



MILLENNIUM GOAL # 3

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

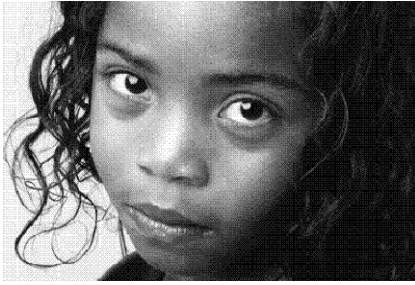
The Goals

- 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

The employment rate of women is two thirds of that of men.

Two thirds of the 880 million illiterate adults in the world are women.

Women with a basic education contract HIV/AIDS at dramatically lower rates and are far less likely to remain in poverty.



But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."

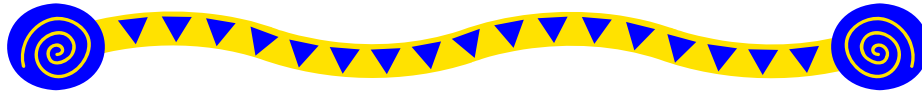
Matthew 19:14

Education in Kenya...

In 2003, a new government came to power in Kenya. The new President, Mwai Kibaki, declared that primary education (Gr. 1-8) would be free. The people were overjoyed and rushed to fill the best primary schools. Consequently, some schools had class sizes starting at 70 students. Couple this high number with the absence of books, even spiral notebooks, and the mandate to wear school uniforms and shoes, families found that education was not free.

In a traditional patriarchal society, such as exists in rural Kenya, the priority is to educate the boy child. Boys look after the farm and if employed provide for the family. Girls are valued for their domestic work. They stay with the family of origin to cook, clean, fetch water and firewood until marriage.

Their vision of education is a way out of poverty. Parents go without food in order to pay fees and to allow their children, usually boys, to attend school. Students who have the opportunity to go to school look on this as the fulfillment of a cherished family dream.



Catholic Social Teaching...

"Catholic social teaching has made it increasingly clear that action on behalf of justice is a constitutive part of the preaching of the gospel, that is, of the church's mission for the redemption of the world. The effectiveness of social action depends on the quality our learning, a process that often includes reading, reflection, discussion, and writing that leads to further action."

M.E. Jegen
Just Peacemakers, (p. 62)

"Today there is a growing sense that we belong to the Earth before we belong to any other group or community, whether family, church, or nation. It is here that we must make our fundamental commitments as human beings. In the words of Brian Swimme, the central insight of our era must be that the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects."

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme
The Universe Story, (p. 243)

"It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action."

Pope Paul VI,
A Call to Action.

Gender Equality Today

Gender Equality is at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and is a prerequisite to overcoming hunger, poverty and disease. Equality is necessary at all levels of education and in all areas of work, equal control over resources and parity in every part of society. While most of the MDG face a deadline of 2015 this goal was set to be achieved by 2005, an acknowledgement that equal access to education is the foundation for all of the development goals.

World wide there are "96 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, with disparities at the secondary level even more acute. Some 67 countries have primary school attendance and enrollment rates for girls less than 85%. Gender inequalities in primary school are greatest in Western and Central Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa." (UNICEF) The girl child, because of her lack of education, is more vulnerable to exploitation and to contracting HIV/AIDS. One third of adults living with HIV/AIDS are under 25 and almost two thirds of them are women.

Indicators linked to this goal aim to measure progress towards ensuring that more women become literate, have voice in their local and world communities and viable job possibilities. Without an education, women find it more difficult to support themselves and their families. Women earn one tenth of the world's income and own less than one per cent of property. Realizing the rights and equality of women is the key to the survival and development of children and to building healthy families and communities.

There are many ways to explore the goal "to promote gender equality and empowering women." In order to make a real change we must begin with the children, the girl child to be specific. In the spring of 2007, the UN Commission on the Status of Women will take up the topic and explore the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Trafficking, child labor, sexual violence, female genital mutilation and child marriages are violations that must be prevented and addressed as part of global initiatives to promote gender equality and to empower women. A basic education will equip girls with the knowledge and skills needed to adopt healthy lifestyles, to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. An educated girl child will take an active role in social, economic and political decision-making as she transitions to adolescence and adulthood.



“As a Congregation our service of the world is an apostolate of education, which in various forms will help [people] of any background, age, race or condition to realize their full development as persons. Our preference is to serve the poor in the most neglected place.”
SND Chapter Acts 1969

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Colossians 3:16

“Bring new energy and creativity to our commitment to those in greatest need, especially materially poor women and children in the most abandoned places.”

“Educate ourselves and others in issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, and take action both individually and as a Congregation.”

SND Chapter Acts, 2002

A story from Carole Proctor, SND

My story begins in the year 1999 when I was introduced to a young woman and her four children, Grace Odongo, Catherine Amondi, Rosalyne Adhiambo and Rueben Omondi (in Luo tradition names are given according to birth order, relationship or time of birth, not by the father's surname), by a Congolese sister friend....

Florence, the mother, continued to come to see me and I, in turn, visited her home in the slums of Kibera, Nairobi. Florence's story began before 1999 when she and her husband and small children lived in Kisumu, a Kenyan city on Lake Victoria. Her husband was killed in a vehicle accident. In Kenyan Luo tradition, Florence was taken in by her husband's brother. Subsequently, because he and all his family were HIV positive (there is little hope of recovery without anti-retrovirals) they eventually died from AIDS. Florence also contracted the disease. She moved to Nairobi with her children hoping to find work. As Florence became more ill, the work of finding maize and selling it fell to her daughters, Catherine, age 10 and Rosalyne, age 11. Her son, Rueben was 5 years old and her older daughter, Grace, was attending a Standard 8 school, living with a step-aunt.

I continued to see Florence and the children, who were not HIV positive, until her death in 2002. The step-aunt refused to care for the children. We found that no other relatives remained alive in Kisumu and a cousin, in Nairobi, would not take any of them because her husband refused to be responsible, so the children had to move to orphanages. Rueben was young enough to be taken to a center with a residential program and a school; the girls had to go to live initially at a street children's facility. Eventually we found a good boarding school for the girls.

Grace, who is now 18, attended three different secondary schools and eventually dropped out of school. The two younger girls went on to take their exams last year. Catherine scored in the top percentile in the country and is now in a highly respected national school. Her scores in her first year have been straight A's. Rosalyne scored very well and is now in a provincial school, and succeeding. They are being financially supported by a generous donor in the US. I have great hopes for both girls.

In Kenya this is a small sample of young people. There is hope in these and similar young women but there is a long way to go before 2015.



Prayer for the Millennium Goals

In a world where so many go hungry,
Let us make the fruits of creation available for all.
In a world where one billion of our brothers and sisters do not have safe
drinking water,
Let us help the waters run clear.
In a world where so many die so young,
And so many mothers die in childbirth,
And so many families are ravaged by disease,
Let us bring health and healing.
In a world where women carry such heavy burdens,
Let us recognize and restore the rights of all.
Let us join together, with a new sense of global community,
A new awareness of our need for one another,
And for this fragile planet,
To meet the clear challenge of the Millennium Goals,
To bring hope as substantial as bread,
To make human dignity as visible as wheat in the fields.
Amen

Dr. Jane Deren
Education for Justice
Center of Concern)

PRAYERS

It was Julie's vision and hope that her sisters would go throughout the world, proclaiming God's loving care for all peoples. (C #7)
SND Constitutions

Believing in the goodness of God, we pray for the many women searching for their own self-worth

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

Believing in the goodness of God, we pray that national governments will realize that to educate a girl is to educate a whole family.

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

Believing in the goodness of God, we pray that the central insight of our era must be "that the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects." (Thomas Berry)

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

Want to learn more?
Surf the web...



The Girl Child Quiz: www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/711_girlchildquizen.php

More Stories: www.unicef.org/voy/explore/cse/explore_1294.html

Brain Teasers: www.unicef.org/voy/explore/cse/explore_1515.html

Photo Essay: Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/photoessays/30048.html

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative: www.ungei.org

Child Protection: www.unicef.org/protection/index.html

Gender Equality: www.unicef.org/gender/index.html

Basic Education and Gender Equality: www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index.php

The Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/crc

The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW): www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/index.html

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw

The Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals

The UN Special Session on Children: www.unicef.org/specialsession

The Fourth World Conference on Women: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html

UNICEF Statistics on Basic Education: www.childinfo.org/areas/education/

Gender Equality & the MDG: www.mdgender.net/resources/

Major Regional Trends: www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/overviewEng1-23LowRes.pdf

MDG: 2006 Progress Report:

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2006/MDGProessChart2006.pdf>

Millennium Prayer: <http://coc.org/index.fpl/1262/article/1800.html>

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

1. What are your feelings after reading the story by Sister Carole Proctor? What do you do with these feelings? Where do they lead you? Can you stay with them until you recognize them as a constructive gift?
2. Re-read the quotation from Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. How do you understand that “the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects”? Do you agree that this must be “the central insight of our era”?
3. Look up on the web one or two of the references provided with this module. Share something you learned with another person or with a group.
4. Reflect on the two excerpts from the SND Chapter Acts of 1969 and 2002 provided with this module. What growth and development do you see among the Sisters of Notre Dame in the matters treated in these excerpts? What future possibilities can you envision?