The overarching goal of the major United Nations conferences and summits held in 2002 was poverty reduction, reaffirming objectives of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Millennium Summit (2000). In this regard, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated that the guiding motto of the United Nations in the twenty-first century was putting people at the centre of everything the Organization does. This was further reinforced when the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council chose as its theme the contribution of human resources development to the process of development in general.

Poverty has many faces; the task of improving the welfare of the poor is an urgent one. More than one billion people live on less than one dollar a day; in developing countries, more than 11 million children under the age of five die every year from diseases that are preventable. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, life expectancy has dropped by 10 to 20 years as a result of the human immunodeficiency syndrome/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic. In addition, about 800 million people are chronically malnourished, and over 100 million primary school aged children, mostly girls, are out of school.

Poverty can be defined, not only by the lack of income, but also by the lack of basic human development as indicated by malnutrition, poor health and low educational attainment. As such, human resource development is as fundamental to the fight against poverty as it is to the achievement of long-term economic growth.

Health and education are the basic building blocks to human resource development. They should therefore be integrated into poverty reduction strategies and policies and properly reflected in national budgetary allocations. Giving priority to those capacity-building efforts could give impetus to meeting the goals, targets and commitments made to halve the number of people living in poverty by 2015.
Health and poverty

The link between poverty and health is well established. Poor people tend to have poor health. Half of the burden of communicable diseases is concentrated in the poorest 20 per cent of the population, according to World Bank estimates. Poverty and low economic growth lead to inadequate and inappropriate health interventions.

Health problems exacerbate income poverty, creating a vicious cycle. A person without access to medical care for a treatable condition suffers loss of income, especially when an illness requires a period of inactivity. What is true for individuals is true for societies as well. For example, according to the World Bank, a recent study estimates that in Africa, income growth per capita is being reduced by about 0.7 per cent per year because of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. In East Asia, studies show that 50 per cent of the financial crises in poor families are triggered by illnesses, including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and severe malaria. In contrast, children who are vaccinated or whose mothers received prenatal care are generally healthier, perform better in school and, consequently, have higher potential earnings. Clearly, the causality between poverty and health runs in both directions: poverty breeds ill-health, and ill-health keeps poor people poor.

Investment in health is a productive investment and has the potential to transform the lives of the world’s poor. In the least developed countries, only 13 dollars ($13) or less were spent on health annually per person; the situation needs urgent attention. Studies indicate that better health protection and improved nutrition could save as many as 8 million people annually.

The significance of increased investment in health for poverty eradication and economic growth is confirmed in the report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health. The key recommendation of the Commission is a substantial scaling up of access of the world’s poor to essential health services, including a well-focused programme targeting catastrophic illnesses, particularly HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The Commission further found successful health delivery in the close-to-client (CTC) initiatives, which provide health centres at the local level, often at smaller facilities or through outreach services. The report added

Youth Employment Network

The Youth Employment Network, an initiative of the Secretary-General, was endorsed by heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration as they resolved to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 20). The Network is a joint initiative of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank and draws upon the expertise of leaders from private industry, economic policy institutions and civil society to develop new approaches to the challenge of youth employment. The Secretary-General convened a high-level panel on youth employment composed of 12 eminent persons, which met for the first time in 2001, and prepared a set of policy recommendations that were transmitted to the General Assembly in September 2001.

As part of its recommendations, the high-level panel identified four top priorities to address the global issue of youth employment: employability; equal opportunities for young women and men; entrepreneurship; and employment creation. Separate working groups have subsequently been established to explore each of the priority areas in greater detail.

One of the overriding objectives of the work of the Youth Employment Network is to draw greater attention to the linkages between decent, productive employment for youth and poverty eradication. By focusing on the four priorities established by the high-level panel, the Network emphasizes the contribution that a decent work strategy for young people can make to reducing poverty and promoting economic and social development. For more information see the web site of the Network at:


that an additional spending on health of $66 billion per year could translate into at least $360 billion in growth, a six-fold return on investment.

**Education and poverty**

The evidence shows that lack of education perpetuates poverty. Children from poor households develop less human capital because they are less likely to attend school, or if they do, they suffer from a lack of facilities, classrooms or textbooks.

Education, like health, is one of the pillars of human development. While job creation is a priority in anti-poverty strategies, education is a critical factor because it raises the earning potential of individuals, increases labour productivity and contributes to sustained growth. Through education, people can improve themselves, and this contributes to social mobility. In addition, education enhances people's understanding of their social rights and responsibilities and, consequently, improves the ability of individuals to fight for or protect their rights. Furthermore, an educated population is able to participate in the democratic governance of development, particularly in fighting poverty. Studies show that investments in education and training, particularly for women and girls, yield rich results.

**Links between health and education**

Health and education are mutually reinforcing. Poor health leads to poor education, in general, and poor education leads to poor health. Surveys of school performance carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the five francophone countries of Africa suggest that children of educated parents tend to be in better health. In particular, in studies of 20 African countries, this relationship between the level of education of mothers and the overall well-being of their children is demonstrated through reduced mortality, morbidity and malnutrition. Conversely, children of illiterate parents tend to be less healthy, enrol in school later and leave school at an early age, or perform less well in school, eventually perpetuating poverty into the next generation. At the same time, children who are healthy tend to perform better in school, improving the odds of raising their future potential earnings and breaking out of poverty.

Good health also improves, or at worst, does not hinder the delivery of education. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has shown that the incidence of the disease in the teaching force has adversely affected the delivery of education services in some parts of the world.

In turn, education is essential to good health. Education is increasingly used as an effective tool to raise awareness of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The "education vaccine" against HIV/AIDS is premised on the hypothesis that education works, not only by providing information and sex education at school, but also by empowering people, especially young women, to understand relevant information and translate knowledge into behavioural change.

Clearly, education and health have a reinforcing impact on poverty eradication; those elements must be taken together and not in isolation. Investment in health will yield better returns when the population is educated; investment in education is more effective when the population is healthy. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) initiative, for example, includes education as a component of the microcredit programme, with a focus on female education and particular stress on environment, health and legal rights. In Mexico, the Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación (PROGRESA) combines several types of assistance based on the interactions between nutrition, health and education. To

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4. See “The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education to the process of development”, report of the Secretary-General (E/2002/46).
enable the poor to escape from the poverty trap, effective poverty reduction strategies require social programmes that coordinate basic social services.

Effective provision of health and education services: some important considerations

Five of the eight millennium development goals concern health and education. To provide impetus to the efforts of developing countries and assist them in achieving those goals will require political will, commitment and leadership. Local, national and international action should be guided by some of the issues raised at the round table discussions on health and education of the 2002 session of the Economic and Social Council, including the following:

(a) A substantial investment in health is needed to expand health intervention to increase its impact. The investments should focus on the poorest and the most vulnerable. In addition, research and development, in partnership with the private sector, should be shifted from the current focus on diseases prevalent in the developed countries to a focus on those that kill the most people and hinder development in the rest of the world. Development assistance for the prevention, testing and treatment of HIV/AIDS is also crucial;

(b) Sustainable education interventions must be demand-driven, country-owned and both led and structured according to the specific needs and behaviour of poor households. Greater investment is needed in technical and vocational education as well as in higher education to provide a labour force aligned to a technologically changing world;

(c) Optimize linkages and complementarities between health, education and other sector services. For instance, providing food is a simple, proven and effective tool to attract poor children to school. Reproductive health and education in life skills for youth and adolescents can be successfully integrated through formal and non-formal sectors as part of the lifecycle approach to education, health, population and development. In addition, dissemination of new knowledge and replicable practices via the Internet will help advance those efforts. Moreover, decentralized and local management of basic services allow for delivery to be more effective and better adapted to the needs of communities.

Finally, partnerships between communities, civil society, Governments and private sector and international organizations are crucial in helping developing countries to build their human resources. By mobilizing financial assistance, expanding the transfer of technology and making aid and debt forgiveness conditional on health - and education-spending policies, international organizations can offer greater benefits to the world's poor.

A world solidarity fund for poverty eradication

The proposal to establish a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication and the promotion of human development in the poorest regions of the world was introduced at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The fund aims to assist countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and the target of halving extreme poverty by 2015, as well as other millennium goals. It is proposed that this fund would operate as a trust fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and would receive voluntary contributions from individuals, foundations, organizations and the private sector. In its resolution
55/210 of 20 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to undertake consultations with Member States and all the relevant stakeholders on this issue. There was broad support for this proposal. Some countries, however, were of the view that such a fund, based on voluntary contributions, should not duplicate existing initiatives in this area or divert scarce resources from United Nations funds and programmes.

At the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a report on the proposal to establish a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication (see A/57/137), which contained recommendations on mechanisms, modalities, terms of reference, mandates and governance for operationalizing the proposed fund. The annex to the report included a proposal to establish the fund and was prepared by UNDP in consultation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

In its resolution 57/265 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly endorsed the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund.

Progress on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

Endorsed by all Member States, the Millennium Development Goals comprise a series of time-bound and measurable targets, ranging from halving extreme poverty by 2015 to providing universal primary education by 2015 (see box). Progress towards meeting the goals has been too slow, and results have been mixed, with marked differences between and within regions. Over the last decade, East Asia has already halved the proportion of its people living on less than one dollar per day, falling from 28 per cent to 14 per cent. All other regions, however, have fallen far short of the target. In sub-Saharan Africa, home to around 300 million poor people, the decline in the poverty rate has been negligible. Faster progress has been made in South Asia, but it is inadequate to meet the target by 2015. While East Asia has made progress in reducing the proportion of its population suffering from hunger, the number of hungry people in Africa actually rose by 27 million during the 1990s.

Progress in achieving universal primary education by 2015 is slow in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. At the current rate of progress, the goal to reduce child mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 will result in a reduction by only one fourth. A similar grim picture emerges for maternal mortality, with sub-Saharan Africa and South-central Asia making little progress to achieve the target by 2015. Furthermore, there is insufficient progress in meeting the broader objectives of the Millennium Declaration on such issues as human rights, democracy and good governance, conflict resolution and the special needs of Africa.

Much of the progress has been achieved by relying on strategies that combine the efforts of Member States of the United Nations and international organizations with those of the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations, foundations and other parts of civil society. The Secretary-General has cautioned that progress must be made on a much broader front. What is needed is a coordinated strategy complemented by the will and resources that can make a difference for the poor and vulnerable.
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2015

• Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Worldwide, 1.2 billion people still live on less than $1 a day. However, 43 countries, with more than 60 per cent of the world’s people, have already met or are in the process of meeting the goal of cutting hunger in half by 2015.

• Achieve universal primary education
113 million children do not attend school, but this goal is within reach; India, for example, should have 95 per cent of its children in school by 2005.

• Promote gender equality and empower women
Women make up two thirds of the illiterate population in the world and 80 per cent of the refugees in the world are women and children. Since the 1997 Microcredit Summit, progress has been made in reaching and empowering poor women, including nearly 19 million in 2000 alone.

• Reduce child mortality
The target is to reduce under five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. Although 11 million young children die every year, that number is down from 15 million in 1980.

• Improve maternal health
The target is to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters. In the developing world, the risk of dying in childbirth is 1 in 48. But virtually all countries now have safe motherhood programmes and are poised for progress.

• Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
The target is to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and halt the spread of other diseases. Killer diseases have erased a generation of development gains.

• Ensure environmental sustainability
More than one billion people still lack access to safe drinking water; however, during the 1990s, nearly one billion people gained access to safe water and as many to sanitation.

• Develop a global partnership for development
Targets include aid, trade and debt relief. Too many developing countries are spending more on debt service than on social services. New aid commitments made in the first half of 2002 alone will reach an additional $12 billion per year by 2006.
Expert Group Meeting: Supportive environment for cooperatives: A stakeholder dialogue on definitions, prerequisites and process of creation

The meeting, held in Ulaanbaatar from 15 to 17 May 2002, was convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and by the Government of Mongolia, with the assistance of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC). The meeting focused on two recent developments relating to cooperatives. The first concerned the United Nations guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, which are to be considered by Member States in developing or revising their national policies on cooperatives. The second development is the new Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation adopted by the International Labour Organization in 2002.

The meeting brought together professionals with different backgrounds and areas of expertise in cooperative development. Its primary purpose was to provide support to Member States and national, regional and international cooperative organizations in their efforts to create a supportive cooperative environment and to promote an exchange of experience and best practices. The meeting identified key issues relevant to implementing the United Nations guidelines and set out specific suggestions and recommendations pertaining to the creation of supportive environment for cooperatives. The main conclusions and recommendations will be included in the report of the meeting.

(For further information see http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/coop-egm.htm)

Tenth observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The tenth commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Thursday, 17 October 2002 on the North Lawn of the United Nations. The annual observance of the Day serves to promote awareness of the urgent need to eradicate poverty everywhere in the world.
The observance was sponsored jointly by the missions to the United Nations of Burkina Faso and France and organized by the International Movement ATD Fourth World, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information and the Sub-Committee on the Eradication of Poverty of the NGO Committee on Social Development (Committee on Non-governmental Organizations).

The programme featured a reading in different languages of the text of the commemorative stone, serving as a reminder of the obligation to end the scourge of poverty. Testimonies from people living in poverty and a message from children were read. A personal testimony was read by Benson Venegas about his work with the Talamanca Initiative to alleviate poverty in Costa Rica.

At a press conference held as part of the commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty at United Nations Headquarters, Eugen Brand of the International Movement ATD Fourth World reiterated that organization's dedication to engaging individuals and institutions to acknowledge and support those living in extreme poverty. Jean-David Levitte, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, said poverty was a violation of a person's human rights. He added that the fight against poverty was a moral duty and called upon the world to mobilize on behalf of the poor to fight against poverty.

Charles McNeill of the United Nations Development Programme presented an Equator Initiative 2002 award of $30,000 to the Talamanca Initiative, the largest exporter of organic products in Central America. The Initiative was one of seven recipients of the Equator Initiative 2002 awards given in recognition of communities' work in reducing poverty while protecting biodiversity.

Other observances

In Bangkok the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) observed the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty with a seminar, during which three prominent poverty specialists shared their recent work on poverty in the region.

The United Nations Information Service (UNIS) in Bangkok sponsored the broadcast of the message of the Secretary-General by Radio Thailand, including a 15-minute special report on poverty. In addition, UNIS coordinated public-awareness activities sponsored by the International Movement ATD Fourth World and the Friends of ATD Foundation on 20 October 2002.

Activities, Events, and Publications: regional Commissions

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) published the following items during the reporting period:


The report, prepared by the Sustainable Development Division highlights the major environmental issues of concern on the continent and makes recommendations for action.

**Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC)**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) reported the following activities related to eradication of poverty:

**Poverty estimation and dissemination**

The Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC continued performing its regular poverty estimations for Latin America, based on national household surveys provided by the countries. The estimates are a major input for evaluating poverty reduction strategies and assessing the progress towards the goal of halving the incidence of poverty by year 2015. The ECLAC publication, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2001-2002*, includes poverty projections for 2000, 2001 and 2002 in addition to estimates for 1999 and 2000.

**Improvements in household surveys**

The Division has continued to provide technical assistance for several Latin American countries within the framework of the Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI), jointly sponsored by ECLAC, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. The major goal of the project is to improve household surveys-through technical and financial assistance, regional workshops and training courses-as they are a fundamental tool for the analysis of living conditions and the design and supervision of social policies. As in previous years, the Division organized two regional MECOVI workshops in year 2002: Design and Construction of Sampling Frames for Household Surveys (Peru, June 2002; and Sampling Practice for the Design of Household Surveys (Argentina, November 2002).

**Assessment of poverty reduction targets**

The Division played a key role in the ECLAC-UNDP project on assessing the Millennium target to reduce extreme poverty by half by the year 2015. It contributed to the development of the methodology used for the poverty simulations and carried out several country studies. Preliminary results for 18 Latin American countries were made available in March 2002, and the Division will publish the final report in the next months.

**Expert Group on Poverty Statistics (Rio Group)**

The Division is currently organizing, in collaboration with the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the fifth meeting of the Expert Group on Poverty Statistics (Rio Group). The Rio Group was created by the Statistical Commission in 1995 to study the statistical consequences of the world summits of the United Nations and make proposals on the use of statistical information to follow-up and monitor the objectives and goals approved in those summits. The Group has done extensive work on methodological development and on the identification of basic guidelines for the measurement of poverty.

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**

**Events**

- Poverty Centre of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The advisory panel of the Poverty Centre, set up to provide guidance on the structure and contents of two reports on the state of progress towards achievement of the Millennium Goals in the Asia-Pacific was scheduled to meet for the second time at ESCAP in Bangkok early in 2003. The panel composed of ten Asian experts, planned to assemble for a two-day meeting to discuss and review the data collected, its illustration and its interpretation by continued on page 11
Two years ago, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders recognized the global progress that had been achieved in the struggle for human development, but also identified some of the serious impediments and threats—such as HIV/AIDS, conflict, and terrorism—that still stand between humanity and the realization of its hopes for freedom from want and freedom from fear. They responded by adopting the Millennium Declaration: a clear statement of values and priorities for action in the new century.

Among those priorities, none was more important than the pledge they made "to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty". More specifically, they resolved that by 2015 they would: halve the proportions of the world's people living in extreme poverty and hunger and without safe drinking water; achieve universal access to primary schooling and gender equality at all levels of education; reduce child mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters; halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce the incidence of other major diseases; integrate the principles of sustainable development into their policies; and forge a global partnership for development.

This International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is an occasion for us all to recommit ourselves to these Millennium Development Goals, and reflect on the progress—or lack of it—so far achieved.

No doubt, the world has made some progress on the poverty front. According to the latest data, the proportion of people living on less than $1 a day in developing countries declined from one third in 1990 (the agreed start date from which progress is to be measured) to one quarter in 1999. But not every region or country has had a share in this progress. In sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as in several transition economies, the absolute number of poor people has gone up.

Overall, the world is not on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. By the year 2000—the latest for which data are available—we should have been 40 per cent of the way there. But for most of the Millennium Development Goals, the global record shows that barely half that amount of progress had been achieved.

There is hope. The Millennium Development Goals are attainable. But poverty is an old enemy with many faces. Defeating it will require many actors to work together.

The Millennium Development Goals are global, but what will determine whether they are or are not met is what happens in each separate country. And there is no magic formula for reaching them that every country can apply.

Each country must find the right mix of policies—the one that suits its local conditions. And the people of each country must insist that those policies be applied.

Let no one think that this applies only to developing countries. The developed countries, too, must ensure that no part of their own population falls short. And they also have a special global responsibility. They must deliver what they have promised: to open their markets fully to the products of developing countries; to let them compete in the global market on fair terms; and to provide much more generous development assistance. Without these things, many developing countries will be unable to reach the Millennium Goals, however hard they try.

In other words, it is not here at the United Nations, or by the work of United Nations officials, that these Goals can be achieved. They have to be achieved in every country, by the efforts of its government and its people.

That is why I have started a Millennium Campaign: to make the Goals better known throughout the world, and to try and mobilize the force of public opinion behind them.

I shall make a global report each year. But I hope that every developing country, with the help of the United Nations and other international institutions, will also produce its own annual report—so that in each country the people will know how they are doing. Our hope is that, in this age of democracy, once people know, they will insist on action.

On this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, let us recognize that extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to human security everywhere. Let us recall that poverty is a denial of human rights. For the first time in history, in this age of unprecedented wealth and technical prowess, we have the power to save humanity from this shameful scourge. Let us summon the will to do it.
the Poverty Centre. The experts were expected to review the analysis undertaken and make recommendations on the work accomplished to date on preparing the first "state of progress" report. They intended to help give meaning and shape to the data in keeping with regional perspectives on strategies and programmes for poverty reduction and development. Additional information on the meeting is available from http://www.unescap.org/povertycentre/AdvisoryPanelMeetings.htm.

Publications

• Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2002
  http://www.unescap.org/drpad/publication/survey2002/

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

The web site for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) can be found on the Internet at http://www.escwa.org.lb/.

Poverty in the ESCWA region

The spread of poverty in the ESCWA region has resulted from internal as well as international determinants in five spheres: political, economic, social, environmental and cultural. At present, the situation of the ESCWA countries is, to varying degrees, one of increased economic strain, political instability, deteriorating social conditions and soaring unemployment, affecting not only the traditionally poor but also the middle class. Moreover, poverty affects women disproportionately.

The Commission's work on poverty began in 1995 and progressed in three phases. In the first phase, ESCWA undertook a number of technical studies on the measurement, characteristics and determinants of poverty. Poverty was seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that resulted from complex interlinked determinants including social, economic and political conditions and a disabling environment. In the second phase, the emphasis shifted to the evaluation of policy measures adopted by the ESCWA member States to combat and eradicate poverty. To date, twelve sectoral studies and country profiles as well as the proceedings of the expert group meeting on improving standards of living in the Arab Mashreq have been published.

ESCWA is currently implementing the third phase, dedicated to the tools that can help to alleviate and eradicate poverty, such as microcredit and social funds. Microfinance is one of many tools available to fight poverty, but it has tremendous potential for change in poor people's lives. Within this framework, the Human Development Section has undertaken a study of the existing microfinance sector in Lebanon and will replicate this study in the other ESCWA member States. The country studies intend to provide an overview of the existing situation in the field of microfinance. The overview would then be used to facilitate impact-assessment studies and would result in recommendations for better delivery of microfinance services.

The gender dimensions of poverty have been also studied by the Women and Development Unit of the Social Development Issues and Policies Division of ESCWA. The first phase was an exploratory study on the verification of the concept of the feminization of poverty in the region. A second phase addressed the manifestations of poverty for women, especially in conflict-stricken areas of the region, and as such undertook a field survey of female-headed households and their link to poverty. The third phase examined the tools for alleviating poverty among women and their economic empowerment, including the feasibility and operationalization of microcredit facilities in the ESCWA region.

Additional information on the work of the Social Development Division is available from http://www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/sdd/main.htm •
Events

Poverty-related events included the following:

- "Expert group meeting on poverty statistics, Beirut, 10-12 September 2002
- "Expert group meeting on social policies in the ESCWA region, Beirut, 10-12 December 2002

Publications

- "The Role of Microcredit in Poverty Alleviation: Profile of the Microcredit Sector in Lebanon (E/ESCWA/SD/2000/2) •

Major UN Conferences in 2002:

At the major United Nations Conferences held in 2002, listed below, it was recognized that persistent poverty is the leading global challenge.

World Summit on Sustainable Development

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, focused on improving the lives of poor people and ensuring a world that is sustainable for future generations. Acknowledging that the increasing gap between the rich and the poor presents a major threat to global prosperity, stability and security, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development contains specific global targets for poverty reduction, clean water and sanitation, and infant mortality.

The Summit also addressed a range of environmental and development issues, such as climate change, energy, agriculture, trade, African development and the needs of small island States. In addition, prominent in the debate were the removal of agricultural subsidies, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and the need to open markets for developing countries.

The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development stressed that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns and protecting and managing the natural resources were the objectives and essential requirements for sustainable development. Partnership, an important outcome of the Summit, will deepen the quality of the implementation of commitments made. Promoting the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development is therefore imperative.

In addition information on the Summit is available on the Internet at http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/ •

International Conference on Financing for Development,

The Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002)8 paved the way for a new spirit of international cooperation in confronting development issues. While the main focus was on finance, economic and development policies, the Monterrey Consensus also included such social issues as social protection, income distribution, employment and gender equality.

There was a widespread consensus on the urgency of achieving the development goals embodied in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), in particular, the objective of halving world poverty by 2015. The Monterrey Consensus also stressed the fundamental responsibilities of Governments to invest in people, including in education, health, basic social infrastructure and social security programmes, all of which are vital for overcoming poverty, but also very productive investments in themselves for economic growth. The importance of mobilizing resources and implementing aid effectively to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was widely supported.

The web site of the follow-up process to the Conference is located at http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ •

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Second World Assembly on Ageing

The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid from 8-12 April 2002, produced the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in response to the opportunities and challenges posed by population ageing. Within the context of a society for all ages, the recommendations represent three main priorities: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

Recognizing that demographic change will likely occur at a rapid rate in developing countries, where the older population is expected to quadruple by 2050, the Second World Assembly emphasized the importance of placing ageing in the context of strategies for the eradication of poverty and working to achieve full participation of all developing countries in the world economy.

For additional information, see the following web site:
Five-year review of the World Food Summit

The five-year review of the World Food Summit, held in Rome form 10-13 June 2002, called for a global commitment to reducing world hunger and ensuring food security. The Summit produced a declaration calling on the international community to fulfil the pledge made in Istanbul five years earlier to reduce the number of hungry people to about 400 million by 2015. Issues of trade, biotechnology, pollution, food safety and the decline of family farms were extensively debated, including a renewed focus on rural development. Also well recognized was the link between confronting poverty and poor food security. Success in meeting those challenges will require political will, resources, technology and fairer trade.

The report of the Summit and other relevant information can be found in the Internet at


EDITOR’S NOTE

The Bulletin on the Eradication of Poverty is a periodical publication of the Division for Social Policy and Development. It provides information on poverty eradication initiatives, including those related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). Address correspondence to:

Bulletin on the Eradication of Poverty
United Nations Secretariat
Room DC2-1358
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

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