

# Millennium Development Goals

**Time is of the essence. 2005 will be a decisive year, with the Millennium Summit +5 taking place. If the world is going to succeed in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, civil society must push its respective governments – as “owners of the Goals” – to take action on them and begin to prioritise the fight against poverty before the war on terrorism.**

These were some of the messages at UN headquarters, September 8–10, 2004, when 2,700 people from different organisations and 90 countries met to discuss work with the MDGs under the theme, “Civil Society Takes Action”. SIWI was one of 7 organisations from Sweden participating in the conference.

Today, the world’s priorities are wrong. 50 billion dollars per year are dedicated to development aid, while at the same time, global military expenditures are 950 billion dollars. The United States alone spends 450 billion dollars on the military and 15 billion in development aid. The world’s developed countries

agreed at the UN conference in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2000, to commit 0.7 percent of their national budgets to development aid, a figure fulfilled today only by the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries.

“The fight against poverty is overshadowed by the fight against terrorism, but the fight against terrorism can never be won if the fight against poverty isn’t won,” said Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, during the conference.

## Civil society must mobilise

No more promises are needed, it was stated time and again during the conference. The world’s leaders have already agreed to the deadline to cut poverty in half – a goal which can be measured.

According to the British Ambassador Sir Emyr Jones Parry, development aid must at the least be doubled on an annual basis to USD 100 billion. But it isn’t just money which is important; a number of speakers spoke about the political will, and it is the civil society’s role to see that the politicians fulfil their promises.

“I am convinced that without the civil society, the MDGs would not exist, and without the civil society, they can’t be carried through,” said Ms. Eveline Herfkens, Secretary General for the UN’s Millennium Campaign.

## 2005 – a critical year

Next year, 2005, is an important year in the battle against poverty. Five years will have gone since the MDGs were agreed upon, and many processes have to get started if they’re going to be fulfilled. The overarching focus must shift from security issues to development issues.

In March 2005, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will report on how the first five years have gone. A number of other important reports will be released during the course of the year. SIWI will be involved in a number of important processes; among others, the 13th meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2005 (see page 14).

The progress being made to date must also be emphasised in 2005 so as to continue momentum on the MDGs.

“We see a number of new initiatives coming up,” says SIWI Executive Director Anders Berntell. “Programs for implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management Plans are on their way in an increasing number of countries. New initiatives for improving water and sanitation in cities are also on their way. We see a new awareness emerging both in governments and other implementing agencies and amongst the donor-countries. Some countries where the Governments have been very determined are already ahead of the Millennium Development Goals.”

SIWI will also continue its active work to make the broader connection between water and the MDGs better known. In 2004 SIWI produced together with the Millennium Project a policy brief entitled *Investing in the Future: Water’s Role in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*.

The basic statistics about water and sanitation are well-known: 1.1 billion people currently lacking access to safe drinking water, and 2.4 billion people lack access to sanitation. The brief showed further how poverty, hunger, environmental problems and diseases would be directly combated and significantly scaled back if fought with water access as a primary goal; child and maternal mortality rates would drop; and other important issues, including education and gender equality, would indirectly benefit from achievement of the safe drinking water and basic sanitation targets identified within the MDGs. ■

# 2005 Critical Year for International Development

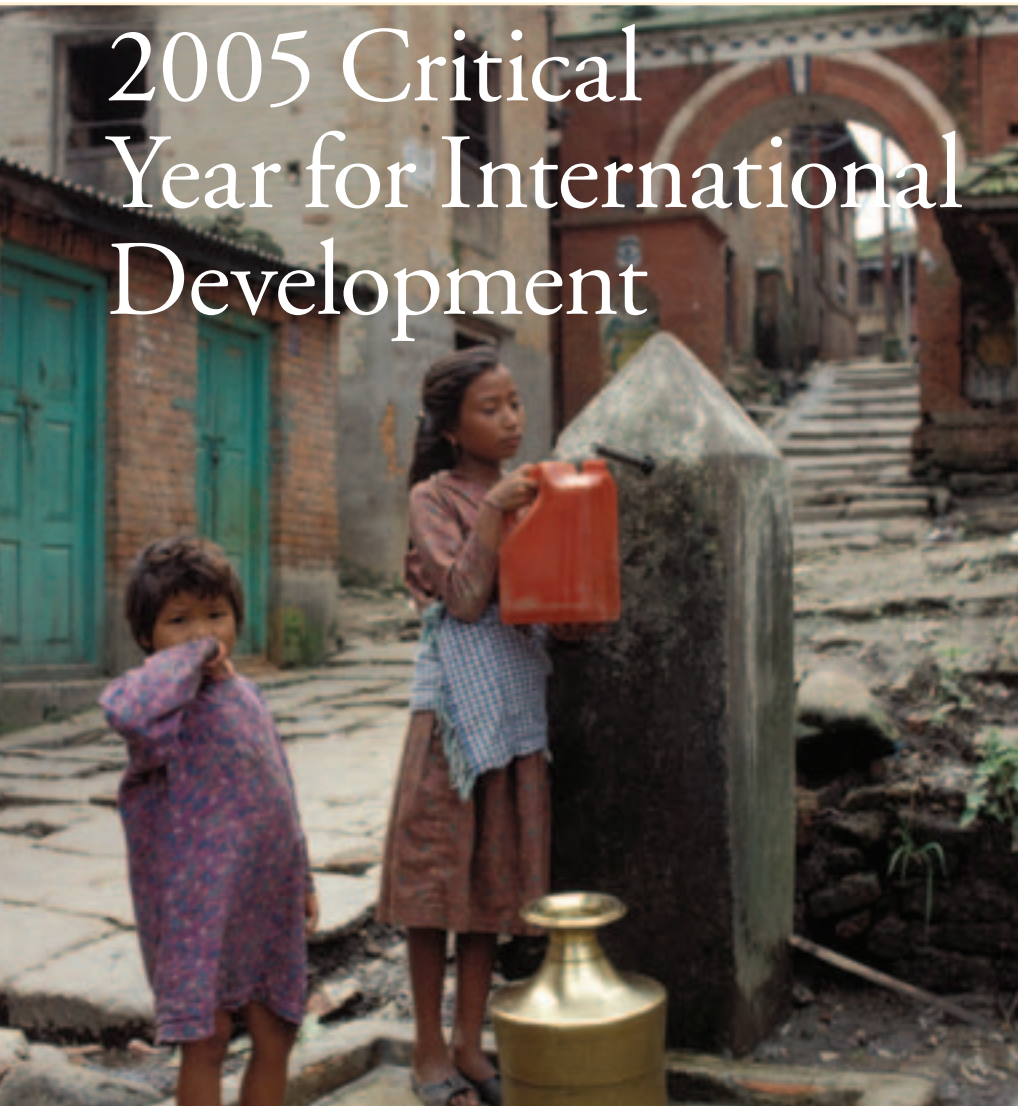


Photo: David Dabmer