

**JUST Notes**  
**SPECIAL ISSUE ON**  
**October 17, Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**  
**October, 2007**

**We promise to stand with people who are poor by working with others  
to alleviate conditions of poverty and oppression**

--Promise Chapter 2006  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange

**EARTH CHARTER—PRINCIPLE III: Social and Economic Justice**

**13. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.**

**MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL #1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

**October 17** is the annual observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The observance of this day began after a 2000 international summit of the United Nations, in which developed countries pledged to eradicate poverty and hunger by 2015. One of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

**DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY**

**Extreme (or absolute) poverty:** Living in extreme poverty (less than \$1 a day) means not being able to afford the most basic necessities to ensure survival. 8 million people a year die from absolute poverty.

**Moderate poverty:** Moderate poverty, defined as earning about \$1 to \$2 a day, enables households to just barely meet their basic needs, but they still must forgo many of the things-education, health care-that many of us take for granted. The smallest misfortune (health issue, job loss, etc.) threatens survival.

**Relative poverty:** Lastly, relative poverty means that a household has an income below the national average. --NetAid

**THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

- About 1 billion people globally live in extreme poverty on an income of just \$1 a day, of whom 700 million live in Asia and the Pacific. Many of the poor lack access to basic health services. --World Health Organization
- Each year, more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive.
- More than 800 million go hungry each day. Over 100 million primary school-age children cannot go to school. --NetAid
- Women experience the highest level of poverty. Rural female-headed households are at the bottom of the poverty chain.
- The top seven developed countries in the world (called the G-7) have 10% of the world's population and 63% of the wealth.
- Some 115 million children do not attend primary school; in addition, one in six of the world's adults is illiterate.

- Conflict is a key obstacle to overcoming poverty. Since 1990, conflicts have killed as many as 3.6 million people and have injured many millions more.
- Today only 10% of global spending on medical research and development is directed at the diseases of the poorest 90% of the world's people.
- Diarrhea—caused by unclean drinking water—is a major killer of young children in developing nations: in the 1990s it killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict in the Second World War.
- Every year, more than 10 million children die of preventable illnesses—30,000 a day. Moreover, more than 500,000 women a year die in pregnancy and childbirth.
 

--Education for Justice
- Children in the developing world spend most of their childhood struggling to survive, without much hope for a secure, productive life. They face incredible odds --of the 57 million people worldwide who died last year, 10.5 million of them were children less than five years old. The majority of these children — some 98 percent — were in developing nations.
 

-- CARE- <http://www.care.org/campaigns/childrenpoverty/index.asp>
- Today, 37 million Americans—and 1 in 6 children—are struggling in poverty, making hard choices between food, health care, heat and rent. Since 2000, the number of poor Americans has grown by more than 6 million.
- Top 10 states with highest poverty rate between 2004-2005: Mississippi, Louisiana, District of Columbia, New Mexico, West Virginia, Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky and Oklahoma.
- Top 10 cities (100,000 or more population) with highest rate of child poverty: Atlanta, GA; Detroit, MI; Long Beach, Ca; Miami, FL; Milwaukee, WI; El Paso, TX; Memphis, TN; New Orleans, LA; Philadelphia, PA and Baltimore, MD.
- The number of Americans living in extreme poverty remains the highest level on record, since data first became available in 1975.
 

--Poverty USA
- The ratio of average CEO pay (now \$11.8 million) to worker pay (now \$27,460) spiked up from 301-to-1 in 2003 to 431-to-1 in 2004.
 

--Education for Justice

## **SAMPLE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

- The poorest countries of the world account for only 0.4 percent of international trade, yet they lose and estimated \$700 billion a year due to unfair trade rules. Many people concerned with poverty are pointing to statistics that show that unregulated, “free” trade primarily benefits wealthy corporations and wealthy countries; poverty is increasing around the world despite increased free trade. They point to the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor has increased under free trade.
- Globalization, which seeks the lowest wages in countries of the South, relies on women and child labor. It is women and children who are concentrated in sweatshops, export processing zones and sub-contracted work. Discrimination in the labor market places women in the lowest-paid jobs.
- In the Global South, women, more than men, are responsible for food crops, which are affected negatively by agricultural imports from Northern countries. In Senegal the reduction of trade barriers and the free entry of agricultural goods from heavily government-subsidized EU countries has threatened the traditional products (tomatoes, onions and garlic) of female peasant farmers.
 

--Education for Justice

- Biofuels and Small Farmers - It has been a very aggressive cycle against small farmers and against nature. The export of subsidized grain from the United States and the European Union has led to the bankruptcy of the small growers from the countries of origin and the importing countries. Large-scale cultivation of monocrops such as soybeans in the Latin American southern cone has spread, wiping out multifunctional farms, and its technologies have contaminated millions of hectares of soil and water.
- The United States is currently the largest importer of Brazilian ethanol. Last year it imported 1.74 billion liters, or 58% of the total three billion liters that Brazil exported. There is concern that while expansion of the ethanol industry may boost Brazil's GDP and some Brazilians will become very wealthy in the process, the majority of the population will not benefit from the ethanol export boom. It is likely the livelihoods of many Brazilians, especially the rural poor, will be subordinated to maintain U.S. consumption. -- Americas Program
- Economic injustice plagues most of the world, providing a strong impetus for immigration. Given this situation, any true solution to illegal immigration. The U.S. must take into account the root causes of the poverty from which many immigrants are trying to escape. Root causes, especially those which have been perpetuated by U.S. foreign policy, have not focused on the well-being of the poorest.
- Despite recent initiatives to reduce the debt of poor countries, such as the Heavily-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), dozens of countries have still not received relief and are still enslaved to debt. High levels of debt hurt the poor because the money that governments must spend on paying interest on debts takes valuable resources away from much-needed social services in poor countries. --Education for Justice
- The world's most impoverished countries are forced to pay over \$100 million EVERY DAY to the rich world in debt repayments, while poverty kills millions of their people. --Jubilee Debt Campaign

## 0.7% AGREEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL AID

- In the March 2002 Monterrey Conference, 22 of the world's wealthiest countries agreed to make "concrete efforts" towards the goal of each giving 0.7 per cent of their national income as aid to the poorest countries. This conference was attended by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, U.S. President George Bush, French President Jacques Chirac, and many other world leaders. In the September 2002 Johannesburg Summit, these same 22 countries re-affirmed their commitment to reach the 0.7% goal. This would provide enough money to raise the \$195 billion per year. This would allow the problems of extreme poverty to be "substantially eliminated," in the words of the United Nations.
- Five countries have already met the goal: Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. In 2002 and 2003, five other countries set up a schedule: Belgium, Ireland, Finland, France, and Spain. In July 2004, the United Kingdom set up a schedule to give. In April 2005, Germany; in May 2005, Austria, Greece, Italy, and Portugal. Only six countries have not yet set up a schedule to give. These are Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United States. <http://www.poverty.com/index.html>

## OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION

- **Sign up for Call to Action** to support the efforts of those living in extreme poverty and demand the fulfillment of human rights for all. <http://www.oct17.org/Why-the-Call-to-Action.html>
- **Call your senators** and ask them to push for broad reform of the farm bill when they take up the bill. Urge Senators to ensure that the farm bill that comes to the Senate floor includes reform of commodity policies that hurt U.S. farmers of modest means and make it harder for farmers in poor

countries to feed their families; increased food stamp benefits so that U.S. families can afford a healthy diet; and more investment in rural development, especially resources targeted to the U.S. communities in greatest need. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

<http://www.bread.org/take-action/take-action-seeds-of-change.html>

- **Stand Up and Speak Out** is the growing movement of people no longer prepared to stay seated or silent in the face of poverty and inequality. On October 16th and 17th, Stand Up and Speak Out for the Millennium Development Goals. Help us break the world record. So we can break the record of broken promises. <http://www.standagainstopoverty.org/>
- **Print a letter to your government** supporting 0.7% in international aid. Take action to help achieve this goal. <http://www.poverty.com/printletter.html>
- **Saturday, October 27, 2007** --"Point 7 Now! Mobilizing American Catholic Faithful to End Global Poverty". A conference focused on the Millennium Development Goals and the need for fair trade, debt forgiveness and increased aid to poor countries in order to end extreme poverty, or, as keynote speaker Jeffrey Sachs explained, the poverty that kills. <http://www.usfca.edu/point7now/index.html>
- **Join a local advocacy group** that urges elected officials to enact just social policies. Lend your support to organizations that work with people in poverty to bring about positive changes at the state and federal level. [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)

## HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Promote Poverty Awareness Month <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/povamer.shtml>
- Millennium Development Goals <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goal1.shtml>
- Millennium Campaign to End poverty by 2015 <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/>
- The ONE Campaign seeks to raise public awareness about the issues of global poverty, hunger, disease and efforts to fight such problems in developing countries. <http://www.theonecampaign.org/>
- A distressing world hunger map that displays children and adults dying of hunger around the world. <http://www.poverty.com/>
- Jubilee Debt Campaign that demands an end to the scandal of poor countries paying money to the rich world. It calls for 100% cancellation of unpayable and unfair poor country debts. <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/>

## PRAYER

Gracious, Loving God,  
We live in a world that aches for a new beginning.  
We watch as the gap between rich and poor grows ever wider.  
We watch as children continue to die from hunger.  
We watch as your Creation continues to be in peril.  
In this time we seek your face, a face of compassion and hope,  
the promise of a new vision and a new beginning.  
Inspire us with your Spirit of justice to new possibilities and new realities.

Bless us with the energy to work for justice for all your children.  
Hearten us when the task wearies us, Nourish us with a  
foretaste of your new creation. Help us sing out with hope.  
Amen.

--Adapted from the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative.