



# A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



## Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS)

### The Church and the World Speak Out Against Global Poverty

The Catholic Church and many other global leaders have spoken out on the need to reduce global poverty. They recognize the solution should be a shared responsibility between those who have more and those who have less. Dating back to 1967, Pope Paul VI in his statement *On the Development of Peoples* (Populorum Progressio) referenced the scripture that asks “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:17). As people of faith we cannot look the other way while our brothers and sisters live in misery.

In 2005, charities, religious groups, celebrities, and people around the world concerned about poverty used the year as an occasion to increase awareness about people’s suffering in poor countries, and pressure their governments to do something about it. In 2005, a number of campaigns started in countries around the world to highlight the issues of extreme poverty and to urge their leaders to tackle the causes of poverty and meet their promises of the Millennium Development Goals. These campaigns took advantage of key political events, including the annual G-8 meetings, the UN Millennium Summit and the World Trade Organization Ministerial, to raise attention and advocate around global poverty. In July 2005, Pope Benedict XVI offered a message to participants at a *Make Poverty History* march in Edinburgh, Scotland. He stated: “*People from the world’s richest countries should be prepared to accept the burden of debt reduction for heavily indebted poor countries, and urge their leaders to fulfill the pledges made to reduce world poverty, especially in Africa, by the year 2015.*”

### The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty

The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty was launched in 2005 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The campaign focuses its activities on three areas of U.S. economic policy:

- **Trade:** Shaping U.S. trade policies to overcome poverty and promote human development are central priorities.
- **Aid:** Supporting effective aid programs that foster long-term development and empowerment of the poor.
- **Debt:** Canceling debts of the poorest countries in ways that reduce poverty and promote dignity.

### One Country’s Experience

The women of Dimba in the West African country of Mali needed a grain mill. Before getting one they had to either grind whole grain into flour by hand or walk many miles to find a mill. As part of Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) work in Mali to promote girls' education, the organization helped a women's association in the village of Dimba build a grain mill. The women in the village were excited. "The mill has lightened our household work," they said. "We now have more time to participate in education and training sessions and our daughters have more time to devote to their studies."



Mali is one of Africa's biggest producers of cotton. It has reserves of gold, and a politically stable government. But it remains one of Africa's poorest countries. Mali is landlocked and due to natural and man-made problems, it periodically suffers from food shortages. In 2005, over 1 million Malians out of 12 million people were in need of food aid. Mali's economy depends on activities related to agriculture. Seventy percent of Malians work in this sector and agriculture provides 40% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Over 70 percent of Malians live on less than \$1 a day. Given these factors, the country has an immense need for outside resources and is therefore very dependent on international development assistance.

Mali's prospects for meeting the Millennium Development Goals are slim, according to a 2004 report by Mali government and United Nations. While the country has made some progress in the last decade, for example in the area of primary school attendance, it needs to make other social improvements. According to the World Bank, the country's adult literacy rate was 55 percent in 2001 and today only about 67 percent of children are enrolled in primary school. Mali's formal health care system is lacking and many people live very far from the limited health facilities that are available. To reduce poverty in the country the government has outlined several priorities: increase school enrollment rates to 73 percent, improve health by reducing child mortality rates by 15 percent and improve access to water by building 9,600 wells and pumps over the next 11 years. These country priorities can only be realized with increased aid from the international community.

## What are the Millennium Development Goals?

Fewer people in the world are living in extreme poverty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century compared to earlier times; but most of this improvement can be attributed to China. If you exclude China, the number of people living in extreme poverty actually increased, and in Sub-Saharan Africa it increased by almost 40%. The World Bank has calculated that between 1990 and 2001 the proportion of people living in extreme poverty fell from 28 percent to 21 percent in the developing world. Still, the World Bank estimates that nearly half of the world's six billion people live on less than \$2 a day, with a significant gap between rich and poor countries in terms of job and educational opportunities, healthcare and life expectancy. For example, the average gap in life expectancy between a low-income country and a high-income country is 19 years (*UN Human Development Report 2005*). At least fifty countries in the world –Mali included – are categorized as 'least developed countries'. Many of these countries – at least 34 -- are in Africa. In fact Africa today is poorer on average than it was twenty five years ago.

In September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York, world leaders came together to take stock of global poverty.

### Millennium Development Goals 1990-2015

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

At this gathering the United States, along with 189 countries, endorsed eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for reducing extreme poverty. The goals are meant to be measurable within an established time frame; they require specific progress on reducing poverty by 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals aim to reduce poverty and hunger, ensure all children have access to school, reverse the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, preserve the environment and empower women. The eighth goal addresses the two-way partnership between rich and poor countries, without which these goals could not be achieved.

Establishing the goals is one thing, achieving them another. With less than a decade to go before 2015, poor nations are expected to step up their development activities and to institute policies conducive to making progress on the goals. Wealthy countries need to step up their commitment of resources to poor countries as well.

To make progress on the goals, the World Bank estimates that development assistance to poor countries should double from what contribution levels have been in recent years. This could add up to \$40-\$70 billion dollars. As one of the 189 countries that signed on to the Millennium Development Goals, the U.S. has committed to implementing policies that help poor countries meet the goals, including areas of trade justice, debt cancellation, and development aid.

## CRS Development Programs Support the Millennium Development Goals

In Mali and many other countries around the world, CRS programs give poor people access to staple foods, offer small loans and technical assistance in agriculture, support children's school enrollment, promote women's literacy, provide healthcare services, and promote conservation strategies. These activities directly support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- **Goal 1 – *Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger***

In West Africa CRS helps the most vulnerable rural families increase their income to help them appropriately market their products to help them become food secure. In 2006, this project will help train 62,000 farmers.

In Guatemala more than 60 percent of people do not have access to clean water. CRS programs help impoverished families get access to clean water, improve sanitation facilities, and offer hygiene education classes. In 2006, this project will help more than 2,000 people directly.

- **Goal 2—*Achieve universal primary education***

In northern Ghana CRS education programs attract more children to school by providing lunches and take home rations of food that benefit entire families. Students are taught to read and write and teachers are given the skills they need to become better instructors. In 2006, this education project will help more than 16,000 people directly.

- **Goal 3—*Promote gender equality and empower women***

In Uganda CRS small loans (also called microfinance) projects provide borrowers (74 percent are women) in very remote regions of the country the money they need to sustain their livelihoods. Microfinance programs support cottage industries such as managing a 'village table' selling oranges and nuts or producing and selling sesame and handicrafts. In 2006 this project will help 20,000 people.

- **Goal 4—*Reduce child mortality***

In the province of Maguindanao, the Philippines, CRS supports a pilot program on child survival to provide residents, especially children under the age of five, with medical assistance. The initiative seeks to reduce the incidence of disease and mortality in children in this province through four interventions: breastfeeding & nutrition; pneumonia management; diarrhea management; and immunization.

- **Goal 5—*Improve maternal health***

In Maguindanao, the Philippines, CRS trained 200 health workers and 80 traditional birth attendants in child survival interventions. In the Sankuru district in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, CRS vaccinated children and pregnant women against common diseases such as measles, whooping cough or tetanus.

- **Goal 6—*Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases***

In Zimbabwe CRS educates young people about the causes of HIV/AIDS to help reverse the projection of a drop in life expectancy from 60 to 40 years by 2008. In 2006 this program will train 250 teachers and 18,000 students.

- **Goal 7—*Ensure environmental sustainability***

In Guatemala, CRS helps increase the productivity of family farmers, protect natural resources and assists people who are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. CRS does this by teaching conservation techniques, crop diversification, emergency preparedness and encouraging people's civic participation in issues that protect the quality of natural resources.

- **Goal 8—*Develop a Global Partnership for Development***

The USCCB/CRS *Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty* mobilizes Catholics throughout the U.S. to advocate for U.S. policies in the areas of trade, aid, and debt to foster economic and social development for people living in poverty throughout the world. The campaign provides resources for U.S. Catholics to learn more about global poverty and ways it can be reduced. Through advocacy efforts people can then hold their elected officials accountable for implementing policies that can contribute to positive change for poor people in the world.

## Catholic Relief Services Doing Its Part

Back to our story about the women of the Village of Dimba in Mali who got their grain mill. The women received funds for the mill through CRS' *Food Assisted Education Support* project. This project focuses on increasing enrollment and attendance in food insecure areas in Mopti, Mali. Through this project CRS provides meals to students and take-home rations for their families. CRS also informs people in the community about the importance of girls' education and improving the infrastructure of schools. Because entire families benefit from the program, school enrollment is up in this community and so are school retention rates.

CRS' work around the world has expanded over the years. We currently work in 100 countries on 5 continents, through local offices and an extensive network of partners to aid the poor by first providing direct assistance where needed. We then encourage people to help with their own development. Together, this fosters secure, productive, just communities that enable people to realize their potential.



## What You Can Do

- Visit the *Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty's* website ([www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty)) to learn more about global poverty and to download educational, advocacy and worship resources.
- Start an email based action group to advocate for legislation, including U.S. development assistance that makes a difference in the lives of the world's poor, especially in Africa. Visit [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty) for action alerts.
- Support CRS programs around the world that help communities to fight poverty. Visit CRS' web site to learn more about CRS projects to promote health, agriculture, education and income-generating activities in poor countries, You can make an online donation by going to this website: <http://www.crsgifts.org/>

### PLEDGE

*If a brother or a sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them "go in peace, keep warm and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:15-16*

*I pledge to be a peacemaker,  
So that I may say "go in peace,"  
To a world that is more peaceful.*

*I pledge to serve the poor,  
So that I may say "keep warm and eat well,"  
To a world that knows more comfort  
And less hunger.*

*I pledge to work for economic justice,  
So that I may say "be prosperous"  
To a world whose trade is just,  
Whose aid is well placed  
And whose debts are forgiven.*

*I pledge to put my faith into action,  
So that when I say "I follow Christ,"  
The world might see and believe.*

*Catholic Campaign  
Against Global Poverty*

*Catholic Relief Services  
US Conference of Catholic Bishops*