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CBF ADULT MISSIONS EDUCATION RESOURCE

SEPTEMBER · OCTOBER · NOVEMBER | 2009

Poverty Relief and Education

Learn How God Calls Us to Meet Others' Needs

Workplace Chaplaincy

Discover a Ministry to Those Who Serve

God's Love in Chengdu

How the Good News is Being Lived Out in China

affect:

SEPTEMBER · OCTOBER · NOVEMBER | 2009

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About the cover

No matter what part of the world we serve, God calls us to minister to the whole person. Whether we are meeting needs after a natural disaster, addressing systemic poverty, or connecting with people at their jobs, our ministry has no boundaries.

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STORIES THAT AFFECT

Poverty Relief and Education

BY MEG OLIVE

Forget field trips, fancy calculators, athletic teams, and the latest, safest playground equipment. For many children, teens, and adults, things such as signing their name, reading a book, owning a pencil, reciting the alphabet, and memorizing multiplication tables are out of reach. Seventy-five million children and 774 million adults are currently missing out on a quality education. Without access to education or opportunities to learn life and job skills, many people all over the world find themselves stuck in the cycle of poverty.

Poverty and education are linked in many ways. Poverty is a limitation to educational achievement, and conversely, education is one of the primary avenues for fighting extreme poverty. Globally, the poorer the child, the less likely the child is to attend school. Because families living in poverty often rely on their children to supplement income, they take their children out of school for seasonal work or sometimes forever. Children may not attend school because they are ill, one or both of their parents are ill, or they have been orphaned. Children with disabilities are frequently left out. Families often cannot afford the mandatory school

- Education is not merely a way to get out of poverty; it provides people with the means to fight poverty.

Educating children is important to helping them grow into adults free from some of poverty's chains.

fees for uniforms or supplies. For many out-of-school children, the language used at school is different from the language used at home, which presents a number of communication barriers for students, parents, and teachers. Although both boys and girls struggle to receive an education, girls are often excluded because of their gender. Proportionally fewer girls are enrolled in school than boys, and girls are often removed from school



at an earlier age. In many parts of the world, girls are held back because of presumptions that education is wasted on girls, that girls should primarily be in the home and not in the workplace, and that girls are generally less capable than boys.

Education is not merely a way to get out of poverty; it provides people with the means to fight poverty. When people go to school, economies grow faster and poverty rates decline. A single year of primary school increases the wages people earn throughout their lives by five to 15 percent for boys, and the number is even higher for girls. Education is essential for improving health, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and better enabling people to cope with illness. For many living in poverty, education is seen as a luxury to be hoped and wished for but never achieved. This is a tremendous misunderstanding. Basic education is an inherent human right without which people cannot live life abundantly.

“Achieving universal primary education” is one of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000. One hundred eighty-nine United Nations member states adopted the UN Millennium Declaration and agreed to try to reach eight broad goals by 2015. Each goal has specific targets and benchmarks to measure progress. The second of these goals is to achieve universal primary education. In all the regions of the world inequalities in access to education are major obstacles to reaching this goal, but achieving universal primary education means more than full enrollment of all students. It also involves quality education—where all children who attend school achieve literacy and complete school on time (as opposed to in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, where more children of secondary-school age attend primary school than secondary). In fact, less



CBF field personnel in three countries in Africa are actively working toward the goal of achieving universal primary education.

than 55 percent of children of appropriate age in developing countries attend secondary school.

In 2007 the CBF officially endorsed the Millennium Development Goals. Members of the Fellowship are at work in the United States and around the globe serving as the presence of Christ, and this work is encompassed by the MDGs. Work done by the field personnel is made stronger by the commitment of people and institutions to address the same problems around the globe. CBF field personnel in three countries in Africa are actively working toward the goal of achieving universal primary education. For these personnel, the connections between poverty and education are everyday realities.

Jessy Togba-Doya understands education to be at the heart of his ministry in Balama, Liberia. Working in Hosanna, Ethiopia, Dee Donalson trains kindergarten teachers and establishes schools. Melody and Sam Harrell partner with communities in Kenya to provide educational opportunities for children that lead to further community development.

Balama Elementary School began under a grand Dahoma tree that still stands in the front schoolyard. Before the construction of the 11-classroom facility that exists today, children from the village of Balama and surrounding villages gathered under the

Dahoma tree for literacy classes. In 2006 the construction of the school was a collaborative effort between several aid organizations and the people of Balama. Jessy, along with his wife Calandra, saw this as evidence of the community coming together to “build a future for their children brick by brick.” Enrollment in Balama Elementary School for the 2008 academic year was up to 565 students, with 280 males and 285 females attending. Most of these students walk 45 minutes to and from school each day.

The 14-year civil war (1989-2003) in Liberia devastated many lives and left the entire country in ruin. With peace in Liberia and the election of a new president, people have been encouraged to return to their home villages, but often health care, skills training, food rations, and other services, which were available in displacement camps, are not available to those who return to their own villages. Communities such as Balama, where Calandra and Jessy live and work, are faced with the enormous task of rebuilding shattered lives and destroyed villages and with coping with the socio-psychological effects of the civil war. In Liberia the communal is valued more than the individual, so providing access to education affects the entire community—not only those who are enrolled in school.

Partnering with Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary has provided the Togba-Doyas with another opportunity to see how education can break the cycle of poverty for families. In December 2007, the seminary graduated 30 students. The outdoor service was crowded with relatives of the graduates who were dressed in the finest clothes they could afford or borrow. Many of the family members traveled a great distance to attend graduation. As the name of the graduates were called, cheers went up in their honor. When each graduate stepped off the platform

affect you:

You don't have to travel to Africa to discover that education and poverty are related. Consider the condition of schools in your own community. Where are the "best" schools? Where are the "worst"? How is poverty affecting the education of your neighbors? How do city council and schoolboard decisions affect education in your community? What keeps students in your community from learning? The start of a new school year is a great time to learn something about the needs of the elementary school nearest your home. Consider volunteering as a mentor. Offer to clean and repair a run-down playground. Ask a teacher to tell you about his or her students and their strengths and needs. How are you supporting education? Can you teach children? Could you train teachers? Could you sponsor a child to attend school? Could you sponsor a teacher who wants to learn? Can you sponsor these field personnel as they work through education to fight poverty? Get involved in your community (or a distant community) and continue to learn about and pay attention to the ways education and poverty are connected.

with a diploma in hand, members of his or her family laid down their "lapas" (wraps) for the graduate to walk across. The families then gathered around the graduate—hugging, singing, and dancing in celebration. In a country where more than 90 percent of the population is illiterate, these 30 students have reached the astonishing goal of graduating from college. Calandra reflects, "In the West, when a person graduates from college, it signifies a more secure hope for that individual's future. In Liberia, when a person graduates from college, it signifies a more secure hope for the entire family's future."

While teaching English to students at Kale Heywet Church Ministry Training College in Hosanna, Ethiopia, Dee Donalson noticed that most of the village's young children did not attend kindergarten because the distance to school is too great. Only 20 percent of Ethiopia's children attend school because the Ethiopian government does not have the financial resources to provide enough classrooms or teachers, according to Dee. She is partnering with several Ethiopian organizations to build a kindergarten at the college that will serve children of the staff, college students, and college neighbors. "Kindergarten taught in a developmentally appropriate way gives them a foundation on which to build the rest of their education," she said. "It also

teaches them to problem-solve, investigate, explore, examine, and experiment." Dee understands the importance of foundational educational opportunities even in the midst of a higher learning environment. She has learned, however, that size and age make no difference in her context. Very few of the teenagers have an opportunity to attend school and are eager to join the kindergarten classes as well. Dee hopes that one day the kindergarten will be expanded to include other grade levels and the college will be able to provide foundational and age-appropriate access to education for villagers of all ages.

"Providing education for children, especially at an early age, relates directly to poverty relief, especially when done in concert with local communities," says Sam Harrell, who works with his wife, Melody, at eight Integrated Child Development Centers (ICDCs) in Kenya. "Parents care deeply about the welfare of their children and will sacrifice hugely and work hard in making life better for them. At the end of the day, not only are the children healthier and stronger with a brighter future because of it, but whole families and communities find themselves restored and better able to meet the basic needs of their members," he explains.

A few years ago the Kenyan government mandated that free primary education would be offered to all

Kenyans. When this plan was implemented, however, preschool and nursery age children were not included in the provision. When the Harrells sat down and talked with local church and community leaders about what they understood their biggest need to be, it became clear that there was great concern about the needs of the youngest members of their communities. Creating nursery schools or ICDCs—one intentionally set in the poorest part of each province of Kenya—became a tangible way to meet that need. Sam says the centers are proving to fulfill a number of the Millennium Development Goals and are also "a wonderful model for accessing communities and addressing other needs that are prevalent for everyone."

Community involvement is essential for the Harrells' work in Kenya. Each of the ICDCs throughout Kenya has been established through community participation. Not only are the children being taught basic curriculum, parents are being taught about nutrition and basic health care for their families, and community committees are learning how to manage such projects effectively. The Harrells are working to integrate effective community development practices that will have long-term benefits for the people they work with in Kenya. According to Sam, "Sometimes all it takes is a step in the right direction for

continued on page 21



Poverty Relief and Education

OPPORTUNITIES TO AFFECT

BY MEG OLIVE

IN SMALL GROUPS

Use the suggested plan with mission groups, Bible study groups, or any other small gathering. Distribute and encourage participants to read the article prior to the meeting if appropriate. Be creative as you adapt what is suggested to your context.

Before the Session

1. Read the article, “Poverty Relief and Education.”
2. Consider having a globe or other map of Africa available. Gather Pictures 1, 2, and 3 from the 2009-10 Picture Pak.
3. Research information about education and poverty. Type “education and poverty” into an online search engine and see what information you retrieve—www.un.org and www.campaignforeducation.org are also good places to start. Search www.youtube.com for videos you can share with your group. Scan your local newspapers for articles about education and poverty in your own community. Plan to discuss the state of education on a global scale and a local scale.
4. Explore the “Missions” section at www.thefellowship.info. Follow the links

to the field personnel mentioned in the article or any others with ministries related to education. Visit the Harrells’ Web site at www.africaexchange.org or the Togba-Doya’s site at www.balamaproject.org for current information about their projects.

5. Consider ordering the DVD “Focusing on the People of Kenya,” available from CBF by calling 1-888-801-4CBF or online from the CBF Store at www.thefellowship.info/theCBFstore. The video highlights the Harrells’ work in Kenya and provides many additional educational opportunities. Another media resource that supplements this and all *Affect* articles is the 2009-10 Media Disc, also available from CBF.

6. Research the Millennium Development Goals. A good place to start is www.thefellowship.info/mdg. Several short videos explaining the MDGs can be found at www.youtube.com. Micah Challenge USA is a partner of CBF that does advocacy work related to the MDGs. See www.micahchallenge.us for more info.

During the Session

1. Start by reviewing the article. Point out Liberia, Ethiopia, and Kenya on



God’s calling is not only to an individual, but quite often to families.

a world map. Ask participants what surprised them or what they learned by reading the article. Ask participants what additional information they know about education and poverty. Do they have experiences of working with education? What is your congregation or group doing related to education and poverty?

2. Share some of what you learned in your research about education and poverty. If you have updated information about the personnel highlighted in this article, share it now.
3. Divide the group into smaller groups. Assign some groups to consider and list the ways that poverty affects education. Assign other groups to consider the ways

education affects poverty. Invite the groups to engage one another and their findings. Acknowledge that the relationship between poverty and lack of education is cyclical.

4. Share what you learned about the MDGs. If this is a new idea to your group, spend some time explaining the goals. Do a quick audit of what your church is doing or could be doing to help reach the goals.
5. Lead the group (or divide into smaller groups, if necessary) in a discussion about the idea that in communal cultures, education of an individual means a better life for the community. How is this idea similar and dissimilar to attitudes in your culture?
6. Have someone read “Affect You” (page 5). Lead the group in a discussion about education and poverty in your community. How would the state of education be different in your community if the entire community invested itself in providing quality educational opportunities for its children?
7. Consider how your group will respond. Will you take a special interest in this issue and contact the field personnel for ways you can be directly involved? Will you act as a group in your own community?
8. Have someone read “Think on These Things” on right sidebar. Call attention to the Prayer Calendar on page 23. Lead the group in a prayer time focused on the relationship between education and poverty.

After the Session

Continue to pray for God’s leadership in how you might respond. Be open to further learning opportunities. Find ways to implement ideas discussed in the small group. Be creative in reminding the group of what they discussed and may have committed to as a group.

IN PUBLICATIONS

Consider including information from this article in your church’s newsletter, on bulletin boards or Web site, or in other places of publicity. Direct congregants to Web sites where they can learn more about CBF field personnel and their projects. Write a short blurb about the relationship you have discovered between education and poverty. Include findings from both a global and local scale. Find out if your church already supports education initiatives or other work in poverty relief. If so, highlight those in publications as well.

Think on These Things

Learn to do good; Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (Is. 1:17).

Isaiah 1:17 is a favorite Bible verse of one of CBF’s field personnel working in education. This chapter of Isaiah includes a two-part discourse from the Lord. This speech first makes it clear what the Lord rejects and then what the Lord requires. The admonition in verse 17 is clear. These instructions are not empty abstractions, and they require much more than just a change in character or attitude. This verse is full of action words. Learn. Seek. Rescue. Defend. Plead. This is what the Lord required of the people of Israel, and it is indeed what the Lord requires of those of us who claim to be the people of God today—both as individuals and as communities of faith. Deep engagement with those who are poor challenges our concepts of what it means to be church. Understanding church as not merely an organization or institution, but as a community that embodies the values of the Kingdom of God, often allows learning, seeking, rescuing, defending, and pleading on behalf of others to become a natural part of what it means to be church. The involvement of those in poverty in the life of the church forces us to discover new ways of being church within our unique cultural contexts. The message we proclaim as Christians has credibility only to the extent that we demonstrate it. What can you learn to do? What are you seeking? Whom have you rescued? Who needs to be rescued? Whom do you defend? Whose case are you willing to plead? ■



Sharing the Good News involves building trusting relationships.

need help?

Visit www.missionseducation.org and select “Teachers” to find additional images, ideas, and online resources.

IN WORSHIP SERVICES

Guided Prayer

At the start of the new school year, lead worshippers in a guided prayer for all of those who are returning to school. Pray for students, teachers, staff, and administrators in your community. Get a list of schools in your area and pray for each one. Pray for children and adults all over the world who are students. Pray for those who have the desire to learn but cannot due to lack of access to education or other barriers mentioned in the article. Lead worshippers in a guided prayer for field personnel and global ministers whose work is education.

Virtual Prayer Walk

Use the virtual prayer walk section of the “Focusing on the People of Kenya” DVD available through CBF to lead worshippers in praying for the people of Kenya and the Harrells’ work in education. To order the DVD, visit www.thefellowship.info/thecbfstore.

IN COMMUNITY

Table Talk at Home

As your family prepares for the start of another school year, have conversation about what it would be like not to be able to attend school. Use “Poverty Relief and Education” to have a discussion about the relationship between poverty and education. Tell the stories of the field personnel highlighted in the article. Locate Liberia, Ethiopia,



Christians share God’s love by providing greater access to education.

and Kenya on a map. Guide your family in imagining what it might be like to attend a school that meets under a tree. Lead your family in prayer for the students of the schools mentioned in the articles and those working through education to alleviate poverty all over the world.

Table Talk at Church

On a Wednesday night or during another community gathering, use the suggested guided prayer from the “In Worship Services” section to lead those gathered in a focused time of prayer for education.

Walking the Talk

Reread the “Affect You” and “Think on These Things” sections on pages 5 and 7. Consider your options. Will you be involved on a local or global scale? Or both? Investigate what opportunities

for involvement already exist in your community and congregation. Will you contribute to the education of those affected by poverty with your time and energy, your prayers, or your finances? Usually when you firmly and thoughtfully commit to one area, the others follow close behind. Consider your own attitudes and preconceived ideas about those around you who are poor or uneducated. How are your thoughts about them or responses concerning them congruent or incongruent with the admonition found in Isaiah 1:17?

IN READING GROUPS



In *Three Cups of Tea* (Penguin Books, 2006), Reading Groups will discover the powerful story of Greg Mortenson, an ordinary man who has sought to bring change and peace to the remotest and poorest parts of Pakistan. By establishing schools, particularly for girls, he has made a lasting difference in this region.

For a discussion guide to this and other Reading Group suggestions, go online to www.missionseducation.org and click on “Book Clubs.”

next month:

In his book, *Loving Monday* (InterVarsity Press, 2006), John Beckett offers a model for incorporating the Bible into professional business practices. Beckett recounts his story of establishing a business that balances financial success with the Christian life.

"Poverty Relief and Education"

continued from page 5

communities to realize the strengths and resources that they possess." To the Harrells' surprise, three of the communities with ICDCs now have extended their schools to include primary grades one through three. Each community has come up with its own ways of supporting the teachers and the schools. This effort has been a real affirmation of community participation in the education process and evidence of how education can influence an entire community's well-being.

It has been estimated that 18 million more teachers are needed by 2015 for everyone to be educated in time to meet the Millennium Development Goal. There is a lot of work to do, and the connection between education and poverty relief is clear. By providing a common goal to work toward and ways to measure progress, the MDG regarding education provides some measure of motivation. As believers in and followers of Christ, we are also motivated, however, by our desire to see God's Kingdom come on earth through both our proclamation and our demonstration of the gospel: we recognize that people living in poverty and those who are uneducated, like everyone else, bear the image of the Creator; we desire to treat those in poverty with respect so that they may become architects of change in their own communities; and we work to build relationships which lead to mutual change. Through a variety of means and methods, these field personnel are working through education to relieve poverty. Through community involvement in the education process, each community is changing. Jessy Togba-Doya, Dee Donalson, and Melody and Sam Harrell are enabling others to fight poverty and are also being the presence of Christ in Liberia, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

Meg Olive is a not-so-aimless wanderer who enjoys sleeping in the desert, chocolate milkshakes, and roller coasters with no long lines.

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