



The Millennium Development Goals are the world's targets for addressing extreme poverty. They mirror our rich Catholic social teaching by placing the highest priority on the dignity of life, stewardship of the environment and solidarity with all individuals, worldwide. They demand human rights and focus on immediate, persistent action. While each goal is important in its own right, the goals should be viewed collectively as they are mutually reinforcing.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

2015 Target: To reduce child mortality by two-thirds, from 9.3% of children dying before age five to 3.1%.

Rationale? *About 29,000 children under the age of 5 die every day (i.e., 21 each minute) mainly from preventable causes.*

Of the nearly 11 million children who die annually, over 70% succumb to one (or more) of the following four causes: diarrhea, malaria, pneumonia or neonatal complications, with the latter being the most prominent. Four million babies per year die in the first week of life. Malnutrition and lack of safe water and sanitation exacerbate the situation and contribute to fatalities a majority of the time.

Since an Ethiopian child is 30 times more likely to die by his or her fifth birthday than a child in Western Europe, the focus to reduce infant mortality turns to the developing world.

Family Care. About 80% of health care in developing countries occurs in the home. The majority of children who die, do so at home, without being seen by a health worker. A significant number of deaths could be prevented if families were given better support and more integrated access to dependable information, supplies and basic medical services.

Research shows that 6 million of the almost 11 million children who die each year could be saved by low-tech, cost-effective measures such as vaccines, antibiotics, nutrient supplements, insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria and improved family care.

Progress. Progress in meeting this Millennium Goal has lagged behind all other goals. In 2002, 0.7% of children in industrialized countries died prior to age 5. In developing countries the statistics were significantly worse. In South Asia, 9.7% died before age 5 and in sub-Saharan Africa, the number reached 17.4%.

90 countries (53 from developing nations) should be able to meet the 2015 target. But, 91 developing countries lag far behind. In fact, many have seen mortality rates rise since 1990—i.e., Iraq, countries from sub-Saharan Africa and former members of the Soviet Union. In addition, the number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is projected to reach 25 million by the end of the decade; 18 million will reside in sub-Saharan Africa. This, along with only modest progress fighting malaria, means the threats facing child survival are as grave as ever.

Advocate. Encourage debate about child mortality. Learn more:
www.millenniumcampaign.org