

The World Working Together To End Poverty



Photo Credit: <http://bit.ly/1VclHMn>

In 2000, Pope John Paul II celebrated the Jubilee Year for the Church, and he also hailed the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which he believed were necessary to promote justice and peace in the global community at the start of the new millennium. John Paul sent his representative to the United Nations (UN) to convey the Pope's fervent hope that "at the dawn of the third millennium, the UN will contribute to the building of a new civilization for the benefit of all mankind, a true civilization of love through creating a new global partnership" of 189 countries who would work to implement the MDGs.

This partnership focused on ending extreme poverty in the world by articulating eight specific goals, with a deadline of 2015. The goals included: eradicate extreme poverty (living on less than a \$1.00 a day) and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women and girls; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development.



Center of
Concern

Progress Made

The Millennium Development Goals were evaluated early in 2015, after 15 years of effort on the part of governmental and non-governmental groups across the globe, including many Catholic development organizations. The 2015 UN MDG Report (<http://bit.ly/2bgRTKQ>) found that the 15-year coordinated effort produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history:

- Extreme poverty has declined significantly: in 1990, nearly half of the population in the developing world lived on less than \$1.25 a day; that proportion dropped to 14 percent in 2015.
- Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015.
- The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide has fallen by almost half, to an estimated 57 million in 2015, down from 100 million in 2000.
- Many more girls are now in school compared to 15 years ago. The developing regions as a whole have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. (For example, in Southern Asia, only 74 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 1990. Today, 103 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys.)
- The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015.
- More than 71 percent of births were assisted by skilled health personnel globally in 2014, an increase from 59 percent in 1990.
- HIV infections fell by approximately 40 percent between 2000 and 2014. Over 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted between 2000 and 2015, primarily of children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Worldwide, 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation and clean water since 2000.



The Work Continues

While these outcomes have been good news, much work remains to end all hunger in this world, to improve health services for every member of the global community, to achieve full gender equality, to ensure that every child is able to get an education, and to provide a healthy environment for all people. Given the success of the MDGs, the United Nations has committed to continue their efforts at creating a more just world with the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals. These global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or Global Goals, will guide policy and funding for governmental and non-government development organizations around the world for the next 15 years.

The progress that was made with the MDGs demonstrated the value of a central, unifying development agenda supported by specific goals and targets. The new SDGs hope to go further than the MDGs by addressing the root causes of poverty and promoting the need for sustainable development that works for all people. (Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.)

SDGs, Pope Francis, and CST

When Pope Francis spoke to the United Nations during his visit to the United States in 2015, he supported the new Sustainable Development Goals and the united efforts to continue “the work to ensure that every human being can live and flourish with basics needed for a life of dignity.” The Pope also emphasized that we must reclaim the environment if sustainable development is to move forward. The Vatican’s delegation to the United Nations had affirmed the main purpose of the SDGs just weeks before the Pope’s visit: “This Agenda is a clear sign that . . . the international community has come together and affirmed its commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to ensure that all children, women and men throughout the world will have the conditions necessary to live in both freedom and dignity.”

Because the UN Sustainable Development Goals reflect so many of the values of Catholic social teaching (CST), the *Education for Justice* website will feature one of these goals every month, exploring the issues involved and connecting each goal to the teachings of the Church. Pope Francis has reminded us that we are all members of a global family that share a common home: “We must regain the conviction that we are all part of the human family, that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world.” We are all called to the work for international justice and peace, and the United Nations have provided a guide for this crucial work through their Sustainable Development Goals.





Prayer

In a world where so many go hungry,
Let us make the fruits of Creation available for all.

In a world where so many children suffer,
Let us bring health and healing.

Let us join together, with a new sense of global community,
A new awareness of our need for one another and for this fragile planet
To meet the clear challenges of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals,
And thus, create hope as substantial as bread,
And make human dignity
As visible as wheat growing in fields. Amen.

Action

- Share information on the United Nations' development goals past and present.
Use this video for a quick overview:
<http://bit.ly/1Lp1FnS>.
- Start doing your part in small ways to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals: <http://bit.ly/1WMIBe4>.