

A WORLD IN TRANSITION

2015. Indeed, only eight sub-Saharan countries have a reasonable chance of meeting the poverty goal based on current trends.

- **Weak governance.** Many failed or fragile states are now putting millions of people at risk. There are huge demands for accountable and effective governance to provide services, security and prosperity. History has shown that democracies do this best, because they best reflect people's own local needs. However, in spite of democracy's gains, 73 countries with over 40 percent of the world's population still do not hold free elections, and over 100 governments still significantly restrict civil and political freedoms. Many of the world's states are dangerously weak or failing, providing fertile ground for conflict and extremism. More than 20 million people are either displaced within their countries or refugees in other countries. Without sound democratic governance, and the human rights that underpin it, most countries will find it extremely difficult to contend with the challenges of globalization, urbanization and demographic pressure, and so dangerous instability can result.
- **Health crises.** New global diseases are taking millions of lives, the vast majority in the developing world, especially Africa. Worldwide, some 42 million are infected with HIV/AIDS (two thirds of them in sub-Saharan Africa), and 28 million have died. In

sub-Saharan Africa, the face of this epidemic is increasingly female: 76 percent of infected young people are women. Many fear a massive new wave of the disease in East and South Asia. Infectious diseases that emerge first in developing countries also pose a growing global threat, as demonstrated by the SARS outbreak in 2003.

- **Lack of access to education.** Education is key to a brighter future for millions of people in developing countries. While progress has been made—more than 84 percent of the world's children now attend school—more needs to be done. More than 800 million people are illiterate and 115 million children, most of them girls, have never seen the inside of a school.
- **Demographic pressure—youth without work.** Although population growth is expected to level off by mid-century, two billion people—mostly in the developing world—will be added to the world's six billion in the next 25 years. With this increase, a vast number of young people will be looking for employment and a share of the benefits of the globalization process in coming years.
- **Gender inequality.** Women and girls still face significant barriers in developing countries—for example, only 60 percent of young women are literate, versus 80 percent of young men. Too often, women have fewer economic assets than men, including land,

capital, credit and marketable skills. They also have less access to education and health services. These disparities may result from law or practice or both. Empowering women can drive progress in many areas, particularly poverty reduction. Indeed, as women are empowered, population growth slows, child and maternal health improves, and more members of society are able to participate fully in their communities.

Thousands of Haitians march through the streets of Port-au-Prince to demand justice.

