

**Jeffrey Sachs**

**Reith Lectures 2007: Bursting at the Seams**

**Lecture 4: Economic Solidarity for a Crowded Planet**

Recorded at SOAS, London

SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to the School of Oriental and African Studies in London - SOAS, as it's more commonly known. It's part of London University, and it's Britain's leading academic institution, dedicated to the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It's an appropriate place to be holding the fourth of this year's Reith Lectures, as Jeffrey Sachs turns his attention to one of the defining problems of those parts of the world, extreme poverty. To give it its economic definition, people who are forced to live on less than a dollar a day. As the world converges and grows richer, its newfound wealth, argues Sachs, threatens to be fatally undermined by the vastness of the terrible poverty it leaves behind. We have to rescue the poor and the failing communities in which they live, if we're to enjoy the fruits of economic globalisation. It can be done, he says. To explain how, and why, please would you welcome the BBC Reith lecturer 2007, Jeffrey Sachs.

(APPLAUSE) The end of poverty - by the year 2025. It's seems like an outlandish claim, an impossible dream. But it's within reach. It is a scientifically sound objective. And it is the most urgent challenge of our generation.

In fact, if we in the rich world fail to take up this challenge, we will imperil ourselves and the world. A crowded world, one that is "bursting at the seams," cannot afford to leave millions to die each year of extreme poverty without imperilling all the rest.

John F. Kennedy, whose vision of the possible inspires these lectures, put it this way in his Inaugural Address in 1961:

'To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required-not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.'

In my last lecture, in New York, I talked about war and peace and about our extremely dangerous tendency to define the world as "us versus them." Because of that tendency, war can erupt as a self-fulfilling prophecy of conflict between mutually suspicious groups.

Yet war can also erupt as a result of the collapse of an impoverished society, one suffering the scourges of drought, hunger, lack of jobs, and lack of hope. Ending poverty is therefore a basic matter of our own security.

Darfur, Somalia, Afghanistan. These are all, at their core, wars of extreme poverty. So too, quite obviously, were the recent wars of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, and many

others. The U.S. has just established a new military command in Africa, declaring Africa to pose new security threats to the U.S. But even as the U.S. spends more than \$600 billion on the military, and even as U.S. counterinsurgency forces spread out across the impoverished stretches of the Sahel, the U.S. will never achieve peace if it continues to spend less than one hundredth of the military budget on Africa's economic development. An army can never pacify a hungry, disease ridden, and impoverished population.

We need to understand the challenge of extreme poverty not only as a matter of ethics and politics, but also as a matter of science. We can and must achieve a much clearer understanding of how to end poverty, based on the best scientific evidence. We have powerful technologies that can be mobilized, and which can make a remarkable difference at a remarkable speed.

We can usefully start our diagnosis by understanding the progress that has been made. When John Kennedy spoke of the bonds of mass misery in 1961, close to half the planet was in extreme poverty, measured by the traditional standard of living on \$1 per day or less. Today, the proportion of the world's population in extreme poverty is down to around one-sixth, approximately 1 billion of the world's 6.6 billion people. The absolute numbers of the poor are declining, and their proportion is declining even faster. Globalization has, on balance, helped the poor, especially in Asia, where economic growth and poverty reduction are proceeding at historically unprecedented rates. We have the wind in our sails, since world markets give a powerful impetus to the spread of technologies and the rise of income. Once countries get on to the ladder of development - exporting manufactures and services in world markets, and linked to the world in networks of production, trade, finance, and technology - they tend to make continued progress up the ladder. Market forces, based on saving, investment, trade, and technological advance take hold. The crisis of extreme poverty is centered in those regions not yet on the development ladder, stuck in extreme poverty and hunger, with only the weakest of links to global production - through primary agricultural goods and mineral resources.

Poverty is not yet declining in tropical Africa, and a few other places. Africa has not so much been harmed by globalization, as bypassed by it. The basic challenge is to help Africa and other still-impoverished regions onto the development ladder.

Consider some recent data, this time using the metrics of life and death rather than dollars. Life expectancy at birth is probably the best single indicator of overall human wellbeing that we have. Life expectancy is not only a crucially important goal in its own right, but is also an excellent indicator of overall social organization - for example, the quality of the health system, the presence or absence of war, the reach of infrastructure, and the extent of food insecurity. Life expectancy at birth is also relatively easy to measure and to compare across countries.

The worldwide improvements in life expectancy on the planet have been dramatic. In 1960, 105 countries, with two-thirds of the world's population, had a life expectancy at birth of less than 60 years. By 2004, that list had shrunk to only 47 countries, with a mere twelve percent of the world's population. And virtually all of those 47 countries are in Africa (with the exceptions being Afghanistan, Cambodia, Haiti, Laos, and Papua New Guinea).

Why does Africa lag? Here is where the scientific evidence on extreme poverty is vital. The overwhelming non-scientific assumption held in our societies is that Africa suffers mainly from the corruption and mismanagement of its leaders. With the viciousness and despotism of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, it's an understandable view. Yet this seemingly self-evident view is wrong as a generalization. Zimbabwe may get the headlines, but there are many countries in Africa, like Tanzania and Mozambique just nearby, that have talented and freely elected governments struggling against poverty. But they too face great obstacles, and their people too continue to suffer from extreme deprivation.

Consider the fact that nine developing countries - with two in Africa - were tied with exactly the same corruption score in this year's Transparency International index. Specifically, Ghana and Senegal were assessed to be at the same level of corruption as Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Peru, and Saudi Arabia. Yet the two African countries have life expectancies of around 56 years, while all but one of the other countries have life expectancies of more than 70 years. On average, for countries with comparable corruption levels, Africa's life expectancy rates are nearly 20 years below the rest of the world's.

Africa's problems are not due mainly to corruption, but to its ecology, history, weak infrastructure, and burgeoning population growth. Moreover, once those underlying sources of extreme poverty and disease are scientifically identified, we can also identify the practical technologies and strategies needed to solve these problems, and thereby enable Africa like the rest of the world to break free of the poverty trap.

Africa, compared with other poor regions of the world, suffers from four enormous burdens, all of which are solvable with proven and relatively low-cost technologies.

The first is low food production. Africa is a hungry continent, with grain yields roughly one third of other developing regions of the planet. Part of the problem is Africa's age-old dependence on rain-fed agriculture in a savannah climate, where the risks of drought are ever present. Sub-Saharan Africa lacks the river-based irrigation systems of South and East Asia. Another urgent problem with Africa's agriculture is that Africa's soils have been depleted of nutrients because impoverished farmers have been unable to afford fertilizers to replenish their soils. Older techniques for replenishing soil nutrients, such as the rotation of farm lands, allowing the replenishment of nutrients on land left to fallow for 10 or 20 years, are no longer feasible. Rising land scarcity because of Africa's burgeoning population means that scarce arable land can no longer be left to fallow even for one year, much less a generation.

The second challenge is Africa's disease ecology, which leads to uniquely high burdens of tropical diseases, especially malaria. This again is a matter of ecology. Africa has a climate and species of disease vectors that contribute to its unique burden of tropical infectious diseases. These are controllable, but at much greater effort than needed in other parts of the world.

The third challenge is Africa's miserably deficient infrastructure, with the world's poorest network of roads, power, rail, and fibre-optic cables for internet. For many

historical and geographical reasons, Africa's colonial powers did not build the roads, rail, and power grids that they did in other parts of the world.

The fourth challenge is the continuing surge of population, in which poor families are still having six or more children in rural areas. Fertility rates are still so high in rural Africa that populations are doubling each generation.

These challenges - food production, disease control, weak infrastructure, burgeoning populations - are not caused by corruption, but by ecology, history, and by the vicious cycle of extreme poverty itself. Each of these challenges is susceptible of utterly practical solutions, and in short order, but they require public-sector investments beyond the levels that impoverished African countries can afford.

African countries, in short, face a poverty trap. They can overcome impoverishment through identifiable and proven public investments, but these countries are simply too poor to undertake those investments out of their own resources. Nor are they creditworthy enough to borrow those resources from global capital markets, though these markets can help.

This litany of problems may seem overwhelming. Left alone, they will be. But each is actually solvable, and much more easily than is typically imagined. We've seen what can be done, for example, in our own Millennium Villages, a project that applies proven techniques to these very challenges in villages across a dozen countries of Africa. Here is what can be accomplished.

Powerful technologies, as simple as insecticide-treated bed nets and a new generation of anti-malaria medicines, can control malaria by 90 percent or more. Anti-retroviral medicines can make AIDS a chronic rather than fatal disease, and one with reduced stigma and much more chance of prevention. These successes, and many like them, have been accomplished in countless specific projects where donor funds have been made available, but not on a country scale or regional scale.

Current agronomic technologies can triple food production. The key in that case is to get smallholder farms the vital inputs of high-yield seeds, fertilizers, and small-scale water management techniques that can dramatically boost farm yields. Africa can and must have a Green Revolution as India initiated nearly forty years ago. Malawi has started this year, with a program to guarantee vital inputs for the poorest farmers. Food yields have soared, in a neighbourhood of acute food shortages. And we should certainly remember that India's Green Revolution also depended on international aid in its early years. Virtually every country has needed a helping hand at some point. It's a rule of life.

Current technologies can extend roads, rail, power, and the internet even to the most remote regions. A satellite dish, or a mobile phone tower, can end isolation that might have seemed irremediable a generation ago.

The fourth challenge, excessive population growth, is similarly susceptible of practical and proven solutions. Fertility rates in rural Africa are still around 6 children or more. This is understandable, if disastrous. Poor families are worried about the high rates of child mortality, and compensate by having large families. Poor families

lack access to contraception and family planning. Girls often are deprived of even a basic education, because the family cannot afford it, and are instead forced into early marriage rather than encouraged to stay in school. And the value placed on mothers' time is very low, in part because agricultural productivity is itself so low. With few opportunities to earn remunerative income, mothers are pushed - often by their husbands or the community - to have more children.

Yet, as shown by countless countries around the world, fertility rates will fall rapidly, and on a voluntary basis, if an orderly effort is led by government with adequate resources. Investments in child survival, contraceptive availability, schooling of children, especially girls, and higher farm productivity, can result in a voluntary decline in total fertility from around six to perhaps three or lower within a single decade. But these things will not happen by themselves. They require resources, which impoverished Africa lacks.

The world has committed, time and again, to help Africa accomplish these development objectives. We are pledged, all countries on the planet, to support the Millennium Development Goals, the internationally agreed goals set in the year 2000 to cut poverty, hunger, and disease decisively by the year 2015. We are half way to 2015, but still far off the mark. Our governments talk, and they even begin to act, but they fail to act with the urgency and decisiveness required by the circumstances, and commensurate with our promises. And the urgency will grow as climate stresses multiply. The longer we wait, the greater is the suffering and the larger are the long-term risks and costs.

Success in the MDGs will require stronger actions on all fronts - by civil society, by businesses, by African governments and communities. I will speak about the roles of business, civil society, and each of us as individuals, in the final lecture. But success will also require finance, at a scale that can only be provided by official development assistance by rich country governments. Our governments have long promised to deliver 0.7 percent of rich-world GNP as official aid, but so far have consistently failed to do so.

The situation is absurd in many ways - at least 10 million people dying each year because the rich world refuses to spend 0.7 percent of GNP on aid! For Africa specifically, we would need around \$70 billion per year to enable Africa to get on to the ladder of development. That's \$70 per person per year from each of us in the rich countries. It's about 0.2 percent of our annual income. It's well under the annual cost of the Iraq War. Indeed, it's about 2 percent of the estimated wealth of the world's 1,000 billionaires. And consider that Wall Street and the City of London together took home Christmas bonuses of some \$40 billion this past holiday season.

The deep question is why the rich countries, with so much wealth, are so irresponsibly and relentlessly neglectful, when the amounts needed are so small and the consequences of inaction are so catastrophic for all. Is this the fate of modern societies? Are our politicians inevitably distracted by local concerns, or by the illusions of war? Are our populations so jaded and cynical and uncaring as to make this neglect inevitable? The answer, thankfully, is no. Let's not over-generalize. Several of the world's wealthiest countries do honour their commitments. The key for us is to understand why they do, while the rest do not.

Five countries of Northern Europe have long met the 0.7 percent of GNP commitment. These are: Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The European Union has now promised, once again, to do so by 2015. Yet the European Union obviously agonizes in this promise. The U.S. doesn't even agonize. It doesn't even try. The US will spend \$600 billion on the military this year, but only \$4 billion on African development. Moreover, senior U.S. officials vigorously reject the global standard of 0.7 percent in aid, even though the U.S. government signed on to that international target.

The striking thing about the aid performance is the very strong correlation between a country's international aid and its care for the poor at home. Countries that take care of their own poor also tend to help the world's poor. Countries that neglect their own poor tend to walk away from their international responsibilities as well.

In brief, the social welfare model of Northern Europe helps the poor both at home and abroad. The U.S. model, alas, leaves the poor to suffer their fate, both at home and abroad. Americans, as a result, are fearful of their economic future, as they are left to fend for themselves. They have little time for others. The world is seen as filled with threats, and of "us versus them," rather than with opportunities in an interconnected global society. The Nordic countries, by contrast, have the domestic security of social protection which they then seek to extend to the world.

The successes of the Nordic system are crucial for us to understand. Many on the political left admire the Nordic social welfare state, as do I. Yet they mistakenly believe that the Nordic countries are somehow anti-market and anti-globalization. Nothing could be further from the truth. Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, are all market-based economies, competing fiercely in world markets. They believe in open trade, and invest heavily in high technology and in R&D to keep their international competitiveness. But they have discovered that it is possible to combine market efficiency and open trade with strong social services and social protection. They have achieved, in short, a system of Economic Solidarity within a market economy. Rather than compromising their economic well being, these institutions of Economic Solidarity have strengthened the market system itself. The Nordic countries have not only eliminated poverty in their midst, and achieved the best health outcomes in the world. They have also fostered the confidence to extend such solidarity to the rest of the world.

No doubt, the Nordic successes have depended, in part, on their relatively small size and social homogeneity. Their levels of internal social trust are very high. Migration is putting that social trust under challenge. But even if their social homogeneity is not replicable elsewhere, their social trust can be. Perhaps the key to success, after all, in the 21st century will be building trust across ethnic and cultural lines, within our own societies, as well as across societies.

We can end poverty, at home and abroad, with the technologies and tools that we have, if we trust each other sufficiently, at home and abroad. As JFK said in the context of war and peace, we need not talk about blind trust, a naïve trust, a trust of dreamers or fanatics. We must seek a practical trust, built on specific institutions and specific ways of delivering help for the poor. Our economic solidarity must rely on

scientific evidence and rigorous audits as much as on trust. But at the core of such institutions is the trust that we are all in this together, that our fates, economic and otherwise are shared, and that the defeat of poverty will be a victory of security for all on the planet.

My suggestions on Economic Solidarity therefore are the following.

First, let us embrace market economics - yes - but also recognize that free market economics are passé. We need an active role of the state, to help the poorest to break free of the poverty trap, and to help narrow the inequalities of a high-income market society.

Let us understand that economic solidarity is insurance for all, the poor and the rich. Our societies can be both productive and safe. If we invest in solidarity, we will also end up with a more caring society. It's not our poor versus the poor abroad. It is help and solidarity with both.

Let us resolve to honour our commitments in the fight against poverty, hunger, and disease. Our commitments are small compared with our vast wealth, and the benefits will be vast. We have the power to save millions of lives each year, to help slow a burgeoning population growth in the poorest countries, and to reduce, if not end, the conflicts and wars caused by extreme poverty, which threaten peace everywhere. This, truly, is the work of our generation.

In the next lecture, we will consider another lesson from the small Nordic countries. Small is beautiful in today's economies. These small economies are open to the world, but are also small enough to establish high levels of internal cohesion. They reap the best of a large open world economy and a strong home base.

The place for the "small" - our communities, regions, and cultures - in a large and interconnected world, will be among the themes that I will explore in the next lecture. More generally, we will explore how each of us can contribute to solutions at a time when our governments alone are surely insufficient to the task.

(APPLAUSE) SUE LAWLEY: Jeffrey Sachs, thank you very much indeed. Now it's time for our cosmopolitan audience here at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London to explore, endorse or challenge those views about the need and the means of ending extreme poverty. So I'm going to begin by inviting Karl Ziegler, who was once an adviser, I believe, to the President of Uganda, and he's founded an organisation called The Centre for Accountability and Debt Relief. Mr Ziegler, your question?

KARL ZIEGLER: Yes, thank you. I also am a founding Director here in the UK of Transparency International. Flight capital, capital flight, out of Africa today, is going up by leaps and bounds as their commodity prices are going up.

SUE LAWLEY: Is this money that goes to Swiss bank accounts you mean?

KARL ZIEGLER: Yes, well they, of course, go to Swiss bank accounts. Flight capital traced by the World Bank in 2004 was ninety-five billion dollars out of sub-Saharan

Africa. 2005, the figure had erupted to a hundred and fifty billion.

SUE LAWLEY: Just so we're clear, for people who are not as close to the subject as you are, this is money that's gone in, given in aid which is siphoned out of Africa. Is that what you're saying?

KARL ZIEGLER: No, not simply aid, because as Jeff points out correctly the aid level is quite low, but he would love to see it expand and balloon. What I'm arguing is that the expanded aid going into sub-Saharan Africa, if his prescription were followed, would basically continue to go into flight capital. Under corrupt leadership in Africa money that goes in as aid is usually used to buy a new presidential jet, or increase the parliamentarians' salaries. I think you'll be more effective if you addressed those core issues.

SUE LAWLEY: So Jeff, you say the problem is not due to corruption. Here's a view that it absolutely is.

JEFFREY SACHS: Well, Karl and I have been arguing about this for years, and I'm glad that he had a chance to hear me tonight. These things are simply your way of saying that you think that everything necessarily has to be stolen rather than thinking about ways to help people that practically need the help to stay alive. We bring in bed nets, the bed nets don't get shipped to Swiss bank accounts-the bed nets could save millions if we took this seriously and if we stopped the clichés.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to give you a quick comeback on that Mr Ziegler - a quick one if you will.

KARL ZIEGLER: A very quick comeback is that essentially the poverty in Africa is... and it's not the white commentators like myself who comment on it, it's Africans who give the data, and basically demand change of leadership, because they say problems one, two and three, unlike your list of four, is the problem of corruption.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to call in the gentleman here, who's waving his hand at me.

JULIAN MORRIS: I am Julian Morris, from International Policy Network. The problem in Africa, as I see it, is one of too many big men trying to impose their will upon the people. It's the rule of big men, rather than the rule of law. Botswana has grown much more rapidly than any other country in Africa. The single simplest explanation for that is the institutions underpinning that. And the explanation for why the rest of Africa hasn't worked is because of the poor governance in those countries.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff...

JULIAN MORRIS: What you're suggesting is that we give much money now, especially to the governments of Africa. I suspect that that will have the opposite effect to that intended, it won't encourage the rule of law, it'll have the opposite effect.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff, I want you to react to that if you would.

JEFFREY SACHS: The single biggest reason for Botswana to have done well is that

in the late 1960s they discovered massive amounts of diamonds in the Kalahari desert. Let's get real.

JULIAN MORRIS: How do you explain Nigeria's poverty then, because ... .. oil wells.

JEFFREY SACHS: Yes let's please understand how Botswana got wealthy, because it's perfectly plain that it was very poor people living in the Kalahari desert, until the diamonds came. And with all that good governance, let's remember also that Botswana has the highest AIDS prevalence rate in the world. So let's not oversimplify that it's all just corruption and mismanagement. Sometimes it's other things as well. President Guebuza, President Kufuor, President Toure, President Kikwete, and many others are not big men. This is just a slur, and I'm surprised it's a slur here where you know Africa, and you understand it's fifty-four countries. It's not one mass of homogenous corruption.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Let me just see if there's anybody in the floor really, general... On the point of corruption, I'd like some general views. The gentleman there, yes?

MAN: Yes, thank you. I'm from Africa, I'm from the Congo myself, and I believe that even the doubling of aid is not going to help at all, as long as the West doesn't drop all these trade barriers against African goods. And we are talking as if we are oblivious of history. We've just celebrated the bicentenary of the slave trade, how Africa's been always squeezed dry. Since the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism that is going on today. No single government in the West has tried to investigate the implication of ... in the Congo war, which made Britain, America, Belgium, France, rich in the very twenty-first century, now.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff?

(APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: I think the point - and I think there should be no doubt about it - governance, meaning our governance and governance in Africa, and help, meaning our help for Africa, are both part of the solution. Now on trade barriers, there's no doubt some huge abuse, as you say, and cotton is the most despicable of them all and one that affects the Congo. But what's also true is that in addition to the trade barriers, and I believe even larger, is the absence of basic infrastructure, because the power grid prevents reliable internationally competitive production, because the road network does not work effectively, because the rail network doesn't exist. So from my point of view, if we're going to get the trade going, which I believe is absolutely critical, we need to invest in basic infrastructure.

SUE LAWLEY: What people listening to this think to themselves is, look, as we know, the figure is over the past fifty years 2.3 trillion dollars has been given in aid somewhere out there - why hasn't anything moved on, why hasn't anything changed?

JEFFREY SACHS: That preposterous figure confuses everybody rather than

illuminates. If you take 2.3 trillion dollars and you divide it by sixty years, and you divide it by three billion people in the developing countries, it comes out to thirteen dollars per person per year, that's all. We've spent seventeen trillion dollars on the military in the US alone during that period.

SUE LAWLEY: Okay we've got that point, I'm going to take a question...

JEFFREY SACHS: So, no but, so that is the point, this is playing games with numbers and games with lives, and we have to look at what's really needed, get down to the specifics, get down to the details, stop casting the aspersions on the corruption abroad and look at what can really save lives, raise food production, build infrastructure, and help get this region out of its poverty trap.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to go down to a question over here. Yes?

IMOGEN MOORE: Hi Professor Sachs, my name is Imogen Moore, I'm a postgraduate student here at SOAS and a former employee of the United Nations in a number of countries. I couldn't help but notice you've given us a number of statistics and figures relating to poverty, but you've made no reference to the voices and concerns of the poor themselves. Do you regard poverty as a technical problem to solve, or a partnership?

(APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: Clearly I regard it as the most essential partnership on the planet, and I regard it as the most important thing we can do to get serious about this. Since I spend most of my time in villages and listening to people from the ground up, let me tell you what they're concerned about. They're concerned about their children dying, as they carry them on the backs ten kilometres to a clinic and the child's dead by the time they get there. They are concerned that they do not have enough to eat for three months before the next harvest. They are concerned that they cannot afford a treadle pump for supplementary irrigation during the dry spells that seem to come with increasing frequency in the savannah. There is not one step in the world, ladies and gentlemen, that can be taken without the leadership of the poor themselves. But I will say that this has nothing to do with denying people their opportunity; this is to give them something real so that they have tools to get out of this trap.

SUE LAWLEY: Let me bring in Roger Riddell, who was a Director of Christian Aid at one point I think, so he has experience in these matters. I mean there is a problem is there not at the giving end as well as at the receiving end. We've talked about corruption, it's the power of the donor that becomes a bit of a problem, and I think that's the area ...

ROGER RIDDELL: Yes, I wholeheartedly agree with Professor Sachs that more aid is needed, but if there's one thing we've learnt in the last thirty years of aid-giving, it's that aid is unlikely to work unless recipient countries are allowed to pursue development strategies which they have drawn up themselves, which they own, and are thus committed to. What makes you think that donor-driven, technocratic approaches will work today when donor-driven approaches in Africa have so singly failed in the past?

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff?

JEFFREY SACHS: I'm really incredibly surprised actually, at every one of these characterisations. The Millennium Development Goals are not met by the poor because they've been promised help which hasn't arrived. Every one of the countries where we're working through the United Nations, with Kofi Annan first, now with Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, where the Millennium Villages are operating, have governments that want nothing more than to achieve a two thirds reduction of child mortality, a three fourths reduction of maternal mortality, to cut hunger by half, to cut income poverty by half. They want these goals, they plead for them. We then make promises we'll double aid by 2010. Where are those promises? Nowhere to be found. Now, I know you work for this, but I think our message needs to be to our governments also - get on with it, fulfil the promises.

SUE LAWLEY: We have here someone from an international Catholic aid agency, Christine Allen, Director of Progressio. You work in the field, what's your experience?

CHRISTINE ALLEN: Thank you, Professor Sachs. I mean as you highlight, the people in the countries of the south are not stupid, they may be poor but they're not stupid, they have hopes and dreams and desires for their children like the rest of us. But I don't think we can ignore the issues about governance that we've highlighted, particularly in terms of corruption. I want to ask you what kind of changes will you see, what kind of challenges do you ask of governments who do aid provision, so that we can ensure that that aid actually really meets those that are poorest and marginalised?

JEFFREY SACHS: If you go to an African village and discuss these issues, which you do, and which I do all the time, let me say what comes up. They'd like to grow more food, they'd like not to be hungry, they'd like their children not to die of malaria, they would like safe water points, they would like some transport and communication. These are the things you hear everywhere. Let's not be confused by this. So what does it mean to have aid programmes that respond to those needs? It means to be practical, it means bed nets to fight malaria, high yield seeds, treadle pumps, vaccinations, anti-retroviral medicines, bore holes. Are those mere technocratic solutions? Well those are the things that poor people would like, their lives depend on it. Their lives can be saved by it.

SUE LAWLEY: How do we get through this, Jeff, is really what's being asked. Where's it going wrong and how do we get...

JEFFREY SACHS: I think that from my point of view there seems to be a pervasive misunderstanding, and that is that we're already doing so much, but we're not doing what they want. And this is absolutely not the case, we're doing so little, and also not what they want. That's the point.

(APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: I don't understand the mindset, because I know the numbers. The

numbers are that the total envelope of aid is twenty-five billion dollars for everything. Now start taking away from that the salaries of rich country consultants, take away the food aid, take away the padded debt relief numbers, and you're down to a few billion dollars. You may be at five to ten dollars left over per recipient in a situation where there is no power, water, bed nets, malaria control - it's a matter of arithmetic. The reason these things happen is not that we're doing something so large in some other area, believe me we're hardly doing anything. We have not stepped up to our promises and our commitments. It may be hard to hear.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to go for a quick comment, briefly if you would, sir.

ALISTAIR McFARQUHAR: I'm Alistair McFarquhar, retired, ... from the University of Cambridge, but once the first economist working for government in Africa - with the possible exception of South Africa. Take the two biggest problems generally acknowledged, malaria and Aids. The problem with malaria is a failure of Western science and green politics to use DDT. Take the use of contraceptives to control Aids in South Africa - that's a combination of the juju and the Vatican Church. There's nothing complicated about it.

JEFFREY SACHS: We did not try for a long time to control malaria, and DDT is one possibility. It's only one of many tools and it's not appropriate in some places and is appropriate in other places. It turns out to be more expensive than long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets, less effective in some areas. So where you want to use that tool among many is a scientific and ecological question.

SUE LAWLEY: What about the juju and the Catholic Church?

JEFFREY SACHS: I think that, again, the South African position on AIDS has been despicable, and it's only recently changed. But as I hear all of these things I can tell you of twenty-five or thirty countries desperately trying to do the right thing. But AIDS treatment requires help and it requires financing, and it's only very recently that that has started. So in all of the statements that are made, there are fifty-four countries, very different circumstances, many countries desperately trying. The one thing that is relatively consistent though is that the level of our effort and attention is far below what we have promised and far below what's needed.

SUE LAWLEY: Okay we're going to have to end it there despite the many people who still want to speak. Jeffrey Sachs, thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Our thanks too to our hosts here at SOAS. Next week we'll be in the former home of the Scottish Parliament, on The Mound, as it's called, in Edinburgh, for the final lecture in which Jeff Sachs will be setting out what he's called a new politics for a new age. For now, from London, goodbye.