

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2016 TO APRIL 2017



CWDF is committed to the worldwide ending of poverty and hunger, within the context of respect for the earth and sustainable development: and we encourage local action to achieve this goal through a number of objectives.

Another year has passed and we have sought to keep our objectives in mind in our programme and in the key issues we seek to pursue: again we have focussed on climate change and tax avoidance and sought to keep them before our members and to both raise awareness and take what action we can. So in July 2016 we had a presentation from a member of Action Aid on tax avoidance, followed up by one of our members attending their workshop on campaigning on tax avoidance. On climate change our members have taken action individually through attending events and signing petitions, and seeking to order our living to reduce our carbon footprints.

Again we have kept contact with our MP, Chris Matheson, and he came to our meeting in September 2016 to speak about and discuss a number of issues affecting world development. (We have made preliminary arrangements for another such session in September 2017, but the June 2017 General Election may have a bearing on this.)

The Sustainable Development Goals are key in world development and a majority of nations are signed up to them, but it is difficult to get information on progress



Evening with Stephen Twigg MP

Our links with the International Development Studies of Chester University are very important to us and with them we have been able to organise two significant events: In October Stephen Twigg MP, who chairs the Parliamentary Committee

which oversees the work of DFID, talked about the work of his Committee and engaged in a very meaningful question and answer session: and in November Duncan Green, Oxfam's Senior Strategic Adviser, talked about his new book, "How Change Happens". Both events were very well attended.

Our web site is fully functioning, despite a brief blip when it was hacked into. This is an important communications outlet with full details of all our events. We regularly communicate with members giving them updated information of our events and events of partnered organisations through the Diary and minutes of meetings and details of talks at



Duncan Green "How Change Happens"

meetings. We have been successful in reducing the number of copies we post to members as this reduces costs.

FORUM REGULAR MEETINGS

May 2016 CWDF Annual Meeting: Officers and Committee members (Terry Green, John Tacon, Bernard Payne, Gerald Grant, Annie McCarthy, Lindsay Cussons and Vicki Jenner) were elected and a financial report given and accepted. In addition we had a stunning presentation of images concerning development projects in various parts of the globe by a professional photographer, Jim Holmes,

July 2016: this was when Natasha Adams of Action Aid spoke about their tax avoidance campaign and gave us some preliminary thoughts about the position of NGOs in the light of the Brexit vote at the 23rd June Referendum.

September 2016: this was when our MP, Chris Matheson joined us as mentioned above.

November 2016: this was discussion evening when we explored members' views on the topics that we should be focussing on as our key priorities. It covered a wide range of issues which the Committee refer to when selecting topics for future meetings. A key issue raised was "Fairtrade" and we sought to highlight this during the 2017 Fairtrade Fortnight by personal visits to management representatives at local Supermarkets. We only had limited success but we learned lessons to help us in 2018.



January 2017: we had a return visit from Stephen Maund who spoke to us about his work in developing a community development initiative in Malawi with a key aspect akin to micro finance.

March 2017: one of our own members Annie McCarthy gave us a very interesting presentation on a visit she had made to Vietnam. It was good to have insights into a country we hear little about.

Our finances are mainly needed to pay for room hire for our regular meetings at the Unity Centre plus fairly low administrative costs. This has meant that we have been able to give donations to DEC appeals to help in Yemen and a gift to Action Aid for providing the speaker in July 2016.

We have been concerned about not increasing our membership; particularly seeming not to attract younger people who are needed to ensure the future of CWDF. An opportunity arose to invite a small group of students at Chester University to carry out a project for us: **CWDF Sustainable Futures** to examine this question. It is a part of their degree course. We look forward to hearing about their thoughts at our May AGM prior to receiving their full report in July.

We have sought to keep abreast of key issues in world development and members are involved in a variety of groups and activities involved with world development. We see glimpses of

progress but so much political effort seems to go on Brexit in the UK and changes in leadership in the USA that world development appears to be more on the back burner!

Finally, the 2017 General Election: in a surprise move the Prime Minister duly gained Parliamentary approval for a snap election on 8 June, 3 years ahead of the previously expected schedule. This could well affect us as in 2015 our MP had only a majority of 93 - the 3rd smallest in the whole of the UK. CWDF is non-party political and, as with previous general elections, we would hope to arrange, in conjunction with the University, an Open Forum for all the parliamentary candidates to give us their views on world development issues. As a Forum we should want to ensure that parliamentary candidates and the future Government have a very positive focus for action on climate change, for achieving sustainable development goals, maintaining the overseas aid commitment, and a compassionate approach to refugees. We shall see!

Terry Green
CWDF Chair
April 2017

CWDF Participating Groups: Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, And Albert, CDEC - Developing Global Learning, Cheshire Asian & Minority Communities Council, Chester Bahai's, Chester CAFOD Support Group, Chester Christian Aid Committee, Chester CND, Chester Fair Trading, Chester Friends of Palestine, Chester Humanists, Chester Quaker Meeting, Holy Trinity Church Blacon One World Group, Hoole URC, Hooton & Ellesmere Port Catholic Church Justice & Peace Group, St Columba's Third World Group, United Nations Association, University of Chester Dept of Geography & International Development, VSO Cheshire Supporter Group, Wesley Church Centre, Wirral Trade Justice Group.

www.chesterwdf.org.uk