Christian Aid Ireland Issue: Fifty-Nine magazine Spring/Summer 2021

Climate Pandemic Poverty

Global crises - but your love knows no distance







Christian Aid Ireland is the official relief and development agency of the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Moravian Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the Salvation Army, and the Irish Council of Churches.

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Give thanks with a donation



Have you or your loved ones received the vaccine? Help us protect the most vulnerable while the vaccine remains out of reach for so many. www.caid.ie/vaccine

Charity shop



Garvagh (near Coleraine)

The shop at 85 Main Street, Garvagh is open Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.30am until 4.30pm and on Saturday 10am until 4pm

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Cover image: Climate change has brought drought and hunger to Kenya. Full story on pages 8-9.

Mission statement

The work of Christian Aid Ireland is based on our Christian belief that everyone. regardless of their faith or race, is entitled to live a full life, free from poverty.

We believe in tackling the root causes of poverty, not just their symptoms. We believe that the world can and must be changed so that there is equality, dignity and freedom for all.

Please visit our website at: **christianaid.ie**





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or many, 2020 was one of the most difficult years in living memory. The coronavirus pandemic challenged health systems and economies in every society and the climate crisis continued to grow more deadly.

But even in the toughest moments, love brings hope. We've been inspired by remarkable people across the globe, working side by side for a more just world. People like you, our supporters.

You donated over £210,000/€230,000 to our coronavirus appeal. You signed our petition calling for debt cancellation to help the world's poorest countries fight the pandemic. Your support enabled our partners to provide soap and better access to water to help people reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, as well as distributing cash and food parcels to those who have lost work due to lockdown.

And while we celebrate the vaccine's roll-out in the rich countries of the world, Christian Aid is campaigning to ensure that they are made available in low-income countries too. Because none of us is safe until all of us are safe.

The development of vaccines gives us hope that we can move on from coronavirus. But the kind of

God who is love, you taught us the true nature of love by the example of your Son, Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us. Nurture in us that same sacrificial, selfgiving love that we may love our neighbour as ourselves, desiring for them the same privileges we enjoy: healthcare and protection from disease; adequate food, water and sanitation; a stable climate and financial security; peace and the right to voice our concerns. Teach us again how to love others. With your love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. In Jesus' name we ask, Amen.

world we move into is up for grabs. It's important that we don't return to 'business as usual'. The world economy hasn't been working for the poor or the planet and we urgently need to create a new kind of 'normal'. That's why we're asking governments around the



world, as they plan their economic recovery from coronavirus, to commit to tackling inequalities as well as climate change.

This year, as we look ahead to the G7 summit in June and the UN climate negotiations in November, let us continue to passionately and humbly put our faith into action, seizing the opportunities that are within our grasp. Whether you sign a petition, join a protest march, pray for the brothers and sisters you have never met, or donate to help communities battling the climate crisis, it all counts.

This isn't a pipe dream: you've created real change throughout Christian Aid's 75 years of fighting poverty and injustice. You've stood with the people of South Africa to fight apartheid, you've convinced supermarkets to stock Fairtrade products, and you've helped to win huge victories for climate justice, such as the 2015 Paris Agreement.

We have a struggle ahead to build a world in which everyone can thrive. But together, we can draw on the inspiration of past successes and take real hope from love in action across the whole Christian Aid family.

Thank you for everything you are doing to build a more just world.

Rosamond

Rosamond Bennett, Chief Executive, Christian Aid Ireland

We want to know what motivates and inspires you to support Christian Aid. Please help us by filling in our 2021 survey at caid.ie/survey. We really want to hear from you!

Bangladesh monsoon flooding

Last summer, monsoon flooding affected more than 3 million people across Bangladesh. One of the worst affected districts was Jamalpur in the north where Suruz Mia lives with his family.

Suruz was paralyzed following an illness four years ago and cannot work. To get by, he had no choice but to borrow money from local moneylenders at high interest rates. Suruz's eldest son used to help him repay his loans but when he lost his job during the lockdown and was no longer able to help, Suruz began receiving threats from the moneylenders. His situation became even worse when flooding badly damaged his home and destroyed his garden where the family grew food to feed themselves.

With support from Irish Aid, Suruz's family was among 2,400 families who received cash from Christian Aid's local partner to buy food, medicine and to help with repair costs, as well as hand sanitiser and face masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus.



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Beirut explosion

On 4 August 2020, a huge blast at the port of Lebanon's capital Beirut killed over 200 people, injured more than 6,500 and destroyed or damaged 74,000 homes. Six months on, it's the most vulnerable who continue to suffer most as they also contend with a dire economic situation and rising coronavirus levels.

Our local partner who works with Syrian refugees in Lebanon told us that since the explosion they are having to help Lebanese citizens too. Many families have been out of work for months and are struggling to eat. Some mothers are feeding their babies diluted tea because they cannot afford milk.

Assad, a Syrian refugee who used to live near the port with his family of 10 was forced to move because of heavy damage to his home caused by the blast. The force of the explosion burst his eardrum while he worked at a nearby market. Although not physically injured, his children still suffer to this day:

'My children are scared when they hear a loud sound, and they wet their beds or wake up afraid every other night.'

Christian Aid's local partner provided Assad with a food parcel, soap and cash to support his family.

Coronavirus lockdown in Nigeria



Shima Aondofa (33) lives in Ajio village in Benue state, central Nigeria. Despite having been an orphan and a polio survivor, Shima set up his own barber shop and was able to support himself with his earnings. But when coronavirus spread across Nigeria and restrictions were imposed, his income fell drastically:

'I was out of customers and I could not afford food to eat or soap to wash with.'

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Shima was one of nearly 400 vulnerable people in Benue state to receive a hygiene kit from Christian Aid containing masks and soap to help keep them safe from coronavirus. to primary and secondary impacts of Covid 19 on IDPS, and ulnerable populations in Hard to Reach Communities in Benue State (COVID 19 APPEAL FUND PROJECT)

Shima Aondofa lives in central Nigeria. Credit: Christian Aid/Latitude Space.

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Coronavirus response in Democratic Republic of Congo

Last April, amidst a global pandemic, fighting forced Fatuma Amuli (25), her husband and their six children to flee their village in South Kivu province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since then, they have been living in a relative's house which has only two rooms, now occupied by 16 people. The house has no running water and the family rely on a nearby well for water to drink and wash with.

With support from Irish Aid, Fatuma's family was among 1,400 families to receive soap, masks and jerrycans from Christian Aid's local partner to help ensure they can wash their hands regularly at home to help reduce the risk of catching coronavirus.

As Fatuma explains, the coronavirus awareness raising carried out by our partner has helped her family stay as safe as possible. Through the local radio and posters, we have learned how to avoid catching coronavirus and passing it on. Now I wash my hands before breastfeeding and wear the face mask I received when I go to church.'



Burundi peacebuilding

hen Butoyi (not her real name) from Nyanza Lac in southern Burundi was abandoned by her husband, her two brothers-in-law tried to evict her and her three children from their home and the small farm on which she grew most of their food.

Our local partner CNEB (National Council of Churches of Burundi) trains communitybased peacebuilders to prevent violence and resolve disputes within families and communities.

Butoyi told us her story:

'I argued a lot with my husband. He married a second wife and was always beating me and telling me to go back to my parents. He told me that I had to leave so that the second wife could get a room. Our community leader, Jacqueline is a peacebuilder so I told her about my problems.

'Jacqueline asked my husband, what would happen to his three children if their mother left home but this didn't change his mind. Things were made worse by the second wife who was pouring oil on the fire. She said that as long as I was there, my husband didn't care about her. In the end, my husband left both of us and we haven't seen him since.' Butoyi's difficulties

were far from over:

'My husband's two brothers part-owned our land and they told me I had to leave so that they could sell the land. I told them that I had nowhere to go, nowhere to take my children but they didn't care. I went back to ask Jacqueline for help. She pleaded with them to think of the impact this would have on their brother's children. The whole situation was very distressing, and I was becoming mentally unwell. The pressure was just too much.'

Eventually, one of the brothersin-law was persuaded to drop the idea of selling the land:

'This led to arguments between the two brothers but Jacqueline didn't give up and kept holding firm until she managed to also convince the second brother to let me keep the land. Jacqueline really was a God-send. My relationship with my brothers-in-law is much better now.'

Christian Aid's peacebuilding work in Burundi is funded by Irish Aid, the Irish Government's programme for overseas aid. Its main focus is to resolve land disputes which arise when Burundian refugees return to the country after many years in Tanzania.

Sierra Leone soap-making



Three of the women who formed a soap-making business in eastern Sierra Leone. Credit: Mariama Bah, SEND Sierra Leone.

n Sierra Leone, women in the eastern district of Kailahun have set up a soap-making business to help in the fight against poverty and coronavirus. Among them is Augusta Ngeibah, the

breadwinner in her family. Augusta lives with her two grown-up children and her mother. She is a member of a community savings and loan scheme (similar to a credit union) which offers low-interest loans to help with school fees, medical costs, business start-up or even the cash to buy food and other basics.

Christian Aid's partner SEND Sierra Leone set up the community savings and loan scheme with the support of Irish Aid and trained a group of 30 women in how to make soap. To start their business, Augusta and the others used a loan from the scheme, topped up with their savings, and purchased all the materials they needed from the local market.

The women began producing soap in September 2020. Each batch takes two weeks to complete and the women produce 2,400 bars of soap each month. Augusta remembers how Ebola ravaged Sierra Leone in the past and hopes that the soap will protect people from coronavirus infection: 'We sell the soap within our community for only 1,000 Leones (equivalent of 6 pence / 7 cents) so everyone is able to buy it. Handwashing with soap really helps prevent the spread of the virus.'

As well as helping to prevent infection, illness and even death, the soap is helping to boost household incomes and tackle poverty. Each week, the women set aside some of the money they earn from the sale of their soap to deposit in the savings scheme and to repay their loan.

As Augusta explains, the soap-making business is helping the women branch out into other ventures. They are buying several acres of farmland to grow crops which they intend to harvest and sell to earn more money.

'As a group we have also invested our savings into a groundnut and cassava farm,' she concludes.

Christian Aid's work in Sierra Leone is funded by Irish Aid, the Irish Government's programme for overseas aid. Its main focus is to help women boost their family incomes, to help communities access health care and to reduce violence.

Drought drives hunger in Kenya

You might recognise Rose. We introduced you to her last year. At the time she was battling the climate crisis and today she still is. This Christian Aid Week, will you help people like Rose break the cycle of climate chaos?

rom severe drought to flooding, climate chaos robs 68-year-old Rose of what she needs to survive: a reliable source of water. Without water, every day is a struggle. Without water, Rose is thirsty and hungry. This is her climate crisis.

When Rose was a child, growing up in the Kitui region of Kenya, there was plenty of rain. It fell at the right times, giving fruit to the baobab trees and providing plenty of nutritious food to eat.

But now this is just a memory. The climate crisis has brought extreme weather and her community is feeling the brunt of it. The situation is made worse by the coronavirus pandemic.

For months at a time, Rose lives with a drought. In recent years, it has become so bad that it's caused a hunger crisis, as Rose explains:

'I often feel hungry. Because of climate change, I worry a lot about food. I pray to God that the rainfall will become normal like it used to be.'

During the dry season, Rose sets out on long and dangerous journeys to collect water. She has been the sole carer for her six grandchildren since her husband died and her daughters moved to the city for work. She walks for up to seven hours each day on an empty stomach and it exhausts her.

'Because I am old, I can't walk very fast. When I get home, I just rest in the evening. I have no energy to do anything else,' Rose says.

There is an earth dam just minutes away from Rose's home which should be a lifeline. But it's not wide enough or deep enough for everyone's needs. Even when it rains, it runs out of water quickly.

What's more, when the rains do fall, they are much heavier than they should be, putting Rose's community at risk of flooding.

The threat of coronavirus has only made things worse for Rose. Handwashing to stay safe against the virus can be difficult. And the local school closures have kept Rose's grandchildren at home, all needing another meal that they would usually get at school.

With a reliable source of water, Rose would be free from long journeys. She could grow fresh vegetables to eat. And she could protect herself from the dangers of coronavirus.

Your gifts this Christian Aid Week can help make this a reality.

Donate or get involved at caweek.ie and help people like Rose get the water they need to live. 'I often feel hungry. Because of climate change, I worry a lot about food. I pray to God that the rainfall will become normal like it used to be.' Rose Jonathan is on the frontline of the climate crisis in Kenya. Credit: Christian Aid/Tom Pilston

People like Rose need every last drop to survive this climate crisis. Please give this Christian Aid Week.

E20/E23

could buy four taps for a water point at a dam where families can collect water.

£60/€68

could buy ten bags of cement to help a community build an earth dam.

£335/€378

could train an earth dam committee to keep a dam in good repair and run it effectively.

Please donate at caweek.ie or by telephone on 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) or 01 496 7040 (Dublin).

The money you raise will help families facing poverty and injustice around the world.

What a difference a dam makes

Thanks to your generosity, Christian Aid's local partner built a sand dam for Florence and her community, just a short distance from her village in Kenya. With easy access to water, Florence has been able to grow tomatoes, onions, papayas and chillies on her farm. She also manages 10 beehives and sells the honey for cash at the market. Before the sand dam, she would spend 8 hours a day collecting water but now she has time to develop her farm business. She has a cow, a donkey, two turkeys as well as some goats and sheep. Florence told us: 'I am very happy now. I have strength and power. I have learned to depend on myself.'

ESB faces human rights probe

reland's National Contact Point of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is investigating whether Ireland's Electricity Supply Board (ESB) has breached its human rights responsibilities by importing coal from the Cerrejón mine in La Guajira, northern Colombia following the submission of a formal complaint.

The complaint was lodged by the Global Legal Action Network, supported by Christian Aid Ireland as well as a coalition of Colombian and international human rights and environmental organisations.

Complaints were also filed simultaneously with the OECD National Contact Points in Australia, the UK and Switzerland against BHP, Anglo American and Glencore who own Cerrejón.

A separate complaint was also lodged against the Dublin-based Coal Marketing Company (CMC) which is the exclusive marketer of coal from Cerrejón. The bulk of the coal burned at Moneypoint power plant in County Clare since 2001 has come from this mine.

The complaint outlines how ESB has failed to take the necessary actions to identify, mitigate and prevent human rights abuses linked to the mine despite well-documented evidence of forced displacement of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and pollution of local rivers and air.

Rosa María Mateus Parra, lawyer with Christian Aid's partner CAJAR which is a signatory to the complaint, explains: 'The people of La Guajira have borne the huge social and environmental costs of the mine, while harmful fossil fuel coal is exported around the world in the midst of the climate crisis and a small number of companies record huge profits.'

If the complaint is successful, ESB will need to take steps to comply with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, including ending its relationship with the mine and issuing an apology to the affected communities for its part in causing harm.

CMC stands accused of being complicit in ongoing environmental harms and human rights abuses at the mine and success with this complaint would require CMC to stop selling Cerrejón coal.

> **Cerrejón coal mine** Credit: Bianca Bauer

Ireland paying fifth of 'fair share'

reland is failing to fairly contribute towards efforts to help developing countries adapt to a changing climate, latest figures reveal.

In 2019, Ireland contributed only €93m in climate finance, which is used by developing countries to reduce emissions and adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change. This is only around a fifth of Ireland's fair share based on pledges made at the Paris Agreement that richer countries should contribute \$100 billion a year towards climate finance.

Christian Aid is calling on the Irish Government to publish how it plans to increase spending ahead of the UN climate conference in Glasgow this November.

Also, ahead of the summit, we will be pushing the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Assembly to create new legally binding commitments to reduce their carbon emissions.

Children in Akwidaa village, Ghana Credit: Getty Images

UN body examines Irish tax policy

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has announced it will investigate Ireland's tax policy to determine its impact on children in developing countries following a submission made last June by Christian Aid and a coalition of non-governmental organisations.

The Committee will assess whether Ireland's tax policy undermines the ability of developing countries to raise revenue that could be spent on vital public services, including education and healthcare which are both key human rights obligations.

The submission criticises several Irish tax policies including the practice of allowing large multinational companies to shift profits from developing countries to low-tax Ireland. As Sorley McCaughey, Head of Policy and Advocacy at Christian Aid Ireland explains:

'Tax incentives can attract investment into Ireland, but Ireland's aggressive tax policies allow tax avoidance, and it's often developing countries that suffer most. Profit generated in Ghana, for example, is shifted out of the country, reducing the money available to spend on healthcare and education. This has a real impact on children's rights and is morally indefensible.'

The Irish Government has until October to respond to the concerns raised and a minister will attend a formal review hearing in Geneva in February 2022.

Vaccine justice for all

Christian Aid is highlighting concerns that 3 out of 4 people in developing countries are not due to receive their coronavirus vaccines this year. Ahead of a meeting of the G7 hosted by the UK in June, we are calling on pharmaceutical companies to share their vaccine formulas with the world as well as for governments of wealthier countries to share any surplus stock to help speed up equal access to the vaccines for all.

Our soap-porters

Many of our supporters have been marking the moment they received their coronavirus jab to call for 'vaccine justice' for people in developing countries who do not expect to receive their jabs this year. Here, our supporters hold their vaccination cards and a bar of soap to show that handwashing with soap remains one of the best defences against infection for people in poor countries until vaccines are made available. As part of our global coronavirus response, Christian Aid has given soap to 250,000 vulnerable people to help protect them from infection.



O John Doherty from Comber, County Down.

• Nora Gibson from Cookstown, County Tyrone.



Rachel McCormick from Garvagh, near Coleraine.

12



Rev Dr Liz Hughes from Portadown, County Armagh.

O May and Ronnie Hamilton from Dundrum, County Down.

Have you or a loved one received your vaccine? If you'd like to give a donation in thanks please visit caid.ie/vaccine

Stoneyford's love for people 'farr' away

Norma Parker, Rev John Farr and one of his chickens Credit: Press Eye

any thanks to the rector and members of St John's Church of Ireland in Stoneyford, County Antrim who donated £1,300 to Christian Aid, buying virtual Charity Gifts for people living in extreme poverty.

Charity Gifts act as donations, supporting particular areas of our work. Popular Charity Gifts include training women to become tailors or giving beehives and fruit tree saplings to families living in poverty, to boost their household income.

Not surprisingly, the rural parishioners of Stoneyford chose to support our farming programmes, buying virtual chickens, turkeys and goats which could provide manure to boost the crop yields of people living in poverty as well as eggs, milk and meat to feed their families and surplus to sell for cash.

Pictured with Christian Aid organiser Norma Parker is the rector Rev John Farr who keeps a few chickens of his own and he brought along one of his feathered friends for the photograph. For more information please visit **www.caid.ie/CharityGifts**

Sullivan carries the can

Pupils at Sullivan Upper School in Holywood, County Down raised over £2,000 after completing a 'jerrycan challenge' - running in relays across their school's sports pitches carrying a large drum filled with water. The youngsters ran more than 200 kms during their challenge which they completed in mid-December.

In the rural areas of many African countries, jerrycans are used, mainly by women and girls, to fetch the water that families need for drinking, washing, cooking and for their animals. But climate change has brought drought to countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya, meaning that women and girls are walking further than ever in search of water. Some spend up to 7 hours a day walking, with many girls dropping out of school as a result.

We are grateful to the Year 10 students for their fundraising efforts, and to their teacher Mrs Johnston for inspiring them. Mrs Johnston has been fundraising for Christian Aid since visiting our projects in Rwanda in 2005, in her role at Sullivan but also in her previous positions, teaching at Down High School in Downpatrick and working for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.



Founder's life celebrated

Christian Aid Ireland has been giving thanks for the life of one of our founders, George McCullagh of Cabinteely, County Dublin who died in February, aged 84.

Born into a Presbyterian family, George was brought up on a small farm near Ballybay, County Monaghan. In 1960, he was among a number of young men from Ireland to attend the World Council of Churches' Youth Assembly in Lausanne, Switzerland where they heard first-hand accounts of the reality of extreme poverty overseas.

George and the other volunteers were so motivated by this experience that on their return, they travelled the length and breadth of Ireland showing 16mm films of Christian Aid's work to churches and community groups. They persuaded congregations to fundraise by holding soup lunches, church collections and an annual sponsored walk in the Phoenix Park. They formed the 'Dublin Christian Aid Committee' which later became Christian Aid Ireland. Speaking in 2015, George recalled his joy at recruiting his first 'committed giver' - a widow from Dublin who promised to give £5 a month. George said that she sent a £5 postal order every month for the rest of her life.

It is because of the energy, vision and compassion of George McCullagh and the other founders that Christian Aid Ireland has been able to bring emergency relief to people whose lives have been devastated by conflict and disaster, and hope to those living in extreme poverty.

Christian Aid Ireland's Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett said: 'We offer our deepest sympathy to George's wife Edie, his children Ken, Bruce and Joy and especially to his youngest son, our colleague Mervyn who is a senior leader at Christian Aid in London. The apple never falls far from the tree.'

A life of service to the poor

Ne of Christian Aid's most dedicated supporters has pledged a gift to the charity in his Will. Albert Smallwoods (83) from Derry/ Londonderry is a lifelong humanitarian and a leading Church of Ireland layman who has raised hundreds of thousands to bring hope to people living in extreme poverty. This, and his support for more than 40 local charities, was recognised with the award of an MBE in 1992 and saw him named 'Pensioner of the Year'

a decade later. He has also been made a Knight of the Order of St John and in 2005, he was among eight people from Northern Ireland selected to attend a special reception at Buckingham Palace to mark UK Year of the Volunteer.

Albert was just 15 when he began working at the Londonderry Electric Light Station, later moving to Coolkeeragh power station where he became engineer-in-charge. But it was through his unpaid work, representing the Derry and Raphoe diocese on Bishop's Appeal - the Church of Ireland's world development committee - that he raised hundreds of thousands for Christian Aid and other agencies. In 2007, he visited Christian Aid projects in India:

'I couldn't believe the poverty. There were no toilets, no running water. Children without clothes or food. Women carrying basins of cement on their heads. It was really shocking.'

On his return, Albert spoke in churches throughout the Derry and Raphoe diocese and gave interviews to radio stations and newspapers, inspiring others to support Christian Aid's work.

So, why has he decided to leave a gift in his Will to Christian Aid?

'l want to carry on my life's work after l'm gone.'

And he offers this reflection on his life so far:

'I've really enjoyed my life. I'm grateful because when I was 19, I had rheumatic fever and a heart murmur. My GP said he doubted I would see 50. I'm now in my 80s, so I feel very blessed.'

> To read the full version of Albert's story, visit our website at **www.caid.ie/lifeofservice**

> > You too can leave a lasting legacy by remembering Christian Aid in your Will. If you would like information or have any queries, please contact Sarah by email on sleeman@ christian-aid.org or telephone: 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) 01 496 7040 (Dublin).

Albert Smallwoods MBE KStJ with his wife of 46 years, Vivian.

Let your Ootogeone

As a Christian Aid supporter, your love is alive across the world.

It's in the clean, fresh water in Grace's village in Kenya. It's in the relief supplies that reach Tasmin's refugee camp in Bangladesh. And it's in Johaira's smile in Nicaragua, because she knows she can provide for her precious baby – not just today, but for the years to come.

You can let your love live on. By leaving a gift in your Will to Christian Aid, you can help build a fairer, more peaceful world for the next generation.

> Let your love live on with a gift in your Will. For support, please contact Sarah by email on sleeman@christian-aid.org or telephone 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) or 01 496 7040 (Dublin).