

FACTS ABOUT... **Poverty** and the *Millennium Development Goals*

The Problem

There are 1.2 billion people living on less than one dollar a day, and about half the world's population lives on less than two dollars a day. With few choices or opportunities, they are condemned to lives that are prone to hunger, disease, illiteracy, joblessness and hopelessness. Too often, they lack access to food, safe drinking water, sanitation, education, health care and modern energy services.

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, 147 heads of State and Government and 191 nations in total adopted the Millennium Declaration, which set out specific targets for development and poverty eradication. By 2015, they pledged to:

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe and affordable drinking water.
- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Achieve gender equality in access to education.
- Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality rate.
- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases.
- Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

Key Statistics

While there are substantial numbers of people living in poverty in developed countries, most of the people living in extreme poverty reside in developing countries. Of the 4.6 billion people in developing countries:

- Almost 800 million are not getting enough food to lead normal, healthy and active lives.

- More than 850 million are illiterate.
- More than one billion people lack access to clean water supplies.
- Some 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation.
- Nearly 325 million boys and girls are not in school.
- 11 million children under the age of five die each year from preventable causes.
- Around 36 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.
- Around 120 million couples who want to use contraception do not have access to it.
- East Asia's poverty rate has fallen from about 28 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 1998, with the number of people living in poverty declining from 418 million to 267 million.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, the poverty rate is about 48 per cent and has remained unchanged over the last decade. However, the number of people living in poverty has grown, from 220 million in 1990 to 300 million in 1998.

What Needs to Be Done

Progress is possible. Already, there has been success in increasing the average life expectancy worldwide from 60 to 70 years; the infant mortality rate has dropped from 100 to 50 per thousand live births; the number of under-nourished declined from roughly 900 million to about 800 million; and the adult literacy rate is up, from slightly over 60 per cent to nearly 80 per cent. The share of rural families in developing countries with access to safe water has grown more than fivefold within the past 30 years and contraceptive prevalence has reached nearly 50 per cent in developing countries.

Through trade and investment and reforms in other areas such as finance, governance, infrastructure and legal systems, countries that



successfully integrated into the world economy saw per-capita income grow up to 5 per cent per year in the 1990s. Growth in countries such as China, India, Uganda and Vietnam has driven a global reduction in the poverty rate. In the 1990s China reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty from 360 million to 210 million. In Uganda poverty fell 40 per cent, and in Vietnam it fell by half.

Many developing countries have already achieved universal primary education for both boys and girls, or are on track to do so. Over 60 per cent of the world's people live in 43 countries that have met or are on track to meet the goal of reducing by half the proportion of people who go hungry.

Despite these advances, poverty on the global scale continues. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called on donor countries to almost double present levels of assistance, to \$100 billion a year, in order to meet the Millennium Summit Goals.

The World Bank, in a report released in January 2002, came up with similar results, calculating that additional aid of \$40-\$60 billion a year would be needed to reach the Goals. World Bank President James Wolfensohn said that would be roughly a doubling of current aid flows, to approximately 0.5 per cent of gross national product for developed countries — still well below the 0.7 per cent target agreed by global leaders years ago.

In response to this call from the United Nations and others, an additional \$12 billion a year in aid by 2006 was pledged by world leaders at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002. Although the totals pledged did not meet the levels needed, they reversed the trend of declining aid, and donor countries may be motivated to give more if demands are met for accountability and results. How to generate additional funds and how best to direct aid in order to achieve sustainable development are key challenges facing the Johannesburg Summit.