

I previously touched on CfL support through Christian Aid and the World Development Movement (WDM) where we can extend our support and make a difference to the lives of some of the world's poorest people. For example :

FOOD SPECULATION



What is the problem?

Banks, hedge funds and pension funds are betting on food prices in the financial markets, causing drastic price swings in staple foods such as wheat, maize and soy. Massive price hikes are catastrophic for the world's poor, who spend most of their income on food, and lead to:

- Increased hunger as food becomes unaffordable.
- Malnutrition as less dairy, meat, fruit and vegetables are eaten in order to afford staple food
- Increased burden on women to earn more money by taking up risky employment such as sex workers or domestic workers.
- Households using up savings, going into debt or selling assets to pay for food.
- Families unable to afford healthcare and education as more of their income is needed to buy basic food.

How are they doing it? Historically, 'futures contracts' were created in US financial markets to help farmers deal with the uncertainty of growing crops (such as unforeseen weather conditions). A futures contract enables farmers to sell their crops at a future date at a guaranteed price. However, these contracts can also be bought and sold by bankers who have little or no involvement in the actual food being traded but bet on food prices, to make money. During 1990s and early 2000s, aggressive lobbying by bankers led to weaker regulations over food speculation. New and complicated financial products were created to allow more ways to make money from betting on food. Banks such as Goldman Sachs created special index funds to help financial companies make money from food prices, just like they do from share prices. **While bankers are reaping huge profits from betting on food, poor families across the world are paying the price of hunger and malnutrition.**

What can be done? WDM is putting pressure on the UK government to back proposals to regulate betting on food prices in financial markets. The Obama administration and the European Commission are both calling for regulation to curb betting on food prices in financial markets but there is heavy lobbying against these proposals from the banks. The UK has to play its part in backing European proposals and not side with banks and block important progress towards regulation. The World Development Movement is calling on the UK government to support proposals for: All futures contracts to be cleared through regulated exchanges. Most contracts are currently done in private, which means it is impossible to know how much of what is being traded. Contracts need to be brought out into the open and strict limits to be set on the amount that bankers can bet on food prices.

ZIMBABWE – OUT OF SIGHT OUT OF MIND: Peering from the window of my little den I am depressed at the sight of yet another dreich day. However some cheer, as the latest batch of photos taken by sculptor Andrew Mabanji just back from his rural village



20 miles from Harare land on my PC. The scene on the left looks so picturesque and peaceful; a group of villagers and children gathered round a scotch cart with oxen – almost biblical. Their weather is idyllic by comparison and everyone looks at peace with the world. After all, doesn't the media show shops brimming with food and goods albeit mostly imported from South Africa and China. One can buy anything – if one has dollars and therein lies the problem. This photo is a tiny sample of surely some of the poorest people in the world, hidden away

whilst their leaders plot and feed their insatiable appetites on even more power, money, land or diamonds. These forgotten Zimbabweans are left to fend for themselves. Few if any children in the surrounding villages can afford schooling so help tending goats. Some including those in photo below, have serious health problems and treatment is but a dream as they cannot afford medical fees. One can see the hopelessness in their eyes. Many are forced to beg from poor neighbours in order to survive. Their future looks grim.



Left to right. 10 year old Francisca Chakanyuka lives with uncle Pondai and cannot attend school owing to a disability. 41 year old Mrs Teresa Mahwendu a widow with one child, urgently needs treatment for a dreadful growth on her shoulder. 24 year old Lonica Mafusire has weak joints, is deaf and her body shakes but tries to help with gardening. 14 year old Chipso Lungo who lives with her grandmother is also blind and too poor to attend a special school. 3 year old Nokutenda Ishe Dean is virtually immobile and lies on his back asleep most of the time. However, a few recent donations from the congregation has enabled me to get sorely needed funds to these and other people in this village within a few weeks of their plight being highlighted by Andrew. The photo on the left shows Andrew and a delighted Teresa overcome with gratitude for the help from St Andrew's.



On the wider front, general unease grows as an election seems possible. The world may hope for a repeat performance of the Egyptian peaceful revolution but sadly, all over the country, violence against any opposition has accelerated. An Assistant Commissioner in charge of the province of Harare, stated that “The situation in Egypt will never be tolerated anywhere in Zimbabwe”. The daily assaults on civil liberties to engender a paralysing fear in every sector of society have already started. It is a pattern Zimbabweans are very familiar with in the run-up to elections. Through it all, their president remains silent and his silence surely denotes consent while his thugs on the ground attempt to silence all dissent. Haven't these poor people suffered enough?

News reports tell us Silveira House welcomed 61 women and children driven out of their homes during the recent violence in one of the suburbs of Harare. Two days later, the police arrived demanding to see the displaced people and take all their details. Fear spread among them when they realised the police knew their whereabouts.

Later that day the police brought the ZTV and demanded to see the people again. Staff tried to prevent them saying the people were already traumatized but it had no effect. They pushed their way through aggressively without any concern for the feelings of the displaced people who covered their faces with blankets.

A clip appeared in the evening news reporting that Catholics are harbouring MDC activists and there is a group currently based at Silveira House. The women anticipated this and fearing further harassment left during the night.

FAITH: The one constant area of comfort to most Zimbabweans is their faith which is as



natural to them as breathing. (Left: Photo of a rural service). I asked our Artpeace friends what keeps driving them and preventing them from going crazy with worry. Here are some of their testaments:
Lovemore: *'My life is for the glory of God, therefore I refuse to fret over hardships and negative situations in my country because I have faith in God that he will put everything in order. I am experiencing fullness of joy today, and all the days of my life. We always preach faith as we know God can hear our prayers and he takes time to answer them. As I worship in*

F.I.G ministries International it is easy to believe in faith. I am the faith child of a faith God. I live by the faith of the son of God who loves me and gave himself for me. My life is upward and forward because my faith is strong and unwavering, therefore I release the forces of life in my spirit upon my country, family, and everything that has to do with me.'

Godwin: *'When I read my bible I see that coz of faith people were saved, healed. In Eph.4vs5 Peter states that faith is a substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. I take everything 2 God in prayer coz I believe he is the answer 2 my life since he knew me b4 I was born. We die so as 2 rise when time comes but in a world free of sin.'*

Godfrey: *' It is faith in God that has kept me going as an artist because without faith I would be like an empty vessel in the spirit. I give my working strength to God so that with my faith in him, my life and that of my family goes on.'*

THE REDS : Casey my courier friend from Anglesey (Feb NL) delivered some of our old Good News bibles for Artpeace, SH and a condemned prisoner. The artists said how nice it was to be able to read the bible in 'straight' English. DVDs kindly provided by John, Doris and Adrienne were also gratefully received by Fr David as sometimes evenings at SH can be a little bleak. Local Zimbabwe television power permitting, is a joke and often full of propaganda. Casey (see photo), made a big hit with 'The Reds', a football team of orphans from Tafara helped by artist Fortune. Don't they look smart in their gift of new shirts, probably their first new clothing for years. I met Casey at Heathrow on his return laden with an unbelievable 61 kilos of stone carvings!



Clambering onto the 555 coach to Walton with that lot was a bit of a performance!



For all you discerning ladies at St Andrew's, the ladies at SH Skills Dept have sent their latest designs – see sample modelled by Viola. Last month's featured sculpture titled 'My New Dress' by Gift Tembo was snapped up by a lady from Marlow URC. Below are some of the latest exciting arrivals lovingly crafted by hand by our artists and talented friends at SH. Fit to grace any gallery, these pieces are now available for sale. Should **any** reader be interested, please contact me soon as this work is a little special! Please circulate photos amongst family & friends.



Rear large plinth - back row L to R on or by plinth: Muroora (daughter in law), Young Lady, Inner Feelings. **Front of large plinth** - Giraffes, African Lady's Head, Abstract Flower, wooden Guinea Fowl. **Middle row/small plinth** - L to R: Jesus Rising (lemon opal), Left Alone, Hard Times, Baby Elephant. **Front row L to R:** God's Love, Blessed Child, Mukwa wood duck, frog (fruit springstone), stone duck, P pangolin (mahogany).

