

The Global Action against Poverty

We have hope because we know we are not alone. Gerardo Espindola, Bolivia

MMS in Europe have been actively involved in the Global Action against Poverty. It is one of the largest mobilization in the history of Non-Government Organizations/civil society and is worldwide supported by over 1000 organizations. In the year 2000 heads of state from around the world gathered at the United Nations and officially adopted the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015:

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

(for details see www.millenniumcampaign.org)

And while various initiatives have been started, for the greater part we can observe 'business as usual'. In terms of world trade (via the negotiations at the World Trade Organization) we witness the continued efforts of US and EU to forcefully push for further trade liberalizations in countries of the global South. At the same time the US and EU deny the developing world substantial concessions promised as part of the so-called 'Development Round' at the Ministerial Conference in Doha (in 2001), such as doing away with their own subsidies for agricultural goods (production and export) or opening their own markets for products which the South can offer at competitive prices.

This is one of the reasons why NGOs all over the world have formed national and an international coalition for ***promoting greater trade justice, substantial debt relief and more development aid.***

Rallying points were/are around the G8 summit in Scotland (in July 2005), the forthcoming Millenium+5 Summit at the UN on 13-17 September and the Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Hong Kong in December.

In spring MMS in Germany and England were involved in the **Global Action for Trade Justice** (from 8 - 16 April 2005) which had its origin at the World Social Forum in India and has the idea of an annual global action week for greater justice. 10 million people in 80 countries were mobilized for events ranging from signature campaigns, prayer vigils, conferences, public debates, street drama, murals, mass rallies and demonstrations.

Apart from sending *an endorsement of the campaign on behalf of MMS Europe*, German MMS together with religious of the Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network took part in a country-wide signature campaign for Trade Justice, using opportunities of speaking in groups or parishes. They collected 8,500 signatures on postcards which were handed over to the German Trade Minister.

TACKLING JUSTICE ISSUES IN ENGLAND - G8 in Gleneagles – EU Presidency

In the UK the Global Trade Justice Movement is part of the wider campaign "***Make Poverty History***", England was in a special position this year for campaigning on justice issues because the UK was host to the G8 meeting in Edinburgh in July and then in the second half of 2005, the UK government has the presidency of the European Union. It has therefore been particularly important to contact the government in whatever way possible to indicate our demands to **Make Poverty History** and to **Vote for Trade Justice**. These have been our major campaigns this year. Before the G8 meeting at the beginning of July, those of us giving mission appeals have been asking people in the parishes that we have visited to send **postcards** to Tony Blair asking that he use his influence to Make Poverty History. Altogether thousands of postcards must have been sent using this approach. We have been **wearing white bands** to emphasise our commitment to this. 6 MMS went to the **rally in Edinburgh** prior to the G8 summit. We all wore white so that we could form a white band round the city centre to reinforce our demands to the G8. We joined the record crowd of almost a quarter of a million that was well reported in the media. All major organisations were represented. We spelt out our messages to the G8 on sashes and banners.

German MMS supported a full page advert in a major daily newspaper demanding substantial debt relief from the German government.

Before the Edinburgh gathering the **Religious** (Catholic and Anglican) of England and Wales **held a lobby of parliament** in aid of the Make Poverty History goals. Three MMS went to meet our local Member of Parliament to discuss the issues of the campaign and one MMS went to an earlier lobby

arranged by the United Nations Association to press for the implementation of the Millennium Goals, another issue that has now risen to prominence as the heads of governments meet to discuss it.

Results so far & Way forward

Most NGOs have been disappointed in the results of the G8 summit as they are in no way enough to 'Make Poverty History'. And even though pledges made by the G 8 (10 billion more in Overseas Development Aid and cancelling the debt owed by 18 -plus 9- of the poorest countries to international financial institutions) exceeded previous promises, already a number of countries have indicated that their promises will not be kept because of demands at home. This proves once again that without a very alert and critical civil society no progress will be made.

The next Steps and challenges: Now campaigning is focussed on the forthcoming UN summit and the Trade Negotiations demanding trade justice and the implementation of the millennium goals. As the forthcoming **UN summit** in mid-September- meant to assess progress regarding the MDGs - is in danger of being sidetracked by other issues ***MMS in Europe have been e-mailing to their governments urging them to continue to support the EU's position in favour of the UN agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.***

In terms of Trade justice, we will focus on the **Ministerial Conference of the WTO** on 13.-18. December in **Hong Kong**. Right now there are no signs of any progress with regards to granting more favourable trade conditions for the poorest countries of the South as had been promised in Doha under the name of the so called 'development round'. To the contrary the US/EU demand the reduction or even abolition of tariffs and import taxes in developing countries and the opening of the markets for Trade in Services (in the field of water, waste management, electricity and energy, health, transport, and the financial sector).

Therefore in the UK Postcards that say "I Vote For Trade Justice" are going off to the Prime Minister for the rest of the year.