

## Discussion Points

- How far do the MDGs go towards empowering Indigenous Peoples to combat poverty?
- Why is it important for the MDGs to recognise the specific causes of poverty for Indigenous Peoples?
- Here, in Australia, what essential services are available to you that you don't have to pay directly for? For example education, health, water.
- What do you think are the essential things every household must have to be free from poverty?

## Action Points

- Read the introduction to Kofi Annan's report and consider what relevance his words have to us here in Australia. <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm>
- Go to the Make Poverty History website and join the email list to receive updates about campaign activity - <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org.au/home.html>

## Resources

For more information on the Millennium Development Goals: [http://www.caritas.org.au/education/mph\\_about.htm](http://www.caritas.org.au/education/mph_about.htm)

UNDP and Indigenous Peoples: A Policy of Engagement - <http://www.undp.org/mdg/>

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Report on the fourth session. Economic and Social Council, Supplement no.23 [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

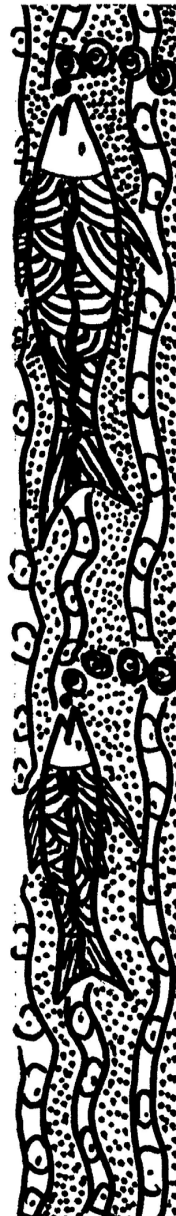
Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005 - Indigenous Report. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) Productivity Commission, Canberra. <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2005/index.html>

A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity. [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/statistics/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/statistics/index.html)

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002, Linacre, S, Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2004. Catalogue Number 4714.0

**For more resources and further details on how to get involved in the Make Indigenous Poverty History campaign please visit the website:**  
[www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph)

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**Indigenous**  
**MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.**

# MAKE INDIGENOUS POVERTY HISTORY

## INTRODUCTION

**“Larger freedom implies that men and women everywhere have the right to be governed by their own consent, under law, in a society where all individuals can, without discrimination or retribution, speak, worship and associate freely.**

**They must also be free from want – so that the death sentences of extreme poverty and infectious disease are lifted from their lives – and free from fear – so that their lives and livelihoods are not ripped apart by violence and war. Indeed, all people have the right to security and development.” Kofi Annan**

## Overview of Make *Indigenous* Poverty History

Objectives:

- To outline the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- To highlight the need to Indigenise the MDGs.

## The Millennium Development Goals

In 2000 most of the world's leaders came together and made a commitment to measurable progress towards peace, security, disarmament, human rights, democracy and good governance. Specifically they committed to halving world poverty by 2015.

This statement of both commitment and confidence in humanity was the **Millennium Declaration**. Arising from this declaration was the **Millennium Development Goals** (the MDGs). These eight measurable and time limited goals address; poverty, hunger, education, maternal and child health, the prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDS, gender equality, the environment, debt, trade justice and aid.

The MDGs focus on the alleviation of poverty for the poorest of the poor and for those in least developed countries.

In supporting these goals the world leaders were saying that despite all the conflict and poverty, across the globe, there is hope and that ending poverty is simply a question of will. We, as global citizens, must have the will to ensure a more equitable and peaceful world. In the words of Kofi Annan:

*"We should never despair. Our problems are not beyond our power to meet them. But we cannot be content with incomplete success and we cannot make do with incremental responses to the shortcomings that have been revealed. Instead, we must come together to bring about far-reaching change."*

## The Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples

There are more than 370 million Indigenous Peoples in the world; together they make up approximately 90 percent of the world's linguistic diversity. They are also the people most likely to experience extreme poverty.

Despite their over representation in poverty statistics Indigenous Peoples are largely invisible in the MDG debate and the goals do not specifically address Indigenous issues. The MDGs are outcomes focused and there is a danger that in defining and measuring poverty in such a way that the specific causes of poverty amongst Indigenous Peoples will not be addressed.

Without strategies for the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in describing and defining what poverty is to them, marginalisation and exclusion will continue.

Key indicators must be devised by, and be meaningful to, Indigenous Peoples. Policy makers must examine how Indigenous peoples are excluded at all levels of power and decision making. And we, as individuals and as members of communities at the local, national and international level, must address those factors that specifically lead to Indigenous poverty including; colonisation, the loss of traditional lands, the loss of languages, the loss of traditional law and the loss of cultural practices – to name a few.

Even then the MDGs will not go all the way to relieving poverty and we make the point that they are one tool to raise awareness and focus on measurable outcomes in order to ensure that we as a society do not shirk our responsibility to ensure that what is the right of every human being - to live free from poverty – is guaranteed for Indigenous Peoples too.



## How do the MDGs affect Australia?

Because Australia is a "developed" country, the MDGs do not specifically target Australia. However despite Australia's wealth there are those who live in poverty and who do not enjoy the same level of health, wealth and even life expectancy as that of the majority of Australians.

Statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples do suffer similar standards of health and wellbeing as the world's poorest, including those in least developed countries. But it is vital to remember that behind the statistics of low income, unemployment, lack of education and family violence there are stories of dispossession, cultural annihilation, loss of languages, stolen generations and a lack of recognition of the original ownership of this country.

Poverty is about more than a lack of money, it's a relative concept. Not being able to access the same level of resources such as education and health as everybody else will also lead to long term disadvantage.



## Measuring Poverty in Australia

It is easy when reading about poverty overseas to become overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and magnitude of the problem, for example.

- One in six human beings on this planet live on less than \$US1.00 day.
- Every year 11 million children die before their fifth birthday.
- Three million people a year die of AIDS.

Focusing our attention on the dreadful suffering overseas does not obviate our responsibilities here in Australia. The magnitude of poverty is not as great in Australia in terms of the quantity of disadvantaged people, but for each and every individual experiencing poverty it is as dire as anywhere else in the world and here in Australia we have the resources to ensure that nobody is living in poverty.

The ABS says:

*"That the lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter would be considered as basic poverty, but this is rare in Australia" (ABS 2002)*

Therefore poverty is measured by looking at those who are relatively less well off in terms of resources available to them. Measuring income may not accurately measure people's access to goods and services. For example, they may have a low income but access to health and education is paid for by Governments. However the ABS considers that comparisons of income can provide valuable insights into differences in levels of economic wellbeing within the population.

The Poverty Commission in 1975, said that poverty is relative and must therefore be judged and measured relative to the average community standard of living.



As Kofi Annan said, in the quote on page 1, all people have the right to live free from want and fear. All people have the right to development. Unfortunately at this stage in Australia not all of our people are enjoying their rights equally.

The challenge for us, as Australians, is to **Make Indigenous Poverty History**. We can only do that if we have the will, the will to really understand the true situation for Indigenous Peoples in our country and the will to do something about it.

The following 8 worksheets address each Millennium Development Goal from an Australian Indigenous perspective. Each worksheet highlights the situation according to the statistics in Australia, but they also focus on the stories behind the statistics and each worksheet encourages you to take action to do your bit to eliminate Indigenous poverty.

Each worksheet also outlines what the targets and indicators might look like if we applied the Millennium Development Goals to address Australian poverty.

The **Make Indigenous Poverty History** Campaign reminds us that we can not and should not forget the plight of the people in our own country. It reminds us that poverty is not an "Aboriginal problem" that it is a problem for us all and that each and every one of us must do everything we can to end Indigenous disadvantage.