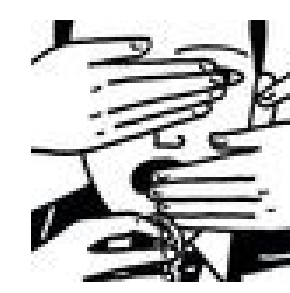
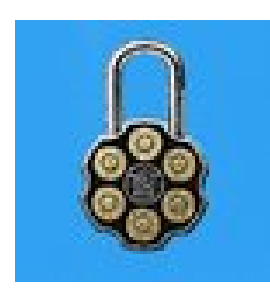


OPINION
Will We Stop Trump Before It's Too Late?



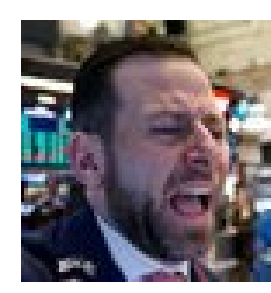
EDITORIAL
The True Damage of Trump's 'Fake News'



OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR
This Gun Maker Wanted Safe Guns



OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR
Only a Country Like Canada Could Produce a Guy Like Jordan Peterson



PAUL KRUGMAN
The Art of the Flail

Opinion | OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Necessary Measures

By AMIR ATTARAN SEPT. 13, 2005



OTTAWA - FIVE years ago, about 150 world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York and tried to move the mountain of global poverty. They adopted eight Millennium Development Goals --

those goals by 2015 would lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty.

The trouble is that progress toward these benchmarks often cannot be measured. And if their achievement cannot be measured, the goals are not only a letdown for the world's poor, but also a time bomb for the credibility of the United Nations. As world leaders gather in New York again this week, the United Nations will have to grapple with the question of whether progress is on track to achieve the goals by the 2015 deadline. So far, this inability to measure progress has meant that the United Nations has either guessed or remained silent.

Consider the hazard of dying in pregnancy or childbirth, a fate that befalls more than 500,000 women annually, according to the World Health Organization. The Millennium Development Goal on maternal mortality is to "reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio." Measuring that ratio requires an accurate count of both safe births and maternal fatalities.

But according to the United Nations Millennium Project, only a "handful of countries" can really prove the maternal mortality ratio is improving; poor, rural countries where obstetricians are scarce, home births are common and the dead are mourned privately simply do not have the data. That is why in 2000, their most recent assessment, scientists from the United Nations warned that "it would be inappropriate to compare the 2000 estimates with those for 1990," or to "draw conclusions about trends."

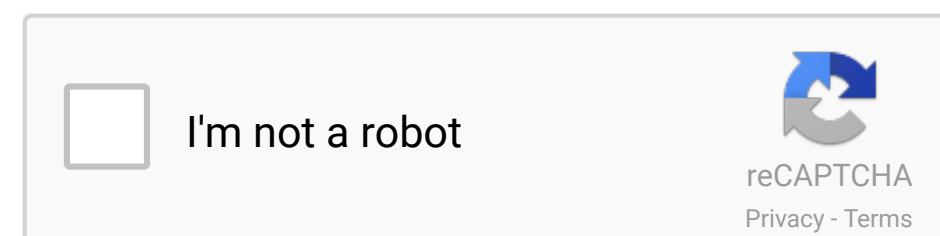
Malaria is another example where United Nations goals hinge on something immeasurable. In 2000, the organization's scientists warned that "it will not, in general, be possible to measure the overall incidence rate of malaria." Yet barely two months later, the United Nations placed bets on doing exactly that and persuaded the world's leaders to endorse a new Millennium Development Goal to start lowering the incidence of malaria by 2015.

Having ignored the advice of its own scientists and fashioned its goal unwisely, the United Nations today studiously avoids having an opinion on whether the malaria crisis -- the disease is the No. 1 killer of children in sub-Saharan Africa -- is getting better or worse. And yet, nobody who studies malaria doubts that it is getting worse.

Opinion Today

Every weekday, get thought-provoking commentary from Op-Ed columnists, The Times editorial board and contributing writers from around the world.

You agree to receive occasional updates and special offers for The New York Times's products and services.



[SEE SAMPLE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [OPT OUT OR CONTACT US ANYTIME](#)

Probably the most useful discussion the United Nations could plan for this week's meeting would be one that asked world leaders to endorse new goals against which they could truly measure progress. This is feasible: there are alternative ways to track malaria's toll or to assess the safety of pregnancies. For instance, dozens of demographic surveillance sites could be

set up in the poorest countries to document births, deaths, illnesses and social services. This has already been done in countries like Tanzania and Ghana.

How disappointing it is that the United Nations leadership went to great lengths to ensure that no such discussion could happen this week. Last September, Louise Fréchette, the United Nations deputy secretary general, instructed the organization's scientists that she didn't want the summit meeting being "distracted by arguments over the measurement of the Millennium Development Goals," and ordered that they refrain from proposing any refinements to the goals. This is lamentable political censorship.

By putting that discussion off limits, and pretending the Millennium Development Goals are meaningful as they now stand, the United Nations has lost five years on a short timeline and sabotaged its own vital mission to help the world's most unfortunate and needy people.

Op-Ed Contributor Amir Attaran, a scientist and lawyer, is a professor at the University of Ottawa.

TRENDING

1. [Opinion: Will We Stop Trump Before It's Too Late?](#)
2. [Trump Administration Imposes New Sanctions on Putin Cronies](#)
3. [The Royal Wedding: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
4. [Thousands of Indian Women Find Their American Dreams in Jeopardy](#)
5. [E.P.A. Officials Sidelined After Questioning Scott Pruitt](#)
6. [Top Pakistani News Channel Is Forced Off Air, and Eyes Are on the Military](#)
7. [Op-Ed Columnist: The Conspiracy Theory That Says Trump Is a Genius](#)
8. [The ISIS Files: When Terrorists Run City Hall](#)
9. [Trump Doubles Down on Potential Trade War With China](#)
10. [Bernie Sanders Courts Black Voters Anew. But an Obama Reference Stings.](#)

[View More Trending Stories »](#)

The New York Times

[Go to Home Page »](#)

NEWS

- World
- U.S.
- Politics
- N.Y.
- Business
- Tech
- Science
- Health
- Sports
- Education
- Obituaries
- Today's Paper
- Corrections

OPINION

- Today's Opinion
- Op-Ed Columnists
- Editorials
- Op-Ed Contributors
- Letters
- Sunday Review
- Video: Opinion

ARTS

- Today's Arts
- Art & Design
- Books
- Dance
- Movies
- Music
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Television
- Theater
- Video: Arts

LIVING

- Automobiles
- Crossword
- Food
- Education
- Fashion & Style
- Health
- Jobs
- Magazine
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Real Estate
- T Magazine
- Travel
- Weddings & Celebrations

LISTINGS & MORE

- Reader Center
- Classifieds
- Tools & Services
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Multimedia
- Photography
- Video
- NYT Store
- Times Journeys
- Subscribe My
- Manage My Account
- NYTCO

SUBSCRIBE

- Home Delivery
- Digital Subscriptions
- Crossword
- Email Newsletters
- Alerts
- Gift Subscriptions
- Group Subscriptions
- Education Rate
- Mobile Applications
- Replica Edition