

UN FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships for a better world

Amir A Dossal

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, 191 world leaders agreed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of global goals to improve the lives of people everywhere. The aim is to meet the 18 targets of the MDGs by 2015. Goal 8, which we see as the enabler to achieving the other seven goals, calls for the development of a global partnership for development. Engaging business and civil society is not only the best chance, it may be the only chance we have to achieve the Goals. We should not miss this opportunity. The central task of UNFIP (UN Fund for International Partnerships) is quite simply brokering partnerships.



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Numerous solutions are being proposed, some long-term and some immediate, as, for example, the Quick Wins identified by the Millennium Project led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs. These are a set of high-impact, short-term interventions that can and should be implemented right away if the world is serious in its commitment.

Creating sustainable livelihoods

Recognizing that there is an increase in 'aid fatigue', the UN looks to innovative approaches to increase the level of investments in the developing world. The challenge for the international community is to create sustainable livelihoods. Total ODA (overseas development assistance) annually (bilateral and multilateral) amounts to \$70 billion while foreign direct investment (FDI) stands at over \$570 billion.¹ The figures speak for themselves. The mantra of 'wealth creation' needs to replace that of 'poverty eradication'. Last year, Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada and the former President of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo, launched a report commissioned by UNDP, *Unleashing Entrepreneurship: Making business work for the poor*, which explores how business can create domestic employment and wealth, free local entrepreneurial energies, and help achieve the MDGs, outlining a road map for encouraging SME

¹ Data on FDI and ODA are based on the 2005 World Development Indicators (World Bank Group), the World Investment Report 2004 (UNCTAD) and the Statistical Annex of the 2004 Development Cooperation Report of OECD.

'At no time in human history have the fates of every woman, man and child been so intertwined across the globe. We are united both by moral imperatives and by objective interests. We can build a world in larger freedom – but to do it we must find common ground and sustain collective action.' *Secretary General Kofi Annan, March 2005*

(small and medium enterprise) investment as a way to lift people out of the poverty trap.

The UN family has been working with the private sector since inception to encourage conversion of policies into action and ideas into concrete investment projects, many of which can be scaled up and replicated. This includes initiatives such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which works closely with the private sector, helping them to design their own solutions to global and local development challenges, with the aim of creating markets where businesses can grow and prosper; the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), which builds private sector alliances for children mainly through the work of its National Committees, where professional staff work closely with businesses and other private sector organizations to match innovative ideas with practical support for children; and the World Health Organization (WHO), which is responding to the call for clear, implementable strategies that address the links between ill-health, environment and development through new partnerships with business.

Using the skills of business, the flexible capital of philanthropy, and the rigour of the marketplace, the UN has the expertise to develop and deliver system-changing solutions to the world's problems. While partnerships are certainly not a panacea and are inevitably difficult to implement in practice, the benefits of working together are numerous. With the sheer scale of the MDG challenge, they are quite simply indispensable.

From theory to practice

There are numerous networks and alliances working to achieve the MDGs. These can be adapted to different contexts. We need to look at what works and replicate successful models, using the private sector's leadership, management skills and logistics systems wherever possible. The following are examples of some initiatives that UNFIP has brokered.

The Coca-Cola AIDS and Polio partnerships

Through these the Coca-Cola Company – the single largest private employer in Africa – has provided for the UN (UNICEF, WHO and UNAIDS) to make use of its vast logistical infrastructure and refrigerated trucks to distribute information about HIV/AIDS as well as vaccines and supplies to remote areas in Africa.

First of the Ground An in-kind contribution from Ericsson to the UN to provide and maintain effective mobile communications equipment and expertise for humanitarian relief operations. The partnership involves UN entities that address emergency response and mitigation (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Cisco Networking Academy Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Initiative Cisco Systems Inc and UNDP jointly launched the LDCs Initiative at the G8 Summit in July 2000. Since the announcement of the partnership, Cisco Systems, UNDP, the UN Volunteer (UNV) programme and USAID have been working together to train students (and trainers) for the internet economy by establishing the Cisco Networking Academy in economic institutions. By the end of 2002, 83 academies in 33 of the LDCs had been established with almost 3,500 students enrolled. The Networking Academy provides students with skills that enable them to design, build and maintain computer networks in the local market.

Polio Eradication buy-down A funding innovation in support of polio eradication involving funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the UN Foundation and Rotary International, used by the World Bank to convert IDA loans to grant status (by buying down the net present value of new IDA credits). The grants have been used by UNICEF to purchase polio vaccines in consultation with WHO.

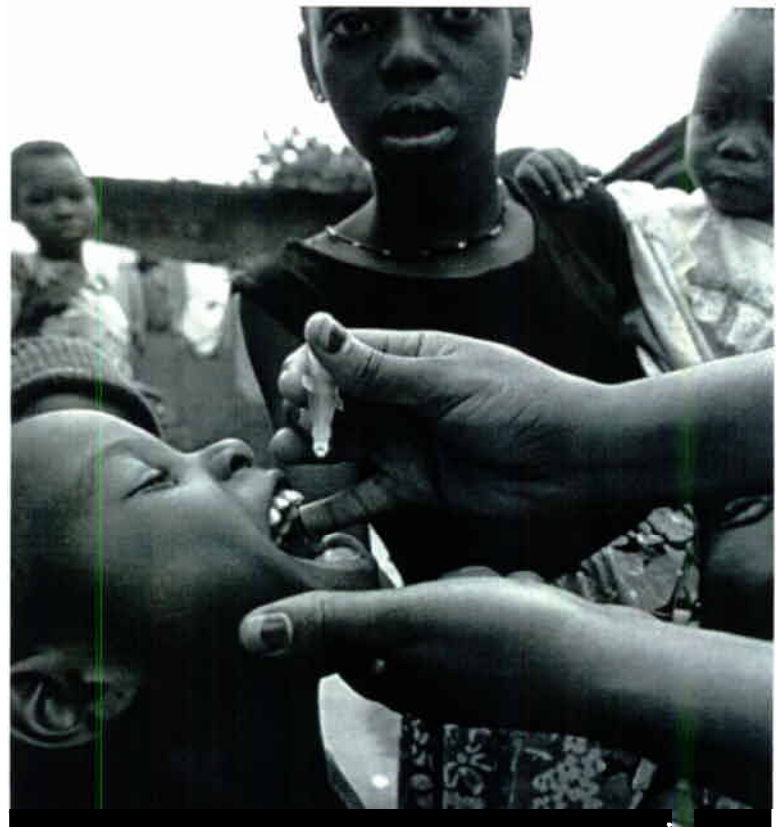
MTCT-Plus A five-year HIV care and treatment partnership between the UN, numerous foundations and other civil society actors, designed to link prevention with care and treatment for HIV-

infected women and their families in the poorest countries. Coordinated by the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University and supported by a coalition of foundations brought together by UNFIP, MTCT-Plus brings specialized HIV care and treatment to existing prevention programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission (MTCT).

Health InterNetwork Created to bridge the digital divide in health and provide affordable, timely and appropriate health information worldwide, so that all communities can benefit from this global public good. The initiative is ensuring that relevant information – and the technologies to deliver it – are widely available and effectively used by health professionals, researchers, scientists and policymakers. Launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2000 and led by the WHO, the Health InterNetwork has brought together partners including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Telecommunications Union, the Open Society Institute, Satelife, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNV, and the World Bank Group.

These initiatives are a few examples of how aid and investment can be brought together for the common good. UNFIP is currently building a database of best practices which will be made available on the *Alliance* website later in the year. [UNFIP](#)

Polio Eradication Initiative – child receiving polio drops.



UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

UNFIP has been building partnerships for the past six plus years and is itself the product of a partnership. Established by the Secretary-General in March 1998 to serve as the interface between the UN system and the UN Foundation – the public charity responsible for administering Ted Turner's \$1 billion contribution in support of UN causes – it has supported over 320 projects in 122 countries and successfully promoted new UN partnerships and alliances worldwide.

See www.un.org/unfip