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At the start of a new century, poverty remains a global problem of huge proportions. Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than $2 a day and 1.2 billion on less than $1 a day. Eight out of 100 infants do not live to see their 5th birthday. Nine of 100 boys and 14 of 100 girls who reach school age do not attend school. Poverty is also evident in poor people's lack of political power and voice and in their vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, personal violence and natural disasters. The scourge of HIV/AIDS, the frequency and brutality of civil conflicts, and rising disparities between rich countries and the developing world have increased the sense of deprivation and injustice for many. 'World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty' (which follows 2 other 'World Development Reports' on poverty, in 1980 and 1990) argues that major reductions in all these dimensions of poverty are indeed possible?that the interaction of markets, state institutions, and civil societies can harness the forces of economic integration and technological change to serve the interests of poor people and increase their share of society's prosperity. Actions are needed in 3 complementary areas: promoting economic opportunities for poor people through equitable growth, better access to markets, and expanded assets; facilitating empowerment by making state institutions more responsive to poor people and removing social barriers that exclude women, ethnic and racial groups, and the socially disadvantaged; and enhancing security by preventing and managing economywide shocks and providing mechanisms to reduce the sources of vulnerability that poor people face. But actions by countries and communities will not be enough. Global actions need to complement national and local initiatives to achieve maximum benefit for poor people throughout the world. A copublication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press.

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