



Methodist Relief & Development Fund

Just Living

May 2004

Welcome

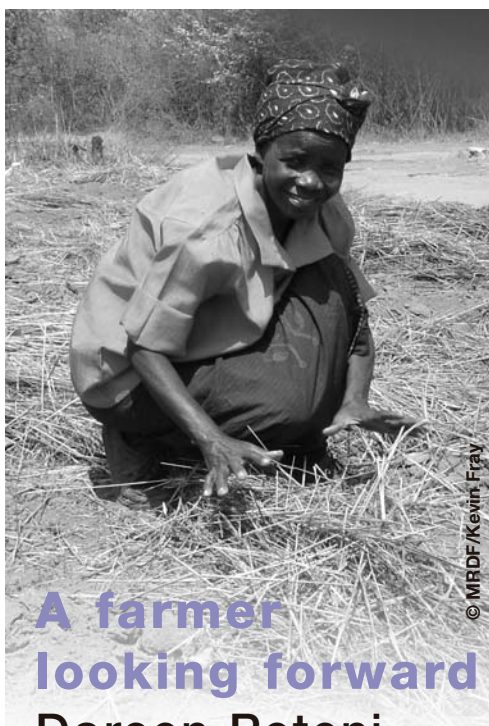
If you follow MRDF's progress, you will know that, under the title *Out of Hunger ... Hope*, we have been focusing recently on food security. We seem to have struck a chord and, as a result, have sent out more resources this year than ever. We are also encouraged by the income so far this year. The quantity of excellent partnerships we can develop with locally-based organisations across the world is entirely down to your generous support. So, thank you!

We want to build on the success of *Out of Hunger ... Hope*. So, we are launching *Our Common Ground*, which looks at how land is used to provide food and help meet our common needs. You can read about *Our Common Ground* inside. You can also find out more on our website at www.mrdf.org.uk. Alternatively, if you want to be added to our regular mailing list or Lifelines email news service, please contact me at Methodist Church House.

We know that people are willing to give when they are confident that their money is used effectively to meet our aim to work for justice and combat poverty. We know that your donations help to achieve this and we hope we effectively convey this to you. We now produce information sheets about some of the organisations we work with, and our key resources – Annual Review, Study Pack and Harvest Pack – all contain stories from the people who benefit most from the partnerships you enable us to support.

Thank you

Kevin Fray



A farmer looking forward Doreen Peteni

Land. There's a lot of it about. But how much do we know about it?

Doreen Peteni (pictured here) knows a lot about land. She has been a farmer in Naluyanda in Zambia for 20 years. However, she could not have imagined the struggle that lay ahead for her and her family when, in August 2001, her husband died. Doreen had little time to grieve before preparing her land for harvest. In November 2001, she awaited the rains, which would herald the start of the planting season. But the rains never came. In 2002, Doreen became one of the 14 million people across Southern Africa, who were dependent on aid and, to make ends meet, she walked door-to-door selling cooking oil and fish.

Doreen cannot afford poor harvests. Neither can Zambia.

Dates for your Diary

16 May	World Debt Day
14-20 Jun	National Refugee Week
24 Jun-2 Jul	Methodist Conference in Loughborough
12 Sept	Racial Justice Sunday
26 Sept	Vote for Trade Justice
16 Oct	World Food Day
17-24 Oct	One World Week – Your Move
17-24 Oct	Week of Prayer for World Peace
1 Dec	World AIDS Day
10 Dec	UN Human Rights Day
10-16 Apr '05	Global Week of Action for Trade Justice

Details of all above events from Kevin at the MRDF Office

It is one of the poorest countries on earth. Out of a population of 10 million, 86% live below the poverty line. Zambia has to find ways to feed its people and, to do that, it must make better use of its uncultivated farmable land. 20% of all Zambians remain dependent on food aid, so why is only 7% of Zambia's land used for agriculture?

If you ruled the world, how would you ensure that land was used efficiently and sustainably to provide all people with their basic needs - food, water, shelter and security? This is just one of the questions we want you to think about by engaging with *Our Common Ground*. Inside, you can read more and find out what you can do to help answer some of the questions for yourself.



Our Common Ground



PERSEVERANCE is the key for Doreen

A year after her husband died, Doreen (pictured on the front cover) consulted Harvest Help, who encouraged her to adopt some of their simple, sustainable farming techniques.

In November 2002, the rain came, the crops began to grow and a good harvest seemed assured. However, whilst her neighbours, using the same techniques, enjoyed a bumper harvest, mysteriously, Doreen's yield was poor. She doesn't know why. But she does know that crop failure confines her and her family to continuing her struggle against acute poverty.

It would have been easy for Doreen to lose faith in her ability and in Harvest Help. But, in August 2003, she prepared the ground again. November came once more, but there was no rain. Doreen feared for her harvest. Then, little by little, the rains began and things started to grow. Time will tell whether or not her 2004 harvest will provide sufficient income, but she knows that, thanks to Harvest Help, she will eventually become a successful, organic farmer.

Later in the year, you'll be able to find out how good a harvest Doreen and her neighbours have by looking at our website: www.mrdf.org.uk. The website is also a good place to look for more information about *Our Common Ground*.

Our Common Ground is the title of MRDF's new range of resources and it is all about land. But how much do we know about land? How evenly is it distributed? Who controls the way that land is used? Over the following year, MRDF will produce a Harvest Worship Pack, two Reflections Newsletters and a Study Pack under the title of *Our Common Ground*. These are produced to help you learn, pray and respond to a range of land issues. We'll also be producing a CD Rom of the Harvest resources.

LAND

Throughout the world, the way land is distributed and managed varies from one place to the next. However, a common trend is that those who work most closely with the land are the ones who understand best how to harness its potential. What prevents them from achieving this is complex and varied, but may typically include the following:

First of all, the rural poor need to have greater access to good arable or pastoral land. They also need the tools to work the land and the training to know how to work land efficiently. Additionally, they need to have access to markets, so that they can sell their produce and receive a fair price. Finally, they need the right climatic conditions.

In many countries, the best land is owned by a few wealthy people, making it hard or even impossible for the poor to make a living from the land that is available to them. Often, they are expected to rent land at high prices and are vulnerable to the climate or market forces.

The experience of the organisations that MRDF works with, such as Harvest Help in Zambia, is that the most effective way to maximise land use is to work with nature and encourage sustainable, small-scale farming. By introducing easy to use and affordable techniques, Harvest Help has enabled many farmers to make better use of their land and improve their food security. They have also introduced a range of measures aimed at helping farmers to improve their soil and address the

effects of unpredictable and decreasing rainfall. Although water covers 20% of its surface, Zambia lacks the infrastructure to enable most farmers to easily channel it to their farms.



Zambian farmers Peter Damiti and Neliya Matuzwi beside their compost heap. Compost helps them to improve their soil

Riddled with debt and with a dreadful balance of trade, Zambia is increasingly using its arable land to grow crops such as tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and flowers for the export market. Zambia is not unique. In a desperate bid to service debt and generate the income that will provide vital resources such as health and education services, many poor countries set land aside to grow export crops. This means less land is available for small scale farmers to grow crops for the local market.

Iran earthquake: rebuilding lives

Thank you to everybody who has donated to the Iran earthquake appeal. We have now raised almost £62,000 which is being sent to where it is most needed. The earthquake that hit southern Iran on Boxing Day registered 6.3 on the Richter scale and destroyed almost all of the historic city of Bam. The effects of the earthquake were devastating; Iranian officials now put the death toll at over 43,000 people and a further 100,000 residents have been left homeless and traumatised.

Your donations are being channelled through Action by Churches Together (ACT), which works with partner organisations on the ground who know what the situation demands. Now that the immediate relief needs have been met, your money is giving the people of Bam the resources they need to slowly start to rebuild their lives.

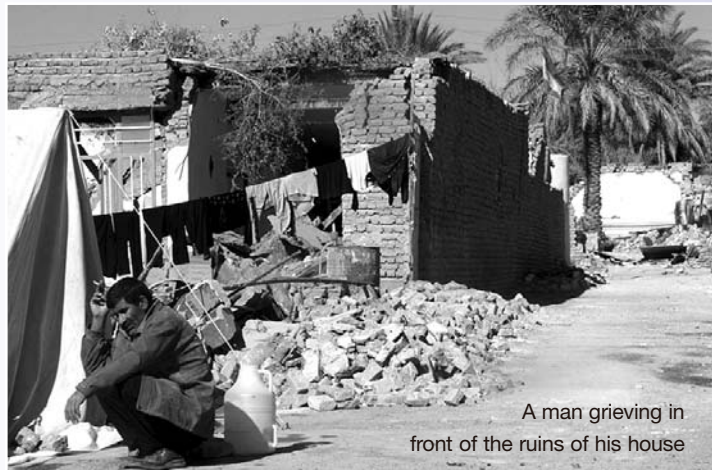
How your money has been spent:

Initially, many people were sleeping outside in the ruins of their houses where their loved ones had died. This left them vulnerable to the freezing cold and to aftershocks. ACT has helped to build large camps on the outskirts of the city for the survivors and is now building more permanent, earthquake resistant housing.

The earthquake devastated the health service, damaging buildings and killing 40% of the area's health staff. Your donations have allowed ACT to provide boxes of medical supplies and mobile field hospitals whilst the health infrastructure is rebuilt.

Rebuilding the damaged infrastructure is crucial to the future of the region. Organisations like ACT are working to do that and to provide skills-training and small-scale loans to the people of Bam that will allow them to start earning a living again.

The earthquake did not just destroy buildings, it left thousands of people traumatised and bereaved and over 5,000 have lost at least one parent. ACT is providing counselling and mental health services to those who need them.



A man grieving in front of the ruins of his house

© Hege Opseth, Norwegian Church Aid/ACT

The scale of the damage in Bam clearly reveals the impact poverty has on the effects of earthquakes. Before Christmas, California experienced a slightly larger earthquake and whilst two people were killed, it caused relatively little structural damage. Yet in Bam, even the most vital buildings like hospitals were not reinforced. The effects of the earthquake, both physical and psychological, will be felt in the region for years to come. However, your donations are helping people to begin to rebuild their lives.

Back to school in DRC

MRDf continues to support emergency situations even when they are out of the headlines. Conflict is a major cause of poverty, as prolonged fighting disrupts all aspects of normal life: schools are destroyed, land is no longer safe to farm and family life is threatened as people flee from their homes. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has suffered all these problems since widespread conflict started in 1997.

The establishment of a transitional government, including all parties involved in the conflict, in 2003 has brought some hope for the people of the DRC. The UN has strengthened its presence in the eastern part of the country, allowing humanitarian access to some areas for the first time. MRDF continues to support work in the DRC through Action by Churches Together (ACT). Thanks to your donations, we are able to help provide assistance to women raped during the conflict, as well as shelter, water and sanitation, schools and other help for people who remain displaced or who are beginning to return to their homes.

Schools, like the one pictured here, are now open again. ACT partners are building and improving classrooms in five schools in the Kisangani District, DRC. They provide much-needed furniture, teaching materials, bicycles for teachers, and latrine blocks and clean water so that the children stay healthy.



© Thomas van Kampen, Lutheran World Federation/ACT

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Here are just a few of the top stories from churches around the UK who have been taking action and raising money for MRDF

The Junior Choir of The Drive Methodist Church, Ilford, came up with a clever idea for getting everyone involved in MRDF's advent appeal to raise money for tree planting projects. They created an alternative Christmas tree using the cut-out shapes of people's hands. Everyone who 'lent a hand' to make the tree, was also encouraged to 'lend a hand' to the appeal by making a donation. A popular way to raise money at Christmas time was to donate the money that would have been spent on individual Christmas cards, presents or trees to the tree planting appeal. Oldham Methodist Church commented: "It is good to know these trees will be flourishing long after Christmas is over."

During Fairtrade fortnight, Methodists in the Witney and Faringdon Circuit celebrated becoming the

first Circuit to gain official Fairtrade status. David Cameron, MP for Witney, presented all 17 churches with certificates from the Fairtrade Foundation. More information about how to get Fairtrade certification for your church or Circuit is available from MRDF.

December's earthquake in Iran (see inside for full details) moved many churches and individuals to take collections and raise money for the survivors. This included Keighley & Worth Valley Methodist Circuit youth group who raised over £100 from a sponsored sleep out.

Thank you and well done to all MRDF supporters. If your church, Circuit or youth group has also been campaigning or fundraising successfully, we'd love to hear how you did it.

Vote for Trade Justice!



Get ready for a new stage in the Trade Justice campaign. TJM organisations, including MRDF and MAYC World Action, will be asking campaigners to cast a vote for trade justice and to collect as many votes as possible - in town centres, churches, colleges and workplaces. Resources and materials to help you take action will be available from June 2004.

Help put trade justice in the news in a way that has never been done before by joining thousands of campaigners in Brighton on Sunday September 26th - the opening day of the Labour Party conference as the UK's governing party. This public launch of Vote for Trade Justice will include international speakers and celebrities, and a church service for inspiration and reflection. We will be asking Ministers and MPs to cast their votes too. Make sure the date is in your diary today.

This is a crucial opportunity to build momentum for trade justice in the run up to 2005, when the UK will host the G8 summit, and hold the presidency of the EU (from July to Dec 2005). The UK will be in a unique and powerful position to take action for trade justice, so it's crucial that we act now to encourage them.

But the campaigning doesn't stop there! We need to keep collecting votes through the rest of 2004 and 2005 to create a huge tide of pressure for trade justice and, in April 2005, we will be joining millions of others around the world in the "People's Week of Global Action for Trade Justice."

See you in Brighton!

New MRDF resources

Our Common Ground Harvest Pack

MRDF's new Harvest pack with information about land issues in Nicaragua, Cameroon and India. Plus posters, worship and activity ideas and ways to take action (available from June 2004).



MRDF Annual Review 2002/3 - One in a Million

An overview of a year in which MRDF grants topped £1million for the first time. Stories from all the continents in which MRDF works, as well as development education, campaigning and emergency aid.



MRDF Annual Report

New MRDF Video

MRDF is making a video. Available on DVD or VHS, it will feature some of those who benefit from working with MRDF. The video is ideal for small groups or for introducing church members to MRDF's work (available from June 2004).

Also available:

- Reflections Newsletter
- Legacy Pack
- Vote for Trade Justice materials (available from June 2004)

To receive regular e-mail updates, keeping you up to date with the latest news from MRDF, e-mail mrdf@methodistchurch.org.uk and ask to be sent Lifelines e-newsletter.



Further Information

Please contact Kevin Fray, MRDF, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR Tel: 020 7467 5142 Fax: 020 7467 5233 E-mail: mrdf@methodistchurch.org.uk

This insert is free. Further copies are available at £1.95 per 10 copies as a contribution towards the distribution cost from MPH (see address below)

This is part of *Methodist Connexions*, the Connexional Link pack provided for the Methodist Church in Britain. Methodist Churches and others in linked ecumenical projects may freely copy this resource for their own use. © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

Who has also been sent copies direct?

District World Development Secretaries
We recognise that not every church has an 'official' world development representative. Maybe you'd like to consider becoming one!

Who else in your church might find this useful?

- Junior Church teachers
- Youth Group leaders
- World Church Officer

Please write their names and get them to tick the box when they have seen or received a copy.