



**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**

**FR: BILL MCINTURFF/LIZ HARRINGTON/GEOFF GARIN**

**DT: APRIL 23, 2010**

**RE: UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION – INDEX OF PUBLIC OPINION ON  
INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

National research conducted in April 2010 by Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research, on behalf of the United Nations Foundation, shows:

- For the first time in five years Americans favorable image of the United Nations rose to 60% favorable. In our October track the UN's image was 50% favorable/36% unfavorable, today the UN's image has risen to 60% favorable/30% unfavorable. The UN's image has been impacted by a very positive news environment around the organization providing humanitarian relief during the natural disasters that have happened recently around the world.
- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) believe the United Nations is still needed today; majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans agree with this assessment.

- Over the course of the last year there has been a significant shift in what voters are saying they remember seeing, reading, or hearing in the past two to three months about international news stories happening outside of the United States. Voter recall has shifted from North Korea to Afghanistan to the natural disasters in Haiti, Chile, Indonesia and Japan. It is important to note as well that stories about Iran's nuclear program and sanctions imposed continue to be prevalent over the course of our three national tracks.
- Voters continue to be concerned about the personal impact of international issues and how international issues abroad will affect them here in the United States.
- There has been a positive shift in public perception of how America is viewed by other countries under President Obama's Administration. In September 2007, 78% of voters said the United States is "less respected by other countries," today the percentage has dropped to 60%.
- Although roughly nine out of ten Americans (89%) say they are not familiar with the specifics of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), after hearing a brief description of the eight goals, 87% of Americans believe the United States should be very (43%) or somewhat (44%) involved in a worldwide effort to accomplish the MDGs by 2015.
- The majority of Americans believe seven of the eight MDGs should be an absolute top or high priority to accomplish by 2015. When asked to choose which MDG is most important to accomplish Americans chose those goals that address the most basic human needs for survival: access to safe drinking water (47%) and alleviating extreme hunger/poverty (36%).

#### **DETAILED FINDINGS:**

##### **How do voters perceive the United Nations today?**

- For the first time in five years Americans favorable image of the United Nations rose to 60% favorable. In our October track the UN's image was 50% favorable/36% unfavorable, today the UN's image has risen to 60% favorable/30% unfavorable. There has been a very positive news environment around the UN providing humanitarian relief during the natural disasters around the world.

The positive stories in the news about the UN over the past two to three months that respondents mentioning seeing, reading, or hearing about are:

- Haiti relief
  - Protecting human rights and providing humanitarian efforts around the world
  - Humanitarian efforts in Africa
  - Chile and Peru relief efforts
  - World Health Organization humanitarian efforts
  - UNICEF humanitarian efforts
  - Earthquake relief in China
- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) believe the United Nations is still needed today; majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans feel this way. This is the highest margin by which Republicans say the UN is still needed today and the lowest among Independents.

***UN IS...STILL NEEDED TODAY/OUTLIVED IT'S USEFULNESS***

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
June 2009	52%/45%	61%/35%	87%/11%
October 2009	48%/46%	64%/26%	85%/9%
April 2010	55%/39%	53%/41%	84%/8%

**How do voters perceive the impact of international issues on their own lives?**

- Over the course of the last year there has been a significant shift in what voters are saying they remember seeing, reading, or hearing in the past two to three months about international news stories happening outside of the United States. Voter recall has shifted from North Korea to Afghanistan to the natural disasters in Haiti, Chile, Indonesia and Japan. It is important to note as well that stories about Iran's nuclear program and sanctions imposed continue to be prevalent over the course of our three national tracks. The table on the following page shows the top news stories by survey track.



- As we have noted previously the divide on this question is socioeconomic status, how closely or involved a person is with international issues, age, and ideology. Those voter sub-groups who strongly believe international issues have a great deal of impact on them personally (41% - rated 75-100 on the above scale) tend to be:
  - Opinion elites, Baby Boomers, voters with higher levels of income and education, voters who very closely follow international news, voters who travel abroad a lot, conservatives, and Republicans.
- There has been a significant positive shift in public opinion about how America is perceived around the world.
  - In September 2007, only 6% of voters said the United States is “more respected by other countries compared with the past,” in June 2009 that number had risen to 21%, and has remained stable in this track.
  - As noted in the June 2009 track, there was a 33 point net shift in attitude on this question with President Obama’s administration, which has stabilized today. Although the majority of voters believe the U.S. is “less respected by other countries,” there has been a major shift in attitude when looking at the net difference between the percent of voters choosing “more respected by other countries” and “less respected by other countries” over time.

<u>7/04</u>	<u>10/05</u>	<u>8/06</u>	<u>9/07</u>	<u>6/09</u>	<u>4/10</u>	
10%	9%	7%	6%	21%	21%	MORE RESPECTED
67%	66%	65%	78%	60%	60%	LESS RESPECTED
-57	-57	-58	-72	-39	-39	NET DIFFERENCE

**What do voters see as the United States’ role in addressing the Millennium Development Goals?**

- It is important to understand that most Americans have not seen, read, or heard anything about the MDGs (10% seen, read, heard a lot/some – 89% seen, read, heard not much/nothing at all). This is an important context to have when positioning an increased U.S. focus on achieving these goals.

- However, once Americans hear a brief description of each of the eight MDGs they do believe achieving these goals by 2015 should be a high priority.
  - We asked respondents to individually rate each goal on whether they thought it should be an absolute top priority, a high but not top priority, a medium priority, a lower priority, or whether it should not be a priority to achieve by 2015. A majority of Americans believe seven of the eight goals should be an absolute top or high priority. The table below shows this data.

<i>Millennium Development Goals</i>	<i>Ab Top Priority</i>	<i>Ab Top/High Priority</i>
More than eight hundred and fifty million people lack access to safe drinking water, many of them children. Unsafe water and poor sanitation cause about eighty percent of all diseases in the developing world, killing more than five million people every year. The goal is to cut in half the number of people without access to safe drinking water.	<b>41%</b>	<b>83%</b>
In 2006, nearly ten million children died before their sixth birthday from preventable diseases. The goal is to cut, by two-thirds, the mortality rate of children under five.	<b>33%</b>	<b>77%</b>
One in five people around the world suffer from extreme hunger and live in extreme poverty, which is living on less than ONE dollar twenty-five cents per day. The goal is to cut in HALF the number of people in the world who suffer from extreme hunger and live in extreme poverty.	<b>32%</b>	<b>71%</b>
Despite progress in primary school enrollment, especially for girls, 75 million children will still be out of school in 2015. The goal is to achieve universal primary education and ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education..	<b>30%</b>	<b>69%</b>
An estimated seventy percent of the children who are not in school are girls, at a time when better educating girls has been shown to translate into better nutrition for the whole family, better health care, and better overall economic performance. The goal is to assure girls the same access to education now available to boys.	<b>28%</b>	<b>71%</b>
One women or girl dies every hour as a result of complications during pregnancy, childbirth or the six weeks following delivery. The goal is to cut, by two-thirds, the mortality rate of mothers.	<b>20%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Thirty-three million people are living with HIV. In 2008, nearly three million people were newly infected and two million people died from AIDS. The goal is to halt and reverse the spread of HIV and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.	<b>20%</b>	<b>62%</b>
The goal is to have leading countries around the world share responsibility to help the least developed countries by increasing economic and development assistance, providing debt relief, opening trade and financial systems and making available new information and communication technologies.	<b>13%</b>	<b>42%</b>

- After hearing these brief descriptions of the eight goals, 87% of Americans believe the United States should be very (43%) or somewhat (44%) involved in a worldwide effort to accomplish the MDGs by 2015.

<b>87%</b>	<b>Total Involved</b>
<b>12%</b>	<b>Total Not Involved</b>
43%	Very Involved
44%	Somewhat Involved
7%	Not Too Involved
5%	Not At All Involved

- Looking closer at the core group of Americans (43%) who feel the United States should be very involved in accomplishing the MDGs. These respondents tend to be from the core Democratic base of voters, but also include some key sub-groups of women voters:
  - Liberals (67% very involved)
  - Strong Democrats (60%)
  - Democrats (58%)
  - Obama voters (58%)
  - Voters who use social networking sites (58%)
  - Environmentalists (59%)
  - Union supporters (57%)
  - Millennial generation (56%)
  - African Americans (56%)
  - Rural women (52%)
  - New England residents (51%)
  - Pacific residents (50%)
  - Working women (49%)
  - Women at home (49%)
  - Age 18-34 (48%)
  - Post graduates (48%)
  - Urban residents (48%)

- When asked to choose which one or two MDGs were the most important and that they would be the most likely to support, Americans tend to choose those goals that address the most basic human needs for survival.

**1st    1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice**

25%	47%	To cut in half the number of people without access to safe drinking water
19%	36%	To cut in half the number of people in the world who suffer from extreme hunger and live in extreme poverty
14%	27%	To ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education
9%	20%	To halt and reverse the spread of HIV and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
9%	18%	To cut by two-thirds, the mortality rate of children under five
7%	17%	To assure girls the same access to education now available to boys
10%	14%	To have developed countries share responsibility to help the least developed countries
2%	8%	To cut by two-thirds the mortality rate of mothers giving birth.

- There is a significant shift however when voters are asked which goals are most likely to happen by 2015 and which goals are just not possible in this timeframe, particularly as it relates to alleviating poverty and extreme hunger.

We asked respondents three questions about the MDGs:

- 1) Which one of these goals do you think is the MOST IMPORTANT and would you be MOST LIKELY TO SUPPORT? And which is the next most important?
- 2) Which one do you think is the MOST LIKELY TO HAPPEN BY 2015? And which one do you think is the next most likely to happen?
- 3) Which one of these goals do you believe is JUST NOT POSSIBLE TO HAPPEN BY 2015?

The table on the following page shows the percentage of respondents selecting that particular MDG for each of these three questions. Next to the percent is the rank order assigned to the goal based on the percentage selecting the goal.

	<b><u>Most Important</u></b>	<b><u>Most Likely To Happen</u></b>	<b><u>Not Possible</u></b>
To cut in half the number of people without access to safe drinking water	47% (1 <sup>st</sup> )	31% (1 <sup>st</sup> )	4% (7 <sup>th</sup> )
To cut in half the number of people in the world who suffer from extreme hunger and live in extreme poverty	36% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	11% (6 <sup>th</sup> )	23% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
To ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education	27% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	18% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	7% (4 <sup>th</sup> )
To halt and reverse the spread of HIV and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.	20% (4 <sup>th</sup> )	20% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	24% (1 <sup>st</sup> )
To cut by two-thirds, the mortality rate of children under five	18% (5 <sup>th</sup> )	8% (8 <sup>th</sup> )	4% (6 <sup>th</sup> )
To assure girls the same access to education now available to boys	17% (6 <sup>th</sup> )	18% (4 <sup>th</sup> )	6% (5 <sup>th</sup> )
To have developed countries share responsibility to help the least developed countries	14% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	14% (5 <sup>th</sup> )	9% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
To cut by two-thirds the mortality rate of mothers giving birth.	8% (8 <sup>th</sup> )	10% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	2% (8 <sup>th</sup> )

- When respondents selected the MDG as most important and the one they would most likely support, we then asked them how personally important it was to them that the goal be achieved by 2015. Overall, the majority of Americans feel very passionately about the importance of achieving the goal they selected by 2015 (64% rated the personal importance an 8-10 on a 1-10 scale where 1 is not at all important, 10 is very important to you).
  - The table below shows the level of personal importance rating for respondents' top MDG.

<b>Millennium Development Goals</b>	<b><u>Mean Score</u></b>	<b><u>% Rating 8-10</u></b>
Mortality rate of mothers	8.5	79%
Primary education for all	8.5	74%
Same access to education	8.1	69%
Alleviate poverty/extreme hunger	8.3	67%
Mortality rate children under five	7.9	63%
Countries share responsibility	7.9	63%
Halt spread of HIV/AIDS	7.4	58%
Access to safe drinking water	7.4	55%

**METHODOLOGY:**

Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey, April 10-14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, on behalf of the United Nations Foundation tracking American attitudes toward international assistance and the Millennium Development Goals.

We had previously conducted research for the Foundation in 2009 on international issues. This memo references these surveys, but the key findings included in this memo are from the April 2010 research.