



GUEST EDITORIAL

Millennium Development Goals, 2000-2009

Challenges and Opportunities

By Almaz Negash, Entwine Global

In September 2000, the international community under the leadership of the United Nations agreed to adapt *eight dire global challenges to create a sustainable development* in countries where people live on less than a dollar a day. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

These goals are unique in that they are backed by a consensus of governments throughout the world. They were set as aggressive goals but also ones that were understood to be achievable with equally aggressive actions by the member nations involved. They are also people-centric and measurable, two important considerations in setting any goals with the intent of transforming communities from the "bottom up."

Since 2000, the UN has reported significant success in many areas of the MDGs in some specific parts of the world. According to the World Bank 2008 report, poverty in East Asia and Pacific regions has decreased from 56% in 1990 to 18% in 2005. As well, South Asia has cut its poverty rate from 51% to 40%. Unfortunately, Sub-Saharan African countries are still lagging behind, and malnutrition has only declined from 20% in 1992 to 16% in 2004.

Furthermore, the recent hike in food prices is jeopardizing the limited gains the MDG made in reducing hunger. Combined with the global financial crisis, this has produced concerns that by some estimates the number of people living on less than \$1 a day may rise by about 40 million, and people living on less than \$2 per day could increase by 100 million.¹ The world's poorest people, most of whom live in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America have nothing to do with the causes of the global financial crisis and yet they are burdened with another "grim" and uncertain future because of it.

¹ UN News Service, January 29, 2009

Challenges and Opportunities

In 2005, as part of the Santa Clara University Global Women's Leadership Network's (GWLN) annual leadership training, Women Leaders for the World (WLW), I presented on the MDG Global Challenges and Opportunities for which at the time research showed that² :

- *Approximately 121 million children are out of school worldwide.*
- *Some 39% of all primary school-aged children either do not attend or have no access to formal schooling.*
- *More than 113 million children never go to school of any kind.*
- *Approximately 250 million children are involved in part- or full-time work, many of whom are in exploitative situations.*
- *HIV has infected more than 60 million people worldwide, and each day 14,000 people are newly infected, more than half of them under age 25.*

Since presenting at WLW in 2005, I have been tracking the progress and the challenges the MDG faces. I became even more interested to see how the latest global financial crisis may have impacted the program. In the wake of this crisis and partly because of it, according to the *World Bank Global Monitoring*, even though some countries are making good progress towards achieving MDG goals, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa lag on all MDGs, including poverty reduction, and Southeast Asia falls behind on human development.

These challenges, however, are about far more than providing funding. These challenges cannot be met by any one government or entity, or even by dealing with one issue at a time. These issues are systemic, intertwined with societal, institutional, geographic, and global economic forces that require equally systemic responses. The momentum in many of these MDG areas is also sufficiently stagnant that small solutions, however well meaning, are simply not enough.

Read entire article by going to: www.voicesofgloballeaders.org

² UNICEF, UN Population Fund



Featured Women Leader

Walking Women's Road

By Ellen Boneparth

This is Ellen Boneparth's last newsletter profile. We thank her for the many interesting ones she has supplied over the last few years. Her words have touched many hearts and minds. It is fitting that this last one is about Peg Snyder, a true "global woman leader," and that it appears during March, the month of International Women's Day, March 6.

From Ellen: "This is my last profile for the GWLN Newsletter. I know whoever takes over will enjoy doing these profiles as much as I have."

Anyone would envy Peg Snyder's resume.

In 2009, she lists as current employment "Independent researcher, writer and lecturer, associate at Columbia University, Vice President of the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund and Treasurer of the Green Belt Movement International." While this is enviable on its own, it's even more enviable knowing Peg just celebrated her 80th birthday. I doubt Peg ever articulated the word "retirement."

After serving as a university administrator from 1954 to 1961, Peg took off for Africa and served as an advisor to voluntary organizations in Kenya and Tanganyika from 1961 to 1964. She returned to the United States in 1965 to fill three roles (not untypical of Peg) as an Assistant Director of the Program of East African Studies at Syracuse University, consultant to the State University of New York and lecturer on international affairs. In the mid-1960s she was director of village development research in Tanzania. Back in Africa from 1971 to 1978, she served as a regional advisor to the UN Economic Commission of Africa in Addis Ababa, director of its NGO program and co-founder of the African Centre for Women.

For many of us, Peg's most memorable work involved the founding of UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) where she served as Founding Director for 11 years from 1978 to 1989. When I asked Peg what her greatest accomplishment was at UNIFEM, she replied, "We built a firm foundation legally (its administrative location in the UN), collecting its partners in the work at headquarters and in the field. The fact that it endures today, 33 years later, and has over 100 million

dollars annually, testifies to the strength of those foundations." After leaving UNIFEM in 1989, Peg became a consultant, lecturer and writer, with a year at Princeton's Center of International Studies and two years on a Fulbright in the Women's Studies Department at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

Going back to her UNIFEM days, I asked Peg what was her "hardest task at the agency." She responded, "The hardest part was getting UNIFEM going. We had only a resolution of the General Assembly which stipulated the fund was established to help those countries that needed help to implement the World Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Women. From that overall direction we had to set out guidelines and forms for applications, types of activities to be assisted, countries to be served, procedures for evaluating requests for help, etc, etc, what the fund could and could not do."

Fine, that was the bureaucratic challenge, but there was also the equally big challenge of gaining legitimacy for a women's development program. Peg added, "We also had a lot of advocacy to do in the UN with colleagues who didn't yet grasp the importance of women in development work. For example, there were those who said that only male foresters should plant trees - not village women. The village women we assisted later cheered their leader, Wangari Maathai, when she received the Nobel Peace Prize."

Peg came to GWLN through her colleague from Ethiopia days, Nancy Hafkin. How lucky GWLN is to have two of the founding mothers of women in development on its board! Nancy toasted Peg at her birthday, saying, "Peg showed me retirement was not the end of one's life work, but simply a change of venue and the opportunity to work mostly at home in comfortable clothes."

I wondered who all was invited to Peg's birthday party. Peg described the party as "a celebration of many aspects of the global women's movement, including three colleagues who had helped to found the African Training and Research Centre for Women in 1975; colleagues who helped found Women's World Banking in the 1970s; academics concerned with women and international development, including those who specialized in intermediate technologies, publications, ICTs; pioneers in the international development movement, including with UNIFEM. And of course my family and my neighbors."

Peg published an article in 2004 entitled "Walking My Own Road" (in *Developing Power*, edited by Arvonne Fraser and Irene Tinker). The women of the world are blessed that Peg's own road has been our road.