

Act Justly update 2

Hope for change

Campaigning requires hope. Hope allows us to see the possibilities, even among real problems. It gives us energy when the odds seem stacked against us. Hope is the foundation of faith and action.

Christian Aid is involved in campaigning as part of the growing Trade Justice Movement. This update looks at how hope can inspire us to 'speak up for the poor'. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Introduction

Ask each group member to think back to when they were a child.

- What did you want to be?
- What were your hopes for the future?

Worship

Choose the worship options suitable for your group and the time available.

- **'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'** (Romans 15:13, NIV)

Read aloud and then meditate individually on this verse.

- Sing or listen to:
 - 'Faithful one' by Brian Doerkson (1989, Vineyard Songs Canada),
 - 'The eyes of my heart' by Matt Redman (1998, Thankyou Music),
 - 'I will speak out' by Dave Bankhead, Sue Rinaldi, Ray Goudie and Steve Bassett (1990, Word's Spirit of Praise Music)

Word

This is the final scene, the finale to John's vision. When all the suffering and troubles are finally over, a new day will begin.

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' (Revelation 21:4, NIV)

Read Revelation 21:1-5

- What do you think John is describing when he refers to the 'the old order'?
- What will be different when everything is made new?
- Compare this passage with Isaiah 65:17-25. What are the similarities?
- What is the significance of their similarity?
- Read Bakary Diarra's story (right). How could these passages be relevant to him?
- How do these passages challenge you, in your situation?

Above right: 'To get ourselves out of poverty we are working harder and harder to produce better cotton, but this is not working. The odds are stacked against us' (Bakary Diarra from Mali)



Christian Aid/Adrian Abio

Bakary Diarra is a cotton farmer in Mali, one of the world's poorest countries. Despite working long hours in the fields, each year he and his family earn less and less from their cotton. Like millions of small-scale farmers in poor countries, Bakary is being forced to compete directly with powerful businesses from the rich world. Despite the fact that Bakary produces cotton efficiently, foreign cotton is often cheaper because of large government subsidies paid to western farmers. So it is not surprising that he is losing out. The result is devastating for Bakary and thousands of farmers like him. They struggle to pay for the basics of life, like healthcare and education for their children.



Christian Aid/Roger Allen

Helen Harrison (centre) from a New Church in Gloucestershire, organised a 'Picnic in the Park' with other campaigners to lobby her MP

Our response

International trade could be the key to ending poverty in countries like Mali. But for this to happen trade rules need to be weighted in favour of the poor. Bakary's response to the campaign was: 'We can only salute you for wanting to campaign on our behalf. May God support you in your campaigning work'.

- Join the Trade Justice Campaign. *Action Requests* are sent five times a year to more than 35,000 Christian Aid campaigners. Contact Christian Aid if you, or someone you know, would like to receive them. Sign up online at: www.christianaid.org.uk/campaign
- Become a campaign organiser and encourage others to take action. You will receive more detailed information and actions that can be used with groups. So like Helen Harrison (see photo) you can encourage others to get involved in the Trade Justice Campaign. She was recently involved in organising local events for the '24 hours for Trade Justice', when MPs throughout the country were lobbied in their constituencies.

'We had a lot of fun at the picnic in the park, which we organised to lobby our MP. We wanted to speak up for more justice in global trade to bring hope to the world's poorest communities.'
(Helen Harrison)

You can contact Christian Aid to:

- Regularly receive further *Act Justly* updates like this one.
- Order a free sample copy of the *Act Justly* booklet, a collection of six sessions for cells or small groups. You could also visit www.fish.co.uk/actjustly/
- Order packs of the booklet for use with your group (four booklets for £5/€8).
- Give to support the work of Christian Aid.
- Ask to be taken off the *Act Justly* mailing list.

You can phone the Supporter Relations Team on 020 7523 2225 or write to Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT. If you live in the Republic of Ireland contact the Dublin office on 01 611 0801.