

# NATIONAL POST

## In defence of practical foreign aid

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Re: Do-good Goals, Do-bad Outcomes, Peter Foster, Feb. 15

It was unfortunate to see your newspaper fall prey to the inaccuracies conveyed by William **Easterly** regarding the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Millennium Project directed by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs. This is especially unfortunate since so many of Mr. **Easterly's** recommendations in fact align closely with those of the UN Millennium Project.

The Millennium Development Goals have nothing to do with Mr. **Easterly's** notion of a top-down "Big Plan." They are simply a set of transparent and time-bound targets for benchmarking progress against the most extreme forms of poverty, indeed exactly the type of clear and auditable targets that Mr. **Easterly** himself advocates. Since their inception in 2000, the Goals have been repeatedly endorsed by every country in the world.

The UN Millennium Project, as an independent advisory body, recommended an action plan for achieving the Goals based on the ground-level experiences of more than 250 leading experts from academia, business, government and non-governmental organizations around the world. Foremost among the recommendations was the need to break from business as usual and give each developing country space to craft its own tailored strategy for achieving the Goals. Quite the opposite of a command economy, the Project underscored open trade, market-based growth, and active leadership from business and civil society as essential to development success.

The Project's experts also stressed that at some point calls for more studies need to be replaced with action. The powers of long-lasting nets to fight malaria, fertilizers to grow food and free lunches to promote children's health and education, for example, are all well understood. But the poorest countries, no matter how good their governance, cannot afford to implement them on any real scale. The little foreign aid that does reach these countries doesn't focus nearly enough on such ground-level investments that communities need. The Millennium Project has shown how, under a more practical system, the longstanding promise of 0.7% of GNP reflects the finance needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and why it is so important for countries like Canada to meet this commitment.

These points address just a few inaccuracies in Mr. **Easterly's** work. Hopefully his book will not distract from the truly urgent task at hand: scaling up practical support for the world's poorest people as they fight to escape the ruthless daily perils of extreme poverty.

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