

## GLOBAL MOBILIZATION AGAINST HUNGER

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**T**HERE ARE OVER 856 MILLION CHRONICALLY HUNGRY people in the world today. Since its foundation in 1962, following an earthquake in Iran and a hurricane in Thailand, the World Food Programme (WFP) has fed more than 1.4 billion of the world's poorest people and invested more than USD 30 billion. WFP was set up as a 3-year experimental programme and it has never stopped. At the UN Millennium summit held in 2000 189 world leaders agreed to halve the number of undernourished people by the year 2015. The World Bank has defined poverty as living with less than 1 USD a day. In 1990 30% of the world population lived in poverty. According to the millennium goal this percentage needs to be reduced to 15% in 2015. We just passed mid-point. What has been reached and what are the challenges?

According to the Millennium Development Goals Report of 2007 the percentage of poor people fell from 30 in 1990 to 20 in 2004. If this trend continues the target of 15% will be met for the world as a whole and for most regions. However, the success is unequally shared. The decline of poverty is mainly due to rapid economic growth in Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa the number of extremely poor people has levelled off, despite rapid population growth, and the poverty rate declined by nearly 6% since 2000. Nevertheless this region is not on track to reach the goal and the poor are the most economically disadvantaged in the world.

As part of the UN millennium goals, developed countries have made the commitments embodied in the 8th Millennium Goal: increase aid to 0.7% of national Income, improve its effectiveness and ensure that the rules of international trade foster poor countries' development. Implementation on these three issues has been lagging. Official development assistance trends have been improved but still fall short of what was promised. The donors that reached or exceeded the target are Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In 2006 Germany spent 0.36% of its national income on aid,

France 0.47% and the UK 0.52%. In 2006 the total aid was USD 103.9B which is 0.3% of the national income of all developed countries.

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the UN, stressed in his

report that all stakeholders need to meet their commitments to be able to meet the millennium goals and he is worried that there has not been an increase in official development assistance since 2004. However, not everybody agrees that financial aid is the way to end poverty. Jeffrey Sachs<sup>1</sup> stresses that development is mainly a matter of money and political will. He has set up the Millennium Villages initiative, supported by Millennium Promise, UNDP, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and the UN Millennium Project. Twelve Millennium Villages have been set up in ten African countries that work directly with the communities, NGOs and national governments to show how rural African communities can lift themselves out of poverty. According to Sachs there has been a lack of appropriate effort in the past. For development to work, rich countries need to help poor countries make certain practical investments that are often very basic. For decades we have

not tried to accomplish many of these basic things, like fighting malaria, an illness that kills up to 3 million people every year. Economic development works because of circumstances like geographical isolation, burden of disease, climate or soil, some countries cannot get started. Therefore we have to help them grow more food, fight malaria or handle recurring droughts. Once they are on the first rung of the ladder of development, they will start climbing just like the rest of the world. The money is needed to break the poverty trap and save lives.

His opponent in the development debate, William Easterly<sup>2</sup>, is critical about the effect of foreign aid and is of the opinion that the poor countries will help themselves to improve their situation. According to Easterly, the West has wasted 2300 billion USD on aid during the last 50 years. The Millennium Development Goals Program consists of 300

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*“ Hunger is felt by a slave and hunger is felt by a king. ”*

GHANIAN PROVERB

experts who have produced thousands of pages of documents explaining what needs to be done to attain these goals. They strengthen bureaucracy. Easterly argues that the ideas exposed by Sachs – and shared by the biggest part of aid organizations and NGOs – are nothing more than a well-intentioned, racist paternalism. He would like to see a «piecemeal reform» approach in which development efforts are carried out one step at a time with subsequent evaluation. If different strategies are implemented all at once, it will be difficult to isolate and understand which strategies work effectively and which did not. Developing countries' true saviours are the people of the countries themselves and those who would help them in their task must also be accountable to them. Aid groups need to search for achievable tasks with high potential for poor individuals to help themselves. To do so they would have to subject themselves to independent evaluation and be accountable to the intended beneficiaries for the results. Such an approach would contrast with the prevailing norm of never holding anyone individually accountable for the results of traditional government-to-government aid aimed at transforming whole societies. Aid could also be used to support the efforts of promising local social and business entrepreneurs who already have a successful track record, thereby letting locals take the lead with their superior motivation and inside knowledge.

Also Robert Calderisi<sup>3</sup> in his book *The trouble with Africa: why foreign aid isn't working* comes to the conclusion that fifty years of foreign aid has not resulted in less poverty. His view is that too much of foreign aid gets stolen by corrupt officials and the culture of the African people is such that they will not criticise their leaders. Calderisi would like all African government officials to make their bank accounts open to public scrutiny. African leaders should take more responsibilities and donations need to stop if given to countries where the governments are corrupt.

Jeffrey Sachs has moved the issue of global poverty into the mainstream but there is clearly no consensus about whether more financial aid will reduce poverty in the world. The discussion between Sachs and Easterly has become the cornerstone of the foreign aid debate in the 21st century.

Climate change is another challenge to ending poverty and its impacts add to the many reasons why there are still so many people suffering from hunger. It is worst for the poorest countries and the poorest people. The most climate sensitive sectors are agriculture and fisheries and these sectors are very important for their economies.

Global warming and changing rainfall patterns lead to lower yields and undermine food security. Changed rain patterns will increase the drought in Africa, where only four percent of cropped land is irrigated. Extreme weather like floods and droughts will both damage crops directly and nurture species that prey on them. The poorest countries have the least human, institutional and financial capacity to anticipate and respond to the effects of climate change.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) science agrees that human activities are driving changes in the Earth's climate with subsequent risks to livelihoods and human well-being. Goal 7 of the Millennium goals is focused on the environment and climate change, as part of the broader commitment to sustainable development. According to a report released by the IPCC in April 2007 the drops in yields combined with rising populations could put close to 50 million extra people at risk of hunger by 2020, an additional 132 million by 2050 and 266 million by 2080.

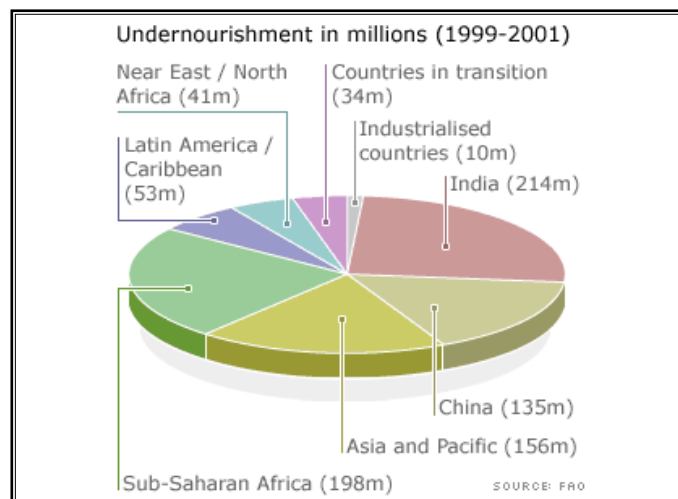
The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) is committed to achieve food security for all. Food security is defined by the World Bank as «access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life». Its key priority is to strengthen the resilience of crop systems to climate variability. It will provide tools and information for adapting agriculture, fisheries and forestry policies and practices. Even if all CO<sub>2</sub>

emissions would stop, the amount already emitted into the atmosphere will result in an enhanced greenhouse effect for the next 50 years. Therefore people will have to adapt to the effects of climate change.

FAO is organising a conference on world food security and the challenges of climate change and bio-energy in Rome in June 2008. The UN wants to reach political consensus on responding to climate change as soon as possible.

Risk financing is a new way at helping the poor cope with extreme weather conditions and natural disasters. In 2006 WFP awarded the French Insurance company Axa Re the world's first insurance contract for humanitarian emergencies. The insurance was to provide cash payouts to farmers in the event of a severe drought during Ethiopia's 2006 agricultural season.

Also the Swiss Insurance company Swiss Re tries to diminish the effects of climate change by providing financial protection for the effects of adverse weather in emerging countries. It has launched its Climate Adaptation Development Programme (CADP) at the Clinton Global Initiative 2007



meeting. In a first phase, it aims at providing financial protection against drought conditions for up to 400,000 people in Africa. Swiss Re started in India in 2004 and sold 280,000 policies to smallholder farmers. Now it wants to provide financial protection in the case of extreme drought to three village clusters in Kenya, Mali and Ethiopia. Swiss Re partners with Millennium Promise and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, which has pioneered climate modeling and climate risk management approaches, and is part of The Earth Institute at Columbia University. The goal of this partnership is to develop and implement climate risk indices for all twelve clusters of Millennium Villages in Africa.

According to the UN, the challenge of climate change is to become an integral element of each country's development strategy. All development partners should collaborate intensively to come up with a shared global strategy to address this global problem.

Let us hope that the global efforts to reduce the human influence on climate change and building a world without hunger will contribute to world peace.

<sup>1</sup> Director of The Earth Institute, Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development, Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University, Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.



From 2002 to 2006, he was Director of the and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals, also President and Co-Founder of a nonprofit organization aimed at ending extreme global poverty.

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Economics at New York University, joint with Africa House, and Co-Director of NYU's Development Research Institute. He is also a non-resident Fellow of the Center for Global Development in Washington DC. He spent sixteen years as a Research Economist at the World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> Worked on Africa since 1975, mostly at the World Bank, where he held a variety of senior positions including Chief of the Bank's Regional Mission in Western Africa based in the Ivory Coast (1991-94). He also served as the Bank's international spokesman on Africa (1997-2000) and Country Director for Central Africa (2000-2002), where he was deeply involved in defending and supervising the controversial Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline.

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