1000 Days to Go

Accelerating the Fight against Extreme Poverty

2013

ONE

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On April 5, 2013, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) deadline will be just 1,000 days away. The world has entered the final leg of its momentous 15-year journey to halve extreme poverty, reduce child mortality by two-thirds, reverse the tide against HIV/AIDS and malaria, and ensure that more people have access to basic services, such as primary education and safe drinking water.

The MDGs amount to a promise the world made to itself. They are commitments that we have all made to each other. The 2015 deadline, which once seemed so far off, is now fast approaching. So it is time to ask ourselves a series of pointed questions. Where do we stand on these ambitious goals? Have we collectively done enough to convert them into reality? And what needs to happen during the last 1,000 days to ensure that the world not only sprints to the finish line – but blows right through it? For it is only if we can demonstrate a willingness to be held accountable for the achievement of those development goals that we have *now* that we will be able to secure an ambitious development agenda for the period *after* 2015.

Where Do We Stand?

The world is a very different place from when UN Member States originally discussed the MDGs and then agreed to them. Extreme poverty has already been halved, falling from 43% of world population to 21% in 2010.[1] Child mortality rates have been slashed, with 2.65 million fewer children dying in 2011 than in 2000. Over 8 million people in the world now receive lifesaving AIDS treatments, compared with just 300,000 in 2002. Coupled with effective prevention strategies, AIDS prevalence rates are steadily receding in many hard hit developing countries.

This is not just localized progress. Dramatic headway has been achieved in every single developing region, particularly over the last few years. The old argument that the MDGs are being driven solely by China's rise is not only untrue, but does a gross injustice to the remarkable trends underway in the poorest regions of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, many developing countries have dramatically accelerated their progress towards the MDG targets. ONE's forthcoming 2013 DATA Report will provide full details, but based on the most recent World Bank data, we can already say:[2]

- 63 developing countries are on track to cut extreme poverty rates in half by 2015, including 16 located in sub-Saharan Africa.
- 72 countries are projected to improve access to safe drinking water by half, including 19 sub-Saharan African countries.
- 65 developing countries are on track to cut child mortality rates by two-thirds, including 13 in sub-Saharan Africa.
- 65 countries are projected to achieve their gender equality MDG (e.g., ensuring girls have equal access to primary and secondary education), including 14 in sub-Saharan Africa.

[1] Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than $1.25 per day, and compared against a 1990 baseline.

[2] World Development Indicators and ONE calculations, **http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators**

So who are these MDG trailblazers? Inside Africa, they include countries like Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, and Uganda. All of these nations are on track to achieve at least half of the eight core MDG targets. Outside of Africa, they are countries such as Bhutan, Cambodia, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Sri Lanka. Some of these countries are well-known names in the development community, while others would not be immediately associated with dramatic development progress. But existing data suggests that they are all making monumental advances.

While progress has been historic in many countries and across many of the MDG targets, several critical gaps must be confronted. These are the tough nuts to crack, but which must be targeted over the last 1,000 days and beyond.

- Only 22 poor countries (seven in sub-Sarahan Africa) are on track to ensure that every child receives a full primary education — not to mention a quality education. While this lagging performance is largely driven by very low starting levels (hence unrealistic targets), this means that 58 million children are not getting even basic life and employment skills.[3]
- Only 30 developing countries are projected to meet their maternal mortality goal. This means that over 100 countries examined will fail to reach their respective targets.
- Currently, 26 countries are projected to meet zero or just one MDG target by 2015 – including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Poor governance and/or conflict are leading causes behind most of these lagging cases – and they are causes which are not easily or quickly resolved.

Who's Getting Ready to Sprint through the Finish Line?

Underpinning the progress on development goals are substantial increases in development resources over the past decade. African government resources have quadrupled – from $84 billion in 2000 to $359 billion in 2011; accounting for approximately 78% of total resources available in African nations.[4] Donor countries have dramatically increased aid levels over the past decade, but official development assistance began to decline in 2011, and today, the OECD announced that global aid levels have declined for a second year in a row, down by nearly 3% (excluding debt, in constant prices). 15 out of 24 countries decreased aid in 2012 and the largest declines in global assistance were from Spain (-51.26%) and Italy (-25.03%). However, encouragingly, nine countries managed to increase development assistance, including the biggest increases from Korea (+17.22%), Luxembourg (+9.77%) and Australia (+9.13%). Additionally, further aid increases are in the pipeline for 2013 from some countries, most notably the United Kingdom, which last month confirmed it is reaching the target of 0.7% of national income dedicated to aid.

[3] Source: UNESCO (2012), *Education for All Global Monitoring Report.*

[4] African government expenditures are calculated by converting government expenditure shares (measured as a percentage of GDP) from the *World Development Indicators*, into absolute expenditure estimates.

Donors clearly need to step up with financial support for developing countries' homegrown efforts. But the story is about more than just new money. It is imperative that all resources (existing and new) are transparently managed and effectively spent. And it is also about ensuring that every Dollar, Kwacha, Naira, or Pound is targeting priority sectors and delivering lasting results for the world's poorest citizens.

To this end, every development actor – including both developing and donor governments – should present clear MDG acceleration plans that span the next 1,000 days and beyond. They should publicly declare how they are moving beyond business as usual and state how they will intensify efforts with accountable actions and resources attached. For developing countries, governments should present these plans to their constituents in a clear, public way. For donor governments, these plans should feed into the UNDP-led process and be posted publicly as well.

- **African MDG Acceleration Frameworks:** Nineteen African countries have signed up to produce costed MDG acceleration frameworks (MAFs), which focus on areas of lagging performance. Seven of those plans are ready for implementation. For example, Burkina Faso is focused on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. If its $310 million plan is fully financed and implemented effectively, Burkina Faso should be able to guarantee food security to 200,000 poor households in the most vulnerable regions and enable some 860,000 schoolchildren to receive a meal every day throughout the school year. Ghana and Uganda are focused on jump-starting progress on maternal mortality through improved access to skilled birth attendance services and emergency care, with similar costed plans. All developing countries should come forward with similar, robust plans.

- **Donor MDG Acceleration Plans:** Several donor organizations and governments, such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, have produced their own MDG acceleration plans. These plans articulate implementation priorities and emphasize technical expertise to energize activity around those goals furthest behind their 2015 targets – for example, scaling up targeted interventions that strengthen existing structures and introducing innovative resource mobilization mechanisms. As a starting point, these efforts should be built off, and closely aligned with, developing countries' own acceleration plans. This will ensure that all available firepower is squarely focused on the same targets.

What More Needs to Happen Over the Next 1,000 Days?

There is a clear need to instill a greater sense of urgency and focus throughout development institutions, along with developing and donor countries. This is particularly essential given the growing interest, energy, and momentum for a new set of development goals and/or indicators for the post-2015 period. In practical terms, there are a number of concrete ways to promote this necessary sense of urgency.

[5] For additional details, see the UNDP's **MDG Acceleration Framework.**

- **Create a Multilateral War Room:** The UN Secretary General, UNDP Administrator, and World Bank President should lead quarterly extreme poverty 'war room' meetings with an action-oriented agenda focused on: (1) tracking up-to-date MDG outcomes and trends; and (2) executing plans to accelerate progress on specific goals, and in specific countries. After each meeting, they should state publicly how they will accelerate results through the 2015 deadline, including what types of adjustments are required.

- **Back Effective Vehicles:** 2013 is the year of multilateral replenishments. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the African Development Fund (AfDF), and the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) will be soliciting multi-year financial pledges simultaneously from donor governments. All three institutions play a central role in supporting the MDGs – especially in Africa. The Global Fund will likely ask for $15 billion for the 2014-2016 period. If it successfully achieves this figure, and if domestic and global financing for health continues to scale up in tandem, the Global Fund can help significantly close global financing gaps needed to essentially bring AIDS, TB, and malaria each under control in the countries it supports. Despite difficult domestic budgetary challenges, all donors should make every effort to ensure that these three essential organizations are financed to the greatest extent possible.

- **Open the Books:** All governments must scale up efforts that will increase the impact and effectiveness of both existing and new resources. For most developing nations, particularly those with lagging MDG performance, this means dramatically improving budget and expenditure transparency and management. At the same time, all donors should accelerate their implementation of aid transparency commitments, reporting in line with the International Aid Transparency Initiative so it is clear what money is being spent and where.

- **Identify Blockages:** The Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) Initiative of the World Bank – which tracks expenditures along with service delivery quality and performance in the education and health sectors – should be scaled up. Through these surveys, we have learned, for example, that Tanzanian teachers are absent from the classroom over 53% of the time, students receive an average of only two hours of instruction per day, and funding leakages average 37% in the education sector. Armed with this type of information, stakeholders can demand improved results and hold all related parties accountable.

As part of our commitment to do all we can to encourage accelerated progress towards the MDGs, The ONE Campaign's flagship DATA Report, to be released in May 2013, will examine developing countries' MDG progress, along with domestic and donor government investments in the health, agriculture, and education sectors. *Financing the Fight,* as the report will be entitled, will serve to remind us all of what has been achieved so far, and what can be done if the world collectively keeps its promises. Achieving the MDGs is everyone's fight; let's redouble our efforts to get the job done.