



Living in God's amazing grace

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

ISSUE BRIEF

GLOBAL POVERTY AND HUNGER

ELCA Policy Base

From the messages of the Old Testament prophets to the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Bible declares God's outrage at the plight of those living in poverty and suffering from hunger. As a result of God's expressed concern for the poor and oppressed, the Bible presents a unique challenge to people of faith to respond to economic disparities in our world so that all people experience the fruits of the earth and live with dignity.

The ELCA social statement on economic life, *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, commits us to "scrutiny of how specific policies and practices affect people and nations that are the poorest," and calls us to advocate for "changes to make policies of economic growth, trade, and investment more beneficial to those who are poor."

Additionally, the ELCA social statement *For Peace in God's World* affirms that "our nation has responsibility to contribute a portion of its wealth to people in poorer nations through effective economic assistance," and that the purpose of such assistance "should be to reduce hunger and poverty in sustainable and environmentally sound ways."

The statement also acknowledges that, "While the United States has been generous in providing humanitarian aid, our nation dramatically trails the rest of the industrialized world in providing development assistance relative to our production of wealth."

Background

Today, extreme poverty traps more than one billion of God's children in a vicious cycle of hunger and disease. One-fifth of the global population goes to bed hungry each night, and 70 percent of those living on less than one dollar per day are women and girls. Six million people die each year from HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—all preventable and treatable illnesses.

In 2000, 189 countries expressed their commitment to ending global poverty and fighting pandemic disease by signing the Millennium Declaration. Based on the declaration, eight inter-related targets toward the elimination of extreme poverty by 2015—the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—were established. The goals aim to achieve the following by 2015:

1. Reduce by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger and living on less than \$1 a day
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five
5. Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio
6. Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Create a global partnership for development with targets on aid, debt and trade



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Developing countries are primarily responsible for achieving the first seven MDGs. Industrialized countries are primarily responsible for goal number eight – to create a global partnership with targets for aid, debt and trade.

In 2003, ONE: The Campaign to Make Poverty History was established as the U.S. expression of international anti-poverty movements inspired by the Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP). Today, ONE has more than 100 faith-based and humanitarian partners and more than 2.5 million Americans that work together as ONE through political advocacy to achieve:

- ✓ An additional ONE percent of the U.S. budget to address deadly poverty
- ✓ Debt relief for the world's poorest countries to help them meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- ✓ Making the rules of international trade fair so all may benefit from the global economy

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has partnered with ONE and established the ONE Lutheran Campaign – the unique effort of the ELCA to engage Lutherans in the ONE Campaign. For more information on the ONE Lutheran Campaign, including information about ONE Lutheran congregations, visit www.elca.org/one.

In June 2007, the ONE Campaign launched ONE Vote '08, an unprecedented, bipartisan campaign to make global health and extreme poverty foreign policy priorities in the 2008 presidential election. The ELCA supports the goals of ONE Vote '08, and questions related to the Millennium Development Goals in this packet reflect a unified platform that the ELCA shares with ONE Vote '08. For more background on the ONE Vote '08 platform, see www.onevote08.org.

Sample Questions to Ask Your Candidates

- ✓ While the United States gives the largest volume of official development assistance when compared to every other country in the world, its giving is second to last in terms of percentage of gross national income. If elected, will you commit at least an additional 1 percent—roughly an additional \$29 billion in 2010 – of the U.S. budget for poverty-focused development assistance?
- ✓ Debt cancellation for the world's poorest countries is central to the fight against poverty and key to ensuring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many poor countries spend more each year to repay decades-old debt to the world's wealthiest countries and international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) than they do on the fight against poverty, including stopping the pandemic of HIV and AIDS, putting



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children in school and ensuring access to clean water. If elected, will you commit to expanding debt cancellation to all countries that need such relief in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals?

✓ Fair trade is a long-term solution that will help people in developing countries lift themselves out of poverty. Fair trade ensures poor countries achieve economic sustainability and self-sufficiency by allowing them to sell products more easily in the global marketplace. If elected, what will you do to help ensure that the poorest countries in the world have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy? Specifically, how would you address U.S. agriculture subsidies that depress prices and distort global markets?

✓ HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis claim more than 6 million lives each year. The poorest of the poor, especially those in Africa, suffer most from these preventable and treatable global health pandemics. We have the medicine and proven cost-effective strategies to address the pandemics. However, the moral and political will to dedicate the funding necessary to save lives are missing. If elected, will you support providing one-third of the global financing required – at least \$9.4 billion in 2008 – to fight HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria?

✓ More than 10 million children die every year in poor countries from preventable and treatable causes, like diarrhea and respiratory infections. More than 500,000 women die each year during childbirth due to a lack of adequate health care resources. If elected, will you support scaling up U.S. efforts to address child and maternal health and family planning needs in the poorest countries of the world by an additional \$2.9 billion by 2012?

✓ Education is vital to sustainable development. Today, more than 77 million primary school-aged children are not receiving the education they need for their future. If elected, will you commit to the U.S. fair-share contribution of \$3.3 billion annually to help achieve universal primary education by 2015?

✓ It is estimated that more than 1 billion people in the world do not have access to clean water. Roughly one child dies every 15 seconds from sanitation-related diarrheal diseases. If elected, would you commit to \$1.3 billion per year to help people throughout the world access clean water?

✓ More than 800 million people suffer from hunger in the world today. The U.S. helps sustain millions of those suffering from hunger by generously providing food aid, especially when emergencies strike in other countries. If not delivered properly, however, food aid can



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undermine local economies and damage the potential for long-term sustainable development. If elected, will you allow countries that receive food aid to purchase food in local and regional markets when possible, instead of shipping food aid from the U.S?

Sources

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