

The ONE Campaign aims to bring African voices to the table

As the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire in 2015, The ONE Campaign, an international grassroots advocacy backed by more than 3 million members worldwide, is launching an initiative to make sure the world's poorest people have a say in the development of the next set of goals to eradicate extreme poverty.



Dubbed "You Choose", the campaign will reach millions of citizens in South Africa, Malawi and Zambia, with the hope that thousands will take advantage of this free opportunity to tell world leaders about their priorities. In South Africa, radio spots prompt listeners to participate in the poll by texting 'VOICE' to 30667 for free. Different numbers will be used in Malawi and Zambia. Citizens are then asked "what can the govt do to help improve your family and friends' future?" and encouraged to text back their top concern, such as education, health, corruption, food, etc.

"The hard data about people's biggest concerns and priorities will then be presented at the UN's meeting of the High Level Panel on the new development framework at the end of March in Bali, Indonesia," says ONE Africa director, Dr. Sipho Moyo.

The "You Choose" campaign, with support from the Omidyar Network, features some of Africa's best-known celebrities such as musicians Hugh Masekela, Lira, Jabulani Tsambo (aka 'HHP'), D'banj, as well as football stars Benni McCarthy and Chris Kantongo. These high-profile Africans have recorded messages urging people to join the fight against extreme poverty and send their views via SMS. The spots will be aired on various national radio stations in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi starting on 30 January.

Jazz musician, Hugh Masekela called the initiative an "excellent opportunity for Africans to speak up on the path they want their destiny to take."

"We are not leaving this matter only to experts sitting in board rooms," he said. "No one understands Africa better than Africans themselves. ONE is asking for nothing more than your voice. You will be heard. Your voice can make a difference. Speak up...or rather, start texting."

According to Dr. Moyo, only 16.5 million Africans had mobile phones when the original MDGs were designed in 2000. Now, she says, there are 650 million mobile phones in use, and this explosion in information and connectivity allows us to learn first hand what priorities Africans believe the new development agenda should include.

"In the new Africa, technology is turbocharging our drive for socioeconomic transformation," she says. "ONE's promise to every African citizen who speaks up is this: We will make sure your voice will be heard by world leaders. And acted upon."

The "You Choose" initiative is part of the "My World" coalition, a UN lead global survey that will broaden the understanding of what citizens feel will have the most impact on their lives.

"You Choose" is being supported by Mxit, Media Institute of Southern Africa's Zambia and Malawi chapters, Economic Justice Network (EJN), Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), Civil Society of Agriculture Network (CISANET), Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), the Non Governmental Organisation Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) and the Zambia Council for Social Development.

Just as ONE is pressing to open the process for citizens views to be heard, the organisation has also just published a report demanding these principle of openness and transparency be at the heart of the new development goals through our report launched for the Monrovia High Level Panel meeting. The report, 'Open for Development,' makes five concrete recommendations to the High Level Panel to ensure greater transparency in both the design and implementation of the post 2015 goals.

For more, go to www.one.org/youchoose

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