



Witness through Action: Young People and the MDGs

At the dawn of the new millennium in September 2000, all member countries gathered at the United Nations Headquarters for the Millennium Summit. There they committed to improving the quality of life in developing countries. These heads of state agreed upon a set of realistic, measurable, and achievable goals called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which apply internationally and within each country at the domestic front. Not only did they agree upon goals, they also agreed upon a deadline - 2015.

The majority of the world's young people face poverty, hunger, insufficient educational opportunities, insufficient access to health care, limited employment opportunities, limited access to communication and lack of space in decision making processes. With all these global realities young people in many parts of the world feel hopeless, isolated, and alone. It is a sad paradox that some young people in affluent countries feel hopelessness and a loneliness that leads them to see suicide as a solution to their problems.

Realizing that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to the complex and multifaceted challenges of the MDGs, young people are an integral piece of the puzzle of achieving the Goals. The past decade has seen a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in decision-making, as successful efforts by governments to engage youth have led to better policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Far too often, however, the roles played by youth in these processes are marginal. Why? Youth continue to face institutionalized prejudices in many quarters that see youth as lacking expertise, experience, capacity, or drive. Rather than being viewed as a problem or risk to be contained or solved, youth should be recognized as social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive solutions to societal issues that directly affect them.

We, the young people gathered here today together with those whom we represent, with a diversity of experiences, believe that it is necessary that we are provided with basic resources such as access to education,, food, employment, health care, information and communication technologies. These basic resources are crucial for the development of young people in the world today.

Our Commitments and Call to the Church and Civil Society

We commit ourselves to become active in the struggle against hunger, poverty, discrimination, and exclusion and to build a world of peace and justice.

We commit ourselves to think and act responsibly in both our personal lives and in our communities in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We call upon other young people to share their experiences with others thereby encouraging one another to take up the challenge to engage in social, political and economic issues.

We call upon Church and civil society leaders to support and accompany young people in their actions to eradicate poverty and hunger.

We call upon Church leaders to be witnesses to young people, of faith lived in action for justice and equality.

We call upon civil society to hold governments accountable to their promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Declared by: young people at World Youth Day 2008; Caritas Australia; IYCS-JECI; IYCW-JOCI; MIJARC-ICMARY; and IMCS-MIEC Pax Romana