



Community Commons Bulletin

A summary report of the Community Commons:
A Dialogue on Local Approaches to the MDGs

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SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY COMMONS DIALOGUE ON LOCAL APPROACHES TO THE MDGS: 16-18 JUNE 2005

The Community Commons was held from 16-18 June 2005 at Fordham University in New York, and was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Fordham University, working in partnership with other organizations supporting community-based initiatives. More than 150 participants from over 40 countries were in attendance, representing mainly community-based organizations (CBOs), along with representatives of UN agencies, international organizations, governments, academic and research institutions, NGOs and the media. A Community Planning Day was held on 15 June 2005 to discuss expectations and desired outcomes of the Community Commons.

During the three day event, participants met in Plenary sessions, as well as in breakout groups and committees. Participants were provided an overview of the process to review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and discussed in thematic groups issues related to: HIV/AIDS, livelihoods and poverty reduction; natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and poverty reduction; community resilience to conflict and disaster; and housing and infrastructure. They also addressed cross-cutting issues related to indigenous and traditional knowledge, gender empowerment and traditional culture, and developed recommendations based on these themes and cross-cutting issues. Community representatives discussed what they expected of their partners, and partner organizations discussed opportunities and challenges they experienced in working with communities. A local-global dialogue was also convened so that community representatives could engage with global leaders, and a panel of partner organization representatives engaged with community members to discuss opportunities for moving forward in partnerships.

A recommendations committee met throughout the meeting to develop a set of recommendations and a Community Commons declaration to be taken to the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector (also known as the "Civil Society Hearings") taking place at UN Headquarters from 23-24 June 2005. The Civil Society Hearings will provide input into the UN General Assembly High-level Plenary to review the outcomes of the Millennium Summit, to be held from 14-16 September 2005.

The facilitators for the Community Commons were Benson Venegas (Talamanca Initiative and Asociación ANAI, Costa Rica), Esther Mwaura-Muiri (Grassroots Organizations

Operating Together in Sisterhood – GROOTS – Kenya), Sandy Schilen (GROOTS International, US), Patrick Muraguri (Africa 21st Century Development, Kenya), Donato Bumacas, (Kalinga Mission for Indigenous People – KAMICYDI, Philippines), and Gladman Chibememe, (Chibememe Earth Healing Association – CHIEHA, Zimbabwe).

In addition to the formal discussions, other activities included traditional singing and dancing at the beginning of each session, cultural events, a reception at the Bronx Zoo, a Community Commons film festival, and informal information sharing. Community representatives also began documenting their stories for the South-South Initiative, a project being implemented by the UN Development Programme's Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, which will be reproduced in a book as part of its *Sharing of Innovative Experiences* series.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROCESS

Over the past decade, the central role local communities have played in advancing sustainable development has become increasingly apparent. At the same time, there has been a growing recognition of the need to understand how local communities manage change, as well as the importance of innovative approaches to capacity building and development at all levels and across a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Many experts now agree on the need for governments and other actors

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to work collaboratively with communities to help shape and realize national and local policies that can inform from the bottom up.

It is within this context that the idea of the “community dialogue space” was born. The first community dialogue space, Community Kraal, was part of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. This first dialogue brought together about 70 community leaders from more than 20 countries, and included the finalists for the 2002 Equator Prize. This prize, which recognizes outstanding local efforts for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation in the tropics, is awarded by the Equator Initiative –which is also responsible for the community dialogue process. The Equator Initiative is a UNDP partnership that brings together the UN, civil society, business, governments and communities to help build the capacity and raise the profile of grassroots efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In light of the positive response to the Community Kraal, the Equator Initiative has since hosted a series of community dialogue spaces and special dialogue events in support of community work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Over 500 community members have participated in these dialogues.

The Community Commons was designed to build on previous Community dialogue spaces, which were all held alongside international conferences such as the World Parks Congress (Community Park), Convention on Biological Diversity COP-7 (Community Kampung), International Ecoagriculture Conference (Community Shamba), Third IUCN World Conservation Congress (Community Mubaan) and Barbados Plan of Action on Small Island Development States +10 (Community Vilaj). Regional meetings were also held in Africa and Latin America.

The Community Commons was the first dialogue not held in parallel with a specific conference. Instead, it aimed to feed directly into the high-level processes and dialogue leading up to the UN General Assembly High-level Plenary to review the outcomes of the Millennium Summit. This Plenary, which is taking place in New York from 14-16 September 2005, will bring together Heads of State for a special General Assembly session to review progress made towards achieving the MDGs and towards the commitments made in the UN Millennium Declaration. More specifically, the Community Commons was also scheduled to feed directly into the Civil Society Hearings taking place from 23-24 June 2005, at UN headquarters. These Hearings were also intended to feed into preparations for the High-level Plenary in September 2005.

COMMUNITY COMMONS PARTNERS: The Community Commons was organized by a partnership of diverse groups dedicated to advancing community-centered approaches to development, which included UNDP, Fordham University, the Equator Initiative, Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE), Ecoagriculture Partners, the Canadian Government, Conservation International, International Development Resource Centre (IDRC), Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), GROOTS International, World Conservation Union (IUCN), Nature Conservancy, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Global Environment Facility’s Small Grants Programme (SGP), UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Tribal Link, Television Trust for the Environment, UN Foundation, World Conservation Society (WCS), and UNDP’s Energy and Environment Bureau for

Development Policy, Capacity 2015 programme, HIV/AIDS Group, Civil Society Organizations Division, and Special Unit for South-South Cooperation.

COMMUNITY PLANNING DAY: On Wednesday, 15 June 2005, a Community Planning Day was convened for participants of the upcoming Community Commons to identify their objectives and desired outcomes for the Commons. Sean Southey, UNDP, said he hoped community representatives would celebrate coming together, share experiences, and inform policy, and that community voices would be heard beyond the Commons itself. He stressed the importance of developing capacity, and said institutional capacity at the national and global levels was important in creating the right conditions for community work to be successful. He explained that Fordham University is a new partner in the Equator Initiative. Participants articulated their objectives and desired outcomes and reviewed the history of the global community dialogue spaces.



Facilitator Donato Bumacas, Kalinga Mission for Indigenous People (KAMICYDI), Philippines

Participants identified specific outcomes they hoped to achieve, including an action plan, a common platform and partnerships with other organizations, and agreed that the Community Commons was only worth participating in if the results could be taken back home. Participants also met in thematic breakout groups to discuss best practices and to share experiences, and to address cross-cutting issues. The five breakout groups addressed: sustainable livelihoods and food security to reduce poverty; natural resource management and fostering biodiversity;

community practices and responses to HIV/AIDS; community resilience to conflict and natural disasters; and housing and infrastructure. Cross-cutting themes that were discussed in all the groups included indigenous and traditional knowledge, gender empowerment and traditional culture.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY COMMONS

OPENING OF THE COMMUNITY COMMONS: BLESSING OF SPACE AND WELCOME

On Thursday, 16 June, the Community Commons space was officially opened with a benediction and blessing led by Donato Bumacas, Kalinga Mission for Indigenous People (KAMICYDI), Philippines. Father McShane, President, Fordham University, welcomed participants to Fordham, said they should consider Fordham a second home and asked everyone to join him in a prayer. Nancy Gills, Fordham University, said she was extremely happy the Commons was being held at Fordham and thanked UNDP for trusting Fordham to convene the community dialogue.

BACKGROUND: WHAT ARE WE HERE TO ACHIEVE?

Sandy Schilen, GROOTS International, and Patrick Muraguri, Africa 21st Century Development, Kenya, facilitated the opening session, reviewed activities from the Community Planning Day and outlined the agenda for the following three days. It



Participants sharing experiences during the Community Commons

was acknowledged that communities were already working on the MDGs before governments identified them in 2000 and that the Community Commons was an opportunity to engage with partners, government agencies, UN agencies and other representatives, hear experiences from and struggles of working at the grassroots level, and challenges in trying to have an impact within the UN, and to harness experiences and translate them into concrete actions.

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

Participants heard presentations by two community representatives on opportunities and challenges. Ana Lucy Bengochea, Comité de Emergencia Garifuna, Honduras, highlighted the importance of the Community Commons meetings, stressed the importance of grassroots organizations having a common voice at national and international levels and emphasized the need for action and community-created and driven initiatives. She underscored the need to recognize women's and indigenous initiatives and urged participants to find inspiration in their similar experiences and take action.

Gladman Chibememe, Chibememe Earth Healing Association (CHIEHA), Zimbabwe, described the long process of developing the community movement since the identification of the MDGs in 2000. He emphasized that this meeting was not event oriented but part of a process aimed at advancing sustainable development rooted in communities. He said the aim of this meeting was to create a common vision and to form a movement to ensure that sustainable development is achieved. He outlined the history of the Community Commons, highlighting continuing dialogue, monitoring and evaluation of achievements, and community declarations. He hoped that the Community Commons would develop a set of recommendations and a common vision.

OVERVIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM REVIEW SUMMIT

PROCESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY PREPARATIONS: On Thursday, 16 June, Charles McNeill, Environment Programme, UNDP, made a presentation, recognizing that participants represented a microcosm of the global community. He said the Community Commons was occurring at a special time in history, five years after the Millennium Summit and ten years from the deadline created for the MDGs. He suggested that now was the time to look back on achievements and forward to reset priorities to meet the MDGs. He noted that over 170 Heads of State have committed to participating in the High-level Plenary in September to make decisions on plans, goals and priorities,

and that community voices need to be heard. He acknowledged that often local and indigenous communities are the last to be heard and that UNDP wants to reverse that. He pointed out that the breakout groups will focus on the same topics that the Heads of State will discuss and urged participants to contribute towards, participate in and "own" this meeting. He emphasized that UNDP is committed to communities over the long term, working "shoulder to shoulder," and quoted Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator, who said that "the MDGs can only be reached farmer by farmer, community by community and family by family."

He outlined the framework for the High-level Plenary, explaining that agreement needs to be reached by the beginning of the meeting on the four main themes outlined in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report, *In Larger Freedom*, namely: freedom from want; freedom from fear; freedom to live in dignity; and strengthening the UN. He said the Community Commons' recommendations and Declaration would contribute to this process, and participants should consider how development can remain as prominent as institutional reform and other political issues.

Alejandra Pero, Civil Society Organizations Division, UNDP, described the process for civil society in the lead up to the High-level Plenary, in particular the Civil Society Hearings to be held 23-24 June at the UN. She reiterated the importance and strategic timing of the Community Commons, as the Civil Society Hearings would feed directly into the High-level Plenary. She noted that 250 participants representing NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector would meet at the Hearings to present views, comment on reports and make recommendations to Member States, and that the General Assembly President would chair the meeting, and then collect inputs and prepare a summary document to be included in the preparatory documentation for the High-level Plenary. She reviewed the format and the selection process, which she said was organized through and by NGOs, said a side event on the Community Commons would be convened, and emphasized the importance of crafting clear messages and recommendations so that community voices would be heard through the community spokespersons at the Hearings.

Facilitator Sandy Schilen noted that Gladman Chibememe would be the spokesman for the communities at the Civil Society hearings. She also identified a number of other community representatives who would be allowed to ask questions and others who would be participating as observers. She called attention to important concrete issues to be addressed by the High-level Plenary, including a proposal to create a new financial mechanism and facility.

During the ensuing discussion, participants raised questions on how to: determine which government representatives would attend; follow up after the Civil Society Hearings; and convey voices of communities not



Charles McNeill, UNDP

represented at the Community Commons. One participant pointed out that many communities do not have access to the internet and asked how follow up information would reach them. Another emphasized the importance of progress and commitments from developed countries to facilitate achieving MDGs in developing countries. Charles McNeill responded that ambassadors to the UN would be attending the Civil Society Hearings, and that sharing experiences with ambassadors and missions would be the appropriate vehicle to convey concerns to governments. He also recalled commitments made in Monterrey in 2002 to increase aid, and identified countries that had fulfilled their commitments. Regarding lobbying, Alejandra Pero suggested tapping into the Millennium Campaign and larger civil society movements, such as the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP).



Mirian Masaquiza, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES, FOURTH SESSION:

Mirian Masaquiza, Secretariat, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, highlighted key recommendations from the Fourth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. She said the Forum was only recently established after decades of “knocking at the UN’s door,” and explained that the Forum aims to advise the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on indigenous issues. She reported that over 200 people had met at the Indigenous Forum from 16-27 May 2005, to tell States and agencies that indigenous people have rights and need to participate in the MDG process. She said the Forum’s outcome included 144 recommendations, and the report would be presented to ECOSOC. She pointed out that in some cases, the MDGs have actually increased the poverty of indigenous people where focusing on one MDG has compromised another. She highlighted difficulties in reaching government officials in home countries, but said indigenous people should continue to lobby permanent missions.

LIVELIHOODS AND CONSERVATION: William Karesh, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), said that, historically, development and conservation have been pitted against each other, but suggested that this conflict is generated by people in power, and is not necessarily a reality on the ground. He said WCS has had recent successes in identifying issues that transcend conflicts and barriers, highlighting programmes focusing on the health of people and animals. Noting that this provides common ground and allows new partnerships to be identified, he said people are no longer “thinking outside the box, as the boxes have been torn down.” He urged participants to find common ground and stressed that local communities can be a source of power.

SHARING OF EXPECTATIONS AMONG COMMUNITY COMMONS PARTICIPANTS

On Thursday, 16 June, representatives of communities and partner organizations were asked to divide into smaller groups to discuss the expectations they had of each other. Donors and partner organizations were asked why they had come to listen to communities, and what they hoped to gain, while community

discussion groups were asked to identify what kind of external partners they were seeking and new ways of working with partners. Facilitator Sandy Schilen said communities organize themselves to work in the long term and are seeking long-term assistance, while development agencies often work with a short-term orientation. She suggested debating this issue in the smaller groups. Five community groups and three partner groups met to discuss expectations.

COMMUNITY GROUPS’ REPORTS: During the breakout sessions, community groups addressed three broad tasks/themes: brainstorming and listing external partners and groups they work with; considering what roles external partners should play to scale up community work; and considering how they would like to work differently with partners and what paradigm shifts were needed.

Partners identified by the communities included government organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, church and clerical groups and private organizations. Community groups also emphasized the importance of South-South cooperation, and acknowledged positive aspects of relationships with partners as they assist with, *inter alia*, visibility, attendance at conferences, and technical, logistical and administrative support.

On considering what other roles external partners should play, community speakers emphasized, *inter alia*, the following:

- ensuring projects are community-driven and fully participatory, and giving communities decision-making powers;
- valuing communities’ integrity and following communities’ agendas;
- acknowledging ancestral knowledge and maintaining collective and ancestral lands for sustainable development;
- facilitating community access to resources, decreasing resources allocated to consulting and administrative expenses, and channeling more resources toward strengthening local capacities;
- directly funding CBOs and reviewing aid policies to include community initiatives;
- providing advocacy and documentation and ensuring project quality;
- respecting community members’ human rights;
- including community youth and women in projects’ technical teams;
- limiting negative environmental impacts of projects; and
- reviewing and updating conservation laws regarding natural resources.

On working differently with partners and paradigm shifts, some of the issues identified by communities included:

- involving local authorities from the outset;
- standardizing and simplifying project frameworks;
- increasing long-term funding;
- developing more coordination between partners;
- supporting regular joint and participatory monitoring, evaluation and review of projects;
- ending the imposition of donor priorities and creating longer term partnerships that are not solely project based and do not create dependence;
- using the media as a tool in promoting community efforts;
- setting aside funds to ensure sustainability;
- using resources in a more innovative way, such as for experimentation and promotion of holistic projects;
- scaling up of community access to markets and promoting distribution and sales of community products;

- applying flexible tax laws that promote the sale of community-based products; and
- training and capacity building within donor agencies so they are sensitive to the needs of communities.

Participants also suggested that donors should play an active role in linking community groups so they can share experiences and knowledge, including dialogue and partnerships between communities in the project cycle. In addition, they lamented the lack of support for communities without a track record.

During the ensuing discussion, one community representative called for reexamining the word “partnership,” as the relationship is not always mutual and equal. She also highlighted that illiterate people are not ignorant and have a wealth of information critical for community development.

PARTNER GROUPS’ REPORT: During the breakout groups, the partner organizations were asked to consider: what they would like to learn from communities; what information, opportunities and challenges they had to share with communities; what targets or problem solving issues they encounter that links to their work with communities; and what they hoped to take from the meeting.

On what they would like to learn, one group suggested that communities can be the “tail that wags the dog.” Partners said they hoped to learn what the elements of success are in areas related to the MDGs, what policy environments have helped or hurt, and what the key messages are that the communities want the Heads of State to bring to the High-level Plenary. Partners also identified sharing information with communities, identifying successful initiatives, and taking into account what communities want and need instead of imposing ideas on communities.

On what information, opportunities and challenges they have to share, partners in the various groups emphasized their belief in the community development agenda. Other partners acknowledged the lack of quality time available to spend with people in communities. They also identified:

- supporting champions within the institutions and engaging actively in a process of empathy and listening;
- engaging the private sector and focusing on supporting brokers between the communities and donors;
- viewing communities as agents of change and placing them at the center of sustainable development;
- addressing issues more holistically, creating interlinkages between the MDGs, and ensuring continuity of projects;
- disseminating and ensuring access to information; and
- not viewing communities in discriminatory ways.



Annette Mukiga, Rwanda Women's Network, presents the outcomes from the thematic group on community resilience to conflict and a disaster with the assistance of Facilitator Patrick Muraguri, Africa 21st Century Development, Kenya

On problems encountered, partner group representatives highlighted the need to work cross-sectorally, but also noted current institutional structures can hinder this. Some noted difficulties in transferring knowledge from one community to another, while others highlighted challenges such as resistance to change, lack of funding to facilitate community initiatives, and language barriers.

On what they would like to take from the Community Commons meeting, partners hoped for a better understanding of individual initiatives and insight into what works. Some partners also called for shifting paradigms and acknowledging communities as the source of solutions, finding ways to give money directly to community-based projects, and including community representatives in project design meetings.

In the ensuing discussion, one partner representative supported investing in CBOs so they can utilize resources effectively. Another suggested exploring opportunities linked to new emerging markets, opening up government procurement to community based enterprises, and facilitating access to more lucrative and fairer markets. Another partner pointed out that many of those working in development do believe in working differently, but that the structures in which they work do not allow for that. She said agencies should network, strategize and work together to resolve this dilemma.

THEME GROUP DISCUSSIONS

On Friday morning, 17 June, participants met to hear the recommendations that had emerged from the thematic groups which met during the previous two days. The thematic groups had been convened to share experiences and best practices and to develop recommendations that could be translated into concrete actions.

HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE: Sheila Grant, Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE), Jamaica, provided recommendations from the group discussing housing and infrastructure, which included: establishing a complementary community-investment mechanism for technical and infrastructure support; emphasizing community built, owned and operated development; emphasizing self-built urban development through funding of service lots; supporting organizational strengthening of CBOs; acknowledging women's role in construction; and participatory budgeting and community driven processes.

LIVELIHOODS AND POVERTY REDUCTIONS: Mirian Masaquiza presented the recommendations of the group on livelihoods and poverty reduction. These included:

- creating mechanisms to ensure full community participation;
- supporting holistic, integrated long-term work, especially integrating positive cultural values and systems, experimental programmes and alternative economic models;
- ensuring transparency and combating government corruption, party politics, sectarianism and discrimination;
- allocating a percentage of funding to locally-directed and controlled CBOs;
- including support for land tenancy, food security and community-based struggles for human rights;
- ensuring basic services and social insurance guarantees;
- respecting local economic self-determination, recognizing that unrestricted market globalization and privatization impede achievement of the MDGs; and
- treating and supporting communities as equal partners and experts.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO CONFLICT AND DISASTER: Annette Mukiga, Rwanda Women's Network, presented the recommendations from the group considering community resilience to conflict and disaster. She reported that the group had urged agencies and governments to ensure policies and programmes address vulnerabilities in order to avert disasters and conflict, and had called for, *inter alia*:

- enabling the creation of social support networks and safe spaces for women to share trauma, organize and start rebuilding communities;
- supporting women-managed recovery, rebuilding and development services that empower women;
- investing in education, awareness and information dissemination;
- encouraging community-to-community exchanges for innovative disaster mitigation, conflict prevention and resolution strategies;
- addressing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in post-conflict and post-disaster situations;
- promoting community-government dialogue, accountability and good governance as a means for preventing conflict and preparing for disaster;
- supporting women to break their silence on violence perpetrated on them;
- developing user-friendly, low-technology early warning systems;
- supporting and encouraging communities to continue protecting natural resources as a way to build resilience; and
- using indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms.

HIV/AIDS AND DEVELOPMENT: Shannon Hayes, GROOTS International, presented recommendations from the HIV/AIDS and development group. She said the group had recommended:

- shifting funding to recognize that grassroots organizations are leading the work on homecare;
- supporting ecumenical advocacy;
- including grassroots communities in decision-making processes;
- investing in long-term training and learning at the grassroots level;
- recognizing the value of traditional healing and indigenous knowledge to combat HIV/AIDS and boost nutrition and immunity; and
- getting Heads of State to recognize the severity of the problem.

A youth representative added that a lack of information contributes to the problem and that youth should be taken into account in the decision-making process.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY: Metua Robert Vaiimene, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Cook Islands, presented recommendations from the natural resource management and biodiversity group. He said the group had reaffirmed the vital role that locally-driven community actions play and recommended, *inter alia*:

- respecting traditional knowledge and sacred burial sites;
- creating a political framework that includes community participation;
- sustaining investment into communities and recognizing the integral role of traditional leaders, women and youth within the community;
- securing prior informed consent (PIC) from the community;

- creating markets that serve communities;
- strengthening community capacity to facilitate access to markets, finances, information and technical support for sustainable enterprise development;
- applying holistic and integrated social policies that are not market oriented; and
- supporting MDGs holistically through intercultural and multilingual approaches.

The group also recommended that national governments should develop clear national policies for conservation and management of natural resources, enhance access to microfinance credit by creating special funds, and establish co-management partnerships where communities could be hired to provide services.

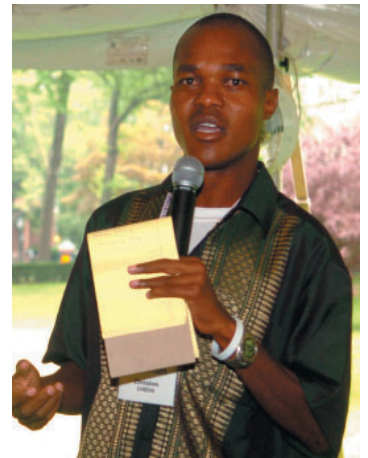
DISCUSSION: Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiri underscored the importance of translating recommendations into action-oriented proposals. She used the example of the National Environmental Agency (NEMA) in Kenya, which includes community representatives in project committees so they are able to consult and work with ministries. Participants identified concrete actions to take the recommendations forward, such as: securing more money from the global fund for AIDS for HIV/AIDS caregivers; establishing local community resource councils to deal with biodiversity and natural resources management issues; developing mechanisms at the local level to integrate community processes; providing community radios to disseminate information; and including community representatives at international conferences and world fora.

Regarding HIV/AIDS, participants suggested meeting with church leaders to discuss perspectives on condom use, stigmatization, judgments and other AIDS-relevant issues. One participant pointed out that all religions should be brought into this dialogue. One partner representative highlighted the GEF Small Grants Programme, and said a similar mechanism could be created to help communities achieve the MDGs. Partner suggestions for recommendations of the Community Commons included:

- keeping the recommendations simple, realistic and small in number, and going beyond buzzwords and generalities;
- focusing on the MDGs and their implementation;
- focusing on proposals that do not cost money, as well as those that describe how money can be dispersed;
- calling for changing policies and creating enabling environments for communities to work in; and
- considering how communities can be incorporated into mechanisms related to international treaties, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Partners also urged community participants to build on their own experience in their respective countries, and determine what has been successful locally.

A recommendations committee, facilitated by Gladman Chibememe, was then established to translate recommendations



Facilitator Gladman Chibememe, Chibememe Earth Healing Association (CHIEHA), Zimbabwe

into more concrete proposals, taking into account recommendations from thematic groups, donor and community groups, and Plenary discussions.

COMMUNITY ACTION FOR REALIZING THE MDGS

On Friday morning, 17 June, Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiri opened this session, explaining said it would be a capacity building exercise to assist in understanding the MDG framework. During this session, a South African project was shared, using a tool created by GTZ, a German-owned development agency, which works on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). She said the tool enables communities to assess the outcome of their work within the MDG framework.

Dennis Skhalela, Makuleke Community, South Africa, representing a GTZ-assisted community, described his community's project, the Makuleke Project. He explained that his community had successfully reclaimed ancestral lands in Northeastern South Africa and had agreed to utilize the land for a conservation and biodiversity project. He described the creation of a private-public partnership with investors and partners to build a game lodge development, operate it and then transfer ownership to the community. He said his community had created a Communal Property Association and a Joint Management Board with outside experts, enabling them to manage their communal land themselves. He stressed that the community had driven the whole process.

Using a poster diagram created by GTZ, Skhalela explained how GTZ had assisted them in determining how the project's results fit into the MDGs as a means of assessing progress. He highlighted, as examples of success, youth employment, education and promoting gender equality in the Joint Management Board. In response to a participant's question, he said that a cost-benefit analysis had not yet been performed, but that it was in their management plan. One participant asked why his community had not spread the benefits of their success with other communities in neighboring Mozambique. Skhalela explained they had begun such an initiative with funding from the Ford Foundation, but the funding had run out and they had been forced to stop.

Facilitator Sandy Schilen highlighted the South African case as a successful example of incorporating all the MDGs into a project, and creating documentation tools that capture the accomplishments of the projects and progress over time, and that could be replicated. GTZ representatives volunteered to create a tool kit page to facilitate the creation of project presentations.



Dennis Skhalela, Makuleke Community, South Africa, described the Makuleke Project as an example of community action toward realizing the MDGs

PARTNERSHIP LEARNING AND ACTION AGREEMENTS

On Friday, 17 June, Facilitator Sandy Schilen asked that participants identify new ways of working with partners over the next year and behavioral changes that need to take place to achieve this. She recalled that in the thematic groups held the previous day, communities had agreed that a paradigm shift was needed to include communities in bottom-up planning, implementation and decision making. She pointed out that communities are already working on integrated problem-solving approaches at the local level and working holistically, and asked that participants match this reality with new ways of channeling money and decision making. She then asked participants to break into groups to discuss what concrete actions and activities they would commit to within the next year to shift the way that groups are partnering.

During the breakout groups, participants identified the following actions, which were reported back to Plenary:

- donors developing mechanisms to monitor community activities by relating initiatives to the MDGs;
- identifying advocacy and lobbying initiatives;
- using the media, training and capacity building to communicate contributions to MDGs;
- educating donors when community representatives return home from the Community Commons;
- networking between countries, sharing contact information, receiving information in Spanish and indigenous languages, and reporting by communities;
- strengthening local capacity to organize outreach to other communities, making use of community networks and local development committees;
- building local capacity for organizations to administer their own programmes and projects;
- reporting back by partners to communities;
- developing communication tools, such as the use of theater, radio and posters, to inform communities, as well as establishing a tool kit and database to disseminate information regarding MDGs and partners at the grassroots level;
- simplifying proposal writing;
- collaborating between partners and women's groups and within women's groups;
- holding workshops with partners to highlight MDGs and developing monitoring and evaluation systems for assessing progress on MDGs for projects;
- creating more MDG village projects;
- basing donor contributions on communities' requests and needs and communities lobbying donors to do so;
- lobbying for national policy changes, where necessary, to enable communities to approach the private sector;
- following up with local authorities and international organizations on existing programmes for financing housing support;
- following up with the business sector for funding;
- approaching civil society to lobby governments to address land issues;
- encouraging South-South cooperation;
- using current partners to reach other international agencies; and
- publishing a weekly newsletter providing information on what partners are doing.

LOCAL-GLOBAL LEADERS' DIALOGUE

On Friday afternoon, a local-global leaders' dialogue was convened. Donato Bumacas opened the dialogue with a ceremonial song, and said that the Community Commons was a place where people could feel equal and connected, and where diverse people could develop a common vision. Charles McNeill and Esther Mwaura-Muiri facilitated the dialogue.

LOCAL LEADERS: Speaking on behalf of youth, community representative David Camejo Gonzalez, Ideas Youth Caffe, Dominican Republic, emphasized the sixth MDG on HIV/AIDS, in particular in his region of the Caribbean and Latin America. He called on global leaders to include in their agenda the creation of alternative youth work programmes so youth do not have to resort to being sex workers, and to align education with the MDG on the poverty eradication. He reminded the panel that youth would be leaders one day. He called on them to support youth and include them in decision-making processes.

Speaking on behalf of women at the Community Commons, Ana Lucy Bengochea, Comité de Emergencia Garifu, Honduras, urged the panel to create an integrated and comprehensive vision within the MDG process and stressed the need to promote local and rural understanding of the MDGs. She also stressed the importance of assigning resources to grassroots organizations for infrastructure, housing and sustainable agricultural support and addressing global warming. She called on the panel to include communities in the MDGs process, give communities a voice, commit to reach communities and address the language barrier.

Joyce Kores, GROOTS, Kenya, said the main goal was developing local communities at home, and that communities have accomplished a lot and know what they want and how to do it. She stressed that communities should be consulted in project development, and that agencies should be trained in working with communities. She also emphasized implementing a bottom-up approach.

Metua Robert Vaiimene, Cook Islands, said although his country is small, it shares many of the same problems and circumstances as larger countries. He stressed the importance of involving indigenous people and traditional knowledge holders in all parts of the development process, called for income-generating programmes for youth in his region given the high levels of youth unemployment, and called attention to the vulnerability and susceptibility of small islands to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.

Maria Cleofe Bernadino, Palawan NGO Network Inc., the Philippines, called for politically neutral development, and highlighted problems caused by World Bank mechanisms relating

to developing country debt and by corporate exploitation of developing countries' natural resources. She urged global leaders to pressure corporations to be more socially sensitive and oriented towards engaging communities. She asked the World Bank to consider communities when addressing countries' financial needs. She also requested UNDP to reform accessibility

to small grants projects and to use it to combat bad corporate practices, and asked the WCS to link with Fordham University in carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of community needs in conservation efforts. She emphasized the reality of inequality and called for a definite and precise pledge from global leaders towards the Community Commons.

GLOBAL LEADERS: John Tognino, Chairman, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Fordham University, said challenges and crises are not unique to any one part of the world. He said only by inclusion will problems be solved and that the future depends on involving youth and women. He highlighted Fordham University's diversity, and said global corporations are becoming more responsive and are hearing community voices. He urged community representatives to continue their work, highlighted education and health as universal challenges, emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship as an emerging issue. He also drew attention to examples of Fordham student activism in the community.

Cayetana Carrion, Sustainable Development Programme, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), expressed concern at the lack of references to women in the draft outcome document for the High-level Plenary, and said WEDO would be lobbying at the local and global level so that women's rights would be recognized.

Shoji Nishimoto, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, stressed the importance of including community recommendations in the draft outcome document for the High-level Plenary. He hoped that more ODA would be available, but said funding is not paramount, as the ability of people to manage their own affairs is also vital. He said the challenge was tapping into local capacities in order to influence the decision-making process from the bottom up to ensure that national policy is anchored in communities' aspirations. He said development is not politically neutral and indicated that UNDP is committed to expanding the room available to work with CBOs so that they can have influence in the political arena. He added that politicians must be convinced that it is in their own best interests to make more room for communities. He said UNDP was here to learn from communities and was ready to adjust its *modus operandi* in working with them.

John Robinson, Senior Vice-President and Director of International Conservation Programmes, WCS, said conservation and development are two sides of the same coin, and neither can



Youth representative David Camejo Gonzalez, Dominican Republic, speaking with Shoji Nishimoto, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, during the Local-Global Leaders' Dialogue



Ana Lucy Bengochea, Comité de Emergencia Garifu, Honduras, during the Local-Global Leaders' Dialogue

be effective without the other. He identified a shift in how conservation organizations are working, stated that the top-down approach does not work, and indicated that WCS is working at the local level in rural areas and involving local communities and traditional knowledge. He said conservation should not exist in a vacuum and highlighted the importance of natural resource management in minimizing the impacts of natural disasters, using examples from the recent Asian tsunami.



Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiru, GROOTS Kenya

Jan Bojo, Environment Department, World Bank, explained that World Bank debt relief audits and conditional mechanisms are needed not only to justify investments to donor countries' taxpayers, but also to audit how loans are spent. He stressed the need to ensure that projects are rooted in community desires and indigenous knowledge and explained that the World Bank tries to address this through its Poverty Reduction Strategies, which he said are more or less participatory depending on the country being granted the resources. He explained that governments are the World Bank's shareholders and thus funding is mainly channeled through governments, but that the Bank also has 150 social funds specifically equipped to reach communities. He also outlined the Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, explaining the World Bank view that debt is a symptom of underlying policy problems necessitating that debt relief be coupled with sustainable policy reform.

DISCUSSION: Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiru asked if UNDP would consider partnering with communities to ensure they are contributing to the MDGs, track how governments are responding, and create a concrete plan where communities can be part of the monitoring process. She said that often agencies push communities to work thematically, while the communities themselves work holistically. She also asked if any agency was willing to contribute to a fund that would support peer-to-peer learning and exchange. She asked community representatives to come up with concrete messages they wanted global leaders to respond to. During the discussions, community representatives urged the following: facilitating transfer of knowledge between communities; creating a global community task force on each MDG with 20% of membership coming from community leaders; creating a learning fund for community peer learning; creating a dialogue mechanism for access to markets and technologies, creating more millennium village projects; respecting fundamental human rights; and ensuring the right to food and self-determination. One representative lamented the lack of government participation in the Community Commons, while another said that without peace, development cannot occur and that sometimes funding agencies created conflict through their practices.

Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiru then asked the global leaders to reflect on what they would take away with them from the Community Commons and integrate into their approach to the Millennium review process.

Shoji Nishimoto suggested the resource allocation process should be less formal, be competition-based and reward communities having the greatest impact. He said this was the only way to achieve the MDGs. John Robinson said he had learned that concrete outcomes are critical in gauging the contributions to the MDGs. Cayetana Carion explained that her organization is involved in advocacy, but does not provide funding. She said WEDO would include in its message at the Civil Society Hearings that women need to be included in the Millennium review process.

John Tognino said he hoped participants would come back to Fordham and emphasized Fordham's commitment to global education. Jan Bojo was impressed by the amount of energy exuded by the people at the Community Commons. He said that although people at the World Bank consider that a paradigm shift has already taken place, he had now heard the call for a greater shift. He supported the Community Commons' format, compared it to the World Bank annual Development Marketplace, and said the World Bank should convene more initiatives of this kind. Facilitators Esther Mwaura-Muiru and Charles McNeill thanked community representatives and global leaders for participating in the dialogue.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LOCAL-GLOBAL DIALOGUE AND THE PROCESS SO FAR

On Saturday, 18 June, Facilitator Donato Bumacas asked community members to reflect on the Local-Global dialogue process, whether they considered it a success, and what they had learned from it. Participants said it felt rewarding to be part of a process that had been interactive and focused on issues raised by diverse communities around the world. One participant expressed concerns that the discussion had failed to address natural resource management and women's movements in promoting traditional medicine.

One participant emphasized the need to provide post-grant support and establish structures to realize ideas emerging from the Community Commons. A partner representative stressed the importance of energy security, and lamented its exclusion from the Local-Global Dialogue and the MDGs, stating that it is a cornerstone in realizing the MDGs. She urged concrete recommendations, such as setting a goal for energy development so that by 2015 no woman in Africa should have to use a mortar and pestle. Facilitator Sandy Schilen asked participants to consider how to use the Local-Global dialogue process as an engagement strategy in their home countries. Community members suggested inviting government ambassadors to participate in the next Community Commons in order to facilitate and encourage government-community dialogue and using Equator Initiative facilitators and existing umbrella networks to enable further national dialogues. One participant noted the lack of community representatives from the Middle East at the meeting. Facilitator Esther Mwaura-Muiru highlighted the *Local to Local Toolkit* found on the website: www.huairou.org, which assists CBOs in creating dialogues like the Local-Global dialogue.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOVING FORWARD IN PARTNERSHIPS

On Saturday morning, 18 June, a panel of partners convened to provide an opportunity for communities and partners to discuss how they could move forward together.

PRESENTATIONS: Facilitator Benson Venegas emphasized the importance of sharing risks and benefits, developing a

common vision, clarity and long-term perspectives in creating strong partnerships. He reiterated the need for new financial mechanisms, a bottom-up approach, and partnerships based on trust and transparency. He emphasized the need for global, national and local strategies and following up on Community Commons' findings and recommendations. Facilitator Sandy Schilen said communities are often unable to follow up and are perceived as unstable, while communities view partners as unresponsive. She then asked partners to discuss what activities their institutions carry out that might link to the follow-up actions identified at this meeting.

Sean Southey, Manager, Equator Initiative and Capacity Development Group, UNDP, said UNDP was committed to continuing the dialogue spaces, and was looking into convening one before or during the September 2005 High-level Plenary. He said more regional dialogues should be considered in order to strengthen regional networking, and identified community representative "ambassadors" from each region that sit on the Equator Initiative Board: Benson Venegas (Latin America), Esther Mwaure-Muiri (Africa), and Donato Bumacas (Asia).

Pascal Olivier Girot, Latin American and Caribbean Office, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, explained that his job is to share knowledge from experiences in Latin America across the UN in order to formulate projects related to community-based natural resource management. He highlighted community-based initiatives supported by the Small Grants Programmes (SGP) and the Equator Initiative, learning exchange mechanisms and peer-to-peer exchanges, and the importance of going "into the field" to learn from each other.

Francisco Simplicio, UNDP Special Unit for South South Cooperation (SSC), explained that his programme is based on the idea of developing countries supporting each other. He noted the SSC Unit was trying to mobilize more Southern resources and indicated that countries such as Thailand, Brazil, India and South Africa were eager to help other developing countries. He highlighted the SSC Unit's initiative of documenting communities' experiences for a book as part of their *Sharing of Innovative Experiences* series. He said many communities did not have the opportunity or capacity to document their experiences so the UNDP SSC Unit was providing grants of US\$500 to document their stories.

Tom Bigg, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), said IIED is a research organization but also focuses on local-level practical solutions and on bringing lessons to global audiences to see how global changes can generate local-level change. He highlighted IIED's Poverty and Conservation

Learning Group, noting that conflict between poverty and conservation is artificial and that they should not be separated. He said the starting point should be experiences, expertise and knowledge of communities and civil society. He suggested that the Learning Group could play a greater role in any future Community Commons, if desired by the communities. He also discussed IIED's project on policies that work and said much could be learned from policy interventions at the local level.

Fatima Denton, UNEP Risø Centre for Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development, highlighted three sustainable energy programmes that could work more at the community level. She said the African Rural Energy Enterprise Development was subsidizing project loans in Tanzania, Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Zambia and could be extended to other African countries. She also highlighted a similar energy project in Brazil, the Capacity Development for the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project, and the Global Energy Network for Sustainable Development. She called for finding ways to directly partner with communities rather than going through the normal routes, and she said that she often was asked to speak on behalf of communities, but that her experiences did not accurately reflect the communities' experiences. Facilitator Schilen suggested that the Equator Initiative and UNEP could perhaps communicate more on these issues.

Charles McNeill, UNDP, suggested that a copy of the Community Commons' recommendations be sent to every UN Country Office and UN Regional Bureau and that the Country Office be invited to organize national dialogues, with the UN Regional Bureau being made aware of the process. He said UNDP would convene another community dialogue in September before or during the High-level Plenary and would establish a local entrepreneur facility to build on the Equator Initiative and other similar initiatives. He said he would try to generate further support to replicate the Community Commons in other areas.

Andreas Drews, Suhel al-Janabi and Arno Sckedye, GTZ, explained that their role within GTZ was mainly focused on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Agenda 21 initiatives. They highlighted GTZ's commitment to connecting with communities and feeding back recommendations into mainstream policy and development processes. They said they would brief the governments of those community representatives they had sponsored to come to the Community Commons, and take recommendations into GTZ policy development and project implementation and into the Poverty and Environment Partnership (PEP). They also stated that they would continue to support the South-South Initiative and communities at the High-Level Plenary in September. Regarding funding, they said that, although they would not have small budget line funds available to support projects until 2007, participants should put forward ideas now for projects in areas related to access and benefit sharing of genetic



Arno Sckedye (left) and Suhel al-Janabi, GTZ



Fatima Denton, UNEP Risø Centre for Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development, Sara Scherr, Ecoagriculture Partners, Pascal Olivier Girot, Latin American and Caribbean Office, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, and Tom Bigg, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

resources, biosafety resources and revitalization of traditional knowledge. Specifically, they asked for concrete examples of best practices in development and conservation initiatives to present at side events during the CBD COPs. They also highlighted the possibility of cooperation with GTZ's larger scale pilot projects and offered to act as an entry point to the facilities that other German institutions offer such as capacity building and linking communities to each other and to partners.

John Herity, Canadian Office, World Conservation Union (IUCN), noted that IUCN was not a funding organization, but that it provided for networking with both government and NGO members. He said he would send the recommendations coming out of this meeting to IUCN offices, which are helping to prepare governments for the High-level Plenary. He expressed concern at the lack of action-oriented agencies represented at this meeting, stressed the importance of developing messages into sales pitches for donor agencies to work more at the community level, and said communities must demonstrate how successful they have been at the community level. He said he would go back to Canada and talk to groups such as International Development Research Centre (IDRC), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to let them know what has happened here, and he highlighted work between the Canadian government and aboriginal groups.

Carol Lemay, Biodiversity Convention Office, Environment Canada, reiterated the work of IDRC and CIDA, highlighted Canada's positive contributions to the CBD and said the CBD was a supporter of the Equator Initiative.

Sara Scherr, Ecoagriculture Partners, said her NGO focuses on managing landscapes for agriculture and conservation and is founded on the principle that community efforts are the basis for food protection and biodiversity. She recalled the Ecoagriculture Conference held in October 2004 in Nairobi, and the Community Shamba, which convened there. She reported that the Community Shamba had recommended: enhancing knowledge and skills and investing in community capacity; developing capacities of community leaders to be leaders in the ecoagriculture field; and creating mechanisms to ensure involvement at all levels. She said actions being taken to follow up on these recommendations included networking to share knowledge and working on community ecoagriculture, incorporating ecoagriculture into policies, and documenting ecoagriculture projects globally. She said they were still looking for ideas on how to further these recommendations.

Due to time constraints, a number of partners were only able to give short introductions to their work. Sheila Grant, LIFE, Jamaica, said LIFE is a UNDP-supported capacity building project providing technical and financial assistance to encourage urban communities to improve living conditions, and explained that the programme promotes participatory and dialogue processes.

Jan Peterson, Chair, Huairou Commission, US, explained that the Commission focuses on grassroots level needs of

women in five thematic areas: disaster; HIV/AIDS; post conflict; local poverty; and secure tenancy and land. Ben Okumu, Millennium Villages Project (MVP), emphasized the synergetic connections of the MDGs and said that MVP has taken a holistic approach to the MDGs, partnering with two local projects thus far, in Kenya and Ethiopia, to test the effectiveness of the MDGs.

DISCUSSION: Throughout the discussion, participants raised a number of issues related to opportunities for moving forward in partnerships. A Latin American representative acknowledged that more than financial resources were needed in order to empower people at the grassroots level, and noted that migration had caused women to take on new roles. She said the Latin Americans at the Community Commons had formed a network to maintain contacts and that GTZ would assist them in their efforts.

A youth representative said the current system is in itself creating poverty, and "instead of bandaids, we need open heart surgery." He highlighted online youth communities, such as www.pioneersofchange.net, as a way for youth to communicate.

One participant suggested creating focal points in each country to facilitate follow up, workshops in each country before going to international meetings, and better communication after meetings. Another speaker said community dialogues should be held in parallel to UN meetings so communities can access government documentation and vice-versa, and challenge national governments. Participants suggested creating a website with contact information of Community Commons participants. One participant supported a mechanism to facilitate immediate assistance in emergencies as normal funding processes can take a long time. Another participant said large projects rarely reach communities and that more community representatives should be brought into the dialogues.

In conclusion, Carmen Griffith, Construction Resource and Development Center, Jamaica, highlighted commitments partners were making, but said some could have been stronger. She cautioned against excluding people within communities and urged people to continue in their struggles to ensure necessary resources reach communities.

NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY PLANNING

On Saturday, participants convened in regional breakout groups to develop regional actions plans, identify actions for linking and networking and building capacity, and identify advocacy and political actions they would undertake, which they then reported back to Plenary.

LATIN AMERICA GROUP: Benson Venegas, Costa Rica, reported on results of the Caribbean and Latin American Group, and said the group had highlighted: access and defense of territorial rights; the importance of indigenous and small farmers in the region; solidarity markets, which would include local exchanges between communities and alliances between the public and private sectors; and the principle of PIC. He also supported facilitating the creation of an environment where women, youth, indigenous people and communities can access markets.



Sean Southey, UNDP (left), and Elena Cocon de Patal, Guatemala (right)



Facilitator Benson Venegas, Talamanca Initiative and Asociación ANAI, Costa Rica

He said the main components of their action plan included: finding resources to establish commercial relations in the region; getting funds to establish a platform for information and dissemination of results; establishing a Community Commons secretariat within the Equator Initiative; and establishing information exchange with UN national representatives. He also indicated that a regional meeting would be held in Guatemala in August 2005.

AFRICA GROUP: Annette Mukiga, Rwanda, said the African regional group had considered actions that did not require additional resources, proposed convening an African community commons, and identified coordinators for the African subregions that would form a steering committee to facilitate networking and follow up in Africa. She said a database with names and contacts, and project successes would be made available to the group. She also said community representatives would work in their countries to identify other community members to include in the network.

ASIA GROUP: Kala Peiris de Costa, Siyath Foundation, Sri Lanka, reported on the results of the Asia group. She indicated that the group had stressed identifying and linking with existing networks, linking with regional partners to communicate achievements at the community level, and utilizing existing sectoral capacities by identifying sectoral focal points in different countries. She also said they planned to convene a regional dialogue in China before the High-level Plenary.

COMMUNITY COMMONS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations Committee met throughout the day on Wednesday and Thursday. Based on suggestions from the breakout groups and Plenary discussions, the Committee presented draft recommendations to Plenary on Friday. Following feedback from participants and further deliberations in the Committee on Saturday, Facilitator Gladman Chibememe presented to Plenary a revised set of the recommendations agreed to in the Recommendations Committee.

The recommendations call for:

- earmarking at least 25% of all funds for the MDGs, disaster mitigation and peace building to go directly to CBOs;
- supporting CBOs to play a decision-making role in identification, planning, design, management, and evaluation of all development, disaster and peace-building programmes;
- requiring governments and local authorities to institutionalize participatory budgeting with CBOs for MDGs, disaster and peace-building funds;
- empowering and compensating CBOs to gather, analyze and disseminate information in order to increase community control over knowledge;
- legitimizing community security of tenure and community access and control over land, forest and livelihoods resources, giving priority to local communities over the private sector;
- recognizing and compensating local traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and practices and protection of intellectual and communal property rights;
- appointing community task forces comprised of CBO members at the global, national and local levels to strategize and review the implementation of and make recommendations for the MDGs, which would continue functioning until 2015, with 50% representation from disadvantaged groups and women, and 50% community membership in national task forces; and
- convening CBO-private sector dialogues on partnerships that enhance community access to finance, technologies,

information and markets and encourage the private sector to set aside at least 10% of profits to support community-driven efforts.



Nancy Busch, Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Fordham University

The recommendations also call for creation of a global learning fund to: enable communities to identify and undertake peer exchanges to learn from successful practices; fund community-based pilot projects; establish community resource teams to teach other communities; support community resource teams to dialogue with institutions to build partnerships; build community capacities to

document and disseminate their knowledge and practices; and support community and women-managed multipurpose centers.

Given the time constraints, participants agreed to mandate the Recommendations Committee to refine the recommendations and finalize the Community Commons Declaration for presentation to the Civil Society Hearings and said members could submit textual proposals to them. Participants agreed to continue working on actions generated in the thematic groups in their regions and communities. (For the final text of the Declaration, visit the Equator Initiative website: <http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/>)

COMMUNITY COMMONS EVALUATION AND CLOSING CIRCLE

During the closing evaluation session, one Latin American participant urged Community Commons representatives attending the Civil Society Hearings to represent the thematic and regional interests of all the participants and not only to focus on their own interests. She also suggested the facilitators should allow more time for debate in future meetings and committed to taking the Community Commons process into the field in Latin America. A participant from India said she would be returning home with renewed confidence as, despite only speaking Tamil, she had made connections, contributed to the dialogue and been pleased to see so many women present. Another participant suggested holding a Community Commons in a “visa neutral country” to allow communities from more countries to attend.

In conclusion, Sean Southey, UNDP, thanked everyone for their part in creating the first Community Commons. Nancy Busch, Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Fordham University, closed the meeting, and said that if community voices were not heard at the High-level Plenary it would not be due to the lack of “fantastic work” done by this Community Commons. The meeting closed at 5:00 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

INFORMAL INTERACTIVE HEARINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WITH NGOS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR: This meeting is scheduled to take place from 23-24 June 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. A summary of the Hearings will be issued as an Assembly document prior to the High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2005. Four separate sessions will revolve around the themes: Freedom from want; freedom from fear; freedom to live in dignity; and strengthening the UN. The sessions will be chaired by the President of the General Assembly. For more information, contact: UN Nongovernmental Liaison

Service; tel: +1-212-963-3125; fax: +1-212-963-8712; email: nngls@un.org; internet: <http://www.un-nngls.org/GA-hearings.htm>

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT: This meeting is scheduled to take place from 27-28 June 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. For more information, contact: Financing for Development Office; tel: +1-212-963-2587; fax: +1-212-963-0443; e-mail: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/contact6-04.htm>; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdcalendar2003.htm>

2005 ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT AND SUBSTANTIVE SESSION: The ECOSOC High-level Segment will convene from 29 June to 1 July 2005, at UN headquarters in New York, to address the theme, "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration as well as the implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities." The Substantive Session will include the following: a Coordination Segment (5-7 July); an Operational Activities Segment (8-12 July); a Humanitarian Affairs Segment (13-18 July); a General Segment (18-25 July); and a concluding segment (26-27 July). For more information, contact: Sarbuland Khan, ECOSOC; tel: +1-212-963-4628; fax: +1-212-963-1712; e-mail: khan2@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/meetings2005.html>

G8 2005 SUMMIT: The 2005 G8 Summit will convene from 6-8 July 2005, at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire, Scotland. Under the UK Presidency, the G8's deliberations will focus on Africa and climate change among other topics. For more information, contact: British Prime Minister's Office; fax: +44-20-7925-0918; e-mail: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page821.asp>; internet: <http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995902703>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN HEALING WISDOM FROM TRADITION TO CURRENT APPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH: This international conference will be convened in Washington DC from 6-9 July 2005, to explore the uniqueness, wealth and complexity of African traditional medicines, and their potential role in addressing some of the crucial health challenges of our times. For information contact: George Washington University Medical Center; tel: +1-202-994-4285 or +1-800-314-1423; fax: +1-202-994-1791; email: registration@africanmedicine.info; internet: <http://www.africanmedicine.info/>

THIRD WORLD YOUTH CONGRESS: This Congress will meet from 30 July to 8 August 2005, in Stirling, Scotland. Convening under the theme of "Young People working together for a sustainable world community," delegates will seek to highlight how much youth are doing to support the achievement of the MDGs. For more information, contact: Ray Bugg, Media and Communications Manager; tel: +44-131-244-7425; fax: +44-795-726-1178; e-mail: ray.bugg@scotland.gsi.gov.uk; internet: <http://www.scotland2005.org>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGAGING COMMUNITIES: Organized by DESA and the State Government of Queensland, Australia, this conference will meet from 14-17 August 2005, in Brisbane, Australia, and will convene under the theme "Citizen-government dialoguing for social justice and social equity." For more information, contact: OzAccom Conference Services; tel: +61-7-3854-1611; fax: +61-7-3854-1507; e-mail: info@engagingcommunities2005.org; internet: <http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org/home.html>

58TH ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE: Scheduled for 7-9 September 2005, in New York, this conference will focus on the review of the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and United Nations reform. For more information, contact: DPI NGO Section; tel: +1-212-963-6842; fax: +1-212-963-6914; e-mail: dpingo@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/>

HELSINKI CONFERENCE 2005 – MOBILIZING POLITICAL WILL: Convening from 7-9 September 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, this conference represents the culmination of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy. For more information, contact: Pieni Roobertinkatu, Helsinki Conference Secretariat; tel: +358-9-698-7024; fax: +358-9-612-7759; e-mail: secretariat@helsinkiprocess.fi; internet: <http://www.helsinkiconference.fi>

GLOBAL DAY FOR MOBILIZATION: Organized by the Global Call to Action against Poverty, the Global Day for Mobilization will be celebrated globally on 10 September 2005, and will seek to mobilize citizens to pressure their leaders to tackle the causes of poverty, and meet the MDGs. For more information, contact: GCAP; e-mail: info@whiteband.org; internet: <http://www.whiteband.org/>

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT: This meeting will take place from 14-16 September 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. The meeting is expected to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made towards the commitments articulated in the UN Millennium Declaration. The event will also review progress made in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes and commitments of the major UN Conferences and Summits in the economic, social and related fields. For more information, contact: Office of the President of the General Assembly; tel: +1-212-963-2486; fax: +1-212-963-3301; internet: <http://www.un.org/ga/>

SECOND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS: This Summit is scheduled to take place from 25-29 October 2005, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to precede and inform the Fourth Summit of the Americas, the forum of the Organization of the American States. Three separate meetings are scheduled: a Youth Summit on 25 October; a Women's Summit on 26 October; and a Leaders' Summit on 27-29 October. For more information, contact: Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie, Assembly of First Nations; tel: +1-613-241-6789 ext. 295; fax: +1-613-241-5808; email: lmackenzie@afn.ca; internet: <http://www.afn.ca>; or Sochitl Alfaro, Organización de Naciones y Pueblos Indigenas de Argentina; tel: +54-11-4381-6039; email: Alfaros1s@uregina.ca



More than 150 participants from over 40 countries attended the Community Commons