

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Are We Making Poverty History?



*A White Band rally in Bangladesh—one of many efforts worldwide calling for action against poverty. This event was organized by the People’s Forum on the MDGs and Campaign for Popular Education. © Millennium Campaign*

In mid-September 2005, world leaders will gather at the United Nations to take stock of progress to cut global poverty in half by 2015. This goal is one of several “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) meant, among others, to change the circumstances of the world’s poor.

To date, some countries are making strides to combat poverty, while the poor are getting poorer in others. For the West, a security agenda still takes precedence over addressing poverty and its root causes—despite the links between the two. Still, the MDGs have served as a common rallying point for governments, U.N. agencies, and civil society groups. Campaigns by the latter have drawn unprecedented public support for “making poverty history.”

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# Editor's Letter



Dear reader:

Welcome to *OneWorld Perspectives*! OneWorld's new series is designed to provide more depth and context to key topics that define today's interdependent world. OneWorld does not take positions on topics featured, but strives to present the perspectives of a range of different actors, particularly in the non-profit community. We also aim to ensure the prominence of voices traditionally left out of the mainstream discussion--those whose lives are most directly affected by these issues.

OneWorld.net is an on-line community of some 1,600 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working across a range of peace, human rights, environment and development themes. OneWorld's content is delivered in 12 languages through 11 regional editions published by OneWorld centers on five continents. Our news services offer readers a fresh perspective on world events and the chance to take action locally and globally on the issues they care about.

The "In-Depth" section of this newsletter provides an overview of the most important aspects of the topic from multiple perspectives. These articles are compiled by OneWorld editors and reviewed by an expert on the topic. For reviewing this issue, our special thanks go to Bilal Siddiqi, Research Assistant at the [Center for Global Development](#). The "From the Frontlines" section offers readers viewpoints from the non-profit community. By featuring the work of NGOs on the selected theme, we aim to strengthen partnerships among them and introduce readers to their important contributions. "Make a Difference" provides readers opportunities to get involved in a meaningful way to create positive change on the issue.

This newsletter is an interactive resource. Your feedback is welcome and encouraged through the "[Speak Up!](#)" page on the OneWorld web site, where you can post your thoughts on the issue and see what other OneWorld readers have to say.

Finally, this newsletter does not purport to have the final word on the themes it treats. To do so would require volumes of content, not mere pages. But it does strive to provide a foundation of understanding for readers, as well as opportunities to learn and get involved personally with these issues. We at OneWorld, along with our non-profit partners, hope you find this series useful and inspiring.

Zarrín T. Caldwell  
Editor, *OneWorld Perspectives*  
OneWorld United States  
<http://us.oneworld.net>



### Goals and Realities

*“In an era of global abundance, our world has the resources to reduce dramatically the massive divides that persist between rich and poor, if only those resources can be unleashed in the service of all peoples.”*

*Kofi Annan*  
*U.N. Secretary-General*

In the year 2000, world leaders at the U.N. Millennium Summit made a commitment to ending extreme poverty by 2015. This goal was to be reached by meeting eight specific targets. These “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) included pledges by 189 countries to ensure universal education, to reduce child mortality, to combat HIV/AIDS, and to improve maternal health, among others. The foremost goal of this ambitious agenda was to reduce by half (between 1990 and 2015) both the number of people suffering from extreme poverty and from hunger.

Coming to agreement on measuring poverty has been difficult at best, but, for the purposes of the MDGs, “extreme poverty” has come to be defined as the population living on less than \$1/day. For the most part, the consensus among international institutions is that over 1 billion people (or about one in every six worldwide) subsist on such bare minimums. Those living at this level of existence have difficulties meeting even basic needs for food, shelter, or health care. They have reached a level of human suffering that is viewed by many as a moral outrage in a world of plenty. The nearly 3 billion people living on less than \$2/day fare little better. Such sobering statistics have led to an unprecedented show of global support for the MDGs.

In his 2005 report on the global goals, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that they were unique because they were “people-centred, time-bound, and measurable.” He added that they were different from prior commitments because

they had the political support of both developed and developing countries, as well as civil society and major development institutions. While cutting extreme poverty in half worldwide may seem unachievable to some, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—who have been working on such issues for decades—argue that, with the knowledge and technologies that the world has at its disposal, these targets are reachable.

© UN/DPI (Sudan)



### Progress and Setbacks

Each of the eight goals of the MDGs has measurable indicators, which are beyond the scope of this article to review. In sum, however, the U.N. reports that global poverty rates are falling and notes that hunger has been reduced by 25 percent over the past decade in some 30 countries around the world. There has also been considerable progress in many parts of the world, especially in Asia, Russia, and Latin America, in ensuring that girls’ enrolment in schools equals that of boys—a major factor in combating poverty.

The gains to tackle poverty made in parts of Asia are particularly noteworthy. The U.N. indicates that economic growth in China and India, for example, has helped to bring a quarter of a billion people out of extreme poverty. Eveline Herfkens, U.N. Coordinator of the MDG Campaign, notes that, largely because of the weight of the statistics in this region, the goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015 is technically on track. Even as some experts disagree with this optimistic assessment, most parties acknowledge



that advances in Asia mask a worsening situation in other parts of the world—like in Sub-Saharan Africa—where the poor are getting poorer. A study published by the University of Cape Town reports that the number of people in extreme poverty has in fact doubled in Africa overall between 1981 and 2001, rising to over 300 million. This figure represents about one-third of the continent’s population.

While chronic hunger has been on the decline globally, progress has slowed over the past few years. And, again, the picture is not uniform. Hunger in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in parts of South Asia, has offset the gains made in East Asia, for example. The original aim of the MDGs was to see progress in every country, but, in reality, some countries have moved rapidly ahead while the situation for others has deteriorated. And, the setbacks aren’t just confined to Africa.

#### *Examining Income Inequality*

The number of poor in a country and their quality of life depend not just on per capita income, but on how equally—or unequally—income is distributed. In an article on China’s rural poor, the *Washington Post* reported figures released by China’s government claiming that the richest 10 percent of the population controlled 45 percent of the country’s wealth, while the poorest 10 percent held little more than 1 percent. In Brazil, adds a World Bank book called *Beyond Economic Growth*, the richest 20 percent of the population earns more than 30 times the poorest 20 percent. The book also cites high discrepancies in Zimbabwe, Mexico, and Russia and specifies that such excessive income inequalities can lead to both more poverty and political instability.

A June 2005 report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) cites slow progress in this region where 220 million people remain poor and where halving extreme poverty remains a struggle for many countries. Although citing progress in countries such as Chile, the report notes that “the poorest countries, where the population has the most trouble gaining access to food, are the ones making the least progress.” It blames high inequality in the region for this state of affairs.

#### **The Role of Aid, Trade, and Debt**

While income inequalities in developing countries are a contributing factor, the reasons for poverty’s persistence are multi-faceted. And, there are plenty of competing studies to show that economic growth alone may—or may not—ensure that poverty reduction takes place. The investment climate in a country, as well as the state of its labor markets and agricultural development, all play a role. Poverty can also be exacerbated by the low status of women, the prevalence of conflict and natural disasters, and lack of education.

The Millennium Development Goals are meant to address many of these inter-related aspects of poverty. NGOs have consistently argued, however, that poverty will only become history when rich countries improve the quantity and quality of aid they provide, when trade policies don’t unduly disadvantage developing countries, and when such countries can be freed from debilitating debts.

Where aid is concerned, such assistance helps countries devastated by famine or other natural disasters, offers immunizations and treatments to millions of children suffering from preventable diseases, and provides safe drinking water to poor communities, among many other benefits. Industrialized countries have long promised to contribute 0.7 percent of their gross national product (GNP) for such assistance to developing

nations. This target was set by the U.N. General Assembly in the 1960s and was reinforced by heads of state in a document called “the Monterrey Consensus” in 2002. To date, however, only a few countries in Europe have met or exceeded this target. Wealthy countries like the U.S. and Japan have refused to make firm commitments. The U.S. contributed about 0.16 percent of its GNP (now known as Gross National Income, or GNI) to development assistance in 2004. This figure is less than most Americans think does, or should, go to foreign aid. In dollar amounts, the U.S. gives more than any other country, but, as a percentage of its income, it ranks nearly last. After significant decreases in the 1990s, official development assistance from all donors has rebounded. But, overall, the rich world still hasn’t come close to meeting its 0.7 percent commitment.

#### Official Development Assistance 2004

Country	US \$ (millions)	As % of GNP
Australia	1,465	0.25
Canada	2,537	0.26
France	8,475	0.42
Germany	7,497	0.28
Italy	2,484	0.15
Japan	8,859	0.19
Netherlands	4,235	0.74
Norway	2,200	0.87
Spain	2,547	0.26
Switzerland	1,379	0.37
U.K.	7,836	0.36
U.S.	18,999	0.16

Source: OECD

On the trade front, the world’s poorest countries continue to have difficulties competing internationally because of the disinclination of rich countries to open their markets to agricultural products from the developing world. Significant

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financial subsidies to rich country farmers give them a further advantage and drive down prices on world markets, making the fruits of poor country farmers’ labor much less profitable. Even countries like Switzerland give farm subsidies to the tune of \$140 per pig and \$990 per cow—compared to only \$0.25 in aid per developing world person. Although concrete actions have yet to materialize, discussions about diminishing such subsidies are now taking place at the highest levels.

Finally, a substantial debt burden keeps many countries locked in a cycle of poverty. Poor countries typically spend more on interest payments than on needed social services, such as education and health care. Advocates for debt relief argue that many original debts, largely for development projects in the 60s and 70s, have already been paid several times over in interest. Due in part to years of pressure brought to bear by anti-debt activists around the world, rich countries agreed in June 2005 to cancel some \$40 billion in debt owed by 18 of the world’s poorest countries. Characterized by many in the developing world and the global NGO community as a welcome first step, the deal covers only a fraction of the world’s total debt and excludes many countries in desperate need of relief if the anti-poverty goals are to be met by 2015.

See other stories in this issue on “[Finding Solutions](#)” and “[Citizen Voices](#).”

### Related Links and Article Sources

The official U.N. site for the Millennium Development Goals can be found at:  
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

For a regional picture of which parts of the world have already met certain MDGs, are on-track, or still need to make progress see:  
[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/progress\\_17aug.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/progress_17aug.pdf)

The above cited 2005 U.N. report on the Millennium Development Goals, can be found at:  
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MDG%20Book.pdf>

An interview with Eveline Herfkens, U.N. Coordinator for the MDG campaign, provides insights into global progress and setbacks.  
<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/atf/cf/%7BD15FF017-0467-419B-823E-D6659E0CCD39%7D/Bring%20the%20MDG%20-interview.pdf>

A summary of the study by the University of Cape Town is at:  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C4958B1A-6F2C-4CCE-B2F2-9544764B4942.htm>

The ECLAC statement referenced above can be located at:  
<http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/prensa/noticias/comunicados/8/21568/P21568.xml&xsl=/prensa/tpl-i/p6f.xsl&base=/tpl-i/top-bottom.xsl>

Chapters on poverty and income inequality from the World Bank book cited above, *Beyond Economic Growth*, can be found at:  
<http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/chapter5.html>  
<http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/chapter6.html>

For more information on the links between poverty and economic growth, see a paper prepared by the Center for Global Development.  
<http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/2791>

For a fact sheet on definitions of international humanitarian and development assistance, see:  
[http://www.interaction.org/files.cgi/3696\\_Foreign\\_Assistance\\_one-pager.pdf](http://www.interaction.org/files.cgi/3696_Foreign_Assistance_one-pager.pdf)

For a comprehensive picture of the longer-term statistics on foreign aid, with charts & tables, see:  
<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Debt/USAid.asp#RecentIncreasesinAidModestLongerViewShowsDecline>

For information about how Americans view foreign aid and combating world hunger, see polls taken by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at:  
[http://www.pipa.org/us\\_opinion.html](http://www.pipa.org/us_opinion.html)

The Center for Global Development (CGD) will launch its “Commitment to Development Index,” which ranks the rich, on 29 August. (Switzerland’s subsidy figures are from a forthcoming CGD paper by David Roodman.) See the main web site for both at: [www.cgdev.org](http://www.cgdev.org)

A helpful fact sheet prepared for the World Economic Forum offers an MDG “report card” at 2003, which offers comments on trade imbalances.  
[http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Initiatives/ggi\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Initiatives/ggi_factsheet.pdf)

The Jubilee Debt Campaign has called for 100% debt cancellation of “unpayable poor country debts by fair and transparent means.” The link below has some useful background information on the debt crisis faced by poor countries:  
<http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/?lid=98>

### *Is Aid Working for the Poor?*

*“World leaders can show that they really mean business by listening to those at the frontline of development and giving them the tools to do the job.”*

*Camilla Toulmin, Director  
Int’l. Institute for Environment & Development*

In 2000, the international community came together to take a closer look at the joint responsibilities of both developed and developing countries in addressing the world’s poverty. The outline of this shared effort became embodied in goal #8 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Among other tasks, this goal asks rich country governments to address the needs of poorer countries by providing more debt relief, fairer trade rules, and more and better aid for countries committed to poverty reduction.

The document also emphasizes the need for those countries receiving aid to demonstrate a commitment to “good governance.” Due to a history of development funds going into the bank accounts of corrupt dictators or bureaucrats and, therefore, not to the people who need it most, donor countries have increasingly insisted that good governance be a pre-condition for aid. Such governance is facilitated by having strong judicial systems, freedom of information, civil society participation, and more. Groups like [Transparency International](#), with a mandate to combat corruption globally, looks at steps that all parties can take to factor the risk of corruption into assistance programs. These include ensuring there is a strict accounting of contributed funds and that rigorous procurement standards are followed.

Civil society groups have joined the refrain for better oversight and for bringing more accountability to aid projects on the ground. As such, they have increasingly placed tougher requirements on evaluating their own programs. In sum, the bar has moved higher for transparency and accountability in all aid projects.



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### **Getting Aid Where it Counts**

Official overseas development aid—whether in the form of low-interest loans, grants, or technical assistance—remains crucial, especially as a response to disaster situations. Such aid is often vital for helping countries cope with famine, for rebuilding communities after floods or earthquakes, for providing life-saving medicines and clean water, for investing in education, and for using all of these means to combat poverty. A report from the [U.N.’s Millennium Project](#) argues that even small investments in basic infrastructure, such as providing electricity, safe drinking water, health clinics, and roads, can turn the tide on poverty in many village and slum communities.

But, what remains important about such aid is that it gets invested in local communities to really change the circumstances of the poor. Stringent conditions have often been attached to aid funds that have little relevance to a country’s needs, or are beyond their capacity to meet, which has proven to be a poor recipe for combating poverty. In some cases, poverty is only exacerbated by this approach. Take the “structural adjustment policies” promoted by international lending institutions like the World Bank. Now widely discredited, these policies obligated developing countries to concentrate on exports, privatization, and debt servicing at the expense of providing education, health, and social care to their citizens. The result was often increased poverty and social unrest.



Furthermore, foreign aid sometimes has more benefits for donors than recipients. In a report released by [Action Aid](#) in June 2005, the organization claims that two-thirds of donor money goes back to donor countries and, thus, is not available for poverty reduction in developing countries. In addition to a large portion of funds going to Western consultants, the report argues that donor governments often require money to be spent in certain ways—having only American pharmaceutical companies provide drugs used in HIV/AIDS programs, for example.

A new U.N. study on African economies also claims that donor money that comes with strings attached cuts the value of aid to recipient countries 25-40%, because it obliges them to purchase uncompetitive imports from richer nations. Njoki Njoroge Njehu, director of a coalition of over 200 grassroots NGOs called [50 Years is Enough](#), notes that such conditional aid raises project costs. She cites Eritrea's recent decision to build a more cost effective network of railways with local expertise and resources rather than using foreign consultants, experts, architects, and engineers imposed on the country as a condition of development assistance. The problems with such “tied aid” have led several European governments, like Norway, Denmark, and the U.K., to distance themselves from these practices.

### Encouraging Local Ownership

A recent refrain of the international community has been the need to “harmonize” aid programs. More simply put, it's a call for procedures to be simplified and coordinated more closely with the specific—and often very different—needs of recipient countries. [The Millennium Campaign](#) asserts that, with donors funding more than 60,000 aid projects around the world, demands on recipient countries—with sometimes limited institutional capacity—are overwhelming. The reporting requirements alone are heavy burdens.

Projects are also not always aligned with a country's priorities. For all of these reasons, the Millennium Campaign calls for donors to “move away from their ‘own’ projects and focus on supporting locally driven and country-owned priorities and strategies” and “to set benchmarks that are locally-based.”

To ensure that aid funds are directly invested in the communities they are designed to serve, some NGOs have been calling for more “community based” development as a means to address the needs of the poor. In this model, local control of small-scale projects is highlighted. Along these lines, the London-based [International Institute for Environment and Development](#) (IIED) argues that aid should be channeled directly to people rather than governments. Aid moving from governments to governments concentrates power at the center, IIED notes, and provides fewer resources for successful activities—like small scale farming—at local levels.

Microcredit programs are another example of local people taking control of their own lives. Civil society groups have been at the forefront of these initiatives, which have proven particularly successful in generating income for the poor. Starting in the 1970s in Bangladesh, microcredit institutions offer loans and other financial services to the very poor—allowing them to engage in self-employment projects that generate income to support themselves and their families.



*Two microcredit clients of ACCION partner BancoSol in Bolivia.*

© ACCION Int'l.  
Rohanna Mertens

U.N. agencies estimate that, worldwide, there are now some 13 million microcredit borrowers. Although some criticize the debt dimensions of these programs, repayment rates for these projects are generally over 95 percent and the majority of borrowers are women. (See the “[Viewpoints](#)” article by [ACCION International](#) in this e-zine for more information on microfinance.)

Long-term solutions that emphasize community participation are the cornerstone of the work of some NGOs. [Heifer Project International](#), for example, donates livestock to local communities based on the given community’s consultation about what is needed. Initial training is offered in animal management and, to make the project self-sustaining, those receiving animals “pass the gift” to others. Some faith-based NGOs, like the [Christian Reformed World Relief Committee](#) and the [Friends Society in Social Service](#), assert that involving communities in lasting socio-economic development is far more fundamental than short-term contributions that may, in fact, support the cycle of poverty. Regardless of the specific approach, many NGOs have led the trend to ensure that local stakeholders are more fully consulted and included in the design of their own futures.

Soumana Sako, the Executive Director of the [African Capacity Building Foundation](#) notes, “If there is no local ownership, it has been shown that development projects won’t succeed. People have to feel that it is their program, designed with their priorities in mind and based on their own leadership.” He adds that, with this approach, poverty reduction is likely to be more successful.

Participatory processes have also been more widely adopted by the world’s largest lenders, like the World Bank and its subsidiaries. These institutions have begun to collaborate more closely with national governments in developing

plans to address poverty. At the end of the day though, whether aid will really be channeled to improved systems at local levels—and facilitate poverty reduction as a result—remains an open question.

See other stories in this issue on “[Global Poverty](#)” and “[Citizen Voices](#).”



© Heifer International/Dan Gudahl

*A woman gives a goat to a neighbor in Heifer International’s signature “passing on the gift” ceremony.*

To add your own comments and thoughts on these topics, go to the “[Speak Up!](#)” page on our web site.

### *Related Links and Article Sources*

The official U.N. site for the Millennium Development Goals can be found at:  
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

A statement from Transparency International looks at specific ways that donor and recipient countries can combat corruption where foreign aid is concerned:  
[http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases\\_archive/2005/2005.07.06.g8\\_summit.html](http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2005/2005.07.06.g8_summit.html)

To download the Millennium Project's report called *Investing in Development*, see:  
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/index.htm>

More information about the Action Aid report noted above can be found at:  
<http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/114368/1/>

For a U.N. report on "tied aid" released on July 7, see: [http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447\\_1554163.00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_1554163.00.html)

Some 35 NGOs released a report in 2002 called "The Reality of Aid." Among other points, this report examines some of the problems with the conditions attached to foreign assistance.  
<http://www.devinit.org/realityofaid/kpolchap.htm>

A helpful policy brief from the OECD on untying aid to the least developed countries is at:  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/24/2002959.pdf>

Summaries on the harmonization of aid from the Millennium Campaign's web site are available from:  
<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=297548>

Some of the information in this article came from a comprehensive new report from the Development Gateway called "Aid Harmonization: What Will It Take to Meet the MDGs?"

<http://topics.developmentgateway.org/special/aidharmonization>

The International Institute for Environment and Development commented on development aid to Africa in advance of the July G8 summit.  
<http://www.iied.org/aboutiied/press.html#g8>

For a whole range of facts on microfinance from the U.N. Capital Development Fund, see:  
<http://www.unCDF.org/english/microfinance/facts.php>. An example of microfinance projects from around the world can also be found at this same site at: <http://www.unCDF.org/english/microfinance/>

A good summary of the pros and cons of microfinance can be found at:  
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/ifipa/bbcid/prog11v3.htm>

Some information in this article came from the editor's prior work on a magazine titled "The IMF and the World Bank: Funding a better future?" produced by *Understanding Global Issues* at:  
[www.global-issues.co.uk](http://www.global-issues.co.uk)

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### *Ending Poverty Takes Center Stage*

*“We spend 900 billion dollars a year on arms, do you think that this small planet could afford 50 billion dollars a year to end poverty and stop hunger? So I think we all, in each country, have to be responsible for our politicians, and make them act.”*

*Michael Douglas, Actor*

Many anti-poverty campaigners have made 2005 a pivotal year in their decades-long struggle to help the world’s poorest join in the global prosperity of the modern era. This year, 2005, marks five years since world leaders agreed to a set of time-bound, measurable goals to reduce poverty. Only ten years remain to show results on those promises and a major U.N. conference is set for September to assess progress. To date, the U.K. has already made these Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) the centerpiece of its presidencies of the G8 and the European Union, two of the most powerful political bodies in the world.

While these issues have made it onto the agenda of the world’s economic powers, it remains an open question whether these leaders will take meaningful action to address them. Campaigners see their responsibility as holding these leaders to account for the promises they had made. They are calling for these leaders to make real changes in the way they do business—both nationally and globally—to finally begin to “make poverty history.”

### **Massive Coalitions Are Formed**

One important characteristic that has set the MDGs apart from previous anti-poverty efforts has been the coordinated global effort to address them, both at political and grassroots levels. After its official launch in January 2005, a campaign called the [“Global Call to Action against Poverty”](#) (G-CAP) has since attracted the commitment of over 900 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all over the world. While the members of

this movement represent a vast array of specific interests and carry diverse agendas, they have been united in their call to end poverty by conveying three key messages: make trade fair, cancel the debt owed by poorer countries, and improve both the quantity and quality of aid provided by wealthier countries.



© Millennium Campaign

*A “Make Poverty History” March in Edinburgh, Scotland*

Bringing together individuals, charities, and campaigning organizations from around the world, G-CAP became the umbrella organization for several more regionally focused campaigns. These include the founding “Make Poverty History” campaign in the U.K., Canada, Australia, and other countries; the [“ONE Campaign”](#) in the U.S.; “2005: No Excuses” in France; and “Don’t Let it Be: World Poverty” in Japan. Among other common elements, these campaigns have encouraged millions of people worldwide to wear white wrist bands to show their support for the fight against poverty. A global White Band Day was organized for July 1 and a second effort is planned for September 10. Innumerable celebrities—from Brad Pitt to Cameron Diaz—have also lent their support to the initiative in the U.S. and throughout the world.

In the U.K., the [“Make Poverty History Campaign,”](#) originally spearheaded by Oxfam in 2003, focused on making 2005 the year to ask politicians and leaders what they were going to do



to overcome poverty. Many of the campaigns center on advocacy work, which is meant to show political leaders the breadth of citizen support for combating poverty. (See the action pages in this e-zine for more ways to become involved.)

## Assessing the Impact

Organizers of G-CAP point out that the coalition has not only united much of the Western world around a single rallying cry, but has also educated millions about aid, trade, and international policy. They also note that the ten [LIVE 8](#) concerts that took place in July 2005, which were based on a theme of ending poverty, took these messages to an unprecedented global audience of 3 billion people. Attracting headlines all over the world, the LIVE 8 concerts were one of the biggest ever mass mobilizations against poverty.

Veteran South African civil society leader Kumi Naidoo, chair of G-CAP, has credited important policy changes to citizen pressure: “The progress that was made [at the G8] in terms of aid and debt cancellation, even though it fell far short of the expectations of most of the world’s citizens who were observing these events closely, would probably not have been achieved had it not been



*Live 8 Concert in Canada  
© Millennium Campaign*

for years of civil society mobilization around these issues,” he said. (Although critics are skeptical about promises of “new money” that will be committed, the G8 meeting in Scotland in early July 2005 promised an additional \$50 billion in aid to developing

countries by 2010, as well as debt cancellation for 18 of the poorest countries.)

While these global campaigns have served a valuable educational role—and mobilized a diverse array of citizens to get involved in combating poverty—there have also been criticisms about both their legitimacy and their long-term value. Some assert, for example, that celebrity endorsements have out-staged the campaign’s message, or, more cynically, that the LIVE 8 concerts were primarily a corporate media event that used poverty as a marketing tool. Others have complained that the campaigns overall are largely run by northern NGOs with not enough input from the global south. Finally, some southern groups are against lobbying the G8, which they feel gives legitimacy to a governing institution not seen to represent the views of most of the planet’s inhabitants.

## Generating National Pressure

A separate, but related initiative to the citizen’s campaigns noted above is the [U.N.’s Millennium Campaign](#). It was launched in October 2002 to encourage citizens around the world to hold governments to account for the promises they made at the September 2000 Millennium Summit. To achieve this goal, the Campaign supports advocates working at the local and national level—including policymakers, NGOs, trade unions, youth activists, and faith-based groups.

The Campaign is different from previous efforts in one fundamental way. It has not created any new organizations, but rather links those already campaigning on health care, education, the environment, peace, trade, aid, and HIV/AIDS under one umbrella. As a largely self-organizing operation, civil society leaders in each country set their own campaigning priorities based on local needs and political realities. In the Philippines, for example, groups are monitoring government

© Action Against Hunger



*Action Against Hunger completes a nutritional survey in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

budgets to ensure they are in line with MDG commitments, while the campaign in El Salvador is focused on ensuring that local authorities deliver services that meet the education, water, and health care needs of the poor. As of July 2005, the Millennium Campaign is helping to coordinate the work of civil society-led campaigns in 49 countries around the world.

From September 14-16, the focus of the Millennium Campaign—and that of civil society groups worldwide—will turn to New York and the U.N.'s Millennium +5 Summit. At this important General Assembly forum, the world's political leaders will convene to assess progress and setbacks related to the MDGs. A historic meeting at the U.N. in June—the first ever of its kind—solicited the input of civil society groups on the upcoming Summit. Their direct participation in September will be much more limited, but the massive citizen mobilizations that have developed around the theme of “making poverty history” will undoubtedly ensure that world leaders hear the voices and perspectives of those most directly affected by extreme poverty.

*To make a difference in the fight against poverty, see “[Get Involved!](#)” in this issue.*

### *Related Links and Article Sources*

The site of the Global Call to Action against Poverty can be found at: [www.whiteband.org](http://www.whiteband.org)

The site for the Make Poverty History campaign is at: [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)

A summary of some of the activities for the 1 July Global White Band Day can be viewed at: <http://www.one.org/EventArchive.aspx>

Statements directly from the G8 Summit held in Scotland in July 2005 are available at: <http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995902703>

For more information on Live8 concerts held around the world, see: [www.live8live.com](http://www.live8live.com)

A comprehensive summary of the Live8 concerts—complete with images, interviews, and blogs—is available through the BBC at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/thelive8event/>

Some criticisms of the Live8 concerts are summarized at: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=vi&ewArticle&code=CHO20050705&articleId=641>

For a summary of some of the criticisms over the global campaigns overall, see an article by Stuart Hodgkinson called “Make the G8 History,” published by Red Pepper, July 2005. <http://us.oneworld.net/external/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.redpepper.org.uk%2Fglobal%2Ffx-jul05-hodkinson.htm>

The main web site for the Millennium Campaign is at: <http://www.millenniumcampaign.org>

For a full report of the hearings held between the U.N. General Assembly and NGOs in June 2005, see: <http://www.un-ngls.org/GA-hearings.htm>

### Other Research Links on Poverty

#### Official Resources

For the full text of the Millennium Declaration, see:

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

Click on 'Poverty' from the thematic table offered at the World Bank's web site to get background data and information on measuring poverty.

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/thematic-alpha.htm#p>

For a report on the World Bank's approach to reducing poverty, see:

[http://www.worldbank.org/oed/arde/2004/main\\_report.html?goog=4018](http://www.worldbank.org/oed/arde/2004/main_report.html?goog=4018)

For a "white paper" from the U.S. Agency for International Development on U.S. foreign aid (prepared in January 2004) see: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/pdabz3221.pdf>

The International Poverty Centre of the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) is specially structured to assist countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. <http://www.undp-povertycentre.org/>

For the Millennium Campaign's response to the G8 communiqué, see:

[http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=219263&content\\_id={D8FF0E41-3E54-4A8F-9AF1-E5A7FFBFBECE}&notoc=1](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=219263&content_id={D8FF0E41-3E54-4A8F-9AF1-E5A7FFBFBECE}&notoc=1)

Click [here](#) to subscribe to *OneWorld Perspectives*; it's free!

#### Misc. Media Links

An article from the *Christian Science Monitor* called "How can the West help Africa? A global Q&A" offers insightful views about African and Western perceptions.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0701/p01s01-woaf.htm>

Wonder what it's like to live on \$1/day, check out this article from the *Christian Science Monitor*:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0706/p01s05-woaf.html>



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In a March 2005 article in *Time Magazine*, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the U.N. Millennium Project, offers solutions for bringing 1 billion people out of poverty.

<http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1034738,00.html>

An op-ed from the Center for Global Development published in the *Financial Times* looks at how countries can break free from the cycle of debt.

<http://www.cgdev.org/content/opinion/detail/3040/>

For a good summary of the history of poverty, including the links between colonialism and poverty, see an entry from *Encarta's Encyclopedia* at: [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia/761577020\\_\\_\\_\\_0/Poverty.html#bottom](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia/761577020____0/Poverty.html#bottom)

## Civil Society Sources

For an interesting perspective on how the world talks about poverty, see an editorial from OneWorld's U.K. partner, id21, at:

<http://www.id21.org/viewpoints/LaurenceJuly05.html>

For success stories of local projects by NGOs around the world, with a section on innovative ideas to reduce hunger, check out InterAction's site at:

<http://www.interaction.org/campaign/success%20stories/index.html>

A helpful listing of key dates, events, and documents associated with civil society activities and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is available at:

<http://www.ngocongo.org/mdg.htm#millplus5>

A "Civil Society Call to Action" on the MDGs released in June 2005 is located at:

<http://www.ngocongo.org/ngomeet/millplusfive/M+5report/index.htm>

A "We the People's" survey on the U.N. Millennium Declaration compiled by the World Federation of United Nations Associations and the North-South Institute can be viewed at:

<http://www.wfuna.org/>

For some background information and fact sheets on poverty, check out the site for OneWorld's partner NetAid at:

[http://www.netaid.org/global\\_poverty/global-poverty/](http://www.netaid.org/global_poverty/global-poverty/)

The Worldwatch Institute will release a Web feature in September outlining how achieving progress towards the MDGs can help to address the root causes of global instability.

<http://www.worldwatch.org/features/security/>

### Stay Informed and Get Involved!

With the stories and perspectives you're not getting anywhere else, OneWorld completes your news cycle. **OneWorld Daily Headlines** brings you the most engaging and relevant articles on the environment, development, human rights, U.S. foreign policy, globalization, and more—direct from over 1,600 non-profit and media organizations across the globe.

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<http://us.oneworld.net/section/us/subscribe>

## Selected Stories on OneWorld

Will the Millennium Summit in September focus on everything except poverty? Check IPS news at:

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=29754>

For a U.N. News Center summary of a 2005 report on the Millennium Development Goals, see:

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/114082/1/>

Before the G8 Summit in Scotland, mass actions across the globe urged world leaders to "make poverty history." <http://us.oneworld.net/article/view/114543/1/>

For an inspiring story about how students in Argentina are doing their own small part to combat poverty, see:

[http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=175513&content\\_id={1D7085C1-FEAC-4FF2-A509-8015FCF7D1D1}&notoc=1](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=175513&content_id={1D7085C1-FEAC-4FF2-A509-8015FCF7D1D1}&notoc=1)

See OneWorld's full coverage of the **Millennium Development Goals** at: <http://www.oneworld.net/article/archive/7356/> or of **Poverty** at:

<http://www.oneworld.net/article/archive/23/>



*By Alex Hill*



It all started on a Sunday in July 2000. I was at mass in the church I had attended all my life, Holy Family Catholic Church, when an announcement was made that a visiting priest from Uganda would be living in our parish for the summer. He would be offering African drum lessons to anyone who

wanted to learn. Since I drummed on everything—including the dinner table, my desk, and the church pew—my mother gave me a knowing look. After Mass, I introduced myself to Father Joseph Birungi and became his first student.

Fr. Joseph spoke with an accent native to Uganda and didn't always understand my words. But we both understood a smile. We met several times over the summer and he taught me how to drum. But, Fr. Joseph taught me more than drumming. We talked about his home and his people and their great need for basic medical care. He told me of the many deaths of his people due to simple, preventable diseases and of his dream to construct a health center in a remote area of his country. From those lessons, I was inspired to help the people of Fr. Joseph's community—somehow. I asked him what I could do to help.

Of course, Fr. Joseph was pleased by my excitement and thoughtfulness, but he also knew I was only a 13-year-old boy. As he told me later, he didn't expect that I would be able to accomplish much. Nonetheless, he decided to dream big. Fr. Joseph said the new health center would need an ambulance and asked if I could try to get one for him. At first, I thought it would be impossible, but eventually I convinced myself that I could do it. The Toyota dealership in Uganda's capital city of Kampala gave him an ordering price of \$50,000!

I knew that to raise that much money I would need a really great idea. I decided to make life-size foamboard cut-outs of Fr. Joe and ask people in my community to "host" him for a day at their home, business, classroom, meeting, or special event. He would come with a "suitcase" containing information about Uganda and the need for the ambulance, a video message from Fr. Joe, a camera to record a picture of the hosts with Fr. Joe for my scrapbook, and a yard sign to show their participation in my project—and, hopefully, inspire others to participate too. I asked each host for a donation to the ambulance fund and a small medical supply.

Many people helped me prepare the supplies and promote the project, although I initially had to overcome my fear of public speaking. I knew that the no one would know about the need of the Ugandan people if I couldn't tell them. I spoke to service clubs, school groups, and church congregations—anyone who would listen. Thousands of people responded. I collected 20 boxes of medical supplies and raised over \$67,000 in less than four months.

I actually traveled to Uganda and went with Fr. Joe to sign the order for the ambulance. During my one month stay I met and lived with the people who would benefit from my project. My trip to Uganda left an indelible mark on me and it is an experience I will never forget.

All the people I met were so friendly and, even in their poverty, they wanted to share what little they had. I have seen that people all over the world share the same needs and wants. We are more alike than we are different. Everyone needs food, shelter, clean water, and necessary health care. We all want to know happiness, health, and love. Parents everywhere want the best for their children and children want to learn and grow. But not everyone gets the same chance for success.

My project helped to provide quality healthcare and emergency transportation to those who would otherwise have no place to go and no way to get there. It brought the world a little closer together as my community realized—and met—the needs of a community across the ocean.

Fr. Joseph's dream became reality when the health center opened its doors in April 2003. His health center treats anyone who comes, regardless of who they are or whether or not they can pay. Hundreds of people have been treated and the ambulance has provided emergency transportation to other facilities when necessary. The ambulance also transports nurses to villages far from the health center to teach disease prevention and provide immunizations. Since the ambulance goal was achieved, I continued to help by raising awareness and funds—largely at my high school—to help ship a 40-foot container of medical equipment from Michigan to Uganda.

I have been privileged to lead a project that has directly impacted many people living in Uganda. Additionally, the project itself greatly increased awareness in my community about the lack of healthcare and other basic needs in Africa. Although my original goal was accomplished, I realized that once I made a connection with the people of Uganda, I couldn't just walk away. I couldn't assume that my part was over and that someone else would pick up where I left off. I had seen their faces, held their hands, visited their homes, and eaten with them. I know that I saw the faces of people who are no longer there—so I continue to tell their story and ask for help.

I have realized that working to help those who are in need in the global community is the best way to show that I care. When I traveled to Africa, I came to understand the many differences in culture that separated the Ugandan community and my community. And even though we were

physically distanced, I saw how my project brought us together. I know that I need to continue to work to change the world for the better.

Through my project, I also learned a few important lessons about life. One, it is our deeds, not our words, that change and shape our communities and our world. Second, we must all believe that one person can make a difference. Everyone has the potential to make a difference, but who among us will choose to act on that potential—and what kind of difference will we choose to make? Third, we must first believe in ourselves before anyone will believe in us. And lastly, although one person can make a difference, one person cannot make a difference alone—we need one another to succeed. It takes a group of dedicated people to create change.

In December of 2004, I was honored to be recognized by [NetAid](#) for my efforts. NetAid gives young people the ideas and tools to create change. Through its various programs, NetAid brings together a community of youth and enables young people to realize their potential. Through this support, I was encouraged in my own efforts to promote global understanding. One individual can make a difference!

For ways that you can assist this project, see: <http://www.scoutbanana.catholicweb.com/>



*The health center in Uganda.*

© Alex Hill

### *The Millennium Campaign*

Although there are many crises facing the world today, the crisis of poverty and inequality is one of the most important. Unfortunately, we have become insensitive to its urgency. Some one-third of the planet's population lives in shocking deprivation. It is estimated that 30,000 people, mostly children, die every day from poverty. This is equivalent to a silent tsunami every six days. While per capita income declined in at least 54 countries in the 1990s—and put 100 million more people in extreme poverty--there was unprecedented economic progress in the rich world during this time. The 1000 richest people in the world are now said to have a personal wealth greater than the 600 million people living in the so-called “least developed countries.”

Shamed by the sheer magnitude of these statistics, world leaders committed themselves to the Millennium Declaration in September 2000—and rededicated themselves to freeing their fellow citizens from the indignity and suffering accompanying abject poverty. They gave themselves 15 years to meet a set of very minimal, but concrete targets called the Millennium Development Goals. Best estimates are that an additional \$50-100 billion could help achieve these Goals within the next decade. With some \$900 billion spent on arms every year, world leaders cannot assert that there are not enough financial resources to meet the basic needs of all.

But why should Americans care about global poverty? Firstly, it isn't a case of addressing domestic over global poverty, which is a false choice. We simply have to deal with both. And, the causal factors and attitudes that lead to exclusion and poverty are the same in rich and poor countries. Everyone on the planet has the right to food, shelter, education, respect, and the right to lead a life free from poverty. From the perspective of social justice alone, it's the ethical choice. Secondly, in survey after survey, the

public in rich countries has made it loud and clear that they want governments to do more. Thirdly, our security depends on combating poverty. Living in a world of new and evolving threats, nation states must combat poverty in order to combat terrorism, organised crime, and proliferation.

Finally, in 2005, we have a real chance to make a difference—to bring development back on the agenda vs. an obsession with the so-called “war on terror.” The U.N. meeting in September 2005, which will review progress on the Goals, is critical. Despite the rhetoric from governments, action is only likely when there is pressure from citizens holding governments accountable for their promises. The good news is that things are beginning to change. Many of the poorest countries in the world are already showing that, with political commitment, these Goals can be achieved. Malawi, Eritrea and The Gambia are making progress on primary education, as are Thailand, Uganda and Senegal with AIDS. We still have a long way to go, however, if we want the Goals to be achieved by 2015.

Mobilizing constituencies in the U.S. can make a big difference. The [ONE Campaign](#), for example, brings together major US and international NGOs to push for a real breakthrough on poverty and AIDS. Ultimately, we don't need another tsunami or a 9/11 to remind us of how closely the world is interlinked. We are the first generation that can actually end poverty, but we are running out of excuses.

Salil Shetty, Director  
[U.N. Millennium Campaign](#)



**MILLENNIUM CAMPAIGN**  
VOICES AGAINST POVERTY

### *Action Against Hunger*



Those of us who work in humanitarian aid know that poverty is not inevitable.

The international community is fully equipped to eradicate it. The world produces more than enough food to feed everyone and to keep them healthy.

Humanitarian organizations prove daily that they can eliminate poverty when communities are victimized suddenly by natural disasters, or when political upheavals drive populations to become refugees. At Action Against Hunger, for example, we shelter victims, feed them, give them access to clean water and sanitation, inoculate them against diseases, and provide them with seeds, tools, and training. As soon as displaced populations are supplied with such resources, they can again become economically productive.

Unfortunately, humanitarian assistance is less effective when communities live long-term with obstacles created by trade barriers, colonial history, tribal bias, or corrupt governments. Why are such obstacles problematic? Because, for example, high import duties overseas can make a worker's efforts unmarketable in foreign countries—or, alternatively, a foreign government's subsidies can keep the prices of its goods so low that foreign goods compete unfairly with goods produced in poor countries.

Further, due to the racism of a colonial past, or age-old tribal biases within a country, societies can relegate ethnic or religious minorities to an inferior status. And, a government can tax its workers' income at excessive rates, crippling workers' abilities to support themselves. Matters are made much worse when a government lavishes luxuries on its ministers rather than spending money on the infrastructure needed to improve its citizens' lives.

Where such poverty-making policies are entrenched, aid workers can only mitigate the effects. We sometimes find ourselves working on assistance programs for years in countries where the original emergency has passed, or has become a chronic emergency. When aid agencies are forced to prolong their efforts, we keep people alive but communities can become aid dependent.

In sum, poverty thrives when government policies exacerbate economic insecurity. At Action Against Hunger, we often observe correctable social and political barriers that cause poverty. We report these to donor governments, to enforcement agencies, and to human rights organizations. In many cases, our reporting has resulted in changes that have improved conditions. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Burundi, for example, we were able to convince the government to incorporate responsible nutrition practices in their countries' medical policies.

More broadly, humanitarian organizations can play an important role in drawing attention to governments that are oppressing their citizens. NGOs can persuade their own governments to bring moral and economic pressure on oppressive governments until they make essential reforms. All countries, regardless of their state of development or political leaning, have essential responsibilities to their citizens.

Working together in coalitions, such as the [ONE Campaign](#) in the U.S., we need to reach individuals everywhere who will feel inspired to learn more about the problems of their neighbors in countries not as fortunate as ours. As one of 37 humanitarian organizations in this coalition, we can amplify the message to governments around the world that it is time to “make poverty history.”

Cathy Skoula, Executive Director  
[Action Against Hunger—USA](#)



### *The Women's Edge Coalition*

If the aim of international assistance, economic development, and trade is to reduce poverty, women must be at the center of these deliberations. Why? Because women constitute seventy percent of the world's poorest people who live on \$1 a day, or less. But women are not at the center of discussions about economic issues, especially as decision makers. While the importance of women's education and health, or of programs to combat gender-based violence is now widely acknowledged, less attention is paid to the economic disempowerment of women which is the basis for these problems.

Women form the majority of the world's agricultural labor, but often do not own the land they farm. They have little access to credit: in Africa, where 80 percent of farmers are women, less than 10 percent of credit meant for small farmers reaches women. Such discrimination, and the work of caring for their families, means that women earn 20 to 50 percent less than men worldwide.

Research and experience have shown, however, that investing in poor women brings enormous pay-offs for families, communities, and nations. When women have an extra dollar a day, they send their children to school, put food on the table, and help break the cycle of poverty. More disposable income for the mother reaps many benefits for the next generation.

When Pact, a Women's Edge Coalition member organization, found that the first priority for poor Nepali women was to increase their income, they started [WORTH](#), a novel microfinance program that did not lend the women any seed money. Rather, the women themselves saved money weekly to form a group savings account. Pact taught them how to lend money to each other and run a business. In just two and a half years, the women have more than doubled

their savings and their annual business income has increased eightfold. Best of all, more than three-quarters of them reported increased decision-making authority in family planning, marriage of children, buying and selling property, and education of girls. This is why the Women's Edge Coalition has advocated to ensure that smart and targeted investments in women are a foreign policy priority in all major recent United States international assistance initiatives—rebuilding Afghanistan, creating the Millennium Challenge Account, and reconstructing communities after the 2004 tsunami.

But poor women in developing nations also need to enjoy the benefits of global trade. Women's Edge has designed a tool called the Trade Impact Review (TIR), which, similar to environmental impact assessments, can be used to forecast the effects of free trade on the poor. These must take place before agreements are signed—enabling better policies to be designed before billions of dollars and millions of lives are wasted. For the first time in 2004, the U.S. Agency for International Development adopted similar methods to analyze trade's impact on the poor in seven countries. Such impact reviews should become a standard part of all trade agreements.

Development assistance, trade, investment, economic growth, technology, and innovation all have the potential to reduce poverty, but only if we make sure they reach the poorest citizens. It doesn't happen on its own. Because most of the poor are women, it is crucial that they are at the table from the beginning.

Ritu Sharma, Co-Founder and President  
[Women's Edge Coalition](#)



### *ACCION International*

Anna is a single mother from Mango, Tanzania. Besides having to provide for an 11-year-old daughter, Anna also takes care of elderly parents. On one income, that's quite a challenge—especially because there are no jobs to be had in Anna's tiny village. Like most of the world's three billion poor living on less than \$2 a day, Anna has to create her own source of income. She dreams of opening a tiny shop that sells dried goods. But she needs capital to realize this dream and the loan she needs is too small for a traditional bank to make. Hence, Anna turns to a microloan. A loan as small as \$20 allows her to buy stock for her shop in bulk and make the profit she needs to increase product selection. Soon, she is able to buy more products and attract more customers. With her earnings, Anna can finally pay school fees for her daughter and care for her parents.

There are millions of people like Anna who, if given the right financial tools—business training, tiny loans and savings accounts—are able to work themselves and their families out of poverty. Microfinance is a unique solution to poverty that taps into the entrepreneurial spirit and will to succeed that exists for all people, regardless of their financial means. And, the interest paid on each loan helps pay for other clients' future loans. Due to the success of these programs, ACCION and its colleagues have committed to vastly increasing the number and size of microfinance institutions. We are on track to more than double the number of clients served by our network and partners by the end of 2008, or to reach 3 million active clients annually.

The poor were considered “unbankable” for many years. Many thought that because the poor had little money, they would not be able to use it responsibly. The opposite proved true. In fact, not only do microfinance institutions have an average repayment rate of 97%, they can make a profit while lending to the poor. Although some

have criticized microfinance for “profiting from the poor,” it is important to remember that these financial services are structured to help the poor succeed—as opposed to loans offered by loan sharks or those who are not structuring their products for the long term financial success of these individuals.



And the profit dimension works. Because of it, established commercial banks are turning their attention to microfinance and bringing more financial services to more working poor around the world. The greatest obstacle to the widespread adoption of microfinance is that there are simply not enough high-quality institutions able to serve the demand worldwide. In some countries, the regulatory environments are also not supportive. These are all problems we are working to fix, country by country.

But, is microfinance making poverty history? According to the United Nations Capital Development Fund, it is in fact helping very poor households meet basic needs and improve economic welfare. By supporting women's participation in particular, it is also empowering women and promoting gender equity. In sum, microfinance benefits clients by providing them with the means to increase incomes, accumulate some assets, and work their way out of poverty. Rather than being a donor-based handout, microfinance is a sustainable and profitable poverty solution.

Roy Jacobowitz, Senior Vice President  
Development & Communications  
[ACCION International](#)

## What Can You Do?

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*Get involved with the following global or political campaigns to “make poverty history.”*

Everybody can take action on poverty in 2005 by wearing a white band on the global white band action days. Upcoming dates are on September 10 and December 10. To find out more about this movement and events in your own vicinity, see:

[http://www.whiteband.org/Lib/take\\_action/take\\_action/gcap\\_issues/en](http://www.whiteband.org/Lib/take_action/take_action/gcap_issues/en)

The ONE campaign is a new effort by Americans to rally Americans—ONE by ONE—to fight the emergency of global AIDS and extreme poverty. The campaign holds that allocating an additional ONE percent of the U.S. budget toward providing basic needs would transform an entire generation of the poorest countries. See how you can join their efforts at: <http://www.one.org/>

The Millennium Campaign and Civicus have launched a comprehensive and easy-to-use Campaign toolkit. Designed to hold elected leaders to account for the promises they made in the Millennium Declaration, the toolkit includes tips on working with the media, planning events, and raising awareness about poverty. <http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=403123>

Short on ideas to “make poverty history”? Then check out the Millennium Campaign’s “Action Center,” which offers about a dozen suggestions for ways to get involved.

<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=393321>

InterAction’s web site has an MDG page, which offers links to several major campaigns. A “Get Involved!” link allows you to send a message to your elected representatives on fighting poverty. Check it out at: <http://www.interaction.org/mdg/>

Only have 5 minutes to spare? NetAid’s site suggests a number of easy ways that you can have a say in policies to help people rise above poverty. [http://www.netaid.org/act\\_now/](http://www.netaid.org/act_now/)

*Here are some other “action ideas” from OneWorld partners:*

Find out how you, your school, your community group, and your colleagues can get involved with Action Against Hunger by, among others, joining an AAH chapter or participating in student projects. <http://aah-usa.org/involved/involved.html>

To take a quiz on how much you know about global poverty, or to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by globalization, check out an initiative of NetAid and the Public Radio Exchange at: <http://www.netaid.org/public-radio/>

If you want to fight poverty directly, get some advice on becoming a volunteer—locally, globally, or on-line at: <http://apps.netaid.org/volunteer/abroad/>



© Millennium Campaign

*A White Band Day program in Greece*



© Save the Children Alliance

Check out the “Get Involved” section of ACCION International’s web site to see how you can help micro entrepreneurs around the world set up their own tiny businesses: <http://www.accion.org/>

Women’s Edge is sponsoring an “Invest in Women” drive, which includes simple ways to create greater economic self-sufficiency for women. Supporting a small-grants fund for women is the centerpiece of this effort. Find out how you can get involved in this initiative at: <http://www.womensedge.org/index.jsp>

Ashoka’s Full Economic Citizenship initiative and Changemakers are launching a global search for innovative market-based strategies that improve the lives of low-income individuals around the world. Two winners will receive an award and \$5,000. Entries must be received by September 22, 2005; see the following site for more details: <http://www.changemakers.net>

Want to support a local project directly? The site for Global Giving enables individuals and companies to find and support high-impact, grassroots social and economic development projects around the world. <http://www.globalgiving.com/>

Grassroots International, promotes global justice through partnerships with social change organizations. Donations go directly to supporting community-based solutions and local initiatives. Their main site is at: <http://www.grassrootsonline.org/>

For just over \$200, you can buy 50 chickens! Madre, a OneWorld partner committed to defending human rights for women and families, shows you how small donations can go a long way to helping local communities fight poverty.

<http://www.madre.org/programs/hra/mdgcampaign.html>

Heifer Project International provides animals to families to lift them out of poverty and be more self-reliant. If you’d like to get involved in some exciting volunteer opportunities, or study tours, get more information from:

[http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201471/k.9BCF/Get\\_Involved.htm](http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201471/k.9BCF/Get_Involved.htm)



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## *What Do You Think?*

*Your feedback is welcome and encouraged through the “[Speak Up!](#)” page on the OneWorld web site, where you can post your thoughts on the issue and see what other OneWorld readers have to say. If you are commenting on a particular article, please mention that in your post.*

### **Points to Ponder**

Do you think having benchmarks for reducing poverty will help to alleviate it? What will happen if countries don't meet these goals?

Is there enough serious discussion about income inequality and its role in exacerbating poverty?

To what degree do you think limited aid, unfair trading practices, and/or debt burdens keep countries locked in cycles of poverty?

Besides the above, what are other root causes of poverty that may not have received attention?

How effective do you think overseas development assistance is, or can be? What are the best ways to ensure that local communities will benefit from it?

How can the energy from the global campaigns against poverty be harnessed to benefit the world's poor?

Many world leaders talk about the links between poverty and global security, but do you think they have acted on it?

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*OneWorld U.S. thanks you for your time, interest, and commitment!*