

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS BACKGROUNDER

Of eight Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2000, one of the goals toward which the least amount of progress has been made is goal four, reducing child mortality. Unless governments put forward a significant new effort to achieving targets associated with this goal, there is little hope it will be reached by the 2015 deadline.

It was a historic time in September, 2000 when 189 world leaders came together at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The declaration committed the largest number of world powers in the history of mankind to making the world a better place by establishing a new, global partnership to reduce extreme poverty. It set out eight, time-bound targets (with a deadline of 2015) that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs.

The goals are:

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
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Under the global partnership for development, action has been taken and progress has been made. But more than halfway to the target date of 2015, much remains to be accomplished, particularly among the world's most vulnerable citizens. Only 30 percent of the progress needed to reach the fourth goal—of cutting child mortality by two-thirds—has occurred.

It is a chronic emergency; 8.8 million children under the age of five die every year. More than 24,000 children under the age of five die every day, most of them from *preventable* causes. Malnutrition and lack of access to quality health care (such as pre and post natal care, birth attendants, immunizations and treatment for illnesses) and basic infrastructure—including water and sanitation—continue to cause sickness and death among infants, children and their mothers.

Next year, world leaders will gather in Muskoka to review progress on the eight MDGs. World Vision Canada is calling on all Canadians to urge our government to make child and maternal health a top priority at the June 2010 G8 Summit in Muskoka, and to significantly increase Canada's funding support for programs on saving the lives of women and children under five.