



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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### Garvagh

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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Janet Zirugo and her grandson Mufaro in Zimbabwe. Full story on pages 8-9. Credit: Christian Aid/David Brazier

### 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.



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#### **Editorial**

This spring, we have all watched with horror the crisis engulfing Ukraine. Besieged cities, traumatised civilians, exhausted refugees and separated families. It has been harrowing to watch and unbearably awful for those forced to endure it.

But amid the darkness, let us take comfort from the flickering light. The savagery and brutality must not blind us to the extraordinary solidarity and humanity we are witnessing. It has been especially moving to see the scale of support from people donating to pay for food, blankets and shelter for those forced to flee, with many even welcoming strangers into their homes.

Christian Aid was formed by the British and Irish churches to respond to the refugee crisis in Europe at the end of the Second World War and today, almost 80 years later, your donations are reaching those caught up in Europe's latest refugee crisis. Christian Aid supporters are responding with the same compassion that you have always shown to your global neighbours. You can read more about our response on page 5.

It is worth recognising how the empathy expressed by European governments for those fleeing Ukraine wasn't equally extended to refugees escaping recent wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead of open arms, earlier waves of refugees seeking safety faced 'fortress Europe' and were left with no choice but to take perilous, often deadly, sea crossings, with too many left to languish in camps and detention centres.

With the eyes of the world on Ukraine, public attention inevitably moves away from other emergencies, including the near-famine in

Lord of all people and all nations,

We lift before you all those living under the threat of violence and war.

We long for the time you spoke of through your prophet Isaiah,

When weapons of war would be beaten into ploughshares,

When nation will no longer lift up sword against nation.

We cry out to you for peace.

May your will be done here, on earth as it is in heaven.

In the name of Christ our saviour.

in the name of Christ our Saviour

Afghanistan, and the forgotten hunger crisis affecting the Horn of Africa. Climate change and conflict continue to be the main drivers of

poverty but even in the most desperate situations, your love brings hope. On pages 4 and 5, we tell the story of how your kindness is reaching people in Afghanistan, South Sudan and Kenya.

Closer to home, there has been cause for celebration. In March, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed a Climate Act, setting legally binding targets to reach 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050. This legislation comes after many years of campaigning, and you can read more on page 10.

There is more good news on pages 6 and 8-9 where we tell the stories of Olive in Malawi and Janet in Zimbabwe. Thanks to your support, Olive has started a small business making a smokeless cooking fuel while Janet has overcome hunger and drought to grow enough food to feed her family and surplus to sell for cash.

But the story that excites me most is on page 7 where we describe one of our peacebuilding programmes in Myanmar. There, we have helped to reduce the incidence of hate speech on social media which has in the past stoked tensions between communities, contributing to the persecution of the Rohingya minority.

So, I hope you will take heart from the success that your support makes possible. Truly, your kindness is saving lives and changing lives. Even when things seem dark as they often do, I hope you will take comfort from the light. Because in the words of poet Amanda Gorman, 'there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it.'

Thank you for being the light.

**Rosamond Bennett** 

Kosamond

Chief Executive, Christian Aid Ireland

This magazine celebrates the life-changing work that your support makes possible. After you've read it, please consider it passing on to a friend!

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Christian Aid has been helping people in South Sudan which last autumn experienced its worst flooding in nearly 60 years. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected when heavy rains caused the Nile to burst its banks. Homes were swept away, crops were destroyed and cattle drowned, compounding the country's existing hunger crisis and pushing many people closer to famine.

Some families had no choice but to eat water lilies to survive. Flooding also brought people into closer contact with snakes and many people were killed by snakebites.

'The flooding destroyed all I had, including the crops my family rely on,' says 49-year-old father of five Luny Machar from Rubkuay in Mayendit.

With funding from the Scottish government, our local partner UNIDOR reached over 4,000 families in Unity State with support including cash, farming seeds and tools and fishing kits. Luny's family was one of those who received cash.

'I really appreciated this money. It will help us to buy food for our children,' says Luny.

In Jonglei State, Christian Aid worked with our local partner African Aid Development to provide emergency life-saving support including blankets, mosquito nets, water purification tablets and cash to families badly affected by the flooding.

## Responding to severe drought in Kenya

Christian Aid is responding to severe hunger across the Horn of Africa where around 13 million people are without enough food to eat as the region experiences its driest conditions in over 40 years. Northern Kenya is one of the worst hit areas and 230,000 people in Marsabit county are in need of emergency aid.

Thanks to our local partner CIFA, 5,000 families now have

better access to water after six boreholes were repaired. This dramatically reduces the distances that herders must travel for water. CIFA also provided 250 families with cash to buy food and medicine as well as supporting the veterinary treatment of more than 40,000 cows, goats, sheep and camels.

Elsewhere in Marsabit,

our local partner PACIDA supported a women's group to grow and sell fodder. This boosts the women's income and helps the wider farming community keep their animals alive during the drought.





### Fighting famine in Afghanistan

Donations made by Christian Aid supporters have been reaching people affected by Afghanistan's terrible hunger crisis. More than half the population do not have enough food to eat and nearly 9 million people are just one step away from famine.

Father of six, Ahmad lives with his family in a rented house in Kabul, which he struggles to afford and keep warm when temperatures drop below freezing in the winter. Ahmad has no choice but to burn wastepaper and cartons to keep the fire going. He told Christian Aid that it has been incredibly difficult for his family to

get food in the last few months:

'When we can't afford meals, we just have bread with tea,' Ahmad says.

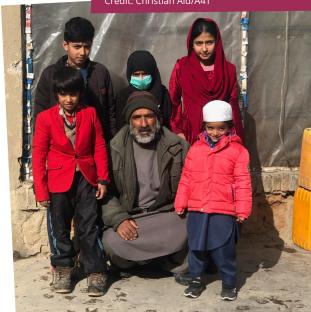
Thanks to the generosity of Christian Aid supporters, Ahmad's family received enough food from our local partner to support his family for a month.

Our local partner reached 550 vulnerable families in Kabul with food packages containing flour, rice, cooking oil, pulses, salt and toiletries. Nutritious high-energy food packages were also given to 300 pregnant and new

mothers as well as 200 infants to help prevent malnutrition.

Ahmad with five of his children outside their home in Kabul.

Credit: Christian Aid/A4T





live Ngwira has asthma. Each time the 51-year-old has an attack, her doctor warns her to avoid inhaling smoke. But smoky kitchens are hard to avoid in northern Malawi where Olive lives because charcoal is used as a fuel for cooking.

As well as the health cost, charcoal production harms the local environment. Many trees in the forests around Olive's home have been felled, leading to soil erosion and poor harvests.

But Olive doesn't face life's difficulties alone. She is a member of a local women's group. With Christian Aid support, Olive and the other women have started a business, making a cleaner cooking fuel from rice husks.

Olive lives in a rice-growing region where rice husks are plentiful. In 2020, Christian Aid's local partner gave the women's group a machine to turn rice husks into briquettes for use as a cooking fuel.

Olive mixes rice husks

and wood shavings and the machine grinds the mix and produces briquettes - around 2,000 kgs worth a month. The machine removes the carbon from the smoke, making the briquettes a cleaner fuel than charcoal. The women use the briquettes at home and sell the surplus for an income.

Olive explains the difference the briquettes have made:

'We no longer inhale smoke that causes us to cough and we don't have to cut down trees for charcoal. Selling the briquettes

helps us pay school fees for our children and we can afford good food such as meat which will improve our health.'

And there are other benefits too. The task of collecting wood for charcoal typically falls to women and girls who get up in the early hours of the morning and trek for long periods alone or in

with their rice husk briquettes.

Credit: Mathews Malata/Christian Aid

small groups, as Olive explains:

'We had to hike into the mountains to search for firewood and break our backs to carry it back with us. But with the briquettes, we just carry them in our bags, bring matches and light them to cook or prepare bath water for our children and then we are done.'

You can read a longer version of this story at caid.ie/TransformingLives

The briquette-making machine.

Credit: Mathews Malata/Christian Aid





n August 2017, sustained violence and persecution against the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group who live in Rakhine State in western Myanmar, forced 700,000 people to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. The medical response organisation MSF estimates that more than 10,000 Rohingya were killed.

Hate speech was blamed for stoking tensions and leading to physical violence. Leaders from the Buddhist and Muslim communities were both accused of making inflammatory comments and circulating fake news about each other's community.

Much of the hate speech was also being shared and viewed online. There are nearly 30 million Facebook users in Myanmar and it's used as a trusted news source. In 2018, UN human rights experts tasked with investigating attacks against the Rohingya found that Facebook had 'played a role' in the spreading of hate speech.

A lack of Burmese speaking moderators was viewed as a factor in the failure to prevent the spread of hate speech online. Since the wave of violence against the Rohingya, Facebook has recruited over 100 people to monitor and remove harmful content in the Burmese language.

To further tackle online hate speech, Christian Aid Ireland, with funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund, worked with a Myanmar based local tech enterprise called Koe Koe Tech (KKT) to develop Myanmar's first ever independent 'natural language processing' algorithm.

Named the Meekin Platform, it uses text recognition and artificial intelligence to monitor Facebook and identify hate speech in Burmese as well as to fact-check misinformation and counter co-ordinated propaganda campaigns.

Koe Koe Tech worked with local community groups to identify, tag and monitor online hate speech. Through the Meekin Platform, KKT identified hate speech, misinformation and disinformation and brought it to the attention of Facebook Myanmar's removals team to get it taken down. Thanks to the platform, 11,000 sources of online hate speech and misinformation were removed in 2021.

Violence is a key driver of poverty and much of Christian Aid's work involves tackling the causes of conflict. In a digital world, tech has a vital role to play in building peace.



From hunger to plenty

Janet Zirugo (70) has a big heart. She has found the strength and courage to keep going, even in the toughest of times. In her village in Zimbabwe, drought has often pushed her family into desperate hunger.

'One year, the rains didn't come and there was so little food. We ate things we wouldn't eat in normal times. I made porridge and gave it to the children, then removed a portion and put it down for the dogs. The children picked up the dogs' share because they weren't full. When I saw this, I knew the situation had become unbearable.'

'My heart was so painful thinking that my family would die. By God's grace we did not die. We soldiered on.'

Thanks to donations from kind people like you, Janet turned the drought-resistant seeds she was given into a garden of plenty. Now her farm is bursting with life. She proudly shows us the food she has grown - bowls full of groundnuts, wild fruit, small grains, golden corn. A rainbow of colour.

Janet is the family matriarch. She has 10 children, 28 grandchildren and four greatgrandchildren. She also looks after many orphans - the children of deceased family members - as well as caring for her 33-year-old disabled nephew.

'In my family, children look up to me and I must give them food. I am more than glad to share what I have,' she says.

Janet's husband John (73) is the head of the village and, as his wife, she feels a responsibility to look after her neighbours when hunger stalks their community:

'If the children of other families come to me, I must give them food to bring to their parents. I can't watch people go hungry when I have food. We don't sleep well when there is hunger.'

Janet works in her fields alongside John and their daughters and daughters-in-law, and hopes that the family never goes hungry again. Janet has built a storeroom to keep her harvest safe and secure, to help her bounce back in future droughts.

Janet is a survivor. A force of kindness. A hunger fighter.

She loves to see her grandchildren's smiling faces as they relish the food she has grown.

'My life is changing,' she says.

This project is lifting us up. We are thankful. It makes me happy to see my family are strong and well fed.'

As she reflects on how her life has changed, she breaks into song. We rejoice with her.

It's thanks to people like you that this change is possible.
Janet's story gives us hope that, with your help, more women will have the power to transform their lives. Please give this Christian Aid Week and help more families break free from hunger.

Janet and her family live in
Mutoko District in eastern
Zimbabwe. Christian Aid has
helped more than 27,000 people
in the area grow more
food and boost their
incomes despite
poor rainfall and

climate shocks.

Janet has survived drought and now grows enough food to feed her family and surplus to sell for cash.



### Journey to climate justice

There was good news to celebrate in March when politicians at Stormont voted to create a Climate Act, something that Christian Aid Ireland has been campaigning for since 2008. Northern Ireland had been the only part of the UK and Ireland not to have climate legislation but the new law introduces legally binding targets to reduce carbon emissions to 'net zero' by 2050.

Christian Aid Ireland has also been pushing for climate action at the international level. In November, staff and activists attended the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow to demand that wealthy, high carbon-emitting countries like Ireland and the UK act faster and do more to tackle climate change. The charity's Chief **Executive Rosamond Bennett** spoke at a prayer event in a Belfast church to coincide with the summit and afterwards led a delegation of staff and activists at a rally in the city centre.

Ahead of the crucial summit, many of our supporters had

'In March, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed a Climate Act, something that Christian Aid has been calling for since 2008.'



Five Christian
Aid Ireland staff and
activists joined huge
street demonstrations
in Glasgow calling for
urgent climate action.
Front, Helen Newell.
Back (L-R), Rev Cheryl
Meban, Stephen Trew,
Darren Vermaak and Dr
Jeni McAughey.

imate action.
Ilen Newell.
I), Rev Cheryl tephen Trew, ermaak and Drughey.

Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly Micah 6:8

activists stand next to the 'flotilla' of

origami boats displayed in a Glasgow

cathedral during the summit.

made origami paper boats on which they had written their hopes and prayers for COP26 and these formed a Christian Aid 'flotilla' of boats which was displayed in a Glasgow cathedral.

The boats symbolised that while we are all in the same storm when it comes to climate change, we are not in the same boat when it comes to dealing with its impacts.

The world's poorest countries continue to feel the brunt of slow onset climate emergencies driven by rising global temperatures, as well as more frequent and intense extreme weather like cyclones and drought, despite being least responsible for climate change.

That's why Christian Aid has continued to push the Irish government to increase its 'climate finance' contributions, funding pledged under the landmark Paris Climate
Agreement to help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change as well as reduce their own emissions.

Global targets for this funding are still unmet, however. Christian Aid Ireland research has shown that Ireland's 'fair share' of the current global target is approximately €500 million a year but at COP26, Taoiseach Micheál Martin only committed to increase Ireland's contributions to 'at least €225 million' by 2025.

Christian Aid continues to push for faster, fairer climate action and support for those who have done least to cause the crisis. This includes calls to assist with the costs of unavoidable and irreversible 'loss and damage' caused by climate change, raised consistently as a key issue in Glasgow but kicked forward to COP27 later this year.

## Spotlight on the 'Single Malt'

New research from Christian Aid revealed that a tax avoidance scheme dubbed the 'Single Malt' is being used by pharmaceutical giant Abbott Laboratories. This comes despite assurances from the Irish government in 2018 that the 'Single Malt' had been shut down.

The scheme could enable Abbott to legally avoid paying corporate income tax on up to €477 million of profits from sales of rapid tests, including Covid-19 tests.

Tax avoidance schemes like the 'Single Malt' make it possible to shift profits from sales of products around the world – in this case including the sales of infectious disease tests to state medical agencies in some of the world's poorest countries, like Ethiopia and Nepal.

Christian Aid Ireland urged the Irish government to take immediate action to permanently close the 'Single Malt' and called for international tax reform to ensure that more tax

revenue is retained by countries struggling to afford healthcare, education and other basic services.



## Business & Human Rights

A long with other members of the Irish Coalition of Business and Human Rights, Christian Aid Ireland appeared before the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence in December to call for stricter rules for multinational companies to prevent human rights and environmental abuses along their global supply chains.

Rosa María Mateus Parra, a lawyer with Christian Aid's local Colombian partner CAJAR, spoke of the devastating human and environmental impact of the Cerrejón mine in northern Colombia which has supplied millions of tonnes of coal to the Irish stateowned Electricity Supply Board (ESB).

Voluntary guidelines have so far failed to prevent harm and Christian Aid's partners are asking us to question where the coal we burn has been sourced, and what communities may have been impacted in the process. Christian Aid is pushing for a new

law to ensure that companies are finally held accountable.

The Cerrejón mine in Colombia has been linked with human rights violations and pollution.



### Supporter action



In 1981, Lisburn woman Hazel McCall read an article in the Belfast Telegraph in which journalist Alf McCreary described the grinding poverty he'd witnessed on a recent visit to India. Hazel was so moved that she brought together a group of volunteers to host fundraising

that she brought together a group of volunteers to host fundraising lunches in the hall of First Lisburn Presbyterian Church. Forty years on and the lunches have raised around £150,000 for our work. A special celebratory lunch was held in December at which Hazel was presented with flowers by our Chief Executive, Rosamond Bennett.



### O Drum roll for Drumbeg

The fundraising lunches at St Patrick's Church of Ireland in Drumbeg, County Down are back after the Covid-19 suspension. Here, organiser Rosemary Bunting poses with parishioner, Hugh Crookshanks. The lunches are held in the church hall on the first Friday of every month and all are welcome.

### Ho-ho-hope for South Sudan

In December, Alex Chestnutt, the Christian Aid organiser at First Antrim Presbyterian Church was among a number of supporters who hung a sandbag on their mantlepiece instead of a Christmas stocking to raise awareness of the flooding in South Sudan, which killed livestock and destroyed crops, leaving millions of people without enough food to eat.



### **⊙** Take the money and run

In October, five runners from St Mark's Church of Ireland in Newtownards, County Down took part in the Belfast marathon, raising £1,100 to support our work. From left to right, Jane and Paul Beaney, Cathy Allen and Barry and Leah Willis formed a relay team which crossed the finish line in an impressive 4 hours 19 minutes.





### Ø Kerry's kindness

In September, a fundraising walk by members of the Tralee and Dingle group of Church of Ireland parishes raised around €600 for Christian Aid when 17 parishioners walked the 8 kms from Anascaul to Inch beach. The walk was organised by Tralee rector, Rev Jim Stephens.

### Caring Carlow

Last autumn, around 40 walkers set off from St Fiaac's Church in the picturesque village of Clonegal, County Carlow, raising more than €1,000 for our work. The walk was organised by Gillian Porter with the help of other Clonegal parishioners, supported by Bunclody rector, Rev Trevor Sargent.



### Ukraine crisis



We prayed for peace in Ukraine at our annual supporters' conference in Belfast in March. Working through local partners, we are offering food, blankets, shelter, medical supplies and emotional support to people crossing borders to reach safety, often with only what they can carry. For more information, please see page 5. To support the relief effort, please visit caid.ie/UkraineAppeal

## Voice for vaccine justice

We are grateful to the Most Rev John McDowell, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland who made a donation to Christian Aid in gratitude for his Covid-19 vaccine and called for more doses of the vaccine to be made available to people in lower-income countries.



### **A Just Word**

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

I was in the kitchen of our Dublin office making a cup of tea alongside some South Sudanese visitors when one of them pointed at a Christian Aid poster on the wall. 'Ending poverty?' he queried. 'Have you thought about ending greed?' 'Charity is no substitute for justice withheld,' Saint Augustine once declared. Charity, as an addition to justice, can be commended. But charity as a substitute for justice is neither charity nor justice.

My South Sudanese friend

Michael Briggs is our Dublin-based Church and Supporter Engagement Officer. He also works part-time helping run a Methodist church in Blackrock, County Dublin.

drastically shifted my viewpoint. When ending poverty, we make the problem 'over there' and the solution in our pockets. When ending greed, we make the problem 'here' and the solution in our hearts and minds.

God calls us to act justly. May justice come. May we end greed and overcome poverty. May His will be done on earth as in heaven.

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# Love that will live on

Jean Thompson has supported Christian Aid for almost 30 years and now she is pledging a gift in her Will.

ean Thompson from Bangor in County Down has been a Christian Aid supporter since 1994, making a monthly donation by direct debit as well as ad hoc donations in response to emergencies.

A retired clerical officer, she was until recently the Christian Aid organiser at First Bangor Presbyterian Church. Each May during Christian Aid Week, she carries out a house-to-house collection in the town.

'I'm passionate about Christian Aid because they help everyone who needs it – it doesn't matter what religion they are.'

Besides her financial support and her fundraising, Jean is also an activist. In 2007, she took part in a Christian Aid march in London, calling on the UK government to introduce a Climate Change Act to cut the UK's carbon emissions - legislation that was introduced the following year.

Closer to home, she has campaigned for debt cancellation, fair trade and tax justice. She recalls one action in particular:

'In 2000, Christian Aid had commissioned a six foot artwork called Body of Chains which was touring around the UK and Ireland. It was a human form made entirely from chains, representing the bondage caused by developing countries' debt

burden. We brought the artwork to Bloomfield Shopping Centre and got shoppers to sign the petition asking the government to cancel this unpayable debt.'

The Body of Chains artwork formed part of the Jubilee 2000 campaign which helped achieve the cancellation of billions of dollars of debt.

Jean was also part of the movement that brought fair trade products into the mainstream:

'This was back when the supermarkets weren't stocking fair trade produce. We collected till receipts from members of our church and used a highlighter pen to draw attention to all the items that could be fair trade – like bananas, chocolate, tea, coffee and sugar. We met the supermarket managers, showed them the receipts and asked them to stock fair trade versions.'

Jean and her husband Andy have two grown-up sons. What do her sons think about her decision to leave a gift in her Will to Christian Aid?

'They don't know yet. They'll find out when they read this,' she laughs. 'But they don't need to worry – they'll be looked after.'

The greatest challenge of Jean's life came in 2011 when doctors discovered cancer in her



'I'm passionate about Christian Aid because they help people in poor countries, regardless of their religion.'

left leg. The surgeon warned that he would have to remove part of her leg muscle and that she might never walk again. Thankfully the worst didn't come to pass and it wasn't long before she was back on the fundraising trail:

'By the following May, I was able to carry out the house-tohouse collection for Christian Aid. I'm very grateful. The power of prayer brought me through.'

You can read a longer version of this story at

#### caid.ie/JeanThompson

It is only with the support of Jean and many others like her that we can carry out life-saving and life-enhancing work in some of the world's poorest countries.

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

Spring/Summer 2022



Christian Aid Week 15-21 May Sign up today at caweek.ie/300Ksteps