

## MILLENNIUM GOAL # 2

### Universal Primary Education

#### The Goals

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

110 million children are still being denied the opportunity of going to school.  
18 million more teachers are needed if every child is to receive a quality education.

Millions of children are sitting in over-crowded classrooms for only a few hours a day. Without urgent action these children will remain in poverty and at far greater risk of HIV infection.

The most tragic and unjust dimension of this state of affairs is this: of the more than 110 million children who should be in school and who are not, two thirds are girls.

"Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could place his hands on them and pray for them. His disciples told the people to stop bothering him. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and don't try to stop them! People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom." Matt. 19:13-14

"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do unto me."  
Matt. 25: 40

## **EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

**A few days ago one woman visited us from one of the nearby villages. She lost her husband a few years ago. The village has no private school and she is unable to afford the public school. Her son, who is ten years old, works with her on the farm and has never been to school. One of her daughters was taken to the city to live with the mother of a priest where she can at least go to school. The mother totally depends on the farm to feed herself and the children. The village is too far from our own school for her son to walk.**

**There are a few public schools in the locality, but children spend six years in school and at the end, they can hardly write their names. Buildings are not adequate, basic instructional materials are not available. Sometimes they do not even have chalk to write or seats for the pupils to sit. Worst of all, teachers are not properly remunerated. As a result, pupils are not taught properly.**

**Sister Christiana Sidi, SND, Enugu, Nigeria**



### **Constitutions of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur**

6 Julie, with Françoise as co-foundress, established schools "for the gratuitous instruction of poor children to prepare them for the duties of their state of life and for the sacraments." (Rule of 1818)

17 In fidelity to Julie's preference for the poor in the most abandoned places, we choose to stand with poor people as they struggle for adequate means for human life and dignity.

18 We value the focus on education in our congregational tradition and give special attention to the educational dimension of our mission, which we carry out through a diversity of ministries among people at all levels of society.

In our world today...

**Bishop Desmond Tutu:**

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

The developing regions show an 82 percent enrollment of children in primary school when taken as a whole. However, specific regions within this total are less than that figure. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, has only 62 per cent of children enrolled in primary school. In several least developed countries approximately two out of five children are not enrolled in school.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, many children are not counted in these totals as they are excluded and invisible in their societies.<sup>2</sup>

Factors leading to exclusion (Ibid., pp.4-7) :

- 1) Poverty and inequality - Children in the poorest countries are most at risk for missing out on primary and secondary school; in poor areas, there exist poorer services and high costs for access to services; children in the poorest countries face the highest risk of death, illness and malnutrition.
- 2) Armed conflict in their country-Most countries where 1 in 5 children die before five have had armed conflict since 1999.
- 3) The spread of HIV/AIDS- Children account for an increasing proportion of people living with HIV. Many children are orphaned or are needed to care at home for those who are ill.
- 4) Discrimination- Against women and girls, ethnic discrimination or stigmatization, language barriers, those with disabilities

Factors contributing to children becoming invisible in their societies:

- 1) Lack or loss of formal identification (Not registered at birth, refugees, displaced children, orphans, street children, children in detention, children in early marriages, hazardous labor or combat and trafficked and indentured children.)
- 2) Inadequate State protection for children without parental care
- 3) Exploitation of children through trafficking and forced labor
- 4) Premature entry into marriage, hazardous labor and combat

(Ibid pp.8-9)

Additional barriers to quality education for all include lack of strong investment in the educational system, inefficiency of existing educational systems and increasing schooling costs for families- for textbooks, uniforms and school fees.<sup>3</sup>

Sources for quotes:

<sup>1</sup> UN Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. "Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals," 1990-2005.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible.

<sup>3</sup> C. Lloyd and P. Hewett. "Primary Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent Trends and Current Challenge." New York, Population Council.



B. C. Forbes:

Upon our children - how they are taught - rests the fate - or fortune - of tomorrow's world.

Thomas Berry:

Unless we are totally depraved we will seek to give to our children not only life and education but a planet with pure air and bright waters and fruitful fields, a planet that can be lived on with grace and beauty and a touch of human and earthly tenderness.

**Constitutions of  
the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur**

We are united by a common vision of the Gospel and a common call from God to follow Jesus according to our heritage in Notre Dame, in Julie's simplicity and joy. We share resources in community and make a communal response to local and world needs, especially as they are voiced by the poor.

#30

"We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals – worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries – but only if we break with business as usual.

We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals."

*United Nations Secretary-General  
Kofi A. Annan*

## WHAT WILL BECOME OF CARLOS?

Carlos lived in a shack across the street from the school in South Central Los Angeles, California, with his parents, two brothers and two sisters. Carlos, a fifth grader, was responsible for his second-grade sister, first-grade brother and sometimes the four-year-old child. The family had personal reasons which caused them to move frequently. Carlos had intense reading intervention in Grades 1, 2, and 3. In the middle of Grade 3 the family moved to their shack across from my classroom.

When Carlos entered my fifth grade classroom he came to school every other day. In a short time we got Carlos' attendance to improve. It was obvious that he was an intelligent 11-year-old, but he faked reading by decoding the first syllable and mumbling. Carlos could not attend intersession classes due to caring for his little sister. So one January when we were "off track" Carlos and I had reading classes from 7:15 to 8:15a.m. on his little front porch. He grew from a first grade reading level to a high-second grade level and was able to function when he returned to the classroom in February. His parents had become involved and we were ready to help him transition to the local 6-8 grade school.

The owners had roofed, repaired, and painted Carlos' home. It no longer looked like a shack. Then the news came. The family was being evicted. I saw Carlos at the end of June. He was not yet registered in a new school. It would be a huge school of 1500-2000 students. There would be no articulation with the school from which he came until records arrived and were pondered. What will happen to Carlos and countless others like him?

Sister Phyllis Cook, Los Angeles, CA, USA

## A Story from Peru

### EDUCATION IN PERU

Maria is an 11-year-old girl from the northern coastal region of Peru. Because of domestic violence, her mother left her father to raise Maria and her younger brother alone. Given her very limited education, mother was unable to secure a job that would allow her to support both of her children in school. The decision was made to place the boy in school and to send Maria to Lima to live with an aunt.

Maria entered our school with a second grade education and some behavior problems. The teacher noted her red, chafed hands. It was discovered that Maria was working in the mornings cutting alfalfa and coming to school in the afternoons to study. The exhaustion from her forced labor and distance from her mother limited Maria's ability to concentrate and learn.

The school began to address the reality of abuse and Maria was moved into the home of another aunt; however, there was constant threat of conflict between the two aunts. The mother appeared after several months and considered taking Maria back home; however, she was no better able to provide an education for her daughter.

Sister Liane Delsuc, Fe y Alegria School #34, Lima, Peru

## A Prayer for Universal Primary Education

**Song:** “Listen to the Children” –Karen Drucker (or song of choice)

**Voice 1:** Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” And Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them.

**Voice 2:** Jesus says: “Whatever you do to the least of these you do unto me.”

**Voice 3:** St. Julie said, “Teach them what they need to know for life.”

**All: Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur ... making known God’s goodness  
... educating for life.**

### Reader 1:

We develop educational programs which expand our knowledge and understanding of the diversity in our world community and which celebrate the richness of that heritage. *The Hallmarks of a Notre Dame Education, California*

### Reader 2:

Our essential nature—the core of our being, the authentic self—is inherently good. It **is** goodness. It is not goodness as opposed to badness; it **is** nonseparation. It **is** interconnectedness. It **is** compassion. Once we touch into that, we simply lose all desire to do harmful things to others.

*Cheri Huber- International Zen Teacher*

**All: Sisters of Notre Dame, women with hearts as wide as the world, make known God’s goodness and love of the poor through a Gospel way of life, community and prayer**

### Reader 1:

- ❖ Education is a basic human right and fundamental to the fight for human dignity and freedom. For 125 million children and 880 million adults, that right is violated everyday. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, exclusion from education will translate into growing poverty, inequality and deprivation. *Global Campaign for Education*

### Reader 2:

- ❖ Since education is a basic human right, public pressure needs to mobilize governments and the international community to fulfill their promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all people; in particular for children, women and all disadvantaged, deprived sections of society. *Global Campaign for Education*

**All: Continuing a strong educational tradition, we take our stand with poor people, especially women and children, in the most abandoned places.**

### Reflection:

Please sit quietly for the next five minutes, being aware of the breath of the Spirit that connects all beings breathing in you. For a few moments allow yourself to experience this interconnectedness.

You are invited to reflect on these questions:

- 1) A commitment to social justice requires
  - Compassion – “suffering with” – I feel others’ pain and cannot turn away.
  - Responsibility – We can act and must – and God calls us as coworkers to serve.
  - Respect – The poor are leaders too, with personalities and opinions and talents!
  - Humility – All of my life can be given in love, but earth will still not become heaven.
  - Dependence – Not I, but God in me; unless the Lord builds the house...
- What Can One Person Do? Faith to Heal a Broken World, by Sabina Alkire, et. al., p. 183
- Share an experience of any one or more of these responses
- 2) When have you “bellowed” or taken a prophetic role?
- 3) What could those in the developed countries do to help those in the developing countries advance towards this goal?
- 4) Given our resources as a Congregation, where does this reality lead us? To what does it call us?

# PRAYERS

## *Quote from Chapter Acts*

Impelled by Julie's passion that everyone experience the goodness of God, we commit ourselves to help to create a more just and loving world. #3

### Scholarships Create a Future in Nigeria

A very good example of a child who has benefited from these scholarships is a young woman, Amina Alao. Her father was known to have helped the sisters in buying newspapers. One day, the sisters discovered that his little daughter Amina, who was of school age, was not going to school because of lack of funds. The sisters decided to adopt the girl and put her in school. Being a Muslim Amina's father got a lot of criticism from his relatives and friends because they thought the sisters were looking for a way of converting Amina, but the old man was convinced that his family would be gaining from that. Amina was about ten years old then. She started right from nursery one. After three years her uncle, a secondary school principal who was the strongest in criticizing Amina's father, decided to send his own children to Our Lady's because he had seen the result of Amina's father's decision. Amina did so well in her primary education that the sisters went on to put her through secondary school, where she graduated with an excellent result. Seeing how promising she was, the sisters continued sponsoring her in her college education. Right now Amina is in her final year of college where she is majoring in Chemistry and Biology. This is an excellent example of a way Notre Dame in Nigeria has given a child an opportunity of not just completing primary education but an opportunity of receiving a total education. In a few months from now, Amina will be a certified teacher and will be able to earn some income with which she will be able to take care of herself and her family. Amina is the only one the sisters have sponsored up to college level, but there are hundreds of children that the sisters have helped obtain their primary education.

Sister Jacinta Oparah, Kwara, Nigeria

### Prayers related to topic:

That churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and houses of meditation everywhere pray that children all over the globe receive strong, vital educations...

**Hear our prayers,  
good and loving God.**

That civic and religious communities meet regularly in study groups to raise peoples awareness of the MDG issues...

**Hear our prayers,  
good and loving God.**

That each one of us initiates opportunities that involve others in prayer, study and actions that will help create an environment in which the Millennium Goals can be met...

**Hear our prayers,  
good and loving God.**

That countries, communities and individuals from around the world will connect and share resources with one another so all will have what is needed for the education of their children...

**Hear our prayers,  
good and loving God.**

## **Questions for Reflection and Conversation**

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

1. There are questions for reflection at the end of the prayer material included with this module. Before considering these questions you may want to talk about the following questions with another person or with a small group.
2. What were your feelings when you read the first page of this module? Can you use your feelings as “instructors” to help you move to a constructive response?
3. How do you see this goal in relation to the future of the Sisters of Notre Dame?
4. What relationship do you see between the quotations of B.C. Forbes and Thomas Berry in this module?
5. Sister Liane Delsuc describes a situation of a girl in a Fe y Alegria school in Peru. How would you want to cope with this case?