

Promises, promises!

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We've all made promises, but keeping them is a different matter. **Youth Topics** looks at the promises the world's governments have made to reduce poverty; how these promises are progressing; and what we can do to make sure they are kept.

Activity 1 Broken promises

AIM: To explore our own experiences of promises

Break the group up into pairs and ask them to describe to each other any promises they have made and why. Have they made promises and not kept them, or did others make them promises that were then broken? What were the consequences? How did they feel?

Activity 2 Millennium dreams

AIM: To introduce the promise made by world governments in 2000



Ask the group to write down or draw on a large sheet of paper anything that happened in the year 2000. As well as personal things, encourage them to think of events in the news. Tell them about a promise made by all 189 member governments of the UN to halve world poverty by the year 2015. Ask them to draw something to represent this promise.

DISCUSS: Is it possible to keep such a promise? What might the obstacles be?

Activity 4 Ana Maiba's story

AIM: To relate the MDGs to real people's lives

Ask people to match as many of the MDGs as they can to the following case study.

Ana's day begins at dawn with a long train journey to collect three bags of charcoal, each weighing 50kgs (almost eight stone). The trip there and back takes all day. When she finally returns home she has to split the charcoal into smaller bags to sell.

Ana lives in a small town in Zambia. She is a middle-aged mother bringing up

seven children on her own. 'Whatever profits I make are never adequate to feed my whole family,' she says.

Ana is not only suffering from malnutrition, but also living with HIV, which has weakened her immune system. If she dies, her children will have to fend for themselves. *continued over...*

Activity 3 Goal!

AIM: To introduce and explore the Millennium Development Goals

Explain that, to fulfil their promise, governments set themselves eight goals. These were called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They promised that, compared with figures for 1990, they would:

- halve the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 (70p) a day and halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger
 - ensure all children get a primary education
 - ensure girls have the same access to school as boys
 - cut infant- and child-deaths by two-thirds
 - reduce the number of women dying in childbirth by three-quarters
 - combat HIV, malaria and other major diseases
 - halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, transform the lives of 100 million people living in slums and reverse the loss of environmental resources
 - create fairer trade rules, reduce debt for the poorest countries, increase aid, improve employment for young people, and provide better access to affordable drugs and technology.
- (Visit www.un.org/millenniumgoals or contact CAFOD for an MDGs poster).

Write each goal onto a separate slip of paper. Ask the group to rank the goals in order of importance. The point of the exercise is to provoke discussion, as there is obviously no right answer.

Activity 4 Ana Maiba's story continued...

DISCUSS: What actions on the part of governments would most help Ana and her family?



The money Ana Maiba makes from selling charcoal is barely enough to feed herself and her family

Activity 5 The clock is ticking

AIM: To explore how far governments are progressing toward the MDGs

Ask the group to vote on a scale of 1-10 (1 = no progress, 10 = all sorted) on how close they think each goal is to being met by 2015. Record the votes. Then read the information below* and ask the group to vote again.

Goal 1

- 1.2 billion people – that's around a fifth of the world's population – still survive on less than 70p per day.
- In sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia extreme poverty has increased.
- In other parts of the world the situation is either the same or has improved.

Goal 2

- 114 million children worldwide still do not attend school. That's equivalent to almost twice the total population of the UK.
- In the least-developed countries, only six out of ten children go to school.
- In most other regions progress is being made.

Goal 3

- In a quarter of countries, fewer than eight girls for every ten boys go to school.
- Progress has been made in most other regions.

Goal 4

- Nearly 11 million children under the age of five still die every

year in poor countries.

- In sub-Saharan Africa the number of children who die before they reach the age of five has increased since 1990.
- Other areas are making progress.

Goal 5

- Half a million women die in pregnancy or childbirth each year.
- There's little indication of progress anywhere in the developing world.

Goal 6

- One million people die each year from malaria and 1.6 million from tuberculosis.
- HIV is the main cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth cause of death worldwide.
- Only two countries have managed to combat the spread of HIV.

Goal 7

- More than one billion people do not have safe water to drink and 2.4 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation.
- Urban slums are expanding in developing regions.

- The number of threatened species is growing.

Goal 8

- Unfair trade rules remain the major obstacle to development.
- In 2004, the richest countries voted against giving 100 per cent debt relief to the poorest countries.
- Although UK aid levels are rising, the global level of aid given to poorer countries is falling.
- Poor countries still have to pay for seeds patented by multinational companies (see www.christianaid.org.uk/indepth/0001biot/biotech for more info).

DISCUSS: Were there any changes in votes? Were the group surprised by how much or how little progress has been made? What do they feel now about the MDGs and the governments' promises?



* Taken from http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_coverfinal.htm

Activity 6 Trade not aid?

AIM: To examine the underlying causes of poverty and how they can be tackled

Explain that the leaders of the world's eight richest countries will discuss the MDGs at their meeting in Scotland in 2005. What does the group think their priorities should be? What do they suggest ordinary people could do to influence these leaders? How important does the group think fair trade rules are to achieving these goals? Visit www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk to find out about the Trade Justice Movement, and for info and ideas of what your group can do to make trade justice a reality.

CAFOD, Christian Aid and SCIAF endorse the MDGs as targets for improving the lives of millions of the world's poorest people. We believe changing trade rules to benefit poor people offers one of the best chances of meeting the MDGs.