

A Christian World Service Newsletter Spring/Summer 2005

InFocus

Christian World Service is a Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia



fill the future with hope

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Cover: Sudanese Mother and Child
Photo: Nicholas Kerr

From the Director

In response to our theme of "fill the future with hope", I was recently asked: is there much hope for Africa? Aren't they a long way off meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? While North Africa appears on track for most MDGs, it is true that much of sub-Saharan Africa is still a long way off. The health, education and economic challenges are certainly enormous as 48% of people in sub-Saharan Africa live in absolute poverty, which is double the average for all developing countries (it is 15% in East Asia, 40% in South Asia and 12% in Latin America).

That said, the news is not all bleak and there is plenty of hope. From my recent discussions in Nairobi with staff and members of the All Africa Conference of Churches, it is clear that many of the people working on poverty reduction in Africa are optimistic and would like me to tell some good news stories.

African governments are now prioritising poverty reduction issues higher than they have in the past and a higher proportion of African governments have produced MDG plans and reports than any other region.

African churches are leading the way. The All Africa Conference of Churches recently cautioned African governments against perpetuating corruption and inefficiency as the people will no longer tolerate it. There are now active campaigns for achieving the MDGs in over 20 African countries.

NCCA Christian World Service is keen to assist the African churches with their MDG campaigns and I am working on this with Hellen Wangusa, the head of the UN

Millennium Campaign in Africa, and with various African Councils of Churches. With your support, we are also continuing our commitment to development and human rights projects in nine African countries, as well as emergency food provision in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Ethiopia.

Please let me know if you are interested in getting more involved in church-based anti-poverty advocacy in Africa or anywhere else.

We will be sure to bring you plenty of good news stories from Africa, and elsewhere, in 2006 as we all work to fill the future with hope.

Tackling HIV/AIDS in Africa

In 2004 the Council of Churches in Zambia asked NCCA Christian World Service to support a new HIV/AIDS initiative. The Council was seeking to establish a centre in Lusaka that would provide training programs and workshops on the HIV/AIDS pandemic gripping the country. The program has since spread to at least 30 areas of Zambia.

The program's success is now being cited by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) as an example of training for all church leaders and administrators across Africa. Some external church leaders have already received training and returned to their home areas to train others. It is the desire of the AACC that many more church personnel be sent to Lusaka for training in order to work in their own countries to assist those living with HIV/AIDS, but travel and training resources need to be found.

This truly is the Christmas Bowl at work.

Alistair Gee



Alistair Gee (left) and the CWS staff team, Gwen Willis, Howard Graham, Michele Knight, Visier Sanyu, John Ball, Eleanor Acabado, Mark Hobson, Emily Anderson, James Thomson, Charlie Ocampo, Colleen Hodge, Jeff Wild, Kaylea Fearn and Jonathan Lin.

Photo: Robert McLean

Zimbabwe: What will happen to the new homeless?



Photo: Nicholas Kerr

Gabriel Manyangadze, Alistair Gee and Aisake Casimira

The rainy season is coming in Zimbabwe – and 90% of the people made homeless in Operation Restore Order are still sleeping out in the open.

“What will happen to them?” asks Gabriel Manyangadze, Director of the Church in Society program of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches.

Gabriel has been in Australia promoting this year’s Christmas Bowl program.

The aftermath of Operation Restore Order is just one of the human tragedies with which the churches in Zimbabwe are dealing.

Land reform was bungled. The local people do not have the money or the equipment to restore prosperity to the farms.

There is almost no fuel, and tractors and other agricultural machinery are useless. And there is drought.

“Zimbabwe used to be known as the bread basket of Africa,” Gabriel said. “Now it is the begging basket.”

“The economy of Zimbabwe, which is agro-based, took a big knock.

“Even if there’s a normal rainy season, food shortages in Zimbabwe won’t disappear.

“Inflation’s proving very difficult to deal with. The economy is hardly producing enough from exports to sustain the needs of the nation.”

Gabriel said that Operation Restore Order caused unbearable suffering to Zimbabwe’s people.

The operation was carried out from mid May till the end of July this year. Many of the dwellings that were destroyed were illegal. The areas were congested,

unhealthy and harboured criminals.

But these houses were better than the filthy conditions people are living in, now that their homes have gone.

“Many of the buildings had been there for 30 or 40 years,” Gabriel said.

“Most of them represented a lifetime of saving. People lost everything.

“Some of the homes were backyard shacks and cottages. They were against the city bylaws but the authorities had done nothing about them.

“The bylaws also say, quite specifically, that people must be given a period of notice if they’re to be moved on. This has to be in writing.

“It didn’t happen. Things didn’t happen according to the law.” Other houses that were destroyed did fulfil all the legal requirements.

“Many of them had certificates of approval given by the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing,” Gabriel said.

“There were also a lot of housing cooperatives, especially around the capital, Harare. I myself was a member of one of these cooperatives.

“One of the cooperatives invited the Minister to perform the official opening.

“He was widely quoted in the media. He said the cooperatives were doing a wonderful job and urged them to build houses faster.

“About four months down the track this Ministry led the way in the demolishing of houses, claiming that proper procedures hadn’t been followed.

“No wonder people are asking questions.”

Now the Government has promised to build houses for those without homes.

“But the same processes are being followed again – the very processes that caused the old houses to be condemned.

“In some areas, the road network isn’t complete. Areas aren’t connected with water. They aren’t connected with any sewerage system.

“People are asking, Why are they putting up these houses that are similar to the ones they destroyed?”

“The government’s telling people to go back to the rural areas, where they came from.

“But many of them have been in the cities for several generations. They don’t know anywhere else. They have nowhere to go.”

Gabriel said the Zimbabwe Council of Churches has set up direct consultations with the authorities.

“We’re creating church forums where communities have an opportunity to speak directly with political and civic leaders on issues that affect them.

“We’re providing psycho-social support for the victims of Operation Restore Order. People have lost everything. They’ve been severely traumatised.

“With the help of our ecumenical partners, like Christian World Service, we have been able to ameliorate the living conditions of a lot of people.

“There is hope that things will change for the better in Zimbabwe. We believe that one day things will be right.”

Nicholas Kerr/CWS

Read Gabriel's paper, Sustaining peace and hope, at <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws>



Photo: ZW News

Squatter settlement



The Christmas Bowl

Hope in Zimbabwe

Life's tough for women in Zimbabwe. They work in the fields, they collect firewood and they often have to walk miles each day for water for their families.

Australian Christians are making life easier – and healthier – for many of them.

For nearly 10 years now Australian supporters of the Christmas Bowl program have been making it possible for the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) to teach and enable the women to build large cement water tanks in the driest parts of the country.

"We're one of the driest parts of Africa, especially in the south," says Gabriel Manyangadze, Director of the ZCC's Church in Society program.

"Many of the rivers flow only during the rainy season.

"People have to share the water resources with animals. So the water becomes very muddy and dirty. The animals walk right into it.

"We've been able to build 500 cement water tanks a year with help from Australia.

"The family tanks hold 60,000 litres. People are able to harvest enough water to last right through the dry season.

"The tanks we're building for schools and hospitals are a lot bigger.

"People now have clean drinking water all year round.

"People are much healthier – especially the women and children, who are the ones who are most at home.

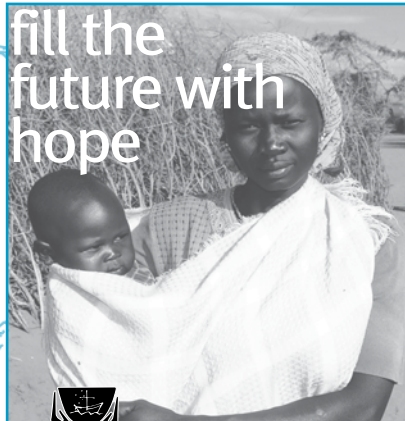
"Safe water's especially important for the hospitals. People were coming to hospital for treatment.

They were given pills to take – and they often had to take the pills with infected water."

Nicholas Kerr/CWS

In 2005, \$80 000 from your gifts to the Christmas Bowl was sent for this project. Thank you.

fill the future with hope



Give a gift to the Christmas Bowl

freecall: 1800 025 101
email: christmasbowl@ncca.org.au
online: www.ncca.org.au/give/christmas_bowl



Photo: Gwen Willis



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together

International Programs

World Council of Churches
Solidarity/Sharing Courses
Ecumenical Formation
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
WCC Assembly
Action by Churches Together
Emergency Co-ordination
Administration/Resources Training
World Student Christian Federation
Inter-Regional Office
Africa and Asia Pacific Desks
Justice/Peace
Frontier Interns in Mission
International Exchange



Photo: Charlie Ocampo

Middle East Programs

Middle East Council of Churches/Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees
Gaza Health/Development
Jerusalem Liaison Office
MECC Lebanon
Agricultural Extension
DSPR Lebanon
Joint Christian Committee School



Photo: Nick Kerr

Africa Programs

All Africa Conference of Churches
Education for Peace
Ethiopian Orthodox Council
Water Security
Ogaden Welfare Development Association
Agricultural
National Council of Churches in Kenya
Peace Building
Christian Council of Mozambique
Rehabilitation/Reconstruction
Capacity Building Initiatives of Namibia (CABIN)
Training/Development
Coptic Bishopric of Public Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS)
Comprehensive Integrated Development
New Sudan Council of Churches
Relief/Development
Sudan Council of Churches
Medical
Council of Churches in Zambia
Water Security
HIV/AIDS
Zimbabwe Council of Churches
Training/Rainwater Harvesting

What we are at work in the world



Photo: Kim Cain

Asia Programs

Christian Conference of Asia

Urban/Rural Mission

Youth Development

Education

CCA Assembly

World Student Christian Federation

Justice/Development

Christian Committee for Development in Bangladesh

Ethnic Community Development

Myanmar Council of Churches

Justice/Development

Church World Service Cambodia

Svay Rieng Development

Well Construction

Demining in Kompong Thom

Yayasan Sosial Naroman Foundation (YASONA)

Timor Leste

Agricultural Development

Organisation For Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation (OfERR)

Tamil Refugee Relief/Development

Indonesia

Christian Non-Government Organisations' Network

Capacity Building

Philippines Indigenous Leaders' Organisation (LAKAS)

Literacy/Numeracy Training

Leadership Training

National Council of Churches in Philippines

Women's Empowerment

Amity Foundation China

Health Workers' Paramedical Training

National Christian Council of Sri Lanka Relief/Rehabilitation

Burmese Border Consortium Refugee Relief

Churches of Christ in Thailand Klong Toey Slum

"Went out to West Kwai'o to do further training in community health. It was a great encouragement to see that one particular village had been working hard since we were there last time and had built a fence around the village. They had noticed a significant decrease in the amount of sickness especially amongst the children.

It was amazing to hear other stories of what can happen when people work together to build a healthier environment.

Preparing for another "Trainer of Trainers" workshop in Honiara. It is the second part of the training we started in August so I am looking forward to working again with the same group of enthusiastic people."

**From the Solomon Islands Christian Association
Community Health Program**



Photo: Kaylea Fearn

Pacific Programs

Pacific Conference of Churches

Partnership Capacity Building

PCC/WCC Pacific Desk

Fiji ECREA

Christian Leadership/Social Justice

Pacific Theological College

Community Sustainability

Pacific Concerns Resource Centre

Documentation/Research

Solomon Islands Christian Association

Capacity Building



Photo: Nicholas Kerr

Australian Programs

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission

National Program on Refugees and Displaced People

State Ecumenical Councils

See <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/christmasbowl> for 2005 resources

The church must speak with a prophetic voice

Fiji is a fabulous tourist destination. But it has its ugly side, too – and the problems are growing.

Aisake Casimira, Executive Director of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) in Suva, Fiji, has been visiting Australia to launch this year's Christmas Bowl program.

Aisake said that Fiji has suffered from the 2000 coup, cyclones and floods.

"Australian Christians have stood with us," he said. "Each year you share generously of your wealth, your prayers and your understanding in solidarity with us in our misfortunes."

"The church must speak with a prophetic voice," he said.

"The churches have tended to be too concerned with their own survival.

"The churches, as a community, need to be more progressive and more prophetic."

Some church leaders – especially Catholic and Anglican bishops – have been doing this. But the churches as a whole seem not to be listening.

"These leaders, and our Vice-President, are really saying four things," Aisake said.

"First, people need to respect one another. Second, we need to respect our religious beliefs as well as our ethnicity. Third, we need to believe in multiculturalism more than ever. Four, we need to talk to each other. We need to be in dialogue with each other."

Aisake said life in Fiji is changing rapidly – and people are losing many of the things that have acted as anchors in their lives.

"People's jobs are becoming more fluid, less permanent," he said. "People don't have social welfare to fall back on when they lose their jobs.

"Families are less permanent. One in five marriages does not last more than 10 years. This is leading to an increase in the number of street children.

"There's also been an explosion of squatter settlements in and around the major urban areas.

"Our economy seems to be sustained mostly by consumerism.

"Poverty is growing and unemployment is adding to the problems.



ECEA Workshop

"Our democracy is still weak and there are still political tensions.

"As people's 'life anchors' go, they will become more and more frustrated and things will become more explosive, more incendiary."

Aisake said young people make up about 35 per cent of the population of almost a million people.

"That's a telling statistic," he said.

"This will have an impact on Fiji's politics and the politics of the surrounding Pacific Island countries in the future.

"It's a cliché to say that young people are our future – but they really are the future of a moral and sustainable Pacific.

"If there aren't enough employment opportunities for them, if they aren't meaningfully participating in and gaining from the economy, our highly educated youth will turn to violent means to satisfy their aspirations."

Aisake believes the moral and ethical issues involved in globalisation must be faced if human rights are to be respected and if there is to be a real chance for peace.

"When we become anxious and uncertain – as we are now in the increasing fluidity of our existence – it creates fear.

"Fear leads to anger. Anger breeds violence. And violence, when combined with religious fanaticism, becomes deadly."

ECEA is sponsoring workshops and seminars on conflict resolution and

peace-building as well as providing counselling, especially for those traumatised in the coup.

Aisake hopes the churches will provide more opportunities for dialogue.

"Christians are good at talking," he said. "Right through the history of Christianity we've found answers to problems by talking things through, listening, and reaching solutions.

"We need to encourage people to learn how to build bridges, to build relationships that are inclusive – and we've been doing that quite well over the last couple of years.

"We need to do a lot more to find a moral and ethical framework we can work from to solve the tensions and the problems facing us.

"We in the churches need to help people know more about the Pacific Plan. As churches we need to prepare our own responses to it.

"All this can be done only through conversation. Wars and conflicts are not the answer."

Nicholas Kerr/CWS

Read Aisake's paper, *Reflections on building peace*, at <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws>

In 2005, \$50 000 from your gifts to the Christmas Bowl was sent to ECEA. Thank you.

Living on the Shelf: Warehoused Refugees

Remember where you celebrated New Year's Eve in 2000, or where you were for the Sydney Olympics? Seems like an eternity ago, doesn't it!

Now picture having lived in a refugee camp since that time, unable to go home, unable to live in the country in which you sought refuge, or to resettle in another country. For millions of the world's refugees, this is their reality.

Rather than obtaining one of the three "durable solutions" for refugees – repatriation to their home country, integration in the country they have sought refuge, or resettlement in a country like Australia – 7.8 of the world's 11.5 million refugees have been effectively "warehoused" – confined to camps and deprived of their basic human rights for five years or more.

Why? Host countries do not want to have the burden of supporting millions of refugees, and developed countries have been reducing aid, so refugees are often overlooked after emergencies end and they are effectively warehoused – confined to remote border area camps by host countries, without the right to work, own land to farm, or to move to other areas. Meanwhile they are forced to depend on dwindling aid supplies as countries divert funds to the latest international crisis.

What is the Anti-Warehousing Campaign?

The main aim of the campaign is to put pressure on governments to find solutions – for developed countries to provide more aid to alleviate the burden placed on host countries and for host countries to grant refugees proper identity documents, work rights, and permission to move freely, and own land and businesses, so that they can get on with life and become self-reliant.

What is CWS doing?

In Sudan, CWS is supporting the People to People Peace-Making Process, which aims to overcome tribal, ethnic and political conflicts that have destabilised Southern Sudan and prevented Sudanese refugees returning from countries like Kenya, where they have lived in deplorable conditions in camps for up to 20 years without any solution.

In Thailand, CWS is supporting the Thai-Burma Border Consortium, which runs the refugee camps stretched out along the border area inside Thailand. Over the past year, the TBBC has made great progress toward increasing the self-reliance of refugees by gaining permission from the Thai government to run education classes and vocational skills training programs. The TBBC is also hoping that refugees will soon be granted permission to move internally

and work freely, which would greatly assist in normalising their lives, rather than being dependant on aid and confined to crowded border camps.

CWS's Refugee Program has also been lobbying government and raising awareness of the need for comprehensive solutions for those living in protracted refugee situations in Australia and internationally.



James Thomson

Photo: Mohsin, CWS

James Thomson, the author of this article and the Advocacy Officer for CWS's Refugee Program, recently attended the North-South Civil Society Conference on Refugee Warehousing in Geneva to speak on how to use United Nations' human rights mechanisms to strengthen refugee protection in camps overseas.

South Asia Earthquake

More than 86 000 people are believed to have been killed and over 100 000 injured by the October 8 earthquake - the majority of them in Pakistan. Hundreds of thousands of people still remain homeless, with many survivors in the highlands without food, shelter or medical treatment weeks after the devastating quake. Under-funded relief workers speak anxiously of a "second disaster in the making."

More than 300 000 tents and nearly four million blankets have been distributed.

The World Health Organisation reports that hundreds of earthquake survivors have been diagnosed with acute diarrhoea and doctors are investigating whether there are cases of cholera. Relief workers are urgently trying to improve water supplies and sanitation at the camps where the survivors are falling sick.

The Action by Churches Together **South Asia**

Earthquake Appeal currently is for A\$ 23 977 807 - **thank you** to all who have contributed to it and to the **African Food Emergency** and the **Tsunami Appeal** – CWS is still receiving contributions for these appeals.



Isolated village

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together

Simply Sharing Week 2006

As *forceten* comes to a close, we have an opportunity to reflect and give thanks for the important work the partnership of NCCA CWS and Caritas has achieved over the past 38 years.

Although *forceten* supporters will no longer receive their monthly newsletters, they will still be able to be a part of one of *forceten*'s most inspiring programs; Simply Sharing Week.

In 2006, Simply Sharing Week will focus on our Pacific neighbours, particularly the Solomon Islands.

Kaylea Fearn, whom some of you will know as a friendly staff member from CWS Victoria, will be coordinating the Simply Sharing Week program in 2006.

"The 2006 Simply Sharing Week kit is shaping up to be an exciting resource for schools and churches. It's an opportunity for Australians to discover more about our Pacific neighbours, the issues they are facing and the steps they are taking to empower themselves," she says.

The kit will concentrate on health and education in the Solomon Islands, with a close look at how our local partners are attempting to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

"We look forward to the ongoing participation of faithful supporters and are keen to link with schools and churches new to Simply Sharing Week too," says Kaylea.

Simply Sharing Week will be held 14-21 May in 2006.

To order your Simply Sharing Week kit or to find out more, contact Kaylea on (03) 9650 6811 or email kfearn@ncca.org.au



Photo: Mark Hobson

Kaylea Fearn, Archbishop Adrian Smith (Solomons), Tom Anayabere (PNG), Koila Costello-Olsson (Fiji) and Fe'iloakitau Tevi Kaho (WCC Pacific Desk)

Partners4Peace

Partners4Peace are special people who commit to regular giving so that CWS has greater certainty in supporting projects. The projects selected are those which help build peace by meeting people's basic needs, improving their opportunities, and helping to realise the dreams that they have for themselves and their children.

Since July this year Partners4Peace have received news of the projects through Peace Mail newsletters and been introduced to the people who are actually responsible for the peace-building projects.

People such as:

- Sooriya Kumari in Sri Lanka, aiding tsunami resettlement
- Michael Ouko restoring lost childhood in war torn Sudan
- Constantine Dabbagh maintaining the quest for peace in Palestine, despite unending problems
- Aisake Casimira from Fiji, working to bring people of different backgrounds together in peace and harmony
- Ezzat Bousshra, working in Egypt to improve health, literacy and community living skills in poor communities
- In December, the time of new birth, the heart-warming story from Joyanta Adhikari in Bangladesh, about the training of birth attendants and their results with safe motherhood

And there's many more to come – for the needs in this troubled world are so great. Please become a Partner4Peace and share the blessings and joys that we have in Australia.

For a limited time, new Partners4Peace will receive the first six Peace Mails and those who decide to allow direct debit of credit card or bank account, will be sent a complimentary binder to build the chronicle of how your gifts, your commitment, have made a difference.

Please don't delay, phone Howard on 1800 025 101, or e-mail: partners4peace@ncca.org.au or visit our website www.ncca.org.au/cws where a form can be downloaded. We look forward to welcoming you as a Partner4Peace.

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