



CHURCH OF IRELAND Bishops' Appeal, June 2020

YOUR GIVING HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE



Think back to your parish Harvest Thanksgiving last year and even to your Lenten focus this year. They seem like memories from a previous life! Yet projects funded with your donations then are helping people survive now.

When Bishops' Appeal funded projects to increase food security and agricultural productivity, and to improve healthcare and access to water between September 2019 and March 2020, little did we know that these programmes would soon be tested to the limits. These 'tests' came in the guise of severe drought, flash floods, and super-locusts and then, when communities were already vulnerable and with very few food and income reserves, they were forced into lockdown by Covid-19.

Some projects have been put on hold and emergency responses put in place instead. Other projects have enabled communities to survive by

providing life saving supports during the pandemic.

We give thanks for the part that the Church of Ireland plays in enabling communities to withstand crisis, and for the generosity of churches and individuals who donate to emergency relief responses. The provision of soap, hygiene kits, water stations and food packages are crucial at this time. Vital funds are being channelled to reach people with no access to money or markets and with limited or no access to healthcare.

Being generous in tough times is hard, but it is important. Solidarity with the global church and the world's poor

is a pivotal part of our faith. Letting church communities across the world know we are praying for them and learning that they in turn are praying for us is humbling. Letting the most vulnerable such as refugees and day labourers and people in conflict zones know they are not forgotten in their suffering is a lifeline. And then trusting that God will take our generosity, the little we have - our donations, our time, our willingness and he will bless and multiply them.

Because a virus can spread quickly. But so too can love.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

The supports highlighted here cover approximately one third of the funding distributed during this time-frame.

NORTHERN ARGENTINA

Bishops' Appeal has supported a SAMS Water and Garden project several times over the past 5 years, most recently in late 2019, enabling it to expand to serve more communities. The Wichi are traditionally hunter gathering forest dwellers. They have been living in this region for thousands of years, but it has become more difficult to support themselves in their traditional way due to deforestation. The past 40 years have seen the arrival of large agricultural companies with vast areas of Chaco lands cleared for commercial farming.

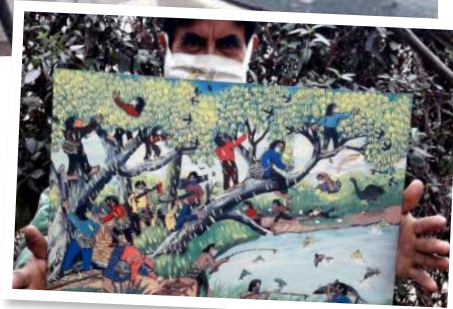
The project was started when a young Wichi girl died of protein deficiency. Although the Wichi are 3% of the Salta population, they account for 35% of the patients that leave the nutrition wing of Salta's best hospital. The indigenous tribes have the worst social statistics in the country with high rates of child deaths (four times the national average) and illiteracy as well as widespread malnutrition.

Traditionally, Wichi families have grown a few crops to supplement their diet, however huge losses of land has prevented this. Added to this, the environmental changes caused by mass deforestation has



caused higher summer temperatures and more frequent droughts and flooding.

As part of this project more than 40 water wells have been dug, taking advantage of the good quality ground water, and over 40 gardens have been planted. The secret to good harvests is incorporating drip irrigation and providing people with training and access to good seed. Spring and summer crops are maize and pumpkin and winter crops are tomato and chilli. Although the virus has not reached the Wichi people, it has restricted movements. This affected work on some gardens and



white fly has infected the tomato plants in 15 of the 40 gardens. Now, some of the indigenous trainers and agriculturalists have permission to move around and have secured plastic sheets to protect the remaining crops against frosts due in July. The funding has enabled an abundance of water and the communities have had plenty to eat and even sell from the summer and spring crops, as well as enough water for hand washing and sanitization.



LEBANON

71 million people worldwide are refugees. Most have sought refuge in neighbouring, developing countries. Tearfund Ireland has provided ongoing support for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Bishops' Appeal is supporting their response of emergency food and hygiene kits for people living in overcrowded makeshift settlements. Here is one family's story:

Halima has three children and lives with her mother, father and grandmother in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

All 7 family members live in a single roomed tent.

Halima and her family are one of the families Tearfund Ireland is supporting with weekly food distributions including hygiene kits with items such as soap, hand sanitizer and bleach.

Halima's husband died in Syria: 'In



Two of Halima's children

Syria, I could not sleep because of the bombings and explosions and all the things we saw. My two oldest children saw many traumatizing things. Several times we witnessed planes dropping bombs near us. It would hit homes and cattle. So we fled with nothing but the clothes we were wearing.'

Halima's mother, Aida, tells us about life since the Coronavirus outbreak:

"We are very afraid of the virus, especially for the children and for us



Halima's mother Aida

as we are old. If we were to catch the virus, we would never be able to get proper treatment. My husband has diabetes and high blood pressure, and for two months now we have not been able to buy his medication.

So we are thankful that we received this hygiene kit. The items in it will help us wash and disinfect our hands well and hopefully protect us from catching the virus. The church also gave us some washable face masks which will be very helpful whenever we need to go buy food."

ETHIOPIA

Tearfund Ireland supports over 700 Self Help Groups in Ethiopia. Bishops' Appeal has part-funded the expansion of these groups over several years and most recently has donated to their Covid-19 response.

Self Help Groups form when group facilitators identify the poorest in a community and invite them to become members. Together with 10 – 15 others, they gather weekly to save small amounts of money, set up small businesses and help each other lift themselves out of poverty. As well as the material benefits, the groups provide a community and network of support for individuals who may only have had a few years of schooling, are mostly likely to be child brides and have experienced

abuse and setbacks in their lives.

With Covid-19 restrictions in place participants can't meet together. Also the various small businesses they started as a result of the support from the Self Help Group have all been shut down.

However, these groups have become an effective channel for spreading accurate Covid-19 prevention messages into some of the remotest areas and communities in rural Ethiopia.

Misconceptions, such as fears around eating fruit or any non-boiled/cooked foods, can exasperate food shortages, especially after months of locust attacks on crops, so accurate messaging is vital.



Responding to the Ebola outbreak in 2014 taught them that faith leaders play a crucial role in disseminating information so the Self Help Groups, along with 1,200 local churches are reaching out and raising awareness through radio broadcasts and brochures.



USPG⁺ PARTNERS IN GLOBAL MISSION



BANGLADESH

Over 850,000 Rohingya people fled to Bangladesh to escape targeted violence in Myanmar in 2015 and 2017. Now they are faced with another crisis, and with no proper homes or healthcare, and with global humanitarian aid completely decimated as well as casual labour jobs shut down, they are struggling to survive.

Working alongside local partners,

Christian Aid is utilising Bishops' Appeal funding to set up handwashing stations, to distribute soap and to create ICU areas in the overcrowded camps.

Meanwhile, the Church of Bangladesh has initiated COVID – 19 Health responses with financial support from USPG, another agency in receipt of Bishops' Appeal funding. The intervention includes Hand Washing

Kits which have been distributed to the community members of 112 Parishes of the Church of Bangladesh. It includes buckets, mugs, soap and awareness materials. The majority of the Church members are from the ethnic and tribal groups who are marginalised and who have limited resources, hence the Church of Bangladesh is supporting them through prevention and awareness campaigns.

SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone lost 21% of its healthcare workers to the Ebola outbreak. It is the most dangerous country in the world in which to give birth, with 10 women dying every day in childbirth. With such a fragile healthcare system it is in a vulnerable position to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

Bishops' Appeal is supporting Christian Aid's petition to cancel the debt of 72 of the world's poorest countries. Countries such as Sierra Leone are forced to spend

far more on their international debt than on their healthcare systems.

The issues are complex and solutions need to incorporate global tax policies and trade deals as well as debt jubilee. But a journey of 1,000 miles begins with just one step.

Give of your time and sign the petition to empower many Governments in the Global South to take action to protect its citizens: <https://www.christianaid.ie/campaigns/cancel-debt-petition>



ZAMBIA

Issues such as food security and climate change don't disappear in the face of a pandemic. They make surviving it harder.

Bishops' Appeal supported Self Help Africa to run a three-year project in the Kafue Sub-basin beginning in March 2019.

3,000 households were supported with the provision of high-quality vegetables such as vitamin A fortified sweet potato, legumes and fruit trees and training in sustainable practices such as crop rotation field designs, early planting, use of manure, weed control and post-harvest technologies. As well as increased food and incomes, there is emphasis on protecting and restoring essential eco-systems.

This project is taking place where 57% of people live in poverty and 43% of children have stunted growth. 90% of the districts' inhabitants depend on the wetland eco-system for their livelihoods, yet the yields

don't provide enough for them to eat.

Shortly after the project commenced, the drought became so pervasive, that for the first time in 15 years the World Food Programme started distributing aid in the worst affected areas. There were concerns that families would resort to selling their seed in order to survive. To combat this, training was paired with emergency relief in the form of 25kg bags of mealie meal and €6 given to each household each month for three months. Immediately after this, lockdown occurred.

However, farmers who received training and grew early maturing seed varieties and planted early have had good crop development and are now harvesting cowpeas, beans and groundnuts.

Where there is excess food to sell, Self Help Africa is supporting farmers to sell their crops so that surplus food is not left to spoil and farmers are not left without income. Providing access to markets is a huge part of their coronavirus response across East and Central Africa.



SOUTH SUDAN

Bishops' Appeal is supporting Christian Aid in providing seeds to people who were casual day labourers and now have no way to earn money to feed themselves as local markets have shut down. The rainy season in May means that there is an opportunity for people to grow food.

In a country where there is so much instability due to war, focusing on mobilising faith leaders to spread accurate information and distributing seed are two of the most effective ways to support communities at this time.

CMS Ireland partners with Maridi Diocese who have already trained several prevention education officers, and with the help of Bishops' Appeal and other

Church of Ireland funding they have purchased bicycles so that they can travel around the 6 Archdeaconries to raise awareness and encourage prevention methods. Yei and Ibba Dioceses would like to do something similar.

The war has also ensured that no one in South Sudan has any reserves, so being unable to sell at market has left many in urgent need of food and soap. Several partner Dioceses have been able to make packs

available to the most vulnerable in their communities due to Church of Ireland support.

The MU in Maridi have been busy making masks for the Diocesan clinic, and their request for further supplies continues to be met.



EAST AFRICA: KENYA, RWANDA & UGANDA

Throughout East Africa CMS Ireland partners with the local Church to deliver training and to provide food and soap to the most vulnerable among their communities.

40% of people around the world are unable to access soap and clean running water in their homes.

In Kenya the Church ministers to communities in informal settlements. They have identified many elderly residents who are without basic household supplies and with Church of Ireland support, are providing emergency food and hygiene kits for them.

In Rwanda, Kibungo Diocese has been



distributing food and soap packages to its neediest families throughout 3 of its parishes.

In Northern Uganda, Madi West Nile Diocese has been busy distributing fliers and handwashing supplies to marginalised areas, including some of the refugee camps. However,

the diocesan clinics there need assistance to upgrade their Personal Protection Equipment and to upgrade their main hospital to be ready as a treatment and isolation centre. With our help, CMS Ireland hopes to release funds to support these efforts soon.

CREATOR GOD, WE PRAY:

*May we who are far from the ones we love be reminded to find ways to be the loving embrace of God for our neighbour.
May the restrictions we face remind us of the daily threats to human dignity, life and basic safety faced by so many people around the world.*

May we who are healthy remember people without access to basic health care.

May we who are limiting our travel remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who have a social safety net remember our sisters and brothers in the Global South whose hardships will only increase.

May our fear for our elders' lives move us to love and cherish each person we encounter every day.

In the face of fear, let us choose love, peace and hope.

Amen

Prayer: Development and Peace - Caritas Canada

To support these amazing efforts, be they agricultural, water access, or emergency relief, you can donate to the Bishops Appeal, selecting our Covid-19 emergency appeal or donate to our General Funds. One gives relief in times of crisis, the other builds resilience to help withstand crisis.

We commit the work of our partner agencies into the hands of God.

We commit these communities and their struggles for survival into the hands of God.

We commit our lives and what we choose to do with them into the hands of God.

Amen

**<http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/give/>
For more information contact Lydia: bishopsappeal@ireland.anglican.org**