

# THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

## ISSUE

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More than one billion people – one-sixth of the world’s population – live each day under the weight of extreme poverty. While income poverty is part of the problem, the dimensions of human poverty are much greater. Pandemic disease, widespread conflict, environmental degradation, chronic hunger, and a lack of access to education are all *both causes and effects of human poverty*. In order to meet the challenge of addressing global poverty in all its dimensions, world leaders in 2000 created the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, a set of eight quantifiable targets designed to cut poverty in half by the year 2015. The MDGs envision rich and poor nations working together in partnership to combat poverty.

Despite the extraordinary promise of the MDGs, progress has been slow, and most of the world’s poorest regions are destined to fall far short of meeting the MDGs unless significantly increased resources from the world’s rich nations are made available.

## BACKGROUND

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In 2000, 181 countries began the new century by signing the Millennium Declaration pledging a massive global mobilization against poverty. Out of this historic covenant came eight measurable, interwoven goals to be completed by 2015: (1) Cut in half income poverty and hunger; (2) Achieve universal primary education; (3) Promote gender equality and empower women; (4) Reduce child mortality; (5) Improve maternal health; (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) Ensure environmental stability; and (8) Develop a global partnership for development with targets for aid, trade and debt relief.

## 109<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS

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In 2005, two prominent world events – the June G8 Summit and the September World Summit of the UN – devoted large segments of their agendas to the MDGs. These meetings produced several steps forward: (1) A strong reaffirmation of the MDGs by the international community (despite the Bush Administration’s lobbying to abandon them); (2) A commitment by G8 leaders to significantly increased foreign assistance by 2010; and (3) A new plan for 100% debt cancellation for a group of the world’s most impoverished countries. This progress was measured, however. The foreign-aid commitment, while significant, falls well short of what most experts believe is necessary for the MDGs to be met. Similarly, the debt-cancellation plan excludes more than 50 countries for which debt is significantly hampering progress toward the MDGs.

Congressional funding for key MDG programs lags even further behind what’s needed. The U.S. currently gives a smaller percentage of its GNP (approximately 0.16 percent) to international development than any other industrialized nation. Funding remains largely stagnant for key development accounts as well as for vital health programs like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria. Even funding for the Millennium Challenge Account – a promising but thus-far poorly implemented initiative of the Bush Administration – lags well behind what has been promised to the world. Moreover, important U.S. health and development initiatives in the developing world currently are fatally hampered by ideological restrictions placed on them by the Administration and its allies in Congress.

**Members of Congress of both parties have come together to add funding above the Administration’s requests for has shown some promise in creating alliances between Republicans and Democrats to**

**programs vital to fulfillment of the MDGs, like the Global Fund. These alliances need to be expanded and intensified significantly, however, if the U.S. is to take a leadership role in helping the world meet the MDGs.**

In one surprising victory, Congress passed and President Bush signed the Assistance to Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Act of 2005. The legislation, for which the Episcopal Church has been a principal advocate, provides – for the first time in U.S. statute – a comprehensive and holistic approach to the worldwide humanitarian crisis of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). This includes children who suffer from poverty, armed conflict, displacement, trafficking, and pandemic disease such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The president and Congress now must follow through with funding and strategies for implementing the bill. While a small step in the right direction, the OVC Act demonstrates the sort of holistic and creative approaches necessary for the MDGs to be met.

## **GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS RELATED TO THE MDGs**

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The 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention adopted Resolution D 006 supporting the Millennium Development Goals. That resolution also calls upon the United States to contribute 0.7% of its budget to international aid, and calls upon all diocese and parishes to contribute at least 0.7% of their budgets to support programs that foster economic development in the world's poorest countries.

The Anglican Communion as a whole also supports the MDGs. The June 2005 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-13) passed a resolution endorsing the MDGs, building on the initiatives of the 1998 Lambeth Conference of bishops endorsing 0.7% giving and broad international debt relief.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

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Visit the Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) at [www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn) for action opportunities and updates on advocacy related to the MDGs. Send a message to your lawmakers urging them to devote greater funding to key MDG initiatives..

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

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Episcopal Relief and Development: [http://www.er-d.org/programs\\_63930\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.er-d.org/programs_63930_ENG_HTM.htm)

A Litany on the MDGs: [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654\\_64549\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654_64549_ENG_HTM.htm)

A Theological Reflection on the MDGs by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold:  
[http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654\\_64550\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654_64550_ENG_HTM.htm)

The ONE Campaign: <http://www.one.org/>

- [How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas](#) by David Bornstein
- [The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time](#) by Jeffrey Sachs
- [Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals \(UN Millennium Project Series\)](#) Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director
- [Development as Freedom](#) by Amartya Sen
- [Ending Global Poverty: A Guide to What Works](#) by Stephen C. Smith
- [What Can One Person Do? Faith to Heal a Broken World](#) by Sabina Alkire and Edmund Newell