



Assessing the 2003 UNDP  
Human Development Report:  
**Meeting the Millennium  
Development Goals**

Report of a public seminar hosted by the  
United Nations Association in Canada  
in Ottawa, November 19, 2003



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## INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the United Nations Association in Canada, I am pleased to present you with our 2003 Seminar Report, which is entitled: *Assessing the 2003 UNDP Human Development Report: Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*.

This report highlights the main points addressed and discussed during a day-long public seminar that took place in Ottawa on November 19, 2003. The seminar was comprised of a keynote speaker and a series of expert panelists that structured their presentations around one of the following three themes: (1) The Priority Challenges in Meeting the Millennium Development Goals, (2) The Role of Wealthy Countries in Achieving the Goals, and (3) Mobilizing Grassroots Support for the Goals. These presentations were complemented by plenary sessions where participants had the opportunity to raise questions or share their comments on the respective topics. Over 100 people from government departments, parliamentarian offices, academia, civil society, and the general public attended the seminar. This eclectic group made for a rich exchange that resulted in a very dynamic and interesting event.

In capturing the spirit of the seminar, this Report summarizes the proceedings of the seminar. Given the large scope of the Millennium Development Goals, this report does not pretend to be all encompassing, but it does serve to identify areas for further research and deliberation. This report is therefore a great tool for Canadians who are already active or looking to become engaged on the issues of international development.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank the participants who dedicated a day of their time to this seminar. UNA-Canada is also grateful to the many individuals who have contributed to the success of this project, most notably Ian Foucher, Joan Broughton, Steve Mason, Julie Larsen, Lyn Ly-Repstock, Jason Bristow, Geneviève Handler, and Stephanie Manson. This initiative would also not have been possible without the generous support of the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the International Development Research Centre, and Rights & Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development).



**Kathryn White**  
Executive Director  
United Nations Association in Canada



## THE EIGHT MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In order to fully appreciate this report, it is helpful for one to have a general idea of where the Millennium Development Goals come from and of what they consist. Here is a succinct overview of the Goals and their origin:

In 2000, the UN hosted a World Summit at its headquarters where a record number of Heads of State gathered to discuss critical issues for the new millennium. At the Summit, countries adopted the Millennium Declaration which committed them – whether rich or poor – to doing all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental sustainability. Emanating from the Millennium Declaration were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These are concrete targets for advancing development and reducing poverty by 2015. The eight Millennium Development Goals exhort the global community to:

1. Halve extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower of women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development  
(with clear targets for aid, trade, and debt relief)

## WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS

### **Ms. Kathryn White**

Executive Director – United Nations Association in Canada

Ms. Kathryn White opened the seminar by welcoming all participants to the event. Recognizing that the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) represent a very ambitious campaign mounted by the United Nations, she encouraged participants not to be deterred by their idealism, reminding all present that without ideals the UN would not have been created in 1945. Ms. White also stressed that the MDGs symbolize both a rude awakening and a clarion call for the developed world to make a pledge to work with developing countries in fighting the poor social and economic conditions faced by their populations. She emphasized the need to look at what Canadians can do in this *Millennium Development Goals'* campaign to meet the specific targets that have been set in terms of both time and results.


## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### **Making Services Work For Poor People: An Approach to Reaching the MDGs**

**Dr. Shekhar Shah** – Manager Public Sector & Governance  
(Eastern Europe & Central Asia) The World Bank Group

As the first speaker of the conference, Dr Shah began by motivating a discussion on why making development services work for poor people is the most critical issue in meeting the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs). He noted that key services, whether in health, education, sanitation, and electricity, are failing poor people because of their low level of quality and their high, often unaffordable cost. To be successful, services must empower the poor. This can be achieved in three ways. Firstly, there is a need to provide poor people with the ability to monitor and discipline service providers. Secondly, they must have a more active role in policy making. Lastly, incentives for service providers to cater to the poor should be strengthened through monetary and non-monetary means.

Of the eight MDGs, Dr. Shah focused on the five that directly deal with human development outcomes because they are most critical to the welfare of poor people. He acknowledged that the first goal – to reduce by half the number of people living on less than US\$1/day – would likely be met, due to rapid growth in the populous China and India. The same cannot be said, however, of the second goal, which would see every child attend primary school, or the third goal that strives to improve gender equality. Similarly, it is unlikely that there will be a significant enough reductions in child and infant mortality rates or improvements in levels of maternal health (Goals #4 and #5). According to Dr. Shah, these two goals will be difficult to achieve because of the discrepancy between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of the populations

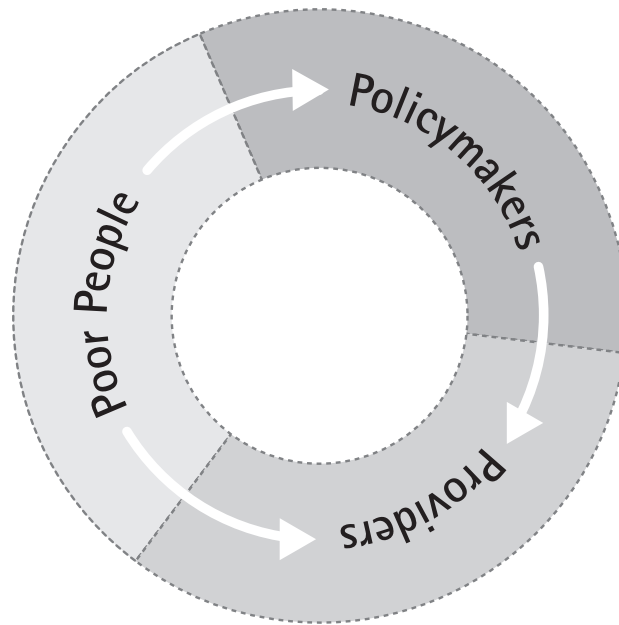


within countries. A dramatic difference exists in mortality rates between the richest and poorest fifths of the population in many countries. In education, fewer of the poorer children get into school and they experience higher drop-out rates. In India, only 36% of the poorest fifth of children complete primary school education, compared to 97/98% of the richest.

One way to address this problem is through **economic growth**. If one examines the relationship between economic growth and the development targets based on growth projections, all regions of the developing world, with the exception of Africa, will meet the first goal, that of halving income poverty rates. Further, most regions – excluding Africa – will achieve one aspect of the second development goal by reaching the targets set for primary education. Despite these optimistic growth projections, no region will meet Goals #4 and #5 (reduction in child and infant mortality rates and improved maternal health). Economic growth is only part of the solution. Even if Africa was to double its per capita GDP growth rate, this region could only fulfill the first goal, that of halving income poverty rates.

In addition to the economic growth approach, Dr. Shah noted that another popular solution among decision makers is to **increase public spending** for services to the poor. However, he underscored the fact that there is no clear correlation between increased public spending, through foreign aid or domestic undertakings, and an improvement in services provided to the poor. What often happens is that an increase in public spending benefits the richer members of society rather than the poorer ones. In Guinea, 48% of health spending benefits the richest fifth of the population, while less than 8% benefits the poorest fifth. Another problem is that funds usually fail to reach frontline service providers, such as clinics, schools, and the households. A prime example of this trend is Uganda. In this country, only 13 cents out of every dollar spent on education actually reach the schools – the rest disappears along the way. As a third problem that relates to services, Dr. Shah emphasized the lack of incentives to service providers, which leads to a low quality or nonexistent provision of services to the poor. These observations show that economic growth and public spending are not enough to help developing countries reach the benchmarks established by the Millennium Development Goals.


Dr. Shah felt that a higher level of accountability is the ultimate solution to help poorer nations achieve these goals. Accountability will address the inadequate allocation of expenditures, the failure of funds to reach the frontlines, and the limited incentives to service providers. According to Dr. Shah, the direct lines of accountability between people and service providers get filtered through the policy makers. The relationship that exists between citizens, the service providers, and political actors can fundamentally affect the delivery of the service. Politics plays



an important role in the distribution of services, regardless of the political regime in place (i.e., democracy, socialism, communism, etc.). Dr. Shah used the example of Cuba, which remains one of the best health care providers in Latin America. Their success can be attributed to a strong level of accountability between the state, the service provider, and the citizen.

In this triangular relationship of accountability, Dr. Shah was quick to point out that problems often surface between the policy makers and the service providers because of weak monitoring mechanisms. This common concern can be overcome. For example, emerging out of a civil war Cambodia needed a rural health care system. They experimented with three options: (1) contracting out to NGOs, who became responsible for services; (2) contracting internally, allowing NGOs to aid public services; and (3) creating control groups, which were services run by governments. The first option, contracting out, provided the most efficient and highest quality services. Dr. Shah put emphasis on the fact that this response might not be the best for all situations – there's no "one-size-fits-all" solution.

The other side of this accountability framework is the relationship between the service provider and the poor, which Dr. Shah described as the "direct/short route of accountability." This relationship needs to incorporate more incentives for clients. A good example of this is Bangladesh. This country had very good primary school enrollment rates, but girls often dropped out when making the transition to secondary school. The government responded by putting in place incentives for young women, such as awarding them scholarships when they stayed in school. Schools would also receive grants based on their female enrollments and the maintenance of female clientele. Changing incentives can thus increase client power, and, in return, this empowers the poor.



Dr. Shah closed by saying that it is most difficult to provide services where there exists a weak conduit for accountability. According to Dr. Shah the *Millennium Development Goals*, especially the first five, are destined to fail if client power is not increased and people are not put at the center of service delivery. Poor people must have the means to buy services in order to give them power over the provider; this is what was previously referred to as client power.

### Discussion

In an ensuing audience discussion the topic that seemed to draw most attention was that of gender equality and gender issues. Dr. Shah addressed the concern over a lack of gender analysis in development data by pointing out that a significant improvement in the gathering of information can actually be noted in comparison to 10 or 12 years ago. The World Bank has taken steps to address this concern by implementing updated survey techniques, such as the collection of data through household surveys with the cooperation of bilateral organizations. Through these surveys all persons in a house are polled, with emphasis on female children. Dr. Shah also mentioned that more work should be done when it comes to impact evaluation. The analysis conducted by the World Bank focuses mainly on the implementation of a project, rather than on its impact.

Addressing a second set of questions dealing with the negative effect of market-place ideologies on young women, Dr. Shah argued that we must refer to the data and not to preconceived notions of what works and what does not. For instance, Bangladesh did see an increase in female enrollments in secondary schools and that should be the focus. Dr. Shah reiterated that one size does not fit all and that incentives might not always be the solution to increase and maintain female enrollments in schools. Other countries and other regions might have to create their own methods to address this problem.

## PANEL 1

### Priority Challenges in Meeting the Millennium Development Goals


Ms. Iris Almeida, Director of Policy, Programmes, and Planning, *Rights and Democracy*, chaired the first panel, which included two speakers: Ms. Nena Terrel, Outreach and Advocacy Advisor for the United Nations Human Development Office, and Ms. Janet Burn, Senior Policy Advisor (Corporate Planning) with the Canadian International Development Agency.

#### 1. Human Development Report 2003: A Compact among Nations to End Human Poverty

As the first speaker on this panel, Ms. Nena Terrell began her presentation by re-framing the question: "Will the MDGs be achieved?" to "What does it take to achieve these goals?" She noted that despite the number of summits dedicated to development, the promises made, and the actions expected, sub-Saharan Africa is likely not going to meet the development goals until 2156. To add to this crisis, twenty-one countries have experienced a drop in the human development index, twelve a decline in school enrollment, and fourteen an increase in child mortality since the 1990s. Clearly the MDGs will not be realized unless action is taken to reverse these trends.

International assistance needs to focus on the countries with the steepest mountains to climb. For these fifty-nine priority countries (thirty-eight of which are in sub-Saharan Africa) aid is imperative. Economic stimulation through trade is not enough.

According to Ms. Terrell, **chronic structural problems plague the poorest countries**. Priority countries' problems are rooted in structural factors such as a low population, difficulty accessing trade opportunities, violent conflict or ethnic strife, a one-commodity economy subject to fluctuating prices, and high AIDS/HIV infection rates (greater than 5%). In many cases, once a country can overcome one of these structural factors they can attain a threshold level of development. Once this is accomplished development becomes sustainable, and a country begins the climb out of poverty. Research has shed light on these root problems. For instance, growth was experienced by 75% of large coastal countries, 100% of large land-locked countries, 67% of small coastal countries and 24% of small land-locked countries. Most of the small land-locked countries have experienced an average negative growth rate. It becomes apparent that more effective aid will be needed for those who live in rural settings, and small countries. This needs to be accomplished without victimizing or blaming these countries.



Research for the UN has shown that current aid levels need to be doubled: at a minimum, there needs to be the addition of \$100 billion of worldwide relief. This would represent an increase of \$50 billion, or a doubling of the current aid provided by developed countries. At first glance, this may appear to be an exorbitant amount, but not when we compare it with the tobacco industry, as one example, where countries spend over \$240 billion collectively. Other functional issues, to complement the structural ones, include debt relief, technology transfer, access to medicine, and market access to developed countries. However, these areas require more research and, ultimately, more political impetus. One example of an existing distortion is that five times more money is spent on agricultural subsidies than on foreign aid in developed countries.


Ms. Terrell ended on a positive note, acknowledging the general skepticism about achieving the MDGs, but reminding the audience that both small pox and polio have been eradicated. She underlined that, in these successes, mobilization, awareness, and participation did make the difference. The question isn't what can be afforded: it is what needs to be addressed. Achieving the MDGs from a human development perspective is about enlarging people's choices and enhancing their capabilities.

## **2. CIDA and the MDGs: Opportunities and Challenges.**

Ms. Janet Burn set the MDGs in the context of the transition, or the change, expected for the Canadian Government, under a new leader of the Liberal party and Prime Minister, for 2003-04. The MDGs present a formidable challenge, and they have become a way to focus donor attention on the need for policy coherence.

According to Ms. Burn, aid needs to be broadened to encompass migration, agriculture, and economics. Integrating aid and non-aid policies is a challenge for macro-level policy coherence. Coupled with this, the measurement of results and the communication of such results need to be made a government priority.

The Government of Canada has made a commitment to increase aid by 8% annually, with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) managing 80% of these funds. By 2010, the international aid budget should be doubled. Despite this projected increase, the doubling will bring the budget back to where it was in the early 1990s. CIDA has recently taken important steps to quadruple aid spending by 2005, yet such a new level is still below the goal Lester Pearson set in the early 1960s.



Like the previous panelist, Ms. Burn argued for the need to broaden the conception of aid, and to more carefully target development efforts. While earlier efforts were broadly dispersed, currently 50% of international assistance will be dedicated to Africa, and, within Africa, more closely aligned with country-specific priorities. CIDA participates in capacity-building and trade-facilitation to ensure that more countries participate in the trading system. Further, the global community has demonstrated broader efforts to extend duty-free and quota-free access to products coming from developing country. Canadian legislation to promote the export of food and drugs to developing countries has been tabled, and the new Government of Canada has signaled that a high priority will be given to the entire range of issues.

The last issue addressed was horizontal collaboration and government outreach. CIDA is working closely on security issues with other departments, and on trade issues with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). CIDA has re-designed its corporate-results framework around the MDGs, with this strategy to be tabled in January, 2004. CIDA is responding to a need to address the quality of aid, quantity of aid, policy changes, results management, and the engagement of Canadians.

### **Discussion**

One audience member re-iterated a concern that CIDA's budget was reduced to such an extent that it has fallen back to previous levels of aid, and noted that politicians in both Canada and developing countries need to be held more accountable. Another focused on gender and the fact that Goal #3 seeks to empower women. He specifically wanted to know whether criteria were available that could be used to combat violence against women.

In response, Ms. Burn replied that CIDA is aware of the limitations it faces and the objectives it needs to reach, and noted that it has had a long-time focus on gender equality. Gender equality will receive significantly more attention in the new sustainability plan.

Iris Almeida wrapped up this session by reiterating that, since many of the issues are inter-connected, the new approaches wisely incorporate broader approaches to aid. She also highlighted Ms. Terrell's remarks that more analysis and problem-solving need to be devoted to the structural factors that underpin poverty.

## PANEL 2

### The Role of Wealthy Countries in Achieving the Goals

Ms. Anna Nitoslawska, Administrator of International Programmes with the Canadian Labour Congress, chaired the second session, with Mr. Magnus Schönning, First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, and Dr. John Foster, Principal Researcher for the North-South Institute as the two speakers.


#### 1. Sweden and the MDGs

Much of Mr. Magnus Schönning's presentation focused on how Sweden is promoting the MDGs. He outlined three main strategies: 1) enhance support and aid to poor countries; 2) advocate and encourage a greater role for developed countries; and 3) develop domestically oriented campaigns for public education and diplomacy. *(Note: the full description of the Swedish strategy is available at [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se) and [www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se))*

The Swedish approach is holistic in nature, and the first integrated initiative will be debated by Parliament at the end of 2003. Sweden's direct aid is US\$166 million, not overwhelming in absolute terms but, when broken down, it represents a contribution of US\$230/per capita. This is a very substantial amount when viewed in relative terms. Sweden has also allocated US\$5 million for trade capacity-building in developing countries. On a comparative international scale, Sweden is the fourth largest contributor of development aid.

Sweden is actively trying to reduce European Union (EU) agricultural subsidies, using their EU membership directly to assert the need for improved developing world access to the European Union. The five Nordic ministers (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland) have made their commitment official by issuing a declaration, stating their intentions and goals to improve market access for developing countries. One of these goals proposes debt re-structuring and debt cancellation solutions.

Public education and diplomacy is a pillar of the domestic orientation of Sweden's strategy. Though the campaign has optimistic tones, it stresses the urgency of international aid, using postcards and TV and movie ads to demonstrate that it is possible to halt poverty by 2015. There is widespread support for the campaign. A conservative newspaper has carried a major ad-supplement on the MDGs. Furthermore, theaters are running a short public service film/announcement that reaches out to the general public.



The overarching message for this panel was that there is a substantial role for wealthy countries to play. Functionally, more emphasis should be placed on increased efficiency, follow-up, and evaluation. A conclusion was that the real success should be based on shared responsibility, coordination between developed and developing programs, and education of the general public, which is the catalyst to building the political will necessary to generate and sustain momentum.

## **2. The Role of Wealthy Countries: Views from the South and from Civil Society**

Dr. John Foster spoke about the urgent need to establish better guidelines in order to measure social progress, development, and accountability, while ensuring an active participation of developing countries and civil society in the MDG campaign. He began by noting that the MDGs have been subject to criticism and skepticism throughout civil society, especially as the goals and agenda have been disseminated throughout the development policy and activist community. During his introduction he established rising expectations as the norm, by evoking the imagery that the goals should be seen as a floor rather than a ceiling – the floor of perhaps an elevator that must keep going up.

Using Goal #6 as an example, he highlighted the debate about the ambiguity and their ambitious scope. Goal #6 calls for the reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS in twelve years. Measurement is limited, because it only accounts for condom use and the number of HIV orphans. Measurement does not include the number of people in treatment, which is the most relevant figure. Currently, only 300,000 people are in treatment, out of approximately 35 million in need. The World Health Organization (WHO) aims to have 3 million in treatment by the end of 2005. A glaring discrepancy exists between the US\$10 billion to meet health goals and protect life, compared to the \$450 billion the US government spends on defense and military procurement.

Dr. Foster proceeded to outline two approaches which would more directly involve the developing nations in the MDG process. First, use the MDGs to rate progress made by our home governments. Civil society organizations can help, can press for greater organization and can offer alternative ways to meet goals. Since there currently exists no formal means for accountability in the international community, efforts could be made to develop such a mechanism.

Civil society has another agenda item that they advocate. This is the economic environment, and specifically, the relationship between commodity prices and the related challenge for developing countries. These economic conditions were key factors leading to the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98 and have contributed to other economic crises. Related to this, the inadequate market access for developing-nations' commodities has led to the ruin of economic sectors and perpetuated developing world impoverishment. A growing consensus, including some influential economists, has recognized that this situation must change.



Wealthy countries do have a responsibility to poorer countries, and wealthy countries also possess more voting power in many international financial and international organizations. It is within their control to shape an agenda more amenable to meeting the MDGs. The FFD (Financing for Development section of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) has its origins in reaction to the crises of the late 1990s and includes a broad agenda for the consideration of national and multilateral policies. Within this process lay many of the fundamentals that will determine whether or not the MDGs are met. This is a tent in which all of the major multilateral players are at one time, which implies that foreign ministers and development ministers should also be under the tent. There will be a review on the progress toward the MDGs in 2005, and the initiative has thus far included hearings, roundtables, and interactive dialogue, all of which will help foster a better understand of the international economic situation.

Dr. Foster pointed out that the MDGs are only a part of a larger tapestry established by the Millennium Declaration in 2000. They are partial and do not cover essential areas like peace, security, and human rights. The whole declaration, not just the MDGs, must be kept in mind when evaluating the progress of development. While a US\$50 billion increase in aid has been discussed, real progress will be made when aid increases in *multiples*, not *increments*.

Many improvements toward these goals can be made within Canada. Discussion, education, and information is needed. There may be an auspicious window of opportunity with the installation of a new government. Compared to the Swedish effort, in his opinion Canada has not done nearly enough. One learning point has been that Canada can dramatically improve its public education and public diplomacy efforts, because there is not enough relevant knowledge among the general population.

## Discussion

One audience member applauded the example of the Swedish International Development Agency, noting how far ahead it was in comparison to other countries, but he cautioned that stakeholders in Canada should not simply blame themselves or their government for not doing enough. The focus should be on what needs to be done, rather than what has not been done.

Another audience member gave an inspirational example. A high-school teacher from Alberta, he had paid his own fare to this seminar and spoke about establishing a "UN teacher" programme, for the purpose of instilling awareness in primary and secondary school students. With the attitudinal shift brought by such initiatives as the MDGs, he argued that children will demand greater action and accountability on the part of future Canadian governments to alleviate poverty. This point echoed the benefits outlined by Mr. Schönning's description of public awareness campaigns in Sweden and the need to have such initiatives in Canada.

## PANEL 3

### Mobilizing Grassroots Support for the Goals


Ms. Joan Broughton, Public Information Officer, United Nations Association in Canada, chaired the third session. The two speakers for this panel were Ms. Monika Rahman, Policy Researcher for the Youth Coalition, and Mr. David Morrison, President of NetAid.

#### 1. Sexual and Reproductive Health/Rights in the Millennium Development Goals: A Youth Perspective

Ms. Monika Rahman brought an informed perspective to the issues already discussed. As representative of the Youth Coalition, her comments were based on direct experience and participation with youth and gender-related issues on a domestic and international level. She attributed great importance to the concerns that youth groups have regarding their participation in the MDG campaign.

Ms. Rahman began by asking the question: "Why is it important to mobilize youth in the MDG campaign?" She reiterated the recommendations of Chapter 7 of the *Human Development Report 2003*, which states that the success of the MDGs depends on whether avenues in the decision-making process are going to be made available to those who are most affected by these issues. To evidence how young men and women, especially in the area of sexual and reproductive rights, are affected by the MDGs, Ms. Rahman cited alarming statistics from the 2003 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) *State of the World Population Report*. Among these statistics: half of the world population is under the age of 25; one fifth of this group are adolescents; one in four adolescents are living in extreme poverty; 153 million are illiterate, of which 62% are female; pregnancy is the leading cause of death for females between the ages of 15 and 19; 50% of people living with HIV/AIDS are between the ages of 15 and 25; 52% of people living with HIV/AIDS are women; etc. Clearly, these numbers suggest that the priority issues of the MDGs affect young people, and yet indicators addressing youth are only scarcely scattered throughout this campaign.

Currently, a debate exists throughout the youth movement regarding the MDGs. **Is the youth agenda being co-opted?** As an organized sector, or movement, youth were not included in the process of defining the documents, nor did they claim a space in the campaign. Because of the attention given to the MDGs by governments, intergovernmental agencies, and heads of states, however, youth groups are realizing that their participation might provide them with greater access to decision-makers and, thus, to their critical issues.



Among youth groups one prevailing argument is that youth and sexual and reproductive right goals must be paid attention to because they are an inherent part of modern development. Those in this camp see this as a way to hold governments to account, while generating more collective action. Against this, another argument holds that this might only be another framework to which young people will need to adjust, while leaving behind existing frameworks – of their own design. Youth and Women’s groups have worked for twenty-five years, only to see their work reduced to eight encapsulated goals. These people feel a strong pride in ownership over the programmes they have already conceived of and constructed over the past years; they are worried that groups, with already limited resources, will be stretched too thin as they struggle to join the MDG bandwagon.

The background for these arguments is challenging. The lack of youth participation confers a lack of ownership over the goals and process, and not feeling involved in the process is an obstacle in mobilizing support. Though it is conceivable that a youth perspective could be included in the goals, it has so far not been the case. From a youth perspective, the majority of the energy has been spent to generate an understanding of the MDGs. Instead, the need is urgent for a concrete, comprehensible plan of how youth can mobilize and pressure governments.

Ms. Rahman suggested two main avenues through which this can be achieved. First, the Millennium Project, which has created ten task forces to examine the specifics of the eight Millennium Goals, is an ideal space where youth could contribute. Second, a platform for different sectors (women, youth, indigenous groups, etc.) must be created in order to develop a cohesive agreement on how they can engage the MDG campaign. The MDGs could then be incorporated into networks of education, which would help mobilize people to create momentum. In turn, this would attract decision makers and make them more inclined to listen.

## **2. Mobilizing Grassroots Support for the Goals**

Mr. David Morrison gave a presentation that centered on the need to mobilize grassroots support. He began by disclosing that NetAid, the group he founded, is dedicated to increasing support of rich countries for development through grassroots mobilization.




He began by stating that one of the key goals of the MDG campaign is to move people beyond the compassion-and-charity model of engagement to a recognition of the fundamental global interdependence of Africa in the world economy. Changing the mindset of people is crucial to creating a political will and engaging governments, especially in developed countries like Canada and the United States of America.

The theme of communication, building on Mr. Schönning's presentation, was extended, by noting that, in broad terms, communication of the United Nations goals has suffered because much of the effort expended so far has been focused on project development. Northern Europe, he noted, has been particularly active in communications. Southern Europe is also making headway. He pointed to Italy as one example, Italy, where a small MDG campaign has married their framework with the Italian social movement and there have been large demonstrations and much publicity. Throughout Europe celebrities have drawn attention to the issue through public promotion, and by now many are aware of Bono (the musician activist with the Irish group U2) as a leading light.

As a practical necessity, a long-term (12-15 years) commitment is needed to get the MDGs commonly understood in Canada and the US. For self-evident reasons, the US market needs to be saturated with awareness. Not only does it matter more than most countries, but it is tougher to focus attention there. A White House that shows leadership on development could go a tremendous way to ensuring that the goals would be met by 2015. He emphasized that change needs to take place in the relationship between trade, aid, and debt: that it is not simply about development assistance. Like earlier panelists, he also underscored the global interdependence of things.

**On an optimistic note**, he indicated there are signs that things are changing in the US. When NetAid began its advocacy, they felt isolated and there were only a few other NGOs with which they could advance the discourse. Now, nine NGOs are collaborating at the grassroots level with the goal of inserting development as an issue for discussion in the upcoming election caucuses and primaries. Mr. Morrison emphasized that the collaboration is not just about fundraising, but it is also about raising awareness, advocacy, education, and communication. He noted that there seems to be an untapped latent support in the US for development; polls show the US government commits less to aid than people would like. NetAid has collected 60,000 email addresses of people who have used their website to fight poverty. The response has been larger than anticipated, so that the website has been redesigned along the MDGs. People can participate directly in marching toward these goals.



A key element for mobilizing support is to reach people under eighteen. To this end, Net Aid has invented a computer game that imparts curriculum as one plays. They hope to reach 35,000 students in the US and Canada. NetAid is also developing on-line games that middle-school students around the world can play to educate themselves about the MDGs.


Another element, or dimension, to communication is to convey success stories. Some interesting research has shown that success stories, more than other modes of advertising, resonate with people. One reason people do not get involved in fighting poverty is that they do not believe they will make a difference. Mr. Morrison argued that NetAid has found success by communicating stories about people who have successfully engaged the issues.

David Morrison closed the panel by emphasizing the importance of mobilizing grassroots support. He felt that the MDGs were a rallying cry, and used, as evidence, the Swedish newspaper advertisements, which are really hitting home. He concluded by re-framing the typical statements of disappointment: it is not that the development community has failed, but that the development community has never made a collective effort to get rid of poverty, and has never had the proper resources.

### Discussion

Several specific questions were posed by the audience. Was anything special being done to reach out to African countries to ensure their active participation? Did Ms. Rahman's Youth Coalition have a programme to help young women who become pregnant and could not return to school. Were there other programmes or organizations to help people who otherwise would not have access to computers and the Internet for the kind of learning tools developed by NetAid?

Ms. Rahman noted that the organization – *Taking IT Global* – has accomplished a great deal for youth, they have an excellent website and have received a lot of money from fundraisers. With respect to the second query, she noted that help is available for women (and girls) who have had their studies



interrupted by pregnancy. It is also commonly referred to as a priority issue for many regional civil-society groups. Mr. Morrison noted that the game(s) to which he referred are not yet in created, but because students from all over the world go to the NetAid website (albeit it still in uneven numbers from country to country) it is likely they will also play the game.

Members of the audience also had concerns regarding sexual reproductive issues. Their questions focused on whether young men were being mobilized as much as young women on these issues. Ms. Rahman replied that results based on a recent survey she sent out, during a training session for their organization, indicated that there were as many men as women applying in Asia and Africa. She said it surprised her, although she also noted that in some countries women are pre-screened away from the application process for local social reasons.

The causes of systemic poverty were also a topic of focus for this discussion period. More specifically, participants wanted more information on education efforts undertaken in the North and the South on this issue. Mr. Morrison noted that education was being pursued by many social organizations and that the MDG campaign is working towards involving more people in this area. As an example, he cited the work currently being done by the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom which has developed a curriculum for the national school system intended to bring more knowledge and understanding to the issue of poverty. In terms of NetAid's work, Mr. Morrison mentioned the MDG quiz that they have made available on their website, which tests people's understanding of the Goals. (see: [www.netaid.org/projects](http://www.netaid.org/projects))

## CLOSING DISCUSSION


Dr. Rohinton Medhora, Vice-President for Partnerships and Programmes at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), chaired the final session of the seminar. He offered a brief and compelling summary that tied all the presentations together, while fielding comments and questions from the audience.

### Seminar Summary

In his presentation, Dr. Medhora focused on the areas that will need more attention if the MDG campaign is to succeed. In doing so, he addressed many issues, most notably the need for more accountability, for greater exchange of information among stakeholders, for change in ways in which developed countries and its citizens look at development, and for the empowerment of the poor.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Medhora reminded the audience that if the issues addressed through the MDGs are to be tackled in an earnest fashion, more aid will be necessary, greater awareness and education of the general public will be required. In addition, lobbying will need to continue. Ultimately this campaign will need to be about giving people the capacity to solve their social and economic problems themselves. Poor people must have a sense of ownership regarding their future and the challenges they currently face. The only way to give them this sense of ownership will be through their empowerment.

Beyond this philosophical outlook on the MDGs, Dr. Medhora addressed the different models for development that are available to the international community. He mentioned that the traditional way in which social services are delivered to developing countries is a mixture of public and private initiatives; similar to the way developed countries operate. Through this framework, what you often find is that privatization is not the sole answer because, if you privatize a monopoly, services do not necessarily improve. What is needed is privatization accompanied by competition. And yet he noted that competition may sometimes be fabricated and, thus, will fail to improve services. Taken to extremes, both privatization and competition may cause more harm than good. To avoid these extremes, Dr. Medhora emphasized Dr. Shah's reference (see *page 2 of this report*) to a strong accountability framework between the state, the service provider, and the client. To apply this accountability framework will essentially bring stakeholders, be it governments, non-governmental organizations, or corporations, beyond the traditional way of looking at development.



Dr. Medhora also remarked that in order to be strong the accountability framework would need to be complemented by networks. This concept of networks essentially refers to the communication and flow of information between and within groups. For instance, organized crime, terrorist organizations, civil society, ethnic groups, etc. all operate through networks. He noted that governments, either collectively or individually, seem to be lagging behind in this department. More work must be done in this area.

In terms of aid, or monetary support through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), to developing countries, Dr. Medhora highlighted the existence of two trends among developed countries which contradict each other. On the one hand there is a successful trend: developed countries award aid to countries that operate with good governance standards. The other trend sees donor countries hesitate to support countries that are plagued with instability. Dr. Medhora argued that this situation is problematic because the MDGs are most urgent in countries that are experiencing instability because of civil war, ethnic conflicts, or corruption in its government ranks. In order for the MDG campaign to be successful, these trends will need to be reconciled. This will be one of the biggest challenges facing the international community.

Another problem with respect to the attainment of development goals is the gap that persists between researchers and those involved in project implementation and management. All donor agencies and all government agencies face this problem. If you read most of the research output, there is much nuance and the findings are presented in a very empirical and thoughtful way. When programmes are developed and implemented, however, it is not clear that this knowledge is always taken in consideration or applied. The challenge therefore resides in making operational, within institutions, the knowledge that is done through cutting-edge research, such as the annual *Human Development Report* and the *World Development Report*. Dr. Medhora went on to point out that the business of having authors moving between the writing of reports and field operations, such as is the case with Dr. Shekhar Shah, is one very good way of overcoming this gap.

Dr. Medhora concluded by emphasizing that the MDGs were not an end, but rather a means to an end. The end is something else. As some authors have suggested it could be development as freedom. Consequently, if the international community is going to tie itself to standards of development through the MDGs, then all stakeholders must be reminded that these measures are simply systematic ways of getting at "something else." The concept of that "something else" is different to different people, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach for development.



## Discussion

This last session offered the opportunity for participants to express their ideas, thoughts, and questions regarding the themes addressed or omitted during the seminar. In order to capture the authenticity of the exchange, the comments of participants are transcribed in their own words and have been organized under themes.

### 1. Working together on the MDGs


"In the 1990s, countries were coming together and solidarity was being created and we ended up with programmes of action, through World Conferences, that didn't get very far in terms of implementation. I think this reduction in plans of action has created cynicism. I really do feel that the number one necessity for the MDGs to happen is political will. If political will is not there, we will never be able to mobilize resources and transfer them where most needed. If we can use the MDGs to pressure the government it can be taken from a cynical place to a way of creating political support."

"In spite of what people say about the MDGs, they bring many commitments and goals, made by governments in the 1990s. Some may say it is reductionist, but I tend to think that it is more holistic in nature. If we pull up our sleeves and make governments accountable, then there might be a chance to make these Goals a reality."

"The work undertaken by grassroots organizations is important, but more collaboration must be done with parliamentarians in order to create an agenda and push it forward. Many activists in Canada have grown cynical. This has to be overcome and a good way of doing so is to bridge the chasm between the work and the deeds. The work being done through official and unofficial networks must reach parliamentarians. We cannot have exclusive processes when it comes to an issue of this importance."

"It seems to me that we tend to compartmentalize and label: NGOs are crusaders, policy makers are cynical, corporations are exploiters, etc. We need to seek some integration here and the *Millennium Development Goals* are one thing we can rally around."

"Collective action is good, but in this business government matters. Rich governments, just as much as governments from developing countries, are needed to make this campaign successful. The goal of the campaign is to create political will and get these governments on board. In doing so, we need to create a discourse among people of differing views. I think that's the big idea – to get people out of their silos and talking, because political will comes from the people."



"We need to involve more young people into this campaign. After all, they will be the ones in positions of influence by 2015. Moreover, they seem to be deeply affected by these Goals. Based on some of the presentations, it seems that there is an interest on the part of young people since they are already working on these issues. It is perhaps just a question of investing more time in ensuring that the pool of people consulted is expanded. More collaboration is the essence of my message. This responsibility should fall on NGOs, governments, and other stakeholder groups. I'm also for mobilizing those over sixty; they have experience and many seem eager to contribute."

## **2. The MDGs as a framework for change**

"The MDGs are just a floor, not a ceiling. Do not take these Goals as the ultimate limit. Take them as something you can hold yourself accountable to. For instance, what happens on January 1, 2016? Do we suddenly say: 'we have done it (or not done it), it is finished?' No, it is a long process and these Goals are just indicators to keep us on track."

"I think that some good points were made earlier about how knowledge and the implementation of development has to change because it needs to be done better. From this point a view, the MDGs are important because they are causing all of us (including those working in the field of international development) to think about how we are spending our money. While we should mobilize to ensure that aid is increased, we should also be smarter about what we are doing with it. Pushing money at problems is not necessarily a good way to proceed."

"A wide-ranging awareness campaign needs to be implemented here in Canada. This campaign should be aimed at the general public and at young people in our schools. This is necessary to change people's mindset on what international development means and the reasons it is so important. Also, grassroots organizations should continue their lobbying efforts in keeping our government accountable to its international obligations."

## **3. Other areas that could be addressed through the MDG campaign**

"Some of the reasons people move from poorer countries to richer countries relates to political strife and lack of professional opportunities. Thus, some of these countries lose a lot of competent people. More attention should be focused towards reversing this trend in order to keep human capital in the countries where it is needed most."


## CONCLUSION

Above and beyond the comments collected within this report, the United Nations Association in Canada, as the chief organizer of this event, received very good feedback from participants and panelists. The conference generated much interest and the discussions were lively and seemed to galvanize people in attendance. Organizers and participants alike are now faced with the question: "what next?"

Ideally an action plan would have been developed for stakeholders in Canada in order to ensure that the important issues discussed during this seminar would not be forgotten or lost. Unfortunately, such an ambitious endeavour would have required much more time and resources from both organizers and participants. Nevertheless, while this report does not purport to offer concrete recommendations, areas of further research and work have been clearly identified within the context of the seminar. These ideas can serve as guideposts for governments, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academics, students, etc. Tabled under international and domestic areas, here are some avenues where further work and collaboration needs to be done in order for the MDG campaign to achieve what it set out to accomplish

### International Level

- Overseas development assistance (ODA) needs to be doubled worldwide. The amount now stands at \$50 billion and must reach \$100 billion. (Not considerable when countries collectively spend over \$240 billion annually on the tobacco industry). However, and more importantly, the relationship between trade, aid, and debt must also change. It cannot just be about increasing aid. As only one instance, greater market access to developing-nations' commodities must be guaranteed.
- In the case of development assistance, it will also be crucial to determine how funds can be channeled to countries plagued by civil strife, ethnic crisis, and wars.
- A strong accountability framework needs to be implemented between the states, service providers, and the poor. All stakeholders (NGOs, governments, social groups etc.) must contribute to this arrangement. Through this process, the poor – people, not countries – must also be empowered. If the MDG campaign is to succeed, poor people must ultimately have a sense of ownership over the issues that affect them.

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- The MDG campaign must include youth perspectives to a larger degree. While work is presently being undertaken in youth conferences across the world, there is a need for improved collaboration. In return, young people must be willing partners in this process. It was suggested that the Millennium Project's task force teams could be a good point of entry for youth.
  - The gap between researchers and practitioners needs to be bridged. There needs to be greater knowledge transfer between those who write and think and those who act. This is especially pressing within intergovernmental agencies and international institutions.

### Domestic Level

- Public education and awareness campaigns must be reinforced on a wider spectrum in order to reach Canadians of all walks of life, with a special focus on young people. (i.e., ad campaigns, school programmes, workshops, etc.) People's mindset of international development must be changed. It needs to move from a compassion-and-charity model of engagement to a recognition of global interdependence of economic issues, health issues, social issues, etc.
- Measurement of overseas development results and the communication of these results need to be made a government priority.
- The Canadian government needs to support and promote its corporate-result framework, expected for 2004, that seeks to improve horizontal collaboration and outreach. The government has accomplished this in areas such as security and trade and must extend it to development issues.

## ORGANIZATIONS PRESENT AT THE SEMINAR

Action Canada Population and Development (ACPD)	Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada
Assembly of First Nations	Partnership Africa Canada
Baha'i Community of Canada	Parliamentary Office for Alexa McDonough
Canadian Commission for UNESCO	Parliamentary Office for Gilles Duceppe
Canadian Council for International Cooperation	Parliamentary Office for Keith Martin
Canadian Ethnocultural Council	Parliamentary Office for Susan Whelan
Canadian Health Society	Philippines Development Assistance Programme
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	Physicians for Global Security
Canadian Public Health Association	Rights & Democracy (ICHRDD)
Canadian Society for International Health	Senator – Rose-Marie Losier-Cool
Carleton University (Norman Patterson School of International Relations)	Sierra Club of Canada
Centre for the Study of Living Standards	Statistics Canada
Common Cause Canada	Swedish Embassy
Department of Finance	Treasury Board of Canada
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)	UNDP
Group of 78	UNHCR Canada
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	UNIFEM Canada
Mer et Monde	University of Ottawa (Department of Political Science)
North-South Institute	Watercan
	World Bank
	World Vision Canada
	Youth Coalition

*NOTE: This is not necessarily an exhaustive list as some participants may not have identified themselves in terms of their affiliations.*