

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2014-APRIL 2015



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.

We have come to the end of another busy year in the life of CWDF aiming to move towards this goal and we hope you have found our 2014/15 programme interesting and challenging. We have also come to the end of our 22nd year together. Amazing to think that in 2005 we were campaigning at the G8 in Edinburgh for debt relief for 'poor' countries and for relief of famine, especially in Ethiopia. We have come a long way and added our voice and presence to achievements towards this goal.

I read in an Oxfam magazine that between 2005 and 2011 the number of people in extreme poverty fell by 362 million and this figure will have increased since 2011. But there is still much to do to make poverty history.

There has also been increasing aid to Africa:

many more people with HIV have access to drugs: an increasing number of primary aged children are now in school in Africa: in 2012 there were 20 million fewer cases of malaria world-wide. And this year the UK Parliament passed an Act to commit 0.7% to international development.

It is good to be reminded of achievements, but there is still much to do and this past year we focussed on Climate Change and reducing tax avoidance. This was the result of discussion at our last AGM in May 2014. We believe that these are two areas where progress should be made and that will help people living in deprived situations and countries.

Our re-designed website www.chesterwdf.org.uk, has now been fully functioning for some time. It can now be relied on for information about forthcoming events, whether our own or events organised by other member groups. We hope that those with internet access have visited the site. It is a very important communications medium for us and we do encourage everyone to let us have event details for inclusion on the website.



FORUM REGULAR MEETINGS

These meetings have continued bi-monthly covering business; speakers/discussions and sharing of information about a wide range of events in the Development sphere.

May 2014 CWDF AGM

Officers and Committee were elected, a finance report given and subscription levels set for 2015. The business meeting was followed by a showing of extracts from George Alagiah's series on "The Future of Food" as shown on BBC 2.

July 2014

Sue Bownas (CAFOD) spoke to us about the CAFOD campaign to champion small farmers, especially women - 75% of world's farmers are women). She also told us about the new campaign by a consortium of charities on Climate Change and sustainable energy: 'One Climate, One World'.

September 2014

Chris Matheson, then Chester's Prospective Labour Parliamentary Candidate, spoke to us about his concerns that many people still remain ignorant about the why it is important for the UK to provide aid to developing countries. He said that tax avoidance was

robbing developing countries of much needed resources. He really valued our 2013 Food Matters Conference and hoped something similar might take place in the future. He also visited our stall at the Chester Green Day in June.

November 2014

Eva Watkins, Action Aid, came from London to tell us about the campaign to stop tax avoidance which had such a dreadful impact on Developing Countries. Their campaign to get Barclays to stop advising companies to avoid tax (we had been involved) had been very successful. She also explained that there was to be a Consortium of Charities campaigning against tax avoidance in the lead up to the General Election in May 2015. They are seeking commitment to introduce a Bill in Parliament to make it harder for big companies to dodge UK taxes and ensure UK tax rules do not encourage big companies to avoid tax in developing countries.

January 2015

Naomi Woodcock, a 3rd year student in Development studies at Chester University, spoke to us about her three month placement in South Africa. She had been there under the International Citizen Service

financed by DFID. She had worked with vulnerable children in the Embo valley.

March 2015

Some members had been to the University to hear Emma Mawdsley (senior Lecturer in the Geography Department at University of Cambridge) talk about "After the honeymoon? The next decade of South-South Development Corporation". The Committee considered this to be a significant issue that the Forum needed to reflect upon, and Gill Miller was invited to lead a discussion on the issues raised at this meeting. Gill, particularly highlighted changes to the Nature of Aid and said it was important to distinguish between emergency aid and development aid:

- Changing the meaning of 'Foreign Aid' by expanding the commercial element of 'development finance'.
- Changing from poverty reduction to economic growth as the central 'analytic of 'development'.



Pre-Election Hustinas 22 April

Acceptance of the principle that recipient countries need to have economic growth.

- Changing from social sector (Health, gender, education) and 'soft wiring' (Good governance) to investment in infrastructure and productivity, industry, resource extraction, agribusiness etc.

We also discussed questions to raise at the Hustings evening in April.

April 2015

Together with the International Development Studies Department of Chester University we organised a Pre-Election Meeting on International Development Issues at the University, for discussion with the four Parliamentary candidates for Chester. This was well-attended - over 100 people, including a healthy number of students alongside seasoned development campaigners. We believe it suitably set the scene for the Forum to have ongoing contact with the new MP, Chris Matheson.

OTHER ISSUES

During the year we wrote to Stephen Mosley, then our MP, on a number of issues including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) about which individual Forum members have campaigned. An underlying concern is the power it would give to big

companies over democratically elected Governments. Two members attended a Conference in Manchester (Poverty North and South - Two Sides of the Same Coin) and another member went to a Conference in Liverpool about the great difficulties of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We hope that you have found our regular Diary and other mailings helpful. We try to keep members in touch with what is planned and what others in the Development area are planning so that we can support each other.

In addition we have been involved in other events such as Chester Green Day, and hearing Romy Tiongco speak about his work in the Philippines.

Finance

We have continued to keep our subscriptions low, essentially to do no more than cover administrative costs. But with some additional donations we have

had enough money to make donations to a number of

appeals. These have included £100 to MuCAARD in support of Romy Tiongo's work in The Philippines, £50 for Action Aid's Ebola Appeal, £100 for MSF's Ebola Appeal. In addition, Forum member Heather Lannin took the lead in organising the music event "Band Together to End Ebola" at The Guildhall on 23rd April, raising £200 for the DEC appeal.

Membership

Membership 2014-15 stood at 12 individual members and 22 organisations. In addition, our Diary updates are emailed to a wider circle of interested people.

A Glimpse Ahead . . .

The AGM takes place just a few days after the General Election, with a new government and a new Chester MP. Changes may influence our priorities for the next year - but it is fairly certain that our key objective ending poverty and hunger will remain, and that tax avoidance and climate change will be key issues. We look forward to establishing regular contact with Chris Matheson as the new Chester MP.

*Terry Green
CWDF Chair, May 2015*

CWDF Participating Groups: Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, and Albert, Caldly Valley Church, 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, Friends of the Earth Chester & District, 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 & Development Studies, VSO Cheshire Supporter Group, Wesley Church Centre, Wirral Trade Justice Group.

