

Micah Challenge - the story so far

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When we stepped into the vestibule of the United Nations building, it was like walking into a dream. Earlier, a small group of us had imagined a Christian movement that mobilised people around the Millennium Development Goals –eight promises to reduce poverty which the United Nations initiated at the dawn of the Third Millennium. These eight promises to the poor came about when 191 nations committed themselves to half absolute poverty by 2015.

We were there because we believed that something was happening in global evangelicalism which increasingly embraced God's heart for the poor as an integral part of the Gospel agenda. From the very outset, the campaign was regarded as an effective vehicle harmonising growing evangelical concern for the poor with its biblical witness to the world. Micah Challenge was to be more than a programme: it was to become a global evangelical response to the poor. We were without excuse for evangelicals committed to the authority of Scripture already had a biblical mandate to respond to the poor. In this mission to the poor we hoped that Micah's prophetic impulse allowed no escape clause on such a historic response from our world governments.

Micah Challenge was therefore, primarily a response to God but it was also a response to our Governments. If world leaders were prepared to commit to these measurable promises to the poor it seemed inconceivable that the Christian church should not hold them responsible in the spirit of transparency which they themselves had offered in the MDGs. If the government of Nigeria or Brazil committed themselves to fight corruption, reduce infant mortality and work for greater gender equality for example, how could the church in these countries – with their moral mandate - fail to hold them accountable? The pincer movement of North and South responses harmonising local churches and Christian NGOs provided an effective platform for action. And this action would not be an overnight wonder. This campaign was never envisaged as a short term sprint but rather as a long haul marathon towards and even beyond 2015.

But this was also to be a redemptive movement. Micah never envisaged itself as a hostile anti-government protest. Instead it would stand as critical partners with government, critiquing, highlighting injustices and condemning where necessary but always as partners committed to fulfilling the promises made and bringing the wealth of our constituency in order to accomplish this.