



10 December 2009

Malaria Consortium third Annual Lecture  
Church House, Westminster, London.

*'Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: Are rights being realised?'*

PROFESSOR MYLES WICKSTEAD CBE

Malaria Consortium Executive Director Sunil Mehra opened the lecture, welcoming everything and noting the diverse group of people in attendance. After thanking the Malaria Consortium members of staff for organising the event, Mr. Mehra then briefly introduced Malaria Consortium and its work on delivery and access. He introduced Professor Wickstead as the lecture's speaker and then handed over to him.

Professor Wickstead thanked Sunil Mehra for the introduction and began by stating that he was speaking on Human Rights Day and that his lecture title, *'Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: Are rights being realised?'* required unpacking; what are the MDGs? Are we progressing towards them? And what is required for progress?



He began by reminding the audience of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the overarching goal being to half global poverty by 2015. The goals are largely related to basic education and health, he said, and follow on from the International Development

Targets of the 1980s and 90s. He acknowledged that yes, good progress is being made. 100s of millions of people have been pulled out of poverty in the past decade. However, this progress is as a result of East and Southern Asia, whose success, notably China and India, has been driven by rapid relentless economic growth of 8-11%.

Therefore, he commented, there are two concerns because of this; Africa risks being left behind (although noting that steady growth had occurred across Africa in recent years around 6.2% prior to the recession) and that new threats such as climate change and the global recession present a significant obstacle.

When asking what is required for progress, Professor Wickstead stated that a holistic approach to development was required, highlighting a number of key areas. There is an assumption that the goals serve themselves, he said, yet they are in fact intertwined with other conditions, thus one should instead focus on the whole spectrum. This should include

- **Good governance:** Without a certain degree of this, progress in all other areas is undermined. Professor Wickstead noted that this was overlooked during the Cold War dynamic in which development was once framed. Support was given to leaders based on allegiance to ideology, such as Mobutu in Zaire. In Africa, divisions found physical expression in conflict, materialising into 'hot war' in a number of instances. However, such excuses fell away after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The 1990s brought recognition of the importance of governance, peace and stability.
- **Human capital:** The MDGs focus on primary education and gender access, he said, yet these cannot be achieved without a broader effort, such as providing teachers or technical assistance in for agricultural development than can free up children to attend school.
- **Trade:** In trade between developing and developed countries, current policy is detrimental to growth, Professor Wickstead commented. Citing the example of Cocoa exports in Ghana he demonstrated that raw cocoa can be exported to the EU without tariffs, yet when value is added to the cocoa, tariffs are added. Therefore this provides a disincentive for manufacturing to expand in developing countries.

In summary, Professor Wickstead emphasised that all of the factors mentioned are essential in providing the foundations for achieving specific MDGs on education on health. He then moved on to discuss Malaria, outlining that a coherent approach was required to reverse this disease, and many others. After providing some background to malaria, a disease that causes over one million annual global deaths, disproportionately affects Africa and children under five, and also is a significant threat to the lives of pregnant women, he commented that due to the work of organisations like Malaria Consortium, malaria is preventable. Good progress is being made. Net distribution, vector control, and treatment regimes are all playing a part in combating the disease. Furthermore, work towards a vaccine is ongoing, led by GlaxoSmithKline.



However, such measures alone will not solve the problem of malaria, which means returning to the necessity for a broader developmental approach. For example, he said, to distribute the vaccine, infrastructure is required to transport it, and a health

system with trained doctors and nurses need to administer it. All of this must also occur in an environment of stable governance.

Professor Wickstead then turned to the issue of rights to development, asking how the MDGs relate to rights, and that this connection is a difficult but necessary one to make. Is development a question of justice (being tied to rights) or charity, he asked? Using the example of the Copenhagen summit, he said that there are two ways of viewing it. If climate change is man made, it is an issue of justice. If it is natural and developing countries are suffering, then it is a matter of charity. Yet this somewhat misses the point of development, he said. The MDGs are an aspiration, an expression of political will. They represent the most basic rights of all; health represents a right to life, and education a right to a better life. Issues of justice and charity are irrelevant, since development itself is right. Rights are a secondary prism to view the MDGs, being useful and essential. But the primary prism is that of common humanity.

Professor Wickstead ended with reflections from two events in history; The Pale Blue Dot photograph of planet Earth taken in 1990 by Voyager 1 and the tracing back of all humanity to a single extended family group in Ethiopia 76,000 years ago. These examples being symbolic of our common humanity, and how it is the prism through which development should be viewed.

The lecture was followed by a question and answer session. Topics raised included:

- The control of HIV/AIDS,
- Legal duties and responsibilities in development,
- One-party states and their ability to meet the MDGs/UN Declaration on Human Rights
- Governance and free trade in Africa,
- Meeting the MDG 5 on maternal health,
- Progress on Health systems/ infrastructure strengthening,
- The development of African companies,
- The interconnectedness of issues by overemphasising the MDGs
- The need for longer term targets after the MDGs have been completed.



Sunil Mehra closed the event, asking attendees to consider what they have learned tonight and elsewhere, and then ask what they as individuals are going to do? He thanked Myles Wickstead for speaking, and for inspiring the audience. The lecture was attended by approximately 90 people from the donor, academic, advocacy, government ministry, NGO, media, and corporate sectors.