

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals
by
Hoi Kei Phoebe Chan
May 12, 2006

Back in September 2000, 189 countries signed on to the UN Millennium Declaration to achieve eight goals by 2015. Knowing that the goals are attempts to improve human development in general around the world, they reflect the urgent need to recognize basic human rights such as gender equality, education and health care. Those eight goals came from agreements through resolutions that were previously presented and discussed in many United Nations conferences.¹ However, some of the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] seem unlikely to be accomplished by 2015 because of cultural differences, the governments and the countries' foreign policies. This paper will give an innovative way at looking at the goals set by the United Nations.

Acknowledging that the United Nations is in need of a Reform as said by Gillian Sorensen and Jean-Marc Coicaud, the UN needs to restructure itself before trying to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals. As Coicaud said, "too many countries are not willing to take the UN seriously." Therefore, it raises concerns over the discrepancy, transparency, accountability and the leadership of the UN which causes internal tensions.² Thus speaking, there is an urgent need to balance the power within the world body before it becomes even more destabilized. From an insider's point of view, the leadership of the UN looks demoralizing because of violations of ethical practices within the body.³ It is suggested by Sorensen that each country's citizens should be involved in order to voice their opinions to their respective governments while pushing for their representation and their commitment to the MDGs.⁴ Therefore, UN Reform must

¹ "Health and the MDGs: background." World Health Organization. 23 April 2006
<<http://www.who.int/mdg/background/en/index.html>>.

² Dr. Jean-Marc Coicaud, ATHGO International Symposium, 25/4/2006

³ Dr. Jean-Marc Coicaud, ATHGO International Symposium, 25/4/2006

⁴ Gillian Sorensen, ATHGO International Symposium, 25/4/2006

be made to restore morale within the community to achieve the next step forward:
MDGs.

It is recognized that each of the MDGs is unique and affects the society differently especially in the developing countries. The first MDG tackles the issue of poverty and hunger. From the UN Volunteers publication, it is said that around 1.2 billion people survive on less than US\$1 a day and this situation is quite disturbing.⁵ By sending aid through volunteers, funding, technology or even exchange of students abroad, it could be an initiative which may help to combat against poverty and hunger, since local people would be able to learn and spread the skills they learned to one another.⁶

The second MDG consists of achieving universal primary education.⁷ That is achieved through the World Food Programme's School Feeding Program where food is offered to children and parents to encourage education and eradicate poverty through knowledge.⁸ However, this goal is hindered by the third MDG⁹ which promotes gender equality and empowering women. In many societies, women are seen as inferior due to societal values or even religious beliefs. Therefore, the UN should encourage religions and social groups to be more tolerant towards women. The situation would not change in one day, but at least, gradual changes will eventually pave way to gender equality and allow women to get educated. So, once this MDG is accomplished, the second MDG would gain more ground and be accomplished.

⁵ "MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." UN Volunteers. September 2005. 23 April 2006 <http://www.unv.org/infobase/facts/04_05_20DEU_MDG_1_ph.htm>.

⁶ "MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." UN Volunteers. September 2005. 23 April 2006 <http://www.unv.org/infobase/facts/04_05_20DEU_MDG_1_ph.htm>.

⁷ "UNFPA State of World Population 2005." United Nations Population Fund. 23 April 2006 <<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch1/index.htm>>.

⁸ "World Food Programme (WFP)." School Feeding. 2006. 10 May 2006 <http://www.wfp.org/food_aid/school_feeding/index.asp?section=12&sub_section=3>.

⁹ "UNFPA State of World Population 2005." United Nations Population Fund. 23 April 2006 <<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch1/index.htm>>.

As for the fourth, fifth and sixth MDG, they all go hand in hand due to the fact they deal with health issues¹⁰. If foreign aid is well-spent, health care in developing countries can reduce the many illnesses which are curable like malaria. Also, good management of the funds can then improve maternal health and reduce child mortality. However, until a cure can be found for HIV/AIDS, only prevention and education about that disease can reduce its impact on the society especially with the high mortality rate and number of orphans in Africa.¹¹ If diseases like HIV/AIDS can reduce maternal health, it would raise child mortality. Therefore, it can be seen that all the health issues are inter-related and there is no way to solve one while neglecting the others.

The seventh MDG is the most interesting one considering it involves environmental sustainability. Agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and various world summits have been placed to promote sustainable development for countries.¹² It is important to understand that alternate sources of energy and resource management are crucial to preserve natural resources and endangered species for future generations. Despite the fact that there is much emphasis on developing new technology to replace the lack of resources, there has not been any real initiative in attempting to imitate the ancient technology. Knowing that our predecessors had only basic materials and technology for their art and architecture, their impressive structures still stand today after more than 2000 years, like the Coliseum in Rome or even the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. That

¹⁰ "UNFPA State of World Population 2005." United Nations Population Fund. 23 April 2006
<<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch1/index.htm>>.

¹¹ "2M babies die within 24 hours." 9 May 2006. irishhealth.com. 11 May 2006
<<http://www.irishhealth.com/?level=4&id=9451>>

¹² "Ensure environmental sustainability." Environmental Sustainability in 100 Millennium Development Goal Country Reports. UNDP. 23 April 2006
<<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=186388>>. (downloadable as link)

is what one can call sustainable development.¹³ It is also important to note that the ancient people did not have sophisticated weapons to protect themselves with or even advanced tools for agriculture. Yet, they still managed to survive without the commodities with which one knows today. Maybe the imitation and re-introduction of the ancient technology will be the solution to fix environmental degradation.

As for the eighth and last MDG, it relates to global partnership for development. In Coicaud's presentation, nation states are reluctant to provide funding which actually hinders global partnership development.¹⁴ That means it slows down the development in developing countries and creates more problems that will delay the accomplishment of other MDGs because of a lack of funding. Also, there have been concerns over globalization as a new type of global partnership. But then, until a free and fair market is accomplished, there will always be conflict in terms of global partnership.

In conclusion, the Millennium Development Goals will never meet the targets pledged in 2000 by 2015 unless a UN Reform takes place. Plagued by internal problems, the UN has become a battleground because of conflict of interests. As discussed, the goals are idealistic but can be achieved if people start working together looking through the root of the problem, originating from the ancient world, by turning the hands of time.

¹³ This topic was raised at the CANIMUN 2006 conference in the committee of *General Assembly Special Session: population growth and sustainable urban housing*.

¹⁴ Dr. Jean-Marc Coicaud, ATHGO International Symposium, 25/4/2006

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