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Young Australians are leading the charge towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals
Melbourne, 18 August 2014

Today marks 500 days until the target date for achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The goals have led to the most successful global anti-poverty campaign in history, and young Australians are helping to lead the charge.

The eight goals include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, increasing access to education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, ensuring environmental sustainability, and building partnerships for development.

In the last 20 years extreme poverty has already been halved, with over 700 million people being lifted out of extreme poverty. However, more progress is desperately needed.

We now have 500 days to accelerate action on issues such as ending hunger, fixing the global tax system, and increasing foreign aid to our most vulnerable neighbours.

The goals were launched 14 years ago, and since then we have have seen significant progress around the world.

In Cambodia, 98% of primary school children now complete school, an increase of 32% since 2003. In Afghanistan, girls now represent 40% of school children.

17,000 fewer children under the age of five die every day thanks to boosted efforts to reduce preventable childhood deaths. Nigeria has achieved a 41% reduction in maternal mortality rates since 1990.

However, we still face a lot of challenges. 1.2 billion people remain in extreme poverty. The richest 85 people on the globe control as much wealth as the poorest half of the global population combined. This means that the voices of the poorest go unheard, and we have a global responsibility to fight for them.

The regional head of the United Nations Development Program, Haoling Xu, has warned that at the current rate many countries will fail to achieve the MDGs, and has asked that the goals be treated with urgency.

Oaktree is Australia’s largest youth-led organisation who are leading a movement to end extreme poverty. From 28 September to 4 October 1000 volunteers between the ages of 16-26 are roadtripping from every capital city in Australia to storm the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra and petition our leaders to commit to fighting extreme poverty.

Fiona Canny, Head of Campaigns for Oaktree, said that “the challenges are daunting, but the solutions are within our reach.

“We are at a unique moment in history. The eradication of poverty is tangible, and it will lead to a more sustainable and equitable world. That’s the world I want to be a part of.

“Were closer to alleviating extreme poverty than ever before. Our generation can be the one that sees the end of extreme poverty,” said Canny.

The Roadtrip is part of a larger campaign called the End Poverty campaign, which aims to demonstrate widespread public support for ending extreme poverty to leaders and decision-makers at the G20 summit in Brisbane in November.

“We have 500 days to accelerate action towards achieving the MDGs. Let’s make every day count. Our work can have a real impact on millions of people’s lives,” said Canny.

Applications for the Roadtrip close this Friday 22 August. For more information, and to apply, head to http://www.oaktree.org/roadtrip/

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