

Solving the World's Water Supply Crisis

Around the world, nearly 1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 3.6 million people die from water-related illnesses each year. Unsafe water and poor sanitation is one of the world's greatest humanitarian crises. And it affects the most vulnerable populations—the world's poor.

Actor Matt Damon co-founded Water.org, a nonprofit that seeks to end the global water supply crisis. Damon is more than the organization's spokesman. He has immersed himself in the issue and is directly involved with the organization's activities.

"I think what resonates with me most is when you see people living without clean water and they're forced to scavenge for water and basically use up all of their time just doing that," said Damon. "You realize that they're in such a crippling cycle of poverty; it's just a death spin that they can't possibly get out of."¹

Water.org helps communities in Africa, Asia and Central America gain access to safe water and sanitation. The organization helps negotiate loans between microfinance institutions and communities that will be used to building systems to tap into a well. The community helps raise the money, participates in construction and maintenance and as a result is engaged and empowered.² "Our vision is clean water and sanitation for everyone, in our lifetime," said Damon.³

Since its inception in 1990, the organization has helped hundreds of communities and tens of thousand of individuals gain access to safe water and sanitation. Water.org has been successful in raising money and attracting institutional funders because many believe that its approach and solutions are scalable. Rather than a top-down charity, Water.org's approach is bottom-up sustainability.⁴



from the editor

0.7% of Wealth: A Small Price to End Global Extreme Poverty

• Alison Gemgnani
• United Nations Millennium Campaign

With five years to go to the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals] target date of 2015, the prospect of falling short of the Goals due to lack of commitment is very real. This would be an unacceptable failure, moral and practical. If we fail, the dangers in the world—instability, violence, epidemic diseases, environmental degradation, runaway population growth—will all be multiplied.
↳ United Nations Secretary, General Ban Ki-moon, Keeping the Promise, February 2010

In the world of development and poverty reduction, statistics are at times the most valuable snapshot for telling us where we are and where we need to be. According to the 2010 UN Millennium Development Goals report, tremendous progress has been made in the fight against poverty. Enrollment in primary school reached 89 percent in the developing world, the under-five mortality rate dropped by 28 percent and rural drinking water coverage increased to 76 percent.¹

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain, and the road ahead may be more difficult than the one already traveled. Eleven percent of children—a staggering 72 million—are still denied access to primary education. Every year, 8.8 million children die from preventable diseases such as diarrhea and pneumonia. Ensuring that the remaining 24



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THE 8 Millennium Development Goals aim to:

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and women's empowerment
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability and better access to water and sanitation
- 8 Create a global partnership for development

responsibility to create a better world. This historic agreement become known as the Millennium Development Goals, more often referred to as the MDGs.

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Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

The Goals are achievable; they have timelines and deadlines and are locally defined and measurable. The MDGs have helped transform entire countries and the results are staggering:

- Through a national input subsidy program, Malawi went from a 43 percent national food deficit in 2005 to a 53 percent food surplus in just two years.
- Kenya eliminated school fees and, as a result, enrolled an additional two million children in primary school.
- Due to the government's successful health insurance program, Rwanda is likely to meet—and even surpass—the child and maternal mortality targets by 2015.
- Cambodia has managed to halt and reverse the spread of HIV.
- With an increased investment in water and sanitation resources, Guatemala increased access to improved drinking water for 96 percent of the population and improved sanitation for 84 percent.

When it comes to the MDGs, in addition to the number of children enrolled in primary school, the number of children dying every year from preventable diseases, or the number of rural households that have gained access to drinking water, one of the most important statistics to achieve the MDGs is the responsibility of rich governments: 0.7 percent.

percent of rural households gain access to drinking water will require overcoming the current technical, logistical and financial constraints.

When nations gathered at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, they entered an extraordinary promise to work together to rid the world of extreme poverty and its root causes by the year 2015. For the first time, nations recognized that they share an equal



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- Sweden (1.12%)
- Norway (1.06%)
- Luxembourg (1.01%)
- Denmark (0.88%)
- The Netherlands (0.82%)

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According to development experts, 0.7 percent represents the percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) that donor countries have committed in Official Development Assistance.² It is believed that 0.7 percent is vital in achieving the MDGs and ensuring the end to extreme poverty within a generation. First pledged 40 years ago in a 1970 UN General Assembly Resolution, the 0.7 percent target has been reaffirmed in many international agreements over the years.

Even so, the 0.7 aid target alone will not achieve the MDGs. Donor and recipient governments must work in partnership to ensure that aid is used effectively, resources are delivered and allocated properly through transparent channels and countries must practice good governance.

Living Up to Commitments

Five countries not only reached but surpassed the 0.7 percent target in 2009: Sweden (1.12%), Norway (1.06%), Luxembourg (1.01%), Denmark (0.88%) and the Netherlands (0.82%).³ As of 2005, 16 of the 22 donor countries either have met or agreed to reach the 0.7 percent target by 2015. While reasons may vary among countries for their commitment to the 0.7 percent target, these countries see the value in investment in development and have the political will to ensure that they provide the expected contribution to the MDGs.

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Together, we can hold our leaders accountable to the promises made to the most vulnerable members in our global community and provide hope for a better future for all.

The current shortfall is \$18 billion (in 2004 dollars) against the 2005 commitments. Despite being the largest donor in terms of volume (\$28.7 billion), the United States pales in comparison to many other countries with only a 0.2 percent contribution. If the United States met the targeted 0.7 percent in 2009, the contribution would have been approximately \$99.6 billion dollars—a difference of \$70.9 billion.

To provide a sense of US Government spending, the Department of Defense's 2010 budget totaled \$690 billion, including funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, whereas the Department of State's 2010 budget, which includes the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was \$54 billion.⁴ The State Department and USAID are the lead agencies in charge of US diplomacy and development. Although diplomacy and development spending may never reach the levels of defense spending, leadership within the US government has recognized the need for civilian power to promote stability and economic growth.

President Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy calls development a strategic, economic imperative, and during a September 2010 Conference in Washington, DC, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates argued that "development is a lot cheaper than sending soldiers." Not only is development cheaper, but it also promotes good governance, leads to stability and can help create conditions that no longer require soldiers. Helping others escape poverty is necessary to create a just and stable world. When foreign states malfunction, their societies are likely to experience steeply escalating problems that spill over to the rest of the world, including the United States. Failed states are seedbeds of violence, terrorism, international criminality, mass migration and refugee movements, drug trafficking and disease.

The United States and the Millennium Development Goals: From Rhetoric to Reality

We will support the Millennium Development Goals, and approach next year's summit with a global plan to make them a reality. And we will set our sights on the eradication of extreme poverty in our time.

➤ President Barack Obama, September 2009

In his first appearance before the United Nations General Assembly in New York, President Barack Obama declared that the MDGs are "America's Goals." This declaration set a tone for how the United States would re-engage with the MDGs in the final years before the 2015 deadline. A year later, Obama followed through by pledging to double US foreign assistance to \$50 billion by 2012; invested nearly \$100 billion dollars in major development initiatives to address the most pressing development issues (global health, food security and climate change;) and announced a Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development—the first of its kind from any administration—demonstrating continued US leadership in global development.

In the US, the Millennium Campaign works with partner organizations and individuals like you to closely monitor US contributions to the MDGs. Together, we can hold our leaders accountable to the promises made to the most vulnerable members in our global community and provide hope for a better future for all.

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Alison Gemgnani was formerly the editorial and advocacy consultant for the United Nations Millennium Campaign (www.endpoverty2015.org), North America. In this role, she was responsible for preparing Millennium Development Goals-related outreach materials, including a weekly newsletter. Gemgnani interned with the European Office of the Millennium Campaign in Rome, Italy. Prior to joining the campaign, Gemgnani served as the area coordinator for the State of Illinois for Amnesty International. Gemgnani has a BA in legal studies and psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's in public management with a concentration in international development from Bocconi University School of Management in Milan, Italy.



from the editor

Ensuring Effective Aid

Author, economist and native Zambian, Dambisa Moyo has a different and emerging view about foreign aid. She is calling for the world to taper off financial assistance to African governments, putting an end to all of it. In her 2009 book, *Dead Aid*, Moyo blames Africa's poverty and corruption on foreign economic assistance. In response to the arguments by defenders of aid, Moyo points out the undisputed facts. Dysfunctional regimes have received billions in aid from Europe and the US. Corrupt leaders are the ones that benefit financially, not the impoverished citizens and the continent is saddled with inflation and an unsustainable debt burden from huge loans. The final clincher is that most of Africa is poorer now than it was before aid dollars began to increase, a few decades ago.¹

Moyo does not condemn all aid, only aid to governments—large sums of money transferred from government to government. Humanitarian aid, emergency aid and aid given to specific organizations and people on the ground is still necessary. Moyo is advocating for the solutions that have worked in China and India. For Africa, she recommends paths to independence: higher-interest and less lenient, capital market bonds; partnerships with the Chinese who have already done more for Africa's infrastructure and economic growth in the last five years than the US has done the last 50; and more microfinance, efficient banking of savings and remittances. Not everyone is opposed to Moyo's ideas, African government ministers and major charities are listening.² Ultimately, Moyo wants what most everyone else wants for Africa: long-term growth and jobs not band-aid responses and temporary solutions.

“Most of Africa is poorer now than it was before aid dollars began to increase, a few decades ago.”



Photo courtesy: David Grundy