



action/2015

Holding Governments and the Private Sector to Account A Broad-based People's Campaign against Poverty, Inequalities and Climate Change

15 Solutions for 2015

"As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems . . . Inequality is the root of social ills."

-- Pope Francis

"A poor girl from an ethnic minority in a dispersed rural area with uneducated parents is lost in the national statistics. A just world system would listen to her voice. However, girls and women rarely have a say in whether they should go to school or not."

-- Adelaide Sosseh

"Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom."

-- Nelson Mandela

Top Line Messages and Overview

From local and national governments to international institutions and the private sector, we must address the current context of obscene inequality if the world is to truly eliminate poverty and enable a life of dignity for all.

To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, 'we have enough for everybody's need, but not enough for everybody's greed'.

- The world's 85 richest people are worth as much as the poorest 3.5 billion (half the globe's population).
- The fundamental human rights of more than 1 billion people - including the rights to education, health, water, sanitation, food and a safe clean environment - are denied daily.
- Discrimination and unequal treatment denies the rights of women and socially excluded communities, often relegating them to lives of exploitation and poverty. Two-thirds of people living in extreme poverty are women.
- 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of the planet's ecological resources.
- Lust for money, power and natural resources drives armed conflict and violence in nearly 1 out of every 3 countries, preventing people from leading normal lives.

Global leaders increasingly acknowledge that extreme inequality harms everyone in society and must be addressed. The resources and knowledge to eradicate poverty and inequality exist, but governments and the private sector must be held to account to ensure a just distribution.

People's anger has been juxtaposed against a narrative of aspirations and hope as people from Brazil to Tahrir and Taksim Squares take to the streets to demand change. The Post 2015 and Sustainable Development Goals processes present a major political opportunity to place truly transformative change on the agenda.

We will campaign for a world where our economies create prosperity for all and not a select few, where extreme income inequality is overcome, governments, people and the private sector respect the rights and dignity of all people and treasure the planet so that it will be habitable for current and future generations. We will hold Governments, International Institutions, the Private Sector and Polluters Accountable. We will achieve change at local, national, regional and global levels with a broad-based people's campaign for equality and **15 Solutions for 2015**.

15 Solutions for 2015

I. Holding Governments Accountable: Human Rights and Social Protection

The members of the United Nations must be held accountable to their commitments, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and upholding key components of the international legal framework, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Yet with over one billion people living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day and over three billion people on less than US\$2.50 – mainly, women, young people and members of communities that are excluded or marginalised due to caste, gender, race, sexual orientation or migrant status – governments are not keeping their promises.

The MDGs have made an impact, but they do not address the root causes of poverty and inequality. National indicators and averages also mask inequalities. In Pakistan, for example, 87% of boys in the richest 20% of the population attend primary school, while just 32% of girls in the poorest group do; similarly, the maternal mortality rate for rural Pakistani women is almost double that of urban women.

Solutions

1. Governments have to respect Human Rights

Governments have human rights obligations. Mechanisms must be implemented to ensure people can claim their rights and have access to justice and remedies for human rights violations – economic, environmental, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political ones.

2. Gender Equality and Ending Violence Against Women

Women's rights are human rights. States must ensure women's access to land ownership and guarantee women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights plus universal access to quality, comprehensive and integrative health services. Women and girls must have equal access and opportunities to education, employment and decision-making. New tools must be created to measure unremunerated work by women in the care economy and social reproduction. Violence prevents women and girls from realizing their rights and contributes to inequality. States must eliminate the causes and all forms of gender-based violence, discrimination and human trafficking. They must adopt and fully implement laws that prevent violence and prosecute perpetrators.

3. Social Protection so that no one is left behind

Instead of focusing on austerity measures that hinder economic growth and unravel social safety nets, governments should invest in people through social protection schemes, which are economically feasible and proven effective in remedying inequality and eradicating poverty. Social Protection programmes must be designed and implemented to ensure that socially excluded groups - including people with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, seniors and Dalits - access these essential services. International financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF must not be allowed to pressure governments to adopt austerity measures and other policies that impoverish families, harm communities or heighten inequality. Governments and other bodies must also not prioritise Public-Private Partnerships, particularly in cases where privatisation leads to higher user fees and diminished services.

4. Clean Water, Quality Health, Education and Toilets for All

Governments have a responsibility to ensure universal and affordable access to high-quality, comprehensive health services and education as well as clean water and sanitation. Government investment in these essential services must be transparent and extensive. States should not privatise service delivery as it raises prices and excludes communities.

5. Foster Peace

Wars and the arms trade enrich some, while impoverishing many. The UN affirms that peace is a 'sacred right' and that States have a 'fundamental obligation' to preserve and promote peace. States must address the root issues that drive violent conflict, ensure that perpetrators of war crimes cannot act with impunity, provide access to justice, involve women in conflict resolution, implement the Arms Trade Treaty and ensure that people can live in freedom and enjoy ownership and control of their own resources. Governments should also cut military budgets, shifting resources from the billions spent on defence and war to social expenditures instead.

II. Make the Private Sector Accountable: Tax Justice & True Social Responsibility

The private sector contributes to development through technological innovation, revenue generation, job creation and support for community initiatives. Yet businesses also create and exacerbate poverty and inequality through destructive corporate practices such as land and water grabs, mega-mining, tax evasion, bribery, union busting, worker exploitation including inhumane and unsafe working conditions and indecent wages.

Governments and some international actors want businesses to play a larger role in development. It is not a question of philanthropy, though, but rather how companies earn their money. Business must be held to account to a triple line that includes labour relations, community and environmental impact. If the private sector is to contribute to the Post-2015 agenda, it needs to transform and earn our trust.

Solutions

6. The Private Sector has to respect Human Rights

The private sector must operate within the context of the UN Framework on Business and Human Rights, including the International Bill of Human Rights and the International Labour Organisation's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This responsibility 'exists over and above compliance with national laws and regulations'. Individuals and communities must have access to remedy when businesses do not adhere to these principles.

7. Decent Work and Employment

International commitment and national implementation of the Decent Work Agenda, including creating jobs (especially for youth), providing vocational training and apprenticeship programmes, minimum wages that are decent wages, guaranteeing rights at work including freedom of association, promoting social dialogue, extending social protection and preventing labour trafficking.

8. Tax Justice and Transparent Financial Systems

Every year, \$160 billion is lost to tax evasion. Providing every person in the world with a bare minimum income of US\$2 per day would only cost about \$100 billion. A Financial Transactions Tax of just 0.05% could raise upwards of US\$400 billion a year, funds that could be used to promote development and fight climate change. We need progressive national tax systems, an international 'Robin Hood Tax', proper regulation of the financial sector and concrete actions like information sharing, sanctions and rewriting tax codes to end tax havens. A fair and transparent process must also be created to cancel odious, illegitimate and unpayable debts of low and middle income countries.

9. Trade Justice

Existing trade rules and free trade zones under negotiation - like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and Trans-Pacific Partnership -- often promote the interests of large businesses over those of small-scale farmers, producers and traders, to the detriment of impoverished communities. Trade relations must instead promote equality among trade partners and uphold the special and differential treatment of developing countries. Rich nations should not impose trade agreements on countries of the Global South, be it through bilateral treaties, regional partnerships or the World Trade Organisation.

10. Land Grabs and Extractive Industries

Stop the acquisition of land, water and other natural resources by businesses, local elites and people in power without the free, prior and informed consent of affected individuals and communities. Eliminate financial support for economic activities that are harmful to the planet and communities. Require companies to clean up and pay for their messes.

III. Holding Polluters Accountable: Climate Justice

The planet is quickly moving to a point of no return as carbon emissions rise. Climate change and environmental degradation fuelled by unsustainable consumption habits disproportionately impact women and impoverished communities as those least responsible for causing climate change are the most adversely affected. Millions of people across the globe - including small farmers, herders and coastal communities - are struggling to adapt to increasing temperatures, unpredictable drought and floods. A failure to respect planetary boundaries is leading to decreased food security and food sovereignty, contaminated and depleted water supplies, migration and displacement. Governments, businesses and individuals all have a responsibility to protect the planet for current and future generations.

Solutions

11. Climate Justice and Respecting Planetary Boundaries

Urgently adopt a global climate agreement that cuts greenhouse gas emissions and provides significant financing for affected communities, including those impacted by desertification and deforestation. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities requires that the burden of adjusting to these limits be equitably shared. Polluters - both corporate and state - must pay to clean up the mess and compensate those affected. We must create low carbon economies that are in harmony with nature and that support sustainable development, while respecting the rights of future generations and ensuring that agrifuels do not displace food production.

12. Sustainable Production and Consumption

Present consumption and production patterns reflect inequalities and contribute to environmental destruction and man-made climate change. Consumers and producers in industrialized and emerging economies alike need to break this cycle by favouring services and products that improve quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials, pollutants and emissions. Governments can promote this transformation to solidarity economies by replacing GDP and GNP as measures of a country's economic strength with new metrics that also measure externalities like public health, the environment and inequality.

IV. Achieving Accountability through People's Participation

Genuine democracy, transparency and increased people's participation are essential for a more equal world where everyone can live with dignity, peace and according to their needs. But collusion between decision-makers and elite interests has blurred the lines between business and politics and led to an exponential growth in the power of large corporations. At the same time, we have witnessed the relegation of civil society to the margins with activists, aid workers and journalists even becoming targets for assassinations, arrests and disappearances.

Solutions

13. Public Participation in Decision-Making

Public authorities must be willing to open up and hold genuine dialogue with divergent voices and interests as well as impoverished and excluded communities. People affected by a policy are entitled to have a voice in public decisions that affect their lives. Governments should be willing to justify their actions whilst those affected must have the right to question them. Inclusive participatory planning processes are required as well as special mechanisms to ensure the participation of women, including quotas for female representation in decision-making bodies.

14. Transparency, Access to Information and Private Sector Influence

To ensure inclusive, accountable and transparent government processes, citizens have a right to information. Citizen monitoring, independent commissions and legally-binding accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure a fair distribution of resources and address corruption. Corporate influence on the public sector and democratic processes must also be regulated, limited and transparent, including information about political donations and financing of political parties and public institutions.

15. Strengthen People's Actions and Civil Society Space

People around the world work for change – for innovative solutions and solidarity. States must not abdicate their responsibility to protect all citizens, including civil society activists, while at the same ensuring freedom of expression, association and assembly through sound legal frameworks and judicial systems. Governments must also ensure meaningful civil society participation when drafting laws as well as in international processes like those in the United Nations and G20.

Linking the Campaign: **From Communities to the Nation and the World**

As we campaign as **action/2015**, we will work for transformation at multiple levels from villages and city councils to state and national parliaments and the halls of the UN.

A key focus for campaign actions are National Governments, who have a responsibility to ensure that the rights of all people living within its borders are fulfilled.

The key participants for this mobilisation are the citizens and residents of individual countries who will develop specific demands and build on existing campaigns.

Global commitments and frameworks also play a key role in influencing, building and reinforcing change at the national level. The Post 2015 process is an important space for advocacy and action on the four key issues of this campaign and will be used as a tool for uniting our mobilisation actions at key moments. We believe that with genuine political will, an ambitious Post 2015 agenda to end poverty and inequality can be developed.



About GCAP: The Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) challenges the structures, institutions and processes that perpetuate poverty and inequality. More information at www.whiteband.org.

About action/2015: **action/2015** is a broad-based people's campaign fighting Poverty, Inequalities and Climate Change. GCAP leads **action/2015** together with other organisations. In total, 1000 organisations from more than 120 countries participate in the campaign. More information at www.action2015.org.