

To Eliminate Poverty Some Actions We Can Take

1. **Large scale economic development** is the most effective eradicator of poverty. This depends on the success of private-sector entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and political reformers who increase trade, establish the rule of law, build infrastructure, create educational institutions and insure property rights. China may end poverty in the twenty first century. Millions of low-cost laborers plus modern technology, ample capital, and a sound business environment brought per capita income up from 7.5 % of Western Europe's to 20% by 2000. *To aid this type of growth, we can support trade liberalization, social entrepreneurship, and training of economic and political leaders.*
2. **Microcredit.** Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, discovered that if you lend small amounts of money to a borrower's club composed of individuals who aspire to start or grow small businesses, the rate of return is higher than 98%. With a \$20 loan, for example, a woman could purchase a sewing machine and then begin sewing her way out of poverty. A goal was set and achieved in 2005 to reach 100 million people with microcredit. A new goal has now been set to reach 500 million people by 2015. *Kiva.org is an NGO that offers people the chance to become microcredit lenders for as little as \$25 to local partners who then make the loan to an entrepreneur in a developing country. During the period of the loan, the partner provides updates to the lender on the business's progress. Elementary students in a Montessori school in Bozeman MT are lending money through Kiva and learning about the culture and people of other countries.*
3. **Social entrepreneurship.** William Drayton has popularized the term social entrepreneur to describe a creative person with a new idea to address a major problem who pursues their vision and spreads their ideas as far as they possibly can. The Ashoka Foundation (Ashoka.org), begun by Drayton, identifies and then funds such persons as they attempt to scale up a project that has succeeded locally. *We can support such efforts by nominating a social innovator for an Ashoka Fellowship and by giving to the work of foundations such as Ashoka.*
4. **Partnering at the grass roots.** Globalvolunteers.org is one of many organizations that match interested volunteers with domestic or overseas projects needing volunteer help. In addition to the know-how and labor a volunteer gives, perhaps more important is the hope people receive when an "outside" person joins in their efforts if only for a short time. You never know what will grow from such first hand exposure. Several years ago, Roy Barber visited a youth center in South Africa. He began making music with the young people. This grew. Now he has written several musicals with the students, run exchange visits between his students in Maryland and the South African young people, raised thousands of dollars for scholarships and sponsored more than 100 students. *We can choose a country, a project, and work together with folks there to accomplish something they need.*

5. **Support a student.** There is broad agreement that nothing helps a person break the cycle of poverty more effectively than a good education. In every area of the world, there are students who need support. *We can invite students for a Thanksgiving meal, or to spend a year in our family as an exchange student through the American Field Service Committee, or mentor an inner city student in need of extra adult caring through a local non-profit.* Such relationships can be life changing for both student and adult.

6. **Build or support a school.** Through an organization like PavaFoundation.org which helps village Guatemalans identify and think through a community project such as a school, *we can join or organize a work party to help construct the school.* FaithatWork.org each July organizes such an effort and its magazine Faith at Work carries stories of folks who have done this.

7. **Use a hobby or talent as a bridge to others.** Jean Adams, a retired art teacher, leads art sessions at Christ House in Washington DC, a residence for homeless men. At another residence for homeless women, Cynthia Dahlin offers poetry writing workshops. Musicians teach inner city kids how to play their instruments at the Sitar Center in DC. Rachel Dickerson coached a group of inner city women in photographing their neighborhood and then mounting a photo show in their community center. *We can start with a hobby, talent, or interest and then start researching the Internet for ideas on ways to use our interest to lift folks out of poverty.*

8. **Read to get ideas.** *How to Change the World* by David Bornstein focuses on the Ashoka Foundation story and is loaded with ideas for anyone interested in creating projects that help others. *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson describes how one man, inspired to help build one school in northern Pakistan, went on to keep building schools. *Banker to the Poor* by Muhammed Yunus describes the tremendous power of micro credit to lift people out of poverty. Oral Lee Brown in *The Promise* tells how she, a woman of modest income, sent a whole class of first graders to college. *Choose an interest, read a book, and get involved.*

9. **Raise and give money to worthy individuals or projects.** Globalgiving.com offers a list of projects, organized by geography or subject matter. The donor can contribute any amount. Also included are creative fund raising ideas. Bill Clinton's book *Giving* is full of ideas of how giving can be effective and enjoyable. Jeffrey Sachs' Milleniumpromise.org offers opportunities to give to villages and cities that are connected to the Millenium Goals. *We can identify and support projects and people that touch our heart. We also can propose that our church's or organization's giving be tied to the passions of members for particular projects. Then there is an in-house person to monitor and share the project's progress.*

Make Poverty History - One Action at a Time!

This paper was created by Jackie McMakin to be used widely. Feel free to distribute. You may contact Jackie through info@faithatwork.com.