

TEXT OF PRESENTATION ON “PUEBLO DEL MILENIO” TO U.N. MILLENNIUM PROJECT

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30 March 2006

The following text is verbatim of the “Pueblo del Milenio” project in the Dominican Republic to the U.N. Millennium Project staff. The presentation was held at UNDP Headquarters in New York. The U.N. Millennium Project staff included: Dr. Sonia Sachs, Millennium Promise (Wife of Dr. Jeff Sachs); Dr. Mariana Kastrinakis, Health Advisor; Dr. Garry Conille, Health Advisor; Mr. Gonzalo Pizarro, Research Manager. Along with Mr. Gagain from the Government of the Dominican Republic were present: Dr. Gustavo Rojas, Secretary of State, Coordinator of the Executive Commission on Health Care Reform (CERSS), Dr. Karina Mena, Secretariat of Public Health and Social Welfare (SESPAS), among others.

From Millennium Villages in Africa I’ve only seen what Pedro Sanchez has been doing with the nitrogen-fertilizer based approach in agriculture. What we are doing is totally different. Let me “Jeffrysachsize” this. When Jeff came in April 2004 he emphasized that we are a middle income country, and that our number one priority is not necessarily the mobilization of more resources as it is for an African country for example. For that reason we need to take not only a top down approach, but a bottom up approach not only because of the resources are not urge but also because we have pockets of poverty, as Jeff would also say.

So we did this need assessment, national as a plan we had to do four things as I said to our President and Vice-President:

1. Reduce the duplicity that exist between sectors,
2. Prioritize which interventions need to be front loaded to 2006,
3. Where are we going to implement these interventions, or which pockets of poverty,
4. And finally who is going to implement them.

And the example I was using was “school breakfast”. School breakfast is a quick-win for us. The Minister of Education cannot continue to implement it. There is a lot of corruption in school breakfast, stolen money and it is chaotic, and the Minister of Education would be the first to lift that. So now it has been outsourced and the tender (solicitation) has been done with the help of UNDP who will bring a responsible

company that will purchase milk and food from our domestic market and utilize it to get kids into school because as a country we will not achieve the MDGs of universal primary education.

With the Millennium Village or what we want to create are “MDGs communities”. We want to be able to say to a province “you are a millennium community”, “you are doing the right thing to be able to achieve the MDGs”. And this is one of Jeff’s examples; you need to localize the MDGs. He says what does 178/100,000 live births mean for us as a country? I want to know if he said what are the maternal mortality rates of every province? Of the communities? Of each hospital? Were are we failing? So with the “Pueblo del Milenio” or “MDG Community” we are doing a needs assessment because we don’t need to mobilize more funds, as Jeff said. Jeff said in an email that they are creating a best practice standard for the villages to create an incursion of more funds. What we are doing is a needs assessment to channel the funds from key entities. The fact that we are focusing in El Seibo, an extremely poor community, CERSS, of Gustavo Rojas, a commission who manages funds of the World Bank and IDB, etc. said to the First Lady “I am going to commit 25 million pesos to redoing the provincial hospital” which if you’ve seen it, it looks horrible, I mean it looks like a hospital in Africa or Haiti.

The reason why we did this with the First Lady is because we have to take advantage of all the good things that exist in the country. She created a programme called Progresando which deals with values. Her philosophy is if the President who has focused on creating this economic miracle in his first administration, he focuses on infrastructure, he wants computers in every single classroom, he wants computers in the hospitals, he wants roads and bridges and that is what he’s done traditionally over his first administration and the second.

But the First Lady says we need to do that but also work and build values at the family level and community level so she is taking El Seibo as her first community. She is also moving to the border with Haiti where there is also pockets of poverty. So she already set the infrastructure and Progresando is actually geared towards MDGs and every family has a tree at their home and you have to put leaves if you achieve them. The roots start with getting your identity, a programme called “Dominican Republic con nombre y apellido” because if you don’t have young people with IDs you can’t monitor the MDGs, kids out of school that we can’t account for, that is part of the tree. When you achieve certain things, if you graduate from high school or if your children graduate from high school then you can add a leaf.

And I saw this when I went to the homes in the extremely poor neighborhoods of El Seibo and you see families coming together showing you their progress “progresando” and they take a sense of pride as a family and it makes you want to cry, and I told the First Lady since she did cry. In their progress evaluate how to achieve the MDGs and they take pride in showing you this.

So now, we’ve taken what the First Lady has done with what the president is doing. The President is doing something he didn’t do in his last administration, he is visiting every

single province and he is having what is called “audiencias populares”, bringing together the entire community, thousands of people in the biggest auditorium in each province and they make demands to him in public and he evaluates and he says “according to their needs, these are the investment we are going to make”. And we are aligning that with our needs assessment. It is like a needs assessment made by the President called “recorridos”. When he goes to the provinces, besides listening to the demands he also swears in what is called a “provincial council on development”, led by the governors who are appointed by him, these means that all of them are from his political party, but the majority of the municipalities are from other political parties.

This is what is key. There is a law that was established two years ago says that municipalities should get 10% of the national budget, so if Jeff is saying that our needs assessment should be intervention based and take into consideration key investments, we not only need to work with the ministries as we did with Mariano and Gustavo and everyone else, but we also need to engage the municipalities, and we didn't to that in the Needs Assessment. So now we have El Seibo who has only two municipalities, last year they received 6% and this one 8% of the budget, we are not even achieving the law, under the law they don't get what they deserve, but still they get a lot of money. The capital receives USD\$250,000 a month or 3 million dollars a year, I only have a budget of USD\$1.5 million dollars a year, monthly USD\$55,000. So the municipalities of the very poor El Seibo people wonder what they do with the money.

So now we are meeting with the mayors of other political parties, since we are not political they are more open to me and we are including the UN country team, the Millennium Project has tough our UN Country Team how to do a needs assessment that we are now doing locally. We sat at the table and explained the mayors and explained to them and they conversed with us. The mayor would tell you that he has 600 employees. But what do you do with 600 people? If you ask the opposition they say is 1,500 people, and the people in the street say it is more than 1,000 people. So basically every month the 8 million pesos or USD\$242,000 is just a subsidy to their political party because all the money is dedicated to “nomina” or payroll. So what we are doing is taking the model of “Presupuesto Participativo” or Participatory Budget were we say that 40% or 50% has to go to infrastructure or “obras” because if the President goes around the provinces saying “these are your needs and these is what we will invest in this infrastructure”, we have to share, and this is Jeff's point, a country like Dominican Republic does not necessarily need more resources, specially resources from abroad, we have to mobilize the private sector and the other political parties and municipalities. With el Pueblo del Milenio we are taking a pilot province and putting all the attention on it , holding a very inclusive needs assessment process and then, and I think the Millennium Project can learn from that is that, as a pilot country is a bottom up community based approach with a top-down national central government approach. We took the 120 public hospitals and we said “ok, what are the needs”, and it was so broad that nobody could really specify or identify.

But now in El Seibo we have 2 hospitals and 16 primary clinics so you can literally sit down and you listen to the needs assessment and know that it is much more specific.

You can even name the doctors and we realize that we have a lots of needs, needs are endless, but for example, when it come to doctors we have more doctors than the ones we need. Why do we have so many doctors and no one in the hospital? We have what is called “guardias presenciales” guarding the presence, showing that there is a skilled obstetrician all the time so what the doctors said is that they don’t fulfill their schedule. These are the key issues that we are finding out in this poor province that we need to address and not only poor financially but “in-kind”. Basically it will be a book, it will be a provincial MDG report, just like the General Assembly says all countries must have, we will have one by province, it will be a needs assessment, but also a plan. Because all the interventions, we have actually changed the name because interventions have been confusing, so we call them actions because if we say intervention is like intervening, taking action, so we say actions and activities and then we have inputs, like how much medicine, how many needles, how many beds, how many sheets, literally that much, in schools is how much toilet paper, how many toilets, etc. and then we cost it out and then we put who is responsible for it, it says who will implement it and then we even have a timeline to implement interventions in 2007, 2008, 2009, etc.

I spoke to Jeff and he is going to Haiti on the 5th and he wants to come from Haiti, so I committed to renting a private plane and bring him because we want to present him the first provincial plan on MDGs of El Seibo. We’ve spent since January with Gustavo Rojas and other Ministers, the First Lady launch it with the Governor of the Province and all the local entities, we’ve added a needs assessment element on energy and poverty also one on ICT which is different from the one at the national level and we’ve done it slow, January till May for us is slow, because we want to be able to replicate it, we want to do it right. We’ve adapted the methodology a little bit of the Millennium Project or the one we used at the national level and then next we want to replicate it in 3, 4 or 5 other provinces, maybe in the border.

(End of Verbatim Text of Presentation)
