



## The Current Development Context: Positive Change

Over recent decades there has been the fastest reduction in poverty in human history. This unprecedented progress has been a combination of many factors including:

- economic growth. Over the period 1990 – 2010 developing countries grew their Gross Domestic Product, their 'national wealth', by about 6%
- better policies to address global poverty particularly the global commitment to the eight [Millennium Development Goals](#). These set out an internationally agreed framework to promote development over the period 2000 - 2015. These goals focused on: the eradication of poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/ Aids, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environment sustainability; and creating a global partnership for development
- significant reductions in poverty in particular parts of the world. For example, between 1981 and 2010 China lifted 680 million people out of poverty, cutting its poverty rate from 84% to about 10%. And growth in other countries beyond China has also cut the number of people living in extreme poverty by 280 million.

As a result of this progress:

- there are half a billion fewer people living below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. In 1990 43% of the population of developing countries lived in extreme poverty, by 2010 this had reduced to 21%
- child death rates have fallen by more than 30%, with about three million children's lives saved each year compared to 2000
- deaths from malaria have fallen by one quarter
- life expectancy has increased steadily across the world, particularly in most developing countries: world average life expectancy rose from 66 years in 2000, to 70 years in 2011 (World Health Organisation).

### The Development Challenge: extreme poverty

However, alongside these very positive changes there remain significant challenges and extreme poverty remains throughout much of the developing world. Around 1.4 billion people around the world still live in poverty and they account for the use of just over 1% of the world's resources. Whilst absolute poverty has reduced, there has been growing inequality between rich and poor in many countries. In addition, many significant challenges - such as environmental sustainability, the impact of climate change, demographic change and the global economic situation – influence actions to reduce poverty.

### How is International Community Responding?

Many political leaders now believe it will be possible to eradicate extreme poverty within our lifetimes:

'...the post-2015 agenda is our chance to usher in a new era in international development that can lead to a world of prosperity, peace, sustainability, equity and dignity for all.' - [Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary General, 31 August 2013](#)



'Today, Africa and indeed the entire world stand at major crossroads in our drive to eradicate poverty and build sustained prosperity for all peoples. We can continue with business as usual and get the same results, which keeps hundreds of millions of people in poverty and deprivation; or we could begin to transform economies in order to achieve sustainable development.' – [\*Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, 2 June 2013\*](#)

'For the first time in human history, society has the capacity, the knowledge and the resources to eradicate poverty.' - [\*Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, August 2002\*](#)

The international community is currently reviewing how the Millennium Development Goals helped to reduce extreme poverty. In 2013, 26 representatives of governments, the private sector, academia and civil society met to advise the United Nations Secretary General on a new agenda for development agenda to coordinate international action from 2015 onwards. Their report ['A New Global Partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development'](#) argues that:

- no one should live in extreme poverty, or tolerate violence against women and girls.
- no one should be denied freedom of speech or access to information.
- no child should go hungry or be unable to read, write or do simple sums.
- all should be vaccinated against major diseases.
- everyone should have access to modern infrastructure – drinking water, sanitation, roads, transport and information and communications technologies.
- all countries should have access to cost-effective clean and sustainable energy.
- everyone should have a legal identity.

Their report outlines out a potential programme of action, with identified goals, which by 2030 could achieve the following:

- 1.2 billion fewer people hungry and in extreme poverty
- 100 million more children who would otherwise have died before they were five
- 4.4 million more women who would otherwise have died during pregnancy or childbirth
- 1.3 billion tons of food per year saved from going to waste
- 470 million more workers with good jobs and livelihoods
- 200 million more young people employed with the skills they need to get good work
- 1.2 billion more people connected to electricity
- 190 to 240 million hectares more of forest cover
- \$30 trillion spent by governments worldwide transparently accounted for
- People everywhere participating in decision-making and holding officials accountable
- Average global temperatures on a path to stabilize at less than 2° C above pre-industrial levels
- 220 million fewer people who suffer crippling effects of natural disasters.