Hunger No More

By Terry Woodnorth

“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24, TNIV)

June 7, 2005, National Hunger Awareness Day

Hunger No More. Make Hunger History. Make Poverty History. The One Campaign. The Micah Challenge. Global Call to Action Against Poverty. The Hunger-Free Communities Act. Millennium Development Goals Resolution. These slogans, campaigns and legislative initiatives represent a movement that is growing in size and intensity to heed the call to act justly in response to the needs of the poor and hungry of our world.

Is it realistic to hope that poverty and hunger can be reduced so dramatically in the next decade that these scourges upon humanity can really become history, or at least be radically reduced? Hunger advocates, entertainment stars, and political and faith community leaders have come together as a diverse coalition to answer that question with a resounding Yes!

I joined more than 600 Christians (from food pantry workers to advocates against hunger to Executive Directors of relief and development organizations, primarily from the United States, but also from other countries including Canada and Haiti) on the campus of American University in Washington, DC, for the conference One Table, Many Voices: A Mobilization to Overcome Poverty & Hunger (http://www.onetableconference.org/). We gathered June 4-7, 2005, for worship, reflection, advocacy training, and lobbying on Capitol Hill. It was described as the first time that so many people, organizations, and denominations have come together to bear witness for those who are hungry and poor. The song “Let Justice Roll” based on Amos 5:24 permeated the worship time during the conference.

The conference was co-sponsored by Bread for the World (http://www.bread.org) and Call to Renewal (http://www.calltorenewal.org). Bread for the World is a nonpartisan citizens’ movement of 54,000 people of faith, including 2500 churches, which helps hungry people by lobbying our nation’s decision makers on legislation that addresses hunger in our communities and around the world. Call to
Renewal is a national network of churches, faith-based organizations, and individuals working to overcome poverty in America.

What’s at Stake?

Worldwide, 10 million children die every year from preventable causes. Over 800 million people suffer from hunger. One woman dies every minute due to pregnancy or childbirth; 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water. Tuberculosis and malaria are on the rise—500 people die of TB everyday. There are 300-500 million cases of malaria each year.

In the United States, people are considered food insecure and at risk of hunger when they do not know where their next meal will come from or have to cut back on the types and amount of food they eat because they do not have enough money. In 2003, more than 36 million people, including 13 million children, were at risk of hunger in the United States. One in four people in a soup kitchen line is a child.

What Has Been Promised in the Past?

In 1963, President Kennedy told delegates to the first World Food Congress, “We have the means, we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will.”

As a result of the 1996 World Food Summit, the U.S. government adopted the goal to cut U.S. food insecurity in half by 2010.

In September 2000, 147 leaders and 189 nations, including the U.S., affirmed a set of international development goals in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm). Known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) they have helped focus the energy and resources of the nations of the world on a common vision to address the issues of hunger, poverty and health. The promises found in the “Development and poverty eradication” section of the Declaration include the following:

11. We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.

19. We further resolve to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world’s people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water.

One of the most important paragraphs from the Declaration is paragraph 13:
Success in meeting these objectives depends, *inter alia*, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems. We are committed to an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system.

**International Campaigns**

A number of related campaigns are now in full swing to rally support behind these promises to reduce hunger and poverty.

The **Micah Challenge** ([http://www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org)) is a global Christian campaign that aims to deepen engagement with the poor and to challenge leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015.

The **ONE Campaign** ([http://www.one.org/](http://www.one.org/)) is an effort by Americans to rally Americans—ONE by ONE—through a diverse coalition of faith-based and anti-poverty organizers to show the steps people can take, ONE by ONE, to fight global AIDS and poverty. You may have even seen the ONE video on television ([http://www.sun.com/one](http://www.sun.com/one)). **Make Poverty History** in the UK ([http://www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)) and **Make Poverty History** in Canada ([http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca)) are similar campaigns.

The **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) ([http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)) are derived from the Millennium Declaration. In recent decades, many countries have made tremendous strides in improving the livelihoods of their people, but progress has slowed.

The MDGs provide a framework for designing and implementing development programs. International institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, as well as governments, the private sector, private voluntary organizations (also now often referred to as civil society organizations), and citizens groups recognize their importance and usefulness. The MDGs are a valuable tool for raising citizen awareness, coordinating action, and evaluating progress in the global effort to provide basic living conditions to millions of poor and hungry people. The following is a summary of those goals:

**Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

**Target 1:** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

**Target 2:** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

**Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education**

**Target 3:** Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development
Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally.

Target 13: Address the special needs of the least developed countries (LDC). Includes: tariff and quota free access for LDC exports; enhanced program of debt relief for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for countries committed to poverty reduction.

U.S. Domestic Campaign

The Hunger-Free Communities Act, introduced in the U.S. Senate on May 25 and in the U.S. House of Representatives on May 26, would commit the United States to the goals of cutting U.S. food insecurity and hunger in half by 2010, ending U.S. hunger by 2015, and requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture to report annually on progress toward those goals. It includes sense-of-Congress language protecting the structure and funding for the national nutrition programs, which include the Food Stamp Program (http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/), and National School Lunch Program (http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/default.htm).
Further, it authorizes $50 million for a grant program that would fund grassroots groups who collaborate to develop innovative strategies to end hunger, provide direct assistance and strengthen public programs. Finally, it authorizes collection of hunger data at the county level.

“With the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives introducing this bill on consecutive days, a clarion call has been sent to our nation’s leaders that we are moving closer to ending hunger in our nation,” said Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. “This legislation will also empower local groups to work together on solutions that fit the circumstances in their communities.”

Signs of Hope


The most Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa.