

What in the World?

Millennium Development Goals

RTE

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Globalisation

Poverty

At the start of the new millennium, 189 nations of the world agreed eight millennium development goals that they believed would transform the lives of the poor of the world. They are as follows:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

These goals were intended to signify the collective responsibility of the global community to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity. The Assembly committed itself to 'spare no effort to free people from abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty and to free the entire human race from want'. That was the historic pledge.

Human Rights

Ten years later, and blaming the financial and economic crisis for the setbacks that hindered the eradication of poverty, the Assembly expressed 'deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger surpasses one billion people'. The assembly also expressed concern at 'the alarming global levels of maternal and child mortality'.

Concern was also expressed about the precariousness of many people's food security, increasing challenges posed by climate change and loss of biodiversity, which have increased vulnerability and inequalities.

Shot on location in Bangladesh, Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia, this series critically examines the impact of the Millennium Development Goals on some of the poorest people on the planet.

The Locations

In Malawi, frail elderly Nana Chingowe is left to care for her three orphan grandchildren, eleven year-old Nelson, ten year old Mathero and five year-old Blessings. But other than occasional casual work as a day labourer for which she earns €0.30 a day, she has no mean to support them. Hunger stalks their lives. Water, however, is plentiful, at least during the rainy season. Sometimes even too much so. The roof of her tiny one-roomed block-built house is porous and the rain teems in. These are the ultra poor of Malawi. Dispassionately but with tremendous emotional power, Nana tells us their story.



Meanwhile in Bangladesh, water too threatens the lives of the coastal people in the Bay of Bengal. But here it is the increasing frequency of cyclones that is devastating the area. Aminur Rahman's life was utterly upended during one of these cyclones. He graphically re-lives the afternoon in which he desperately tried to hold on to two of his children and that moment of recognition when he was forced to realise that they were dead and he had to let them go.

Vietnam, one of the few Marxist-Leninist states still standing. The constitution declares that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a State of the people, from the people for the people and the Communist party of Vietnam is the faithful representation of the rights and interests of the working class, the toiling people and the whole nation. Just over thirty years after the country was devastated by war leaving between one and two million dead, it's economy is storming ahead. In 1993, poverty levels were at 58%, more than every second person was poor. Now that figure has dropped to 12%. It is an impressive achievement.



Kenneth Kaunda remains a dominant father figure on the Zambian and African landscape. One of the first to break the silence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he has been an outspoken voice for Africa and has been an arch critic of the European colonial enterprise. In this programme he gives us his current assessment of the country, the continent and of the Millennium Development Goals. But an outspoken President does not a country make. Zambia remains one of the poorest countries in the world with almost two-thirds (64%) of its population living below the poverty threshold while over half (51%) live in extreme poverty.

A new four-part series on the Millennium Development Goals



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