



SPECIAL EVENT ON PHILANTHROPY AND THE GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENDA

23 February 2009, United Nations, New York
Conference Room 2,
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

BACKGROUND NOTE

Leadership for Health: Harnessing Business Skills to Meet Social Needs

Achieving the health MDGs through dynamic partnerships



United Nations Office for Partnerships



“Addressing global challenges requires a collective and concerted effort, involving all actors. Through partnerships and alliances and by pooling comparative advantages, we increase our chances of success.”

United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon

Given the scale of development issues, particularly in the area of public health, that the world is facing today, the urgency for multi-stakeholder partnerships cannot be overemphasized. The last decade has witnessed the establishment of a number of global health partnerships, the majority of which have been collaborations between the public and the private sectors. Such partnerships continue to grow in importance.

Half way to the target date of 2015 set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it has become evident that many regions of the world are off track in meeting these goals, many of which are directly linked to health. The High-level Event on the MDGs, convened on 25 September 2008, by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the General Assembly, highlighted a number of areas in global public health where urgent action is required to speed up their implementation. In particular, the issues of maternal and child mortalities need to be addressed and decisive action needs to be taken to control and treat major diseases, including neglected tropical diseases. The General Assembly made clear that non-governmental partners, including the private sector and philanthropic organizations, could play a central role in contributing to this effort.

In preparation for the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on global public health to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 6-8 July 2009, the Special Event on Philanthropy and the Global Public Health Agenda of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 23 February 2009, provides an opportunity for a more targeted and in-depth discussion on some of the specific challenges faced by developing countries, in particular, in Africa. The Council serves as forum to identify concrete actions and initiatives that could contribute to achieving the health-related MDGs by 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals contain targets to: (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; and (8) develop a Global Partnership for Development.

The conversation between the members of the Economic and Social Council and its observers and the philanthropic community will take place as the international community grapples with how to minimize the impact of the global financial crisis on social development, in general, and on public health, in particular. In this context, the Special Event is timely, as it will provide a platform for a genuine interaction on how best to ensure that health-related philanthropy continues to be an important investment for social transformation and long-term economic growth.

The Special Event will focus on actions that can be taken by the private sector and philanthropic community to improve the health outcomes of women and girls and to bring more attention to preventing and treating neglected tropical diseases. To date,

maternal health is considered the area of least progress among all the MDGs. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its latest report on the health-related MDGs, notes that more than 500,000 women died of causes related to maternity in 2005, with about half of these deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. No region has achieved the necessary 5.5 per cent annual decline needed to meet the goal's target. Another issue of great concern is the neglect of certain diseases of poverty. These diseases, which are largely treatable and preventable, continue to affect more than 1 billion people throughout the world; only 10 per cent of global health research, however, is devoted to their cure. Controlling and eradicating these diseases can lead to a virtuous cycle with positive impacts on development.

In a note prepared for the High-level Event on the MDGs, the Secretary-General pointed to a number of cross-cutting challenges to the achievement of the health-related MDGs. He highlighted that, in many countries, malnutrition and lack of access to quality primary health care and basic infrastructure, including water and sanitation, continue to be the major causes of ill health and death among mothers and children. Access to essential and affordable drugs, as well as functioning health systems and the extension of health services to people in rural areas and urban slums, are additional key challenges for developing countries. More generally, it is agreed that progress has to be made on all MDGs at the same time, in order to achieve the overarching goal of significantly reducing poverty. Progress towards achieving the health-related goals will not be possible without reducing hunger and poverty, gender equality and the empowerment of women, wider access to education, better stewardship of the environment and a stronger partnership among all actors in the global development community.

As of January 2009, the following countries are members of the Economic and Social Council: Algeria, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Some well-known examples of global health partnerships include the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Alliance for Vaccine Immunization (GAVI), the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Drugs for Neglected Tropical Diseases Initiative (DNDi) and Malaria No More. Collaborating and benefiting from the relative strengths of others has increasingly become perhaps the most viable way to meet the MDGs. It is important to foster partnerships between national governments, United Nations agencies and communities on the ground to be able to draw on varied experiences and knowledge.

The ECOSOC Special Event on Philanthropy provides an excellent forum to showcase existing successful partnerships and to draw on these experiences. Efforts should be made to enhance existing partnership initiatives, for example, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health or Drugs for Neglected Tropical Diseases,

among others. It is clear that improving women's health, especially the health of the poorest women, or significantly reducing the prevalence of neglected tropical diseases would require an extraordinary range of interventions, long-term policy changes, legal reforms and cultural change and, in the case of neglected tropical diseases, research and development. Long-term commitments to both global and national priorities in public health are needed to maximize the outcomes for the poorest and most vulnerable. The ECOSOC Special Event could be a first of many needed steps in this direction.

Examples of existing initiatives

General initiatives

[The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#)

[The GAVI Alliance \(GAVI\)](#)

[Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition](#)

[Malaria No More](#)

[Medicines for Malaria Venture \(MMV\)](#)

[The Malaria Vaccine Initiative \(MVI\)](#)

[Roll Back Malaria](#)

[The Measles Initiative](#)

Improving the health outcomes of women and girls

[The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health](#)

[The Campaign to End Fistula](#)

Neglected tropical diseases

[Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative](#)

[Stop Neglected Tropical Diseases Initiative](#)

[USAID Programme to Stop Neglected Tropical Diseases](#)