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## U.N. Report Urges Rich Nations to Double Aid to Poor

By CELIA W. DUGGER

**U**NITED NATIONS, Jan. 17 - An international team of experts sponsored by the United Nations proposed today a detailed, ambitious plan to halve extreme poverty and save the lives of millions of children and hundreds of thousands of mothers each year by 2015.

The 74-page report, which synthesizes 3,000 pages of findings by 265 experts, says that drastically reducing poverty in its many guises - hunger, illiteracy, disease - is "utterly affordable." Industrialized nations will need to double aid to poor countries, to 0.5 percent of their national incomes, it said.

The report of the United Nations Millennium Project, which was prepared under the stewardship of Prof. Jeffrey D. Sachs of Columbia University, advocates trade reforms to level the international playing field, as well a sweeping array of spending on, among other things, health, education, rural development, slum upgrading, roads and scientific research. Such an effort, the report said, would lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

The Millennium Project's blueprint for development - viewed by some critics as utopian overreaching - is likely to shape the agenda for agencies of the United Nations over the coming decade and to influence other major players, including the World Bank and the governments of impoverished African countries.

"We're talking about rich countries committing 50 cents out of every \$100 of income to help the poorest people in the world get a foothold on the ladder of development," said Professor Sachs, who was appointed to lead the project by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002.

The worldwide outpouring of grief and aid since a huge tsunami killed more than 150,000 people in Asia and Africa last month has stirred hope here that the same wellspring of empathy can be tapped for what Professor Sachs called "the silent tsunami" of global poverty that kills more than 150,000 children every month from malaria alone.

The report, "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals," is the first in a series of initiatives this year that are meant to focus

the world's attention on fulfillment of sweeping poverty-fighting promises made by the world's leaders in 2000.

In July, Britain will be host to a summit meeting of industrialized countries that will spotlight global poverty, particularly in Africa. Prime Minister Tony Blair has appointed a commission on Africa that is to report this spring. And Britain's finance chief, Gordon Brown, is campaigning for a "Marshall Plan" for Africa that includes debt relief and his own proposal to roughly double aid from rich nations.

Britain itself has pledged to double aid by 2013 to 0.7 percent of its national income. The United States, which currently allocates less than 0.2 percent for aid, has not made a comparable pledge.

In September, world leaders will gather here to take stock of progress toward the antipoverty goals they set in 2000, among them universal primary education and sharp reductions in hunger, child and maternal mortality and the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day.

Today's report says poor countries should stop tailoring their plans to combat poverty to the limited resources now available and instead draw up comprehensive approaches to achieve the poverty reduction goals, then figure the costs.

The project calls on poor countries to improve their own governance, uphold the rule of law and spend more of their own money to combat poverty. But economists on the millennium team estimate that those resources will be inadequate and that donors will need to make up the difference.

"We are not telling countries what to do," Professor Sachs said. "I meet with national leaders, cabinet ministers, villagers all the time. They want to stay alive - to fight malaria, to get H.I.V.-infected people on ARV's," or antiretroviral therapies, "to build roads, to use fertilizers and agroforestry. These proposals are not imposed from the outside."

The report advocates that rich countries support a crash development program this year in at least a dozen poor, well-governed nations that donors are confident will use the money wisely. Ghana, Mozambique, Mali, Senegal and Tanzania are among those most often mentioned.

It also recommends pressing this year for 17 "quick wins," policies that it says would swiftly translate into millions of improved and saved lives.

Among them: mass distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and medicines to combat malaria, a leading killer of children; elimination of fees for primary schools, with lost revenue replaced by donors; expansion of school meals programs to hungry areas;

providing regular deworming medicines to schoolchildren in affected areas to improve school attendance and health; distribution of free or subsidized fertilizer to impoverished African farmers; and expanded treatment of people with AIDS and tuberculosis.

The long list of "quick wins," as well as the daunting scope of development challenges the report advocates tackling simultaneously have led to internal debate among some experts working on the report.

Professor Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia and a specialist in economic development as well as health policy and management, said many poor countries were ready to move forward on many fronts, especially with infusions of aid to improve their administrative and information systems. "The problem is not really the range of issues," he said, "but the lack of financing."

But Nancy Birdsall, who heads the Center for Global Development in Washington and was a leader of the project's education task force, said she worried that the report did not sufficiently emphasize that many difficult social and political changes having nothing to do with money will have to be made by the developing countries themselves to reduce poverty.

And while she, too, strongly supports increased donor aid - her nonprofit institution recently published "Millions Saved," a book about successful initiatives in public health - she also said that the report recommended too many priorities and "quick wins."

"Having so many unfortunately reflects the difficult reality of setting priorities, even for the authors of this report," she said. "We wanted a constraint-free world, but that's not the way life is or the development challenge. Even if the money is there, where do you start? What do you work on?"

The report bears the unmistakable stamp of Professor Sachs, a crusader for the idea that within a generation, rich and poor countries together can end the extreme poverty afflicting more than a billion people.

His indefatigable advocacy for a wide-ranging set of prescriptions and sharp increases in aid have intensified the long-smoldering debate about the efficacy of foreign aid for poor countries struggling with weak governance and corruption.

Prominent development experts who were not on the Millennium Project team reacted to its report with comments that ranged from harshly critical to cautiously supportive.

William Easterly, an economics professor at New York University, said an incremental approach with more modest goals - for example, the use of vaccinations to curtail childhood deaths from measles - would have been more effective than that of the report.

"Its approach is a sort of utopian central planning by global bureaucrats, a crash program like a Great Leap Forward for poor countries," he said. "This will not work any better than central planning by bureaucrats has worked anywhere else, which is to say not at all."

But Professor Dani Rodrik, a Harvard University economist, said that while the plan requires "a huge leap of faith" that poor countries can handle sharply higher inflows of aid, it is worth a gamble, especially since the increased amount of donor assistance proposed is such a tiny share of rich countries' national incomes.

"It has the potential of making a difference in a number of countries that take this opportunity and put it to good use," he said. "One has to ask the question: If not this, what else?"

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