Panel Proposal

1. **Title of the group panel:**

**Complementary Approaches towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals for Education: Lessons from the Field.**

**Panel Organizer:**
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**Panel Chair:**
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**Panel Discussant:**
Radhika Iyengar, Ph.D.
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**Presenter 1**
Elizabeth Kubis
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**Presenter 2**
2. Panel Abstract:

(a) Objectives:

The second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) aims at universal primary education for both boys and girls. In addition, the MDG on gender equality – MDG 3 – proposes to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa have registered strong progress, as witnessed by the reduction in the out-of-school population by almost 13 million or 28% in the period 1999-2007 (UNESCO, 2010). But this progress has been uneven among countries. This panel presents an opportunity to discuss different approaches to achieving a common goal. This panel is focused on the Earth Institute’s efforts achieving MDGs in the African continent. The papers presented include national policy level interventions in Nigeria, to school level mediation in curriculum through ICT and MDGs focused activity based lesson plans. The panel also includes frameworks such as Early Childhood Education,
Gender equity and Education for Sustainable Development, discussed all under the MDG umbrella.

(B) Perspectives or theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this panel is the Millennium Development Goals Framework. With the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, governments around the world have committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of race, class, ethnicity or gender, will have access to a full cycle of primary education by 2015. By providing knowledge and skills, encouraging new behavior and increasing individual and collective empowerment, education lies at the center of social and economic development. Universal and equal education are fundamental to the success of poverty reduction strategies, increasing future employment opportunities, promoting economic growth, and creating healthy and happy individuals. Moreover, educating the girl-child has proven to have a positive impact on reducing fertility and ensuring the education of future generations.

However, despite promising steps, there is evidence of massive educational deprivation that continues to be concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2005). Gender disparities in primary school enrollment are overwhelmingly to the disadvantage of the girls. Eleven countries, seven of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, report female intake rates which were less than 80% of the male rates in 2000 (UNESCO, 2003/04). With such massive gaps to cover, the global education community debates over different approaches that would help eradicate educational poverty. This panel will highlight such debates and also present concrete examples of practical successes and problems on the field.

(C) Educational and scientific importance

The panel examines different perspectives, voices, levels of interventions that The Earth Institute has adopted towards achieving the MDGs. The common link between all the approaches is the MDG Framework. However, the global education discourse on approaches towards achieving the MDGs leads us to multiple directions. These models range from having an “integrated approach” towards development (Millennium Villages Project, 2010); community based models to build accountability, school based interventions, national level policy initiatives etc. The panel will discuss the complementary models and approaches described in the presentations, which capture a range of the Earth Institute's educational initiatives.

(D) Contribution
With very little time left to achieve the MDGs, the papers address practical issues and lessons learnt from the field to provide guidance to the education planners and implementers. The case studies discussed will be able to provide practical considerations in achieving a global goal. The Nigeria-Scale-up paper will highlight the use of real time data in identifying the gaps, the school based curriculum interventions such as ICT and Connect to Learn’s activity based lesson-plans will provide examples that help to improve teacher classroom practices. Papers focusing on gender equity and early childhood education will be critical in showcasing the importance of such framework in achieving the MDGs. Education for Sustainable development ties all the topics together by focusing on improving the quality of education in and out-side schools. This panel presents case studies from the African continent using the MDG framework and aims to provide practical examples that will reach out to researchers, academicians, practitioners and students.

(E) Description of how the session will be structured

In the first paper, Kubis will provide examples of using ICT and international collaboration to enhance teachers’ skill set and global understandings. In the second paper, Iyengar will attempt to address a national level policy intervention that aims at providing planners and administers a real time tool to monitor the progress towards MDGs. Through the third paper, Park builds bridges between the community and the schools by making the home environment and families ready for school. The fourth paper, takes us back to schools by providing innovative ideas for teachers to enhance their classroom practices. Hursh focuses on Education for Sustainable Development using the Earth Institute’s Integrated Model to achieve the MDGs. This paper ties all the approaches together and attempts to address the underlying gaps in the approaches. Each presenter will speak for 12 minutes, followed by a 10-minute discussion by Dr. David Hursh. This will leave about 30 minutes in the end for Q&A session.

3. Keywords or descriptors: Millennium Development Goals, curricular approaches, ICT, activity based curriculum, real-time data, Education for Sustainable development

4. Region and Country: Africa

5. Audio Visual Requests: Power Point projector

Paper 1:

Title: Differences between Ghanaian and American approaches to education

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The School2School Program (S2S), a three-year project of the Millennium Cities Initiative (MCI) and the Center for Technology and School Change at Teachers College, Columbia University is a response to Kumasi, Ghana’s desire to expand teacher content knowledge and technical skills in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The project represents a collaboration that grew out of a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and to global education. The program thus involves helping Math and Science junior high school teachers in New York City and Kumasi explore the Millennium Development Goals in teacher partnerships, with an emphasis on STEM learning.

A pilot during the fall of 2010 was dedicated to building the Kumasi teachers’ basic ICT skills, introducing them to the Internet, and showing them resources for creating lessons. They also established some preliminary partnerships with NYC teachers. The first official year of the project began in Fall 2011. This presentation will discuss observations from the pilot and first year capturing different cultural perspectives on education and the differences between Ghanaian and American teachers related to specific educational approaches such as lesson design, planning and implementation and the role of technology at each stage.

Paper 2:

Title: Use of Technology for Large-Scale Education Planning and Decision Making

Name: Radhika Iyengar
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Nigeria recently made history by launching one of the world’s largest poverty elimination campaigns aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Known as the Conditional Grants Scheme (CGS) and with $1 billion per year,
the program reaches out to nearly 25 million people in 113 Local Government Areas with the specific objectives of 1) investing in the MDGs at the sub-national level and promoting local ownership and sustainability 2) empowering State and Local Governments to carry out their constitutional responsibilities and 3) leveraging public sector organizational and expenditure reform, along with national planning to improve service delivery.

The MDG for education ensures that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. To meet these goals, the Nigerian government is collaborating with The Earth Institute to develop a web-based real-time, performance/project tracking system to aid in informed decision-making at the local level. The Nigerian MDG Information System (NMIS) provides real time data entry via web-based platforms or mobile phones; geo-referencing of facilities with the ability to visualize dynamic status updates, and a logic-based display interface that allows for rapid progress assessments and the triggering of alerts for potential problems. Detailed and current data, planners and administrators at the local level facilitates data-driven budgeting, planning and implementation. The integration of technology and education presents an example of how planners and administrators can use of real-time data for data-driven budgeting, planning and implementation.

**Paper 3:**

**Title: Maximizing Potential for Young Children: A Responsive Caregiving Program**

Name: Soohyun Park  
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This presentation explores MVP’s Responsive Caregiving Program targeting three main components and goals: 1) To maximize community sensitization on the importance of early childhood development and education by emphasizing caregiver’s critical role in providing for young children 2) To improve children’s home learning environment and caregiving practices through workshops and mother support groups 3) To improve school readiness by increasing the availability of learning materials for young children and by monitoring children’s development index in all domains.

With implementation of the Responsive Caregiving Program, the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) holds the capacity to improve the continuity of care for young children (0-3 years) who are currently at home without adequate stimulations or resources to maximize their development. This program targets all primary caregivers, including mothers with newborns and pregnant mothers for early intervention, to emphasize the importance of appropriate caregiving and education at home before first
year of schooling. By working closely with families, nursery schools, the community and MVP’s health sector to thoroughly understand the local needs of young children, the program takes a child-centered approach to ensure that both children and caregivers are equally emphasized and focused throughout the program.

**Paper 4:**

**Connect To Learn’s Millennium Development Goals Curriculum**

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The Connect To Learn (CTL) Millennium Development Goals (MDG) curriculum will serve as the main curriculum framework for CTL’s School-To-School Connections, beginning in Fall 2011. School-To-School Connections, CTL’s flagship information and communications technology (ICT) program, fosters cross-cultural learning and cultivates global awareness by connecting classrooms in rural and urban communities in Africa with classrooms in the U.S.

CTL’s curriculum promotes awareness about the MDGs, integrates the productive use of technology to meet varying ICT skill sets and provides a platform for collaborative and interactive learning. The curriculum teaches students about the eight MDGs through core subjects, Language Arts, Civics, Mathematics and Science, with a culminating activity that allows students to contextualize the MDGs into their communities.

The curriculum promotes student-centered activities and class discussions to inform students about the complexity of MDGs in a global context. In addition, each of the ten units includes activities where students engage with their local communities to address the issues pertaining to the MDGs. Building upon this knowledge, U.S - Africa partner classrooms connect using videoconference and share the perspectives of their local setting.

The curriculum is meant to be adapted as teachers tailor the content for various grade levels in different settings. The ongoing feedback received from teachers can be incorporated into the curriculum to be more relevant and applicable to the wider audience of educators.

**Paper 5:**
We face a global crisis of failing or at best stagnant economies, global climate change and diminishing resources, and education systems that fail to adequately students to contribute to society. In 2005, the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary attendance, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development, all by 2015. Shortly thereafter, the Earth Institute at Columbia University took up the challenge of achieving the MDGs through a synergistic approach integrating reforms in medical care, agriculture, education, and the provision of energy and water in fourteen clusters of rural villages in ten sub-Saharan African countries. Now, half way between 2005 and 2015, the Millennium Village project is on target to achieve the goals.

In this presentation, I describe how the educational reforms focusing on sustainable development and environmental health and gender equity are essential to improving the living conditions in rural communities and achieving the MDGs. In particular, we aim to develop schools as community centers in which students, teachers, and community members combine resources to create the knowledge necessary for community improvement. Further, this work is being carried out during a global recession that has reduced the contribution from developed countries to developing countries.

Reference:

