



Columban Mission
Global & Local

Living the Gospel: Responding to Challenge



THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

What are they?

In September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Development Summit, 189 nations including Australia, agreed to halve the extent of global hunger and the most acute forms of poverty by 2015. The UN Millennium Declaration committed to freeing the entire human race from want:

'We the heads of State and Government... recognise that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.'

Why is this an issue for Christians?

I came that you may have life and have it to the full John 10:10

All human beings are created in the image of God with an inalienable dignity. Human dignity is undermined or denied by the unrelenting grind of poverty. People living in extreme poverty, people condemned at birth to die young, people enslaved by unjust structures and policies that inhibit their ability to achieve their potential are unable to claim the dignity they deserve as humans. In their work among the poor in many nations, Columbans see first hand the debilitating effects of poverty, injustice and lack of opportunity therefore we embrace the achievement of the MDGs as a priority issue.

The Church embraces the principle of the Preferential Option for the Poor. Those who are most marginalised are those in need of the greatest support. In his World Peace Day Message in 2005, Pope John Paul II called for the 'mobilisation of

international solidarity to overcome the 'extreme poverty in which millions are living'. In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI sent his greetings to the thousands gathered for a Make Poverty History rally and urged those living in the wealthy nations to call on our leaders to fulfil the pledges they made to reduce world poverty by the year 2015. Globalisation is benefiting the few and leaving behind the vast majority. Even the prophetic voice of nature is telling us that our world is out of balance!

The Declaration identifies eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015:

- 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
- 2. Achieve Universal Primary Education**
- 3. Promote gender equity and empower women**
- 4. Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five**
- 5. Improve Maternal Health**
- 6. Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and Other Diseases**
- 7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability**
 - improve the lives of slum dwellers, ensure access to safe water and integrate principles of sustainability into policies and programs to reverse environmental loss.
- 8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

What is the situation? Will the Goals be met?

- According to the 2005, UN Human Development Report, there have been gains made on many development indicators BUT the progress is too little and shows huge inequities.
- Today there are 2 million fewer child deaths than in 1990 and the chance of a child reaching the age of 5 has increased by about 15% BUT a child born in Zambia today has less chance of surviving past the age of 30 than a child born in 1840 in England.
- Overall there is a decline in global income poverty BUT Sub-Saharan Africa had almost 100 million more people living in poverty in 2001 than in 1990.
- While there have been impressive advances in education, there are still 800 million people in the world, mostly women lacking basic literacy skills. On current trends the MDG target of universal primary education will be missed, with 47 million children in developing countries still out of school.
- In 1980 child death rates in Sub-Saharan Africa were 13 times higher than in rich countries. They are now 29 times higher!
- The estimated cost of ending extreme poverty – the amount needed to lift 1 billion people above the US\$1 a day poverty line - is US\$300 billion. This sounds a lot but is equivalent to less than 2% of the income of the richest 10% of the world's population.

- Source: UN Human Development Report, 2005

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, second Inaugural Address, 1937

The challenge for us:

Under the UN Millennium Declaration, signatories committed to increasing foreign aid to 0.5% of GNI (Gross National Income) by 2010 and 0.7% by 2015.

In 2006-7 Australia has budgeted 0.30% of GNI for aid and on current projection this will increase to 0.36% by 2010. This is well below the internationally agreed standard and includes monies spent on security policy.

Australia's level of aid in the latest international comparison of aid levels ranks Australia as being 19th of the 22 OECD donor nations. We are simply not pulling our weight!

At the heart of **Catholic Social Teaching** is the call for us to respond at three levels:

- ◆ A generous sharing of our wealth in recognition that the goods of Earth belong to all.
- ◆ Voicing a challenge to the structures and institutions that keep people poor and marginalized.
- ◆ A personal commitment to work for the common good and stand in solidarity with the marginalized, the oppressed and the poor.

What can you do?

- Be more generous in your support of reputable overseas aid and development agencies.
- Write to the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister asking that they commit to meeting our international obligations to lift our level of foreign aid to 0.5% by 2010 and to 0.7% by 2015.
- Ask that Australia reduce or cancel the debts owed to us by poor nations and introduce fair trade initiatives to assist poor nation development.
- Take it personally! Live more simply and sustainably, buy fair trade goods, reverence and conserve the resources of Earth, join a group and get active.

For more information and ideas:

www.unmillenniumproject.org
www.makepovertyhistory.org.au
www.micahchallenge.org.au
www.caritas.org.au

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