

# Catalyst Briefing Sheet for MPs: Poverty.

## Who we are

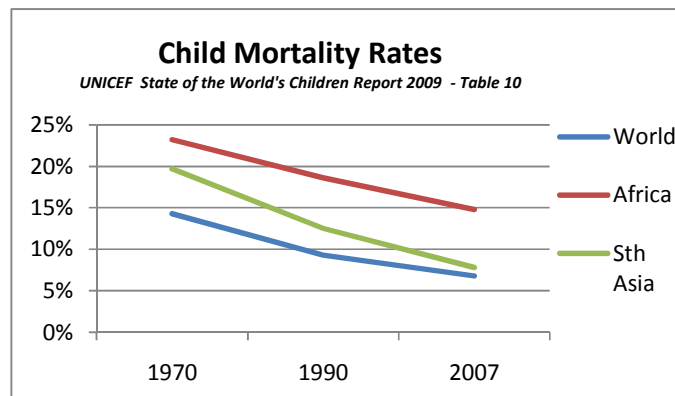
We're here as representatives of our local church, [Church Name]. We are members of our church's social justice group called 'Catalyst'. We are one of many such groups in churches across Australia.

## The Problem

Almost 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty<sup>1</sup>. This means they live on less than US\$1.25 a day, which is insufficient to meet their most basic needs. They are hungry, susceptible to disease and lack access to things Australians take for granted, such as clean water, decent sanitation and access to health care.

Child mortality is one of the most apparent and devastating outcomes of extreme poverty. Each year 8.8 million children die before reaching the age of five<sup>2</sup>. These deaths are from causes that are mostly preventable or treatable. These children die because they cannot gain access to basic hygiene, education, food, water and health care that we take for granted. As a result, a child born in a developing country is over 14 times more likely to die within the first five years of life than a child born in an industrialised country<sup>3</sup>.

Progress is being made – the proportion of children dying before five years of age fell from 93 to 72 deaths per 1,000 between 1990 and 2006<sup>4</sup> and has fallen by 64% since 1960. However this progress is now being threatened. The food price crisis, climate change, the stalling of global trade talks and the global financial crisis have the potential to reverse the gains that have been made in recent times.



## The Possibilities

We believe extreme poverty can be ended. Over the course of the last 200 years today's developed countries eliminated extreme poverty and in the last 50 years a number of newly developed countries have done the same. The Republic of Korea is a good example. In 1960 Korea's development indicators were lower than many of the world's poorest countries (per capita income for example was only 1/3 of Cambodia's today), the nation had just emerged from a civil war that claimed four million lives and destroyed half its manufacturing base and more than three quarters of its railways, the nation was ruled by a reputedly corrupt former general and a USAID report described the country as a "bottomless pit". Yet with a mix of market incentives, state

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2008), *World Development Indicators 2008*. Note that \$1.25 is the new international poverty line and refers to 'purchasing power parity' in 2005. According to the WDI2008 report "PPP can be defined as the number of units of a country's currency needed to buy the same amount of goods and services in that country as one U.S. dollar would buy in the United States".

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF

<sup>3</sup> UN Millennium Campaign - EndPoverty2015 (January2010)

<sup>4</sup> UN Millennium Campaign - EndPoverty2015 (Sept 2008) Goal 4 Fact Sheet.

direction of the economy, and substantial aid (over US\$5 billion from 1960-1980) Korea was able to eliminate extreme poverty<sup>5</sup>.

KOREA: A SUCCESS STORY	1960-65	Today
Income Per Capita (current US\$)	\$130	\$19,690
Life Expectancy at Birth	54 years	76 years
Child Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	127	5

## What We Are Asking

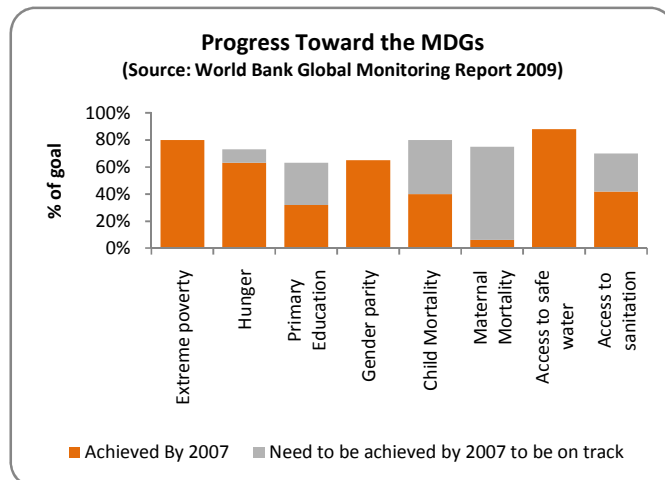
We believe Australia is not shouldering its fair share of the global effort to achieve the human development targets outlined by the Millennium Development Goals. Whilst we have been extremely appreciative of the increases in aid we believe that ***Australia should increase its aid commitment to 0.7% of GNI by 2015, in line with the commitment made by many other industrialised nations and the oft repeated 'aspirational' goal of successive Australian Governments.***

### Aid Focus

The Government has made the Millennium Development Goals a central focus of its aid program, which led to substantial increases in the 2009-10 aid budget for water and sanitation, basic education, health and rural development. These increases were welltargeted given slow progress on the education and health MDGs.

Achieving the health MDGs will require \$50-60 billion a year in development assistance by 2011-12<sup>6</sup>, of which Australia's 'fair share' is \$1180 million. ***We are calling on the***

***Australian Government to continue scaling up aid to the health sector from the current \$600 million to \$880 million in 2010-11 and \$1180 million in 2011-12.***



### Climate Change

Climate change is already impacting people living in poverty and threatens to undo the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Developing countries are more vulnerable to climate change because they are more dependent on their natural resources and have a lower capacity to cope with environmental hazards. Poor communities around the world are already suffering from a range of impacts such as more frequent droughts in Africa, a destabilising Asian monsoon, rising sea levels and more frequent and intense storms in the Pacific. Climate change cuts across all development issues and it is an absolute priority that Australia, as one of the world's highest percapita greenhouse gas emitters, makes strong contributions to global mitigation and adaptation frameworks

<sup>5</sup> Information from World Bank online database (accessed March 26, 2009) and Ha-Joon Chang (2008), *Bad Samaritans*, Bloomsberry Press

<sup>6</sup> Make Poverty History (2008), *Nine Steps to Achieving the Millennium Development Health Goals in Our Region*

*We are calling on the Australian Government to:*

- *Ensure Australia takes a lead in achieving a global agreement to keep climate change below 2° and assumes a fair share of the burden in achieving that goal;*
- *Commit at least 2% of the funds required to help developing countries adapt to climate change;*
- *Ensure that aid for climate change mitigation and adaptation is additional to achieving the international aid target of 0.7% GNI.*

## **What We Are Asking You To Do**

1. Make global poverty and realisation of the MDGs a key focus of your public service. We ask that you champion the cause of more and better aid and action on climate change as critical ways Australia can assist people living in poverty;
2. Speak up on poverty and the MDGs in the party room; in the Parliament (eg make an adjournment speech on this issue); in your electorate (eg electorate newsletter, speeches at schools).
3. Join the Parliamentary Friends of the MDGs group chaired by Julie Owens, MP, and Senator Guy Barnett.
4. Contact the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance letting them know of our concerns around aid, climate change and the MDGs.