

NEARLY 2% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION STAND UP AGAINST POVERTY

New York, 22 October 2008 – Anti-poverty campaigners today announced that more than 116 million people – nearly two percent of the world population – mobilized at events in 131 countries on October 17-19 as part of “Stand Up and Take Action.” The mobilization, which was ratified by Guinness as breaking the world record for the biggest mass mobilization on a single issue, sends a clear message to world leaders that citizens will not stay seated while promises to end poverty remain unfulfilled. At least 5 million additional people – many in Africa and Latin America-- Stood Up at events not submitted before the Guinness deadline.

“In what was undoubtedly the largest global mobilization against poverty in living memory, citizens around the globe put their leaders at the national and global level on notice that their commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 have to be met – no more delays or excuses are acceptable,” said Salil Shetty of the United Nations Millennium Campaign. “Already, world leaders are responding. Mass mobilizations have the power to change the course of history, and we will not stop mobilizing and advocating for action until the Millennium Development Goals are achieved for the poorest people in the world.”

“This is a new kind of action the world is seeing: it’s the local influencing the global. Women in villages in Africa are connecting and joining millions of citizens in other countries and young people are taking ownership of the Millennium Development Goals like never before. Thousands of actions, pictures and messages show a powerful groundswell of determination from ‘We the People’, and that a new global financial architecture must be about equality and gender justice,” said Sylvia Borren of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) who attended Stand up events in the US this week.

“This is a wonderful statement of global determination and commitment to end the injustice of extreme poverty,” said Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Cape Town and Chairman of The Elders. “116 million people demand the right to food, water, health care, education and a life of dignified work for all. 116 million people have stood together to say end extreme poverty. This message must be heard by leaders everywhere – it cannot be ignored.”

“This show of the mass will of people around the world against the massive injustice of poverty and in support of the Millennium Development Goals this past weekend was moving and powerful – but now it’s up to world leaders to match the passion and commitment of their people and deliver on their commitments ,” said human and civil rights leader Martin Luther King III. “My father proved that when the voices of citizens become too loud to ignore, governments are forced to do the right thing. We’ll keep mobilizing and advocating for change until they do.”

“The largest Stand Up is truly an historic event and as keepers and adjudicators of world records we are delighted to ratify such an important record and make this official,” said Craig Glenday, Editor-in-Chief of Guinness World Records. “We congratulate every individual for taking part in this initiative and welcome them to the family of Guinness World Records.”

“This ever increasing number clearly shows that business as usual cannot go on,” said Eveline Herfkens of the UN Millennium Campaign. “Leaders must take note and act now.”

The number of people who “Stood Up and Took Action” as verified by Guinness World

Records in each region is as follows:

Africa	24,496,151
Arab States	17,847,870
Asia	73,151,847
Europe	951,788
Latin America	211,250
North America	123,920
Oceania	210,803
Total	116,993,629

Key “Stand Up and Take Action” events included:

In the Philippines, more than 35 million people --1/3 of the population – Stood Against Poverty at events organized through the Department of Education, universities, local municipalities and government ministries. Thousands of fishermen also took to the streets with GCAP Philippines on October 17 to demand a government program for food sovereignty and sustainability.

In Egypt, millions of people Stood Up in mosques across the country as well as along the banks of the Nile, where two sailboats made eight stops between Alexandria and Aswan to educate Egyptians about the Millennium Development Goals.

In Ahmedabad, India, Indian Cricket League officials and cricket players from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and the West Indies led a “Stand Up” moment for 30,000 fans at a game of the Ahmedabad Rockets and the Mumbai Champs on October 17.

Farmers in Pakistan took to the streets to decry rising food prices. Other Stand Up rallies urged the government to check rising poverty as the number of poor people in Pakistan rose from 60 million to 77 million this year.

In New Delhi, India, more than 6,000 people Stood Up on the perimeter of Parliament on October 18, including some of the richest and poorest families in the country, in an event organized by the Art of Living Foundation, one of the largest spiritual movements in the world.

In Badarpur Khadar, a village 15 km from Delhi, India, with no electricity, water, sanitation or health facilities, 700 people Stood Up on October 18, when they opened the first school in the village’s 300-year history. The villagers plan to take up the issue of their denial of the fundamental constitutional right of primary education with the government.

In Jigawa, Nigeria’s poorest state, the Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence Sa’ad Abubakar III -- the most powerful and respected traditional ruler in West Africa -- joined 20,000 people who Stood Against Poverty on October 18, in a Summit where they called on the government to empower women and other marginalized groups through skill acquisition programs, empowerment schemes and access to micro-financing.

In Rwanda, President Kagame joined 10,000 people to Stand Against Poverty at the Rubavu Stadium, in the Western Province. The President called on Rwandans to use their hard-won peace and stability as the foundation to fight poverty, create wealth and drive development for the well being of the entire population.

In Uganda, the entire Parliament stood on October 17, and members of the Parliamentary Committee on the Millennium Development Goals helped to clean the Kisenyi slum outside Kampala.

In Malawi, over 600,000 people were mobilized under the Micah Challenge umbrella. 240 catholic churches joined with over 1,000 Ecumenical churches. The congregants demanded greater transparency and accountability from their leaders.

In Jakarta and other cities of Indonesia, more than 450,000 Muslims in 1,500 mosques Stood Up after Friday prayers on October 17. Khatibs (preachers) explained the responsibilities of Muslims in accordance with Islamic values to fight poverty.

In Bangladesh, over 13 million people Stood Against Poverty at events throughout the weekend, including a Millennium Development Goals Road Show and a policy seminar to engage political leaders in the upcoming national elections.

In Nepal, over 1.5 million people Stood Against Poverty, at a convention of women members of the Constituent Assembly and many other events focusing on deepening participatory democracy as part of building a poverty and hunger-free Nepal.

400,000 students in the West Bank and 200,000 students in Gaza Stood Against Poverty as part of an annual program to teach them about the Millennium Goals and involve them in holding their government accountable.

In Thailand, the Royal Thai Government, represented by the Ministry of Interior, and the United Nations jointly pledged their commitment to eradicate poverty and inequality by launching a 180-day Roadmap for Poverty Eradication.

Thousands of people in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Baidoa, Somalia stood up in solidarity with all others around the world living in poverty, and determined to Take Action to improve their own situation.

In New York, H.E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the UN General Assembly, and Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro joined 837 people who Stood Against Poverty after performances by the cast of the Broadway production "Tale of Two Cities."

In Italy more than 400,000 people Stood Against Poverty at events which included a high-level event attended by Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini and Letizia Moratti, Mayor of Milan.

A poverty forum in Kabul saw delegates pledge to take action to end poverty in Afghanistan, where 85% of the population is deemed to be living in poverty. Parliamentarians and government officials, professors from Kabul University, civil society organizations, and religious leaders attended the event and Stood Up.

In Germany, Development Minister Heidemarie Wiecezorek-Zeul joined the Stand Up event in Berlin, encouraging civil society to increase pressure on the government to stick to their promises. With hundreds of events across the country, more than 100,000 people demanded more and better aid and the implementation of fair world trade rules to realize the MDGs.