

in common

GLOBAL ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

— A 10-POINT AGENDA —

The most dangerous idea in the world today is that poverty is inevitable and irreversible.

The United Nations states, "The world today has the material and natural resources, the know-how and the people to make a poverty-free world a reality in less than a generation."

Conditions associated with poverty—such as environmental degradation, conflict, and disease— affect rich and poor, developed and developing alike. Nevertheless, the situation is far from hopeless.

Redistributing just 0.5% of global income would be enough to help the 1.3 billion people whose lack of food, education, jobs, health care, and housing denies basic human needs.

Beyond merely seeing these desperate conditions, beyond our goodwill and charity, we must stop creating poverty.

We play a role in the global trade and investment practices that directly contribute to poverty.

It lives or dies by the actions we take at the individual, business, and government level.

It's in the consumer choices we make, the awareness we raise, the assistance we volunteer, the votes we cast, the laws we pass, and in the way we conduct our business and trade. Change is possible.

1 Promoting Sustainable Development

Sustainable development occurs when economic growth does not outstrip and destroy the natural resources needed to maintain prosperity. For example, forests and vast tracts of farmland are often sacrificed for short-lived trade and foreign exchange advantages. The resulting environmental damage undermines people's abilities to support themselves, furthering the cycle of poverty.

2 Upholding Human Rights

People are the single greatest development resource. Yet, if they are denied the right to vote, speak publicly, or freely assemble, then they are prevented from contributing to the process of development.

6 Building Peace

With war comes human rights violations, disease, environmental degradation, and hunger. Under conditions such as these there can be no development.

7 Promoting Global Food Security

Hunger is often the result of global trading practices that favour food production for export rather than encouraging local food security. These practices often degrade the local environment, limiting future food production.

"WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID OF DREAMING THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE IF WE WANT THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BECOME REALITY." *Vaclav Havel, President, Czech Republic*

3 Creating an Equitable Global Economic Order

Where laws have been enacted to ensure that workers fairly share in corporate profits, the result has been a virtual explosion in a community's health, creativity, productivity and wealth. Unless a similar economic order is established for global markets, poor countries will remain poor. Existing global financial and trade systems, including unsustainable debts and trade barriers, allows profits to be primarily captured by financial institutions and their investors, with little reinvestment in some of the poorest communities that have contributed to this wealth.

**"TOGETHER WE ARE A SUPERPOWER.
IT'S A NEW DEFINITION OF SUPERPOWER—
IT IS NOT ONE, IT IS EVERYBODY."**

Jody Williams, Coordinator of the international campaign to ban landmines (ICBL)

4 Achieving Gender Equity

The face of poverty has been and continues to be overwhelmingly female. Women receive less than 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of its property. Women make up 70% of the poorest people. This fact extends well beyond women since a community's future, its children, are deprived of a chance to lead healthy productive lives when born to mothers who are malnourished, or economically and often socially disadvantaged.

5 Improving The Lives Of Children

Children who grow up malnourished, uneducated, abandoned, sold into prostitution, or forced into child labour have few if any opportunities to raise themselves out of poverty, let alone positively contribute to their community's prosperity. Investing in their health care, education, emotional well-being, and training is one of the best strategies to ensure a community's long-term prospects for development.

8 Promoting Individual & Corporate Social Responsibility

There are no enforceable international regulations that ensure fair trade and investment practices—ones that allow developing communities to fairly share in the profits. Transnational corporations profit from a lack of regulated minimum wages, child labour, unfair working conditions, and weak or non-existent environmental laws. Such conditions create communities of working poor where children are forced to work rather than go to school.

**"NEVER DOUBT FOR A MOMENT THAT A SMALL GROUP
OF DEDICATED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.
INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS."**

Margaret Mead

9 Reinvesting In Canada's Foreign Aid Program

Foreign aid is a critical resource that needs to be more directly targeted to helping meet basic human needs such as education, and health care, as well as to creating genuine opportunities for communities to help themselves. It is crucial that Canada reverse cuts to its foreign aid program, so as to assume an equitable share of global responsibility for eliminating poverty.

10 Creating New Opportunities For Citizen Participation

Historically, it has been citizens who organize and act together on issues that touch their lives that have given birth to movements that advance social causes. It is therefore essential that members of a community have the right to define, negotiate and shape their own development.

"SECURITY FOR A FEW IS INSECURITY FOR ALL."

Nelson Mandela, President, South Africa

in common is a campaign focusing on the elimination of poverty. Over 100 organizations both in Canada and in the developing world have joined together, committed to making this goal a public and political priority. The campaign is coordinated by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. Visit in common's website at www.incommon.web.net; or phone 1-888-647-4141, or email incommon@ccic.ca