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Eight ways to change the world
 A photography exhibition on the millennium development goals

Beckoning for our hands

Jeffrey D Sachs, special adviser to the UN's secretary general, Kofi Annan
Wednesday September 7, 2005

The Millennium Development Goals will be achieved when we truly understand our common fate on this planet.

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In a crowded world, there is no longer a place that is "too poor" or "too remote" to matter. Terror can emerge from Afghanistan, the next influenza from duck farms in Asia, worldwide climate change from factories in Detroit or Manchester. And by the same token, the next great scientific or artistic breakthrough can come from any corner of our planet. In short, our safety, our security and our very humanity depend on taking seriously the lives and fates of others.

This remarkable exhibition of photographs on behalf of the Millennium Development Goals brilliantly highlights our common humanity. We look at photos of people living in extreme poverty but see first and foremost their humanity and spirit and dedication, even in the midst of extreme deprivation. Their eyes don't call for our pity but for our camaraderie and partnership and empathy.

Around 1 billion people on the planet struggle for their very survival each day, and thousands lose that struggle, succumbing to hunger, illness, and natural hazards simply because they are too poor to stay alive.

There is no reason for this kind of suffering in the 21st century. The people we see are fully capable of becoming highly productive and secure members of the world community, if they are just given a helping hand.

These photos indeed beckon for our hand.

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