

**“Alliances, Partnerships and Integration:
Cornerstones for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals" High-Level Segment**

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The greatest challenges to meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and who suffer from hunger by 2015 are creating the political will to do so, the credibility that it is possible, and the scaling up of practical examples of how it can be done.

We have been aware of the need to fight hunger and poverty and their increasing threat to global security for many more decades than we have recognized the threat and power of the HIV/AIDS scourge. Yet, goals to fight hunger and poverty have been rolled back continually to the point that it is almost inconceivable that these challenges can be met. On the other hand, though far from adequate or under control, the campaigns to control and conquer HIV/AIDS have been relatively quickly mounted, are well-organized, visible and funded by governments, businesses, foundations and grass roots campaigns.

The campaign to halve hunger and poverty by 2015 requires dealing with seemingly conflicting challenges and adopting innovative and inter-connected strategies for food production, environmental protection and trade. Overcoming obstacles can only be done by building strong mutually supportive linkage between agriculture, natural resource management and trade policies. The current separate sector-based approach to policy and strategy formation only exacerbates the situation.

This is the paradigm of competing challenges inherent in many of the key Millennium Development Goals:

- Seventy percent of the world's poorest citizens are farmers, living on less than \$2 a day
- Over 800 million people go hungry everyday and the demand for food is set to double in the next 30-40 years. Eighty percent of that increase will take place in the developing world.
- Globally, half the world's habitable land and 80% of the world's fresh water are devoted to food production
- The world's twenty-five richest regions of biodiversity are also most threatened with biodiversity loss. These regions occupy less than two percent of the earth, but are home to over one billion people who depend on farming for their sustenance and livelihoods.

A major issue is how to keep the need for increased food production in the developing world and the growing environmental and natural resource crisis from heading to a collision course?

The Plan of Implementation at the World Summit on Sustainability (WSSD) clearly links poverty alleviation, food security and environmental protection, importantly, in the context of economic globalization. While it does not provide specific legal tools or hard targets and timetables for most activities, it does provide a basis for a fresh look at the environment, food security and development. The latter is essential if one understands the dramatic implications on the environment from the increases in agriculture production needed to cut hunger and provide for anticipated population growth.

It is possible to move beyond the current impasse by challenging existing assumptions responsible for current contradictory policy approaches. First, sustainable and adequate food production is consistent with sustainable protection of biodiversity and natural resource management. Second, the Millennium Development Goals for food security, poverty reduction and biodiversity protection can only be achieved by compatible, if not integrated policy and implementation strategies in the areas of food production, biodiversity and natural resource management and trade.

An Integrated Approach with harmonized Externalities. Integrated rural development strategies for developing countries can provide the policy framework and practical tools to deal with the multiple elements from food production, biodiversity conservation, physical and intellectual infrastructure to social development services that are essential to the viabilities of rural economies. The only element missing from a comprehensive or integrated rural development approach - and essential is trade, which is usually determined at national and global levels - and by developing countries. The Doha Round is a first step towards necessary harmonization of trade policy to give development a chance to work.

There are several avenues that must be pursued to create a new paradigm for rural development. The first area for attention concerns the need to integrate and harmonize global, regional, national and local policy strategies - both vertically and horizontally at each level - for food production, environment and natural resource management and trade. The second aspect of vertical policy integration is the need to enhance donor coordination and strategic support for integrated strategies in order to maximize their impact and focus on common goals. An integrated approach will produce economies, greater and faster results than sector-based ones. Assuming, of course, that supporting infrastructure and governance are in place.

Repositioning Agriculture in the Development Mainstream. Global leaders need to reposition agriculture at the center of international development efforts and rural development strategies to alleviate hunger and poverty as well as being the key to the sustainability of the earth's increasingly fragile ecosystems. What would this imply?

- Research to design criteria for successful community based examples of community-based initiatives that combine food production and biodiversity protection
- Mobilization of significant resources from the \$30 billion in increased aid committed at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development.
- Substantial increases in investment in agriculture and natural resource management science and technology for the developing world. One has only to look at the difference made by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), which not only created the green revolution, but also has been responsible, with national research organization partners (NARS), for making the major contributions to improved nutrition, appropriate agricultural production and natural resource management, on small scale farms as well as larger production areas in developing countries over the last thirty years
- Concurrent investments in market and communication infrastructure, and education
- Design of incentives for ecosystem services to enhance incomes and provide the poor clean water and healthy habitats

The Role of Partnerships, Alliances and Consultation. The political will for achieving the Millennium Development goals depends on partnerships and alliances, which provide the energy and outreach to mobilize support over a long period of time. Changing the existing paradigms for food production, environmental stewardship and development is a complicated and long-term task. A high priority is to improve communication and coordination within governmental and international organizations, business and academia among those working on ecosystem and natural resource management, agriculture and poverty alleviation. The active participation and often leadership of civil society is essential to the success and sustainability of the type of global campaigns being undertaken.

Developing and developed countries need to be equal partners in the development of vertical policy integration and coordination. Experience has taught us that assistance and development have to be demand-driven. This is a fundamental principle of NEPAD and the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa. The World Bank and other major donor agencies have put in place processes for country consultation, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, CCA and UNDAF. Nevertheless, ways still need to be explored to promote agriculture in these processes as the key to hunger and poverty reduction. The paradox is that developed world economic growth has historically emerged from a sound agriculture economy. One has only to look at the United States or the European Union.

Community Based Initiatives. In addition, much more attention needs to be paid to community-based initiatives and consideration of local social, environmental and economic parameters. Since the first world environment summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, one of the main arenas of achievement for sustainable development has been at the local level. Local people, working with diverse partners, have pursued innovations in their own production systems and local landscapes to successfully integrate agriculture and biodiversity conservation, to the benefit of both local livelihoods and globally valued biodiversity. Much of this progress has taken place under the radar screen.

The UNDP-GEF Small Grants Program has funded over 6000 projects based on biodiversity and poverty. With support from IFAD, crop and livestock producers in the poorest countries in the world have halted resource degradation and raised local incomes. An IUCN-Future Harvest research partnership identified dozens of successful cases where innovations both increased farm productivity and farmer incomes, and also improved habitat and biodiversity. In the first year of operations, the Equator Initiative has already identified over 400 successful initiatives undertaken by communities in tropical ecosystems, which promote poverty and hunger alleviation through innovative partnerships for the conservation and innovative use of biodiversity. These examples include staple crops, livestock, forest communities, fishing, from small-holders to multi community and large landscape-based projects.

The Monterrey Bridge Coalition (MBC) is a multi-sector, multi-year initiative that works with other parallel initiatives within the Millennium Development Goals processes to integrate and enhance their impact. The coalition was established to encourage resolution of the hitherto considered paradoxes between the compelling realities that make up the paradigm for combating hunger and poverty and providing biodiversity stewardship and ecosystem management. The MBC is a joint initiative of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Future Harvest Foundation, an initiative of the international agricultural research centers of the CGIAR (Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research) with IFAD, UNDP, IICA and a growing representation from civil society around the world.

¹ J.A. McNeely and S.J. Scherr, *Ecoagriculture: How to Feed the World and Save Wild Biodiversity*, Island Press, 2002