

Jubilee Debt Campaign at Newcastle University

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Development Coordinator:

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GUINNESS WORLD RECORD SMASHED TO SMITHEREENS!

Make Poverty History's proposal wows campaigners around the world.

Nearly two percent of global population demand that world leaders keep their promises to relieve poverty.

In early summer, Make Poverty History North East called for a target of 1% of the world's population for participation in the 'Stand Up against Poverty' actions this year - i.e., 67 million. This inspired campaigners across the country and beyond, and was trumpeted by the Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign, Salil Shetty, in the final weeks before the action. In fact, nearly 117 million took part - the best part of two percent! [The precise figure was 116,993,629.]

"Stand Up' actions are sponsored by the United Nations Millennium Campaign and the Global Call for Action against Poverty. They provide a simple way people throughout the world can show their support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to halve severe poverty by 2015. Although the UK has been slow to pick up on this, the North East led the way this year with scores of schools, churches and community groups getting involved – no other region came near. Newcastle University gatherings alone involved four hundred people.

But it's not about numbers – it's about people! The 'Stand Up Pledge' says it all: "We wish to set a record of the number of people standing up to demand action on poverty – but the record we really want to break is the world's record of breaking promises and just ignoring the poor."

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Newcastle University; and Development Coordinator, Make Poverty History NE

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Unprecedented levels of support:

Our call elicited unprecedented expressions of support from regional leaders. Those backing it include Newcastle University, Cllr John Shipley OBE, Leader of Newcastle City Council; and Kevin Rowan, the General Secretary of the North of England TUC. Powerful messages of support have been received from the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Newcastle and Durham, and other faith leaders. The Association of North East Councils contacted all 25 local authorities (and all their councillors!) to encourage participation by the region's schools, and Gateshead Council circulated information about the Millennium Goals to all 3,500 of their staff.

High Profile Events

Three major events took place planned for Friday 17th October on Newcastle University's campus.

- A 'Civic Prayer Breakfast' was attended by Cllr David Wood, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle; Mrs Margaret Sentamu, the wife of the Archbishop of York; and Helen Goodman MP, Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, were the speakers. Others attending included the Bishops of Newcastle and Jarrow and MPs Jim Cousins and Dave Anderson.
- At 1.10pm, a Rally for students, staff and public was addressed by Professor Paul Younger (Pro-Vice-Chancellor) and Pete Mercer (Students' Union)
- Finally, at 6.10pm, a Public Lecture was given in the Curtis Auditorium by Paul Vallely CMG, Co-Author of the Africa Commission Report and Associate Editor of The Independent. Mr Vallely is one of the most highly respected journalists of our time.

Background

In the year 2000, the world's leaders pledged to halve severe poverty by 2015, stating that, "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty" (Millennium Declaration, September 2000). They set out eight 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) to bring this about.

UN agencies both monitor progress towards the MDGs and highlight discrepancies between the commitments made by governments and their fulfilment. The 'United Nations Millennium Campaign' (UNMC), "supports and inspires people from around the world to take action in support of the Millennium Development Goals" and asks, once a year, for an international expression of popular support in order to strengthen its hand. It sponsors 'World Poverty Day' (17th October) and 'Stand Up' actions throughout the weekend. UNMC works in partnership with the 'Global Call to Action against Poverty' (GCAP), the international campaigning coalition, and GCAP designates World Poverty Day as its 'Global White Band Day'.

Make Poverty History *NorthEast*

Chair, Judith Sadler; Vice-Chair, Kevin Haigh; Secretary and Website Manager, Tim Kenny; Treasurer, Mike Waller; Development Coordinator, David Golding; Minutes Secretary, Maureen Osborn; Mailing List Manager, Veronica Golding.

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