

TOGETHER FOR A CHANGE

November 2004

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

*Carol Finlay, Local involvement, Church of Scotland
Department of World Mission*

2005 promises to be an exciting year. It's the 20th anniversary of Live Aid, and the 10th Comic Relief. The UK will hold the Presidency of the European Union, and in July host the G8 summit in Scotland. 2005 is also the first year in which the Millennium Development Goals (targets agreed internationally to halve world poverty) will be assessed.

The UK Government has shown leadership within the G8 on issues relating to development and environment, and 2005 will provide an unparalleled opportunity to lobby for international commitments on aid, debt and trade policy. Aid agencies and churches, including the Church of Scotland, are planning a major national campaign, entitled **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**, in the lead up to the summit. [More information about the campaign can be found at www.makepovertyhistory.org]

Much of the crucial discussion and decision-making takes place in the months immediately before a summit. Therefore, to have any influence, we must make our voices heard in advance.

One way to do this is to 'Vote for Trade Justice'. As members of Trade Justice Movement (TJM) Scotland [www.tjm.org.uk], World Mission and Christian Aid have this campaign as their focus for the co-branded 'Together@ChurchofScotland.Christian-Aid' project this year. Why not encourage all your members to cast their vote and then to widen the campaign out into the congregation and community.



One of the four communities in the 'Together for a Change' project is The Gambia. The name 'Gambia' comes from a Portuguese word meaning 'trade' – ironic as the country exists because the British demanded a trading post when Africa was carved up in 1884. The area became a British Protectorate in the otherwise French dominated West Africa. Ironic also as in The

Gambia today, most of the farmers are women and most battle to receive a fair price for their crops in the market place because of unfair world trade rules.

By casting your 'Vote for Trade Justice' you are standing alongside the women farmers in The Gambia, as they seek the opportunity to feed and educate their children.

We need changes to international trade rules that allow countries like The Gambia to prioritise food security over trade – let us together play our part in making poverty history in 2005.

ROYSTON ROAD - GAMBIA

Russell McLarty, minister of St Paul's Church of Scotland

Guild Visits 2004

A Guild member responded to what she had heard about life in Glasgow's East End with all the pressures so many ordinary people have to endure each day.

"You are telling us about a completely different world from the one we know in our town."

This was confirmation to me of the worth of the Together for a Change Project. It has been good to share the struggle people have to retain dignity in the face of poverty because it opens up understanding and empathy.

Alzira de Costa, who is on a World Exchange placement with us, came with me to visit a few of the Guilds before returning home to Goa, India. She has spoken to many people in our community, on behalf of Together for a Change, about life's pressures and has gathered these common threads:

That it is very difficult to bring up a family on a low wage where children are constantly asking for the replica football jerseys, fashion trainers, and computer accessories which others are given and which are widely advertised.

That children do not seem to place very much worth in education where their parents themselves had a bad experience of school and cannot encourage them.

That there is a very real 'poverty of spirit' where so many lack ambition or even the resources to make the most of life with the opportunities on offer.

That a family member's alcohol abuse (which is so common) is a terrible additional burden to any family.

That the 'benefits trap' still leaves many better off unemployed or else both parents working ridiculously long hours to provide a low income for their family.

That the presence of drug dealers in the streets and in neighbouring homes is a constant worry with intimidation very much part of daily experience.



A stall in a Community Hall helps provide quality affordable fruit and veg

That house theft and resale of stolen goods, often to feed drug habits, is accepted as a matter of course where people cannot afford insurance and would be afraid to report crime to the police.

That there are very high levels of stress and unhappiness.

That there is poor health and poor diet where local shops are very expensive and the big supermarkets more difficult to travel to without a car.

People have so often said,

"... but surely poverty in our country is nothing compared to poverty in Africa."

That is certainly true but we cannot accept that there are so many in Scotland who have such a poor quality of life.

Exchange Visits 2005

In 2005 we plan that some of our local folk will have the opportunity to be part of the groups visiting The Gambia in Africa, with the prospect of folk from The Gambia participating in return visits to Glasgow.

One of the ways we hope to share common experience is through an arts project exploring Scots proverbs and West African proverbs and the way they relate to life today. We believe it to be so important to see the common factors in the struggle to survive poverty with dignity.

It has been suggested that people in The Gambia are more resourceful and more contented than our folk in Glasgow – we look forward to hear what peoples' responses will be. Thanks to all in the Guild who are able to support this most important Together for a Change Project!

Still need a speaker?

Do you still need a speaker for next session or planning a Presbyterial Council meeting? Then please call us. We would love to come.

National Mission

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World Mission

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EASTERHOUSE - JAMAICA

More on Easterhouse - Jamaica in the next issue but don't forget to look at our website for monthly updates and other resources: www.togetherforachange.org