

The G8 and the Millennium Development Goals

A guide for teachers

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are international targets for reducing global poverty. By the year 2015 these goals, if they are reached, will have lifted around 500 million people out of poverty. Fewer women will die in childbirth, fewer people will die from treatable diseases, many more boys and girls will go to school and the lives of millions of people will improve dramatically.

How did they come about?

In the year 2000, the member states of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration. This document outlines the 189 countries' commitment to the UN's principle of working towards a more just, peaceful and equal world. The MDGs, as a set of realistic and achievable targets, are central to this process. By signing up to these goals, governments of both developing and developed countries have committed themselves to working collaboratively towards a better future for all of us.

What is happening now?

Progress on the goals will be measured each year, in order to help achieve them all by 2015. For the first seven goals, the onus is on the governments of developing countries to ensure that targets are met or bettered. It is however the eighth goal, to 'build a global partnership for development', that will create the conditions necessary for achieving the other seven. With this goal, the responsibility falls on the richer countries and the wider 'global community' to reduce debt, to give more and better aid and to make trade fairer, among other measures. At the current rate of progress, many of the targets will be missed and it is therefore vital that pressure is stepped up on the global community to increase efforts to achieve them.

What progress has been made?

Hardly any of the MDG targets are on track to be met by 2015. A full update on progress can be found here: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/change_the_world_in_eight_steps/?37 (click on the final link, 'Millennium Development Goals update – are we on target?').

What is the G8 doing about the MDGs?

At the G8 in Gleneagles in 2005, the G8 promised that aid would increase by \$50 billion by 2010, with half of this, \$25 billion going to Africa. The G8 is far off track from meeting this promise, with Italy, the chair of this year's summit, being the biggest promise breaker.

The G8 describes its work on Development and Africa – with reference to the MDGs – here: http://www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/IIContesto/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_SviluppoAfrica.htm

For more information, visit:

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get_involved/campaign/health_and_education

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

<http://www.undp.org/mdg>

<http://www.endpoverty2015.org/>

For classroom activities on the Millennium Development Goals, visit:

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/change_the_world_in_eight_steps/?37