



ODUMUNC 2011
Issue Brief for the
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum

The Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

By: Julian Lawson

"We must not fail the billions who look to the international community to fulfill the promise of the Millennium Declaration for a better world. Let us meet in September to keep the promise."
Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

Introduction:

As the 21st century unfolds, new challenges confront the global community. The alleviation of poverty and human suffering are among the very greatest of these. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the basic mechanism of the international community to achieve its most fundamental goals in the struggle against poverty. The process was established in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in September 2000 by all 192 United Nations member states. It recognizes the most imperative issues needing improvement among the world's developing nations. The main goals established by the summit include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, ensuring environmental sustainability, developing a global partnership for development, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. Since the adoption of these target goals, the world community has made great strides in meeting the 2015 deadline. However, many nations have struggled to meet the target levels as the deadline approaches in five years.

Current Situation:

In September 2010 the United Nations held a follow-on summit conference to review the current status of the MDG implementation. According to the UN Development Programme, the eight MDG's are broke down into 21 quantifiable targets and 60 indicators. The indicators conclude that many of the original goals are nearly completed or have made significant progress. As declared in the UN outcome document (A/65/L.1), successes have been made in combating extreme poverty, increasing school enrollment, reducing child deaths and reducing the spread of infectious diseases. However, the General Assembly recognizes several barriers that compromise 2015 deadline of the MDG's; in which climate change, the global financial crisis and a decline in global support are explicitly expressed as potential problems. Therefore, the 2010 summit emphasized to prioritize poverty reduction, gender equality, environmental development and child rights. The summit procured \$40 billion for women and children health. Moreover, the GA called upon all member nations and NGO's to assists in meeting the demands of the MDG 2015 deadline.



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Background:

Within the past 15 years, the reduction of poverty and the advancement of development can be attributed to several governmental and intergovernmental actors. Prior to the MDGs, the global community had a disorganized approach to solving the world's social and economic issues. Many states would act unilaterally, often in their own self interests, and NGO's attempted to address such issues without the will, legitimacy or funding of UN member states. The Millennium Declaration granted state actors and NGO's the power to truly confront such issues with uniformity. Prominent nations such as China, India, United Kingdom and United States have greatly impacted the progress of the MDG's. Moreover, African states have also played a major role in the progression towards satisfying the MDGs.

The MDGs have become one of the most important issues in the United Nations. Since 2002, international giving has increased 21 percent. Despite increased international cooperation, the goal of reducing hunger and poverty in developing nations is still far from the par level. For instance, the percentage of children under five who are under weight has risen by several percentage points within the last year in Southern Asia, Latin American, the Caribbean and Western Asia. Eastern Asia has seen a 50 percent increase within the past five years in regards to this statistic. Enrollment in primary education has continued to rise, reaching 89 percent in the developing world. But the pace of progress is insufficient to ensure the 2015 deadline. In addition, for girls in some regions, education remains intangible. Child deaths are falling, but not quickly enough to reach the target. All of these indicators and statistics reaffirm the importance of the MDGs and the urgency for the international community to work in unison to achieve the global goals.

Major Actors:

Debates over the MDGs engage the entire international community. Western countries and Japan tend to provide important leadership and funding in the pursuit of the goals. However, there are many other important actors such as China, India, and many African and Asian states that contribute to the achievement of the MDGs.

African States: Africa is the largest target region for most development assistance. African states tend to work collectively in international institutions to maximize aid donations and increase their national control over the issue of aid. Regional organizations such as the African Development Bank, African Union Commission and many others are fundamental to gaining political and financial support. African states such as Angola, Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Sierra Leone have been confronted with increased level of child deaths. However, in recent years the continent has seen great improvement through progressive leadership and increased internal



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and external funding. The MDG African steering group has placed extreme importance on food security, education and health, issues which are proclaimed by the group to be feasible.

China: Without any doubt, the development of China has greatly impacted the progression of the MDG's. Because China is the world's most populous country, it has positively impacted the global MDG indicators, which many analysts declare to be a victory. However, this is mainly due to a drop in China's poverty rate from 60 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2005. Because China and India accounted for over 62 percent of the planet's poor in 1990, changes to the world's poverty rate depend heavily on their performance. Therefore, an inference made between the global poverty rate and the Chinese poverty rate may create an *ecological fallacy*, thus distorting the indicator's true global measurements. But China still strives to reduce its poverty problems, a major consideration in its economic development policies. More recently China has emerged a major source of foreign aid and economic investment for developing regions, making its policies an essential consideration in development planning elsewhere.

Europe accounts for most of the world's direct development assistance. European initiatives increasingly shape the international dialogue, due to its unique combination of strong rhetoric and visionary proposals, and generous funding. Germany is the world's third largest agricultural exporter and the third most important donor country for development aid. They insist on creating a "green revolution" to combat hunger and poverty. France and Spain support a financial transactions tax (FTT) which requires the developed states to provide aid to the developing states. The United States opposes, while Germany and United Kingdom are hesitant to back this so called "Robin Hood" tax.

India: India is an important actor in the MDGs. First, India is the world's second most populous country. Moreover, since 1991, India has more than doubled its GDP, yet it has made little progress in meeting the demands of the MDG's. Currently, India has nearly half (48%) of the world's chronically malnourished children under five, which is 60.8 million children. In addition, the gap between lower and middle class is rising at an exponential rate. If India can confront this issue, along with several others, then true progress towards the MDG deadline will be assured.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): The NAM consists of 118 member states, of which sixty three members (53 percent) are classified as priority countries, with high under-five children and maternal deaths. The NAM is publically supportive of the MDGs but criticizes the international community (primarily the Western Bloc) as not creating conducive environments for completing its goals. NAM has strength in numbers. The current Secretary-General of NAM, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt has shown to be a strong leader for the large caucus.



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Non Governmental Organizations: NGOs have been instrumental in helping facilitate and implement the MDGs. International organizations such as the Red Cross, Red Crescent, Doctors Without Borders, OXFAM and hundreds others provide immediate and long term assistance in target countries. Moreover, they help to assess the progression of indicators and provide essential “on the ground” information.

The United States of America strongly supports progress toward the MDGs, but historically prefers trade-based mechanisms rather than financial aid. American aid donations are much smaller proportionately than other donor countries, unless military assistance is included in its giving totals. American official assistance generally refuses support to non-democratic or socialist countries, which are typical characteristics of many prospective recipients. This makes America isolated in many international forums debating these issues. But America’s focus on development, democratic principles and measurable results within the MDG debate carries considerable clout.



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Author's Biography: Julian Lawson is a senior in Old Dominion University's Undergraduate Program in Political Science and an officer of the Old Dominion University Model United Nations Society.