

VOICES FOR JUSTICE 09

**4th Micah Challenge
National Gathering
September 12 -15, 2009**



REPORT FOR MEMBERS AND SENATORS

THANK YOU

Micah Challenge would like to thank all Members and Senators who supported its fourth national Voices for Justice gathering on 12-15 September 2009.

141 Members and Senators took part in Voices for Justice 09 events and meetings, with 129 briefing meetings being held with Micah Challenge supporters over two days. The meetings discussed how Australia can go beyond aspirations to give more and better aid, tackle the effects of climate change on the poor and meet our commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve global poverty by 2015.



Co-Chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of the MDGs, Julie Owens MP and Senator Guy Barnett, arrive at the Voices for Justice Opening Celebration on a Bangladeshi rickshaw.

OPENING CELEBRATION

270 Micah Challenge supporters aged 12-71 from every state and territory participated in Voices for Justice 09. Participants were welcomed to Parliament House by Julie Owens MP and Senator Guy Barnett, Co-Chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of the MDGs. 16 aid and development organisations and a broad range of church groups and church leaders were represented at the gathering. 43 school students participated in the youth program and six leaders from the Asia-Pacific Region took part in a special Pacific Leaders Stream.

POVERTY AND JUSTICE BIBLE LAUNCH

The Prime Minister, The Hon Kevin Rudd, and The Leader of the Opposition, The Hon Malcolm Turnbull, launched the Poverty and Justice Bible together in the Great Hall. This version of the bible highlights over 2,000 passages which discuss our responsibility to act for justice and care for the poor.

The Prime Minister addressed the audience at the launch:

"Faith without works is dead, and the Christian doctrine is one that is both about individual spirituality and a parallel commitment to social justice.... May it be an inspiration for many more Australians to contribute to the worldwide fight against poverty and injustice, and a better and fairer future for people of all nations, all colours and all creeds."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, 14 September 2009

In his speech Mr Turnbull also offered his support for the aims of Voices for Justice:

"On behalf of the Opposition, can I congratulate each and every one of you for your dedication and your commitment to speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves."

Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull,
14 September 2009



Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Leader of the Opposition Malcolm Turnbull receive copies of the Poverty and Justice bible.

OFFERING OF LETTERS FOR MORE AID

5612 hand-written letters from Christians around Australia addressed to the Prime Minister were presented to MPs during Voices for Justice, calling for an increase in overseas aid to the internationally agreed target of 0.7% GNI. Australia remains one of just 6 OECD countries that has not yet set a timetable to reach this aid target – a target set in 1970, representing Australia’s fair share contribution to the MDGs.

“81% of Australians believe that Australia should join other nations and lift aid to 0.7% of national income by 2015.” (Quantum Market Research survey of Australian attitudes to aid, June 2009)

“This is no time for complacency. A wealthy country like Australia should be able to do better than make the international aid target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income only aspirational. We should make it a reality.”

Judi Moylan MP, Hansard 15 September 2009

BETTER AID TO SAVE LIVES OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

MDGs 4 and 5, to Reduce Child Mortality and Improve Maternal Health, are two of the goals which lag behind the most globally. 18 of 29 developing countries in our region are not on track to achieve MDG 4. Evidence suggests that proven and cost effective interventions can reduce child deaths by at least 60%.

Voices for Justice participants demonstrated Malnutrition Upper Arm Circumference Bands to MPs, highlighting the 8.8 million children who still die each year before their



Health Workers use Malnutrition Upper Arm Circumference Bands to assess the nutrition of children under five years.

5th Birthday from preventable causes. For example, 22% of these children die from diarrhoea and 21% from pneumonia. These bands are used by health workers to check for signs of malnutrition in children under five years.

“There is something incredibly inspirational about meeting the next generation of campaigners against injustice, today’s youth who want to change the world and who may well occupy these seats in years to come. During this meeting we spoke about their concerns for today and for the future—poverty, climate change and international aid issues—and what Australia can and should be doing to fight world poverty.”

Senator Nick Xenophon, Hansard 29 October 2009

The increase in health aid in this year’s federal budget was a welcome step forward, but brings us to just half of our



Micah Challenge supporters and MPs at the Voices for Justice Opening Celebration on the Front Lawns.



129 MPs met privately with Micah Challenge supporters during Voices for Justice. Anthony Albanese MP met with passionate school students from his electorate.

fair share to meet the MDGs for health. Micah Challenge calls 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.

MDG GOAL 8 REVIEW LAUNCHED

Tim Costello, Co-Chair of Make Poverty History, launched the Millennium Development Goal 8 Review, a report from Micah Challenge and Make Poverty History, outlining Australia's progress towards MDG 8: Developing a Global Partnership for Development. Voices for Justice participants presented the reports to MPs in their meetings.

"As the deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals looms closer, Australia must go beyond aspirations and set concrete steps in place to give more and better aid, ensure trade justice, cancel poor country debt, support good governance and tackle climate change – to do our fair share to halve global poverty." (MDG Goal 8 Review Page 2)

To receive a copy of the Goal 8 Report, contact Micah Challenge National Coordinator, John Beckett: john.beckett@micahchallenge.org.au or (02) 9356 8500

MDG 'SPEED DATING' AND POLICY FORUM

Voices for Justice participants were hosted by the Parliamentary Friends of the MDGs for a unique MDG 'Speed Dating' event. MPs and Micah Challenge supporters engaged in lively rotating discussion groups, as speakers were given 60 seconds to convey their message about the MDGs. Community representatives and school students spoke about how they are engaging Australian communities on the MDGs; policy experts spoke about how Australia can come closer to meeting the MDGs; and development practitioners and community leaders from the Pacific Region spoke about the negative impact of climate change on achieving the MDGs.

In a separate event, Channel 10's Hugh Riminton facilitated a 'Policy Forum' with Bob McMullan MP, Senator Marise Payne, The Hon Greg Hunt MP and Voices for Justice participants. The forum explored how Australia can meet its commitment to the MDGs by 2015.

SURVIVE PAST FIVE 5TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Bob McMullan MP and Senator Marise Payne co-hosted the final event of Voices for Justice, a 5th Birthday Party focussing on child and maternal health. The 5th Birthday Party both celebrated the achievements made in eradicating poverty – and the lives saved, and highlighted the need for urgent action to stop more preventable deaths of women and children. MPs lit candles on the birthday cake to show their support.

Lyn Lusi, Director of HEAL Africa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, spoke about child and maternal health in the Congo:

"May the Australian Government join the Australian people represented here in raising their voice for justice on the world stage. Our children and grandchildren will remember the people of this generation, here today, as the heroes who won the third world war, the war on want."

95 MPs signed the giant 5th Birthday Card for the Prime Minister in support of an increase in health aid to ensure that every child around the world can survive to their fifth birthday and beyond.



Bronwyn Bishop MP signs the giant Birthday card at the 'Survive past five' 5th Birthday party. 95 politicians signed the card in support of increasing funding towards MDGs 4 and 5.

PROTECTING POOR COMMUNITIES FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change threatens to undo progress on the MDGs. Already there are an estimated 150,000 extra deaths each year because of climate change, most of them children. Far from making poverty history, climate change will make poverty permanent. Unless Australia takes strong action to keep warming below 2°C and supports poor countries to cope with the impacts of climate change our ability to reach the MDGs will be threatened.

Farmer Nick Crichton from rural NSW told of the impacts of climate change on his community – and expressed his concern for the world’s poor whose lives and livelihoods are already being affected by climate change. Rev Tafue Lusama, Chair of the Tuvalu Climate Action Network, and five other Pacific region leaders shared first hand about the impacts that climate change is already having, and will continue to have, on their communities.

For them climate change is personal. Rising sea levels and changes in weather patterns are threatening food security, crop production, safe water sources and displacing communities. This is why Micah Challenge calls the Australian Government to advocate for an international fund to help poorer countries adapt to climate change and commit our fair share to that fund, beyond existing contributions to overseas development.

SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Motions in support of Australia taking stronger action for the MDGs were passed in the Senate and the House of Representatives following Voices for Justice, as well as over 20 speeches from MPs in Parliament in support of the Micah Challenge campaign. Thank you to all MPs who have spoken up. If you would like to make a speech in Parliament in support of the MDGs or for more information about Micah Challenge, phone (02) 9356 8500 or see www.micahchallenge.org.au.



Community Leaders from the Asia-Pacific and Africa joined Voices for Justice participants to talk about the impact of climate change and child and maternal health in their home countries.



Voices for Justice participants present giant 5th Birthday card and 5612 personal, handwritten letters in support of increasing aid to 0.7% GNI by 2015, to the PM.

MICAH CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS CONTINUE TO TAKE ACTION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Micah Challenge supporters who attended Voices for Justice continue to spread the word about the MDGs in their communities; with several local media articles published and plans to hold 5th Birthday Parties in every electorate around Australia.

“Voices for Justice took me out of my comfort zone in a good way, I had never visited a politician before and now I feel equipped to encourage others to do the same. I learnt that things will change if we use our voices...”

“It’s a privilege to be involved in such a large movement on behalf of the poor.”

(Quotes from Voices for Justice 09 participants)

Another world record has been set this year with over 173 million people worldwide participating in STAND UP to show their support for the MDGs. Voices for Justice participants returned to their communities and took part in STAND UP with over 225,334 people around Australia as the movement to take action against poverty continues to grow.

MICAH CHALLENGE IS A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO MOBILISE CHRISTIANS TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST POVERTY AND INJUSTICE, IN SUPPORT OF THE MDGS TO HALVE GLOBAL POVERTY BY 2015. CHURCHES FROM A WIDE RANGE OF DENOMINATIONS, SCHOOLS, FAITH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS, AND INDIVIDUALS, AS WELL AS A COALITION OF MORE THAN THIRTY AID AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN. MORE THAN 101,000 CHRISTIANS IN AUSTRALIA HAVE SIGNED THE MICAH CALL IN SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

For more information about Micah Challenge, see www.micahchallenge.org.au