Civil Society and the global agenda: from evaluation to action
In 2005, the 60th year of the United Nations, Heads of State and Government are being called to a Millennium Review Summit meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, to be held from September 14-16 in New York. The agenda for this meeting is now being shaped and there are real opportunities for civil society to engage in this process.

In this pamphlet, you can find out:
- Why 2005 is a “pivotal year for the United Nations”.
- When and where major events leading up to the Millennium Review Summit are taking place.
- What civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world are thinking, strategizing, and campaigning about.
- How civil society groups are mobilizing support for what they want to see on the Summit agenda.
- What you can do — at local and global levels to make a real difference — to become a Global Citizen!

**A Vision for our Millennium**

In 2000, the United Nations proclaimed the Millennium Declaration as the global agenda for the 21st century. It cites fundamental values, essential for the 21st century: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. To translate these values into action, the Declaration identifies the following action agenda:
- Peace, security, and disarmament
- Development and poverty eradication
- Protecting our common environment
- Human rights, democracy, and good governance
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Meeting the special needs of Africa
- Strengthening the United Nations

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) embody specific targets and timelines for achieving many of the objectives of the Declaration.

Five eventful years later, world leaders and citizens are reviewing progress on this agenda, considering new factors, and correcting course for the future:
- With some notable exceptions, rich countries have been reluctant to commit the resources and make the reforms required to fulfil the Declaration’s promise.
- The “9/11” terrorist attacks diverted attention and resources from development and peace.
- The decision to go to war on Iraq, without Security Council support, threatened the core purpose of the United Nations.
- The response of people all over the world to the Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrates the vitality of our shared sense of common humanity and the indispensable role of the United Nations system in coordinating massive emergency relief and securing long-term sustainable development.

**The Millennium Review Summit: “An event of decisive importance” — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan**

At the Millennium Review Summit, September 14-16, 2005, the world’s political leaders will be called upon to take decisions that will determine whether or not the vision of the Declaration will be fulfilled: “To ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people… based on our common humanity.”

Here we put forward some ideas in brief. For more details see: *We the Peoples 2005; The UN Millennium Declaration and Beyond. Mobilizing for Change: Messages from Civil Society*, from The North-South Institute (NSI) and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). The report highlights the results of a global online survey of civil society organizations in more than 100 countries and documents how they are engaging with the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. *We the peoples 2005* will be available online in March, and in print shortly thereafter. Please see WFUNA (www.wfuna.org) and NSI (www.nsi-ins.ca) for further information, including the texts of the previous three annual *We the Peoples* reports.
Since the Millennium Declaration was proclaimed in 2000, civil society organizations have become increasingly active in pressing world leaders not only to keep their promises, but to recognize that the plan for progress for the 21st century must be broader and bolder.

At the centre, the Millennium Development Goals embody specific targets and timelines for achieving many of the objectives of the Declaration: to alleviate worldwide poverty, hunger, and disease; to globalize human rights, the equality of women, and environmental protection; and to create fair rules of trade, increase development assistance, and put an end to unsustainable debt. These can only be achieved through a new Global Partnership for Development, “a development compact,” in which rich join poor to fulfill the promises.

This year CSOs around the world are reviewing the progress made over the past five years and the lessons that need to be learned. They are engaging in intensive dialogues about priorities, about policy change, about strategies that meet the promise of the Declaration but go further. Campaigns for change are springing up in country after country.

The Millennium Review Summit – Opportunities for influence

What are the main entry points and opportunities for civil society to influence the preparatory process for September’s UN Millennium Review Summit? Openings for advocacy with national governments will vary from country to country, and must be assessed by each organization and network. Events at the UN itself, from January through July, will shape the Summit. The G-8 Summit of the richest nations in July will send decisive signals. Advocacy now, in all three “theatres,” is essential. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will set the stage with a major report in March 2005, outlining his views and recommendations for the Summit. The report will consider two major studies: “A more secure world: our shared responsibility” – The report of the UN’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (www.un.org/secureworld) and Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (www.unmillenniumproject.org).

At the UN, where many civil society organizations have consultative status, there will be regular and special official meetings, with NGO forums and side events. Among the most important are:

**Leading to:**
**The Millennium Review Summit, September 14-16, NY**

**The G-8 Group of Industrialized Countries**

**July 6-8** The G-8 host, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, wants to give priority to Africa and to climate change. His Finance Minister, Gordon Brown, is calling for Africa’s debt service until 2015 to be written off and for the establishment of an International Finance Facility to double development assistance to over US$100 billion a year.

Major civil society events provide the opportunity to coalesce priorities and develop strategies:

**March 2-7** “UN at 60: Time for Renewal”: WFUNA conference in conjunction with the UNA-USA National Convention in NY. www.wfun.org

**March** Launch of Social Watch Benchmarks for Millennium Review Summit www.socialwatch.org

**May 29-June 1** Global Democracy: Civil Society Visions and Strategies, Montreal, www.fmcivilsociety.org

**July 1** First White Band Day (Global Call to Action, before the G-8 Summit) www.whiteband.org

**July 19-21** Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding, NY www.gppac.org

**Sept. 10** Second White Band Day (Global Call to Action, before the Millennium Review Summit)

Civil society is organizing for advocacy and public impact at key multilateral economic organizations:

**September 26-27** World Bank and IMF Annual World Bank and IMF Meeting, Washington, DC

**December 13-18** World Trade Organization Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference Hong Kong
The beauty of the emerging global civil society is its diversity and creativity, its determination and willingness to explore all alternatives. The challenge is to coalesce around far-reaching priorities. Here are key priority issues drawn from our surveys and dialogues with civil society organizations around the world. CSOs want government leaders to take action. We hope these priority ideas will help provoke your thoughts about what is important to your organization and constituency, your networks and allies, your country, the global community, and the United Nations.

- **Make poverty and hunger history: South and North**

  Relief of extreme poverty is at the heart of the MDGs. Poverty and hunger are prime obstacles to achieving education, health, and environmental goals as much at the household as at global levels. Women and girls are disproportionately affected. Many groups recognize poverty as a systematic violation of human rights. Poverty is about more than money. It is about lack of capability and choice. Ending poverty means reducing inequality. But inequality is growing in many countries, both rich and poor.

  Many groups indicate that only by empowering the poor themselves will poverty and hunger be defeated.

  The MDGs form a *minimum* program for the next five to 10 years, but are only part of what’s needed. Can we stop at “reducing by half the proportion” of people living in absolute poverty?

  Will 2005 bring a full commitment to eradicate not just a portion of absolute poverty, but a global coalition and plan to *eradicate* poverty and reduce inequality, South and North, and a commitment to a future with decent work, gender equity, and empowering the poor?

- **Bring justice to the global economy**

  To achieve the MDGs, a rapid scaling up of resources for development is essential:

  - Increased aid, moving from current levels through the 0.54% recommended by the Millennium Project to the 0.7% of GDP promised by world leaders a generation ago.
  
  - Innovative means of financing development, including global levies on international financial transfers, a carbon tax, and an aid financing facility that would guarantee sustained and predictable support.
  
  - Accelerated cancellation of debt and an open and fair debt arbitration mechanism.

  A new generation of trade arrangements is necessary which focuses on development and on “policy space” for developing countries to plan for their needs. It would include such elements as an end to external conditions which require privatization of public services and assets, inappropriate liberalization of domestic markets, an end to unjust rich country subsidies, and opening markets to the products of the poor.

- **Democratizing global governance**

  Empowering the poor means including them, and diverse elements of civil society, in planning, implementing, and evaluating development initiatives at all levels. Many organizations share visions of inclusive forms of democratic global governance. More groups are working on the details and proposals than ever before. These include specifics on how to assure that developing countries have a more adequate voice and vote in global economic and financial institutions.

  A reformed and strengthened United Nations should be at the centre. Global economic policy decisions need to be made within universal frameworks of human rights, labour, and environmental guarantees. A reformed UN should be adequately funded by innovative sources, as well as national contributions. It would engage civil society and parliaments much more intensely.
Saving lives, sustaining health
The health MDGs are inadequate and partial. The right to health, to access to life-extending and -saving services and treatments remains a dream for multitudes.

Civil society and global leaders share agreement on the urgency of defeating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. But the resources are simply not at the scale required. Action to build health systems which guarantee access and sustained services will reduce death and illness. Free provision of lifesaving medicines can save millions. Empowering women, sex workers, and other vulnerable populations can ensure the most vulnerable gain equitable access. Resources must not be only increased, but multiplied.

Peace: the prerequisite
We can meet the MDGs and much more for a fraction of global military expenditures. The choice lies mostly, but not only, with the leaders of the richest economies. The global trade in arms feeds conflict and profits the already rich. We can stop feeding war and feed the hungry.

Humanitarian and development groups are profoundly worried by the diversion of attention and resources to the so-called “war against terror,” away from combating poverty and building human economic and social security.

The UN must be reinforced in its historic role in preventing and mediating conflict, and in peacekeeping in all its dimensions, including preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Summit will consider proposals to make the Security Council more representative of the world’s populations, to strengthen the role of the more universal General Assembly and the input of civil society voices in global and national theatres of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding offers a timely opportunity for development and peace organizations to make certain that both peace and human development win at the Summit.

Human rights, gender equality, and the future
It will be impossible to meet the MDGs without the achievement of gender equality. In making decisions for the next five years, the full spectrum of human rights could be applied in strengthening democracy and participation, ensuring corporate responsibility and providing economic, social, and cultural security for all. Civil society organizations are applying human rights standards in reviewing government budgets, and in adapting and monitoring progress on the MDGs.

The priority of human rights must be universally recognized, the right to health should not be set aside in favor of privileges like patents, or postponed because expenditure would be inflationary. Sexual and reproductive rights, and access to health services which ensure them, are essential.

Protect the environment
Current development programs often depend on assumptions of rapid growth. But unregulated growth puts an unbearable load on our shared environment. Many community and national groups are working to recover agricultural land, extend forests, protect natural reserves and species, develop renewable energy, and defend public resources like water.

The MDGs do not address the phenomenal threat of climate change and global warming. Women as farmers and water providers, the poor, people who live in low-lying areas and islands, and those in dry-lands subject to desertification, are among the most vulnerable. A sustainable world will be a more equitable one.

Action to limit climate change, mitigate global warming, and protect the vulnerable must command priority from 2005 forward. Resistance to the limited demands of the Kyoto Accord must be overcome, and scaled up commitments developed beyond it. Development must be rethought with environmental impact at the centre. Development, social, and environmental organizations can enhance mutual support.
As well as participating in dialogues and debates on the agenda for the Summit, there is a tremendous amount you can do to help shape the national and global dynamics surrounding the event... and the political consciousness of participants.

1. Campaign, advocate... become a change agent

- Support the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) by joining in mass actions to end poverty. July 1 (just before the G-8) and September 10 (just before the UN Summit) are Global White Band Days, when people will wear white bands to show solidarity with global efforts to end poverty www.whiteband.org. A Global Week of Action on Trade (April 10-16) and action around the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial (December 13-18) will keep trade justice at the centre.


- Join other campaigns for greater equity, health, and sustainability and the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Places to start: the UN Millennium Campaign website (www.millenniumcampaign.org), the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (www.un-nigs.org), CIVICUS (www.civicus.org), World AIDS Campaign (www.unaid.org), and the World March Against Child Labor (www.globalmarch.org; www.icftu.org).

- Initiate a community-based advocacy campaign to request your Head of Government to take the lead at the UN Millennium Review Summit in September 2005 in supporting action to end poverty and hunger throughout the world.

Volunteer

Whether you are a recent graduate or recently retired, take action by volunteering your services to help achieve the MDGs. Travel to a different country to lend a hand while simultaneously building new relationships and a greater understanding of our global cultural diversity. (Find out more at www.unvolunteers.org). Identify the vulnerable in your community — the ill, the elderly, refugees, the disabled, orphans and those charged with their care. Find out what you can do to ease their situations.

2. Promote participatory decision-making, through awareness raising, education, and capacity-building

- Join or help organize local and national MDG hearings with parliamentarians, media representatives, business leaders, and civil society activists – ensure the inclusion of women and people living in poverty in your decision-making processes.

- Join your national United Nations Association (UNA). Many UNAs conduct nation-wide essay competitions and Model UN Conferences on themes related to the MDGs (www.wfuna.org).

- Inform your local and national media. Write letters to the editor and press releases highlighting matters concerning the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs, and Millennium Summit preparations. Invite the media to local actions, projects, and events.

Promote participatory democratic global governance

Join the empowerment campaigns of global constituencies such as the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) 50/50 Campaign for a balanced representation of women in government (www.wedo.org/balance.htm); the Indigenous Peoples’ Network for Change (www.international-alliance.org); the Taking ITGlobal/GYAN global online community of youth (www.takingitglobal.org), and the YES Campaign 2002 - 2012 Empowering Youth to create sustainable livelihoods (www.yesweb.org/index.htm).
3. Implement and adapt

- Hold community meetings to identify local needs and resources, and to strategize around appropriate solutions. Use the MDGs as a motivator and leverage to engage both the public and political leaders. (For an example of a best practice approach see the Green Belt Movement’s community development strategy: www.greenbeltmovement.org).
- Engage educational institutions at all levels in teaching about the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Help develop a curriculum that highlights local aspects of MDG implementation of particular importance.
- Engage with donor agencies, development organizations, and government departments in setting budget priorities and action plans for achieving the MDGs in ways most appropriate to your country’s culture and situation.

Raise funds

Hold fundraising events to contribute to local initiatives in your community, or to major global funds like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (www.theglobalfund.org). Donate funds to the major civil society organizations dedicated to poverty alleviation, or use the Internet to contribute directly to community initiatives and smaller organizations (see www.globalgiving.com or www.viacampesina.org).

4. Monitor, Assess, and Evaluate

- Join with others — in civil society, think tanks, and educational institutions — to become the national “MDG watchdog”: encourage people to share their experiences, assessments, and evaluations with you, produce regular reports, and request prompt feedback from authorities who have been given responsibility for projects and programs designed to achieve the MDGs.
- Learn about Alliance 2015, which brings together six European NGOs to promote development and evaluate European Union policies and expenditures (www.alliance2015.org).

5. Be creative

- Hold local gatherings, cultural events, art exhibitions, community gardening projects, theatre events, poetry performances, and clean-up initiatives highlighting local talent, resources, and possibilities and their links to the implementation of the MDGs and the Millennium Review Summit.
- Use your imagination to help implement and use as a tool the visions of peace, equality, sustainability, and prosperity embodied in the Millennium Declaration. The Global Campaign for Education (www.campaignforeducation.org) is making life-size cutouts of “friends” to symbolize the 105 million out-of-school children and 860 million illiterate adults worldwide to send to policy-makers. Make puppets. Hold competitions. Design posters. Host debates. Throw a party.
- Join the mdg campaign civil society listerv to share ideas, best practices, and strategies for successful planning, reporting, and analysis around the MDGs (go to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mdgcampaign).
Rather than a policy change, I would say that what is most needed is a radical change in attitude on the part of the world’s rich countries politicians, business people and public alike to face up to the suffering and inhumanity of the current global system, which means that over 1 billion people go to sleep hungry each night. This is a denial of their basic human rights. We know what needs to be done to change this: 

*cancel the debt, make trade fair, increase aid, and give poor countries a voice.* We don’t need more elaborate studies and analysis... We need strong leadership, vision, combined with profound listening to those who are suffering. Above all, we need ACTION.

— NGO respondent, 2005 WTP Survey