

CANCEL THE DEBT NOW!

Discussion Guide

1. What was your overall response to this video? What struck you most?
2. What was your impression of the people in the video? Which one(s) impressed you the most? Why?
3. Many Americans are unsympathetic to the debt situation. They say, “I have to pay my debts, why shouldn’t they?” How would you respond to this sentiment?
4. It is argued that debt relief will not work because of widespread corruption among many government leaders in the developing world. Those resisting debt relief say that the money will go into the pockets of the elites and never be spent on programs for the poor. How do you respond to this argument?
5. Those in the Jubilee Campaign do not like the term “forgiving the debt.” Why? How do you feel about it?
6. The South African poet Dennis Brutus calls the debt burden the “new slavery.” He also says that we Americans (and Europeans) are complicit in keeping hundreds of millions of people enslaved. Do you think this is true? Why? Why not? If true, what can we do about it?
7. At the 2005 summit of the major industrialized countries known as the G8, there was much talk of canceling the debt of poor countries. Here is how some key organizations responded to the results of that meeting:

Action Aid:

http://www.actionaid.org./index.asp?page_id=491

While the announcement on debt is a welcome step forward, it falls far short of what is needed. Only 18 countries have had their debt cancelled, leaving 40 more waiting. After the G8 leave Gleneagles, many poor countries will still be left spending more on debt repayments than they do on healthcare and education. For these countries this is a major disappointment.

Jubilee Research:

<http://www.jubileeresearch.org/latest/g8110705.htm>

The Gleneagles Summit was a litmus test of the G8's ability to make a positive contribution to making the world a better place if it had the will to do so - and it has failed miserably. . . .

*On **debt**, it only promised to get a quarter of the way further towards fulfilling the promise of \$100bn debt cancellation that it made 6 years ago, leaving a shortfall from that commitment of around \$40bn.*

Oxfam International:

http://www.oxfaminternational.org/eng/pr050708_g8.htm

The G8 have recognised today that this is the beginning, not the end, of their efforts to overcome poverty. The world's richest nations have delivered welcome progress for the world's poorest people, but the outcome here in Gleneagles has fallen short of the hopes of the millions around the world campaigning for a momentous breakthrough.

World Development Movement:

<http://www.wdm.org.uk/news/presrel/current/g82005final.htm>

The final communiqué is an insult to the hundreds of thousands of campaigners who listened in good faith to the world leaders' claim that they were willing to seriously address poverty in Africa. More importantly it is a disaster for the world's poor. The agreements on trade, debt, aid and climate change are nowhere near sufficient to tackle the global poverty and environmental crisis we face.

The internet enables each of us to become knowledgeable about the debt crisis. In addition to the sites mentioned above, here are a few that will keep you up to date and offer suggestions for action:

Africa Action: <http://africaaction.org>

DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa): <http://data.org>

Debt Links: <http://www.debtlinks.org/>

Global Exchange: <http://www.globalexchange.org>

Global Issues: <http://globalissues.org>

Global Policy Forum: <http://globalpolicy.org>

Jubilee USA Network: <http://www.jubileeusa.org>

The One Campaign: <http://www.one.org>