

Speech by Tim Costello, World Vision International to the UN Roundtable on Education and Health 25 September, 2008

World Vision

Mr. Secretary General, distinguished guests and colleagues.

Thank you on behalf of the more than 30,000 World Vision staff working in 100 countries for this opportunity to present at this high level event on the Millennium Development Goals. It is an honour and privilege to contribute to this invaluable discussion on health and education. While we believe that progress on education is critically important I will focus my comments today on health.

NGOs and governments alike recognize our individual roles in contributing to the MDGs but we also acknowledge that working together is imperative to achieving these goals. All of us can agree that the health and well being of a child lies at the heart of human progress. Whether that child is three blocks away here in Manhattan, or half a world away in Mauritania.

We have heard this day from several knowledgeable and articulate speakers and seen at the events on Maternal and Child Health and on Malaria that there is great passion and commitment from people around the world to achieve the MDG health goals.

World Vision believes that the answer to achieving the health goals rests on two simultaneous strategies:

- 1) adequate coordinated support for developing countries to scale up effective community and district health services; and
- 2) empowering communities to monitor and shape these services.

The first strategy will require those developing country governments that have not yet done so, to allocate at least 15% of government expenditures to health services, to establish effective country health plans and management, and ensure legal and practical support for people's right to adequate health care. It will also require at least a doubling of donor health support to around US\$30 billion per year and much better coordination of donor aid. The International Health Partnership offers an important framework for this.

The second strategy will require much more active work with communities by government and civil society organisations to help build better consultation, participation and monitoring mechanisms around health services for communities. The evidence is clear that services imposed without adequate community consultation and control are unlikely to be well utilized by communities and will be far less effective in improving community health behaviours and outcomes.

We at World Vision are strongly committed to help achieve the MDGs. In 2007, we developed a new global health strategy focusing on community-based maternal and child health and facilitating access to primary health care. Currently we are allocating around \$450 million per year to maternal and child health and other basic health services and plan to increase this further. We believe this is a significant contribution toward making the health MDGs a reality.

As the well-known Arabian proverb says: "Those who have health, have hope. And those who have hope, have everything."

We – those at this table, those in this room, those here this week at the United Nations – we must stand together and take action. Action on behalf of those who cannot be here, who cannot speak for themselves, to realize the hope of greater health.

We are committed to working with all those who seek to achieve the MDGs and I welcome any proposals from other governments, commercial groups or civil society organisations that would like to work with World Vision to continue to move the MDGs forward.

Thank you.