

TASK FORCE: Hunger

'Halving hunger is well within our means'

Task Force provides 40 effective solutions for dramatic reductions in world hunger

17 January 2005, *New York*—More than 850 million people go to bed hungry every day, 300 million of them children. But over the next decade, more than half can be saved from malnourishment, according to the UN Millennium Project's Hunger Task Force. The task force further identified 313 areas around the world in need of priority action.

The task force findings—*Halving Hunger: It Can Be Done*—were released today as part of a detailed global action plan for fighting poverty, disease and environmental degradation in developing countries. The Hunger Task Force was led by **Dr. Pedro Sanchez**, a “MacArthur Genius” grant recipient, winner of the 2002 World Food Prize, and pioneer in the field of tropical soils and agroforestry; and **Prof. M. S. Swaminathan**, winner of the 1987 World Food Prize, leader of India's Green Revolution movement, and world leader in the field of sustainable food security. They coordinated an unprecedented assemblage of experts from governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia who over the last two years have traveled the world to observe and discuss precisely what is being done to fight hunger and how solutions that are succeeding can be used in regions that are still struggling.

“The Millennium Development Goal of cutting hunger in half by 2015 can be met if industrialized countries increase and improve their development assistance,” the report said. “Halving hunger is well within our means. What has been lacking is action to implement and scale up known solutions.”

The Hunger Task Force developed a wide variety of recommendations in the belief that each country, region or community can select the right mix of interventions best suited to its needs and circumstances. It has crafted 40 specific, proven solutions for fighting hunger and a plan for implementing them at international, national and community levels. Africa was given specific emphasis, as it is the only region in the world where malnutrition is rising. The recommendations include:

- **Move from political commitment to action** through increased advocacy, increased resources, greater public awareness, and increased monitoring and awareness.
- **Reform policies and create an enabling environment**, through strategies such as an integrated policy covering agriculture, nutrition and rural development, increased budgetary support, empowering women and girls, increased access to land, strengthening research, removing barriers to trade and developing capacity to implement programmes to reduce hunger.
- **Increase agricultural productivity of poor farmers who struggle to produce even enough food for subsistence** by improving soil health, water management methods, seeds and livestock, and agricultural extension services.

- **Improve nutrition for chronically hungry vulnerable groups** through proven nutrition programmes focused on pregnant and nursing mothers, infants, young children and adolescents, and by supporting programmes that reduce vitamin and mineral deficiencies and infectious diseases that contribute to malnutrition.
- **Reduce vulnerability of the acutely hungry through productive safety nets.** Techniques include preparing for food crises in advance through early warning and emergency response systems and the development of social safety nets.
- **Make markets work for the poor to boost incomes for those who struggle to pay for food.** Strategies include investing in market-related infrastructure, developing networks of small rural input traders, improving access to financial services and market information for the poor, strengthening community associations and promoting alternative sources of income.
- **Restore and conserve the natural resources essential for food security.** Interventions include helping communities to restore natural resources, securing local access, ownership, and management rights to forests, fisheries and rangelands, developing natural resource-based “green enterprises”, and paying poor rural communities for environmental services.

This blueprint for action on hunger is crucial to meeting commitments forged in 2000 at the Millennium Summit, where world leaders agreed to make the fight against poverty—and all of its faces—in developing countries their priority. The summit inspired the Millennium Development Goals, which are built on the recognition that, from health to the environment, from education to gender equality, a growing list of development issues can no longer be managed solely within the boundaries of a single nation.

The task force plan for fighting hunger is part of the UN Millennium Project, which was commissioned by the UN Secretary-General in 2002 to develop a practical plan of action for enabling developing countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals and reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people. As an independent advisory body directed by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, the UN Millennium Project submitted its final recommendations in January 2005.

The Hunger Task Force is one of 10 UN Millennium Project Task Forces that together comprise some 265 experts from around the world, including members of parliament; researchers and scientists; policymakers; representatives of civil society; UN agencies; the World Bank; International Monetary Fund; and the private sector. The UN Millennium Project Task Force teams were challenged to diagnose the key constraints to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and present recommendations for overcoming the obstacles to get nations on track to achieving them by 2015.



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