

## **NGO / Civil Society Forum**

### ***Survey Report***

# ***NGO / Civil society and Poverty Eradication in Least Developed Countries***

**Preparatory NGO/Civil Society Forum and Panel  
for the ECOSOC High Level Segment of 28-30 June 2004**

*« Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the  
context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed  
Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 »*

United Nations Headquarter, ECOSOC Chamber  
New York, 18 March 2004 (1:15 to 6:00 pm)



Many United Nations Conferences have focused on LDCs and adopted special measures to support their development. The First United Nations Conference on LDCs, held in Paris in 1981, adopted the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) to reverse the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of these most vulnerable countries through international commitment and action. This focus was stressed during the Second United Nations Conference on LDCs, held in Paris in 1990. The result of this meeting was the adoption of the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s. The Third United Nations Conference was hosted by the European Union in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001 and adopted The Brussels Declaration and The Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010.

The Programme of Action defines a framework for partnership based on the following seven specific commitments:

- *Fostering a people-centered policy framework,*
- *Good governance at the national and international levels,*
- *Building human and institutional capacities,*
- *Building productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs,*
- *Enhancing the role of trade in development,*
- *Reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment,*
- *Mobilizing financial resources.*

The Brussels Declaration also underlined a commitment to poverty eradication and people's welfare, which is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development; achievement of Rio Declaration goals; recognizing the importance of trade for LDCs' economic growth; the need for an enabling environment for savings and investments; resource mobilization especially during the Conference on Financing for Development of March 2002 in Monterrey Mexico; the critical role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for LDCs' development; and external debt as a main obstacle to LDCs' development. The commitment to enhance Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HICP) initiative is consequently essential.

The eight internationally agreed upon Millennium Development Goals are a test of political will to build stronger partnerships. They are summarized as follows:

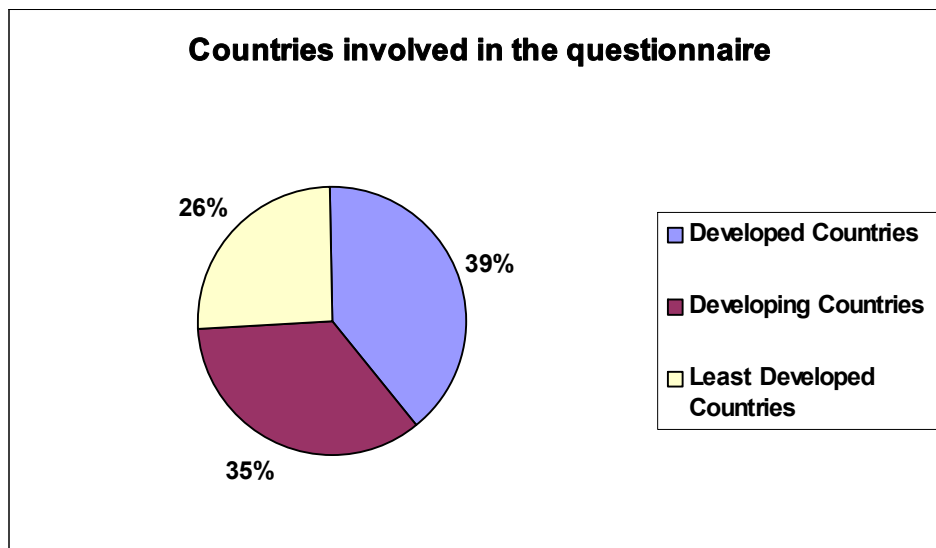
- *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,*
- *Achieve universal primary education,*
- *Promote gender equality and empower women,*
- *Reduce child mortality,*
- *Improve maternal health,*
- *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,*
- *Ensure environmental sustainability,*
- *Develop a global partnership for development.*

The MDGs and the Brussels Programme of Action are very interrelated and their achievement in the LDCs will have a great impact on the overall economic and social situation of those countries. The present NGO/Civil Society Forum, as part of the preparatory process to the ECOSOC High Level Segment, aims to include civil society in the implementation of the MDGs and the Brussels Programme of Action.

The NGO section of DESA, in cooperation with WFUNA and CONGO, conducted research through a questionnaire on civil society's activities related to poverty reduction in the LDCs. The questionnaire is an element of the preparations for the ECOSOC High-Level Segment to be held on 28-30 June in New York, on the theme: "*Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.*"

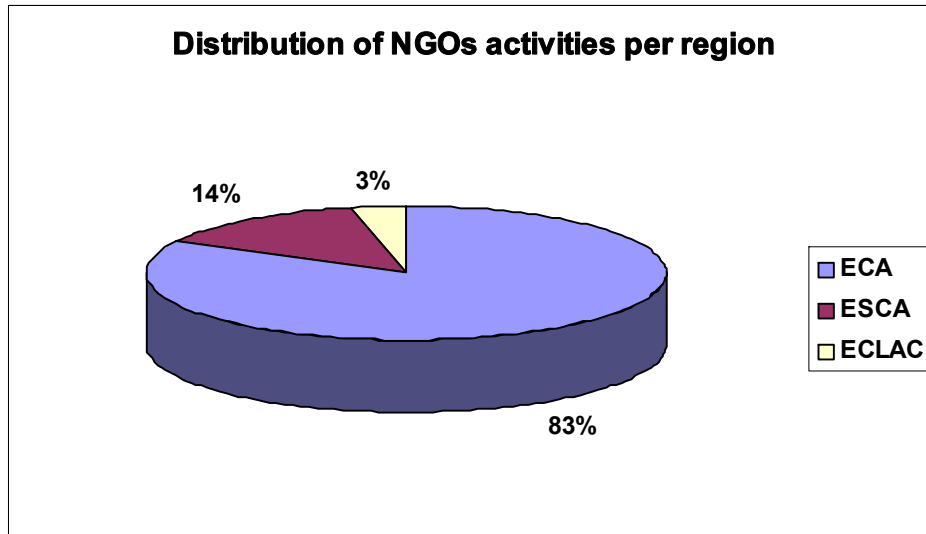
### **I. Role of NGOs/Civil Society in LDCs: Present Situation**

The questionnaire involved 135 NGOs coming from 46 countries. The main criteria used to identify the origin of NGOs is represented by their headquarter location. As showed in the graph below, 76 NGOs come from 18 Developed Countries (39%), 31 NGOs come from 16 Developing Countries (35%), and the remaining 28 NGOs come from 12 Least Developed Countries (26%).

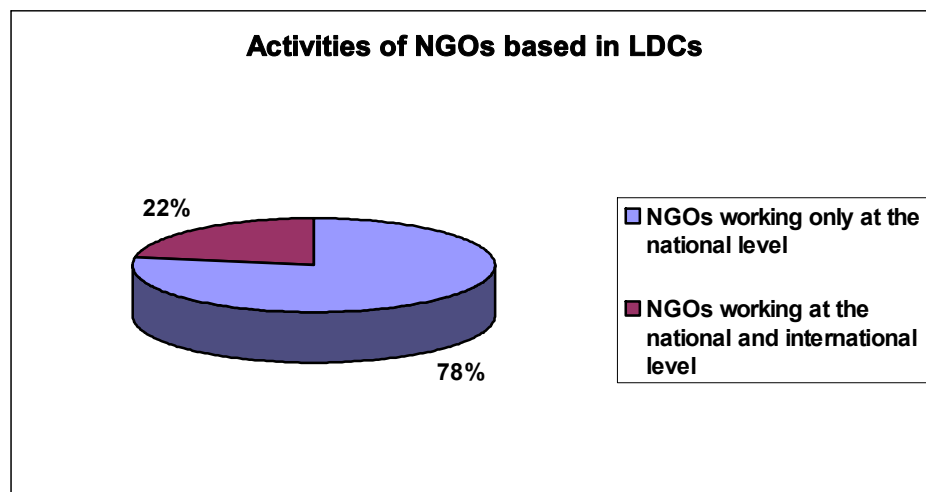


In particular, among Developed countries, the questionnaire involves 9 countries belonging to the European Union and 2 from North America. With regard to Least Developed Countries, NGOs' replies came mostly from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) region, with only 1 other NGO responding from the Economic and Social

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region. Table 1.1 in the appendix shows in detail the origin of the NGOs that replied to the questionnaire.

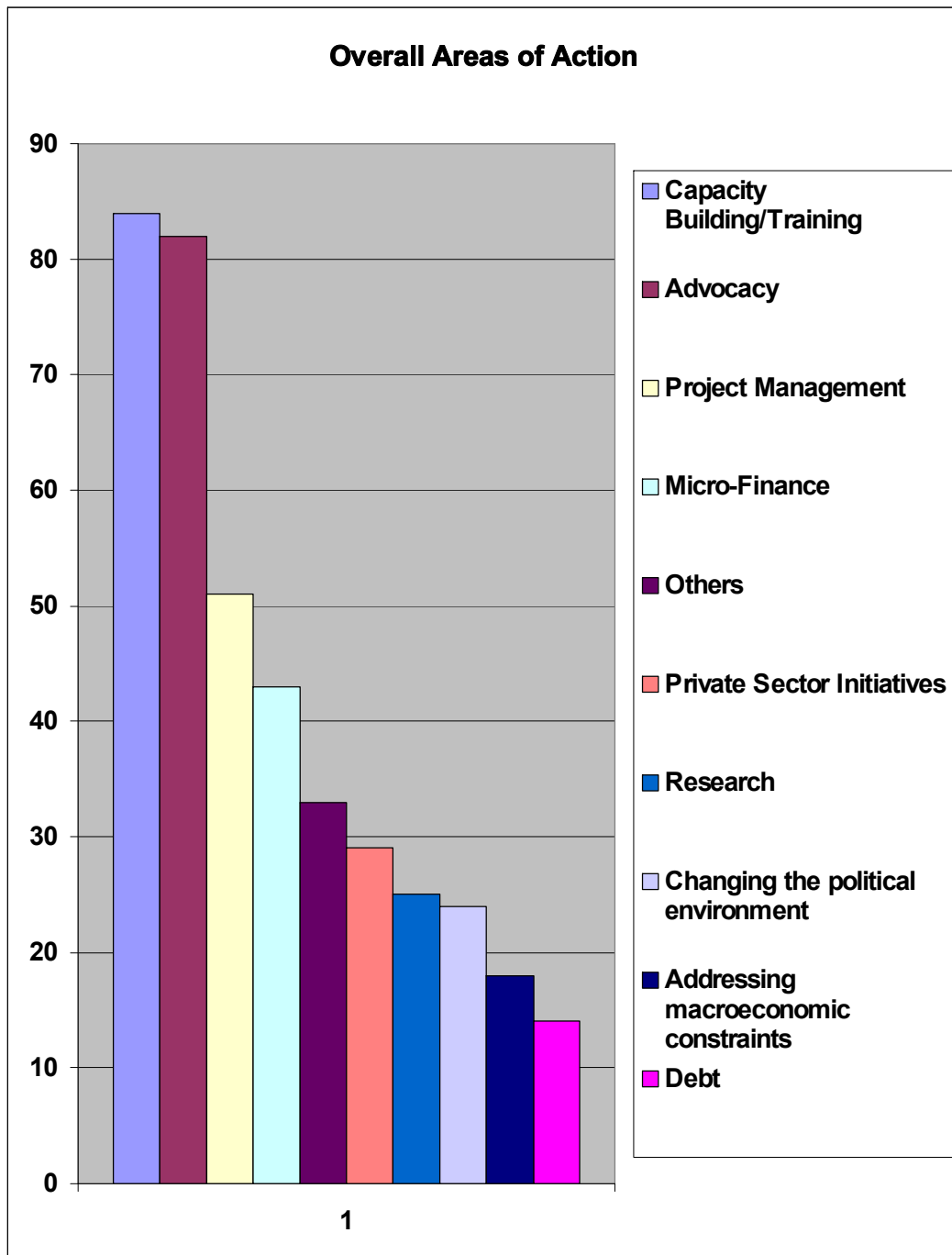


The majority of NGOs confirmed that they are involved in activities to eradicate poverty in Least Developed Countries through resource mobilization and creating an enabling environment. Out of the total number of NGOs 81% devote their activities and resources to LDCs. Moreover, all the NGOs belonging to LDCs implement activities to eradicate poverty, not only within their national boundaries but also by mobilizing resources in other LDCs. However, the majority of NGOs still runs projects only at the national level. Table 1.2 in the Appendix focuses on flows of activities among LDCs.



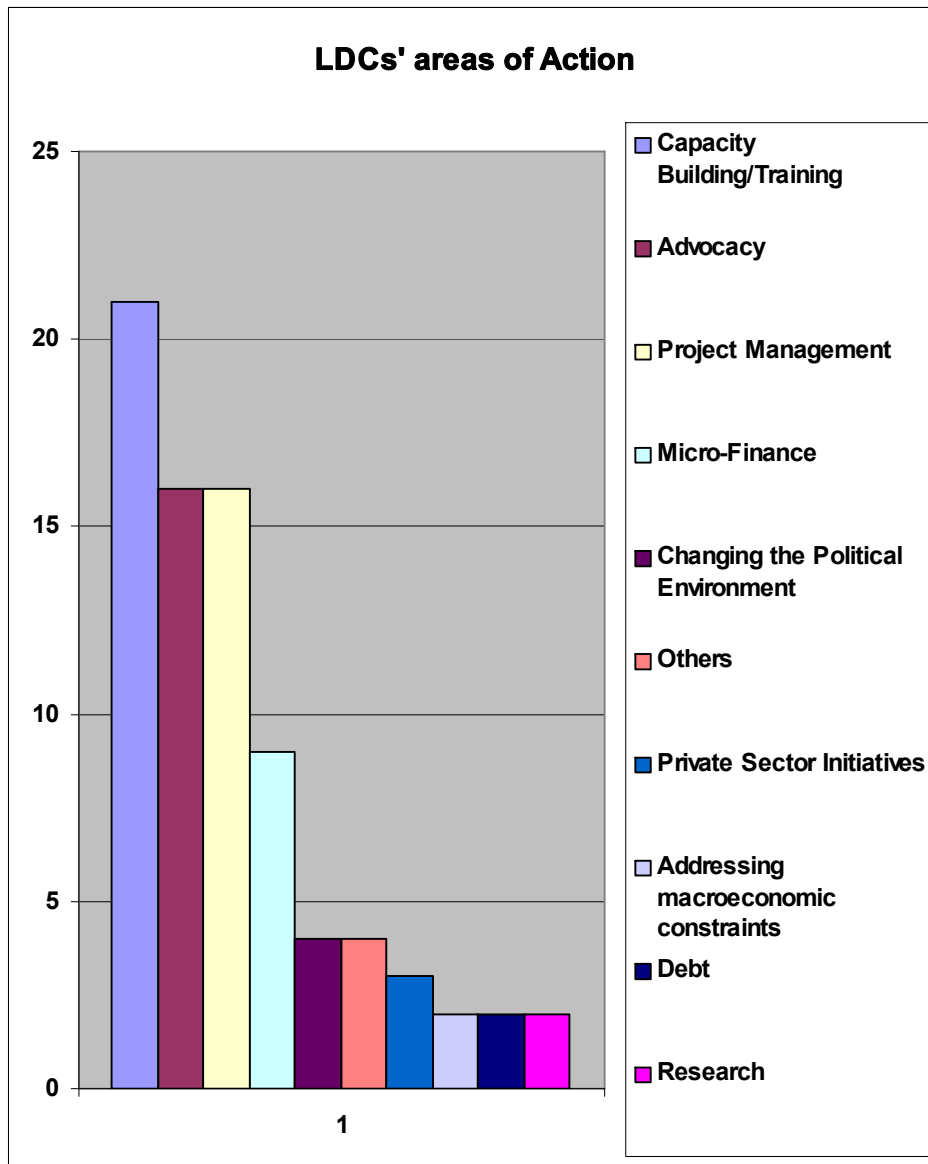
Bangladesh is the country that receives the greatest number of projects in absolute value, followed by Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nepal, as shown in table 1.3 in the Appendix. However, the regional classification of LDCs emphasizes that African

countries belonging to the ECA region are the principal destination of activities against poverty implemented by NGOs.



Capacity Building and Training, followed by Advocacy, Project Management, and Micro-finance, best describe the work of the organizations to eradicate poverty and

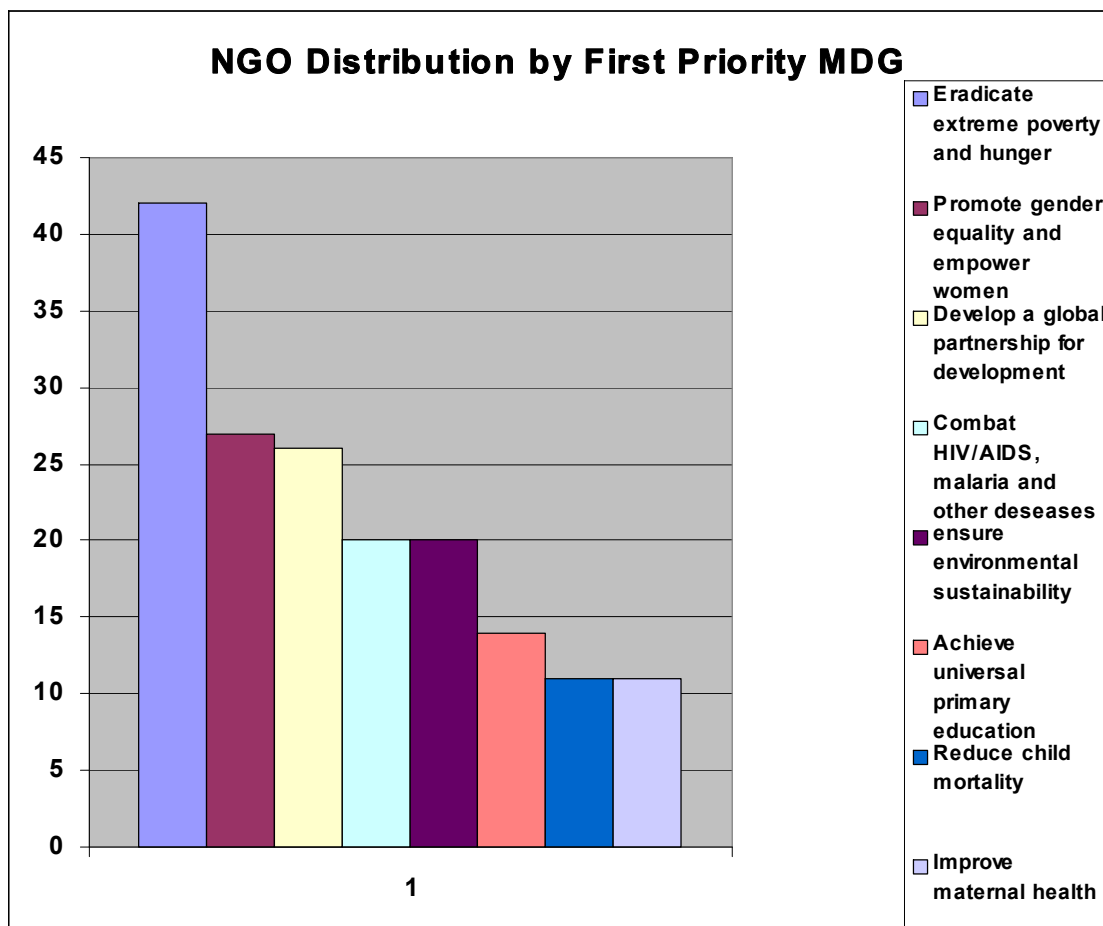
provide an enabling environment for poverty reduction. As shown in the graph below, this feature is reflected also in the actions of NGOs based in LDCs.



The questionnaire asked NGOs to list, in hierarchical order, the Millennium Development Goals upon which they focus primarily. MDGs addressed by NGOs were organized in order of priority assigning 1 to the goal that receives maximum focus and 8 to the goal that receives the least. The survey illustrates that the first MDG – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger - attracts the majority of activities and effort of NGOs. Indeed, 42 out of the 135 NGOs involved in the questionnaire answered this way. To promote gender equality and empower women is the second priority of NGOs. Developing a global partnership for development is the third priority. Combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability are both fourth in priority.

## MDGs and Areas of focus

Areas of MDGs on which the organization is focused	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	42	9	8	2	4		2	3
Achieve universal primary education	14	12	6	7	4	6	2	4
Promote gender equality and empower women	27	14	12	7	4	4	3	4
Reduce child mortality	11	4	3	2	8	6	3	3
Improve maternal health	11	4	9	3	4	7	3	5
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	20	7	14	10	3	2	2	4
Ensure environmental sustainability	20	13	2	5	8	3	3	4
Develop a global partnership for development	26	13	6	7	1	6	5	6



## ***II. NGOs' Success Stories***

In order to share innovative experience and good practices during the Forum and underline the contribution of leading NGOs to the Survey, selected success stories in various fields of intervention related to the commitments of the Brussels Action Program as well as to MDGs will be summarized and presented below. The aim is to create a knowledge basis from which all NGOs could pick up ideas; exchange their respective experiences; coordinate their on-going and planned activities in LDCs; and promote joint partnership and result oriented initiatives and projects for poverty eradication in LDCs.

From the 135 NGOs' replies to the survey, 129 NGOs sent success stories to share with the NGO community, 28 of them were from LDCs' NGOs, 28 from developing countries and 72 from NGOs based in developed countries (23 in USA). The success stories and the programs implemented mainly target LDCs. Also it is important to mention that the programs implemented in Developing Countries are relevant to LDCs.

Almost all the success stories are related to the implementation of the Brussels Program of Action for LDCs and the eight internationally agreed MDGs. More specifically their focus is on the following areas of intervention:

### **1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

- ◆ Hunger (projects that help to provide protein rich food to fight malnutrition in rural areas)
- ◆ Water shortage (paradigm of water resources management)
- ◆ Youth (projects that encourage young peoples' participation in eradicating extreme poverty)

### **2. Education**

- ◆ Education and professional qualifications
- ◆ Protecting and defending human rights (organization of workshops, popularizing national laws, publication of booklets, promotion of citizenship, using Human Rights Tribunals to attack human rights violations)

### **3. Women's empowerment**

- ◆ Programs for pre-marriage guidance and marriage counseling to minimize the breakdown of marriage
- ◆ Rehabilitating women after they leave prison
- ◆ Organizing days to celebrate women's entrepreneurial initiative
- ◆ Fighting genital female mutilation
- ◆ Stressing the importance of women's role in rebuilding societies broken by conflicts

- ◆ Enhancing self-esteem of very poor women

#### **4. Combating HIV/AIDS**

- ◆ HIV/AIDS Prevention campaign against sexually transmitted infections
- ◆ Raising awareness of HIV/AIDS among young people
- ◆ Promoting contraception

#### **5. Sustainable Environment**

- ◆ Identifying the needs and carrying out strategic intervention in agricultural through irrigation and drainage
- ◆ Recycling initiatives, perma culture (a way of using aids to growth, learning to balance soil composition)
- ◆ Strengthening LDCs' infrastructural capacity to adapt to climate change

#### **6. Resource mobilization**

- ◆ Projects for keeping and storing food stuffs for longer periods of time
- ◆ Integrating disabled people, particularly landmine victims, mentally disabled people and people with sight disabilities
- ◆ Giving humanitarian assistance and how it relates to people with special needs
- ◆ Microfinance: regulating repayment flows, partnership, using communities outside the country to help with borrowing schemes, micro-credit, developing systems covering sanctions and repayments of loan deposits

#### **7. Enabling environment**

- ◆ Building good governance and developing a political infrastructure
- ◆ Encouraging economic integration and overcoming macroeconomic constraints (Creating networks between local entrepreneurs and foreign businessmen, developing products in LDCs for the American and European markets)
- ◆ Building infrastructure (transportation, building waterholes, drilling wells)
- ◆ Building information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in LDCs and other developing countries

#### **8 Promoting a global partnership for development: North/South and South/South**

- ◆ NGOs in development partner countries working with NGOs in developing countries to promote integrated rural development
- ◆ Promoting international Summit/events bringing people from the north and south together
- ◆ Developing multi stakeholder clusters to develop partners' networks for poverty eradication.

To highlight the outstanding work of NGOs, the most relevant success stories are described below:

## 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

**Institute of International Social Development**, an *Indian* NGO led a baseline survey of talented tribal artisans in the Birbhum District of West Bengal: by identifying 300 such artisans that are below poverty line and helping them to form self help groups. This collective micro credits and financing group system has made them receive soft loans for any businesses and also assures the creditors of the return of money as the fiduciary responsibility is collective. Consultation and training on market oriented designs of their tribal crafts items, monitoring their marketing in the local, national, international markets, maintaining their account

**Peaceways-Young General Assembly** is an NGO based in USA. It acts in many different LDCs such as *Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Tanzania, Yemen, and Zambia*.

The following success story lays the stress on the youth result oriented participation in extreme poverty eradication. Social and environmental approaches are narrowly secured. “A team of 5 young people between 12 and 15 discovered there was a recycling depot 4 miles away. They gathered materials from a junkyard and made a cart. Then they went door to door in their community and collected recyclable items. A grandfather accompanied them to the recycling depot and after 3 weeks they had funds to make a second cart and get more children working to be paid for recyclable items. At the end of 6 weeks, they had 6 carts and 40 children earning money for their families. The children paid their school fees and medical expenses and bought food for their families in this manner.”

**VIVAT International**, an International NGO based in USA, is working in 8 of the 34 LDCs in Africa. In Alemtena, *Ethiopia* the members of this NGO have designed and implemented a project through local communities to eradicate poverty and hunger, by promoting clean water, home gardening, bee keeping, and poultry; by building the capacity of the communities and promoting community participation; and by establishing community structures to be managed by themselves.

To cite a few accomplishments, they bore three wells with generator and defloration; established functional community based health care; installed grinding mill in one village; a number of families have taken up poultry and home gardening in rainy season; graduated 27 women and 62 men; and promoted 480 school children at the non-formal education program recognized by the government.

**The Elizabeth Seton Foundation** based in USA is implementing a project in *Madagascar* to provide protein rich food to fight against malnutrition. The project serves about 100 children a day. It involves the production and distribution of soy- rice based flour, rich in nutrition. All elements of the flour are produced locally except vitamins and minerals. A secondary aspect of this product is to market it at minimum cost to replace expensive imported products. Since the nutritional flour is produced from local plants it not only improves the nutritional diet of the area but also provides a market for local agriculture products.

**The Africa Muslims Agency**, based in Kuwait has undertaken projects to fight against poverty in *40 African countries* in various socio-economic sectors.

It has organized 47 medical camps especially to cure eye diseases in 18 countries. Treatment includes check ups, eye operations, planting lenses and distributing eye glasses. A total of 270,016 people benefited from this programme in some of the neediest communities in the world. According to this NGO it provides this treatment to people regardless of their religion, nationality, sex or color. This organization has also set up 840 schools and 2 universities. About 500,000 students benefit from this education. It has awarded 300 scholarships/grants for higher studies and 630 students have been sponsored for university studies. In addition it has constructed 3 dams/barrages, dug 4150 wells and established 3 large livestock and poultry farms. Moreover, it has established 204 handicraft centres and distributed 165,000 tones of food, medicine and clothes.

## 2. Education

**Dhaka Ahsiana Mission (DAM)** is an NGO based in *Bangladesh*. Starting with 20 centres in 1992 this NGO has established 807 Community Learning Centres in 7 districts of the country and has a total membership of 80,700 people. The Centres are organized and managed at the grassroots level by neo literates from the community with DAM providing support in the form of books, materials, technical know how (capacity building training support) and at times some seed money for micro credit. One facilitator (a woman) from the local community is recruited for initiating activities, managing operations and supervising the centre. Overall management responsibility lies with the Management Committee democratically elected by the membership composed from the local community. On average 70% of the membership is composed of women from the community. These Centres have been gradually transformed into focal points for community development and raising awareness of relevant social and economic issues aimed at poverty reduction. This model has proved to be so successful that it has been replicated in Nepal and Pakistan.

**CARE International**, based in Belgium, has built on its community schools programme in rural areas to design an innovative fast track elementary schools programme for older girls in Kabul, **Afghanistan**. Girls complete two grades of course work in one year so that they can quickly catch up with their appropriate grade and rejoin regular schools. CARE provides teachers training, textbooks, supplies and salaries of teachers, while parents and communities manage the school.

### 3. Women's Empowerment

**World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM)**, an NGO based in Tunisia, has implemented programs in several LDCs such as *Benin, Chad, Congo, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal*. It is a communication-related success story, as they decided to declare a World Day for Women Entrepreneurs. All national members of FCEM celebrate the third Friday in May as Women Entrepreneurs' Day. They are also lobbying the President of the UN Assembly to declare a World Day for Women Entrepreneurs. The program has brought increased visibility to each national association, and many have increased their membership as well. So far, three countries have responded. In Canada, the mayor of Toronto declared an official "Women's entrepreneurs Day". The President of Mexico declared an official day for women entrepreneurs and also the President of Croatia has declared his support to women entrepreneurs.

**Worldwide Organization for Women-Africa (WOW-Africa)** an NGO from *Nigeria* that also works in *Kenya*, has implemented an innovative program: village women learned to read and write and acquire skills in making soap pomade, cream, baskets, bags and purses to promote family stability. These women also followed nutrition and hygiene classes, learning about the importance of boiling water and filtration. The program also organized monthly health talks as well as doctors' visits.

**The Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children** based in Ethiopia, with national committees operating at the country level, aims to improve maternal health through campaigns against female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices. It has recorded successes in several countries. In certain districts of *Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania* circumcisers have abandoned the practice. Parents have rejected female genital mutilation for their daughters in *Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Sudan, Niger and Chad*. This was achieved through the national committees in each of these countries. Legislation against female genital mutilation is effective in *Burkina Faso and Ghana* through the efforts of the national committees in these countries. IAC contributed to the additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women. Through IAC lobbying at the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights 6 February was adopted as the "International Female Genital Mutilation Day". In Guinea, to fight female genital mutilation in a sustained way, the circumcisers were not only informed about the negative effects on these practices on women's health but also trained in other skills as grinding, dyeing, gardening, etc.

#### 4. Combating HIV/AIDS

**International Presentation Association Sisters of the Presentation** based in Australia aims to encourage young people to undergo a test to discover their HIV status at a young age. This association runs a program called “Running for life” for young people aged 12 and above. This involves youth centers in different towns. The program puts one man and one woman in charge of each group to be role models, who agree to have the HIV test and to speak to the youth about living positively. This encourages the young people to have tests at regular intervals. At this age they are almost sure to be negative, so having a negative test will be encouraged in their behavior and outlook to remain negative.

**Interact Worldwide**, an NGO based in the United Kingdom, is working in *Malawi* to reduce the devastation caused by HIV prevalence rate of 15% (the eighth highest rate globally) in the country. It works with a local NGO called **Banja La Mtsogolo** to enhance the provision of services. It has developed a youth strategy and is conducting research to better understand cultural barriers. Access to contraception is being reviewed and young people are encouraged to become more involved in the delivery of services. Interact Worldwide has assisted the local NGO to develop a comprehensive Voluntary Counseling and Testing programme. An HIV workplace policy has also been established.

**Asian forum of Parliamentarians on population and development** from *Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Samoa, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan and Japan* has been successful in persuading the Japanese government to allocate special trust funds for HIV.

#### 5. Sustainable Environment

“**Association Nationale des Consommateurs et de l’Environnement**” **ANCE** from *Togo* undertook a biological cotton program that hired more than 167 women to make off-the-rack clothes of traditional pagnes, which are sold in markets in Togo and Benin. The project aims to hire more than 500 women by the end of 2005. It has both a social and environmental goal - to fight against the damage caused by the use of chemical products by the Zio and Haho rivers and to avoid polluting the water and the marine products consumed by the rural population who live next to the river. The program also protects the ecosystem of the Togolese mangroves through promoting their sustainable management.

“**Association Nigérienne des Scouts de l’Environnement**” is an NGO from *Niger*. Its project called “One River to Another” is being implemented in collaboration with a Canadian NGO and with financial support from several Canadian Institutes. The project aims to prevent the proliferation of hyacinths in River Niger through community based on an integrated approach that covers socio-economic, environmental, cultural and

educational aspects. While preventing environment and economic damage through the removal of hyacinths (that clog the river bed) the project uses these hyacinths firstly to make compost with the aim of eradicating the use of chemical fertilizers. Secondly, it uses the plants as raw material to make briquettes to replace firewood and for the manufacture of craft paper and other paper based items such as baskets, shoes and rope. It has also manufactured a new type of improved oven that reduces the use of firewood and it can also be used with coal.

**The African Centre Foundation** based in USA has implemented projects in many countries of Africa. Its oldest project called Greening Africa is considered extremely successful. The foundation has created forty acre modern farms in *Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Somalia and Nigeria*. This project has supported more than 10,000 local farmers with tractors, seeds and modern farming methods and provided directly or indirectly cheaper and affordable food to over 1 million Africans.

“**Association Mauritanienne pour le Bien Etre et le Secours de l’Enfant et de la Mère**” AMBSEM developed an integrated complex in one of the poorest Moughateas of Nouakchott, *Mauritania*. This project helps women and children (0 to 6) as a core target.

## 6. Resource mobilization

**Soroptimist International**, an NGO based in United Kingdom is organizing a training program in *Burkina Faso* to help the most impoverished women. Women trained to produce and sell soap, whereas before the training they had to collect sand in the streets and gutters to sell.

“**Centre d’Accompagnement des Autochtones Pygmees et Minoritaires Vulnérables**” is an NGO based in Bukavu city, *Democratic Republic of Congo* is dedicated to help the vulnerable pygmy population. This population has been badly affected by the war. Those affected amount to 150,000 persons. The NGO assists 30% of the 20,000 war displaced pygmies. It takes care of 450 pygmy school children, and is responsible for the demobilization of 133 pygmy child soldiers. About 350 pygmy families have received goats, pigs and traditional equipment for fishing. The pygmies have been given 10,000 young trees for reforestation of sites damaged by war.

**International Multiracial Shared Cultural organization (IMSCO)**, has set up micro-finance projects in *Angola, Liberia, DR of Congo, Somalia, Tanzania and the USA*. It has made an agreement with a number of governments and communities to help link diaspora communities living in the western world to assist their indigenous counterparts and to help to reunite communities and families. This focus is helping to develop stronger family ties and co-development projects, such as a shipping project.

**World Council of Credit Unions, Inc. (WOCCU)** is operating a remittance system through credit unions in the *USA and Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Jamaica, Ecuador and Bolivia*. Their experience has shown that people who receive remittance flows through credit unions are likely to open saving accounts and to save parts of the funds they receive, accumulating them for a productive use rather than for immediate consumption. WOCCU' s model credit union building methodology successfully implemented in many developing countries and Credit Unions (cooperative financial institutions operated by their members) is currently running in 79 countries. Any profits are returned to the members in the form of dividends and lower cost services. The savings that credit unions mobilize from their members are put to work in their communities in the form of loans for housing, small and micro enterprises, education and other members' needs. Many of the credit union development programs work with national governments and credit union systems to improve legislation and regulation.

**The Arab Human Rights Foundation** based in Sana'a, *Yemen* has a successful project aimed at social integration of people with disabilities. It is implemented through awareness campaigns in 45 schools in Sana'a city.

## **7. Enabling Environment**

**“Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement” (Young Volunteers for the Environment)** is an NGO from *Togo*, it has a successful project aimed at reaching different layers of the population to promote a healthy environment. The project aims to build capacity of young people based on the recognition that school children are in general a very good means of reaching adults. Groups of young people have been established in 30 villages across Togo to conduct awareness and information dissemination campaigns on relevant issues such as food security, globalization and poverty reduction. These groups organize international days, environmental education courses in schools, reforestation of fields and radio broadcasts.

**Fundacion Jaime Guzman**, from *Chile* promotes vocations to civil services among Chilean young people, and sponsors 80 dedicated young professionals who want to work in low resources municipalities. It also offers consultancy to the local government in order to improve the management

**LDC Watch**, a network of LDC NGOs, based in Belgium, focuses its action on LDCs implemented programs to encourage South/South trade by minimizing freight costs between LDCs particularly for Small Islands States (SIS).

## 8. Promoting a global partnership for development: North/South and South/South

Some NGOs have brilliant ideas to include all stakeholders in their programs to reach their objectives.

In 2001, the **Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC)**, the main Spanish NGO working in the Mediterranean area made contacts with 41 organizations from 8 different countries *Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Spain, Mauritania and Italy* in order to launch a network of NGO called the Euro Arab Network of NGOs for Development and Integration (READI). FPSC in collaboration with READI and UNDESA has already presented a project to ECOSOC aiming in promoting integrated rural development to effectively contribute in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in least developed rural areas of Middle East and North African countries in partnership with the United Nations. As a follow-up to the Ministerial Declaration and recommendations of the HLS ECOSOC of July 2003, such a project could serve as a successful example to follow by LDCs. It is worth noting that this project gets special interest from several private and public funding agencies taking into account its relevance and the participatory and result-oriented approach adopted for its design and implementation.

**The World Family Organization (WFO)**, based in France and covering the whole world with regional offices in *Brazil, Germany, Canada, UAE, China and Morocco*, is preparing - in partnership with its Governmental members, NGOs, Academia, Parliamentary groups and the support of UNDESA, NGO Section - a World Family Summit in the context of celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family (IYF+10). The main purpose of this Summit is to promote the Family contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In collaboration between WFO and the African Union a plan of action is being prepared, involving the participation of 53 African countries (including all African LDCs). This plan will contribute to the Summit and guide African governments, NGOs, civil society and families in designing, implementing, mobilizing resources, monitoring and evaluating appropriate national policies and programmes for the Family based on their specific requirements and needs.

**Friends' Society in Social Service (FSSS)** from India has targeted to reach out to the Least Developed Areas (LDAs) in the State of West Bengal and its adjoining *Eastern Indian States as well as to South Asian Least Developed Countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan*.

With grassroots' NGOs, local authorities, corporate sector and target groups, FSSS created multi-stakeholder clusters to develop a strong and effective partnership network for poverty eradication in the selected LDAs and LDCs. A regional workshop with all clusters took place in Calcutta, in March 2004 to discuss the priority issues to be addressed. With a full participatory approach, the outcome of the workshop was the design and formulation of a pilot project in form of a comprehensive programme on "Integrated Rural Development for Poverty Eradication in LDAs and LDCs of South Asia". FSSS and its partners are also willing to implement the project in partnership with the United Nations.

**The Association of Aid and Relief** from Japan has been campaigning against malaria in an *Angolan refugee settlement in Zambia*. It has distributed 8,000 insecticides treated nets to pregnant women and infants who are at high risk and is planning to distribute another 2,000 by early 2004. It also provides lessons in malaria prevention to the refugee population and visits households of the net users to ensure proper usage of the nets. As a consequence the number of malaria patients in the refugee settlement has been reduced by 30% after the first year of distribution. In *Afghanistan* this NGO is active in mine action and management of physiotherapy workshops. In *Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar* it supports people with disabilities and runs vocational training centres and wheelchair workshops.

### ***III. NGO Recommendations***

The recommendations of NGOs on how to contribute more effectively to poverty eradication in LDCs are summarized as follows:

#### ***Mobilization of Domestic Resources:***

- ◆ To mobilize and rationalize domestic resources (human, natural and financial)
- ◆ To enhance the identification of resources and increase the level and quality of traditional skills by involving local people
- ◆ To improve maternal health care services through breastfeeding programs. The provision of human milk is strongly associated with increased growth and reduced early childhood mortality. Using studies to measure the impact of breastfeeding patterns on children's academic abilities
- ◆ To maintain the same standards of safety as industrialized countries in radiological medicine, the potential benefits of this technology do not reduce the safety
- ◆ To adapt interest rates to small-scale businesses, in order to increase the efficiency of micro-finance projects

#### ***Mobilization of External Resources and building partnership:***

- ◆ To seek debt cancellation in heavily indebted countries in order to facilitate economic growth
- ◆ To target stakeholders in order to enhance the effectiveness of fundraising
- ◆ To improve overall public safety by establishing a penal system that adheres to international standards
- ◆ To create local financial institutions that lend directly to local farmers and traders. These local institutions should be financed by international organizations such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund
- ◆ To improve access to UN technical cooperation and funding for grass roots NGOs and women's groups
- ◆ To promote stronger partnerships between UN agencies and NGOs

*Poverty Reduction, Economic Growth and sustainable development:*

- ◆ To decrease costs and barriers to small-scale producers, the government should simplify the bureaucratic process and the system of taxation
- ◆ To facilitate access to international markets for commodity exporters
- ◆ To allocate resources to grass roots organizations and NGOs, in order to facilitate sustainable economic development
- ◆ To identify individual characteristics of poverty in order to include marginalized groups
- ◆ To improve agriculture methods and water resource management according to geographic constraints
- ◆ To support activities that help LDCs adapt to climate change, because LDCs will suffer the most from the impacts of climate change

*Enabling Environmental*

- ◆ To ensure the participation of women in decision-making processes that affect their lives and the development the nation
- ◆ To convince politicians to increase the number of women represented in the government
- ◆ To encourage stakeholders to take people with disabilities into account when reaching international agreements
- ◆ To improve overall infrastructures and their service provision, particularly enhancing appropriate transportation. This will assist small-scale farmers to reduce costs in accessing their markets
- ◆ To facilitate the establishment and development of information and communication technology (ICT), especially in the LDCs.