

Poverty isn't history. Despite the gains made by *Make Poverty History* in 2005, today more than a billion people remain trapped in a state of absolute poverty. We live in a world where inaction by the powerful denies education and health to the powerless. Our unjust trade rules condemn millions to enduring poverty. Our complacency over climate change hits the poor hardest. Poverty makes modern-day slaves of vulnerable people – children, women, the poor everywhere.

Blow the Whistle is the first in a series of Micah Challenge campaigns in the UK that will focus Christians and the UK Government on the promises we made, in 2000 (the Millennium Development Goals - MDGs), to the world's poorest people to halve poverty by 2015. 2007 marks the halfway point to 2015.

To date, there has been some progress in some areas. Positive steps were taken at the 2005 G8 in Gleneagles. However, far too many of the MDGs remain desperately off track and in some cases, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, we are actually going backwards. Together we must all do much more, to realise this aim.

Micah Challenge calls on the UK government and the G8 to keep their promises and:

Trade

- Stop forcing developing countries to liberalise through regional trade agreements and allow them the flexibility to choose their own trade policies according to their development needs
 - The UK government to increase significantly its efforts to influence other EU member states to produce public positions on EPAs that are at least in line with its own position, and actively and publicly raise its objections to EPAs with the European Council and European Commission
- Trade is a vital tool in achieving poverty reduction and attaining all of the MDGs, and has the potential to enable millions of people to lift themselves out of poverty. Within households, trade can generate money for food, clothes, and medicines, amongst other things. At the national level, the income generated through trade can be used to develop infrastructure and industry and to deliver health, education, water, and sanitation services. Rules related to intellectual property rights are negotiated within trade agreements and directly affect the access of poor people to antiretrovirals and other drugs. Whilst talks at the WTO are stalled, developing countries remain under immense pressure to sign up to regional trade agreements that pose a major threat to development and poverty reduction.

Education

- The UK Government to act as a donor champion for inclusive education within the FTI and also in the funding of the 10-year education plans developed by a number of African countries. The UK and other donors must ensure that these plans are inclusive before they fund them
- G8 donors who have not yet reached their *fair share* of overall funding for basic education to commit to reach this level by 2008, when an additional 40 countries are likely to be able to significantly expand their basic education programs

Despite concerted efforts to achieve Education For All by 2015, 77 million children remain out of school. Universal education goals will only be achieved if targeted efforts are made to reach those groups of children systematically excluded from receiving an education - chief among these are disabled children (only 2% of disabled children in developing countries receive an education).

HIV and AIDS

- Work towards ensuring that new and affordable generic versions of all essential medicines become rapidly and widely available
- Ensure that child-specific treatment targets are included in broader HIV treatment targets and that all children living with HIV have access to antiretroviral therapy, such as cotrimoxazole.
- Ensure that all HIV positive women have access to appropriate interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission, including new and more effective medicines
- Adopt an international agreement on a funding plan that will deliver the commitment to universal access by 2010, and ensure that every nationally agreed target is financed in full with predictable, untied funding

The global fight against HIV and AIDS is one of the world's highest development priorities. In 2005, at the G8 Gleneagles summit, world leaders committed to achieving universal access to HIV treatment by 2010. Currently only 1.3 million people in the developing world are receiving antiretroviral drugs, out of 6.5 million people who need them. Less than 5% of the estimated 700,000 HIV positive children in need of paediatric AIDS treatment are receiving it – and most of those are in developed countries. Unfair trade rules are preventing cheaper generic drugs becoming available and are pricing out the poor.

Climate Change

- Agree to limit global warming to below 2 degrees - negotiate by the end of 2008 an international agreement, building on Kyoto, to come into effect when the first round of Kyoto ends in 2012
- Commit to reducing collective emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050; introduce domestic carbon budgets that will deliver sustained annual reductions, reaching at least 30% by 2020
- Substantially increase funding, and give all necessary support, to developing countries to help them adapt to climate change and gain access to sufficient low/zero carbon technology to grow sustainably
- Reach agreement on the management of the Adaptation Fund in 2007, so that finances can be released for urgent, on-the-ground adaptation work in developing countries

Climate change is already adversely affecting human lives and livelihoods in developing countries. The effects of climate change include food insecurity, water scarcity, ill health, migration, loss of biodiversity, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, all of which hit the poorest hardest. Climate change threatens attainment of the MDGs and places 40% of international poverty reduction investment at risk. Action is needed to halt human-induced climate change (mitigation) and to increase support to developing countries to deal with its effects (adaptation).

Water and Sanitation

- Galvanise urgent international action in this sector and begin working towards a new Global Action Plan for water and sanitation, with clear and measurable targets and indicators

Currently 1.2 billion people do not have access to safe water. Around one third of the world's population do not have access to basic sanitation such as a toilet or latrine. This has a huge impact on health and livelihoods. More than half of all of the hospital beds in the world are occupied by people suffering from water-related diseases. Five thousand children die every day from dirty water and inadequate sanitation, and women and children have to spend time collecting water rather than working or going to school. The MDGs commit governments to halving the number of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015. Progress to date is much too slow – at current rates, in Africa the water target will not be met by 2050, and the sanitation target until 2100.

More detailed information on the calls for policy change can be found in the "What are we asking for?" section of the Micah Challenge website.

Micah Challenge UK is a coalition of Christian organisations and churches in Britain, uniting Christians in their concern to fight global poverty. Micah Challenge aims to ensure that the UK government and G8 honour the commitments they made to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Over the coming years, further, different calls for policy change will be made upon the British Government, as necessary.