
Preface

The UN Millennium Project has been a unique undertaking. Its 10 task forces, Secretariat, and broad array of participants from academia, government, UN agencies, international financial institutions, nongovernmental organizations, donor agencies, and the private sector created a worldwide network of development practitioners and experts across an enormous range of countries, disciplines, and organizations. The Project was made possible by the unique commitment, skills, and convictions of the task force coordinators, who led their groups to take on some of the most challenging development questions of our generation, and by the task force members, who gave remarkably of their time. This has been a global effort, in the service of a great global cause—the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Our Project has been a microcosm of a larger truth: achieving the Millennium Development Goals will require a global partnership suitable for an interconnected world. The world truly shares a common fate.

This has been a labor of love for the many participants in the task forces and Secretariat. Individuals have volunteered vast amounts of effort and expertise to the Project. Their contributions, far beyond any reasonable expectation, have immeasurably sharpened and strengthened the messages contained in the Project's many outputs, including this report, the task force final reports, the newly developed tools for needs assessment, and the advisory support for MDG-based planning in several countries.

I believe that all of the participants have contributed in such a manner because they recognize the special nature of this effort. Part of that is the honor and privilege of working on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who launched the UN Millennium Project and who has played an unparalleled role in promoting the global fight against extreme poverty. Part is the delight of working for and together with UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown,

whose tenacity, vision, and leadership have guided the UN Development Group's efforts for several years. We have also enjoyed, admired, and richly benefited from the leaders of other UN agencies, who direct teams that save lives and ease burdens of poverty and despair throughout the world on a daily basis.

Another special aspect of the Project is the rare and powerful opportunity to help give voice to the hopes, aspirations, and vital needs of the world's poorest and most voiceless people. We have met countless heroes and heroines of development in the three years of our work—in the villages and slums of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the developing world. We have seen people preserving their spirit, integrity, commitment, and hope for the future even when they have little else, when tragic circumstances have left them bereft of health, education, possessions, and a means of livelihood. The human spirit, we have seen on innumerable occasions, is truly indomitable.

This triumph of the human spirit gives us the hope and confidence that extreme poverty can be cut by half by the year 2015, and indeed ended altogether within the coming years. The world community has at its disposal the proven technologies, policies, financial resources, and most importantly, the human courage and compassion to make it happen.

Jeffrey D. Sachs
January 2005