Will you strive for justice and peace among all people?

Joining together as faith communities can make the difference

Faith communities can provide networks needed for work, evaluation

Ninth in a 10-part series

By Njongonkulu Ndungane

If we are serious about delivering on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), then everyone involved — governments, business and civil society, rich and poor alike — must work together in partnership. We must be "joined up" in our policies and in our actions. It is no good if the advances of aid and development are wiped out, and worse, by debt repayments, or unfavorable trading conditions, or the consequences of global warming.

Churches and other faith-based organizations can play a leading and significant role within civil society. It was churches who led the Jubilee 2000 initiative — putting pressure on donor governments and international financial institutions to tackle the unbearable, and unjustifiable, levels of debt with which too many of the developing countries were burdened. There is still more to be done, but we are at least headed in the right direction. In similar ways, churches have been key players in the ONE Campaign (www.ONE.org), the Global Campaign Against Poverty (www.whiteband.org) and other initiatives. All these show that, when voters lobby in large numbers, politicians are forced to listen!

The Micah Challenge is particularly aimed at harnessing the people power of the churches in the developed world specifically in support of the Millennium Development Goals. I commend it to you, and more details are available at www.micahchallenge.us.

Churches in the developing world can also make a difference through forming partnerships. In sub-Saharan Africa more than 95% of the population has some religious affiliation, with Christianity the greatest. Faith communities can reach almost everyone within the space of a week or two. There are three particular ways in which we make a difference.

> *Let us pray for those who enjoy the abundance of creation and the blessings of prosperity, that partnerships between rich and poor for the reconciliation of the world may flourish and grow.*
>
> *- Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations*

The first is through our activities within local communities. We often have networks where governments do not reach. In many African countries, faith groups provide an average of 40% of all health care. Our potential role as partners in development has only recently been recognized. Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) has many partnerships with churches and faith networks.

Second, the real test of the Millennium Development Goals is whether they make a tangible and sustainable difference to the lives of the very poorest. Faith communities, to which many of these people belong, are often best placed to give accurate feedback on what is actually being achieved.

The third area in which faith communities within the developing world can use their networks is to help our civil society bring a coordinated and focused voice to the development debate, both in holding their own governments to account, and in calling on donors to meet their commitments swiftly, efficiently and effectively.

African Monitor is an initiative I launched earlier this year, which is aimed precisely at these last two aspects. You can find out more at www.africanmonitor.org.■

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Learn more about it

- **ONE Episcopalian**
  http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE/
- **Educational resources from Episcopal Relief and Development**
  http://er-d.org/programs_36756_ENG_HTM.htm
- **Resources from Episcopal News Service**
  http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_77743_ENG_HTM.htm
- **Resources from Episcopal News Service**
  http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_77743_ENG_HTM.htm
- **Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation —** http://e4gr.org
- **United Nations Millennium Development Goals**
  www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
  www.millenniumcampaign.org

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