

# **We the Peoples: 2003**

A Call to Action for the UN Millennium Declaration

Report of the World Federation of United Nations Associations



**World Federation of United Nations Associations**

A peoples' movement in support of the United Nations

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*“The relationship between the United Nations and civil society has changed beyond recognition... Information technology has empowered civil society to be the true guardians of democracy and good governance everywhere. Oppressors cannot hide inside their borders any longer. A strong civil society, bound together across all borders with the help of modern communications, will not let them. In a sense it has been the new superpower—the people determined to promote better standards of life in larger freedom.”*

*Kofi Annan*

*UN Secretary-General*

## Forward

The aim of this report is to portray the engagement of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations, in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at all levels—local, national, regional and global—through to the target year for their achievement: 2015.

An equally important aim is to impress upon the United Nations, governments and the private sector the contribution that civil society organizations are already making (with the potential to offer more) to the critical debates about the policy frameworks and governance structures that need to change if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

This report offers practical recommendations for action, many proposed by civil society organizations, which are intended to help maintain the momentum for alleviating and reducing poverty throughout the world.



Ambassador Donald Blinken  
Secretary-General  
World Federation of United Nations Associations

## We the peoples 2003: the online survey

The 2003 report is based on the responses of more than 330 groups in 82 countries (compared to 240 in 75 countries in 2002). They took part in an e-survey distributed around the world in three languages. English respondents formed 71% of the total, Spanish 18% and French 11%. The proportion of Spanish holds constant from 2002, the proportion of French is down by 4% and English up by 4%.

We are grateful to each group which responded to the 2003 survey. We are pleased that the number of participating organizations has grown more than one-third. We recognize this is only a tiny portion of those who could potentially take part.

Not everyone answered every question and many groups added comments and recommendations. The findings provide us with snapshots of progress. The results are *indicative*, they may be very *suggestive*, but they are *not conclusive*.

The survey questionnaire can be found at [www.wfuna.org/MDGSurvey2003](http://www.wfuna.org/MDGSurvey2003).

## Executive Summary

The 2003 report is a sketch of civil society organizations in action, engaging with the United Nations Millennium Declaration and its Goals for development. It is based on a survey of more than 300 organizations in over 80 countries and a number of other civil society events and sources.

Responses came predominantly from small to medium-sized organizations with relatively few staff and volunteers but large memberships. Most organizations are either global or national in the scope of their activities.

Three quarters of respondents have heard of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and 80% endorse their usefulness for civil society. Of respondents who had heard of the goals, over 90 % are working on projects directly related to achieving one or more of the Goals.

Over half of the respondents felt that the MDGs do not go far enough. There is a strongly held view that the issue of gender should not be confined to one Goal, but be integral to the achievement of all the goals.

A special question on the relationship between peace and security and successful MDG implementation was included in this year's survey. When asked how the lack of peace and security impact on implementation, close to half of respondents answered "very severely".

On many questions respondents were asked for further comment, leading to a diverse collection of insights, examples of successful projects and suggestions for improving implementation. Some highlights from these responses include:

- A strong belief that government should honor the *commitments* they make at the United Nations
- The profound sense of the importance of *peace* for development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- A growing, if at times critical, *engagement* with the Goals, on the part of civil society organizations, in their priorities, their advocacy and their action for development.
- A widespread sense that the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved unless there is a *significant change in government and multilateral priorities* in the North and in many parts of the South. New resources are essential.
- A concern that the goals do not adequately address the *underlying structural causes* that serve to perpetuate poverty.
- The need to take gender into account in all the goals.
- The concern that the enormous growth of older people as a percentage of the population worldwide is not adequately addressed.

- There is a perception that Goal 8, in which rich countries are encouraged to participate meaningfully in a *global partnership for development*, is critical to achieving all of the other goals.
- A sense among civil society organizations and national coalitions that the *Goals must be adapted*, made more precise or taken much further according to the circumstances and needs of their nation, region or sector.
- Preoccupation with the *future of multilateralism* and internationalism, following war and other ruptures.
- A renewed commitment among many to the ideals of the United Nations as well as to reform of the way in which international organizations currently work.

As civil society engages with implementation, suggestions are many regarding how the effort can be enhanced.

- Setting more specific national and international interim targets and time-lines that bring implementation down to earth, looking forward to the review of progress in 2005 and through to 2015.
- Translating the global goals into nationally appropriate goals, and in some cases adding new objectives, MDG+ campaigns.
- Identifying policy changes and social investments which are pre-requisites for the achievement of broader goals.
- Confronting structural and policy obstacles that inhibit or prevent governments from adopting policies appropriate to the needs of their people and their countries.

We conclude that, through the process of civil society's critical engagement and debate, the Millennium Development Goals are immeasurably strengthened, and the barriers to successful implementation, though daunting, move that much closer to being overcome.

This report is one step in what we hope will be a continuing dialogue and review of progress, through our web-site, newsletter, 'UN Connections', MDG campaign listserv, gatherings and exchanges among civil society organizations and active citizens worldwide.

## Introduction

### **“We the peoples... A Call to Action for the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals”**

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) is the original peoples' movement in support of the United Nations. With member associations in over 100 countries around the world, it comprises a global network with far-reaching connections to people in all walks of life. Since the proclamation of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 by governments at the highest political level, WFUNA has regarded its implementation as core business of the United Nations system and has been actively mobilizing civil society to engage in partnerships for this purpose.

In collaboration with the North-South Institute, WFUNA conducts an annual survey of civil society organizations, including its UNA members, to assess their knowledge and level of engagement with the implementation of this Declaration and submits a report to the UN Secretary-General in September, in time for the annual DPI/NGO Conference and the opening of the General Assembly.

United Nations Associations from the following countries participated: Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Finland, Ghana, India, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Sweden, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Tanzania, United States.

The first report was submitted in September 2002 and can be found at [www.wfuna.org](http://www.wfuna.org). It concluded that:

*“The implementation of the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals provides fertile ground for deeper ongoing collaboration between the United Nations and civil society organizations. More than half the respondents have initiated projects. Much more can and will be done. Many more people need to be informed about the objectives of the Declaration, and many attitudes towards collaboration and policy reform must change.”*

While the Millennium Declaration inspires and informs our work, this year's survey and report focus on the Millennium Development Goals. Respondents, however, have emphasized the vital importance of the UN's role in promoting peace and conflict prevention, insisting that this go hand in hand with efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

## What are the Millennium Development Goals?

From the UNDP Website:

The Millennium Development Goals are an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives that world leaders agreed on at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. For each goal one or more targets have been set, most for 2015, using 1990 as a benchmark:

### 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

*Target for 2015: Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger.*

More than a billion people still live on less than US\$1 a day: sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and parts of Europe and Central Asia are falling short of the poverty target.

### 2. Achieve universal primary education

*Target for 2015: Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.*

As many as 113 million children do not attend school, but the target is within reach. India, for example, should have 95 percent of its children in school by 2005.

### 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

*Targets for 2005 and 2015: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.*

Two-thirds of illiterates are women, and the rate of employment among women is two-thirds that of men. The proportion of seats in parliaments held by women is increasing, reaching about one third in Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa.

### 4. Reduce child mortality

*Target for 2015: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five*

Every year nearly 11 million young children die before their fifth birthday, mainly from preventable illnesses, but that number is down from 15 million in 1980.

### 5. Improve maternal health

*Target for 2015: Reduce by three-quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth.*

In the developing world, the risk of dying in childbirth is one in 48, but virtually all countries now have safe motherhood programmes.

### 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

*Target for 2015: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.*

Forty million people are living with HIV, including five million newly infected in 2001. Countries like Brazil, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda have shown that the spread of HIV can be stemmed.

*Many developing countries spend more on debt service than on social services. New aid commitments made in the first half of 2002 could mean an additional \$12 billion per year by 2006.*

## **7. Ensure environmental sustainability**

*Targets: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water. By 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.*

More than one billion people lack access to safe drinking water and more than two billion lack sanitation. During the 1990s, however, nearly one billion people gained access to safe water and the same number to sanitation.

## **8. Develop a global partnership for development**

*Targets:*

- *Develop further an open trading and financial system that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally*
- *Address the least developed countries' special needs, and the special needs of land-locked and small island developing States*
- *Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems*
- *Develop decent and productive work for youth*
- *In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries*
- *In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies.*

## The MDGs: Mobilizing People for Change

The Millennium Development Goals (popularly known as the MDGs) are proving very dynamic as an instrument of political impetus and integration. The MDGs:

- Are based in a Declaration adopted at the highest level of governments.
- Are a positive expression of a people-centred multilateralism.
- Involve unprecedented cooperation between the UN and its many agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), regional development banks, governments, business and civil society.
- State broad but measurable goals and targets, and set specific time lines.

UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan presents annual global reports to the General Assembly on implementing the Millennium Declaration, which includes a chapter on the MDGs. This chapter includes summary statistics on implementation of each MDG, aggregated at the global and regional levels.

A *Global Millennium Campaign* is moving forward under the leadership of former Dutch Development Minister, Eveline Herfkens. In the developed countries, the primary focus is on galvanizing public opinion as a means to boost development assistance, trade, debt relief, technology and other support needed to achieve the MDGs. In the developing world, the aim is to build coalitions for action and to help governments set policy, project and budgetary priorities and to use resources more effectively.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Administrator Mark Malloch Brown, coordinates the MDG campaign and country-level monitoring activities. The UNDP is helping to integrate the MDGs into all aspects of its work at the country level, in response to the priorities identified by each country. All developing countries are being encouraged, with the active support of UNDP, to produce "Country Reports" on the status of their national development efforts.

- The UNDP released its *2003 Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty* (8 July, 2003). It shows that the MDGs are still well within reach at a global level and—at a stretch—still achievable at national level by nearly every country. But for most of almost 60 "priority countries," lack of progress is not about lack of trying to put good institutions, policies and growth in place. It is about handicaps, geographic isolation, war, closed markets, exclusion of women and a deteriorating environment undermining the economic base ([www.undp.org/hdr2003](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003)).

The World Bank, the lead agency for mobilizing funds for poverty alleviation, has integrated the MDG targets into many country-level Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as well as into a wide variety of programming including health, water/sanitation and the environment.

The UN Millennium Research Project, headed by Columbia University Professor Jeffrey Sachs, is generating new research and ideas by mobilizing networks of scholars from

*We face many development challenges, but it is no good tackling them piecemeal. Each of them affects all the others. We need to tackle them all together, with a common strategy, a clear timetable, and measurable targets.*

*Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals at the G8 in Evian, France, on 1 June 2003.*

developing and developed countries to help identify what is needed—in terms of policy, expanded capacity, required investments and financing ([www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org)).

Annual “State of the Future” reports are produced by the Millennium Project of the American Council for the UN University. *2003 State of the Future* states that it is increasingly clear that humanity has the resources to address global challenges; what is less clear is how much wisdom and good will be focused on these challenges ([www.millennium-project@acunu.org](http://www.millennium-project@acunu.org)).

A UN Commission on the Private Sector and Development, co-chaired by Mexican ex-President Ernesto Zedillo and Canadian former Finance Minister, Paul Martin, has been set up to recommend how “to promote a strong, indigenous private sector in developing countries, and to initiate programs with the highest potential impact in private sector development”. The World Bank and a number of donor country aid agencies already have private sector development programs and funds targeted on poverty alleviation.

Some governments have taken on the MDGs with enthusiasm. The Swedish government has stated full commitment to the Declaration and MDGS. A recent survey showed that 90% of the population support the Goals. Parliament has adopted a bill on global development policy. Government and CSOs, including UNA-Sweden, have been engaged in public education, media advertisements and materials emphasizing the MDGs as “The chance of a lifetime”.

Information on these and other elements in the global mobilization for the MDGs can be found on a variety of web-sites. A selected list is found at the end of the report.

# Report 2003: Civil Society Engagement With the MDGs

More and more civil society organizations are engaging with the Millennium Development Goals and the global challenge to alleviate poverty. Our sample testifies to the variety of “entry-points” and levels of involvement, the hopes and disappointments, the willingness to experiment and the wariness about false expectations. Above all the message is one of civil society wanting to make the most of the MDGs...and then do more.

**Geographical scope:** Participants in the 2003 survey come from 82 countries around the world. Respondents from Africa, Asia and Latin America are all up significantly from 2002, but there are still some gaps.

**Membership base:** Almost half the groups report having more than 100 members, and more than half of those have more than 1,000 each.

**Funding:** One-third report funding levels of over \$500,000 per year and a quarter report resources of up to \$500,000. However more than a third get by with less than US \$50,000 a year.

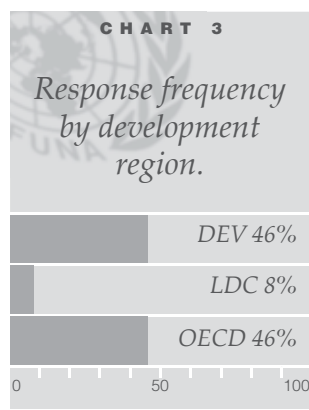
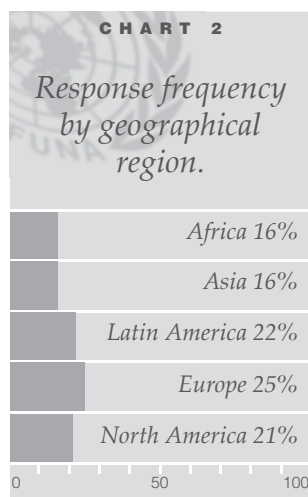
**Staffing:** While a fraction (7%) have more than 100 employees, a portion (17%) have 20-100 employees; half have less than twenty staff and a fifth of them have no paid employees at all. Many of the organizations have volunteers working with them, with a quarter reporting 25 to 100 volunteers each; a third manage with 20 or less.

**Scope of interests:** More than 40% describe the scope of their interests and activities as global, with just a few less citing a national purview, with regional and local scope each signaled by one-tenth of our respondents.

**Connections with the UN:** Participating groups are fairly UN-savvy. More than 60% have attended UN meetings. They report contact with a wide variety of UN organizations, the most frequent being UNDP (63%), ECOSOC (41%), UNICEF (37%) and UNESCO (36%). Together with this experience of the UN comes a great deal of advice and encouragement as to how the world organization and its agencies could assist in accomplishing the MDGs.

*“Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will require the ingenuity, solidarity, and creativity of millions of ordinary people through voluntary action. ...Six billion people have something to contribute. Recognizing this fact is the first step on the road towards harnessing this vast resource in a global effort to meet the MDG targets.”*

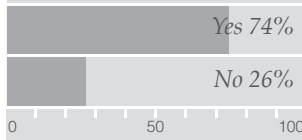
*“Volunteerism and the Millennium Development Goals: an opportunity and an imperative” United Nations Volunteers. 8 April, 2003.*



## Civil Society and the MDGs: A Snapshot

CHART 4

*Do you know about the United Nations' Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals?*



### ► Familiarity with the MDGs is widespread and growing, but gaps remain.

Three quarters of participating organizations have heard of the Millennium Declaration and Goals, a modest increase over 2002. The fact that a quarter of participants in a survey focused on UN issues had not heard of the goals underlines the importance of continued dissemination, education and campaigning.

### ► Civil society groups who know about the MDGs, value them.

Survey respondents who knew about the MDGs soundly endorsed their usefulness for civil society, with about 80% calling them either very valuable or valuable.

### ► The MDGs are inspiring civil society to begin work on the goals.

The proportion of groups engaged in activities aimed at promoting or achieving the MDGs is up more than 12% over 2002. Of more than 150 groups indicating activities in line with the goals, more than half state that the MDGs influenced their decision to initiate the activity.

### ► Not many civil society groups have received additional funding.

For 78% of groups responding, the MDGs have had no effect on their funding. Eighteen percent maintained that the goals had a positive effect on mobilizing resources, while a small number of respondents (3%) indicated that the goals had negatively impacted on funding.

### ► Many groups see themselves as part of a developing global partnership for development.

Almost half the respondents see themselves as part of a developing global partnership for development. A quarter indicate they are working on all eight goals. Among those with a particular focus, slightly more than half cite extreme poverty and hunger. Almost as many groups cite gender equality and environmental sustainability.

### ► Civil society groups think that the MDGs could go further

In response to a question about whether the MDGs go far enough, the majority (60%) of civil society groups in Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries considered that they did not. However respondents from developing countries were less critical (41%) and the number dropped to 27% for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

### ► Civil society groups think that the MDGs could go further

In response to a question about whether the MDGs go far enough, the majority (60%) of civil society groups in Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries considered that they did not. However respondents from developing countries were less critical (41%) and the number dropped to 27% for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

► **In particular, they think the MDGs could have been better formulated to reflect civil society concerns and priorities.**

One of the major civil society concerns about the MDGs is that they do not mention the role of civil society. Moreover, there is no reference to many of the specific population groups that are most vulnerable and in need of special attention. Respondents to the survey were asked to rank the extent to which the goals meet the needs of displaced people, refugees, migrant workers, people in slavery, older people, those with disabilities, indigenous peoples and youth. Not surprisingly, over 70% of respondents ranked the MDGs as either poor or fair. Of these groups, only youth is mentioned in the MDGs. Respondents were considerably more positive about the needs of youth being met.

► **Gender should not be limited to one goal, but integral to all eight goals**

Two thirds of the poorest of the poor are women. Goal 3 recognizes the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality in helping to effect social change. This one goal is seen as essential to achieving all the other goals.

► **The effort should be made to eradicate all forms of extreme poverty**

A key priority for civil society groups is raising awareness of the need to reach not just half the people living in hunger and extreme poverty. Many want to be held accountable for trying to reach 100% of the people in the communities where they work.

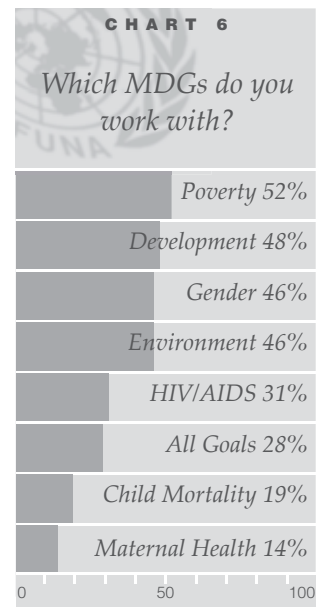
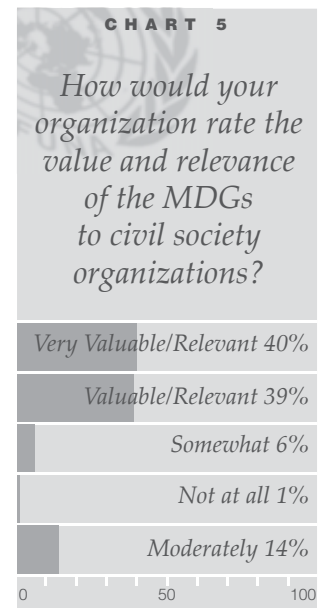
► **While the MDGs are valued, there is uncertainty about whether they will all be achieved by 2015**

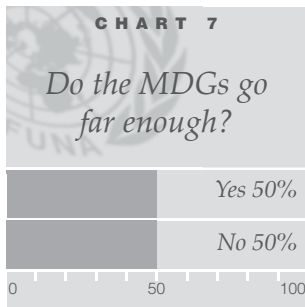
CSOs feel the goals present a useful framework for mobilizing and focusing development efforts, although many have doubts about whether they will all be achieved by 2015. This year, regionally, Asian respondents were the most pessimistic about the goals, (72% rating their achievement unlikely), Latin Americans next (64%), Europeans and North Americans (59% each) and Africans least skeptical (50%). These responses are less confident than in our 2002 survey. If the goals are to get on track for the 2015 target date, the UN, governments and civil society are going to have to greatly increase their commitment of ideas and resources to the task.

► **The MDGs are about achieving global human security**

There is a widespread public feeling of global insecurity and uncertainty about the future. The costs and effects on human rights of the war on terrorism, the spread of new and deadly viruses, climate change and unregulated genetic engineering of food and other life forms are all global in their effects. They threaten people's stability and even their survival. They require more effective global cooperation and global responses.

This sense of crisis was discussed at a consultation, convened in Geneva in June, 2003, by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), of CSO leaders from around the world. It was considered that, "in view of the current geopolitical and economic context, the MDGs are emerging as a valuable anchor to both revitalize multilateralism with a people-centered focus, and hold national governments and international institutions accountable in the years to come".





*“If governments go simply by the wording of the MDGs it looks like they can do things in a gender neutral way on matters of poverty alleviation. But this will not be effective. If governments are serious about achieving the MDGs, it is essential that gender be taken into account for all the goals.”*

*June Zeitlin, Executive Director of the Women’s Environmental and Development Organization (WEDO) speaking at the WFUNA Round Table Dialogue, 26 June 2003*

The World Federation of United Nations Associations, meeting in May 2003, recognized the “*significance of the Millennium Development Goals in achieving global human security and social justice*” and pledged to continue to pursue the Millennium Development Goals Campaign.

► **Rising to the challenge of the MDGs means reforming global institutions**

Some critics argue that the UN has become “irrelevant” and raise difficult questions about the organization’s role and the need for reform. Critics challenge the organization’s ability to discourage destructive unilateralism, to effectively enforce international law, to champion the rights of weaker member states in conflict with those more powerful, and to further democratize the UN structure through Security Council reform. Taking into account these calls for far-reaching reform, the commitment of the whole UN system to achieving the Millennium Development Goals is one of the chief ways it is defining its global role.

The Geneva consultation recognized that the UN has yet to fully engage social movements and expressions like the World Social Forums. There is great knowledge and strength in civil society organizations, and energy and dedication in diverse social movements. The challenge for the UN is how to become more fully an expression and instrument of emerging global citizenship.

## Civil Society Views on What it Will Take to Achieve the MDGs

### 1. Partnerships are increasingly important

In the Millennium Declaration governments committed themselves to:

- Develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication.
- Give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the UN's goals and programs.

It is clear that the prospects for the widespread public acceptance of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as for their implementation, would be immeasurably enhanced if a constructive partnership between government, civil society and the private sector could be engendered.

One of the important aspects of the MDGs is Goal 8, the call for a Global Development Partnership. What is entailed in this partnership?

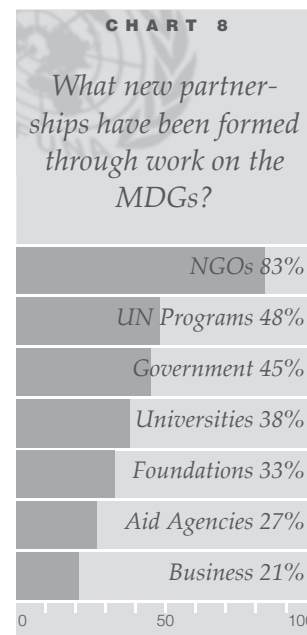
- Wealthy countries are challenged to alter the unequal global trade and financial system in order to better facilitate the development of poor countries.
- It calls for a rules-based, predictable, and non-discriminatory global trade regime that provides for the special needs of least developed countries and land-locked and small island states.
- Other important aspects of the Goal include debt relief for developing countries, guaranteeing access to affordable medicines, providing quality work for youth and others requiring employment, and ensuring the effective transfer of new technologies and productive capacity from the North to the South.

Civil society's expertise, local knowledge, transnational networking capacity, flexibility, public trust and influence make it a desirable, and essential, partner for the UN, World Bank and for member governments in working to achieve Goal 8. Despite the fact that civil society is often difficult to work with—given the vast number and diversity of civil society organizations, as well as the dual roles CSOs legitimately play as both watchdogs/critics and as partners—their role in UN activities is critical.

*One of the best indicators of the level of civil society engagement with the MDGs is the extent to which new partnerships are being formed and with whom. The survey results are very positive.*

Over 80% of respondents are developing new partnerships with other CSOs. Interestingly, this is happening to the same extent in both the North and the South. Almost half the groups mention partnerships with UN agencies and programs and with governments. A third or more cite universities and foundations as partners, and more than a fifth cite aid agencies and businesses.

To what extent is this process of developing partnerships giving momentum to the core idea of the MDGs—a Global Partnership for Development? There are mixed signals.





The United Nations, at Conferences like Monterrey (Financing for Development), in consultative roundtable processes, increasingly recognizes the private or corporate sector as a “stakeholder”. While NGOs have had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, slowly developed over decades, business has achieved an apparently equivalent relationship in a few years.

At the same time, significant sectors of global civil society are intensely critical of the influence of business on political life, on international trade and investment agreements as well as raising questions of corporate ethics and governance.

The encouragement of private-public partnerships (P3s) by some governments, and the engagement of some UN agencies with similar models, has provoked further debate. Where people are positive about collaboration, there is considerable discussion about the terms on which “partnership” is based, and ongoing skepticism about what the meaning of the word is, when the “partners” are very unequal in power and resources.

*Survey participants were asked about how the private sector could better support CSOs in achieving the millennium goals.*

The most valued form of support was a strategic partnership between the private sector and NGOs for specific goals (79%). At the same time respondents saw a need to enact mandatory standards of corporate social responsibility (59%). Access to the resources of the private sector was less important (47%).

The UN developed a new process—the Global Compact—seeking voluntary corporate citizenship with two key objectives:

- To have companies internalize nine principles (relating to human rights, environment and labor standards) as part of their business strategy and operations
- To promote the idea of corporate social responsibility and the recognition that businesses can only thrive if societies thrive.

The Global Compact is not a regulatory instrument—it does not “police”, enforce or measure the behavior or actions of companies. Its principles are drawn from the normative agreements and priorities of the UN system. The Compact relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of companies, labour and civil society to initiate and share activities in pursuing the principles upon which the Global Compact is based.

Some CSOs remain opposed to the Global Compact because it does not monitor whether and how companies follow through on their commitments nor include any formal accountability for corporations. It runs the risk of providing public relations “cover” for companies. CSO spokespeople engaged over the years with the International Baby Food Action Network asked, for example, how the Nestle company could become a high profile member of the Compact, while it continued to violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes?

The debate over partnerships, terms of partnership and the relative roles of civil society organizations, the private sector and multilateral organizations will and ought to continue. The common commitment to the advancement of peoples’ welfare should be one, but not the only, inducement for governments, civil society and the private sector to be united in joint endeavor for the fulfillment of the MDGs. In seeking that goal each sector needs to be a voice for fairness, a source for solutions, and a force for change.

At the core of debate lie key questions about the role and rule of law as against the power of money as well as the preservation of public resources and public space. Some CSOs, and many parliamentarians have been challenging all three with a more fundamental question. What is the nature and future of democratic governance at all levels? The challenge of assuring democratic accountability in an era of increasing differences in access, wealth and power should engage us all.

## 2. Increase civil society participation to improve government accountability

When governments make policy commitments at the United Nations, they become accountable to their people nationally, as well as to the global community, for their implementation.

In assessing the performance both of their own and other governments in implementing the MDGs, respondents generally expressed dissatisfaction—90% of ratings were ‘poor’ or ‘fair’. Respondents from wealthy countries were more critical of governments than those of developing countries.

*Are governments in developing countries perceived to be making the Goals 1—7 a budgetary and policy priority?*

Civil society respondents are divided in their views—while the majority (57%) see no progress, 43% considered their government engaged with implementing the MDGs.

*Are governments in developed countries perceived to be honoring their commitment to Goal 8, concerning the global development partnership?*

Forty-five respondents answered. They considered that most attention is being given to debt relief (62%), followed closely by increased official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction (60%). Outright cancellation of official bilateral debt was mentioned by 49% of respondents, while 33% mentioned providing tariff and quota-free access for LDC exports.

Over a hundred respondents provided suggestions for how governments can be held accountable for their MDG commitments and how civil society can help ensure this.

A large number of respondents believe that governments should report on progress towards MDGs in a manner directly related to each of the goals. There is an appreciation that government reports should include comparisons with other countries and that the reports should be sent to the United Nations. Civil society groups, including United Nations Associations are organizing conferences and inviting responsible representatives from government to report publicly on progress in achieving the MDGs. Although the focus of the survey question was on accountability, many respondents talk about CSOs pressing for government transparency—they seem to be saying that all the accountability in the world is meaningless without transparency.

The UNDP country reports ([www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html](http://www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html)) are an obvious, but as yet not well developed entry point for civil society organizations to participate. The survey found that only half the groups had heard of them. Only 19 respondents had been consulted in the creation of a country report, with 6 agreeing that the process had been inclusive.



*“Involving more partners will inevitably lengthen the process, but this is essential for generating a stronger sense of national ownership and for building a grand MDG coalition.”*

*Jan Vandemoortele,  
UNDP/BDP*

A critical weakness of Goal 8 is the lack of specific targets and time-lines for activities of rich countries. A variety of research organizations and CSOs are attempting to fill that gap.

- “Ranking the Rich” an initiative led by the Washington-based Center for Global Development, combines a series of factors in measuring the impact of the policies and actions of rich countries on poorer nations: aid, trade, investment, migration, peacekeeping and environment. Overall, the Center rates the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal and New Zealand as tops, the U.S. and Japan, big aid donors, rank lowest. [www.cgdev.org/rankingtherich/home.html](http://www.cgdev.org/rankingtherich/home.html)
- The United Nations Association of Canada has defined four areas in which Canadians can ask the government for time-bound targets which can be monitored:
  - reduction of unsustainable debts—owed to us by the least developed countries;
  - the dismantling of unfair trade subsidies and tariffs that make it considerably harder for those in poor countries to enter the global market;
  - the continued increase of official development assistance;
  - the creation of better access to technological progress in poor countries.

In every country, what kind of statistical information is gathered and how it is made use of are priority concerns for civil society groups.

- According to one respondent from Belize, civil society is involved in the MDG process by being part of a technical committee which is in charge of gathering the data, adapting and adjusting the goals and indicators, drafting and approving the national report and being part of the implementation, follow-up and evaluation.
- In Brazil, some city budgets are subject to community scrutiny, input and decision making.

There is growing appreciation that combinations of different analytical tools are needed to achieve the goals, including policy formulation, performance indicators and attitudinal changes. Many see a need for community based indicators, because in large multi-cultural countries such as India, national indicators are too vague.

- **Bulgaria** decided to use the European Union’s poverty measure for Goal 1 because of its candidacy to EU admission, and dropped the 0.7% target on ODA, which would be unrealistic.
- **Argentina** adopted indicators that take into account huge disparities among provinces and introduced a new target to reduce the level of unemployment to less than 10%.
- An initiative was launched in **Vietnam** to “localize” the MDGs, with the creation of a list of VDGs (Vietnam Development Goals), developed by the Poverty Task Force (consisting of government agencies, bilateral, multilateral donors as well as national and international NGOs) and served as an input to set goals and indicators for the PRSP. An article contest has been organized for journalists about the best article published on MDGs.
- **Nepal** has prepared a proposal for mobilizing youth to comprehend and advocate for MDG goals on achieving universal primary education (Goal 2), with an emphasis on education of girls, aiming to encourage innovative advocacy plans by young people.

One of the most critical issues for keeping governments accountable for their implementation of the MDGs is the need continually to hold them accountable for the inter-linkages between the goals.

- A fascinating model is developing in the **Philippines**, where the Social Watch national platform—organizations particularly concerned with social development, and in monitoring government fulfillment of commitments—is taking part with other CSOs in a Multi-Sectoral Committee for the International Human Development Commitments. This body, which is linked to the Cabinet level Social Development Committee, provides an avenue for interaction, monitoring and evaluation of progress, involving diverse CSOs and government.

The anticipated Summit review of the Millennium objectives in 2005 will be a key moment for holding governments to their commitments, but action does not need to be delayed till then. Encouragement from the UN at a variety of levels as well as continued ingenuity and pressure from civil society organizations is essential.

### 3. Stay engaged in policy debates

The Goals are eliciting renewed policy debate at many levels. Fifty-six survey participants made specific suggestions as to how the MDGs could be improved or advanced.

Some expressed concern that the goals might be interpreted too narrowly, and counseled continued reference to the Millennium Declaration as a whole and/or the broader agenda of the global conferences of the 1990s.

- A representative from one UK-based organization wrote: “The MDGs need to include indicators relating to access of all of the poor to development opportunities and related finance; the importance of inclusive data gathering and analysis; age disaggregated data as a priority for MDG analysis; indicators to do with community and household survival and factors which inhibit household development.”
- An Italian respondent commented that the “Millennium Declaration is much more comprehensive than the goals themselves. I am particularly concerned about the rather truncated attention to women in the goals”.

The Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) has been working with a variety of women’s organizations worldwide, encouraging them interpret the MDGs for themselves and how they apply to their own situations.

The most frequently-cited limitation of the MDGs is the poverty goal. The goal to half the number of people living in extreme poverty was criticized for falling short of ideal outcomes.

- A Dutch respondent wrote: “Of course, we realize that in itself achieving the MDGs as they are formulated is a revolutionary agenda. At the same time, we can not accept striving to reduce poverty. It should be our common policy to eradicate poverty”.

Other respondents echoed the need to add goals to the MDGs, with unemployment and food security being mentioned several times. Some felt there were certain themes that needed to be more strongly present in the Declaration and Goals.

- A participant from the UK suggested that “more emphasis should be put on human rights and democratic governance”,

*“It is not enough to attack what is wrong—civil society needs to go beyond protest and a watchdog role. This means being active players in finding solutions through constructive engagement around new ideas and approaches. ...In turn civil society needs the space, the encouragement and the resourcing to be enabled to make this contribution.”*

*Speech by Jeremy Hobbs,  
Executive Director of  
Oxfam International,  
IDRRRI Conference,  
Paris, April 2003.*

“The vision that emerges... can be summarized in four basic principles:  
 – Trade is a means to an end—not an end in itself.  
 – Trade rules should allow for diversity in national institutions and standards.  
 – Countries should have the right to protect their institutions and development priorities.  
 – No country has the right to impose their institutional preferences on others.”

*Making Global Trade Work for People, UNDP/ Earthscan, 2003*

- An American respondent considered that “Kofi Annan’s suggestion that the world must embrace the principle of non-violence should have been included. Our NGO is promoting that now as a result of his report before the Millennium Summit”.

A criticism of the MDGs is that they do not focus sufficiently on the *underlying structural causes* of poverty and underdevelopment. This was seen in calls to focus more closely on Goal 8 as the key to successful implementation of the MDGs.

- An Indian respondent argued for focusing “on structural issues and inequalities in global trade and finance governance”,
- A German organization said the goals “fail to address the reasons for the lack of development and deteriorating situation in many countries, which is precisely rooted in international policies developed by the IMF, World Bank and WTO.”

Official international documents often stress “coherence” of trade, financial, aid and other development policies, as celebrated in the “Monterrey consensus” on Financing for Development. CSOs at the Monterrey conferences rejected the consensus, arguing that in policy “one size does *not* fit all”.

When CSOs across the developing world were consulted by UNDP about trade and sustainable development, what emerged was the need to protect, and enlarge *policy space* for national governments, space in which their citizens could be consulted and involved. There is a need to build up governmental and non-governmental capacity to deal with complex trade issues, their implications for development, and how to deal with more powerful governments in negotiations.

CSOs are challenging policy obstacles in many ways. A large and diverse range of organizations is engaged with processes of global and regional trade regulation.

- Networks of organizations of small farmers argue that global policies which will help them escape poverty will never develop until agriculture is taken out of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Health organizations are similarly pre-occupied with the possibility that the negotiations for the General Agreement on Trade and Services will lead to further privatization of health services and restriction of access for the poor.
- HIV/AIDS activists decry the failure to fully implement the declaration on intellectual property and public health made at the Doha WTO Ministerial in 2001, and the continued blocks to providing life-extending medicines to millions of people fighting the infection.
- Several CSO coalitions (The Hemispheric Social Alliance, Common Front on the WTO) are arguing for the complete abandonment of neoliberal trade and financial institutions and their replacement with more democratic, egalitarian bodies. These networks feel that the entire framework of capitalist globalization is based on social inequality and environmental destruction. They argue that radically different political and economic processes are required to end global poverty.

The Asian Civil Society Forum, organized by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) in Bangkok in December 2002, issued a final statement, affirming support for the Millennium Development Goals and making the following point:

“We have examined implementation of MDGs from the perspective of a rights-based approach with the principle of sustainability and aim to promote them in a consistent, coherent and intentional manner. At a time when global decision-making in economic and social affairs has become much less democratic and transparent, while the resources and influence of the UN have eroded and the power and mandate of the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO have expanded, a rights-based approach with the principle of sustainability would help ensure the needed stability and symmetry necessary for democratic governance.”

In an effort to provide support, encouragement and guidance to African civil society groups engaged in poverty reduction and MDG implementation, the UNDP is publishing a Guidebook: African Civil Society Engagement in the Millennium Development Goals. It seeks to help groups “interested in increasing their leverage over policy and calling for increased aid and debt-relief, poverty-focused national policies and budget allocations, efficient and transparent use of resources, and impressive social spending outputs.” As the author’s point out, much more than civil society efforts will be needed. “A multi-layered effort is essential, involving a broad range of actors, commitment of new resources and approaches. ...CSOs should not be called on to step up their own commitment and efforts without a comparable effort from official actors.”

#### 4. “Political will” at issue

*Survey participants were asked to identify the major barriers to their own government meeting its MDG commitments.*

The chart shows that lack of political will (72%) is perceived as the main barrier, followed by macroeconomic constraints (49%), corruption (40%) and lack of resources (40%) and debt (30%).

If “lack of political will” is the main barrier to achieving the MDGs, what do civil society leaders think should be done about this?

There is a vigorous debate about this question within civil society. There is a marked tendency for the issue to be framed in terms of the overwhelming power and influence of the United States over the United Nations and all other major institutions, and the power of those institutions over developing country governments. Attention is drawn to the fact that although the United States signed onto the Millennium Summit Declaration, it has not endorsed the MDGs. Instead it has established its own Millennium Challenge Account as an instrument to assist governments that meet certain conditions to alleviate poverty in their countries. The whole question of how conditions are determined and imposed on developing countries is at the heart of the debate about the political will needed to achieve the MDGs.

Those civil society groups that remain committed to working with the UN and in support of the MDGs are advancing various strategies for harnessing different forms of power—or political will—to the cause.

#### 1. Maintain the emphasis on the commitment to a North-South compact (Goal 8) and to accountability for all the commitments.

- “The Goals are simultaneously a time-bound call to arms, as well as an unprecedented opportunity, for all countries, rich and poor, to work towards a common future.



*“We consider that poverty, in addition to being an indication of a lack of resources and poor access to basic services, is essentially an indication of insufficient participation of the majority of the people in national policy and decision-making mechanisms. It is also a product of uncontrolled external constraints, such as the debt load and the inequitable nature of international trade relations.”*

*West African Civil Society  
Forum on Millennium  
Development Goals,  
Dakar, Senegal,  
23-24 February, 2003.*

It is up to all of us—in every segment of society—to help make the Goals a reality”.  
David Morrison, President, Net-Aid

- The Secretary-General's Special Representative on AIDs in Africa, Stephen Lewis emphasizes that the HIV/AIDs threatens all the other MDGs, and that applying a gender lens is essential to effectively addressing the AIDS challenge.

## **2. Engage broader constituencies through education and advocacy and bring public pressure for the MDGs on politicians and other opinion leaders.**

United Nations Associations in many countries have translated the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs into local languages and sent copies to members of parliament, and in the context of elections, ensured that all candidates know about the MDGs

## **3. Support strengthening the role of the public sector and the public service in developing countries. The poor and the relief of poverty are intimately linked to the future of public services and utilities, which provide essential items like clean water.**

- Public Service International, a trade union secretariat, has initiated a Quality Public Services Campaign showing how well-resourced, well-run, accountable public services, in which workers are well paid and ensured their basic rights can be instrumental in achieving the MDGs.
- The 2003 Social Watch Report: The Poor and the Market ([www.socialwatch.org](http://www.socialwatch.org)) is one of the most thorough and thoughtful examinations of current pressures to privatize public utilities and public services available. As the report, based on 52 grass roots country studies points out “...faith in the capacity of the market to work in favour of the MDGs does not find support in what Social Watch Coalitions from around the world report here..”

## **4. Envisage changes to the structure of the UN to give it a more robust role in global governance.**

- The Finnish Network Institute for Global Democratization has engaged in North-South dialogue about issues of global governance reform. It is working to reduce the power of financial markets by developing a democratic debt arbitration mechanism and gathering civil society comments on the draft treaty on currency transactions tax. [www.nigd.org](http://www.nigd.org)
- A Nepalese respondent advocated a more dynamic role for the UN, saying that it “needs to be pro-active and provide roadmaps to success to Governments and Civil Society, rather than the current situation where it has taken the approach of being an advocate. It needs to be a body that raises issues and indicates what the problems and consequences are”.
- Other respondents felt that the UN needed to go beyond playing a more active role in agenda-setting and toward a position of greater political authority and enforcement capability. A respondent from Germany saw the UN helping civil society “By effectively controlling the international monetary institutions and the WTO and putting them at the service of people, not the corporate sector.”

Asked how they would evaluate success in their efforts, a wide majority of CSOs look to public participation as the most important indicator, followed by increased media coverage. If impact is embodied in policy change on the part of governments or multilateral bodies, success is demonstrated.

## 5. Develop a strategic approach to fund-raising in support of MDGs

There are interlinked national and global dimensions to the MDGs that should be leveraged in fund-raising efforts, notably in the areas of aid, debt, trade and finance. Time-bound government-specific targets could be developed to specify Goal 8 as MDG campaigns begin to develop in various national contexts and through international coalitions.

### **Increase Official Development Assistance**

UN Secretary-General maintains that \$100 billion a year in Official Development Assistance (ODA) is required, at a minimum, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This means virtually a doubling of current levels.

Unfortunately for many of the poorest, aid actually declined in the 1990s. In sub-Saharan Africa per capita amounts of aid dropped from \$34 in 1990 to \$21 in 2001. The average drop for all developing countries was from \$15 to \$10, one-third.

The objective of donor countries giving 0.7% of the GNP in ODA was first endorsed by the UN in 1970 and later reaffirmed in the Monterrey Financing for Development Conference (2002). Pledges made at the Conference appear to indicate a positive change. ODA went up from US \$52.3 billion in 2001 to \$57 billion in 2002. If the world's 23 largest donors met the goal today, it would raise aid to three times current levels—US\$165 billion a year!

CSOs are engaged not only in pressing for and supporting increased ODA, but in monitoring how funds are spent. The *Reality of Aid* Network publishes an independent annual review of development assistance with an eye to poverty reduction, based on the work of CSOs in a variety of countries. In 2004 the focus will be “governance and the promotion of rights in international cooperation and aid.”

The way in which ODA is given is subject to intense debate among and within governments, and among CSOs. Increased “ownership” by developing country governments and their CSOs is often cited as a desirable objective.

- A respondent from the Netherlands criticized top-down models of implementation, advocating instead for a “more bottom-up approach formulated with local governments and NGOs in partnership”.
- As Jeffrey Sachs stated in Addis Ababa in July: “Right now the way Ethiopia's relations with the donors tends to work is ‘Here's what we are giving you, how would you use it?’ What I am saying is ‘Let's calculate what is needed and then how can we get that amount.’ I want to turn the equation around.”

Some goal-specific funding efforts have been initiated. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, begun in 2001, is an independent partnership—involving governments, agencies, civil society and private sector—to dramatically increase funding and to direct these funds to effective prevention and treatment programs. While needs are estimated at up to US \$10 billion a year, pledges and contributions are far below that. The shortfall for 2003-04 as of July, 2003 was \$3 billion.

*“We are talking...about the issue of a two-sided bargain, and maybe we've been slow in learning, but it is the hymnbook we're singing from now.”*

*World Bank President James Wolfensohn, at the Capstone Roundtable, September 27, 2002.*

*“Debt relief has been shown to have very beneficial effects on development.”*

*Eveline Herfkens,  
Executive Coordinator,  
UN MDG Campaign*

Over 100 CSOs have joined in a global “Fund the Fund” campaign. The Global Network of People Living with AIDS has started an “It Starts With Us” campaign, canvassing the globe for small donations, from the very people who the Fund is supposed to save.

- Three grants totaling \$52 million to Kenya in June 2003 are overseen by a central coordination mechanism that the Global Fund called “an unprecedented collaboration between Kenyan government, people living with the diseases, civil society, faith-based organizations and the private sector”.

Humanitarian relief is crucial in the short run. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in their *2003 World Disaster Report* notes that “New research into the connections between needs assessments and the allocation of relief aid suggests that the scale of humanitarian appeals is often slanted towards what the donor ‘market’ will bear—high-profile crises routinely attract higher appeals for aid, even if other forgotten disasters are more deserving. This trend must stop.”

### **Debt cancellation**

Regional and global networks on debt cancellation, following on Jubilee 2000, and networks on the reform of International Financial Institutions and their policies continue to put pressure on resource provision and the conditions on which it is offered. It is widely recognized that debt relief is more effective than traditional forms of assistance.

CSO pressure has been instrumental in encouraging forgiveness of portions of bilateral debt in some rich countries, and in convincing the international financial institutions to institute the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC), the Enhanced (HIPC) and the Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process.

CSO networks continue to be pre-occupied by:

- the refusal of those who control the votes in the Bank and Fund to institute true debt cancellation
- the refusal of debt-holders to seriously deal with the issue of illegal or odious debt—obligations taken on by repressive and dictatorial governments.
- the persistence of macro-economic conditionalities on loans, and so-called quiet, secret or “underground” conditions placed by the Bank and the Fund on resource transfers to poor governments.
- the ongoing crippling effect of debt for many developing countries, and the extent to which resource transfers from the “south” to the “north” continue to exceed loans and aid.

### **Trade**

Trade remains one of the areas with both the biggest potential and greatest obstacles in terms of development. Respondents to the survey called for changes in the practice of subsidizing agricultural products in developed countries (worth \$320 billion) as an essential strategy for mobilizing resources to achieve the MDGs, and to alleviating hunger and poverty in developing countries. According to the IMF estimates, a repeal of all rich-country trade barriers and subsidies to agriculture would improve global welfare by about \$120 billion.

A one percent increase in the developing countries' share of world exports would lift 128 million people out of poverty, however developing countries' exports are severely hampered by the discriminatory trade policies of the developed countries.

## Finance

Resources are key to success, but there are no specific time-lines and targets in Goal 8. Donor government aid flows often fluctuate making it difficult for recipients—whether governments or CSOs—to plan and implement effectively. The UK Government has proposed the establishment of an International Financing Facility which would provide a measure of assurance of available funds for MDG delivery between now and 2015. For more information see

[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international\\_issues/int\\_gnd\\_intfinance.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international_issues/int_gnd_intfinance.cfm)

An initiative to encourage civil society interaction with finance ministers, was begun in 2002 by the Commonwealth Foundation, in London, focusing on Financing for Development. It involved CSO consultations in Ghana, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Fiji and London, to which host finance ministers were invited. A second meeting is being hosted by the Sultan of Brunei in September, 2003. CSOs asked finance ministers for integrated approaches to poverty eradication, debt cancellation, advanced timetables and enlarged commitments for ODA, legislated accountability concerning ODA in parliament, increased emphasis on domestic investment for development and on regulation and corporate accountability. The importance of food security and the democratization of global trade negotiations were highlighted as well as greater participation for developing countries in the governance of the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The CSOs concluded their message with a commitment to “partnership with government that enhances peoples’ participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives.”

[www.commonwealthfoundation.com/information/index2.cfm](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/information/index2.cfm)

## 6. Reform of multilateral economic institutions

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organization (WTO) are undeniably powerful brokers of development resources and often play determining roles in shaping national economic and social policy. Amid widespread criticism of their role in perpetuating global inequality, recent attempts have been made to harmonize their policies with the goals of poverty reduction, conflict avoidance and environmental sustainability.

*Survey participants were asked to rate the accountability of each organization in relation to its work on the MDGs.*

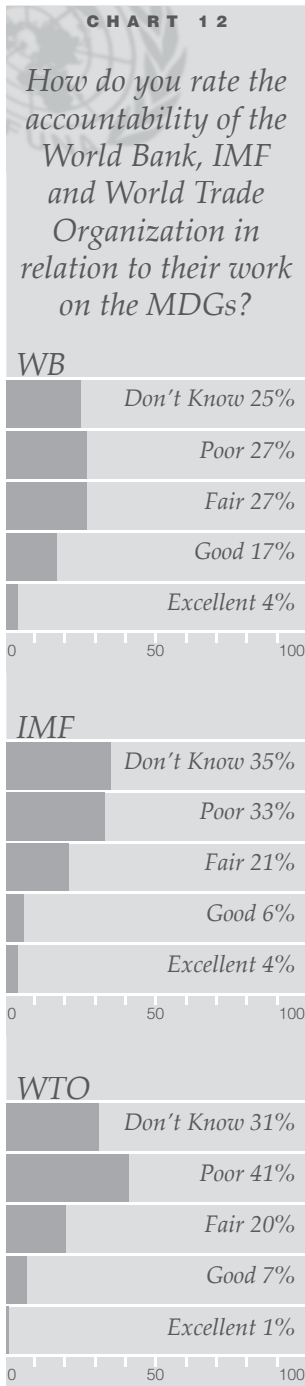
A significant proportion of respondents said they had no way to assess the accountability of the institutions (one quarter for the WB, one third for the IMF and WTO). These results echo broader concerns about the lack of transparency in the international trade and finance bodies. The WTO was the most negatively evaluated, with only eight percent of respondents rating its accountability as good or excellent, in contrast with the IMF (10%) and the WB (21%).

One of the key theatres where Bank, government and CSO roles are being tested is in the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy processes (PRSPs) at country level in which civil society participation is encouraged. The European Network on Debt and

*The Rigged Trade Game*

*“An uptick of only 1 per cent in Africa’s share of world exports would amount to \$70 billion a year, some five times the amount provided to the region in aid and debt relief.”*

*New York Times editorial,  
20 July 2003*



Development (EURODAD) has engaged southern CSOs in evaluating how effective the participatory processes are in real life. Difficulties include:

- the reluctance of the Bank and governments to open up debate about macro-economic policy constraints on government action
- the dominance of the multilateral economic bodies in agenda-setting and reform choices
- a tendency toward un-transparent or “back-door” policy specifications
- however participatory the consultation, decision-making higher up in the Bank seems much less open or participatory.

Public opinion about the Bank’s effectiveness in reducing poverty in developing countries was recently the subject of a survey commissioned by the Bank and done by Princeton Survey Research Associates (2,600 ‘opinion formers’ in 48 countries were interviewed). Just 22% of respondents consider that the Bank is doing a good job on reducing poverty.

There are indications that the World Bank is becoming more open to engaging with the concerns and interests of civil society organizations. In February CIVICUS CEO, Kumi Naidoo, was invited to make a speech at the World Bank; he urged the Bank to support capacity building for citizen groups to engage with governments and for governments to engage with civil society.

To follow up this speech, WFUNA invited World Bank senior communications officer, Carolyn Reynolds, to address the Round Table dialogue on the MDGs in April. She welcomed civil society’s partnership in sustainable development and poverty reduction and noted that as civil society’s role evolves—recent OECD figures cite \$11-12 billion being channeled through NGOs/CSOs annually—the Bank must find new ways to evolve. *“The Bank must adapt its mechanisms for engagement, as well as confront the need to change the way developing countries—and particularly developing country civil society—are represented in its governance structures.”*

In partial response to sustained pressure, other financial institutions are becoming more open to civil society:

- The IMF has initiated the development of a new policy for relations with civil society.
- The Asian Development Bank announced (June 2003) a new \$500,000 fund to assist NGOs with innovative poverty-reduction projects.
- The WTO announced (June, 2003) the formation of civil society and business advisory groups; while a number of major CSOs and the international labor movement accepted the invitation, several key aid and environmental organizations preferred to remain outside.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, ActionAid, World Development Movement and Focus on the Global South issued a ‘sign-on’ statement, challenging Ministers of Trade attending the 5th WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico (September 2003) to make the WTO more democratic. “ While we continue to advocate for equitable and sustainable policies in the areas of agriculture, intellectual property, services etc, we realise that unless the WTO decision-making process itself is addressed, we fail to get to the heart of the systemic problems facing the WTO.” For the full text of the statement see [www.focusweb.org/civil\\_society](http://www.focusweb.org/civil_society).

The United Nations opened a window to *comprehensive dialogue* over global economic policies, when it invited civil society and business into hearings and roundtables in the preparation, conference process and follow-up to the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development. The ongoing process brings the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WTO to the table along with ECOSOC and country delegations. In October, 2003, informal hearings and roundtables on policy will bring CSOs to the General Assembly High-Level review of Monterrey commitments, many of which affect directly whether or not as well as how the MDGs are implemented.

CSOs have organized an International Facilitating Group on Financing for Development (IFG) which continues to pursue opportunities for dialogue and policy influence through the UN and the multilateral economic bodies. The IFG is helping CSOs raise fundamental issues of the governance of the global economy—such as the relative voting power of developing countries in the IMF and World Bank—and support campaigns for structural change.

## **7. Forge a stronger link between the peace and development agendas**

Many CSOs are concerned about the links between militarization, both in expanding defense budgets and willingness to use military force, and the deepening problems of global inequality and extreme poverty. One of the strongest messages from our survey participants is that peace is a pre-requisite for achieving the MDGs.

[www.un.org/esa/ffd/civilsociety.html](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/civilsociety.html)

*CSOs were asked to what extent the security situation, including the war on terror and military expenditure, impacts on the achievement of the MDGs in their country.*

Respondents in Latin America (mainly from Colombia) were most likely to rate the impact of peace and security on MDG implementation as very important (64%). This compares with Africa (55%), Europe and North America (42%) and Asia (33%).

Of more significance than the response to the one question on the survey, was the quality and range of written comments respondents made on this question.

- “Unless peace is there, we are going to continue spending more than 60% of our GDP on defense, 38% on debt, leaving only a meager amount for running the machinery of state”. Survey respondent from Pakistan
- A respondent from Ghana reported that: “There is recognition that peace and security are essential for achieving the MDGs. Our organization therefore has a human security division and works with rural groups and organizations in promoting peace and security.”
- In the words of a Colombian: “As long as there is investment in armaments instead of expenses on sustainable human development, it will be impossible to reach the goals of peace, security, and development”.
- An American stated that “The manufacturing, trading and stockpiling of arms in all their forms need to be halted and reversed. The primary responsibility for this lies with the primary nuclear weapon states, especially those that are members of the Security Council. The notion of development through armament is archaic. Scientific and technological advancements should be pursued for peaceful purposes and the transformation to a viable and sustainable peace economy that benefits all of humanity.”

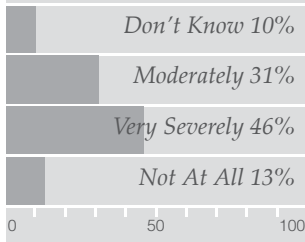
Citizen action for peace broke all previous limits in 2003 as millions around the globe joined in vigils, marches and a variety of other challenges to war. They protested the

*“The MDGs are not a world unto themselves. They are part and parcel of the struggle for international peace and security, for global social justice, for our mutual interdependence. MDGs are not about global charity; they are about global justice, universal human rights, and international security and responsibility.”*

*Dr. Necla Tschirgi, Vice-President, International Peace Academy.”*

CHART 13

*How does the security situation, including the war on terrorism and military expenditure, impact on the achievement of the MDGs in your country?*



*“To look at the Millennium Declaration after 9/11 and the Iraq war, is an interesting exercise. At that moment, in 2000, many were not very excited about it. Now it reads like a revolutionary manifesto, in its defense of multilateralism, peace, human rights, the rule of law..”*

*Roberto Bissio, Managing editor, The Social Watch, Geneva, June, 2003.*

declaration by the US administration of a right to unilateral pre-emptive military action which threatened the UN Charter itself. The emergence of this immense global peace movement has been interpreted by some observers as a new ‘super-power’. Certainly, a sustained movement for major reduction in military expenditures and disarmament is vital if resources are to be freed for human emancipation.

The European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) [www.euconflict.org](http://www.euconflict.org) is proposing an international Conference at the United Nations in 2005, which will focus on the role of civil society and NGOs in the prevention of armed conflict. They are undertaking a three-year program of preparatory research, consultation and discussion with regional conferences as well. This responds directly to a 2001 challenge by the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, urging NGOs to organize such an event.

The challenge to CSOs is to:

- Continue engagement in rebuilding common security approaches through the United Nations, highlighting the enormous relevance of the effort to achieve the MDGs for human security and social justice.
- Continue to advocate for reform of the UN with the goal of creating a multilateral system that can contain the military aggression of powerful states and bring much-needed legitimacy to the concept of fair and democratic international law.
- Support pressures for major reduction in military expenditures and for disarmament as vital for the release of the resources needed to achieve the MDGs
- Encourage all actors in development work to integrate human rights, governance, security sector reform and rule of law programming into their work, and to make full use of Conflict Impact Assessment tools to assist them in doing so.

## 8. Promote educational and public information activities

Throughout the world, civil society groups are promoting knowledge and awareness of the MDGs.

*Survey participants were asked to rate the UN's public promotion of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Their answers convey a sense that the UN's MDG promotion is adequate, but can be improved.*

Many CSOs speak of the importance of public opinion. It is clear that in most countries, civil society groups think that the MDGs need better media coverage so that people will support them and put pressure on their governments to care more about achieving the goals.

- Rock star Bono promises to shed his suit and take to the streets to fight poverty. “We are about to get very noisy, we are about to bang a lot of dustbin lids.”

Civil society organizations are looking forward to the formation of the UN's Millennium Campaign website, which is expected to include tool kits for effective participation and examples of best practices.

A number of the largest CSOs—the World Alliance of YWCAs, the World Alliance of YMCAs—are considering how best they can support the MDG campaign.

Some CSO strategies involve:

- **Campaigns about specific global goals:** The Order of St. Augustine in Italy plans a campaign against hunger through 2004.
- **Awareness raising in communities:** Terra Curanda (Netherlands) highlights the MDGs in publications, conferences and interdisciplinary artistic activities and events. The Andrah-Pradesh UNA (India) is organizing seminars and awareness-raising walks to commemorate the UN's year of Fresh Water.
- **Focus on education of girls:** The Unitarian Service Committee (Canada) runs an Adolescent Development Program in Bangladesh which is a social-immunization program as well as an education project focused on the specific needs of adolescent girls. The 18 month, six-step program provides literacy skills, health information, reproductive health education, interpersonal skills training and confidence to young girls who do not have the opportunity to attend school otherwise.
- **Achieving universal primary education:** The All-China Youth Federation has created a Project of Hope which enables millions of poor students and drop-outs to attend school. The Bulgarian UNA is working on creating tolerance in schools, focusing on the education and relations with Roma children. ATD Fourth World, a French NGO, runs street libraries to bring books and art materials to children who are not in school due to work or other situations associated with extreme poverty.
- **Working with media:** The Female Lawyers Association of Benin (AFJB) is implementing a media strategy for the MDGs involving rural radio and other means of reaching citizens.

The majority of youth organizations which responded to the survey know about the MDGs (75%), while half are involved in work towards achieving the goals. Projects include:

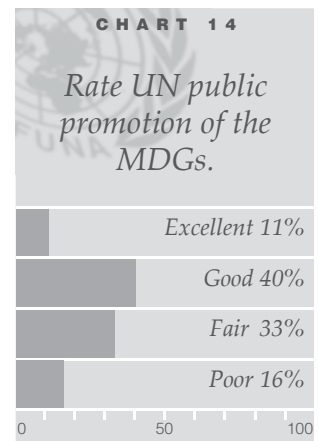
- an education program for children of Nomadic tribes in Mumbai
- work in partnership with the Youth Employment Summit (YES) to help eradicate poverty and hunger
- an AIDS programme run together with youth organizations in Africa

The launch in May of WFUNA-Youth, a global umbrella organization for all UN Youth Associations and UNA Youth Programs, was a significant step forward towards gaining more support for the MDGs among young people. Among its main objectives is the promotion of education and information sharing on the MDGs.

In close collaboration with WFUNA-Youth and WFUNA, the UNA-China is hosting a regional Model UN Conference in 2004 on the theme of Global Challenge 2015. The event will bring together over 250 university students from countries in the region to debate what it will take to achieve the MDGs in the Asia and Pacific region.

King Mohammed VI of Morocco convened a 2<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Congress in collaboration with Peace Child International and the Moroccan Youth Forum. More than 1,000 participants are sharing best practices on youth involvement in the MDGs.

The Nigerian UN Students Association is planning an African Youth Seminar for 2005 with a focus on the MDGs and the NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for African Development).



*"If the push to hold governments accountable really rests with civil society, then the UN needs to do more to highlight the efforts of the NGOs, and in addition to use more accessible language in its communications with civil society and the population at large."*

*Participant in the WFUNA Round Table dialogue on 28 June, 2003.*

## 9. Invigorate relations between the UN and civil society

In his report on UN Reform to the UN General Assembly in September 2002, the Secretary-General announced that he would establish a High Level Panel to review the UN's relations with civil society. The Panel is chaired by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and is composed of members from civil society, governments, the private sector and academia. It will submit a report with recommendations to the Secretary-General in April 2004.

In a paper to the Panel entitled "Civil Society and Global Governance", Mr. Cardoso argued that:

- The legitimacy of civil society organizations derives from what they do and not from whom they represent or from any kind of external mandate. In the final analysis, they are what they do.
- The power of civil society is a soft one. It is their capacity to argue, to propose, to experiment, to denounce, to be exemplary. It is not the power to decide.
- Such legitimacy is, by definition, a work in progress. It is never attained once and for all. It is gained in the arena of public debate and must be continually renewed and revitalized.
- This open-ended conversation, involving many actors pursuing different—and sometimes divergent—interests, is more than the sum of its parts. The debate and deliberation generated by civil society is at the heart of contemporary global governance.
- Strengthening civil society's interaction with the UN does not mean acting only at the highest levels of the system. Concomitant with the trend toward greater citizen involvement is the equally vigorous trend toward decentralization of power and resources to the local level. These processes present civil society with unprecedented opportunities for more horizontal forms of interaction and collaboration with UN programs and local authorities".

One of the findings from the survey is that as civil society organizations become more engaged with the MDG framework, they are developing ideas about how the United Nations could invigorate relations with civil society and in that process the United Nations may itself be reformed.

| *The survey specifically asked how the UN could better support civil society's role in implementing the MDGs.*

Over sixty respondents provided suggestions. There were many suggestions as to how MDG implementation processes could be strengthened and the performance of government, the UN and civil society improved in reducing poverty.

A stronger role for the UN in ensuring governments lived up to their commitments was called for by a respondent from Pakistan

- "The UN has to be allowed to play its role. Governments should be pressured or embargoed for showing a lack of interest in promoting the MDGs and for not allocating sufficient resources. For instance, UNESCO advocates investing 5% of GDP in the education sector and we should all support this.

Many respondents propose that the UN assist in building capacity in NGOs - both technically and in terms of advocacy.

- An Australian respondent remarked that the UN needs to “continue and enhance work to raise understanding and resources within developing country NGOs to do effective advocacy with their own government, donors and multilateral aid agencies.”
- Calls for capacity-building were matched with calls for NGO funding, outreach to smaller NGOs and a greater place for NGOs in decision-making: “The UN must encourage the participation of civil society in the elaboration and fulfillment of the MDGs. It should provide adequate information, participation and financing for civil society.” (Netherlands). An Italian respondent advocated “more outreach to small and mid-size NGOs working in areas related to particular goals”.

Several suggestions were made concerning the UN's ability to reach out to marginal constituencies and bring them into the process of development decision-making and global governance.

- A Colombian respondent sees a role for “joining with and improving the options of the world's poor”, while a suggestion from Pakistan encourages the UN to “improve its contacts in the poorest communities of the third world”.
- A U.S. NGO made some suggestions as to how representatives from poorer countries could be given more access to the UN / civil society dialogue: “The UN needs to facilitate and support democratization of the NGO process and improve access for developing countries' civil society organization representatives... where is the grassroots participation?”

CSO are increasingly aware that UN commitments and obligations may remain unfulfilled if they do not join forces, making use of their consultative relationship with the UN, to hold governments accountable. Respondents wanted the UN to provide more direct technical cooperation to NGOs to promote multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives, projects, and programs as a way of strengthening effective contribution of NGOs to ECOSOC and working towards a result-oriented implementation of the MDGs.

The CONGO Asian Civil Society Forum proclaimed that “We must capitalize on the overtures made under Goal 8, that is moving from mere lip service to a major overhaul of the international cooperation paradigm. Genuine international cooperation, free from abuses of power and vested interests, is not a matter of charity but a legal obligation under the UN Charter.”

To follow up the meeting in Asia, a Latin American and Caribbean NGO Consultation will be held on the MDGs in Chile. This is an initiative of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), together with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and in collaboration with WFUNA.

## Conclusion: Organizing for Change

One of the simple but positive contributions of many UN processes are agreed requirements for periodic review. Half-way through the first five years of the Millennium, CSOs are looking toward 2005 to measure achievement, and to reorganize where barriers and draw-backs continue to block human betterment.

At the same time, some organizations are high-lighting the targets of 2015 as challenges, setting their sites and marking each mile-stone passed.

The Millennium Development Goals are a tool, characterized by human hopes and human limitations. If effectively implemented, they can contribute to the realization of the broader vision of the Millennium Declaration, and the more ambitious goals of the global conferences and summits of the 1990s.

The modesty of the MDGs should be a provocation. If they are partial, why can't they be accomplished long before 2015? The simplicity of the MDGs, the targets and the time-lines, offer a compelling way forward into the future. If we can move this far, why not move much further?

# The MDGs Online

## United Nations

DEV LINK—A comprehensive website that documents how the MDGs are being localized within countries [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org) (click on Implementing the Millennium Development Goals)

Millenium Country Profiles—Country-wise profiles of MDG implementation progress <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi.asp>

MDGs Country Reports [www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html](http://www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html)

MDG Net—A list-serve which provides a continuous flow of information on the MDGs [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org) (sign up through the web-site, or email: [sarah.renner@undp.org](mailto:sarah.renner@undp.org) )

Official UN Millennium Goals site [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html)

Millennium Project—Information on the MDG research initiative [www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org)

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service [www.unsystem.org/ngls](http://www.unsystem.org/ngls)

## Civil Society

ANND—A network of 30 development organizations and 9 national networks from 12 Arab countries [www.annd.org](http://www.annd.org)

CHOIKE—This network of southern civil society organizations is an excellent source for MDG resources [www.choike.org](http://www.choike.org)

CONGO—The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative relationship with the UN [www.ngocongo.org](http://www.ngocongo.org)

EURODAD—The European Network on Debt and Development website presents important MDG analysis [www.eurodad.org](http://www.eurodad.org)

Hemispheric Social Alliance—An alliance of civil society organizations from across the Americas working for a fair global trade and financial system [www.asc-hsa.org](http://www.asc-hsa.org) (original Spanish) [www.web.net/comfront/hems2.htm](http://www.web.net/comfront/hems2.htm) (English)

InterAction—The largest alliance of US-based development and human rights NGOs; this site contains an insightful MDG policy paper and an examination of civil society dialogue around the goals [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

Net Aid—An on-line clearinghouse of MDG information and meeting place for those working on the goals [www.netaid.org](http://www.netaid.org)

Social Watch—News and information about MDG implementation [www.socialwatch.org](http://www.socialwatch.org)

The North-South Institute—research for a fairer world [www.nsi-ins.ca](http://www.nsi-ins.ca)

WFUNA—The World Federation of United Nations Association, hosts the 2002 “We the Peoples” survey [www.wfuna.org](http://www.wfuna.org); To join the MDG Campaign News, send an email to [mdgcampaign-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mdgcampaign-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

*The mission of the World Federation of United Nations Associations is to inform, sustain and energize a global network of United Nations Associations to support the principles and programs of the United Nations and to help shape its agenda.*



A peoples' movement in support of the United Nations

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