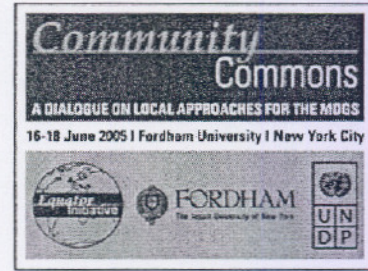


Statement by Gladman Chibememe, based on  
Recommendations from the Community Commons



*Freedom from Want: MDGs 1-7*

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Grassroots, local and indigenous communities from 44 countries gathered at the Community Commons at Fordham University in New York from 15 to 18 June 2005 and spent their time sharing, learning and exchanging knowledge on how community-led initiatives deliver sustainable development. Our recommendations are based on the Community Commons Declaration.

We appreciate and recognize the critical role that the United Nations and Member States have played in promoting the participation of grassroots and indigenous communities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the broader development agenda. This is indeed important as the world is beginning to recognize that grassroots and indigenous communities are primary custodians of the majority of the world's natural resources. We all welcome the concern for evolving a shared vision as reflected in the Secretary General's Report "In larger freedom" as well as the Draft Outcome Document.

**At the same time**, we are calling upon the United Nations, its member states, multilateral organizations and other stakeholders to adopt the **principles of inclusion, consultation and subsidiarity** in the implementation of all Millennium Development Goals and to **empower grassroots and indigenous communities to take control of their own development processes**.

**Development, conservation and livelihood security** will only be achieved if **grassroots, local and indigenous communities are central to the planning, implementation and monitoring of development strategies**. Local and grassroots indigenous knowledge, systems and skills are very often the foundation for sustainable development.

We are therefore calling for a **shift in investment and resources towards community-led initiatives to deliver the MDGs** – realizing that communities have already demonstrated significant capacity and innovative solutions towards **achieving the MDGs in a holistic and integrated manner**.

We are also seeking commitment from national governments and development agencies for long-term partnership directly with the local, grassroots and indigenous community-based organizations.

**We therefore recommend that:**

1. **Communities play a leading role in the planning and implementation of strategies to deliver the MDGs**. This can be achieved by creating **community task forces** at the global, national and grassroots levels to plan, review and monitor progress towards the MDGs while ensuring a strong gender balance.
2. The United Nations, Members States and development agencies **enhance the quality and impact of their aid by directly allocating at least 25% of all resources** targeted to achieving the MDGs to community based organizations, with special attention to women and youth.

3. A **Global Community Learning Fund** be established to replicate and upscale 'local-level' innovative practices that are already contributing to delivering the MDGs.
4. Communities commit themselves to re-educating development agencies and policy makers on effective strategies to partner with communities in order to achieve the MDGs.

**We therefore demand that national and international policy priorities address the following key issues:**

- That our lives, **livelihoods and the eradication of poverty** fundamentally **depend** on the sustainable management of our biodiversity and other natural resources.
- We support the commitments **made by Member States to implement global environmental conventions**. **However, while they are necessary, they are not sufficient** to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources. **All the Millennium Development Goals** need to be implemented within the **framework of environmental sustainability**.
- **National development strategies** must pay particular attention to the social and economic benefits that can be **achieved through sound natural resources management**. Sustainable approaches to agriculture, forestry and fisheries are critical for economic development and rural livelihoods – **yet these key economic sectors are not adequately addressed in the Outcome Document**.
- **Enabling communities to sustainably manage their natural resources**, including in Protected Areas, **requires the protection of intellectual property rights**; the legalization of community land tenure; equitable **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanisms** and ensuring that **Free Prior Informed Consent** is obtained from communities before any development initiative is undertaken.
- **Recognize and restore ecosystem-specific traditional and indigenous knowledge systems** on health, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and other practices.
- **HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis** are globally recognized as development priorities. **25% of the Global Fund to fight AIDS should be committed to community-driven solutions and responses, particularly in prevention, care and support**.
- Recognize **the critical role that women play in community development**. We call for greater investment in capacity building for grassroots and indigenous women to effectively participate in decision making, and also call for at least 30% representation of women in national and local decision making bodies.
- National governments and the international agencies need to support **community-led efforts to build adequate and decent housing, and basic infrastructure** in poor urban communities.
- **Community-led resilience initiatives that prevent and respond to disaster and conflict resolution need to be up-scaled**. Evidence shows that community involvement in disaster reconstruction is most efficient, cost-effective and sustainable.

**On meeting Africa's special needs, we support:**

- Unconditional 100% debt cancellation for countries struggling to get out of extreme poverty.
- Increase in scope for fair trade relations for African countries to participate in the Global Economy.
- Augmentation in quality and quantity of development aid to Africa.
- Action to facilitate participation of local grassroots communities in the African led initiatives including NEPAD and others within the framework of African Union,

We therefore call upon all stakeholders, especially the United Nations, its member states and other multi-lateral organizations to take forward our recommendations and pave the way for greater involvement of communities in creating a global world of peace, harmony and dignity.

For more information on the Community Commons, and to view the Community Declaration, please visit: [www.undp.org/equatorinitiative](http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative).