

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The Road Forward for the U.S.

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In his historic speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2009, President Obama stated that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are America's goals. He announced he would present a global plan to make them a reality at the MDG Summit in September 2010. The U.S. must lead at this event and on the MDGs going forward. We call upon President Obama and his team to work with concerned parties to finalize his promised plan that provides the framework the U.S. Government will use to fulfill its commitments to achieve the MDGs by August 15th. Releasing his plan in advance will signal concerted U.S. leadership and enhance the preparatory meetings for the Summit. InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based relief and development NGOs, welcomes the Administration's commitment and has developed this document based on its members' and allies' decades of critical field experience around the world. This paper outlines key recommendations on each of the eight MDGs that we strongly believe the U.S. Government should include in its promised plan. (We address the three health-related goals (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) together because the goals are closely intertwined and must be approached together.)

Summary of Recommendations

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Fully fund Feed the Future's three-year budget of \$3.5 billion.
- Pursue the country-led, whole-of-society approach of Feed the Future.

Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education

- Launch a Global Education Initiative to galvanize and coordinate education assistance that boosts access and quality and leads to host country sustainability.
- Devote sufficient resources to close the global Education for All funding gap.
- Provide meaningful support for a reformed and independent Education for All Fast Track Initiative.
- Ensure educational opportunities are provided to marginalized children and youth.

Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women

- Integrate gender into all foreign assistance policies and programs.
- Pass the International Violence Against Women Act and ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Create an Office of Gender Integration, which reports directly to the USAID Administrator.
- Focus educational assistance on overcoming barriers to girls in school.

continued on next page

Goal 4 Reduce child mortality; Goal 5 Improve maternal health; and Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Fully fund and implement the President’s Global Health Initiative.
- Fulfill commitments to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other health programs.
- Scale up efforts in fragile and disease-burdened states, and design and implement health programs in relief environments that lay the foundation for strengthening health systems and transitions to development.
- Support research for effective and sustainable prevention and treatment programs.
- Support the G8’s Muskoka Initiative on maternal, newborn and child mortality, and play a leadership role in promoting the Joint Action Plan for Maternal and Child Health to be launched at the September UN MDG Summit.
- Promote gender equity and assure equality of access to health care.

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

- Tackle climate change domestically in the U.S. to support and facilitate an international agreement through the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) process.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for water, sanitation and hygiene development assistance.
- Develop a comprehensive international urban development policy.

Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

Trade:

- Expand full duty-free and quota-free market access to all exports from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- Eliminate rules of origin that restrict input sourcing to increase market access for LDCs.
- Encourage and support South-South and regional trade.
- Ensure U.S. trade and agriculture policies do not undermine U.S. development objectives.

Debt:

- Promote the expansion of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI).
- Promote debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries facing exogenous shocks from the continuing global financial crisis.
- Reduce odious debt.

Partnerships:

- Implement the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action principles on aid effectiveness.
- Decentralize the strategic planning process, moving it to the country level, and re-invigorate USAID missions as the lead development agency for this country-level planning.
- Work with U.S. and local civil society to strengthen local ownership and build national capacity.
- Improve coordination across U.S. Government agencies involved in development programming.

The U.S. Global Development Strategy Framework

While there are eight Millennium Development Goals, we urge the United States to construct a “whole of government” approach to development, which will require coherent and mutually reinforcing official development assistance (ODA), trade and investment policies and practices. The whole of government approach needs to involve civil society organizations in the United States and in developing countries in strategic planning at the country level as well as in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs. The U.S. needs to work with civil society both in the LDCs and the U.S. to build transparency, accountability and integrity measures into programs. Our policies should support the development of representative and well-governed states that can meet

the needs of their populations by providing decent work, fair and inclusive treatment of all peoples, and promotion of gender equity while promoting a healthy environment.

Accountability

To strengthen systems of accountability for development results by donors and developing country governments, an effective accountability mechanism needs to be established at the UN for all the MDGs. This system should be based on a robust, credible, transparent and inclusive monitoring and accountability framework recognized at the global and national levels. It should be guided by the principle of providing evidence-based analysis and recommendations. The framework needs to find a balance between the collection and assessment of quantitative and qualitative data, an effort that will be enhanced through the inclusion of civil

society in the framework. It should produce appropriate results monitoring and program assessment based on the existing MDG impact indicators to improve development learning, program design and practice. The accountability framework should consolidate global commitments related to the MDGs, compare them to resource needs and deadlines, and include mechanisms for monitoring and promoting compliance to be summarized in an annual comprehensive accountability report. Implementation of all policies and programming should be guided by the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness Principles.



Goal 1: **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

The Executive Branch and Congress need to meet the stated goals of Feed the Future (the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative) to "sustainably reduce chronic hunger, raise the incomes of the rural poor, and reduce the number of children suffering from under-nutrition." These recommendations include policy, program design, management and monitoring elements that together will help ensure that these U.S. investments contribute strongly to achieve MDG 1.

Recommendations:

1. The Administration and Congress should work together to fully fund the Administration's request for \$3.5 billion over the next three years to implement the Feed the Future initiative. Other countries must join the U.S. in meeting their L'Aquila commitments, mobilizing a total of \$20 billion by 2012.
2. Pursue the country-led, whole-of-society approach of the Administration's Feed the Future initiative, with a comprehensive framework that includes sustainable agricultural development, maternal and child nutrition, improved emergency response and management, and safety net systems. Integrated goals within Feed the Future should include:
 - A primary objective of gains for poor people;
 - A focus on small-scale farmers and their families, many of whom are women;
 - Environmental sustainability, climate change resilience and risk reduction that incorporate human vulnerability assessments;
 - A gender-sensitive approach integrated into all elements of food security programming;
 - Preventing and treating malnutrition with scaled up, evidence-based interventions with priority for pregnant women and young children;
 - Improving and integrating nutrition activities in agriculture programming; and

- Supporting policies that help smallholders' access credit, agricultural extension and other inputs and services.



Goal 2: **Achieve universal primary education**

G8 countries have a long history of pledging support for education. At Gleneagles in 2005 the G8 pledged to "ensure that by 2015 all children have access to and complete and compulsory primary education of good quality..." At Heiligendamm in 2007 the G8 "reiterated their commitment to 'Education for All' for sustainable development in Africa." Fulfilling these existing commitments is critical to achieving MDG 2.

Recommendations:

1. Launch a Global Education Initiative, similar to the Feed the Future effort for food security, to galvanize and coordinate assistance that boosts access and quality and leads to host country sustainability. The initiative should continue investments in basic education programs, better leverage U.S. assistance and improve inter-agency coordination while reaffirming quality basic education as an ultimate goal of U.S. education assistance. It should encourage working collaboratively with host-country governments and other local stakeholders (including civil society) that create effective programs that produce benefits beyond the education sector as well.¹
2. Together with other G8 countries, devote sufficient resources to close the global Education for All funding gap as promised in the Gleneagles pledge. U.S. multi-lateral contributions should leverage our overall impact while reinforcing U.S. bilateral aid efforts.
3. Provide meaningful support for a reformed and independent Education for All Fast Track Initiative with an effective governance structure to engage all stakeholders, monitor funding flows and the delivery of donor commitments, and extend its impact in places where out-of-school children reside.
4. Place renewed emphasis on reaching marginalized populations, particularly rural areas, conflict-affected areas, children with disabilities and child laborers. Ensure that quality basic education is a part of all U.S. emergency responses, including post-conflict situations. Also develop policies and implement programs that address

¹ This should include addressing funding and implementation gaps in funding. Reforms should improve teacher recruitment, training and retention, foster safe schools, support curriculum development and implementation, and ensure effective school administration and greater parental and community involvement in school decisions while providing tools for effective monitoring and evaluation of student learning.

the economic, cultural, geographic and political factors that keep these children from receiving a quality basic education.



Goal 3:
Promote gender equality and empower women

The face of poverty has been, and continues to be, overwhelmingly female. Investments in women and girls benefit families and communities, resulting in lower mortality rates and declining fertility rates. These investments increase women's access to productive economic activity and health and education prospects for the next generation. Investing in MDG 3 is catalytic for the achievement of numerous other goals.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to integrate gender into all foreign assistance policies and programs, including eliminating discrimination and violence against women. Have a dedicated stream of funding supporting gender equality strategies, monitoring expenditures and finances projects, including funding for local women's organizations that focus on empowering women and girls in each development assistance agency.
2. Congress should pass the International Violence Against Women Act and ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These steps are both intrinsically related to girls' access to and success in school and are key in adding credibility to U.S. leadership to promote gender equity.
3. Create an Office of Gender Integration that reports directly to the USAID Administrator. The new office should be charged with and have the authority necessary to ensure that gender is thoroughly integrated throughout all U.S. foreign assistance structures and in all stages of assistance, including budget, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. This office must be able to hold USAID programs accountable for integrating gender.
4. Focus U.S. international education assistance on overcoming barriers to girls attending and succeeding in school² utilizing advocacy and community engagement. This should include: provision of scholarships/stipends, transportation or boarding, separate lavatories for girls and sanitary supplies at schools, and life skills and vo-

2 Major barriers include economic disincentives, cultural restrictions on girls' education, travel distance to school, lack of adequate facilities, child marriage, safety issues including sexual harassment (from teachers and fellow students) and trafficking, hostile school environment, such as teachers' attitudes, gender biased textbooks, and a lack of female role models in the education system.

educational training. School safety policies and codes of conduct should also be developed and implemented, along with gender training for teachers and hiring and recruiting female teachers.

HEALTH GOALS



Goal 4:
Reduce child mortality



Goal 5:
Improve maternal health



Goal 6:
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The United States should continue to be a leader in international health, focusing on the strengthening of health systems as well as targeted interventions. Progress in health is closely linked to other development objectives, such as improving nutritional status (especially of women and children) and clean water. Women's education and empowerment, as well as their access to health systems are critical for both the health of their families and their own well-being. Program interventions that save the lives of mothers and newborns will lead to stronger health systems.

Recommendations:

1. Fully fund and implement the President's Global Health Initiative (GHI), with designated leadership, which calls for the U.S. to develop an integrated and comprehensive global health strategy across all U.S. Government agencies. Through the GHI, the U.S. should promote efforts that are country-led, strengthen whole health systems, ensure sustainable and measureable outcomes, and are integrated with responses to other global challenges.
2. Honor U.S. commitments to achieve MDG 6 and to support the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as well as meet its commitments to other international health programs.³ The global economic crisis has underscored progress on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases is fragile and robust bilateral and multilateral investments thus remain essential. Leverage U.S. support to ensure other nations help close

3 For example: the Third Global Fund Replenishment, the Global Malaria Action Plan, the Global Plan to Stop TB, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), the Global Consensus on Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health, and the UN Secretary-General's Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health.

the gap and meet commitments in these areas.

3. Scale up U.S. efforts in fragile and disease-burdened states, and design and implement health programs in relief environments that lay the foundation for strengthened health systems and establish building blocks for a transition to development.
4. Continue to support research for more effective and sustainable prevention and treatment programs, including research and development of effective medical interventions, including vaccines, drugs and diagnostics, as well as continuing to support operations and implementation research.
5. Meet the U.S. commitment to support the G8's Muskoka Initiative, which calls for accelerated global action to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality and reaffirms the central importance of universal access to reproductive health care. Develop and build international support for a bold and credible Joint Action Plan on Maternal and Child Health to be launched at the September UN Summit on the MDGs and include strong U.S. national commitments. Bold, focused and coordinated action is urgently needed to scale up proven, cost-effective interventions that focus on a continuum of care across the life-cycle.⁴ The lack of such action means failure to accelerate progress in saving the lives of almost 10 million children and mothers annually.
6. Ensure U.S. health programs promote gender equity and assure equality of access, recognizing the special concerns of indigenous peoples and marginalized groups. At L'Aquila world leaders supported building a "global consensus on maternal, newborn and child health as a way to accelerate progress on the MDGs." The U.S. should put maternal, newborn and child health at the forefront of health programs and urge other nations to do so as well.



Goal 7:
Ensure environmental sustainability

A healthy environment is one of the key building blocks for poverty alleviation. Without sustainable resources poor people and communities face further deterioration in their economies and living conditions. Moreover, the impacts of climate change—more frequent and more severe floods, droughts, cyclones, and shifting seasons and rainfall patterns—threaten food security, safe drinking water, livelihoods and the very right to survival for millions of the world's poorest people.

⁴ These include community case management, emergency obstetric, skilled care at birth and newborn care, insecticide-treated bed nets, vaccines and family planning.

Recommendations:

1. The Administration and Congress must tackle climate change domestically to support and facilitate an international agreement through the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) process. This must include financial support for the most vulnerable developing countries to prepare for and build resilience to climate challenges. Congress should meet the Administration's budget request of \$1.4 billion for climate finance in FY2011. The Administration should work with Congress and support the development of innovative sources of financing, including the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies that will generate substantial new and additional public funds on the scale pledged in the Copenhagen Accord.
2. Develop a comprehensive strategy for water, sanitation and hygiene development assistance as legislatively mandated by the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005. Water and sanitation should be integrated into initiatives on food security, child and maternal health, education, and climate change to ensure these initiatives succeed. Also support and participate in the Sanitation and Water for All partnership to address gaps in policy, planning, financing and technical assistance that have slowed progress in achieving universal and sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water.
3. Develop and support a comprehensive international urban development policy that recognizes the challenges and opportunities of urbanization and addresses the systemic causes of urban poverty. This should include programs that: foster improved urban governance, management and planning; increase land and real property tenure; and promote essential urban services and infrastructure. It should also expand basic shelter and affordable urban housing and the availability of financing for urban housing and infrastructure.



Goal 8:
Develop a global partnerships for development

MDG 8 calls directly on the United States and other developed countries to reform the international trade and financial system and their own international trade and development practices in ways that are more balanced toward the least developed countries. Their implementation, in the context of a U.S. global development strategy that brings cohesion, coherence and predictability to U.S. trade and development policies and funding, will redefine U.S. leadership in the fight to reduce global poverty. It will also provide developing countries with substantial additional resources that can be directed to their efforts to meet the targets for the first seven MDGs. Because MDG 8

has several sub-goals, the following recommendations are divided into three areas: trade, debt and partnerships.

Recommendations:

1. Trade:

- Trade preference programs (TPPs) for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) should be reformed:
 - ◊ TPPs, with full duty-free and quota-free market access, should be expanded to all LDCs' exports, including labor-intensive industries like agriculture (sugar, peanuts, dairy and tobacco), textiles and apparel.
 - ◊ The TPPs should eliminate rules of origin that raise costs and impede market access for LDCs that restrict input sourcing. LCDs should be allowed to “cumulate”—i.e. count inputs imported from eligible countries as local content as long as significant processing occurs in the LCD.
- Encourage and support South-South and regional trade.
- Ensure that U.S. trade and agriculture policies, including agricultural subsidies, do not undermine U.S. development objectives and achieving the MDGs.

2. Debt:

The global economic crisis has left developing countries in serious recessions and most of the assistance from the international financial institutions (IFIs) has come in the form of loans, which may lead to a new debt crisis.

- Expand the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) to include all of the countries which qualify for International Development Association-only support from the World Bank.
- Promote debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries facing exogenous shocks from the continuing global financial crisis.
- Reduce odious debt. Some LDC debt has been accumulated due to irresponsible borrowing and lending for ill-conceived projects, illicit gain by leaders and geo-political influence. The Administration should promote mutually-agreed upon and binding terms for responsible lending and borrowing to ensure transparency, attention to human rights, and consumer protection.

3. Partnerships

- Partner more effectively with recipient countries by implementing the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action principles on aid effectiveness. U.S. aid programs increasingly emphasize country ownership and country-led approaches. To facilitate this, establish a shared definition and criteria for country ownership, focusing on democratic ownership that

specifically includes a country's citizens in formulating a national development strategy rather than simply ownership by the state. This would enhance the growing trend of U.S. aid programs that emphasize country ownership and country-led approaches.

- Decentralize the U.S. Government's strategic planning process, moving it from Washington, DC to the country level, and re-invigorate USAID missions as the lead development agency for this country level planning. To operationalize democratic country ownership, USAID missions should use a process of planning development assistance that actively engages U.S. and local civil society and national and local government stakeholders.⁵
- Work with local civil society, both directly and indirectly through U.S. civil society, in meaningful partnerships with an emphasis on capacity strengthening. It will strengthen local ownership and build national capacity while making it possible for local civil society to contribute its expertise to the formulation, design and implementation of U.S. development assistance.
- Improve coordination across U.S. Government agencies involved in development programming.

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⁵ Early signs are not encouraging. The process of writing the Presidential Study Directive on Global Development (PSD) has been closed to the public and, as a result, has created a good deal of uncertainty about its direction and substance.

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