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ZIMBABWE

Programme successes

A Gender Forum Network has been launched which brings together Bishops, all of whom signed up to commitment to a charter to work towards gender equality within their churches. As part of the network, Christian Aid is partnering with a male gender forum, Padare, a partner whose main drive is to strengthen the capacity of men and boys to become gender champions. So far, the GFN has developed a strategy with each church, to developing a gender policy and a gender sensitive liturgy. Christian Aid's programme also hosted the launch of the Southern Africa chapter of the Side By Side movement, <http://sidebysidegender.org/> an international faith movement for gender justice, which brings together churches to work on gender and inequality.

Increase in yields

Yields have increased in dry regions in the past drought year as a result of climate smart interventions. A group of 240 women who grew sorghum in Binga harvested more than 60mt of sorghum. Another group in Binga harvested and sold organic herbs despite the drought experienced in Binga. The same group continue to reinvest their Fairtrade premiums in local community development initiatives. For example, they helped a local school in building class room blocks and purchasing school furniture. This is in addition to supporting some 50 orphans with school fees.

Access to Capital for Rural Enterprises (ACRE) achievements

With technical support brokered by CA, two private sector companies, Organic Africa and Bayoba developed a business plan that has

helped them secure investment. The two companies provide a secure and viable market for high value, climate resilient herbs and wild collections supplied by marginalised poor communities. Growth of these two companies' business is set to impact on over 5000 small holder producers of small grains (sorghum, millet and sesame) and horticulture products, starting with high value gherkins.

Entrepreneurship for young people

Silveira House has reached over 3,859 children and young adults and 13,867 other people indirectly, enabling them to be safer with greater opportunities to improve their skills and life prospects, including the ability to voice their views and opinions on issues that affect them. The skills include blacksmithing, carpentry and tailoring.

A group from the United Reformed Church will be visiting Christian Aid partners in May 2017.

BANGLADESH

The UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has produced a video of [Women Farmers of Bangladesh](#) looking at support across a variety of sectors including aquaculture, crop, and dairy farming. This story resonates with much of the work of Christian Aid partners.

Shipra Bagchi is the first of the women we meet in the video; she is a shrimp farmer from the village of Baniakhali in Bagerhat, a district of the Khulna division in southwestern Bangladesh. When she first started shrimp farming twenty years ago, Shipra had less than a tenth of a hectare of land (0.05 ha). She recalls how difficult it was to make ends meet in those days. "At that time, this whole area was inundated. Rice cultivation wasn't possible." She remembers that

people used to survive by picking water lilies. And Shipra herself struggled with her new endeavour. “Earlier, I didn’t know the good practices of shrimp farming.”

Thanks to a project implemented by FAO and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, with support from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), Shipra received training in key skills and techniques for improved and increased shrimp production: “How to enhance shrimp production, the benefit of the nursery and the use of PCR certified seeds, correct doses of lime, etc.”

“If I hadn’t received this training, I would not have come to this stage,” she says, noting that her shrimp production has increased significantly. “It is more than double.”

Today, Shipra has around 4 to 4.5 ha of land. “I bought land,” she says. And that’s not all. “After all these years I have managed to build houses, provide education for my children.”

Shipra is eager to share the skills she has learned with others. “Now other people come to me, wanting to learn shrimp farming techniques,” she says. “They seek advice from me on how to become successful. This has all become possible because I followed the instructions under the project.”

credit [Http://www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

CENTRAL AMERICA: NICARAGUA

Nicaragua has experienced ongoing corruption at the highest levels, including during its last elections held in November 2016. President Daniel Ortega won a third term in office, alongside his running mate, Rosario Murillo, who also happened to be his wife. The election went unchallenged in terms of there being no organised political opposition, however there was significant disenchantment and anger throughout

the country, with many demonstrations against his re-election. To date, he remains unchallenged, but the Organisation of American States (OAS) has now requested an open dialogue with President Ortega and his regime, and in January 2017 the OAS presented an official report to the government, making recommendations to improve democracy and transparency over the next three years. Simultaneously, the EU Parliament has condemned Nicaragua’s regime due to the prevalence of human rights abuses and political repression – most cases of which are related to the defence of natural resources and conflict linked to the development of large scale projects on inhabited land.

New US Administration

Following the election of Mr Trump in the US, and his immigration policy, more controls are being put in place to avoid citizens from Central America entering the US. Many of the Central Americans that have been entering the US, have been escaping violence or climate change events that have hindered their attempts to pursue a secure livelihood, and live in safety. For example, many people have been fleeing significant drought and crop failure in Central America over the last year. Governments and UN authorities now believe that there is significant risk of a humanitarian crisis ensuing over the next year in Central America, especially in the so-called ‘Dry Corridor’ where the poorest population are located. In June 2016, it was noted that 3.5 million people were already in need of humanitarian assistance across Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and this is only expected to get worse.

Christian Aid is supporting various ACT Alliance initiatives to support some of these extremely vulnerable small farmers and indigenous communities who are currently experiencing considerable food and water shortages.

Stories for Change is produced by Commitment for Life: it seeks to inform and inspire. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the URC.