

TAKE ACTION GUIDE

Downloading this page is your first step to taking action.

The best thing you can do to make changes in your world is to inform yourself and other people about the issues you think are important...

www.justfocus.org.nz

Did you know?

In 2000, 189 countries committed themselves to addressing the issue of poverty by the year 2015. They made eight goals, the first being to see the amount of people living in absolute poverty halved by the year 2015.

Millennium Development Goals

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 Development

You might think that that achieving these goals is impossible but all over the world countries are making amazing progress. In East Asia alone, the amount of people living in absolute poverty more than halved since 1990¹. But we could be still doing more.

Check out www.endpoverty2015.org for more info on the goals, progress made and ways to get involved.

¹<http://web.worldbank.org>

Poverty

“Global poverty is a powder keg that could be ignited by our indifference.” Bill Clinton

It's real and it's out there

Did you know that poverty is one of the key issues, if not the key issue, facing the world today? In Aotearoa New Zealand, at least 12 percent of us live in poverty². That means that some families, maybe even your family, struggle to put food on the table and to live in warm and dry accommodation. In fact 80 percent of the world's population live on less than \$20 a day and half of the world's population (that's over three billion people) live on less than \$5 a day. Imagine trying to buy food, pay the bills and even access health and education with only \$35 a week— it's near impossible! It also means that those of us who are able to live comfortably with no worries about finance only account for 20 percent of the world's population!³

The cost of poverty is severe. For some of us, not having the right amount of money may mean that we have to miss out on a movie, a mp3 player, or even a new pair of shoes. Others may have to miss out on nutritious food, heaters in winter, and petrol for the car. And some people are reduced to living in slums, begging for food, and struggling to keep dry at night. The effects of poverty have their own consequences. Every day, 26,500 – 30,000 children die due to poverty. Yearly that comes to 11 million children! And, millions of others are driven to child labour, prostitution, and fighting adult wars.

What Causes Poverty

Some people would argue that laziness and poor decisions lead to poverty. That is, the poor are blamed for their own poverty. In reality, the reverse is true. Years ago Mother Teresa, working in the slums of Calcutta, said 'It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish'. She tried to alert us to the fact that one cause of poverty is the greediness of the few in their desire to 'want' and 'have' more. The minority world uses majority world countries to produce their 'wants' at low cost, and poorer countries compete to supply richer countries with resources at a lowest price, leaving their people in conditions of poverty.

The Different Types of Poverty

We can also view poverty in different ways. One way is to think about 'absolute poverty'. We find this occurring when people end up living below minimum standards required for life. These people struggle to get the smallest essentials such as food and shelter. Another type, 'relative poverty', is about being poor compared to other people in your community. It's sort of like not being able to afford a television when everyone else in your community can easily access one, if not two, televisions. Finally, there is 'poverty of opportunity'. This is when a person just can't afford to access services which will better their lives – such as education, health, social services, and employment. For people in each of these types of poverty, overcoming their reality is a real challenge and many find themselves trapped in a 'cycle of poverty' (where generations of families and community may not be able to get out of poverty).

² http://www.nzccss.org.nz/site/page.php?page_id=99

³ <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

Take Action!

- Absolute poverty is still a very real issue for people living in the majority of the world's countries. And, even in countries like wealthy get richer the gap between the rich and the poor is going down. We need to challenge ourselves to think differently about money, wealth, the things we consume and how we relate to the person next door. The small step you make today could have a major impact in years to come.
- Think about others in Aotearoa New Zealand who may have less than you. Donate your old clothing, furniture etc to charities like the Salvation Army or give to organisations like Refugee Services. If you would like to give to a specific charity, or type of charity, use the national charities register: www.register.charities.govt.nz/CharitiesRegister/Search.aspx
- Support fair-trade goods. Even buying a fair-trade coffee can make a difference to a person's or community's ability to break the poverty cycle. Check out the Fair-trade Australia/New Zealand register for products, shops and locations: www.fta.org.au/locator?PHPSESSID=f1fbf33a79d4cc79662ae4dfaf04175b
- Instead of buying expensive presents at times like Christmas, consider purchasing an Oxfam Unwrapped gift. Spending as little as \$12 for a pair of chickens (free range of course) can make a real difference and can contribute to giving individuals and communities the resources they need to make a difference in their own life. www.oxfamunwrapped.org.nz
- Join the Make Poverty History campaign or the War on Want campaign, download resources and take political action. Check out www.makepovertyhistory.org.nz/furtheraction.html and www.waronwant.org/ for details.
- Join the Youth Against Poverty group on Myspace www.myspace.com/youthagainstopoverty or Facebook (http://apps.facebook.com/causes/view_cause/1941)

Where can I learn more?

Websites

- Global Issues: Articles on poverty www.globalissues.org/article
- Poverty.com www.poverty.com
- War on Want www.waronwant.org
- Make Poverty History www.makepovertyhistory.org.nz

Online resources

- Office for Children's Commission: Child poverty article www.occ.org.nz/home/childpoverty/about_child_poverty
- Make Poverty History – Click http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=gFfllW_xQq4&feature=related
- Sarah McLachlan - World On Fire <http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=hzoNlnZ2CIQ>

Other Media

- *Global Bits Issue 10: The Measure of Money* available from www.globaled.org.nz/gec_media/files/Global%20Bits/GB%206%20Money.pdf
- *The No Nonsense guide to World Poverty*, by Jeremy Seabrook. Available from the Global Education Library
- *Paying the Price: Why Rich Countries must invest Now in a War on Poverty*, by Oxfam International and Arabella Fraser. Available from the Global Education Library.