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# What have the Millennium Development Goals achieved?

Lindsey Hilsum blogs on how Millennium Development Goals targets to reduce poverty have been met by countries that have adopted successful capitalist policies, and not by relying on foreign aid.

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Good news – world leaders, development experts and assembled activists meeting at the UN in New York this week to discuss the [Millennium Development Goals](#) can announce that the world is on track to cut in half by 2015 the number of people living in absolute poverty.

Bad news – it’s nothing to do with them. It’s not their actions which have made the difference.

The first goal is to reduce the number of people living off less than [US\\$1.25 a day from 1.8 billion to 920,000](#).

If it happens, which seems likely, it will be because China and India have had record rates of economic growth

“Across China, there were over 400 million fewer people living in extreme poverty in 2001 than 20 years previously. By 2001, China had met the foremost of the Millennium Development Goals — to reduce the 1990 incidence of poverty by half — and it had done so 14 years ahead of the 2015 target date for the developing world as a whole,” says the [World Bank](#).

Other countries which have done well include Vietnam and Brazil. [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) has done worst. In other words, countries which have adopted successful capitalist policies have reduced levels of absolute poverty. Countries which have failed to achieve economic growth and have relied on foreign aid have not.

Writers William Easterly and Dambisa Moyo have challenged anti-poverty campaigners such as Bono and Bob Geldof, arguing that increasing aid may help on specific issues, such as reducing AIDS or TB, but it doesn’t make a difference on the main issue – reducing poverty.

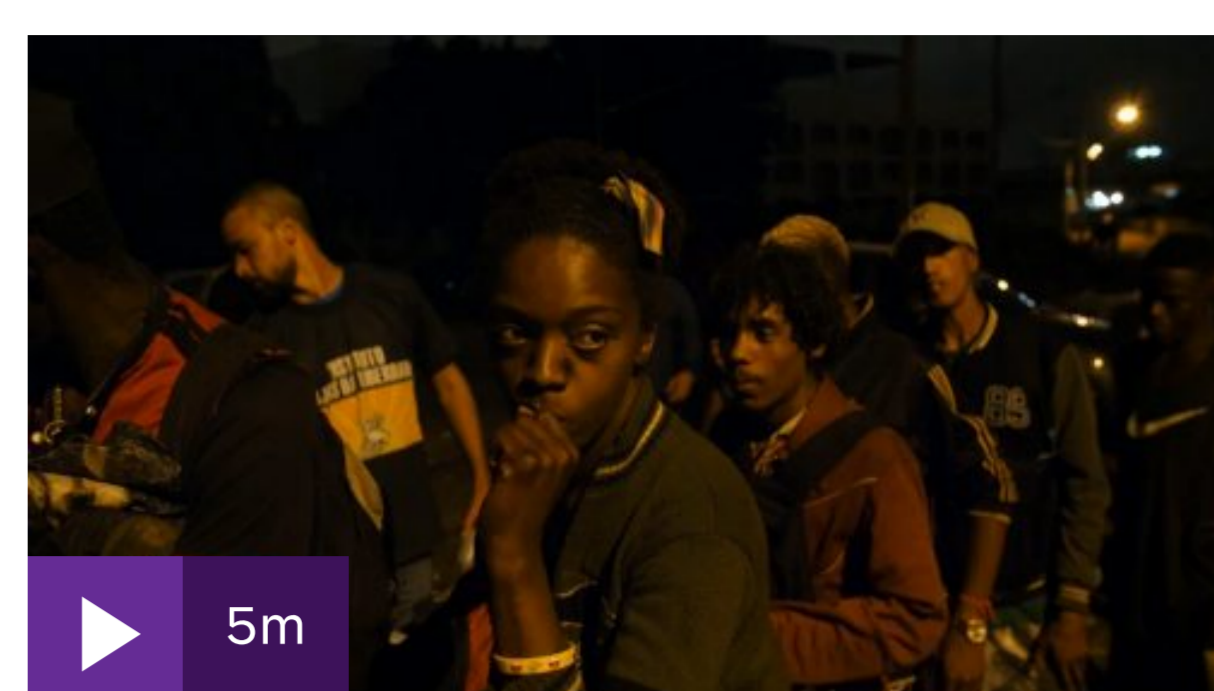
So beware the trumpeting of achievement at the summit in New York.

The people who should be praised are the Chinese Communist Party, the Indian government and other hard-headed regimes whose policies often go against the grain of the international aid consensus .

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