

That None May Suffer – a New Year’s Resolution

January 2015, by Lydia Monds

The United Nations report on Poverty in Rural Communities states that ‘At the heart of every human experience is the desire to survive and prosper: to live without fear, hunger or suffering.’ In our work, the Church of Ireland Bishops’ Appeal seeks to respond to these debilitating factors, through supporting communities that live through such stark realities on a daily basis.



Last year we started the year by highlighting the fact that the majority of the world lives in fear, hunger and suffering, and yet by some ugly twist of fate, this truth goes unnoticed by the minority most of the time. (see article below 'Forgotten Projects') Out of sight, out of mind. Certainly we have seen the effects of constantly bombarding people with images of poverty that never seem to improve, and the wearying of people who wonder if anything they do or contribute actually achieves anything in the face of such overwhelming need. Donor fatigue is a real and understandable reaction.

But what happens when we remove the images and stories of people struggling to provide a meal for their children each day? Our commitment to the Gospel slips, our desire to see God's justice wanes and we become comfortable. Even worse, we demand more comforts, more competitive prices, more choice in our supermarkets, more sales in our stores, better coffee at cheaper prices and newer technologies with different edges to satiate all our wants, and we do it on the backs of slaves, and because we cannot see them, we feel irate at our lack and not theirs, and continue to demand for more.

So as we bring the lives of others back to the forefront of our minds and focus, there IS something we can do collectively in 2015 to see that fewer people suffer, go hungry and live in fear this year. It's very simple, but in its simplicity it's also costly. Are you ready? In 2014, Bishops' Appeal responded to 6 emergency/disaster appeals: Philippines, Gaza, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan and the Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. People gave generously. However, much of the funds were redirected funds from support of our general work in responding to the world's poor, to disaster relief in a particular part of the world.

So here's the crunch: Ongoing projects must not be overlooked when a crisis hits. Parishes are urged not to redirect Bishops' Appeal general giving to emergencies, rather to continue to give to Bishops' Appeal as usual and to give to emergency appeals over and above this regular and consistent giving, **or our compassionate response to disasters in one part of the world could create a disaster in another part of the world.** In 2014 alone up to 15 excellent project, that if implemented could have brought real change to communities, had to be turned down by the Bishops' Appeal committee because parishes were only sending their funds to emergencies. It is even more important than ever that the Church stands with these communities and refuses to overlook them, even if this decision is costly. Because the reality is that the ultimate cost is not borne by us, but by those weighed down by fear, hunger and suffering.

Thank you.