



SHARE THE TABLE

Micah Challenge believes that every person should be able to enjoy the good fruits of God's creation. However, in many parts of our world, creation groans under the pressure of human exploitation and misuse. Food resources are being depleted, forests are diminishing, climates are changing and sea levels are rising.

Humans are interconnected with one another and with their environment. The choices we make such as the food we eat, the clothes we buy and the amount of energy we use all contribute to these environmental pressures. In many cases, the result is that the poorest people of our world, who rely heavily on their local environment and ecosystems, are suffering.

The Australian Government, along with Individuals, churches and community groups has the capacity and opportunity to create change. We can and must do two things to achieve environmental sustainability and reduce the effects of a changing climate on the poor:

- 1) Ensure our own actions are contributing to the solution, not the problem
- 2) Ensure that we are using our resources to help poor people adapt to the changes occurring and lift themselves out of poverty

'Share the Table' events bring people together for a meal as a simple but powerful way of reminding ourselves, our communities and our leaders about our responsibility to share the earth and its resources in a way that reflects and promotes justice.

Millennium Development Goal 7 – Ensure Environmental Sustainability

MDG7 aims to ensure environmental sustainability as a way of alleviating poverty. Specifically the targets are to:

- integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes;
- reverse the loss of environmental resources,
- reduce our carbon pollution
- reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

The problem

The year 2010 was the world's equal warmest year on record. The preceding decade 2000-2010 was the warmest decade on record. Alarmingly over 75 million people in the Asia Pacific region alone are expected to be displaced due to the impacts of climate change by 2050. Entire countries, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu in the Pacific, are already becoming uninhabitable due to the impacts of climate change, including loss of fresh water supplies.

To ensure environmental sustainability, the effects of climate change can't be allowed to undermine the progress already made on the Millennium Development Goals. Australia is currently lagging behind other countries who have committed to taking action on climate change. For example, the European Union have committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% on what they were in 1990, whereas Australia has only committed to reducing its emissions by at least 3.89% from what they were in 1990 (or 5% on 2000 levels).

At the same time, around the world today there are approximately 2.6 billion people without access to sanitation and around 884 million without access to safe water. Approximately 25% of the annual 8.1 million child deaths around the world could be avoided by sanitation interventions alone. That's 2 million child lives that could be saved.

Australia's investment in water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) however, has been lacking. Currently we give only \$171 million/ year to water and sanitation programs. To do our fair share globally, we need to give AUD \$500million/year.

For Australia to do its fair share to achieve MDG7 we must:

- Take a lead by ensuring we are in the top 10 countries for reducing carbon pollution (Australia is currently ranked 39th out of 41 Annex 1 nations).
- Increase the level of aid allocated to sanitation, hygiene and water to AUD \$500 million per year by 2015 and:
- Ensure that at least 50% of this \$500 million is allocated to sanitation (the Millennium Development Goal which currently lags furthest behind)

How to run a 'Share the Table' event

1. Plan early

- Get a team together to help organise and brainstorm creative ideas.
- Choose a date and place for your event. You could arrange a particular time for the event or simply hold the meal/event as part of an existing activity. It can be anything from a large event such as a church picnic through to a small informal dinner party, or even a youth group night or church service.
- Contact your MP early to ask them to be involved and find a date that is suitable
- Register your event online at www.micahchallenge.org.au/share-the-table

2. Get creative

Brainstorm your own creative ideas about how you can best communicate the message to impact your community and your MP. Alternatively use one of these ideas:

- Invite your MP to a church picnic and present them with a picnic basket of 'recipe for success' cards.
- Hold a Masterchef or My Kitchen Rules style competition. Ask contestants to cook a sustainable meal and then enjoy eating it together afterwards. Invite your local MP to be the judge. Invite the community to taste-test and give a 'people's choice' award. See the MDG 7 education page www.micahchallenge.org.au/mdg7 for sustainable food resources.
- Consider organising a sustainable cooking class or demonstration and educating people about local produce.
- Have an international 'pot luck' style meal
- Highlight issues of water and sanitation by holding a hand or foot washing ritual as part of your event or church service.
- Hold a 'global reality' simulation meal after your church service. Download a guide at the MDG7 education page.
- Bake a cake or pie and invite people to share in their 'fair share' of the pie in a morning tea after church. Highlight the reality that the richest 20% of people in the world (Australians included) consume 80% of the world's resources. Use this as a discussion piece for discussing what it means to share the earth with justice.

3. Celebrate and Educate

- Visit the MDG7 Education Page on the Micah Challenge website - www.micahchallenge.org.au/mdg7
- Use the materials to educate people about MDG7 and the links between environmental sustainability and poverty.
- Celebrate God's provision, acknowledging your meal as a good gift, while highlighting the reality that others should also have the opportunity to enjoy the gifts of God's creation in the same way.

4. Raise your Voices

- Order your 'Recipe for Success' cards from the Micah Challenge office info@micahchallenge.org.au or by calling (02)9356 8500.
- Hand out the recipe cards at the event
- Ask other community groups, schools, workplaces or family members to get on board with signing the cards.

5. Involve your MP

- Go to the Australian Electoral Commission website at: <http://aec.gov.au> to find out the details of your local MP
- Invite your MP to come to the event. You may need to negotiate with the MP's diary secretary to find a date that suits.
- Ask your MP to speak at the event about why they care about the environment and poverty.
- Give your MP interesting and symbolic things to do such as taste testing or judging.

6. Spread the Word

- Present the 'recipe for success' cards to your MP and ask her/him to deliver the cards in person to Prime Minister Gillard.
- You could package the cards, along with letters from your community, into a 'recipe book' to present to your MP.
- If your MP can't come, try to arrange a meeting with them in their electoral office to deliver the cards. See our How to Visit a Politician guide for tips. If that proves impossible, drop the cards off or send the cards to your MP's office with a note requesting them to deliver the cards to the Prime Minister.
- Take a photo of everyone with their cards.
- Invite local media to your event and write an article for your local paper or denominational publication/website. Use the How to Contact Your Local Media resource on the Micah Challenge website.
- Take lots of photos. Email us your best photo and a story of how your event went to info@micahchallenge.org.au. The photos will be put together and presented to the Minister for Climate Change, Greg Combet and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kevin Rudd.
- Post your photos on facebook and encourage friends to hold their own 'Share the Table' event in 2011.

Contact details

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