

Justice Peace Links

Justice and Peace Committee – Churchwide Coordinating Team – Presbyterian Women

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Millennium Development Goals

by Louise Davidson



Background

In September 2000, the United Nations (UN) convened the Millennium Summit, during which eight goals were articulated, to address the world's greatest development problems. One hundred eighty-nine nations have since adopted the goals, pledging to achieve them by 2015.

Three of the goals speak specifically to improving life for women and children, but many of the other goals also target problems that disproportionately affect women and children. According to the UN, one billion people live in poverty and the majority of them are women.¹

“Women’s poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy . . . lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision-making process.”²

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are

- 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 development³

“We will have time to reach the Goals—worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries—but only if we break with business as usual,” said former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. “We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline.”⁴

The eight MDGs break down into 18 quantifiable targets that are measured by 48 indicators. Such broad and wide-reaching goals take organization, effort and time to achieve. “It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed,” Annan added. “So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals.”⁵

Various United Nations commissions and bodies have incorporated the goals into their work and plans. For example, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) meets annually to call the attention of world governments to the status of women. The theme of the 2008 meeting, “Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,” related to the third MDG. National delegations and hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (including a group of Presbyterian Women) advocated for stronger efforts on behalf of women.

Louise Davidson is the PW vice moderator for justice and peace.

NOTES

1. “Fast Facts: The Faces of Poverty.” The UN Millennium Project, 2006. See www.unmillenniumproject.org/resources/fastfacts_e.htm.
2. “Women and Poverty,” *Platform for Action* (The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995), A.47, 51. Available at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/poverty.htm; accessed December 16, 2008.
3. “Goals, targets and indicators.” Millennium Project. www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/gti.htm; accessed December 16, 2008.
4. Kofi Annan. Speech at the St. Paul’s Cathedral event on the Millennium Development Goals, London, July 7, 2005. See www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/sgsm9984.html; accessed December 16, 2008.
5. Ibid.

Biblical/Theological Dimensions

Matthew 25:34–40 reminds us that God has called us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, provide drink for the thirsty, and visit those in prison. These basic needs are the same ones to which the Millennium Development Goals speak.

Genesis 1 describes how God gave people the responsibility to care for the earth. Since the evidence of human failure to live out the biblical vision of peace is all around us, we are called to lend our voices and energies to changing the status quo.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Position

The Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation (available through www.pcusa.org/acswp) summarizes the history of advocacy work and policy statements in the PC(USA) and its predecessor organizations. The 12 chapters cover topics of health, economics, war, peace, human rights, gender, race and more.

Presbyterian Women adopted a statement in support of the United Nations and has encouraged United States government representatives to offer generous financial support to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Visit www.pcusa.org/pw/justice/unsupport to learn more.

What Can Presbyterian Women Do?

- Pray for all those whose lives need the kind of improvement the Millennium Development Goals would provide.
- Pray for the wisdom and strong efforts of leaders in nations everywhere to achieve the MDGs.
- Be alert for opportunities to advocate for people who are hungry, abused, homeless, without access to clean water, in need of medical care, victims of violence or war, or deprived of education. Don't forget about people in your own community.
- Follow and support national and international efforts to achieve the MDGs at www.mdgmonitor.org. Use what you learn there to inform your prayer and advocacy.
- Order a pack of PW's wallet cards with the Millennium Development Goals on one side and the PW Purpose on the other. Order item PWR-08-404 through Presbyterian Distribution Service

(800/524-2612); pack of 25, limit two free packs per order*; additional packs \$1.00 each.*

- Become informed about the annual meeting of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Learn about the 2008 CSW's 22 conclusions on "financing for gender equality and women's empowerment," from the meeting around that theme. The conclusions may be found on pages 7–15 of the Report of the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women, available at www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm. Or read a press release summarizing the conclusions at www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2008/wom1679.doc.htm.

In 2009, the CSW will be held February 28–March 13 and will focus on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. Visit www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw for more information on the meeting.

Beginning in fall 2009, watch for information on the 2010 commission meeting.

- Invite a member of the PW delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women to your next PW event. To find a delegation member near you, email PW_PCUSA@pcusa.org.

*Plus shipping and handling, 10% of order total, \$5.25 minimum, \$65 maximum



A Millennium Village: Mayange is a village of returnees—roughly 5,000 people—who came back to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Villages like Mayange need improved infrastructure and support to accomplish the eight Millennium Development Goals.

photo courtesy of unmillenniumproject.org



WEB RESOURCES

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals

The official web site for the UN's Millennium Development Goals, with background information, news, statements, a calendar and more

www.un.org/millenniumgoals

MDG Monitor

A web site that tracks progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; measures progress by country and by goal; and provides the latest news

www.mdgmonitor.org

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP is a network that coordinates global and national efforts to reach the MDGs, particularly the ones that relate to poverty, the environment and HIV/AIDS.

www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The CSW is dedicated to gender equality and advancement of women; annual meetings of the CSW evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate policies for gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw

The Women, Faith and Development Alliance

A partnership of faith, development and women's organizations that works to end global poverty and empower women and girls, calling governmental attention to the Millennium Development Goals

www.wfd-alliance.org

The Presbyterian Washington Office

The public policy information and advocacy office of the PC(USA) that advocates, and helps the church to advocate, social witness perspectives and policies of the PC(USA) to the U.S. government

www.pcusa.org/washington

The Presbyterian United Nations Office

The Presbyterian UN Office represents the PC(USA) at the United Nations and advocates the denomination's concerns to the United Nations.

www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/un

Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation

A collection of the advocacy statements of the PC(USA) and its predecessor denominations

[http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm\\$f=templates\\$3.0](http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$f=templates$3.0)

Also available in Presbyterian resource centers

