

Investing in fight against poverty brings results, General Assembly hears



Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro

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Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro today stressed the need to protect development gains achieved so far despite the fiscal austerity measures undertaken in the wake of the global financial crisis, saying great social benefits arise from investing in poverty eradication programmes.

“In such a climate, we need to scale up those interventions that have the best chance to generate progress across the [MDGs](#) [Millennium Development Goals],” said Ms. Migiro in an [address](#) to the General Assembly’s Development Dialogue, taking place at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

“We must look for multiplier effects wherever we can. And none is more dramatic, none is more proven, than investments in the health of women and children,” she said.

The eight MDGs – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and leading development institutions. They have galvanized global efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest people.

Underlining the importance of reducing the levels of maternal, newborn and child mortality, Ms. Migiro noted that healthy women delivered and brought up healthy children who then attended school and became part of a healthy workforce that created prosperous societies.

“We can take heart from gains on the health MDGs. Last year, countries and a broad range of partners pledged more than \$40 billion for the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health. At its essence, the strategy is about taking what we know works for women and children, and bringing those efforts to scale,” she added.

She said the strategy has a special focus on information that requires that solid statistics be provided on health-related topics such as births, deaths and causes of death to make it possible to analyse policy across the MDGs. Not enough resources have, however, been invested on the information aspect of the Strategy, Ms. Migiro added.

Stronger accountability is another key feature of the strategy, she said.

“We have a framework that will tell us where the money is coming from, where it is going, and how effectively it is being spent. This ability to track resources and results is critical for ensuring that all partners deliver on their commitments, and that we are achieving tangible progress in achieving our goals,” said Ms. Migiro.

With the MDGs’ 2015 deadline approaching, Ms. Migiro stressed the need to consider what lay beyond. “Even a decade ago, we knew that achieving the MDGs would, in a sense, be only half the job. We knew that there would still be a vast backlog of deprivation.

“The time has come to look at those numbers – at those people – at all the men, women and children who will be barely touched by what we do by 2015, and who will therefore need our attention come 2016 and beyond,” she said.

In his opening remarks, General Assembly President Joseph Deiss noted that the international community’s commitment to the achievement of the MDGs had gathered pace in recent months.

He highlighted the creation of the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, which he said has significantly increased the mobilization of financial resources for that cause. He also noted the agreement in May on a new 10-year agenda for the so-called Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which focuses on improving the productive capacities of those States.

“The ultimate goal is to transform economies and societies of these countries so that the category of ‘Least Developed Countries’ no longer exists,” said Mr. Deiss.

He also singled out last week’s high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS as another major achievement because the international community had collectively pledged to intensify efforts to combat the pandemic.

“The partners committed to implement a holistic approach, ensuring justice and social inclusion, and where the fight against AIDS is fully integrated into development programmes,” said Mr. Deiss.

He, however, stressed that despite the extremely positive developments in the global fight against diseases and poverty, it must not be forgotten that in many countries and in several sectors, the MDGs may not be achieved by their target date.

“Suffice it here to remind you that hunger still prevails far too often and that millions of children lack access to medicines and appropriate care and still die from diseases that can be avoided.

“This reality confronts us with the fundamental challenge of turning commitments into action and action into results. In making a tangible difference on the ground in the lives of the poor, we demonstrate that the UN is a reliable, credible and accountable.”

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