Addressing the UN Millennium Development Goals

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The United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals concluded on 22 September 2010 with the adoption of a global action plan to achieve the eight anti-poverty goals by their 2015 target date and the announcement of major new commitments for women's and children's health and other initiatives against poverty, hunger and disease. FACTS Reports is determined to play an important role in communicating about specific field actions that address one or more of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, which are detailed at http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/, are in brief:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Initiated in 2005 by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the MDGs form a blueprint agreed to by most of the world’s countries and leading development institutions. They have galvanized efforts to meet the needs of the poorest of the poor. As expressed by the current Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the MDGs set time-bound targets, by which progress in reducing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion — while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability — can be measured. They also embody basic human rights — the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter, and security.
Considering that the purpose of FACTS Reports is to address issues related to economics, health, the environment, agriculture, education and development in general, its aims map very well onto the MDGs. Furthermore, FACTS Reports exists to assist field actors, international organizations and national agencies in their goals to communicate, exchange and disseminate good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of their programs. Not surprisingly, all articles in this issue (volume 3) speak to one or more of the MDGs, and illustrate how FACTS Reports can be an effective way for communicating about actions taken towards these universal goals.

The articles by Lawson and Pinyosinwat are related to MDG 6 and the challenges in reducing HIV/AIDS, especially in vulnerable groups. Lawson also makes clear the broader point of the close connection between poor health and poverty, especially in low-resource countries. Pinyosinwat describes efforts at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS through undocumented migrant workers in southeast Asia.

The article by Rai, Lee, Rana, and Shrestha addresses MDG 4, but also MDG 2, by improving children’s health through school health and nutrition programs. Obviously, children cannot take full advantage of available education when they are not healthy.

Cherrier and Jayanth’s article on making eyeglasses accessible to the very poor addresses obvious health needs of large portions of the population, including those of children and mothers, which are contained in MDGs 4 and 5. It also speaks to MDG 8 by establishing a sustainable economic model which allows this health program to provide effective services through the local economy.

In a similar vein, Duffau and Diaz-Pedregal discuss in their article economic issues impeding effective health care. Again, while addressing broader issues of population health, their article pertains to MDGs 4 and 5.

The series of articles by von Bertrab, Hernández, Macht, Bösl; Tanguilig and Tanguilig; Warui and Kshatriya; Mbairamadji; Mohanty; and Blanc-Pamard address environmental issues that are germane to MDG 7. These articles contain discussions of a range of field action projects and policies in Cameroon, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, and the Philippines.

Collectively, most of the MDGs are addressed in some way or another in the articles of this volume. Future volumes of FACTS Reports undoubtedly will deal with goals that were not directly discussed in this volume. We look forward to descriptions of field actions targeting directly the eight MDGs.

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