

# JPHIC Update

2008 MARCH

God of grace,  
creator of a world of plenty,  
the heavens declare your glory  
and the earth your generosity.  
In love, you created us  
and in your likeness you made us  
to be partners in creation.  
In greed, we have turned away  
and have marred your image in us  
to fashion a fragmented world.

Renew in us your vision of wholeness,  
that the rich restore wealth to the poor  
and the poor share blessings with the rich.

Revive in us a passion for justice,  
that the tyranny of profit be quelled  
and whispers of freedom find voice.  
Refresh in us our sense of calling,  
that we follow Christ in serving others  
and live simply with those who simply live.  
Amen.

© Annabel Shilson-Thomas, in *Leader's Resource Book, livesimply materials*, (CAFOD, 2007) ]

**East Timor** is the poorest country in Southeast Asia, where 42.6% of children under five are underweight, and 46% of children are stunted by malnutrition; according to a report by the World Food Programme. More than 40% of the population are below the national minimum standard of living (55 cents per day) and the per capita income per year is only US\$370 (£185). [Guardian Weekly, February 2008]

Support for the **United Nations** work to stamp out violence against women has come from one of the world's leading cosmetics companies, Avon. The firm is to commit US\$1 million to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, a fund which was created in 1999 by the UN General Assembly, and which is administered by **UNIFEM** (U N Development Fund for Women). This will be the biggest donation by a corporate donor in any one year. The money will be available for programmes that seek to find 'innovative' ways of countering violence. In the past it has disbursed more than US\$18 to 250 such programmes in more than 100 countries. The company is to match the first US\$500,000 made on the sales of a new 'women's empowerment' bracelet in order to fund its donation. [UN News Centre, March 4 2008]

The **Tanzanian** government has announced plans to begin the naturalisation of refugees who fled Burundi. The country has been the 'home' to many refugees; most fled the civil war in Burundi in 1972 to live in western Tanzania in the settlements of Katumba,

Wilyakulu and Mishamo. After 36 years many feel more at home in their adopted country and are relieved to be offered the possibility of naturalisation. Some have even been born there and so do not even consider Burundi as home. Recently published task force findings of the **UNHCR** and the governments of Burundi & Tanzania found that some 80% of the refugees wish to remain in Tanzania. It is hoped that the process for 172,000 of them will begin shortly. [JRS Dispatches, in JRS News, www.jrs.net March 2008]

UK consumers are now spending more than £450 million on fair-trade goods a year, according to research by the **Fairtrade Foundation**. In the past 16 years it has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the retail economy in the UK. Now some of the major brands are household names - Cafédirect and Divine. Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer's and Waitrose have adopted the movement. Sainsbury's own label tea is fairtrade, as are its bananas, and it is going down the same path with its sugar. M & S bought 1/3 of all the world's Fairtrade cotton in 2007. All this is having a positive effect in the developing areas of the world where infrastructure improvements and better lives are being paid by Fairtrade. Government surveys have shown that the British public believe that Fairtrade is the purest form of aid and is a better way of assisting than giving to charity. One such example is in Malawi where the district hospital in Mchinji was originally built 20 years ago, and can no longer meet the needs of more than 275,000 people. Having no beds for those who accompany the patients, let alone washing or cooking resources, they wait opposite the hospital, hundreds of women and children, all at the mercy of the weather. But in February work began on a shelter built of bricks to give them some protection. It will be completed soon. It has been paid for by fair-trade groundnuts, grown in the country and sold to British shoppers. Growers with Fairtrade status are paid a guaranteed payment above world market prices for their goods, and smallholders form associations which receive a premium to invest back in their local communities to bring about improvements.

Critics argue that accreditation must be easy - but projects are constantly monitored and small holders have been thrown off the scheme in Cameroon for diverting from the agreed standards etc. This means that the Fairtrade accreditation is highly valued. In fact, one of the biggest complaints from the processors and retailers is that it takes so long to achieve accreditation to be approved to supply fair-trade products, because of the time it takes to build up local capacity, quality management systems and train monitors.

Fairtrade now wants to move the scheme beyond the billion pound level, through concentrating on the least developed countries such as Malawi. The UK Depart-

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ment for International Development (DFID) is being lobbied to provide extra money that can help to 'kick start' change in the poorer countries. (Since 2003, DFID has only given £2.1m to the Fairtrade Foundation and its international parent body - when it received £250,000 five years ago it enabled the increase in products from 100 to several thousand.) [Guardian Weekly, February 2008]

According to the **International Crisis Group's** latest newsletter '**Crisis Watch**', twelve actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in February whilst only four showed signs of improvement. Cyprus, Kenya, Kosovo and Pakistan all showed signs of improving. In Cyprus President-elect Christofias vowed to meet with his Turkish-Cypriot counterpart for reunification talks at the "*earliest possible date*". In Pakistan the opposition parties swept to power in 'relatively peaceful mid-month elections. A power sharing deal in Kenya ended a month of negotiations between President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the opposition leader. The declaration of independence in Kosovo on 17th February saw widespread celebrations and 'limited' unrest amongst the Serbs. Deteriorated situations occurred in Armenia, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros Islands, DR Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Israel/Occupied Territories, Philippines, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan and Timor-Leste. The attacks on the president and prime minister of Timor-Leste indicated the need for security reform - but Crisis Watch states that "*their aftermath - including the killing of former head of military police Alfredo Reinado, who led the attack on the president - presents an opportunity for the government to address key issues.*" Crisis Watch identified Cyprus, Pakistan, Timor-Leste and Uganda as Conflict Resolution Opportunities in March; and Armenia, Comoros Islands and Kenya as Conflict Risk Alerts for the same month.

[Crisis Watch, March 1 2008]

The recently published annual report by the **Minority Rights Group International**, 'State of the World's Minorities 2008' shows that it is the minority and indigenous groups around the world who have been worst affected by changing weather patterns - but in most situations when disaster strikes, help and relief

JPIC Agencies: Housing Justice

*"The National voice of Christian action to prevent homelessness and bad housing. We believe that human dignity is challenged by the lack of a decent home. Our vision is a society where every person has access to a home that truly meets their needs."*



Created in 2003 when CHAS (Catholic Housing Aid Society) merged with CNHC (Churches' national Housing Coalition). In 2006 it expanded again when it merged with UNLEASH (Church Action on Homelessness in London). It now combines over 60 years experience with the energy of a new organisation, that unites people across the country to work for change. It enables local groups and churches to provide practical help to those who are in need of housing. It also works at national and local level to change housing policies. All by "*embracing partnerships with people of all faiths and none who share our values of social justice and compassion.*" Call 020 7723 7273 or visit web at [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk) Reg. Ch. No. 294666

"Today more than ever, international trade - if properly oriented - promotes development and can create new employment possibilities and provide useful resources. The Church's social doctrine has time and again called attention to aberrations in the system of international trade, which often, owing to protectionist policies, discriminates against products coming from poorer countries and hinders the growth of industrial activity in and the transfer of technology to these countries."

The continuing deterioration in terms of the exchange of raw materials and the widening of the gap between rich and poor countries has prompted the social Magisterium to point out the importance of ethical criteria that should form the basis of international economic relations: the pursuit of the common good and the universal destination of goods; equity in trade relationships, and attention to the rights and needs of the poor in policies concerning trade and international cooperation. Otherwise, "the poor nations remain ever poor while the rich ones become still richer".

[Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, 1967, n 61 & 57, in Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004)]

reaches them last. The report states that unless policy makers pay attention to the effects of climate change on disadvantaged minorities their very survival is under threat. Minorities and indigenous groups are often the most affected because they live in the poorest, most marginalised areas. One example given is that of the Dalits (or 'untouchables') in Bihar, India. They were disproportionately affected by the floods of 2007, relief took longer to reach them, and it states that they were '*subject to blatant discrimination in the aid distribution process.*' Suggested 'solutions' to climate change bring their own problems. Indigenous and minority communities have also been damaged by the planting of biofuel crops. Seen as the 'greener' option because they produce lower emissions of carbon dioxide, the planting has meant forced eviction and destruction of livelihoods & culture for many. In South American countries such as Colombia, Argentina and Brazil, these minority groups have been forced off their land, sometimes with violence, in order to 'make way' for biofuel crops. [One World UK News, 11 March 2008]

At 8pm on **Saturday March 29th 2008** people in cities all around the world will turn off their lights for just 1 hour - 'Earth Hour' - to show that it's possible to take action on global warming. Switching off is a simple action that can make a difference and sends a powerful message that the people of the world care about the future of the planet. Details of the action can be found at the WWF sponsored website - [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org). The site gives details of how many people in each country have already signed up to switch off. [One World UK news, March 2008 at [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org)]

