

F O O D A N D T H E F A M I L Y

EDITORIAL

This newsletter is one of startling contrasts. In some Westernised societies, obesity and its accompanying ill health are problems highlighted by the issue of food and the family – for example in Hong Kong. In UK too, doctors have warned that more children will suffer from diabetes, possibly resulting in blindness, as a result of being grossly overweight, and more parents will die prematurely of heart disease. But, as this newsletter makes only too clear, in very many parts of the Anglican Communion the problem is not obesity but malnutrition and starvation through poverty and lack of food.

The picture is not simple. Obesity can sometimes be the result of poverty as well as affluence. Research has shown that, in Western societies, some women become overweight as they try to tackle family poverty by saving the best food for the men and children in their families while they eat a starchy diet, poor in protein and vegetables. In some cultures in Africa, the tradition is that the best food is given to the men despite the needs of girls and young women, even if they are pregnant, with the consequent birth of underweight babies. In some Western countries, there is increasing awareness of eating disorders such as anorexia, a form of self-starvation, and two articles in this newsletter vividly portray the suffering involved for the whole family when children became afflicted.

A newsletter of contrasts: and these contrasts exist in our global world – a world of vastly improved transport and the communications explosion of internet and e-mail. Globalisation has many aspects. One is the expansion of trans-national brands – of food, clothing and lifestyles. The cover picture shows the queue outside a newly opened McDonald's in Moscow. Their logo is an international symbol. The author of a book on globalisation* tells of how as a child she was entranced by the attraction of such symbols, finding the reality of healthy cheese sandwiches, prepared by careful parents, a dull and unwelcome alternative. With the youth market frequently targeted by multi-national corporations such as McDonald's, her view would probably be shared by many young people across the globe. Another aspect of globalisation is the international trade in food, with produce from Africa, South America, India and the West Indies filling the shelves of the affluent world. This can bring benefits to many in both developed and developing countries, as the article from Rwanda stresses, and globalisation needs to be harnessed by those of good will to lessen the polarisation between rich and poor.

A practical way forward is the Fairtrade movement and one article challenges churches and church people to buy fairtrade products to help ensure that food producers in the Two/Thirds world are adequately paid for their produce. The power of the great multi-national food corporations and super

stores and the demand for cheap food can mean that prices are forced down to below the farmers' cost of production. This is true of farmers as far apart as Africa, Central America and UK. Many coffee farmers in Costa Rica and Kenya have been forced to sell their crop for less than it costs to grow, and a recent survey of Britain's farmers suggested that for many it no longer made economic sense to produce food.

For many centuries, the provision and cooking of food has generally been regarded as "women's work". With increasing understanding of the detrimental health effects of malnutrition and poor (or wrong) diet in both rich and poor countries, and with changing understandings about gender roles, it should become more of a shared task between men and women. We all need to take responsibility. But the main imperative for more sharing is between the rich and the poor nations, if the scandalous inequalities in the provision and distribution of food are to be tackled.

Jesus' second main commandment was "Love your neighbour as yourself". This involves taking responsibility for our bodies. On the one hand, it speaks against self-harm through obesity or over-indulgence. But it also enjoins Christians to take responsibility for their neighbours. Surely, in this globalised world, those suffering from malnutrition and famine are our neighbours.

*"No Logo" Naomi Klein (Flamingo 2001)

Globalisation

At one time, food was generally sufficient for each community. Today, economists, in their expertise, analyse and convince the world that food is scarce. Sources of food for the families of the world have changed like everything else in the wake of increased populations. Freshwater fish and sea foods have been privatised. Ponds and lakes are producing less than they used to, for we care less to replenish what we harvest than we should.

The family, whether nuclear (the Western style) or extended (the African style) has to look for its food sufficiency in this globalised world of trade – fend for yourself, compete or pull out.

The family problem to obtain the necessary implements to get food is intertwined in the complexity of trade and commerce. When the family produces food, and the harvest is good, sometimes it opts to eat a little to quench the hunger and takes the rest to market, to pay for other services such as schooling and clothing. Herein lies the problem, because the quantity of food produced by a family on a plot of less than 0.5 hectares (in the case of Rwanda) cannot possibly cater for and wholly satisfy the biting hunger characteristic of the one-or-two-meals-a-day-families whose average unit comprises around five heads.

Developed economies have found

alternatives to self-sufficiency in this world of international trade and the global family, but their achievement is belittled by the glaring waste of this food which could have, otherwise, fed the millions of have-nots.

Is distance the cause? Is it lack of awareness? Constructive criticism alone will not ensure that the redistribution of food becomes a reality in the very near future. Hunger, suffering, war, want and all the other “bad news” like terrorism and hardness of hearts by a few giants, are evils not to be tolerated any longer, especially by us, the followers of a Messiah who fed the five thousand Galileans when he saw their need.

Globalisation is here to stay. It is highly dynamic and we should surely salute its onslaught with hope, for the developing worlds, as their last strategy for survival.

Globalisation should, henceforth, not be viewed as a good or an evil to be tolerated simply because of its powerfulness. It is possible to monitor its course with accuracy if we concentrate our efforts, if we lobby and point out clearly what its flaws might be.

I am thinking and trusting that capacity-building could be the one way we can enter effectively, qualitatively and quantitatively the just-opened markets in

the USA, Europe and East and Central Africa, Asia and Pacific so as to harness these adequately to serve our purposes for alleviation of such abject poverty rampant in many corners of our small planet Earth. In order to harness this “fear-creating” buzz word “globalisation” to our advantage, the following could be tried:

- Build capacity in our ability to lobby for a just, true and peaceful cause.
- Work hard at producing and marketing products unique to our environment which are relevant to the market-needs both locally and globally. Focus on those sectors that would effectively employ our cheap and abundant labour.
- Articulate our needs in expertise of all kinds and financing of all types and endeavour to pay our debts! There is no other softer solution but to be crazy about work!

CONGO

Diocese of Katanga

Since war broke out in 1998, many families in the Democratic Republic of Congo have experienced a lot of problems in terms of food security. The war and poverty have stressed the social life of people, as is evidenced by the growing number of orphans and street kids in towns, left by their own families.

Our diocese is not less affected by this situation. People from the north part of the diocese, who used to live on agriculture, have become internally displaced, begging everywhere in towns for their daily food. They walk the streets, from office to office, to seek help for their survival. Their children are mostly suffering from kwashiorkor as a result of malnutrition and starvation.

Even those they are asking for help do not have enough for themselves. The majority of workers are not paid every month, or are underpaid, and cannot afford their basic needs. Food is very expensive in towns, as it is mostly imported from neighbouring countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa.

People in Katanga Province, which depends heavily on its mineral resources, are not used to farming, since the

majority of them have worked for the large mining companies. At the present time, these companies are unable to pay their workers' salaries and the whole of the population is suffering severe deprivation and hunger.

As well as this war which brought insecurity to farms who could produce food locally, farmers also face the main problem of finding means to purchase

seed and fertiliser as these are very expensive.

Again, without fertiliser, farmers cannot expect to produce more because the soil, especially in south Katanga, is too poor. In the north, the soil does not need fertiliser, but people have fled their homes because of the war. Those who still try to cultivate maize as a local staple food are unable to carry their products to towns for consumption because of the bad state of the roads.

To face the challenge, the diocese of Katanga, in common with other churches and non-governmental organisations, currently runs a feeding programme in one of its parishes to help those children who are victims of malnutrition and starvation. Through its community development programme, it is encouraging farmers to work their fields in groups, to enable them to establish farmers' co-operatives that would help to produce more locally, and to study other development issues affecting the local population in agriculture.

ZIMBABWE

Feeding school children

"The children need this food because there is no food in their homes," explains Assa, as she stirs a big pot of porridge. "All these children are pre-schoolers and at this age the right food is important."

Assa is a teacher in Mwenezi district, deep in the low veldt area of Zimbabwe. It's hot and dusty here, the wind blowing swirls of dust around the children sitting patiently under a tree for their food. It is the school holidays, but 83 children have come today for their one cup of 'nutrimeal' porridge made of maize, soybeans, sugar, salt, vitamins and minerals.

Mwenezi, like the rest of Zimbabwe, has been hard hit by a sharp drought, which began at the beginning of this year and has ruined the maize crop. Maize is used to make 'sadza', the sticky, starchy, porridge which is the staple meal here. Christian Aid's partner, Christian Care, runs a programme to feed primary school children. The children at this school are lucky since, if a pre-school shares the

premises with a primary school, they are automatically included in the feeding programme. Altogether in this area Christian Care is working in 67 schools and feeding 37,551 children.

Under another tree, the primary children are being called, class by class, to queue up for their food. The children come early in the morning so that they can be counted and exact quantities of food prepared. If there is anything left in the pot, it is given to those who the teachers know have no food at home. Today, in the middle of the school holidays, 511 pupils have come.

Loveness, aged 11, is knitting herself a hat as she waits her turn. "When I get home we might have another meal because we got maize from the WFP (World Food Programme). It came last week but it will be gone by the end of this week. I have 11 brothers and 10 sisters," she says. "I normally feel hungry and it disturbs my learning. I hear what the teacher is saying, but I feel sleepy."

The headmaster, explains that, although the area is lucky to receive food from the WFP, it just isn't enough. "The rations are based on a family of five – two parents and three children. Families here are

much bigger and a bag of maize is finished in about a week and they might only get one bag a month." He is deeply worried about the effects of the food shortages on the children in his care. "It will be a disaster if the rains don't come. We are praying to God very hard. These lives are in danger."

He knows also that he cannot depend on the government for emergency supplies of maize. Zimbabwe used to be self-sufficient in maize, with part of the country's needs met by the commercial

farmers. Now, with the drought and the forced closures of the big food-producing farms, production has plummeted by more than 70 per cent.

Zimbabwe is also hard hit by the AIDS epidemic – one in three Zimbabweans is infected and there are more than 600,000 Aids orphans. This has severely reduced people's capacity to cope. Famine is not inevitable in Zimbabwe, but the combination of destructive government policies, drought and AIDS could lead to a catastrophic situation.

"These children are the lucky ones," says the headmaster. "They are the beneficiaries of aid. Christian Care brings it here and we can see it, it doesn't get lost in protocol. If we get it through the government we will get ten per cent of what they send. The government always says food is in the pipeline, you know, that famous pipeline which has no end."

ZAMBIA

Most of Zambia's subsistence food is grown by women both in rural and urban areas. Due to urbanisation, they all face the same difficulties in obtaining food. It is very difficult for someone to have access to farming inputs such as improved seeds, fertiliser, tools, and they lack the cash money to purchase them. Most of them shun bank loans because of unbearable interest rates. The families are large with lots of dependants for cheap labour. In both areas they live in communities and form farm co-operatives to make it possible for the government to subsidise.

The economic constraints in Zambia lately have caused a lot of people to suffer from high rates of malnutrition as a result of inequitable food distribution in the household, improper food storage and preparation and ignorance about nutritional requirements. As a result the above people end up in poor health. Diseases like anaemia, diarrhoea, cholera and HIV/AIDS are found in most of the households – either they are infected or affected.

Zambians are well known for their hospitality; most households are open even to strangers to share a meal. The family relationships are really strengthened during mealtimes: that's when they find ample time of togetherness after long hours of working. In many homes, because of culture, men and women eat separately. It is only in isolated homes in urban areas where this is not applicable. The meal is put in dishes; using hands for eating is another sign of togetherness, family unity and good relationships. This has been proved to be the best kind of communication. The main meal is prepared twice a day. Family members will be present for at least one of them.

The Mothers' Union has built project houses in each area (urban and rural) to teach women, men and children survival skills: such as hygiene, food – processing and storage, maintaining household sanitation standards and facilities, and other income-generating activities.

When I moved from Kabwe to Ndola in 1999 to work at the cathedral, little did I know that the cathedral had two other congregations nearby whose membership is very poor. These two congregations are known as St Peter's and St Martin's.

During my many pastoral visits, it came to light that many members were either widows, widowers or orphans and their livelihood was far below the poverty level. What would I do? The cathedral had many members who were out of employment (the town is turning into a ghost town as many industries have closed down). I would not turn to them for help. So I went back to these people and told them that they were the only resources we had and had to do something. So in early 2000, we enlisted the names of all the households. Some were headed by orphans and others by old grandparents. It also became clear

that most parents had died from the dreaded HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The hunger situation is not encouraging. These last three months, the widows and orphans in Twaipia Township, where St Peter's is, have been surviving on one meal a day or none at all. Many do piecework where they earn about 50 pence and then they buy small portions of maize meal, make thick porridge known as nshima, with some bitter leaf – if they are lucky with pumpkin leaves. This can honestly only feed two people, but you will find eight or more crowding round the nshima to have a share. Life has to go on somehow.

That is how the Mission Redeemer charity was born. The families who had enlisted were asked to make a contribution of k10,000 (about £1.20). Then we opened a

bank account of about k200,000. Only then, had we a chance of applying for a grant to an organisation known as Hope Humana who granted us k900,000. We are now doing two projects rearing chickens and a knitting and dress-making club. Though this project did not yield hundred percent results, the widows were empowered to learn how to rear chickens. The vision is that, when we have raised enough money, we will then empower each one of them to be able to raise 50 chickens for a start. Our target is to give each one of them £20 when the group has raised chickens three times. Meanwhile we will be giving them £5 to buy some food of some sort.

NIGERIA

During the pre-colonial days, agricultural production was predominantly subsistence, but sharing. Pre-independence period, enough food was produced and exported from agriculture, fishery and livestock. Coconut, rubber, palm produce, groundnuts, were cash crops produced. Most of the population were engaged in farming. With the oil boom of the 1970s, the contribution of agriculture to the national economy declined.

In Nigeria, the techniques of food production, processing and transportation were very poor, with poorly designed machinery and inaccessible roads, which cause a lot of food damage between the farms and the point of consumption. Nigeria loses much of the food produced through infestation and destruction. There is a great need for improved agricultural policies and research.

The oil brought with it much rural/urban migration in search of white collar jobs. There was growth of commercial and merchant banks, the "get rich quick" syndrome which has led to drug trafficking, "418" internet scams and increase in the crime wave. Because of the rural/urban drift, less active labour is left on the farms, the age bracket for farmers getting to 60 and above. These get tired and retire to their homes, leaving the younger ones to take over farming activities.

There is generally low production due to poor education, poverty and ignorance of the farmers. The production rate of 1% cannot sustain the population growth rate of 2.8% annually. Hence the very high cost of food.

The average Nigerian finds it difficult to meet the FAO requirement for calories and proteins per day, hence under-nutrition is prevalent, resulting in intellectual incapacitation, measles, diarrhoea and reduced resistance to infections. This situation is caused by the poor food

situation, and low purchasing power, as a result of unemployment and underemployment. Socio-cultural factors are also contributory. For instance, cereals are predominantly staple foods in the north, while cassava and starchy root tubers feature predominantly in the south. Beef and dairy products are more readily available in the Northern State than the Southern State of Nigeria, but because of the population explosion, these do not meet the Nigerian requirement for the generality of the people.

Different administrations in this country have adopted measures for improving the food problems. There have been the Operation Feed the Nation, the establishment of River Basin Development Authorities, Green revolution etc. All these have little impact due to inherent maladministration and corruption. The current government in Nigeria is doing everything possible to improve the situation by first and foremost fighting corruption at all levels by the Anti-Corruption Act 2001.

Efforts are also being intensified at carrying

out the compulsory basic education, to produce informed citizenry, massive importation of agricultural machinery, improvement in transport facilities by building a network of good roads, building silos for the preservation of grains and encouraging private participation in food production, processing, preservation and transportation, and nutrition education in schools.

The women's organisation in the Diocese is trying to help Kaduna improve the situation by giving grants to the clergy wives and other members for farming (livestock and food production).

More important, all efforts are being mobilised to create more job opportunities as a means of reducing poverty and increasing the purchasing power of the average Nigerian.

Uganda largely depends on farming for its survival. The country depends on purely naturally produced foods. There are not many industries to process the food; so it is consumed when still fresh. This is of advantage to the citizens and for Kabale in particular. Most people survive on subsistence farming without any artificial ingredients added, which gives a high quality nutritional food value.

However, weather changes have caused problems like heavy rains, prolonged dryness and this has affected the quantity and quality of food production. Heavy rains have left some soils bare; prolonged drought has caused dry parched lands and no plant can grow. All this has led to food shortage.

In addition, the land tenure system in Kabale has contributed a great deal to loss of soil fertility. Land is inherited from the parents and where a family has, for example, seven sons, each one is given a piece of land on which he has to support his own family for life. This leads to over-cultivation and eventually the soils lose fertility; farming being the major activity in the area.

As result the government, together with voluntary workers like NGOs, have come up with the idea of modernising agriculture to increase and improve food production. Modern methods of farming are being encouraged, like mixed farming, agro-forestry, growing improved seeds, fallowing and applying fertilisers to the degraded soils. To some extent this has led to increased food production for the families.

Nonetheless, some poor families, with very small land, still find it difficult to obtain enough food as the harvested crop is used to meet all the needs of the family, like selling to buy clothes, paraffin, soap, school fees, which leaves the family with little or no food to live on.

The improved seeds, which have been encouraged to be used, eventually have become expensive – especially to a subsistence farmer. For example, such a seed will not yield unless it is sprayed; and money to buy the spray is difficult to get for an ordinary man surviving on crop-growing alone. In addition, where the improved breed has been grown, no other kind of crop will survive when planted, unless another improved seed, and it still has to be sprayed in order for it to survive and yield.

Some families which afford crop-growing on a somewhat larger scale find a problem of marketing. Actually, agricultural products are the cheapest selling commodity in Uganda, and Kabale in particular, more so those that are grown and harvested under pure natural conditions. For instance Kabale produces

very sweet and good pineapples but one is sold at 200 Uganda shillings (this has no equivalent in dollar currency). Equally cabbages, onions and tomatoes, even Irish potatoes, are sold very cheaply because people have no sources of income to help them purchase. Eventually, as the foods are perishables, they rot; which leaves the farmer in double loss as there are no preservatives to keep the food in good condition.

Not only those with no land, but even those with very low-paying jobs, go in to buy the cheapest food but most filling when eaten: such food as sweet potatoes, maize (posho), cassava and others. Thus they survive on an unbalanced diet. The end result is that some members of the family become ill, they suffer from diseases like kwashiorkor, goitre, ulcers, which handicaps them and they become even poorer. In some families, their children resort to eating from dustbins and this is not healthy at all. Not only

children but even old women pick food from compost pits.

When there are celebrations and big occasions, families eat together, especially Easter days, Christmas days, party days like weddings, baptism and thanksgiving. In most cases families invite other families to share the meals and the joys together. For individual families, the habit of eating together strengthens their relationships because, after eating, they hold discussions about the family.

To close, I would like to say that provisions should be made to enable farmers carry out food processing of some kind, at least to reduce wastage where marketing has become a problem. This points to the government as it plans for its people.

MALAWI

Transforming futures

In many villages in southern Africa, the months before harvest are known as the “hungry season”. Crops, gathered in April, are often all eaten by Christmas and families are then reduced to eating one meal a day, supplementing their diet from what they can gather in the bush. Hunger and the search for food take many away from working their fields at what is a critical time for the new crop. This contributes to a cycle of poor harvests and more hunger. When the harvest fails completely, as it has in many parts of southern Africa this year, the position becomes much worse.

Harvest Help was set up by Christian Voluntary Service and receives support for its work from many churches across the UK. Working in Zambia and Malawi, it is committed to breaking this cycle and transforming the future for farmers like the Mahangos. Damblani Mahango and his family farm two acres on a hillside in northern Malawi. This year their harvest failed and they have now exhausted their food stocks. The family is surviving on piecework and the charity of their neighbours. However, when they met the Harvest Help worker, Mr Mahango asked not for food but for help to ensure they could grow enough to feed the family in future years. The worker said, “It was humbling to listen to people, whose immediate future was so uncertain, talking so positively about what they could do in the long term, with a little help.”

The Mahangos farm lies in a district where Harvest Help is working with a local organisation to help communities to become self-sufficient and self-reliant. The charity works with groups of farmers

to help them to define what help they need and to provide support and training, as well as any seed or other things that they need. All support is provided on a loan basis, with repayments going to the local community who can then lend this to other farmers in need.

Harvest Help have used this approach successfully for a number of years in Zambia and, although they have only been working in Malawi for just over a year, it appears that it will prove to be successful there also. However, as every farmer knows, there will be times when the harvest fails, whatever farming techniques are used. Many communities are also receiving assistance to develop other income-generating activities such as knitting, baking and honey production. These will help to ensure an income and enough food for the family, whatever the weather.

Tamson Jinkson and his family are a good example of a success story. Just like the Mahangos, the weather has not been kind to their Malawian farm this year. But the introduction of irrigation, composting and contour ploughing has allowed them to produce enough food to eat well all year. With good weather, their farm produces a surplus, which can be sold to pay for basic necessities. Harvest Help's aim is to allow more farmers to look to the future with as much confidence as the Jinksons now do.

GUATEMALA

Malnutrition – Silent hunger

Malnutrition doesn't always show – but it is a killer all the same. For poor families in the remote villages of Central America it is an ever-present threat.

Justiniano braces himself with one leg outstretched against the steep slope of the land he is hoeing. It's a small patch, clinging precariously to the side of a hill outside the village of Popabaj, southern Guatemala. Working alongside Justiniano is his son Isaias, aged six. They are clearing the ground around the maize plants that the family grows for food. The plot of land is too small to support them, and even this does not belong to them – they have to rent it from a local landowner.

“Our problem is poverty,” says Justiniano. “I don't own any land. I'm renting this

piece, but I've only got it for this year. I'll be able to grow some maize for us to eat, but I also have to grow mangetout and sell it to pay the rent for the land. And when you're poor, people don't want to let you rent their land. Looking after maize like this is the only thing I know how to do.”

“There are many days when we have nothing to eat,” says Ramona, Justiniano's wife. “We feed our children mainly on tortillas that I make with maize flour and water. Sometimes we can find some money to buy some rice or meat, but that's not very often. Sometimes we only eat once a day. I'm very worried about the health of my family. When I'm at home sometimes I have to cry alone because I'm not able to do anything about it.” All they can do is work hard and hope. “We live in hope for a better future,” says

Justiniano, “with the hope that God will take care of us.”

You find faith everywhere in Guatemala: in recent years there has been a huge growth in evangelical churches. But the country is less acquainted with justice. Thirty years of civil and military conflict and politically-motivated killings have left deep scars. And behind that stand five centuries of oppression of the indigenous people, ever since the Spanish invaders arrived to conquer this part of Central America.

“The major issue in the community is malnutrition,” says Dr Axel Suquen, director of the Life Association, one of Tearfund's Christian partners in Guatemala. “Malnutrition has many different causes but here in Guatemala our real problem is with the history of the people. The indigenous people here

right nutrients their health, future development – even their life – is at risk. “We had a meeting with some mothers about malnutrition,” recalls Axel. “We took some measurements of one of the children and discovered he was suffering from chronic malnutrition. The mothers of the community had seen him as perfectly healthy, but he’d been suffering from malnutrition all his life.” Children and women of child-bearing age are the ones most vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition. Children don’t develop as they should, both physically and intellectually, and this affects not just them but the whole community.

To help combat malnutrition, the Life Association provides seeds and training to the poorest families with children under five so that they can grow vegetables. The Association also works with the community to set up health-training programmes, and now has 78 locally-recruited health promoters working in the villages. They help parents understand the effects of poor nutrition and the range of diet their families need.

Pedro Par and his wife Antolin are one of the couples who have benefited from this. Like Justiniano, Pedro has to rent land to grow maize, handing over half of what he grows to the landowner as rent. But on the small piece of land where he lives there is room to grow vegetables. With

help from the Life Association, Pedro and his family now grow spinach, radishes and kale on a plot about 7m square. Now Antolin has more variety to feed her family, “I’ve noticed a real change in our children,” she says. “They don’t get sick so often now. I believe it’s because we are eating good quality vegetables.”

There has also been a change in the family since Pedro became a Christian. “I used to drink a lot and beat my wife and I didn’t care about my family. It was a really big problem. But now I don’t drink, and when I get money I use it properly for my family, so we are happy together.”

This experience of all-round change is what the Life Association works for. “We want people to enjoy a good relationship with God, and then to create their own community projects, make their own dreams and carry them out. We want them to have abundant life, as Jesus promised, to have peace with God, with creation, and with other people.”

Edited by Abby King from article written for Tear Times, Autumn 2002, by Mike Hollow of Tearfund.

have been exploited for a long time and now 90 per cent of the land is owned by only ten per cent of the people. The indigenous people aren’t valued and this causes malnutrition in the villages because they just don’t have any land to grow the crops they need in order to stay healthy”.

Child malnutrition has been called “a silent and invisible emergency”. Children affected may not look ill, but without the

FAIR TRADE UK

Five years ago, my friend had the opportunity to spend four weeks in Kenya as part of a Global Perspective programme at Chester College. On her return she told me of farmers who did not harvest their crop – coffee beans left to rot because the price of coffee was so low. When farmers can’t get a decent price for their crop, or the crop is poor, the whole family is affected. No income, no education, no health facilities – not even food for the family. For the first time I heard of the **Fairtrade Foundation** and the work they do. I discovered that my weekly shopping could affect, for the better, families in developing countries.

The Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) was created in 1986 in response to the request of coffee farmers in southern Mexico for trade not aid. The Fairtrade Foundation in London is one of the founding members of the FLO. The Fairtrade Foundation exists to ensure a better deal for small farmers. This means guaranteed better prices which always cover the cost of production, no matter how low the world market price goes.

Fairtrade terms of trading:

- A price that covers the cost of production.
- A social ‘premium’ to be used by producers to improve their living and working conditions.

- Advance payment to avoid small producer organisations falling into debt.
- Contracts that allow long-term planning and sustainable production practices.

By establishing a clear set of standards and monitoring the purchases and sales of Fairtrade products (coffee, tea, chocolate, honey, sugar, orange juice, bananas and mangoes and other products based on some of these ingredients), the Fairtrade Foundation provides an endorsement of products and a guarantee of Fairtrade claims to consumers.

When the City of Chester became the first Fairtrade City in January this year, businesses and other secular organisations had to prove they were committed to using and selling Fairtrade products in the workplace. This poses a challenge for the church

- Are we, in our religious communities, able to meet this challenge?
- Have we accepted and acted upon the words of Jesus to “love our neighbour”? Our neighbour is the farmer in the developing world who struggles to make a living from the pittance multinationals pay for his/her produce.

Chester Diocese (through the Committee for Social Responsibility) hopes to become a Fairtrade diocese. This is done by churches and diocesan establishments making a commitment to buy and serve only Fairtrade tea and coffee, and to educate and inform the people in our churches about the importance of choice of product when we shop.

Which tea or coffee we choose to buy is a life-style choice, but if we positively decide to buy Fairtrade products it is a *life* choice for those who produce it.

FAIR TRADE COSTA RICA

Adolfo's and Isabel's farm lies in the Tilaran region of Costa Rica. Their land of around two hectares was passed down to Adolfo from his father, also a coffee farmer. With four children to provide for, the family lives from cultivating coffee and rearing cows for their milk and cheese. Like many other families in the area, coffee is very important to them and provides 70% of their total income. The coffee harvest lasts for two to three months. It is the busiest time of the year with Adolfo and Isabel starting work at 5am.

With coffee prices at a 30 year low (the lowest ever in real terms) coffee farming is a tough existence. Most producers sell their coffee at a loss. However, Adolfo and Isabel are members of the local coffee co-operative, Co-op El Dos, that exports part of its crop to the Fairtrade market in the UK. For these sales, the couple receive a price guaranteed to cover the cost of production. This modest income allows them to purchase necessities such as rice, and textbooks and pens for the children. A loan from the co-operative, which they repay in part after every harvest, allows them to invest in fertiliser and agricultural equipment.

As Adolfo explained, life was difficult before the co-operative. Farmers had no control over the price they received for their coffee and had no alternative but to sell to a private middleman. Payment was often not received for months after harvesting and had to be collected from the nearest town, San Jose, a journey of two days by horseback, train and boat. Now the co-operative pays farmers on the day they deliver their crop, which gives farmers more control over their finances.

Like parents everywhere, Adolfo and Isabel want their children to receive a good education. The co-operative has made this possible by providing scholarships for the two eldest children. Ultimately, being able to sell their coffee to the Fairtrade market is dependent on the consumer. "I hope consumers will buy more Fairtrade coffee so we can maintain ourselves like this," says Adolfo. "If it wasn't for Fairtrade, with prices so low at the moment we would get deeper and deeper into debt. I know other producers who are getting into debt. Some abandon coffee altogether, and then the father goes and seeks work in the city or in a hotel, or in the United States. When that happens, the family is split up. If the family stays together, it protects the children against problems such as drug addiction."

Co-op El Dos would like to export more to the Fairtrade market, but at present there is not enough consumer demand for Fairtrade coffee.

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Our country, approximately the same size as England, with only 9% of the population, is blessed with fertile soil and a temperate climate, but a wide range of annual rainfalls.

As a child in the 1930s, I recall that a majority of households, even in the larger cities, grew their own vegetables, often also fruits, berries and currants. My grandparents had huge gardens!

In the country, people had at least one house-cow, often three or four, separating the cream from the warm fresh milk by a hand-turned separator so that cream could be sold as butter fat, or churned manually for the family's own use. In the cities, fresh milk was delivered to the door by the milkman with an open can and dipper with which he filled the domestic jugs. What an appalling scenario for today's hygiene-conscious health experts. We survived!

In the 21st century, our greatest health problems result from over-indulgence and "wrong foods" namely obesity and diabetes. Cheapest foods are fast foods, loaded with saturated fats; white bread instead of whole grain, and excessive

sugar and salt in too many foods – ready-made and packaged – and even in packaged ingredients.

Essential foods such as fish and fruit are plentiful and fresh, but expensive. In the poorer communities, particularly Polynesian and Maori, but not exclusively, many children come to school having had no breakfast and often not bringing lunches. An increasing number of schools in needy areas are providing a wholesome breakfast so children will have the energy to pay attention and learn. Lunch needs are monitored.

Surprisingly, considering our mild climate and renowned love of sport, too many adults as well as children get too little exercise and rely on car transport instead of walking or cycling. There are now many initiatives to encourage these latter activities: schools, parent groups and others make healthy alternatives in both food and exercise a cause for reward and commendation.

Photos in local papers are a powerful re-inforcer, as are inter-class competitions.

Diabetes in the Polynesian and Maori population is being referred to as the "killer of the future" if drastic improvements in lifestyle and diet are not achieved. Stroke and heart problems would also be reduced by "eating less and better", while walking for health is vigorously promoted. Education of the public takes a healthy slice of the Health Department budget.

It seems a sad irony, that with millions of the world's population starving or malnourished, in this fair land of plenty too many people are eating themselves into ill health and even death.

On the credit side, thousands of our children and adults, gladly participate in World Vision's 40-hour fast and raise nearly \$2,000,000 for the needy overseas every year.

Our daughter, Jane, was diagnosed with anorexia, at the age of 15, in May 2000. In the six months prior to this diagnosis she had lost nearly three stone in weight. The trigger for her illness was a diet which she and her friends undertook in preparation for a Christmas ball. When her friends stopped dieting, she found that she was unable to.

I knew from Boxing Day 1999 that we had a serious problem. Jane refused to eat breakfast or lunch because she had "eaten so much the day before". As the weeks progressed and her weight loss accelerated, she also slipped deeper and deeper into depression. She felt that there was nothing for her to look forward to and she only wanted to be allowed to die. She isolated herself from her friends and only left the house when she had to. The situation, particularly with regard to her eating, was spiralling totally out of control and we, as her parents, had no idea how to handle it.

Jane and I visited our GP on a number of occasions. I grew increasingly frustrated and frantic as I was treated as an over-anxious mother. Eventually I asked if Jane could be referred to a specialist in eating disorders. We are fortunate to have an adolescent psychiatric unit in our area and Jane was sent to see a consultant there. Within a few minutes he had diagnosed Jane's illness.

Jane's consultant was quite clear that she must be made to eat. Whilst her body weight was so low, her thinking was completely distorted and counselling would be of limited benefit. Jane saw this as a violation of her human rights. If she didn't want to eat, we should not make her. We spent many hours sitting with her until she had finished what was on her plate. She reacted to this by refusing to speak to us for days on end. She would return from school, shut herself in her room, and we would hear her cry for hours.

Very, very slowly, however, positive changes did come about. She started to socialise and make plans for the future. She decided that after her GCSE exams she would change schools. Gradually the battles subsided and she began to take some responsibility for her recovery. She began to look forward to events. In August 2001, she went to stay with some family friends in the States. Her weight, with numerous fluctuations, began to creep up.

Now, in the summer of 2002, she remains underweight for her height. She still battles with the desire to control her eating. She still hates to be in a situation where she is unsure of what and how much she will have to eat but she does want to get better and is full of plans for the future.

Jane's illness has had a serious and negative effect on our family. Our younger child has had two and a half years of his life blighted by concerns over his sister and has had to witness many painful scenes. My husband and I feel the toll on our relationship to be immense.

It is still too early for me to have any real sense of perspective. We have sought to find positives which have arisen from the experience, but they have been few. Certainly we do not get so

anxious about small issues that used to trouble us, and we know what we value. We try not to have ambitions for our children and we encourage them to take responsibility for their lives.

As Christians, my husband and I ask: "Where has God been in this situation?" We have not found an answer.

When you live with someone with anorexia and bulimia, you come to realise that the problem is not just theirs. It affects everyone in the household and also the extended family, friends and workplace.

Ten years ago, when she was 15, we began to notice that at mealtimes our younger daughter Lizzie would find a reason to leave the table with food unfinished and slip upstairs. She began to wear bigger and baggier jumpers. Her face became pale and pinched and it soon became clear she was making herself vomit after eating.

We told her gently we knew what was happening. She seemed relieved, wept, and agreed she needed help. Even so, the road to recovery has been long and hard. She has swung from the starvation of anorexia to the binging of bulimia and back again. Thankfully, a decade on, Lizzie is currently in remission. At her worst, she weighed only six stone; but now her weight is normal. But she knows her eating disorder is always lurking in the background.

Throughout these difficult years, her illness has caused tremendous emotional strains on the whole family. We have felt afraid and helpless as we watched our lovely daughter wasting away. We have been angry – with her and with each other, torturing ourselves as parents with arguments about whose fault it was, and, above all, resenting this disease that seemed to have such a grip on her. It was driving a wedge between us.

As a family, we have travelled to remote parts of Africa. Like us, Lizzie has seen malnutrition in children who had no choice. Why had she, with so much available to her, chosen to starve herself? But of course, she did not choose her

eating disorder. It was an affliction that came, at first unsought and unwanted, because of a host of complex psychological reasons, not yet fully understood, that surround this increasingly common illness.

For those who live with someone suffering with it, life can be very wearing. Time and again we have felt things were improving, only to see her go downhill again. Even now, when I am preparing a meal for guests, I sometimes find the ingredients are missing because Lizzie has had a binge. Or she will stay away from home when she knows people are coming. Other times, when we have been away for a few days, we find she has eaten nothing. Then we begin to think that we ought not to go away, or we ought not to have people to stay, because these alterations to routine still upset Lizzie.

So often we have to be careful about what we say. It is like walking on eggshells. Lizzie is still under medical supervision. But, when we look back over ten years, we do recognise that she has done very well in her battle against her anorexia and bulimia.

I believe there are two main reasons why she has survived, and why even though things can still be difficult, we are much closer as a family. The first is that right from the moment we guessed she had a problem, we faced it and talked about it openly with Lizzie as a family. She says it has been a help to feel we are all in it together.

The second thing we did, once we realised how we were beginning to snap at each other, was to make a conscious effort not to blame anyone in any way for what had happened. Blame nurtures resentment, and that does not help.

It's not plain sailing even now. But the bouts of anorexia and bulimia are getting further apart and seem less severe. We all feel that open communication and honesty with each other have helped. So too has the general debate about this illness. But, above all, we have been hugely helped by the love, understanding and prayers of friends.

SCOTLAND

Cases of food poisoning are being reported more often in the media, and serious outbreaks in Scotland and the rest of the UK have resulted in several deaths. This increased incidence has several causes, but one of the underlying factors is the change in peoples' life styles. Mothers often work during the day and prepare food in advance for when the family come home; food is bought in larger quantities at the weekly shopping expedition and stored for use later; children drift in and out and the family rarely all sit down to a freshly prepared meal and so food is often warmed through at different times. All these pose potential hazards when it comes to food hygiene. Food poisoning is usually caused by the rapid growth of bacteria in a food

which has either been warmed through slowly or inadequately cooked to kill the bacteria. Convenience foods are being used more widely, and these need to be stored at low temperature and properly heated as directed or they, too, can be the cause of food poisoning. Storage of fresh foods such as raw meat and salads in the same fridge can result in cross-contamination of bacteria.

Members of the Mothers Union are engaged in many projects and some of these involve preparing and serving refreshments. For this reason, training was put in place in Scotland to ensure that any risk to the public or MU members from poorly prepared food or bad working practice was eliminated. A lecturer from a local college taught MU

members the basic food hygiene and handling course and at the end they sat a written examination paper. They are now accredited with the Elementary Food Hygiene Certificate of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland and can pass on their knowledge and good practice to others.

This is another example of the way the Mothers' Union resources its members and is active in the campaign for better food hygiene and public safety.

HONG KONG

Nutrition and Related Health Service of St. James' Settlement

Food is essential to life and good nutrition plays an important role in maintaining our good health and reducing risk for chronic diseases. However, malnutrition is always a common problem existing not only in developing countries but also in modern cities, including Hong Kong, and the causes ranging from under-nutrition to over-nutrition.

According to the new weight-for-height standard for Asian people, a recent survey reported that about 35% Hong Kong adults are obese. There are still 5% of Hong Kong adults being classified as obese using the higher WHO (Caucasian) reference. And for children, 10% are obese. Being overweight and/or obese not only brings serious health risk such as high blood pressure, increased blood cholesterol, heart disease, certain types of cancers, stroke, type two diabetes and osteoarthritis, it can also make everyday activities harder. Worse still, being obese doesn't mean being overloaded with all kinds of nutrients. It is not uncommon to find an obese lady with anaemia or an obese man with osteoporosis. How come? It is just because of their unbalanced diet, poor eating habits and lack of regular physical exercise. For the sake of improving the quality of life and a healthy ageing, health maintenance should begin early in life.

Established in 1986, the Health Service of St. James' Settlement aims at promoting the concept of "Total Health" and "Wellness" in the community. Our holistic care health services include the following:

- nutritional counselling and consultation service,
- sport nutrition,
- fitness training,
- weight control management,
- health check-up and examination,

- dental care, and
- community health education.

Since June 2002, the Health Service of St. James' Settlement further expanded to a "Multi Medical and Health Centre", which greatly increases the variety of the healthcare consortium and includes a gynaecology clinic, a geriatric clinic, and an out-patient clinic, where a registered medical practitioner is in charge of a medical service providing for the general public. In addition, there is an oriental life counselling service where an oriental life counsellor helps one's emotional management and trains one's will power by relaxation exercise, personality analysis and cognitive therapy.

The Health Service of St. James' Settlement is a self-financing service. It provides a wide spectrum of health services; focusing from maintenance to wellness and health promotion for the population we serve.

Like many modern cities, people in Hong Kong lack proper and regular exercise, have

poor eating habits, stressful working, thereby adversely affecting their health. Disease-prevention and its early detection is the key to a healthy being. To arouse people to concern about their health, to start from a healthy life style through daily exercise, healthy eating, and a healthy habit of life and balance is an important work of the service.

Editorial Note

St. James' Settlement was founded in 1949 by Bishop R.O. Hall of the Anglican Church to meet the desperate needs of families living in the Wanchai area. Under his leadership, the Settlement offered tangible assistance to these people in the form of food, medical care and tuition in practical skills. It grew from a club for boys and girls located in a Temple in Stone Nullah Lane to the present 12 storey Community Centre.

Family meals as a focus of relationships and celebration

Recently my husband and I celebrated the birthday of a little girl turning three, along with her older brother and sister and her parents. We share close fellowship with this young family in our church in Bowral, a very beautiful part of Australia.

An invitation was issued some weeks before to come to dinner at the young family's home for this very special occasion. There was much anticipation and excitement as the date drew nearer and Sophia, the Birthday Girl, started to count how many sleeps there were till the big event.

We arrived at the appropriate time and were greeted by all three children. There was certainly a buzz in the air. The children offered us nibbles and drinks and a little later we were ushered to the table for our meal. Place cards had been lovingly written and illustrated by the older children and the table, complete with candles, looked celebratory indeed.

Before the meal commenced, the Birthday Girl asked if she could say grace as it was her birthday. We bowed our heads and she said "Dear Lord, thank you for the, What is it we're having Mum?" The reply came back "spicy lamb" and the prayer began again "Dear Lord, thank you for the spicy lamb and thank you for my Mum and Dad, my sister and brother and my friends and this special time and all the people who are sad". It was a delicious meal and had been much looked forward to and prepared with love.

As I reflect on that delightful occasion, I appreciate again how much hospitality means to all of us. To be invited to a family home and to be asked to share food is a way of moving closer to one another. Sometimes we forget what we

actually ate but we remember that we were invited. To celebrate with others their significant events is indeed a privilege.

Every family meal can be an event in some small way. Creativity is very much part of it. Setting the table in a way that is comfortable and makes for ease of conversation creates a relaxed mood. Choosing ingredients and preparing them in a way that looks attractive, as well as tasting good, is a challenge but very satisfying. There are also aspects of love and serving, of wanting to nourish and nurture in all of that. Appreciation too, as family members express their thanks to whoever did the preparing.

Most importantly, at the family meal is where most of us start to learn to pray. It is the place where we express our thanks to God for all He has provided. It is also the place where we begin to acknowledge that others are in need and that we can ask the Lord to supply those needs.

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

NEW ADDRESS FOR IAFN OFFICE

The Family Network office has moved. The address is:
IAFN Office, PO Box 54,
Minehead, Somerset TA24 7WD
ENGLAND

Tel/Fax: (+44) (0) 1643 841 500
E-mail: mail@iafn.org.uk

PRAYER

O Lord, how manifold are your works – we thank you for all the goodness and variety of food and nutrition which you provide;

In wisdom you have made them all – help us as families to learn to farm, to preserve, to prepare and to serve your gifts in the best way;

The earth is full of your riches – help us to share food within our families, to support community co-operatives, and to look for family-friendly food policies;

We ask this in the Name of Him who is the Living Bread – through whom we both pray and give thanks for our bread this day; even Jesus Christ, our Lord

Amen

Revd John Bradford.

THE NEXT FAMILY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

The theme of a future newsletter, to be published in the Trinity 2003 Anglican World, is **Children and Work**. We are looking for articles (300-500 words long) about some of the following issues: child labour (children working for money/in sweatshops etc; bonded labour); children working in the home or alongside their parents; problems with schooling because of children working; projects to protect and safeguard children working; gender issues in children's work (what is suitable/appropriate for boys/girls). We will need to receive articles for this newsletter by **28th February 2003**.

Visit the Family Network website: www.anglicancommunion.org/iafn/

The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the International Anglican Family Network.