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CAFOD Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

no one beyond reach

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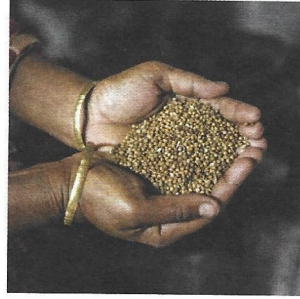
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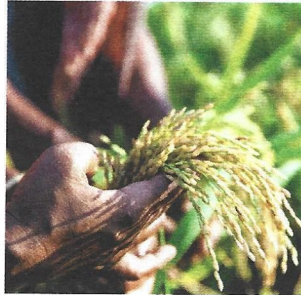
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We are the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

We are an international development charity who reach out to people living in poverty with practical help, whatever their religion or culture.

Front cover photograph:
Salina and her husband Mogibor in one of their rice fields. Because they use their own local seeds, they do not need to spend money on chemical fertiliser or pesticides.

Photographs:
Zacharias Abubeker,
Achuoth Deng, Thom Flint,
Hand in Hand Afghanistan,
Joseph Newman, Amit Rudro,
Women Now for Development

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FOREWORD



As the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, we reach out to people living in poverty with practical help. But our mission calls on us to go beyond charity, to also challenge the structures that bring about poverty and injustice in the first place.

That's why this year we are challenging the growing domination of a few big corporations over our food system. Join our *Fix the food system* campaign and help speak out against the imbalance of power between these global

businesses and the small-scale farmers who produce a significant amount of the world's food.

Globally, just nine crops account for more than 65 per cent of all crop production, largely traded and transported by a few big businesses. In many parts of the world small-scale farmers are unable to freely access a wide variety of local seeds which they have used for generations. Instead of saving, producing, and sharing their own seeds, they are often pushed towards buying a limited selection of commercial seeds produced by a few large agricultural companies.

This is not good for the climate nor for the people. When small-scale farmers can freely access seeds and plant a wide range of crops, they can properly prepare themselves to resist the worst impacts of the climate crisis, and ensure their harvest survives increasingly hostile weather conditions.

This is why we'd like to share the story of Salina, a small-scale farmer and seed saver in Bangladesh – and one of the many small-scale farmers around the world standing up to big business. Read about her transformational work in her village on page 12.

Salina has written a letter to the World Bank calling for the protection of the fundamental rights of small-scale farmers like herself to use their own varieties of seeds. This summer, your parish will have an opportunity to support Salina by adding your names to Salina's letter. Find out more at cafod.org.uk/food

Our faith-filled actions are also like seeds, bearing fruits of change in our world.

Yours in faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Speranza', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Speranza

Campaigns Engagement Manager

THANK YOU FOR GOING BIG THIS LENT



Thousands of people, and hundreds of schools – meaning hundreds of thousands of children and young people – together took millions of steps towards ending global poverty with CAFOD this Lent. In our biggest walking challenge yet, nearly a third of Catholic schools in England and Wales joined 2,500 individuals in the *Big Lent Walk*.

There were priests and teachers, nurses and nuns – not forgetting a committed quota of dog walkers – all lacing up their walking shoes and getting out into the spring sunshine (and rain, and wind – and for a significantly challenging few days, some snow!)

Plus, nearly two hundred community groups and organisations joined in, from ecumenical groups to convents, all coming together to walk this Lent to support people around the world fighting poverty.

“We’ve had the most fantastic response this year,” said Neil Roper, who leads CAFOD’s fundraising events. “The energy’s just been amazing. Schools have totally led the way this year and we’ve been blown away by their enthusiasm. If you walked or strolled, jogged, rolled, anything, this Lent, we’re sending you a massive thank you. It’s been incredible!”

And in a wonderful act of solidarity, our CAFOD team in the Democratic Republic of Congo also took on the *Big Lent Walk* with everyone in England and Wales, making it a truly global challenge.

Whether you walked or ran – on your own, or with friends – or if you sponsored and supported friends or family as they took on the *Big Lent Walk* – your giving and your steps are what made it count.

Thank You!

We are family: THE VOLUNTEERS WHO TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THEIR LOVED ONES

BY CELESTE IYINBO FROM OUR VOLUNTEERING TEAM

“My grandmother was one of the most remarkable people I had ever met,” says Roxinne. “When she was retiring she said to me, a six year old then: ‘My love, in this world there’s a lot of hate and darkness. But there are also people with big hearts and lots of compassion.’ That is why I volunteered for CAFOD in my parish.”

ROXINNE, NORTHAMPTON DIOCESE

Roxinne, 18 volunteers for CAFOD in her parish – part of a vital network working together to get the stories and voices of people fighting injustice around the world out to the Catholic community.

“My parents always taught me to fight for justice,” she continues, “and that if you feel that something is unfair

or wrong, question it constantly and do something about it if you can. By doing simple acts like handing out envelopes, delivering a short talk and displaying a poster, I know I am a piece in the jigsaw of alleviating poverty. By encouraging my fellow parishioners, family, friends and students to support CAFOD’s campaigns, we are targeting the root causes of injustice.”



This page: Roxinne inspires people in her parish, just as her grandmother inspired her.

**EMMA,
NORTHAMPTON DIOCESE**

Like Roxinne, Emma also took inspiration from the values her parents passed onto her. She first became involved with CAFOD when she was about nine years old, and found her way back into volunteering after a few years of focusing on her career.

“My parents always encouraged me to help people,” says Emma.

“CAFOD gives me a chance to do this.”

“I came back to helping CAFOD through CAFOD’s *Thirst for Change*

campaign a few years ago. I followed the progress of the fundraising and felt the water project was an excellent example of changing lives of many people in a very simple way. Six months ago, I saw an advert in our parish newsletter asking for volunteers and I felt called to respond to it. After chatting with the coordinator of the Northampton Diocese I became the parish representative of the Northampton Cathedral. In this brief time I have found the parish very open to ideas for prayers and I am inspired to work harder to fulfil the dream of a happier, healthier, fairer world.”

This page: Emma McNulty puts new technology to use raising funds for CAFOD.

Opposite: L to R: Emily, Lucy, Daisy and Christine taking part in a fab family fundraiser!



**CHRISTINE,
LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESE**

Volunteering means being part of a family – sometimes literally! Christine, 55, is a parish volunteer in Lancashire, and her daughter Daisy, 19, has just started volunteering to help with office work. Christine told us about their family volunteering experience:

“This stems from as far back as my time at school, when we used to collect money during Lent. I can still remember the impact that those stories had on me. Since then, I have always tried to help people, in my own small way.

My eldest daughter, Lucy, volunteered for a charity before. When Emily, my second daughter, volunteered with the CAFOD team in Liverpool, her work and passion inspired us all.

I started out by organising a Recycled Fashion Show with the youth of St Peter’s and St Joseph’s parishes in

Lytham. It was a great success, and we had a lot of fun in the process.

Daisy, my youngest daughter, has always been involved in our madcap fundraising activities for CAFOD, so I am delighted she chose to volunteer to work with CAFOD this year.

“Volunteering with CAFOD gives me the opportunity to help people. There are so many opportunities in CAFOD whatever your talent is.”



Find out more about the many ways to get involved with CAFOD locally as a volunteer

at: cafod.org.uk/volunteer

RISE UP!

8,000 young people call for change at *Flame*

BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN, FROM CAFOD'S SCHOOLS TEAM

On 4 March, I joined around 8,000 young Catholics from across England and Wales as they gathered at the OVO Arena, Wembley for *Flame – the National Youth Congress*. The day opened with a packed morning of prayer and reflections, interviews and music from contributors such as award-winning rapper Guvna B and talented singer-songwriter Adeniké. There was also a special greeting from Pope Francis and a message from Ant and Dec. Declan Donnelly's brother, Father Dermott, who died last summer, played a key role in setting up and shaping *Flame*.

A MESSAGE FROM THE AMAZON

But for me, the most inspiring part of the event was hearing from Jenny Garzón Saavedra, 28, who works with local organisation FUNVIPAS in the Colombian Amazon. The crowd cheered as she came onto stage wearing traditional dress.

Jenny's commitment is fired by her Catholic faith. At 13, she was diagnosed with cancer and turned to God in prayer. She told us: "God gave me this second opportunity, to do his work. To contribute to a fairer world."

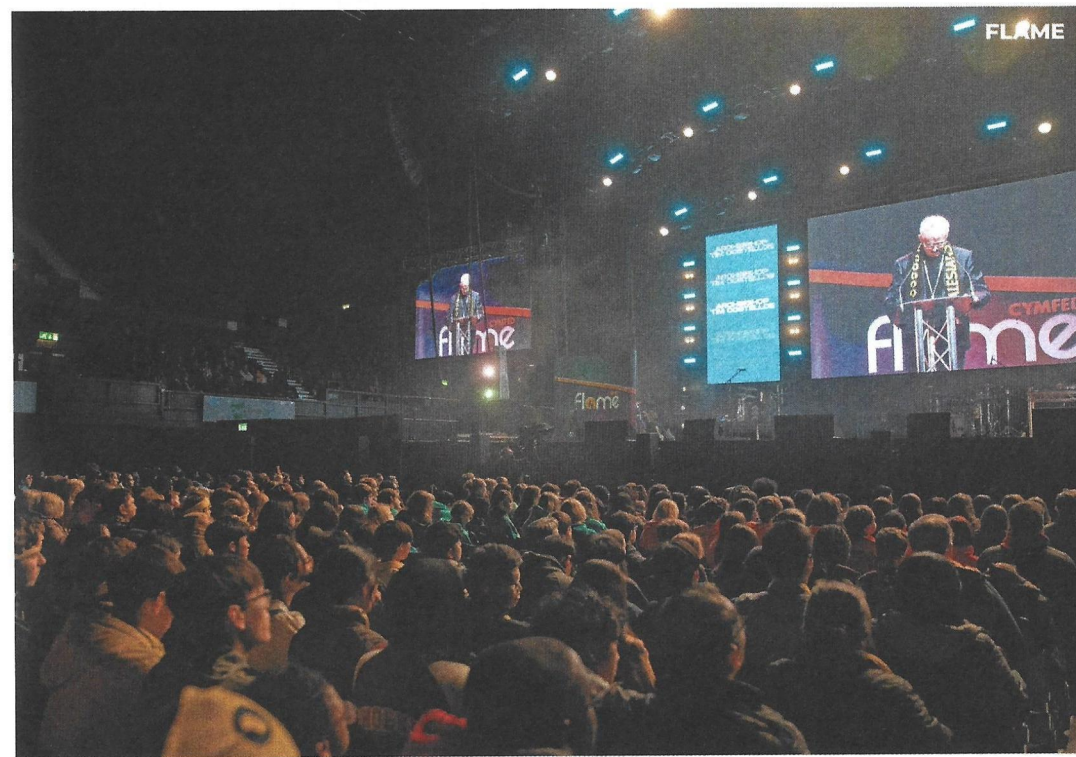
She explained how she uses her passion for painting in workshops where young people learn about their rights and their responsibilities to care for our common home – vital work made possible by donations from our supporters.

In a country still feeling the effects of a 50-year conflict, many of the young people Jenny works with live in areas lacking basic amenities such as clean water, electricity and paved roads. Despite this, by forming children's councils to speak up for their rights, and by a range of initiatives like planting native trees and a project to recycle rubbish into useful items, they are beginning to change the world around them.

RISE UP!

Jenny urged the young people at *Flame* to rise up to protect the Amazon and the Earth, our common home. Together, the entire arena shouted "*Levantémonos!*" – "Rise up!" – in solidarity with young people in Colombia protecting the Amazon.

After such an inspiring day, we already can't wait for the next *Flame* on 15 March 2025. Put it in your parish's diary now!



Above top: The crowd at *Flame* 2023.

Above: CAFOD's 'Change' display.

Right: Jenny inspires the young people with stories of her work in Colombia.



WATCH

See more of what went on at *Flame* at cafod.org.uk/getinvolved

fix^{the} food system

SEEDS OF CHANGE

BY JACK ELLINAS, CAFOD WRITER

“This is where I keep all my seeds,” Salina says. She beams with pride as she slides away the door in her home, revealing several dozen large clay pots, brimming with seeds and grains of all colours. “By the end of the year, all these seeds will be sown.”

Arround Salina’s home in central Bangladesh, her flourishing crops are a testament to her hard work. Different varieties of rice grow in every shade of green, and in amongst them flowering vegetable plants add dashes of pink and yellow.

“Diversity is very important,” says Salina. “You can see in the fields one crop and then another crop, so we are always harvesting. I always have something to sell, so I always have money in my hand, and every morning I have food to cook for my family, fresh, organic produce. I can’t describe how good that feels.”

This diversity is the key to Salina’s success – and the secret of that diversity lies in the seeds she uses.

Salina collects her own seeds from the plants she grows. She and her neighbours share their seeds, so between them they can grow a great variety of resilient local crops. This practice is not new. For generations,

small-scale farmers have freely swapped and shared a wide variety of seeds to produce nutritious food and maintain biodiversity.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent decades, however, governments across the world have adopted seed laws that have the potential to restrict farmers' abilities to use their own local varieties of seeds. These laws, which are being brought in with the support of global financial institutions such as the World Bank, put control of the world's seeds into the hands of a few giant corporations. Instead of being able to choose their own seeds, small farmers must purchase commercial seeds – something that is good for big business profits but not so good for the farmers.

“Commercial seeds always need chemical fertilisers,” explains Salina. “If you use chemical fertilisers, then you need to also buy chemical pesticides. So you end up having to spend a lot of money to buy everything you need for the seeds. Altogether, when you harvest the crop and calculate how much you've made compared to how much you've spent, you make hardly anything.”

And, with the climate crisis hitting farming communities all across the world, it is more important than ever for farmers to keep their own supply of resilient local seeds close at hand.

“Another thing is the changing weather conditions of Bangladesh,” Salina continues. “The last few days there was heavy rain, because of the cyclone. There was a foot of waterlogging in the field. But through

my seed conservation practice I have the seed in my hand. I can replant. So after I drained out the water and got the land ready for sowing, I could sow new seeds right away. And I still have plenty of seeds left, as you have seen! But if farmers are buying seeds from the market and they are damaged or destroyed they don't have any options. Because they bought the seeds, they already spent their money on seeds and cannot buy new ones.”

STAND UP FOR FARMERS' RIGHTS TO THEIR SEEDS

It's clear that our current global food system is in crisis, and at the heart of this crisis is a struggle over control of the world's seeds. Protecting the freedom of farmers to choose seeds is a right we must all stand up for if

we are to tackle global hunger while responding to the cry of the earth and the poor. If we want a sustainable food system, then we must stand with small farmers across the world as they fight for control over their seeds.

ACT

Be a part of our *Fix the food system* campaign this year and join us in demanding the World Bank end all policies that restrict farmers' freedoms to choose which seeds they use to grow food. Find out how at cafod.org.uk/campaign



Near right: Salina and her husband Mogibor in one of their rice fields. Because they use their own local seeds, they do not need to spend money on chemical fertiliser or pesticides.

Far right: Salina's seed store in her home. She collects the seeds herself from the best of her crop.





This page: Salina holds a bowl with two varieties of local gourd seeds. In her home she stores enough seeds to replant her fields whenever she needs to, even if her crops are damaged by harsh weather – a comfort that farmers who rely on buying seeds from companies do not have.

Reading opens up doors of opportunity. For many women, it can feel like those doors are closed. But there is a way in.

“THANK GOD I HAVE LEARNT TO READ AND WRITE.”

BY ANNE FEGAN, CAFOD FUNDRAISING TEAM

I echo these words from Fatima in Afghanistan. The power of reading is by far the greatest gift I've been given. If it wasn't for trips to the library with my mum, or inspiring teachers, I might have felt locked out of so many doors of opportunity.

Reading informs us, expands our horizons, broadens our perspectives and provides insights into different cultures. It's a vital life skill that improves our communication and fosters imagination, creativity and empathy.

Fatima knows just how powerful reading can be.

“INITIALLY, I FELT I WAS BLIND,” SAID FATIMA.

Fatima lives in Afghanistan and has learnt to read and write as part of a life skills training programme. With support from people like you, local experts are working alongside Fatima and other women to develop reading and writing skills.

“I am one of the trainees of the life-skills class,” said Fatima. “I joined the programme eight months ago and thanks to God I have learnt to read and write. Initially, I felt I was blind. I am now able to read signs and I can dial phone numbers.”

Dialling a phone number seems like such a simple thing. Some of us might take the skill of recognising numbers on a phone for granted, but for people like Fatima it has opened up a whole new world of possibilities. Thanks to her hard work and persistence, she is transforming her life.

Sadly, there are still hundreds of millions of people around the world who are unable to read and write. In Afghanistan alone, over 10 million people are illiterate.



This page: Fatima joined the programme 8 months ago and can now read and write.

DISCRIMINATION MEANS WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE MOST AFFECTED BY ILLITERACY

According to World Bank statistics, Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. But the problem of illiteracy is significantly worse for women and girls: only one in five women in Afghanistan can read and write.

This is deeply unfair.

We already know that women and girls around the world feel the worst impacts of poverty and are hardest hit by a lack of food. The problems of poverty and extreme hunger are made worse by illiteracy. How can people be expected to reach their full potential without the fundamental skill of reading?

Imagine how your life would be affected if you couldn't read or write. Your ability to access information and communicate effectively would be restricted. You'd also find it difficult or impossible to access higher education, better paying jobs and to be a decision maker in your community.

Women and girls often have lower literacy rates than men due to a combination of social, cultural and economic factors like early marriage and pregnancy, and the fact that more boys are sent to school than girls.

Women face even greater challenges since the Taliban excluded women and girls from secondary and university education, and prevented women from working with NGOs. Through the hard work of our Afghan partners, CAFOD continues to support women and girls in Afghanistan in a safe and dignified way.

Reading opens up doors of opportunity. For many women, it can feel like those doors are closed. But there *is* a way in.



IN LEBANON, TOO, THE POWER OF READING IS CHANGING LIVES

"I am happy with myself and my children are proud of me," says Akilah in Lebanon. "I am now more confident and more connected."

Akilah was forced to flee her home in Syria due to the war. When she first arrived in Lebanon, she didn't understand any English. This quickly became a problem because her children were learning in English at school.

She wanted to be able to support her children with their school work, and to make friends in the local community, so she signed up for English classes funded by your donations. Now, Akilah feels confident speaking and writing in English

and can help her children learn: "I feel confident enough to answer my children's questions about English."

I think of my own mum taking me to the library, and the time and effort she put in to help me to learn to read. I thank her for this, not only for the practical advantages this skill has given me, but for the emotional depth it has added to my life.

Reading is powerful because it brings us together and helps us to flourish. *Use your phone's camera app to scan this QR code to find out how local experts from Women Now in Lebanon are supporting mums like Akilah with vital reading skills.*



This page: Women learn IT skills at the CAFOD supported project in Lebanon.

ACT

Visit cafod.org.uk/worldgifts and look for the *Teach someone to read* gift to open up doors to education, work, pleasure, self-improvement and more.

WORLD food crisis

How you are helping

Nearly a year after we first launched our *World Food Crisis* appeal, millions of people across Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia are still fighting for survival in the face of the most devastating food crisis in decades. These people are from resilient communities, but years of drought caused by the climate crisis means families are no longer able to cope.

You've not waited for this crisis to hit the headlines and we've been humbled and inspired by your incredible response to our *World Food Crisis* appeal.

Thanks to you, our local experts are on the front line of the food crisis in the affected countries and providing practical help. See how your support is making a difference.

This page: Talaso with her children Abudoh and Ali. Last summer she told us how the drought was affecting her family in Marsabit, Kenya.



THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

BY LUCY JARDINE, FROM CAFOD'S LATIN AMERICA TEAM

I find the concept of 'mother language' fascinating. Growing up in the Netherlands, and going to a Dutch school, learning multiple languages was practically a given. For a while I was studying six, and I've added a few more since then!

One pastime I enjoy is comparing the way we say things in different languages – and how there are those untranslatable words and expressions that say so much about a culture. Why

do we say that a car 'runs' in English, when it 'walks' in Italian?

Languages are, however, more than a source of light entertainment.



PRESERVING NATIVE LANGUAGES

The UN estimates that, every two weeks, a language is lost. And that means more than just words.

"When a language declines and eventually disappears, it is not only the language that is lost, but a whole culture and a whole people, with all of their customs and beliefs," says Noelia, from our Bolivian partner organisation CENDA – the Andean Centre for Communication and Development. "By preserving a native language there is still the hope of being able to revitalise the culture and share all of its knowledge."

Indigenous knowledge is key for growing sustainable crops, protecting the environment and caring for our common home. CENDA is working to keep indigenous languages like

Quechua alive. They produce magazines in Quechua, and have created an app for teaching Quechua to children.

LANGUAGE OPENS DOORS

Julia, also from CENDA, added how important it has been for her to be able to speak to communities in their mother languages.

"It generates confidence," she says. "It opens doors and when you start speaking Quechua with a family, they open up to you, without being embarrassed or fearful, because they know that you are part of them."

It is crucial that we continue to support organisations such as CENDA, valuing native languages. In doing so, we are listening to the thoughts, ideas, challenges, struggles and joys of indigenous peoples – and their wisdom in combatting climate change.

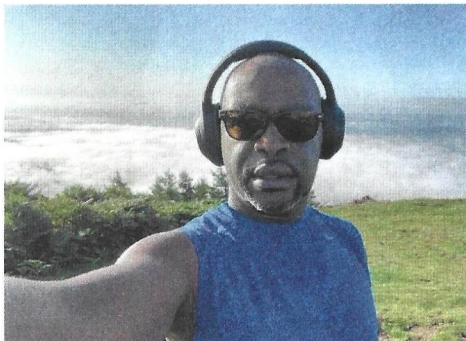
WHO SAID WHAT

“We cannot ignore one fundamental fact, namely that the many moral, social, political and economic crises we are experiencing are all interconnected, and what we see as isolated problems are actually causes and effects of one another. Consequently, we are called to confront the challenges of our world in a spirit of responsibility and compassion.” The Pope’s message for World Day of Peace 2023



“Food systems contribute to climate change... so how can we change this? We need to go back to basics and look at the food system from the way we produce food, to the way we process it, to the way we distribute it... and to the way we consume. We need to go back to what Pope Francis is talking about in *Laudato Si’*.”

Lucy Espila, Caritas Africa



“There is a certain sense of community feeling about walking as you tend to meet the same people regularly and you get to greet them and find out how they are. I love breathing in the fresh air as I walk, it makes me feel energized for the rest of the day.”

Sylvester, who took on the Big Lent Walk in Birmingham Diocese



“At team DRC, our theme for this year’s *Big Lent Walk* is fast, pray and give. During this period, we shall pray that God helps us to sow more beauty than pollution. We shall pray that God helps us in our commitment to care for Our Common Home and all its inhabitants and stand up for those who endure unjust situations in the DRC.”

Merveille and Cesaire, who took part in CAFOD’s Big Lent Walk in the Democratic Republic of Congo



“An ideal way for our neighbouring parishes to feel connected and on the same journey. Let’s get creative and see where our paths will lead us on this one-day event in support of CAFOD. There is no better opportunity to get out in nature, engage with your faith, and practice solidarity than through a community *Big Lent Walk!*”

Steve Carwick, who took part in a Community Big Lent Walk in Dorset



“The SJP EcoClub held a cake sale in the school yard and raised over £170 for the @CAFOD Turkey & Syria campaign! Thank you to everyone who supported us and helped make a difference for those in need. #EcoClub #CAFOD #ThankYou”

St John Plesington Catholic College, via Twitter

A prayer for food justice

This page: Salina helps her grandson pick a gourd from her garden in Bangladesh.

Lord Jesus,
 You understand what it is like to be hungry.
 Teach us to have grateful and generous hearts.
 Forgive us when we make selfish choices
 or remain silent in the face of injustice.

Lord Jesus,
 You welcomed all to your table.
 May we recognise our interconnectedness,
 with our common home
 and our global neighbours,
 so all are invited to share the feast.

Lord Jesus,
 You come to us as bread and wine.
 Fill us with your compassion.
 Nourish us as we advocate for change,
 and seek to make your Kingdom
 a reality in our world.

Amen.

ASK AN EXPERT

Answered by Jony, a sustainable farming expert from our partner UBINIG in Bangladesh



Q

Why is it so important to work with communities, rather than make decisions for them?

A

Our work means working with farmers to share knowledge about how to grow crops using home-made organic fertilisers, and how to conserve and look after local seeds.

Much of this knowledge came from the farmers themselves. The first thing we did when we started the project was go and talk to the farmers and got ideas about the different practices in different regions. This kind of knowledge can only be learned by practising it yourself – learning from a book is totally different.

We have always believed that the farmer is our teacher. We are not going and teaching them, they teach us. They have a lot of experience in farming, so their knowledge is very useful for us for strengthening and expanding our biodiversity and practices. We are just helping them share that knowledge with each other.

In everything we do, we try to engage with the community. Because there may be a day when the project can't continue – but the community will continue. So they need to have the perception that they own this work, so it will remain and it will be sustainable. We are aiming to nurture a culture of agroecology.

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CAFOD
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