

World Record Shattered By Citizens Across Globe Demanding That Their Leaders End Poverty

Over 173 Million People Gather at “Stand Up, Take Action, End Poverty Now!” events, setting new world record for largest mobilization in history

A Guinness World Record shattered this weekend (October 17th, 2009) when 173,045,325 citizens gathered at over 3,000 events in more than 120 countries, demanding that their governments eradicate extreme poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). “Stand Up, Take Action, End Poverty Now!”, now in its fourth year, has been certified by Guinness World Records as the largest mobilization of human beings in recorded history, an increase of about 57 million people over last year.

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“The more than 173 million people who mobilized this weekend sent a clear message to world leaders that there is massive, universal, global demand for eradicating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals,” said **Salil Shetty, Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign**. “In particular, we have seen citizens determined to show their governments that they will hold them accountable for keeping their promises to end hunger, improve maternal health and abolish trade-distorting agricultural subsidies. They will not accept excuses for breaking promises to the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people, who have already been hardest hit by the global food, economic and climate crises they had no role in causing.”

In Asia more than 100 million people participated (101,106,845); in Africa more than 37 million people participated (37,848,412); in the Arab region more than 31 million people participated (31,394,459); in Europe more than 2 million people participated (2,102,121); in Latin America more than 200,000 people participated (229,371); in North America nearly 200,000 people participated (191,535); and in Oceania more than 170,000 people participated (172,582). See www.standagainstopoverty.org for more details.

“Stand Up is proven to be a growing global mobilization, as well as an ongoing grass roots movement from remote areas and cities in so many countries, both rich and poor,” said

Sylvia Borren, Co-chair of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), who attended several “Stand Up” events across The Netherlands last weekend. “These are the voices of young people, women and men demanding the eradication of poverty, and new answers to the food, economic and climate crises. We will carry this overwhelming message forward in the weeks and months ahead to influence both the Copenhagen climate discussions and next year’s MDG review.”

Currently 1 billion people around the world are hungry and 500,000 women continue to die annually as the result of pregnancy and childbirth. The vast majority of these deaths are preventable.

The mobilization is organized globally by the United Nations Millennium Campaign and the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP).

The 3,000 events across every inhabited continent this weekend included:

In Bangladesh, civil society campaigners raised the call “National Unity Can Eradicate Poverty,” urging that a “Poverty and Hunger Free Bangladesh is Possible Now.” The Prime Minister led the nation in pledging to remain united to develop the country by 2020. At a rally in Dhaka, she called upon all political parties to jointly fight corruption and stabilize democracy.†

Despite the typhoons that hit the Philippines just before “Stand Up,” 35.5 million people in the country Stood Up and the† “I Vote for MDGs” campaign, a survey on the issues voters believe should be prioritized by the 2010 Presidential candidates, was launched.

Despite the worsening security situation in Pakistan this week, over 718,00 people registered their call for an end to poverty and inequality. The National coordinator

applauded those who showed great courage by mobilising in the city of Multan where district management tried to prohibit a Stand Up event due to security fears at which 3,000 people came out of their homes and with fresh flowers wrote the message “END POVERTY NOW.”

In Nepal the President read a Stand Up Pledge with members of the Constituent assembly at an event broadcast live on national television, followed by a concert in a large open-air theatre in the heart of Kathmandu.

Peru was one of several countries which used “Stand Up” to start a process of **Climate Justice Hearings** aimed at gathering the testimonies of people whose lives and livelihoods are being destroyed by global warming.† Other Climate Justice Hearings took place in Ghana and Kenya and will continue worldwide in the weeks running up to the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change in December.

In the Dominican Republic school children spent a week learning about climate change and came together on Friday to create murals on their schools walls and stand in solidarity with children all over the world in calling for an end to poverty and for climate justice.

In the United States, the Irish band U2 brought 50,000 concertgoers to their feet for a “Stand Up” moment during their October 18 concert in Norman, Oklahoma.

From Cape Town to Cairo and from Accra to Kampala, millions of Africans stood up in churches, mosques, schools, markets, streets and work places to† call on their leaders to end poverty and inequality. In Uganda, the Local Government Association joined “Stand Up” by launching a historic award to honor the best-performing local government. The inaugural award was presented to the Kasese District.

In South Africa, housemates on the hit television show “Big Brother” made passionate appeals to world leaders to end poverty and led the continent in reading the “Stand Up”† pledge, collected food for disadvantaged children and wrote a song on poverty.† They called on African leaders to stop maternal death, end hunger and address climate change.

In Nigeria, legendary African artist Femi Kuti led over 60,000 people attending the annual event commemorating the life of his late father Fela Kuti, in pledging their commitment to campaigning fervently against poverty and injustice. Femi urged participants at the festival to be bold when holding their governments accountable, noting that Africa has enough resources to end poverty. Accusing African leaders of mismanaging public resources through corruption and poor governance, he called on them to focus more attention on programs leading to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

At Federation Square, Melbourne, a concert organized by Make Poverty History Australia and AusAID included a flash mob stunt and performances by entertainers including Diafrix, a musical group of African refugees.

Citizens of Papua New Guinea Stood Up for the first time this year, in churches and government buildings, with support from the government Department of Community Development.

In Halifax, Canada, citizens marched against poverty in a rally organized by Make Poverty History.

In Italy, more than 400,000 people participated in 200 sports events across the country. The people of L’Aquila, which was hit by a devastating earthquake in April, ran a marathon to show their support.

In Paris, the streets were invaded by 4,000 roller-bladers on Sunday proudly sporting ‘Stand Up, Take Action, End Poverty Now!’ t-shirts.

In Spain, coordinated marches nationwide included a rally in Madrid on October 16, which was followed by an outdoor concert featuring Spanish rock bands.

In New York, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon lead schoolchildren in Standing Up on Friday.† “Stand Up” was also supported by the entire United Nations system, with events organized by United Nations Information Centers (UNICs) across the globe. Hundreds of people gathered on October 16 at the International Labor Organisation (ILO) headquarters in Geneva to Stand Up Against Poverty in a joint action with UNDP and UN agencies, led by ILO Director-General Juan Somavia..

About the Campaigns:

The UN Millennium Campaign was established by the UN Secretary General in 2002. The Campaign supports citizens’ efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.† The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 world leaders from rich and poor countries, as part of the Millennium Declaration which was signed in 2000. These leaders agreed to achieve the Goals by 2015. Our premise is simple: we are the first generation that can end poverty and we refuse to miss this opportunity. For more information, visit www.endpoverty2015.org.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) is a civil society alliance of social movements, international NGOs, trade unions, community groups, women’s organizations, faith and youth groups, local associations and campaigners working together across more than 100 national coalitions/platforms. GCAP is calling for action from the world’s leaders to meet their promises to end poverty and inequality. In particular, GCAP demands solutions that address the issues of public accountability, just governance and the fulfillment of human rights; trade justice; more and better aid; debt cancellation; climate justice; peace and security as well as gender equality and women’s rights. For more information, visit www.whiteband.org.



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