



The responsibility of privilege

Following an example set by the United Nations, even small contributions can have a big impact

Like many people, I'm guilty of trying to simplify messages so my children can understand how fortunate they are. I'll admit that I occasionally deliver the "eat your vegetables because there are people starving in Africa" lecture. I struggle with trying to get my kids to first understand privilege, and then the next big leap: the responsibility of privilege. But last fall, when I met Dr. Kirsty Duncan for the first time, I had a breakthrough.

I'm taking a CSR course through the Conference Board of Canada and the University of Toronto, and Dr. Duncan she spoke to our class about the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Dr. Duncan is a pandemic expert whose work helping nations prepare for crisis has led her to broader development issues. Until I heard her speak, I assumed that "someone" was addressing these

combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development.

Progress invited Dr. Duncan to speak at its annual Face to Face conference this past June. Her message was powerful and hard to digest. She challenged the business leaders in the audience to pay attention and take steps to make their own contributions as part of their responsibility to humanity—part of our responsibility of privilege. Then *Progress* publisher Neville Gilfoy shared the example of the outcome of the 2006 Face to Face commitment to communities in West Africa. In partnership with Etruscan Resources Inc., contributions from Face to Face delegates were put toward building a well and school for a developing community.

Fortunately, many civic-minded individuals, faith-based organizations, celebrities, governments, media organizations, and youth groups are working to make poverty history

issues and that there was little I could do to make a meaningful contribution. She helped me see how we can all be part of the "someone."

The UN, arguably the world's leading authority on responsibility, has developed eight goals to help address huge global issues affecting mainly those who are much less privileged than most Atlantic Canadians. The goals are ambitious, and the timeline to achieve them is now less than 10 years away: by 2015. The goals are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health;

Whether we take it for granted or not, Atlantic Canadians are privileged. Fortunately, many civic-minded individuals, faith-based organizations, celebrities, governments, media organizations, and youth groups are working to make poverty history. Among other actions, they are challenging our leaders to deal in fair trade and address development aid and debt reduction for the Third World.

Here's what Bann Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, has to say about it in the Millennium Development Goals Report 2007: "We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals—worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries—but only if we



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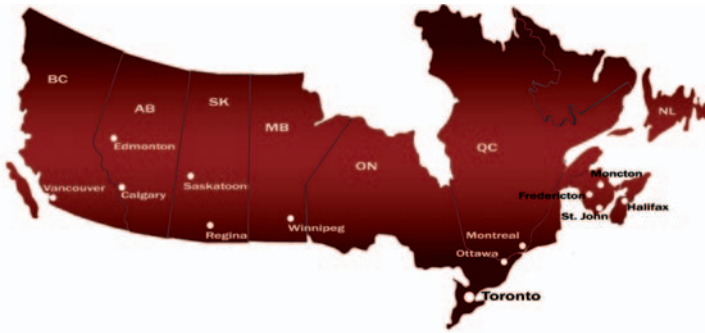
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break with business as usual. We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses, and engineers; to build the roads, schools, and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the goals."



Dr. Kirsty Duncan

As business leaders and, for some of us, as parents, we need to start thinking about how small contributions can have a big impact. Two years ago, when my children, who were then ages 13, five, and three, wanted to write their letters to Santa, I used that as an opportunity to introduce them to some of these issues. Before they told Santa what they wanted, we talked about the difference between "wants" and "needs." Then we filled two boxes for the food bank and wrote a cheque to World Vision Canada. Hopefully this kind of tradition will help contribute to the thousands of small efforts that have the potential to affect great change.

Like many families, businesses faced with daily challenges are sometimes hard pressed to see our privilege. Sometimes the lens of the grand scheme is a critical viewpoint. To find out more about the Millennium Development Goals and how you or your business can take action, visit www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

Lara Ryan is a business consultant specializing in CSR. She can be reached at lara@larayanconsulting.ca.



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