



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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Millennium Development Goals: The Promise of a Better World

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EXPERIENCE

In 2000, 189 countries of the world signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration. This was an historic moment and set forth an ambitious agenda for improving the lives of the world's poorest citizens by 2015 through a joint effort of developing and developed nations. The MDGs are a set of measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger and disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

For us as citizens of the United States, Goal 8 is particularly noteworthy. It calls on the rich countries to give more aid, relieve more debt, and give poor countries fair access to their markets and their technology. The MDGs are a test of political will. While developing countries have the responsibility to strengthen governance to support their people, they cannot achieve the goals on their own without equitable trade

regulations, new aid commitments, and debt relief.

This is an especially significant moment. While there is much that is missing from these MDGs, it is significant that all nations have pledged to fulfill these goals. The nations of the world will report at the Millennium Summit in September about their progress. Before the General Assembly and to all peoples of the world, leaders will speak to their nations' commitment and achievement. Our US government has put in place some of their promise (e.g., some support for debt cancellation and aid to victims of the Asian tsunami), but there is much that is only promise, not achievement. It is a moment for us as citizens, to recognize our role in the world community and our responsibility for the whole.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

The recent tragedy in southeast Asia has put the "world's spotlight on the structural needs and vulnerability of populations that are common victims of poverty and injustice," Caritas-Italy said. "Spo-

radic humanitarian generosity is not sufficient." Instead, "long-term solutions must be adopted that entail more consistent commitment by the international community and a new momentum of public aid to development."

We are all aware that while direct service is absolutely necessary, it is of equal necessity that structural and systemic change be addressed. We know this on a local and national level, but it is imperative that we know and act globally. A UN official, when asked about the greatest environmental problem

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on our planet, was quick to reply, "Poverty." It is poverty, which is a primary cause of all the injustice: among and between people, among and between governments; all this within the context of environment.

Much of the global policy of the United States gets little attention. It is more than conceivable that many US citizens have never even heard of the MDGs. Yet, our government signed them and will report on their achievement in September. Our international policies have often been dismissive and destructive of others. This is done in our name and for the most part, we are totally unaware. As members of the global community, we have much to learn and much to offer. It is imperative that we act.

REFLECTION

Each of our congregations has a goal, a mission. We have chapter statements, assembly commitments; many of them include language and dreams beyond our expectation, but within our hope. The gospel reminds us that Jesus came, "that they might have life and have it to the full." In Matthew, we read Isaiah's words: "the blind recover their sights, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life and the poor have the good news preached to them." We yearn to make these words reality, this challenge more than promise. In our study of and reflection on Catholic Social Teaching we recognize the parallels with the MDGs. These goals identify some of our dreams for all creation. While we recognize their limitations, it is imperative

that we join the world community in support for and achievement of the goals. While we are overwhelmed by the realities of people and environment everyday, we are encouraged by the good we see around us, by the promise of the presence of God.

ACTION

1. Integrate our programs about poverty, women and environment into the MDGs in an effort to see the connections.
2. Recognize the efforts for debt relief as supporting Goal 8 of the MDGs. Continue to support www.jubileeusa.org and www.africaaction.org.
3. Ask our congressional representatives to sign on to a letter for 100% debt cancellation. For a copy of the letter visit www.jubileeusa.org. Call representatives (204-224-3121) or go to www.house.gov to get connected to the Representative to ask for a signature.
4. Become aware of and monitor the MDGs.
5. Contact our congressional representatives; ask them what they are doing to insure fulfillment of the pledge made by President Bush.
6. Organize a postcard campaign to demand an end to world hunger and poverty.
7. Connect our efforts with the NGO community at the UN in New York and Geneva.

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Resources:

- Full United Nations Report: www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- UN Millennium Project for research, country reports: www.unmillenniumproject.org
- "Investing in Development" Jeffrey Sachs: <http://unmp.forumone.com/index.html>
- Background, current UN and civil society action: www.un-ngls.org/mdg
- Net Aid information, programs, action steps: www.netaid.org/campaigns/mdg