

Introduction to the Millennium Development Goals

The UN Millennium Declaration

In September 2000 the United Nations Assembly unanimously adopted the UN Millennium Declaration (<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>). It was an 8 goal agenda that all 192 Member States agreed to adopt. They set 8 goals, they set 21 targets, they set time lines, they allocated funds: and in order to verify if they were being honest with their commitments, they set a number of indicators upon which they asked to be judged. And for the first time in world history, a concrete work agenda for the rights of the voiceless was universally agreed. It was an 8 goal agenda that all 192 Member States agreed to adopt. We, the humanity of the third Millennium, have achieved that technological, economic and political progress from where we can no longer justify hunger and the exclusion of millions from basic health and education.

In 2000, the international community acknowledged that it has a duty to recognize the fundamental rights of those who are being excluded from the benefits of progress. At the United Nations assembly, all countries committed themselves to a work agenda that would tackle the most evident factors of poverty and injustice. They set 8 goals, they set 21 targets, they set time-lines, they allocated funds. And in order to verify if they were being honest with their commitments, they set a number of indicators upon which they asked to be judged. And for the first time in world history, a concrete work agenda for the rights of the voiceless was universally agreed.

The MDGs today provide a framework for the UN system and for synergizing the various international cooperation activities in a coherent worldwide effort. The MDG targets have become an integral part of the World Development Indicators (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Development_Indicators). Each year, an annual report is prepared that assesses the progress made by member states in fulfilling the pledges they made.

Although the UN has a key role to play in addressing the challenges and in tracking the global progress towards these goals, it is national governments that have the responsibility to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets. Thousands of projects and programs have been operational involving a large amount of human and technical resources. However, the resources and efforts have proved to be inadequate and the progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and slow. Many countries finally did not allocate the resources they had committed to and the international media did not pay much attention to the MDGs, so the public is little informed about them. In this documentary, we will see projects on the ground and see what developing and developed nations are doing in order to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs.

The Eight Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: the World has enough food for all; but millions of people still suffer hunger. The MDG1 is focused on removing the factors causing extreme poverty and ensuring that no person dies of hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education: millions of children do not have access to schools; the nations of the world have recognized that they have a duty to provide basic education to boys and girls

alike; the MDG2 is about enforcing the right of all the children to go to school.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women: providing women with equal opportunities means having communities enriched with the wealth that women produce and share; political participation of women means that communities are better managed, more open and that power and opportunities are better distributed. The MDG 3 deals with the removal of the obstacles to gender equity and to full political participation of women.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality; millions of children die because of the lack of care and exclusion. The MDG 4 deals with decreasing the death rates of children under-five while improving their nutrition and access to vaccinations and basic health services;

Goal 5: Improve maternal health: Hundreds of thousands of young mothers die due to lack of care and hygiene. The MDG 5 is about reducing maternal mortality rates by providing access for all women to reproductive health services, both during pre-natal and childbirth; it also tackles reducing adolescent birth rates and promoting the use of contraceptives;

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: in developing countries, people die of preventable diseases. The MDG 6 aims at stopping the spread of AIDS and other diseases like tuberculosis and malaria and increasing the access of people to treatment;

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability: The MDG 7 is the recognition of the rights of future generations to receive an environment as rich as the one we are enjoying and that development will be sustained only by the conservation of the environment. MDG 7 aims at the loss of bio-diversity and environment resources, increasing people's access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and improving the lives of slum dwellers;

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development; the MDG 8 is about promoting a healthy cooperation environment amongst nations: by making the economic and political relationship fairer and more peaceful, it will be possible to remove factors that generate poverty and ignorance.

Not enough progress towards the achievement of MDGs

UN monitoring of MDGs (<http://www.mdgmonitor.org>) reveals that many countries might not achieve declared targets by 2015. This is largely due to a combination of the lack of driving policy changes in these countries and the lack of consistent commitment by donor countries. In spite of official declarations to pursue the 8th MDG goal (i.e. Developing a Global Partnership for Development) by devoting at least 0.7% of GNP to development cooperation, the average contribution by donor nations is still only around 0.23%, i.e. equal to US\$ 56 billion per year (EU has committed 0.7% by 2012). UN and World Bank estimate that an additional donor contribution of USD 50 billion per year would be still required to reach the target of 0.7% of GDP. One of the reasons for low prioritization of commitment to International Development Agenda is the low awareness, among people in richer countries, of the real development issues and on the scope and impact of international cooperation.