

This week in New York, the voices of children will demand that world leaders go beyond rhetoric and focus on the steps necessary to halt the 8 million preventable deaths of the world's poorest children that occur every year. As we approach the 10th anniversary of the UN Millennium Summit—a watershed moment when 189 countries pledged to achieve—eight specific development goals by 2015, the Global Movement for Children (GMC) will be reflecting upon progress made and the challenges that lie ahead.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent not only a compelling political commitment to humanity, but form the very foundation of a healthy, sustainable and fair future for all—and more importantly for the fundamental rights of children as put forth by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A child without a present is a child without a future: malnutrition, armed conflict, ill health or poverty deprive millions of a safe and secure childhood, but they also extinguish any hope of a productive and secure adulthood.

Millions of children face an uncertain future owing to extreme poverty, , contaminated water and preventable diseases. Many millions face no future at all because their young lives are cut short by disease and ill-health.

Today, we must recognise the efforts made in many countries to move towards the achievement of the MDGs: worldwide mortality in children under the age of five has dropped from 11.9 million deaths in 1990 to 7.7 million in 2010. Over the last decade, many developing countries have crossed the 90% enrolment threshold set out by the MDGs.

Nevertheless, despite these successes, progress remains uneven—both with respect to the eight MDGs and around the world. Although living conditions have improved for many, 40% of the world's population still live in extreme poverty: and this percentage has barely budged since the year 2000 when MDG targets were set.

Thus, equity needs to lie at the very heart of every governmental policy: It is also the measure

upon which world leaders must base their plan of action over these next critical years.

And the challenges are many: current world economic, food and energy crises are compromising not only our ability to achieve MDG targets, but those achievements made thus far. Moreover, backing away from development assistance commitments during the world's worst financial meltdown in 80 years is no way to keep a promise. Today, it is the poorest of the poor who have been affected most by a crisis that was spawned by the wealthiest. Industrialized nations need to take responsibility and honour their commitment to earmark 0.7% of gross national product to overseas assistance. Transforming a financial transaction tax to cover internal deficits and to bail out the financial sector without any heed to the global development agenda is no way to bring about lasting and sustainable economic recovery. World leaders also need to heed the development round of the World Trade Organization and thus ensure that international trade rules and regulations are fair and equitable, and that they allow the poor to pull themselves out of poverty.

The UN Summit offers governments one last chance to do their part—to run that final mile and make a lasting difference in the lives of their own people. Global civil society has an outstanding opportunity to take action and hold governments and donors accountable. Most importantly however, it our youngest citizens—our children—who will either praise or condemn our legacy.

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