

INVESTING IN CHILDHOOD



Joyful waiting for maize-meal porridge, Malawi.

Photo: Mary's Meals project.

EDITORIAL

2009 sees the twentieth anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the thirtieth of the Year of the Child (1979). This makes it timely to take stock of the progress made around the world investing in those things which work for a more child-friendly world.

Despite the best efforts of many at every level from individual siblings, parents and communities, to Church, governments and UNICEF, the overall picture – accurately reflected I believe in the articles in this newsletter – is sombre. Millions of children live with a horizon that stretches no further than a stomach-pained craving for a meal; a remote dream of consistent and affordable education; and the longing for freedom from the fear of attack, abuse or premature death. And where the basics of existence are in place (as in the UK for example) children and young people suffer from poor quality – and often fractured – relationships in families, schools and their peer groups.

What is the Gospel in this context? It surely starts with followers of Jesus who will never give up or lapse into helpless despair, whatever the scale of the task they face. They will always be

seeking to sow seeds of faith, hope and love. You will find the sheer resilience represented by these stories of belief against the odds, a source of inspiration and encouragement.

And what are some of the characteristics of these Christian seeds and sowing worldwide?

- The readiness to start where children are (needing food, medicine, training in the basic skills of life, love), using practical and pragmatic methods, rather than lofty ideals and the rhetoric of advocacy.
- A recognition that the most effective long-term investment will be in the training, nurture and education of girls and women.
- The courage to see that others (like global corporations and drug cartels) are investing in children for the worst of motives, and that investing in children and childhood is an uphill battle in both rich and poor countries.
- That universal education remains a hollow aspiration for millions of children, and that learning through play is a culturally sensitive, robust and practical option.
- That holistic investment in children needs a whole community or parish.

Parenting is a role for every person in the community, and churches are ideally placed for this role. Crucially this includes children and young people as agents of change.

The articles in this newsletter are prophetic because their motives are so transparently those of helpers: they do not shout from the rooftops, and yet the message is distressingly clear. As the natural world that adults are bequeathing to our children and grandchildren begins to seem increasingly damaged and fragile, our investment in the growing trees of the forest (the children) remains woefully inadequate.

But in the midst of this dark and chilling reality, candles are still alight: they may be flickering, but even so they reveal the faces of children who will not give up. You will no doubt find your own powerful image among the many represented here, but for me it is the little girl tending the wound of the injured boy using her dress.

Contact Person: Dr Keith J. White, Director of Mill Grove and Chair of the UK Christian Child Care Forum, Mill Grove, 10 Crescent Road, London E18 1JB, ENGLAND

ZAMBIA

In talking about the importance of children and young people in society, one of the common local sayings in Zambia is 'Growing Trees are the forest', meaning 'children are the future.' Children in many urban settings in Zambia face a myriad of challenges such as poor diet, poor health, lack of recreational facilities and lack of education. These threaten to disrupt their development and eventual benefit to society and the Church at large.

Chawama Parish is located in a high-density area where some of the poorest of the poor reside. Here the story of people living on less than a dollar is not theory but a daily reality as in many other compounds in Zambia.

The Church has risen to these challenges mainly through running programmes such as nursery and primary schools, literacy classes for adults and family-relationships ministry. Directly or indirectly, all these are aimed at helping to improve the welfare of the urban child.

The Church provides affordable education through its school, St Francis Anglican Nursery and Primary, which has enrolled 141 pupils. Through the school, the Church provides education that affects both the mind and heart, thereby ensuring that children grow up as responsible and beneficial members of the community. The Church believes that to educate only in the mind is creating a nuisance for society so extra-curricular activities such as sport and showing of Christian and educative movies are an integral part of the school programme. The Church has bought a DVD player and a big screen TV for the *Children Movie Outreach Programme*. This provides not only decent entertainment but good teaching, thus enabling the children to keep away from vices such as drug abuse and crime.

The Parish, in conjunction with clergy wives, runs a feeding programme in Misisi compound, within Chawama Parish. About 250 children are fed on soya porridge for breakfast and are also provided with lunch from Monday to Friday. This ensures that children get at least one decent meal per day, which otherwise they would not have in their homes. This programme facilitates the education of the children who otherwise would miss school because of hunger.

Recently, the Church has introduced literacy classes for adults. Almost 100% of the students in this programme are women. We believe that by educating the parents we are contributing to the welfare of children. Literate parents, particularly mothers, are better equipped to deal with challenges affecting children in urban settings. Through functional



Cooking for children.

Photo: Noreen Njovo.

literacy programmes, parents are not only able to read and write but also equipped to be better 'managers' of their small businesses and family finances, and this means their children are educated and grow in a healthy manner thus reducing child morbidity and mortality. A literate woman is better placed to understand and apply basic health and nutrition needs.

The Church also offers specialised ministries such as the Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, and Girls' Friendly Society, through which children are nurtured and taught Christian values that promote a responsible and godly lifestyle.

After qualifying for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and thus debt cancellation, Zambia started to provide 'free' education at primary school level. Although this has been a great help for some, many children in Zambia still cannot afford to access government education. This is because there are not adequate schools to accommodate every child; and also because families still have to buy uniforms, shoes, books and

pencils/pens and – above all – they need to eat. In a country where the unemployment rate is over 75%, very few families can afford to buy the school requirements. In fact, the so called 'free' education does not go beyond primary level and therefore many children end up on the streets with nothing to do.

It is this background that has prompted the Parish to get involved in the education sector to provide children and parents with the basics that can facilitate their graduation from a life of poverty to a life which is self-sustaining. In John 10: 10, Jesus says 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' We believe that education is a primary and essential tool that can ensure better and abundant life for children.

Contact Person: Father Emmanuel Chikoya, St Francis Anglican Church, C/o Anglican Diocese of Lusaka, Plot 6941, Suez Road, P.O. Box 30183, Lusaka, ZAMBIA

ZIMBABWE – DIOCESE OF MASVINGO



Willing workers help with the supplementary feeding scheme.

Photo: Mothers' Union.

Supplementary feeding for school children

The food crisis in Zimbabwe, due to multiple factors such as drought, has left many sectors paralysed; one of them being the education sector. Being unable to get even a meal a day, most parents – especially in the rural areas – have had to give up on the idea of their children going to school, which causes serious absenteeism. Instead of attending school, pupils are spending days assisting their parents directly or indirectly in getting money to buy food.

Many thanks are due to the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG), Lambeth Palace, the Community of the Resurrection and Mothers' Union who, through our Diocesan Bishop's efforts, have come in and alleviated the situation in those of our schools which were most affected.

We managed to implement the supplementary feeding programme in seven of our Diocesan schools and the impact of the intervention has been tremendous. The project was delayed by the Government regulations that prohibit transporting of maize meal or maize grain across districts and provinces. The lack of maize was the other challenge. However, in May this year we managed to commence the project at four schools located in three different provinces. The programme was then extended to three of our schools, to bring to seven the total number of schools benefiting from this programme.

Quantities of food distributed

Sizeable quantities of food were distributed, eg at least 500kg of maize meal, 24kg of soya mince, 20 litres of cooking oil and 2kg of fine salt, to each of the seven schools.

All the schools started preparing and serving one sadza (thick porridge) meal with soya mince per pupil per day. Recommended quantities of rations per pupil and portion size were served according to age per day, with the youngest pupils getting 100-150gm dry ration maize-meal with 25ml cooking oil each per

meal and the secondary-school children getting up to 250gm dry ration maize meal and 50ml cooking oil. This was done by all schools after food commodities were delivered. The exception was Chasiyatende Secondary School in Chivi District (Masvingo Province) because for a time it was disturbed by the political environment in the district. They commenced the feeding programme at the end of June after being given the nod to commence by political heavyweights in the area.

Teachers appointed at respective schools were tasked to calculate and issue daily allocations to cooking mothers, who numbered between six and eight. This process was done in liaison with respective Project Committees and School Heads and the pupils were fed during lunch hour. Apart from health personnel who occasionally paid visits, hygiene was monitored by an appointed teacher conversant in health issues. High standards of hygiene have been enforced during food preparation, cooking, serving and consumption. Pupils brought their own plates and were taught to thoroughly clean their plates and wash their hands before and after each meal.

Parents of the pupils supplied vegetables to augment the soya mince relish. Soya mince was preferred as a suitable relish because it is rich in protein. The meal was also assessed as a balanced diet because each daily allocation contains all major requirements on the nutrition chart, such as carbohydrates, fibre, vitamins, protein, fats and mineral salts.

Security and storage

Due to the seriously devastating drought in most parts of the country, food provisions are at risk of being pilfered. The respective Diocesan schools benefiting from this programme have each employed a Security Guard to safeguard the food. Most of the storerooms are burglar-barred. The dry stores are placed on dunnage to avoid floor moisture. Rodent infestation is closely monitored as these will gnaw at food, contaminate and deplete stocks.

Monitoring and accountability

Duplicate delivery notes were signed and witnessed by either a School Development or Projects' Committee member on the day of delivery. These are filed at the schools and the Diocesan Project offices. Children were weighed fortnightly. This helps monitor the benefits anticipated in terms of weight gain or maintenance. Diocesan Projects' Committees supervise the daily running of the programme at the respective schools. They provide reports to the projects' office. Some of the daily consumption records are being kept by the school Heads through their Teachers-in-Charge, as witnessed daily by the School Development Committee and Project Committee members.

Impact of the supplementary feeding project

- Increased teaching and learning atmosphere
- Improved attendance and attentiveness
- Improved pupil punctuality in coming to school
- Improved participation of students in extra-curricular activities
- Reduced vulnerability, especially of the girl-child, at secondary school level.

Environmental Impact

The Projects' Committee has commended the soya mince as a friendly relish since it does not require a lot of firewood. With children fed at school, there is reduced cooking in the home, hence further saving on use of firewood. Dry deadwood, even faggots, were being used, hence minimising vegetative destruction.

Challenges

1. More funding in foreign exchange is needed as food commodities are being sold in foreign currency eg 50kg bag of mealie meal is going for US\$30.
2. The unavailability of a suitable truck for ferrying provisions results in numerous trips in small vehicles consuming a lot of the black-market expensive fuel. This hikes the transportation bill.
3. Government policies on purchase and ferrying of maize and maize-meal negatively impacted on the project too.

We thank our funding partners for enabling us to achieve such a noble project. It is our hope and intention to continue with this programme since there is a food crisis in Zimbabwe, with many people facing starvation. Funds permitting, we expect to cover other Diocesan schools located in other areas that are drought-hit. The joy and excitement expressed by pupils, teachers and parents at benefiting schools is such a touching and humbling experience.

The Diocese having the mindset of our Lord Jesus Christ seeks tirelessly to comfort and hearken to these needy souls, because "it has compassion on them because they are like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:33-37).

Contact Person: Bishop Godfrey Tawonezwi, Diocese of Masvingo, PO Box 1421, Masvingo, ZIMBABWE

SCOTLAND – INTERNATIONAL

MARY'S MEALS

Six years ago my brother Magnus and I were in Malawi working on an emergency feeding project. There was a famine in the region. We soon realised that although the famine had created a crisis, chronic hunger was the daily reality for most Malawians.

During our stay there, Magnus accompanied a priest on a visit to a mother dying from HIV/AIDS. She was sitting on the floor of her hut, surrounded by her family and praying that someone would care for her children when she was gone. Magnus asked her oldest son, a boy of about 14, what his hopes were in life. He replied, "To have enough food to eat and to go to school one day". This simple reply stayed with us and his modest dream was the inspiration for *Mary's Meals*. This is a campaign to set up school feeding projects in communities where poverty and hunger block children from gaining an education. It is named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, and dedicated to her as she too knew what it was to bring up a child in poverty. Later that year, the first *Mary's Meals* project began in Malawi by feeding 200 children.

Today, *Mary's Meals* is providing over 350,000 children with a daily meal in school. Most of these are in Malawi but we also have projects in Uganda, Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, Sudan, India, Philippines, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Ukraine, Romania, Bolivia and Haiti. *Mary's Meals* is growing rapidly as more and more people around the world become involved, whether by donating (the average cost for *Mary's Meals* per child per year across all our projects is currently £8.40), volunteering their time and skills or praying for the success of the work. Everyone has something to offer.

Earlier this year I went to Haiti to visit some of our *Mary's Meals* projects there. Our friends met us at the airport and took us straight to Cite Soleil – a notorious shanty town slum outside the capital Port au Prince. It is a nightmarish place. A sprawl of corrugated iron shacks built over a rubbish dump that spills out into the sea. It is home to around 40,000 people. Their poverty, their history and their neglect seem to have made it a fertile breeding ground for every kind of misery a human being can suffer.

Yet when you ask the people there what they want in the way of help, the first thing they say is 'a school.' Our partners have built seven schools in Cite Soleil and



Monique baking clay biscuits.

Photo: *Mary's Meals* project.

we are providing a daily meal to the 5,000 children who attend them. The contrast is startling. A metal gate separates the squalor of Cite Soleil from a school yard full of children in brightly coloured gingham uniforms jostling happily as they queue for a plate of rice and beans. This meal ensures they come here every day. The education they gain is their route out of poverty. Let us hope and pray that they will grow up to be instrumental in bringing about all the changes for the better that the people of Haiti are crying out for.

As I stumbled through Cite Soleil I felt a growing sense of despair. We passed Monique cooking 'terre' on hot concrete. These are made from clay mixed with a little oil and sugar. Traditionally these were eaten by pregnant women for their mineral content. Now they are a cheap food for the very poor – something to fill their stomachs with. The children clustered round us as we continued with our walk. I noticed a boy sitting on the ground, scraping hopelessly with a palm frond at a deep cut on his foot. Given the children's bare feet and the rubbish strewn ground this must be a continual hazard. When I looked again a little girl was kneeling beside him, anxiously wiping the cut with the hem of her grubby dress. Witnessing this little act of kindness was a salutary reminder to me not to be misled by the 'distressing disguise of the poor'. The people of Cite Soleil are our brothers and sisters and they badly need our little acts of kindness. One of our charity's values states; "We have confidence in the innate goodness of people." Time and again we are privileged to see that goodness in action.

The roots of the charity are entwined with those of Craig Lodge Family House of Prayer. This is a Catholic retreat centre in Argyll (and its grounds are home to *Mary's Meals* Headquarters). When the war in the Balkans broke out, the visitors to the retreat centre, like so many others, were desperate to do something to help. When they heard that the MacFarlane-Barrow family were organising an appeal, they were delighted to be able to help: buy tins of food, look out blankets, collect clothes and pray for the venture's success. They took this appeal back to their churches and parishes. Whole congregations then got involved. It was this network of church support that made the initial appeal for a Landrover of aid snowball into an avalanche of donations. When steps were taken to set up a charity to administer these donations, it was this same network that formed an ongoing source of support. And this remains true to this day. As one example of a small beginning leading to greater involvement, the congregation of one Scottish Episcopal Church originally started to support *Mary's Meals* by collecting loose change in a plastic sweet-jar after the church-service each Sunday. Such was the level of support and interest that, as well as the continuing collections, the congregation now makes an annual grant of £6,000 to sponsor their own *Mary's Meals* feeding-kitchen at a remote, needy primary school in Malawi.

Contact Person: Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Mary's Meals, Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll, PA33 1AR, SCOTLAND.

Website: www.marysmeals.org

ENGLAND



Childhood fun.

Photo: Corbis.

What makes a good childhood?

The Children's Society (TCS) is a leading national charity committed to making childhood better for all children in the UK. TCS has supported children since 1881, when Sunday school teacher Edward Rudolf found two of his pupils begging for food on London's streets, and subsequently established the Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays.

While the nature of TCS' work has evolved as society and children's needs have changed, its founder's belief that every child deserves a good childhood remains at the heart of everything TCS does. In 2006 TCS launched a two-year national study called *The Good Childhood Inquiry* to enquire into children's lives and to open a debate about the nature of childhood today in the UK. With the Archbishop of Canterbury as its patron, the panel leading the inquiry has sought the views of thousands of children and young people as well as the findings of social science on six topics; family, health, friends, values, lifestyle and learning.

So far, the inquiry has found that for UK children, friendship is very important for children, both for their social and emotional development and for their own sense of well-being. Adults often underestimate the importance of friendship for children, and how friends help them to adjust to school, the arrival

of new siblings and the experience of being bullied. It found that families are the most powerful influence on children and that poverty remains one of the most significant predictors of children's well-being, causing material and emotional disadvantage and limiting aspiration.

The inquiry heard from many children who want to learn and dislike being held back by other disruptive pupils. But it also found that in order to enable children to flourish, learning needs to address poverty and parenting as well as academic achievement. There was a lot of evidence to show that there are not enough structured activities available out-of-school and those that do exist are often expensive, dirty, vandalised and poorly maintained. In rural areas of the UK, public transport is often inadequate. Many people thought that there should be more child-friendly outdoor spaces as well as more traffic-free roads and that the lack of these might be a factor behind at least some of the antisocial activity in which a minority of young people become engaged when out-of-school.

With regard to health, the biggest number of responses related to children's mental health. Widespread concern was felt that increasing numbers of children are experiencing mental health problems, and that some groups – including young people in prison, young carers, homeless young people and refugees and asylum

seekers – are especially vulnerable. Young people themselves highlighted the importance of being free from stress, pressure and worry. Professionals linked children's mental health with a range of problems, such as poverty and material deprivation, pressures to achieve, the adverse effects of consumerism and exposure to violence. Lastly, children giving evidence to the inquiry felt strongly that you should treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself. They rated values like respect, kindness, friendliness and tolerance, emphasising that these should be shown to others before being expected in return. This also meant they wanted to be listened to by adults and for their views to be taken seriously! Children in the UK are aware of negative attitudes towards them, particularly in the media and asked to be portrayed positively, rather than as "thugs or vandals". As well as a degree of freedom over their lives, children talked about a need for space to enjoy themselves without too many responsibilities.

These findings are available at www.goodchildhood.org.uk. The inquiry has now ended. A very readable short book about the findings will be launched in early 2009. It is meant to encourage all of us to think again about how children are treated. The inquiry will also be formulating their recommendations on what makes a good childhood. It is to be hoped that these will be considered seriously by policy makers, children's organisations and by the churches and that real changes will take place.

Contact Person: Sue Burridge, Community and Public Affairs Adviser, Church House, Great Smith St, London, ENGLAND

The Sexualisation of Girlhood

The sexualisation of girls and women is so pervasive, particularly in Western society, that it can feel normal for young girls to look like teenagers, for teenagers to look like adults, and for women generally to be portrayed primarily as sexual objects.

Sexualisation is not to be mixed up with a healthy understanding of sexuality, which is important for emotional, mental and physical health.

When a person's value is chiefly derived from his or her physical and sexual appeal and behaviour, when a person is persuaded to accept that being physically attractive is what defines 'sexiness', when a person is made into an object for other's sexual use or when measures of sexuality are prescribed inappropriately, the oppressive conditioning process of sexualisation is at work. Young girls who are barely on the threshold of puberty

are vulnerable subjects of this conditioning process. The power of sexualisation of girls and women is immense.

Hope's Place, a Christian charity located in Bristol, UK, has been increasingly aware of these pressures and is deeply concerned about the damaging consequences this power has on the psyche of children and young girls, its harmful effects on themselves, their relationships and their life choices.

A chief concern that prompted the founder and director of this young charity was the rise in unwanted pregnancies in the UK. Subsequently through findings and recommendations it was agreed that low self-esteem was a key indicator that often hampered young people from making healthy and positive life choices. Phrases such as 'I feel rubbish', 'I'm not good at anything' really translate in to 'I'm good for nothing'. They reflect a frustrated longing to look like certain airbrushed celebrity images and reveal young people's need for loving acceptance of themselves.

A strategic way the charity feels called to help in this area is by raising awareness and stimulating critical thinking through its educational programmes. An empathetic and non-judgemental approach is used in challenging distorted perceptions of self and others.

The charity offers free educational programmes in schools, community groups, Anglican and other churches across the city of Bristol which are mainly located in 'challenging areas'. Education at *Hope's Place* works alongside these groups to empower children and young people to develop wholesome thinking and decision-making in the areas of self-image, identity, sex and relationship education.

Examples range from working, usually in partnership with a school, to supporting a church group that wishes to be a pastoral presence to its hard-to-reach young members.

Hope's Place Education has a well-developed and tested programme aimed at secondary school-aged children, and girls' groups in church and community settings. It is also involved in developing initiatives that respond to the specific needs of the primary age group. One such initiative is through partnership with the Bristol, Salisbury and Exeter Diocesan adviser teams who are together developing a programme within the Religious Education framework under the banner of sex and relationship education for the year six transition phase group.

There is a pressing need to work with boys in processing these key issues from a male perspective. *Hope's Place* has developed a programme for boys. Whatever the context or group, the

overall programmes seek to develop emotional and spiritual literacy around these areas.

The demand for these educational programmes to be developed and delivered at various locations around the city reveals an immense need to invest in this way in the lives of our children and young people and in the fabric of family and society as a whole.

Jesus declared 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free' John 8:32.

Giving children the tools that will help them to discern the lies that consumerist society offers, is a huge part of helping them break free of these strongholds. Leading them on a journey of discovering something of being made in the image of God is part of helping them discover the freedom that Jesus was talking about.

Hope's Place depends on grants, donations from churches, communities and individual members to support this vital work. It has a small part-time paid staff and a group of volunteers who support this rapidly growing need. The charity also offers counselling as part of its work.

Contact Person: Chitra Koor, Education Manager, Hope's Place. 21, Stoke Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1JN, ENGLAND. Website: www.hopesplace.org.uk

MADAGASCAR



Happy children, Antsiranana.

Hostels for Children

Our work with children started during the 1960s. Children who were living in the remote villages of the Malagasy rain forest were given the facilities of attending better schools in the town of Antsiranana. We have a hostel with

facilities for 20 boys and also hostel facilities for 20 girls in the main village of Daraina.

The girls' hostel was built by the help of Mary Tindall Trust during the time of the late Bishop Keith Benzies. In 2008, a

memorial chapel dedicated in memory of Bishop Benzies was inaugurated by Bishop Roger Chung Jaomalaza. Due to the poor infrastructure and the remote location of the girls' hotel, it is not possible to visit it during the rainy season.

The boys' hostel since its opening has produced many successful students who have been able to contribute to Malagasy society. The present Dean of the cathedral of Antsiranana was sponsored by the boys' hostel during his student days. With the generous help of people and help around the world this valuable work has been able to go on.

Since poverty is rampant in this part of the world, the hostel work will need support for years to come.

Pray for us.

Contact Person: The Rt Rev Roger Chung Po Chuen F.H., Bishop of Antsiranana Diocese, Mgr Jaomalaza, Eklezia Episkopaly Malagasy, BP 278, 4 Rue Grandidier, Antsiranana 201, MADAGASCAR

WEST INDIES

The Anglican Church on Anguilla has been involved in the education of the young for centuries. This was in the form of Sunday School, Catechetical classes, and primary education for boys in the mainly populated area of the island. Even after the government began to manage and administer schools, the Church allowed its property to be used for educational purposes.

During the mid 1980s, the Church, recognising the dramatic increase in opportunities for people to work and further their education, established two pre-schools – St. Mary's and St. Augustine's. Thus, three-to five-year-old children were and are being given the pre-school experience. The properties are owned and managed by the Church's Vestry who along with the School Board, the Principal and Staff, raise funds to provide resources. Income to pay salaries is derived from school fees and the government's monetary contribution to pre-school education.

The schools' curriculum focuses on the needs of each child. Its organisation and management allow each child to develop cognitive and social skills. Along with

Devotions, the pre-schoolers are engaged in activities relating to language, arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Music, drawing, painting, craft and technology are integrated in each area of learning. Opportunities to choose and plan activities are given to the children. Field trips, discussions, reporting and sharing experiences form part of their weekly activities. It is always a joy to witness their enthusiasm and eagerness to ask questions.

As teachers' professional development and parental training impact positively on children's achievement, the Church invests in the training of its teachers at home and abroad, and supports parenting programmes. All are required to attend local training sessions and educational activities.

With the assistance of the Department of Education, which monitors the work at the school, the principal and staff know what their children are doing, can do, and what they need to do to progress. Based on the last report from the Department of Education, both schools have maintained a high standard.

Additionally, the Church has been

involved in nurturing the spiritual well-being of the children and youth. That is done mainly through the Sunday School held every Sunday morning, the weekly confirmation classes, youth meetings, children and youth choirs and the servers. Along with Bible study, the children and youth interact with one another and their teachers on topics such as the liturgy, history, culture and social issues. Presentations and field trips also form part of their activities. Sessions are mainly interactive. In addition to the knowledge and skills, attention is given to the emotional intelligence of the children. In sum, every effort is made to educate the whole child.

The Church continues to invest in the Girl Guiding and Scout movements. Each week, scouts, cubs, guides and brownies attend meetings on the grounds of the church and the Scouts and Guides Headquarters, located on Church property. The Bishop, who is also the Parish Priest, and his assistant priest are members of both associations.

**Contact Person: Rosena Brooks,
PO Box 180, The Valley, Anguilla,
WEST INDIES**

BRAZIL

My Father's House

Wallace looks up and down the dark, dirty, dirt-track street to make sure the coast is clear. He has a sawn-off shotgun in one hand and two security guards with him – a perk of being high-up in the gang. He crosses the street and goes through the church's front gate, he has come to talk to some people he remembers helping him in the past. He talks to one of the Pastors until he sees someone walking past who he is sure has recognised him; he needs to leave and quickly runs off with his security. Ten minutes later a group from a rival gang turns up at the entrance to the church looking for Wallace.

Wallace is a 14-year-old boy who lives in one of the most dangerous favelas (shanty towns) in Recife NE Brazil. His two 'security guards' who were with him that day were only around 11 years old. In Brazil, there are around 25 million other children just like Wallace, who live in extremely deprived conditions, who have to battle daily with the temptations of gang life or with families who abuse and do not care for them. *My Father's House* project exists to help these boys whose lives are in danger of being destroyed by drugs and try to reintegrate them back into their families. We have a nice house



Boys and team at My Father's House

Photo: Andy Roberts.

in the city away from the favela which houses up to 12 boys at a time. Our youngest boy is seven and the oldest is about to turn 16. In the project they receive the love and the attention that they have been missing, attend the local school and find out about a God who can

and wants to save and change them. On the streets there is little hope for the child and they are very unlikely to make it to 18. Just on the favela where we work, statistics show that an average of four people under the age of 18 are killed each week. The situation is serious.

My Father's House is linked to the Anglican Church *Living Waters* which is situated on the favela by the city rubbish dump. Growing up on the favela is difficult: if you have a family they will probably send you to work picking through rubbish on the open-air dump and the chances are you'll end up in the gangs taking and selling drugs.

The Bible says that the Devil comes to steal, kill and destroy, and that is exactly what he is doing to these children's lives and they in turn steal, kill and destroy. But there is hope. In John's Gospel Jesus

says that 'I have come so that you might have life'. It is only through the life-transforming power of the gospel of Christ that will change these boys' lives. *My Father's House* project exists to do exactly that.

Your experiences during childhood shape and mould the adult that you will become. It is imperative that we try and save these children, both physically and spiritually before it's too late. Wallace spent a year in our project; unfortunately it didn't work out and he returned to the gangs of the favela. This has shown us

once more that providing a bed, food and even love will not necessarily change a child's ways. It is the Lord and only He who has the power to do that. This is our continuing prayer to the 250 plus children we have contact with daily through *My Father's House* project and *Living Waters* Church.

**Contact Person: Andy Roberts,
C/o Rev Ian Meldrum, Rua
Candido Pessoa 1343 Bairro Nova
53.030.020 Olinde, PE BRAZIL**

PARAGUAY



In class with new resources.

Photo:FEISA.

Training teachers, transforming lives

Paraguay, a beautiful country in the heart of South America, is also one of its poorest. In Paraguay 40% live on less than 50p (\$1) a day and 32% of children who start school do not finish primary. The greatest need and challenge, however, is among the country's indigenous population:

- On average each child receives only three years schooling.
- Only 58% of teachers in these communities are indigenous and most of these have little or no teacher training.
- 91% of teachers do not have materials in their pupils' native language.
- Illiteracy is eight times above the national average.

The harsh consequences of this are that communities are losing their language and cultural identity and that children are not

receiving the quality of education they need to prepare them for their future.

FEISA is an Anglican early years teacher-training college with a vision to provide high quality Christian teacher training in order to develop in children their full potential and so provide them with hope and a more secure future.

After a plea for help from an indigenous community in 2005, FEISA began a pre-school teacher training programme with an emphasis on learning through play – a revolutionary concept for indigenous teachers who tend to use traditional rote-learning methods. We soon realised that what these communities most lack is training and resources, as the Paraguayan government provides little of either to indigenous teachers. We made sure that all resources were appropriate to the indigenous context and produced worksheets to develop pre-writing skills, mathematics and literacy, all in their native language, Enxet. The aim of the

programme is to provide a holistic education to enable children to grow in all aspects of their development. At the request of the community, who asked us to provide Christian education, we also produced the first ever Bible materials for children in Enxet, based on the Creation story.

This year we extended the programme to the Enxet community of El Estribo working with nine indigenous schools training pre-school teachers and volunteer mothers – 15 people in total. Along with the training, the schools are provided with all the resources and also furniture they need – many children were sitting on planks of wood for lack of tables and chairs.

The response of the teachers and children has been encouraging and heartwarming. They say that this is exactly the training and resources they have needed for years, but no-one has shown any interest in them before. The children now rush to school in the morning, excited to play and learn, and do not want to leave when school finishes! The programme is enabling schools to strengthen their native language and culture which is particularly important in schools that have non-indigenous teachers who cannot speak Enxet and rely on mothers to help and reinforce the language.

We thank God for the generosity of many donors that have made this project possible and continue to trust Him for the funds we need to continue the project next year. Over 200 indigenous children have benefited and many more young lives can be transformed if we are able to extend this work to other communities.

**Contact Person: Samantha
Parsons, FEISA Teacher Training
College, Casilla 1124, Asunción,
PARAGUAY. FEISA blog site:
<http://www.feisaprayrletter.blogspot.com/>**

PERU



Child's play at El Arca.

'El Arca'

What do a paint brush, a model cow and a lego brick have in common? They can all be found at 'El Arca' ('The Ark'), Lima, Peru. 'El Arca' is a mobile play scheme, run by the Diocese of Peru, taking 'play' to some of Lima's poorest children.

The project works with children and volunteers to help enrich both the children's Christian and school education. Peru has a good record of primary school attendance (97% according to UNICEF), but unfortunately one of the worst standards of teaching in South America. A piece of work is considered good if it has been copied correctly from the blackboard. The emphasis is on copying, repetition and presentation whilst comprehension and analytical thinking are rarely developed.

Through 'El Arca's' different zones (art, reading, roleplay, miniature world, board games and jigsaws) we seek to give children a holistic education. "Mira, mira!" (Look, look!) shouts Miguel excitedly to his sister as he looks at a photograph of a crocodile opening its enormous jaw. Through books and photographs the children's eyes are

opened to God's awesome creation. 'El Arca' also provides a very natural opportunity to share our Creator God's Story with the children and parents. When the children have tidied the activities away, a Bible story, prayer and energetic worship rounds off the session.

The children have the chance to learn through playing with toys that would otherwise be available to them. With the average wage being \$4-\$6 a day, after household costs have been met, school uniforms and all school resources have been bought, toys and books are an unaffordable luxury.

Another goal of 'El Arca' is to build children's self-esteem. Many have low self-esteem as they are often told by teachers and classmates that their work is no good. It is not unusual for family members to refer to a child as 'el burro' (the donkey). At 'El Arca' we encourage children in whatever they do, be it in building a model car with Lego or in painting a picture of a parrot. Everyone's contribution is valued. Just as the animals in Noah's ark were each different and special, so each child is unique.

Ariel is five years old. Although often in

trouble in the classroom for bad behaviour linked to his short concentration span, when he comes to 'El Arca' he enjoys painting. Ariel designed the logo for the project and was speechless with joy the day he showed the banner with his design on to his parents. 'El Arca' is also blessing mothers, many of whom also have very low self-esteem. Through training them to lead different activities in 'El Arca', giving them responsibilities, praying together and lots of praise, they too flourish.

The project is currently running in the Diocesan school, Colegio Santísima Trinidad and at a church mission, San Patricio, on a sandy hillside on the northern tip of the city. Our hope is that through training volunteers 'El Arca' will set sail to many more of the Church's missions and that more children will come to realise that they are loved as unique children of God.

**Contact Person: Sarah Tester,
SAMS Mission Partner, Iglesia
Anglicana Episcopal del Perú,
Apartado postal, 18-1032,
Lima 18, PERU**

URUGUAY



Early Years Education.

Photo: CAIF.

CAIF “Los Granjeritos”

We are a Centre for Holistic Service to Children and Families (CAIF in Spanish), located in Canelones in Villa Felicidad. The Centre is run by the San Pablo Mission of the Anglican Church of Uruguay in an accord with the Uruguayan State Institute for Children and Young Teenagers (INAU in Spanish). We have 120 children and their families on our books.

The Centre grew out of a need and a request from the community. From this, the San Pablo Mission undertook a study to determine the needs of the community and the services offered to it by the state, as a result of which the accord was signed in February 2008 as the first step towards fulfilling the dream.

Our mission is to improve the conditions for development and social integration of families at risk, helping develop the potential of the children and removing the social limitations which militate against their future. We are one more tool of the Anglican Church of Uruguay, seeking promotion of human beings in every way.

We endeavour to develop the skills of the community through play, music and creativity, looking to CAIF as a point of community reference and part of a network of social support. We want to improve the coverage and quality of the social programmes for the poor by developing innovative strategies and

methodologies to help children, women and families. Our team includes five educators, a psychomotor skills specialist, psychologist, social worker, cook and assistant.

The work is carried out via two programmes: **Opportunity for Stimulation** and **Early Years Education**. In the former, children under two years old gather once a week accompanied by their families. We work with them using psychomotor stimulation, play and participation, to ensure good motor, cognitive and emotional development. We also help the parents to realise their own position in the family, develop their abilities and build up confidence and self-esteem, so that they know their children better, understand child development and bring them up more effectively. We create a favourable atmosphere for helping one another and broadening the social support network.

Early Years Education is for children from two to three years old who attend from Monday to Friday. There are four groups and the aim is to build up their identity and self-esteem, thus promoting independence alongside the formation of attitudes and values to help them mix with others. By stimulating language and communication skills as well as understanding of their own body, we develop and encourage early interaction with the world around.

The Sower Project

This works to set up organic gardens on people's own property, providing them with seed, tools and technical advice. We aim to create community associations which help in personal development through group processes. The primary aim is for people to re-acquire the habit of producing in their gardens and homes some of the food they consume. We have been doing this now for two years, but in this past year we have given it fresh impetus, bringing in other practices from which some of the families have benefited.

In the Sower Project we've been working with the local primary school. Thanks to the Church and the 'Work for Uruguay' programme carried out through an agreement with the Ministry of Social Development, a vegetable garden has been set up at the school. Here the children work with plants and learn to relate them to food and nutrition. We have supplied seed and advice, and by so doing have formed links with families through the Church's social partners who, as members of the parents' commission, work voluntarily in the school.

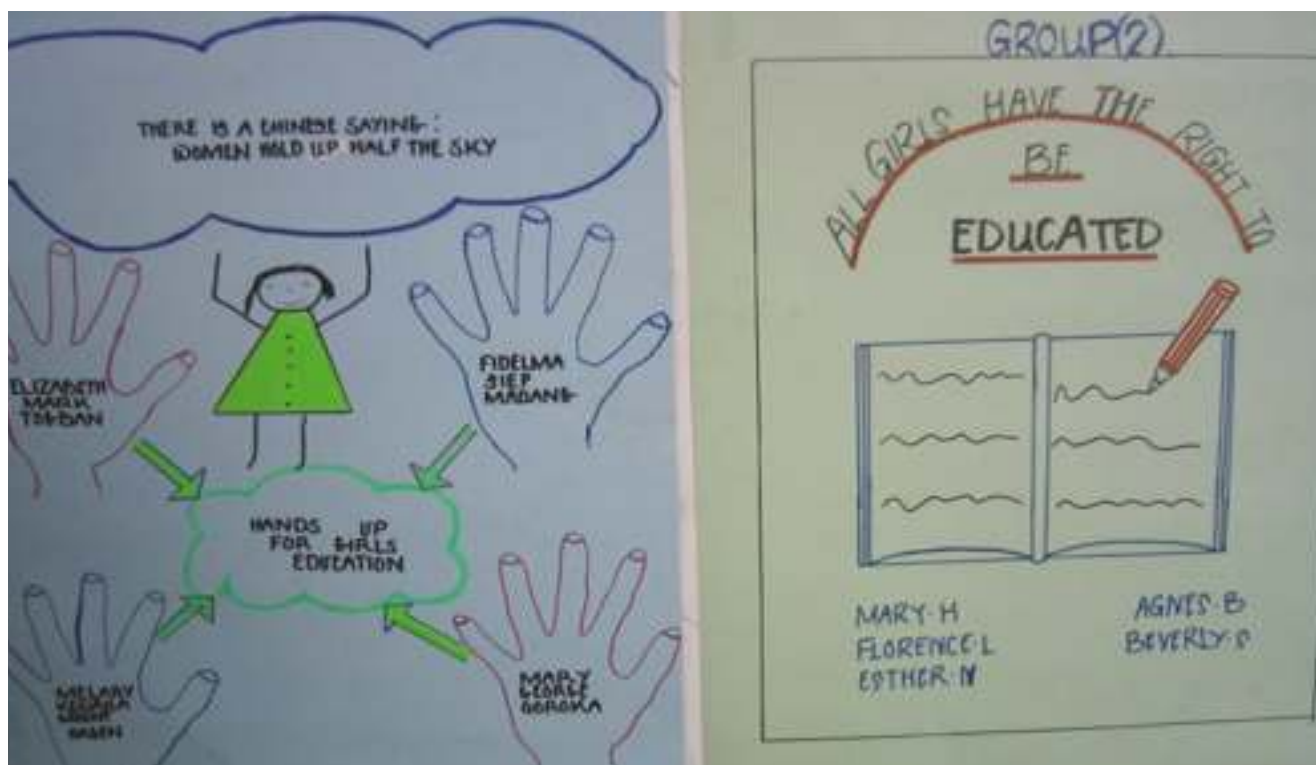
In the school, the Church has held cookery classes to teach the children the link between production and feeding as well as the wisdom of sowing edible plants. It is also an effective way of reaching the parents with the Sower Project.

Young disabled people work in the school and the gardens. They come from another Church project, PANAMBÍ, which in agreement with the Montevideo city council and through various workshops, helps young people with slight learning difficulties to acquire the skills necessary to allow them to enter the world of work.

In Villa Felicidad, these youngsters can put into practice what they have learned. Thus by bringing projects together they can be helped to realise something of their potential, learning through the practical work they carry out in the gardens and improving these gardens at the same time.

Contact Person: Alejandro Manzoni, Casilla de Correo 6108, Reconquista 522, Montevideo, URUGUAY

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Accelerating Girls' Education posters made by the girls

Photo: Della Rea.

Accelerating Girls' Education

Life is tough for girls in Papua New Guinea, particularly in the Highlands. They are born into a day-long, life-long role that includes child and family-care, working the food-garden, marketing, cooking and fetching water. As they grow older, the payment of 'bride-price' by their husband's family often confirms the view that they are a paid-for 'possession' and treated as such.

Girls have much less chance of going to school than their brothers. After all, when money for school fees is scarce, why invest in a child who will leave your community and join her husband's? Even when girls do start school, they are much more likely to have to drop out during their primary school years. The consequences of girls not getting an education often means that their quality of life, and that of their family, will be lower than if they had had the opportunity to go to school. As a consequence, literacy rates for Highlands' women are low (38%), and opportunities for an alternative life or career are rare.

Within the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea (ACPNG), the Anglican Education Division is responsible for over 200 primary schools in remote rural areas. The Division is strongly promoting the belief, not just that education for all is a basic human right, but that educating girls brings significant benefits to the family and the community and, more

widely, that educating girls will make a major contribution to community development in Papua New Guinea.

In partnership with UNICEF, ACPNG is working with local communities on an *Accelerating Girls' Education* programme, based on its network of primary schools. In the rural areas, this project works with local leaders, teachers, parents and adolescent girls, initially involving them in recognising and understanding the problem and its consequences, then seeking local solutions.

Workshops for headteachers, parents and local leaders help identify reasons why girls are less likely than their brothers to enrol, or stay in school. These include:

- Parents preferring to send boys to school in the hope that a good education will help them get a paid job in the future, to provide future support to the family in times of need.
- Parents fearing education will make girls disrespectful of their elders and fill their heads with 'modern' ideas.
- Feeling girls' education is wasted as they will leave home upon marriage.
- Recognising that girls are more likely than boys to be harassed and abused, both travelling to school and sometimes in school, and that they can feel discouraged by

practical factors like the lack of water or good toilets.

- Long distances to school and domestic demands make it hard for girls to start or complete their education.

The workshops also help leaders, teachers and parents understand the many positive benefits of girls' education for their local community including: pre- and post-natal care; educational support at home for children; family health, hygiene and diet; HIV & AIDS protection and care; reduced vulnerability to domestic abuse and violence; income-generation and a greater contribution to community development. In turn, this recognition underpins an increased local commitment to support and sustain girls' education and overcome local obstacles to their inclusion.

The fruits of *Accelerating Girls' Education*, augmented by women's literacy programmes for those that missed out on education, are already apparent. This includes the mould-breaking achievement of the three girls graduating from Simbai Vocational Training Centre with joinery and construction skills that are welcomed and valued in their local communities.

Contact Person: Dennis Kabekabe, Provincial Education Secretary, PO Box 6491, Boroko, NCD, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

HONG KONG



Feeling wheel board game.

In response to the terrible Sichuan earthquake, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Ming Hua Theological College is working on a project to help children affected by such disasters. A workshop was set up for social workers and mental health professionals, led by a certified play therapist. It aimed at enhancing the participants' knowledge of children's post-disaster reactions using first-hand experience from games and exercises with young people suffering post-traumatic stress. Research has shown that children's reactions to disasters appear to linger and persist and are likely to cause much misery to them and their families. Some re-experience the events through recurrent thoughts or dreams about what happened, suffering intense distress at cues or reminders of the trauma. Others make great efforts to avoid thoughts or conversations about the event; they can have diminished interest in normal activities and feel detached or removed from other people. Difficulty sleeping or concentrating, as well as depressive reactions, are common. Increased fears – in young children fear of separation from parents or loved ones – or fears of loud voices,

rocks and rainstorms, can also be manifestations of natural disasters such as earthquakes and the aftershocks which often follow.

For many of the Sichuan earthquake survivors, the psychological help and rebuilding of confidence has only just begun. Initially, efforts to restore children's sense of personal safety and security are paramount. It is suggested that parents, teachers and mental health professionals should encourage children to express their feelings. This can be done through discussion, drawings and story telling. The workshop tells of school-based treatment in classroom groups and individually. Play-therapy techniques are used and the leader demonstrated to the adults attending the workshop some games and exercises which can help children express their feelings and rebuild self-esteem. Her tools include playing cards, puppets, balls, empty margarine tubs, lotion samples and poker chips.

One of the 'lotion-games' is called hand massage. The workshop participants were asked to massage each other's hand by their thumbs rolling back and forth towards the wrist, and simultaneously pass the blessing to one another. A further game is to draw snow pictures (by blowing a small cup of rubber foam on the table) and tell their freely-associated story. Then there is the 'feeling wheel board game' which is played in a group and encourages the expression of positive and negative feelings. We were also taught to 'draw a big tree' by gently rubbing on each other's back from the lower spine to shoulder. Such exercise resembled the experience of burping at nursery stage. "You're involving all the

child's five senses," says the workshop leader, "You create games or activities that have a therapeutic purpose, and suddenly you find them start weeping and telling their feelings of loss."

All the participants of the workshop had a wonderful and enjoyable learning experience. The session was videotaped and the DVD will be donated to Non-Governmental Organisations or social service agencies which offer training or direct help to the survivors of the Sichuan earthquake. Our hope and prayer is that it will help many traumatised children recover their childhood.

Contact Person: Tracy Yip, Director, Good Shepherd Pastoral Education Centre, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Ming Hua Theological College, Glenealy Central, HONG KONG.

PRAYER

Lord of nurture,

help us to invest in children through guidance and example in life and faith.

Lord of encouragement,

help us to invest in children through family love, protection and affirmation.

Lord of growth,

help us to invest in children through food, rest, exercise and care of health.

Lord of friendship,

help us to invest in children through time for meeting, sharing and recreation.

Lord of the future,

help us to invest in children through schooling, trust and preparation.

In the name of the
Child of Nazareth,
Jesus Christ: the Lord of all.

Amen

Rev'd John Bradford

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

IAFN ADDRESS

C/o Anglican Communion Office,
St Andrew's House,
16 Tavistock Crescent,
Westbourne Park,
London W11 1AP, ENGLAND
email: mail@iafn.net
Tel: +44 (0)7948 332697

**THE NEXT
FAMILY NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
is to be on the theme of
Valuing our Elders**

Visit the Family Network website: www.iafn.net

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