

## The UN Millennium Project: A Practical Plan to Achieve the MDGs

In 2002, given the job of devising a plan of action for achieving the MDGs, the UN's Millennium Project started by thinking big: complete fulfillment of the goals by every country. And then it asked an equally big but basic question: how? In 2005, the project presented three years of research in a comprehensive report that may rank as one of the most far-reaching, revolutionary proposals for development in many years. It concludes that the goals are achievable and affordable—with fast and committed action—and it lays out scores of cost-effective strategies for radically improving the lives of at least a billion people living in poverty by 2015.

On behalf of the UN Development Group, UNDP sponsored the report, which was commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, and designed for widespread dissemination and use in national development strategies throughout the world. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* drew upon the contributions of over 250 development experts, who participated in the Millennium Project under the leadership of the renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs. Ten task forces drafted detailed accompanying reports on core MDG issues, such as hunger, environmental sustainability, and the application of science and technology to development. Extensive consultation across the UN, the international financial institutions, donor and developing country governments, civil society and regional organizations helped hone the Millennium Project's final 10 key recommendations. These represent, to a large extent, the broad consensus of the development community.

**“Until now, we did not have a concrete plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The experts who contributed to this huge undertaking have shown without a doubt that we can still meet the goals—if we start putting this plan into action right now.”**

*Jeffrey Sachs, Director, UN Millennium Project*

*Investing in Development* is about ambitious ideas. It issues a rallying cry to break free from taking limited capacities and resources for development as a given. Instead, countries and the international community must determine what they need to do together to achieve the goals and calculate what resources will be required.

*Investing in Development* is also about urgent action. The report proposes “quick wins” that can be carried out now—such as eliminating public school fees and providing electricity to all hospitals. It also looks at what must be put in place immediately to sustain development over the medium and long term. This starts with core investments in infrastructure to benefit the poor, such as safe water and fertile soil, and in human capital, such as through a functioning health system and the provision of technical skills. To assure universal access to these investments, people must have a full guarantee of political, economic and social rights.

Perhaps most importantly, *Investing in Development* is about practicalities. Analysing what holds countries back on the MDGs, it also maps out what they need to do to move for-

ward, examining different combinations of increased capacity, public policies and resources. It provides a method for developing countries to assess steps to reach the MDGs, and recommends the integration of this information into poverty reduction strategies structured around the goals. The report argues for a jump in development assistance to those countries that are ready to scale up investments, and for aligning trade policies and debt relief with the goals. Special consideration should be granted to supporting those countries that remain stuck in the kind of “poverty trap” that cannot be overcome by good policies and governance alone.

After the launch of *Investing in Development*, presidents and prime ministers, heads of international agencies and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) welcomed its conclusions, and the media, from Al-Jazeera to the *Financial Times*, broadcast its main themes to global audiences. The UN Secretary-General’s report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All* drew extensively upon the Millennium Project’s research, recommending *Investing in Development* as an action plan for achieving the MDGs.

Individual countries are now building on the report’s recommendations, many of which are based on experiences in seven countries where the Millennium Project and UN Country Teams have assisted governments in preparing MDG-based poverty reduction strategies: the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tajikistan and Yemen. UNDP will play a major role in supporting countries to pursue this work, through our leadership within the UN development system and across our own programmes around the world.

### Financing the Goals in Ghana

Some of the central MDG issues involve determining how much achieving the goals will cost and where the right resources will come from. In Ghana and four other countries, the UN Millennium Project worked closely with national research organizations on MDG assessments that quantify required annual public investments and gaps in domestic resources.

Projected amounts in 2003 US dollars per capita

MDG investment needs	2006	2010	2015
Hunger	3	5	12
Education	17	19	22
Gender equality	2	3	3
Health	18	24	34
Water supply and sanitation	6	7	10
Improving the lives of slum dwellers	2	2	3
Energy	13	15	18
Roads	11	10	10
<b>Total MDG investment needs*</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Total domestic resources</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>MDG financing gap</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>70</b>

Note: Numbers in table may not sum to totals because of rounding.

\*Includes MDG interventions not yet factored into needs assessment, such as large infrastructure projects, higher education, and environmental sustainability.

Source: *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, 2005.

## Ethiopia: Assessing Costs and Actions

Africa's oldest independent country endured decades of war, drought and famine, and when peace finally came a decade ago, development priorities were numerous and complex. Even though the Ethiopian Government has been hard at work on many fronts since then, when the MDGs were first introduced, they seemed expensive and out of reach. Nevertheless, in 2002 the government embraced the goals as a long-term vision in crafting its first poverty reduction strategy paper, its primary policy document for development planning.

To help carry these efforts forward, the Millennium Project began working with the government on a pilot programme to study how to integrate the MDG targets across public policy planning. Doing so would allow Ethiopia to plot a comprehensive course of actions needed to reach the targets, and manage national and international resources accordingly.

The pilot began within government ministries and departments, where Ethiopian officials worked on drawing up assessments of what specifically was needed in each sector to achieve the MDGs, from education to HIV/AIDS. They were backed by a well-coordinated UN Country Team, which assigned staff from each agency to meet regularly with other development partners in the Development Assistance Group, co-chaired by UNDP and the World Bank.

The group offered ongoing technical advice, for example, on different ways to determine the costs of public programmes, including those identified by the Millennium Project. It decided that UNDP should manage a pooled fund set up to support research and other activities. And the MDG Task Force, chaired by the government and comprising the UN Country Team and the World Bank, launched an MDG advocacy campaign to raise public awareness and engagement. It reached out to parliamentarians, the media, local artists and students; blanketed the country with MDG posters; and sponsored plays and songs on the goals. A series of workshops solicited the contributions of civil society to the assessments, while an MDG Report on progress to date was translated into local languages and widely disseminated across the country.

A report compiling all of the information from the assessments was completed in 2005. For the first time, it provides a clear and thorough picture of the financial and human resources as well as infrastructure that Ethiopia will need to achieve the MDGs. Spending on some issues will have to

*Ethiopia is using MDG-based planning to determine its development priorities and how to finance them. Reaching the goals will require both public and private sector contributions. An example of the latter is the manufacturing of clean, ethanol-burning stoves that an Ethiopian company hopes will aid in reducing deforestation.*

multiply many times over—fivefold in the case of health and education. Donors may need to consider new uses for the disproportionate percentage of external funds still going into short-term humanitarian aid, even though Ethiopia has turned increasingly towards longer-term development efforts.

Ethiopia is incorporating the results of the assessments into its next poverty reduction strategy paper, which will come on line in 2006, and the Task Force is working with different ministries on ways to monitor the strategy in line with the MDGs. In the near future, the Ethiopian Government will be able to turn to this information both for more effectively guiding its own resources, and for making a convincing case for scaled-up donor support. The UN Country Team will use the assessments as the basis for joint development programming.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi recently called the MDGs “practical and achievable,” a reflection of the government’s willingness to invest in strategies to attain the goals. Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, has a long journey to 2015. But its work on the MDGs is building the skills, resources and commitment to get there.

