



You've emphasized the need for balancing responsibilities for the MDGs between the developed and the developing worlds – what opportunities exist for youth from different backgrounds to work together on the MDG campaign? I would hope young people would first look at their own country and see what it is doing to achieve the MDGs. You can visit our web pages (www.millenniumcampaign.org and www.millenniumcampaign.org/youth) to find out how your country is doing. If you are from a rich country, make your government accountable to its promise to deliver on Goal 8, to give more and better quality aid, create more trade opportunities and give more debt relief to poor countries. Without the help of rich countries the global deal will fail and we will never reach the goals by 2015. If you are from a developing country you should investigate if and how your government has implemented the goals in its policy-level decisions. Has your government set up the framework to raise the poor out of poverty and hunger, get every child into school, empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensure environmental sustainability? If not they're not living up to their promises and you need to remind them of their pledge.

The success of the goals seems to depend on sufficient political will and increased aid flows, both determined by professional politicians. What can young people

Caroline Ang of TUNZA asked **Eveline Herfkens**, the UN Secretary-General's Executive Coordinator for the Millennium Development Goals Campaign, how young people can join the MDG campaign.

What can young people do to help achieve the goals by 2015?
Today's world has the resources, technology and know-how to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, but what is still lacking is the firm political will of world leaders to deliver on their promises. This is where young people come in. We need you to get the goals back on track. There are 2.8 billion people under the age of 25 and, in the developing world, youth make up 70 per cent of the population. Young people have to be part of the national and international movement to end poverty and ensure environmental stability. We need the voice of youth in every stage of the process if we want to make the goals a reality by 2015.

The merits of youth involvement in development have been hotly contested – what are your views? Youth participation is a powerful tool towards achieving the MDGs. I have found young people are often the most motivated and inspired activists and have the clearest ideas on how positively to change their communities. To take just one example, the passion of Nkom Marie Tamoifa, a member of the Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit, for environmental issues led her to create the Cameroon Green Youth Association. Her organization eventually expanded to a national network that increased young people's environmental awareness (Goal 7) and provided outlets for youth participation in the decision-making process in her country.

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Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

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Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
- Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020.

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Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.
- Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.

- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing states.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term.
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth.
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.

Young people have realized that they have to take action to fight poverty and hunger and not just wait for governments - and the future looks more positive.

Analiz Vergara
Ecuador

Eradicating extreme poverty needs the strong commitment of all stakeholders, but the most important thing is to involve the younger generation. Every individual can make a difference.

Humphrey Polepole, Tanzania

GOAL 1

I believe that eradicating poverty is vital since the really poor and starving can do no more than fulfil their basic needs - they are powerless to take further steps towards development and sustainability.

Lars Rosendahl Appelquist, Denmark

The Government must focus on concrete policies to win the fight against poverty - things like community partnerships to implement food for work programmes.

Ruth Mulenga, Zambia

- including those not yet old enough to vote - contribute?

Young people can be just as influential as any other group in mobilizing political will, but they have to make their voices heard. Young people who cannot vote still have the power to change the minds of politicians. I often remember a young woman in Viet Nam - a country that on paper will achieve most of the goals by 2015, but has many rural areas that are very far from meeting them on time - who visited the 13 poorest provinces to educate people about the importance of the goals, and bring attention to disproportionate poverty in her country. This is an example of how one young person can really make a difference. There are many similar stories, but the important thing to remember is that every voice counts, no matter how young. No politician will act unless there is pressure to do so, and we all have to add our voices to the global call to end poverty now.

How can we avoid becoming cynical and dismissing the MDGs as 'litter on yet another boulevard of broken dreams' (as you once warned could happen)?

The goals are the best news we've had in a very long time. For the first time in history we have a package that everybody agrees on and we can focus on improving the lives of real people. There are many discouraging statistics, but global averages mask the many success stories so far. Malawi and Rwanda are going to achieve Goal 2 and send all their children to school. Tanzania is on track on its water requirements in Goal 7, and Uganda and Senegal are able to reverse the AIDS pandemic (Goal 6), while Mozambique might achieve both the poverty (Goal 1) and child mortality (Goal 4) goals. If some of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa can achieve some of the goals, I will not give up believing they are all achievable at a global level. These success stories

are cases where the global compact has worked and has saved the lives of millions of people as a result.

And to sum up?

For the youth of the world, tomorrow's future will be defined by what you do today. You have to decide if you are tired of millions of people going hungry, of the massive loss of environmental resources, of your governments breaking promise after promise to help the poor countries of the world. Remember, you could be the first generation to finally put an end to world poverty. Please refuse to miss this opportunity.

By establishing systems of support and education, the feminist movement in Australia can improve its own current situation and provide other countries with much needed support.

Lucia Wellington
Australia

Women's empowerment is essential to promote gender equality. What must change? Women's mobility and social interaction in society, access to resources and participation in decision making.

Nisrine Khaderby, India

GOAL 3

It's hard to imagine living without clean water on tap - but millions have to. I want my fellow world citizens to have the same chances of health and well-being that I do - and that's why I support the MDGs.

Laura Kirby, UK

We must develop common ground between economically and environmentally motivated people. If the resources we depend upon are exhausted we will all lose.

David Greici
USA

Bahraini law gives women all rights equal to men, but the problem is with the historical culture. Our society is starting to get over this and accept that women can be successful in every sphere.

Hanan Rajab
Bahrain

GOAL 7