



Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) MISSION NEWS

Vol. 46 No. 1 | Winter 2011



Nepal:

The high price of tea

It's a hard and unrewarding life. Housing is basic and overcrowded, people and their livestock live side by side. The sewage system is inadequate, with open drains and no toilets. Usually there is no electricity. Clothing is far from sufficient in the chilly winter months, and food is meagre. Despite the risks of living in such appalling conditions, there is minimal access to healthcare.

This is how countless workers in the tea estates of Jhapa District in eastern Nepal live. The hills of this region are famous for quality tea enjoyed worldwide, but workers picking tea leaves day in, day out, get to see little of the tea drinkers' appreciation. Earning \$1.60 for a gruelling eight-hour shift, during which they must pick 26kg of tea, they have scant chances of improving their lot, one defined by their history, landlessness, lack of opportunity and their isolation and dependence on their employers.

Most workers in the estates are descendants of migrants recruited in the mid-twentieth century from Assam and Bengal, northeast India, and especially from Chhotanagpur, now the states of Jharkhand, eastern India, and Chhattisgarh, central India.

Fr Roy Sebastian SJ

(continued on page 3)

The Vision & Mission of CJI

The vision of Canadian Jesuits International is of a world of justice, peace and integrity of creation transformed through our commitment to the poor and our faith in a living God in our midst.

As a response to God's love in the world, the mission of Canadian Jesuits International is to support poor and marginalized people in developing countries through the work of Jesuit and other partners and to carry out educational advocacy.

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M. Faddoul



A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

It is tragic we begin this year almost the same way as last. A year after the earthquake in Haiti, much has been done, however, it is heartbreaking to see people still living in tents, house reconstruction blocked by delays in determining land titles, and a governmental crisis which is making an already weak state almost ineffectual.

The situation in Haiti is a tragic and visible illustration of the systemic inequality and injustice that exist the world over, leaving the vast majority living in poverty and excluded from participation as full human beings.

This is the situation of the tea estate workers in Nepal of which we write in this issue. Much less known or dramatic than Haiti, it is yet another case of deep rooted injustice. Our cover article speaks of the feudal conditions of the tea estate workers - abject poverty, minimal social or political rights, and almost total dependence on the tea estate owners. Small changes are happening though, thanks to political organization and to education, - two processes that help people understand their rights and know they are children of God with the right to a life of dignity.

This is where CJI puts its efforts: education, awareness, organization, affirmation of people's dignity and of God's love for all. In 2010 we spent over \$1.2 million supporting Jesuit initiatives which are making a difference in people's lives. Thanks to you, we sent immediate assistance to the people of Haiti; supported new initiatives such as the conference of Catholic university students in Africa on good governance and anti-corruption; and projects with tea estate workers in Nepal, among others.

We also gathered with students and parishioners in Canada, and through discussions, workshops, information in our website and publications, we are building a growing network of people committed to solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

You will also note a new format for our Newsletter which has expanded to 8 pages and with a new look. We invite you to let us know what you think by writing or calling us. All this would not have been possible without you. For this I am grateful and wish you every blessing and peace for 2011.

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Nepal: The high price of tea (continued from cover page)



Fr Roy Sebastian SJ

Families live on the tea estate, Jhapa District.

The tea workers' families tend to live on the estate itself, in row housing provided by the management, usually two rooms measuring some 12m² each per family, with corrugated iron roofing. Several houses share a water pump and there are no other hygiene facilities. Most estates in the district do not provide electricity for the workers. Firewood is used as cooking fuel.

These feudal-like conditions are found in many other tea estates in the region. Is there any hope for the estate workers of eastern Nepal? There are glimmers of light, mainly thanks to relatively recent political changes and to increased access to education.

Political changes over the past two decades have secured some rights for tea estate workers. Thanks to Nepal's two main Communist parties, there are now trade unions and slightly better wages. The descendants of the original migrants were previously not allowed to obtain

citizenship although they were born in Nepal. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) mobilised farmers and workers to stand up for their rights, and all who are eligible have received their Nepali citizenship cards. This has been a huge service for the people, whom the ruling elite in Kathmandu have traditionally either ignored or exploited. Now estate workers can purchase land, open bank accounts, and apply for government employment. They form a strong Communist vote bank – communism thrives among the poor here. The downside is that one of the two Communist parties, is no stranger to violence. The Maoist decade-long (1996-2006) 'People's War' led to 15,000 recorded deaths. Maoist-inspired gangs have learned that "violence pays", so political murders are all-too-common.

Despite the improvements, there is still a long way to go. Perhaps the most positive sign comes from increased access to education. The

original migrants were illiterate, now practically all the children from the estates attend school.

The crucial thing is that the cycle in which children take over from their parents working in the tea estates, generation after generation, is being broken. Certainly many will continue to work in tea estates, but they will be in a better position to stand up for their rights. Others will be able to move into other forms of employment, away from the isolation of life on the estates. Some have already bought plots of land for their own homes and gardens. Schools are opening students' eyes to other ways of living. ■

This article is based on the 2008 Masters thesis of Dilip K. Toppo SJ, "A Study on the Socio-Economic Status of Chhotanagpur Migrant Workers in the Tea Gardens of Jhapa District, East Nepal", with the contribution of Fr Bill Robins SJ.



Students at Moran Memorial School in Maheshpur.

NEPAL: Changing lives through education

In the 90s, the Nepal Jesuits purchased land in Jhapa District where they run a parish and two schools. Fr Bill Robins SJ describes the Jesuit educational ministry in Jhapa and reflects on the hopes and challenges therein.

There are two schools in Jhapa District: St Xavier's School, Deonia, an English medium school, for the children of local farmers and government employees; and Moran Memorial School, Maheshpur, a Nepali medium school with a strong stress on English. The latter is located next to a tea estate, serving the children of the estate and of the Rajbanshi tribe in the surrounding villages.

Most of our people are on the fringe of society. It is a challenge to get them to see that they can make more of their lives, especially through education. Since the parents are uneducated, they cannot help their children with studies. Children are learning in Nepali and English, neither their mother tongue. They can learn but are not always motivated to do so. We hear, "If I fail I can always get a job in the tea estate, or can farm

with my family, or can go to India in search of work." This is true, but these youngsters deserve more.

Although it is a challenge to teach the children, they can and do work and study hard, as long as we motivate them. Their enthusiasm makes up for lack of help they get from home. We look for practical ways to teach. How does one get them thinking? Jesuit Scholastic Tek Raj Paudel introduced chess and eventually conducted a tournament for all the students. All learned the basics of the game, and above all, learned how to think and plan a little more.

Frs Mathew Das and Roy Sebastian are excellent musicians and organizers. They run the Leadership Training Service in the schools. This programme is an adaptation of the Christian Life Community, designed for students of all faiths. The students learn the

values of daily prayer, self and group evaluation, organization and service.

Funding is another challenge. It costs about \$150 to educate a student at Moran Memorial School for one year. Most tea estate workers cannot afford to pay full school fees, but contribute a day's wages per month, about \$1.60. We have to make up the difference.

Three classes have graduated from Moran Memorial School. Some are working on their farms, in the tea estate, or abroad. The students from the first class have completed their higher secondary studies and some have joined colleges while working to pay their way. Some are now teaching in local primary schools. Such generous young adults are our assurance that the educational service we have begun will continue far into the future. ■

AJAN: Continuing to care about AIDS

Fr Paterne Mombé SJ, a Jesuit from the Central African Republic, writes about his new mission as the Director of the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN), for which he has been well prepared.

I joined the Society of Jesus in 1990 in the West Africa Province and was ordained on 6 August 2006. After ordination, I received the mission to found and direct the first big HIV/AIDS programme of my province, the *Centre Espérance Loyola* (CEL – Loyola Hope Centre), which is located in Lomé, Togo.

My commitment in the field of HIV/AIDS started earlier. At the end of my first year of Theology, I chose to go to Kampala for my pastoral fieldwork, where I worked with a holistic AIDS programme. The following year I attended a workshop on caring for people living with HIV and AIDS organised by the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Arusha. A six-week internship organised by AJAN led to the publication of my book *Rays of Hope: Managing HIV/AIDS in Africa* (Paulines Publications Africa 2004, second edition 2008). My appointment at the CEL followed.

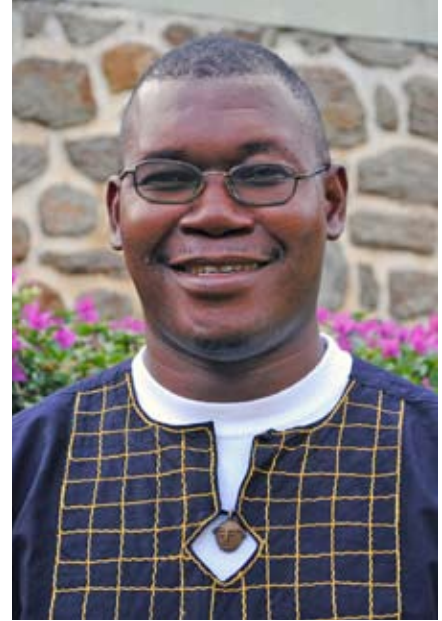
I joined AJAN in 2010 with more than three years experience at the CEL, encompassing prevention, care, treatment and capacity-building. As I take the lead after Fr Michael Czerny SJ, what challenges do I face? One is the shift from direct

work in the field to a context where administrative work predominates. Yet my fieldwork will be of great help to me as coordinator of a network, for it allows me to better understand what my companions face.

Another challenge is fundraising. I want to establish a relationship of confidence with the long standing donors of AJAN as well as with new ones, consolidating a mechanism of transparency and accountability, open communication and partnership.

I see my mission at AJAN in the light of what St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6 *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*, which I would paraphrase thus: Fr Michael planted, I am called to water and God will see to the growth. To ensure that growth takes place in the best possible conditions, AJAN is commissioning an evaluation, a tremendous opportunity to listen to Jesuits and their co-workers, to hear how they would like AJAN to take shape at this turning point of its history.

Since AIDS is being portrayed less and less as a serious issue which deserves our constant commitment,



Jenny Caifiso / CUI

Fr Paterne Mombé SJ

my hope is that Jesuits, especially in the African Assistancy, will continue to be sensitive to the challenge of the AIDS pandemic and to the distress it brings to millions of people and families, so as to offer services worthy of our vocation. ■

The mission of the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) is to encourage and assist Jesuits in sub-Saharan Africa – their works and communities, individually and with their colleagues – to respond to HIV and AIDS in an effective, coordinated and evangelical manner. AJAN was set up in 2002 by Canadian Jesuit Michael Czerny SJ, who ran the network until early 2010. Jesuit AIDS ministries include prevention, education and behaviour change; counselling and testing; parish-based pastoral and medical care; care for orphans, vulnerable children, widows and affected families; and research, advocacy, theology and spirituality. AJAN House, the Network's office, is located in Kangemi (Nairobi).

www.jesuitaids.net

A world without borders: International Jesuit meeting on migration



Peter Balleis / JRS

Children of Haitian migrants in a border town in the Dominican Republic. The boys clean shoes to earn some money.

Fr Jack Costello SJ

On 4 October 2010, 90 Jesuits and associates working with migrants in 29 countries gathered for a three day meeting in Ecuador. They were greeted by Fr Ernesto Cavassa SJ, President of the Latin American Conference of the Society of Jesus, with the following words: “Welcome to Quito, brothers and sisters! Quito is one of the few places in the world where you can go from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern Hemisphere in one step—without walls, without borders, without visas, and without permission! Is this not a sign of the kind of world we believe God has in mind for us? Is this not a sign of a world that is possible?”

In his welcome just before Fr Cavassa spoke, Fr Gilberto Freire SJ, Provincial

of the Jesuit Province of Ecuador, said: “Our world is in need of a radical transformation... And world migration is a focus of this needed transformation.” He reminded the group that the Society of Jesus had, in General Congregation 35, confirmed the work with refugees and migrants as one of its key priorities.

Over the next three days – which included presentations from (among others) India, Korea, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan and the United States – the participants drew up a shared strategy for their global work on behalf of refugees and migrants that confirmed the Society’s emphasis first on personal accompaniment, and then on research leading to awareness-raising, communications and advocacy.

After this meeting we participated in the 8-12 October World Social Forum on Migration, also held in Quito. We felt we were now more prepared to enter this ‘world’ conversation. ■

TANZANIA: Catholic African youth promote good governance


Good governance and leadership, fighting corruption from the grassroots: African university students from 23 countries recently converged in Arusha, Tanzania, to deliberate on these weighty issues during the 10th Pan African Assembly of the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS). The assembly, held from 6 to 14 October 2010, included observers from the USA and the Netherlands.

The participants in the assembly concluded that corruption is one of the worst impediments to good governance, economic development and poverty reduction. They underlined solid rule of law with an independent judiciary;

accountability and transparency; and public support as essential for the fight against corruption.

At the end of the programme, the representatives drew up orientation documents based on the fruit of their discussions. These documents will be distributed at the sub-regional

and country levels.


CJI was one of the donors of this conference, along with Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) and other international partners. To read more about the event, please go to our blog. 



Participants at the Good Governance assembly pose with their national flags.

Raising awareness about organic agriculture

The Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC) in Zambia was the focus of several events held in November and December 2010 in a number of communities in Ontario. Led by Br Paul Desmarais SJ, the events aimed to increase public awareness on the benefits of KATC's work on organic agriculture for small-scale farmers. Br Paul also appealed to Canadians for financial support for this important work. He addressed an evening held at CJI offices in Toronto, and others at Holy Rosary Parish in Guelph, St Simon and St Jude Parish in Belle River, and Visitation Parish in Comber, Ontario. He was interviewed by Radio Teopoli AM530, and the 24 minute interview aired on 17 December.


To see more photos of the CJI event, please go to our [blog](#). 



Ikem Opara / CJI


Paul Desmarais and Kelvin Mulenga Chonzi speaking in Toronto on the work of KATC in Zambia.

Plant and Harvest sale in Duncan BC

A long-running fund-raiser for Jesu Ashram, the annual Plant and Harvest Sale at St Edward the Confessor Parish in Duncan BC, raised \$7,000 in 2010 when it was held on 25 September 2010. The sale started way back in 1989 when Kitty and Frank Sarton moved to Duncan. They were already supporting the hospice set up by Br Bob Mittleholtz SJ and they told other members of the Duncan community about it. From the first sale, which raised \$390, the initiative grew by the year, expanding from the church basement to the gymnasiums of a neighbouring school. In 2010, 65 apple pies were baked the day before the sale and 17 more were donated. Other donated items are stored all year long; when parishioners are moving or down-sizing, they often donate household items to this worthy cause. For photos, and more on this event visit our [blog](#). 

Concert in support of university in Sudan

A concert to support the building of an agricultural campus for the newly created Catholic University of Sudan will be held at the church of Our Lady of the Airways, 7411 Darcell Avenue, Mississauga, Ontario on 14 May 2011 at 7 pm. The concert is being organized by a small committee of Canadian friends of Fr Michael Schultheis SJ, the Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University, with the support of CJI.

The Catholic University of Sudan, a project of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sudan, currently has two faculties with an enrolment of 250 students. It opened the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in September 2008 in Juba, the principal city of Southern Sudan, and a year later the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in Wau. This important initiative in Sudan comes at a historic moment, following a referendum on self-determination which was held in January 2011. For more about Sudan's referendum, please go to our [blog](#). 

Students engaged in building a more just world

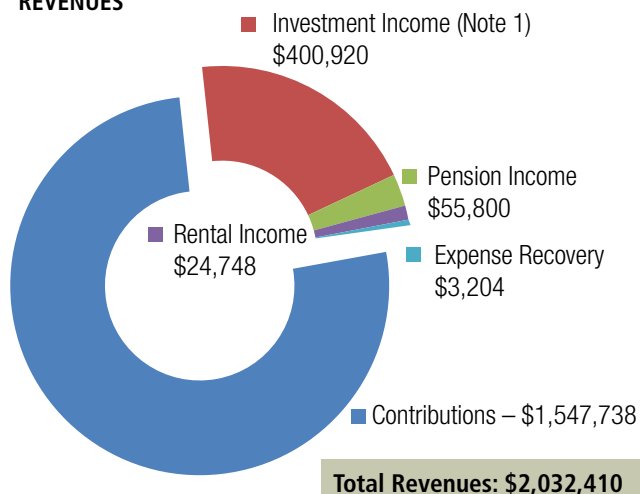
In November 2010, over 400 students gathered for three days for the 15th annual Catholic Students United Nations Assembly (CSUNA), which had the theme of Promoting Global Partnership through Solidarity. CJI Director Jenny Cafiso delivered the keynote speech. She recounted the stories of people from Cambodia, Zambia and Liberia, whose lives have been affected by landmines, agricultural policies or war. CSUNA provides a platform for Catholic school students in the Greater Toronto Area to engage in current global issues. For more details, see our blog post on CSUNA; visit csuna.wordpress.com; or see the Catholic Register website under Education Stories.

On 6 December, CJI Programmes Coordinator, Ikem Opara, gave a presentation to students training to become teachers in Catholic secondary schools through the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE). For a number of years CJI has been invited to give a presentation in this course, the Secondary Catholic Social Justice Cohort, taught by Patricia O'Reilly.

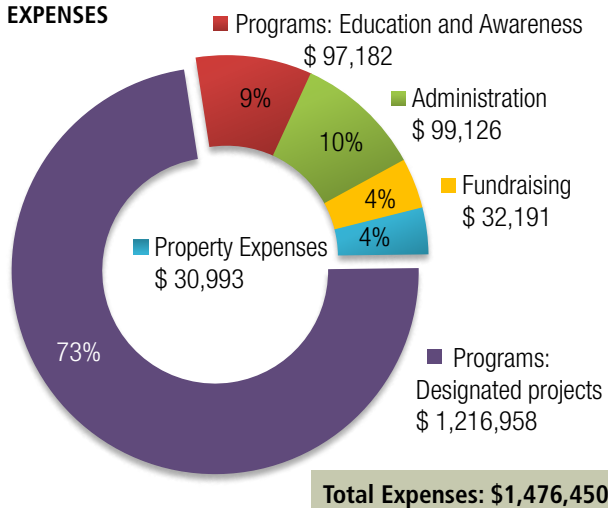
On 10 December, CJI ran a workshop at the 7th annual Social Justice symposium organized by Brebeuf College School in Toronto. The theme was Welcoming the Stranger: Refugees in Canada. ■

Canadian Jesuits International Statement of Operations, August 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010

REVENUES



EXPENSES



Excess of Revenues over Expenses – \$555,960

Note 1: Investment income includes interest income and both realized and unrealized gains or losses in the market value of investments held during the year.

Come and join CJI's online community

CJI has officially launched its Blog and Facebook page. Join us to share ideas and news, and to connect with members of our network in Canada and internationally. ■

canadianjesuitsinternational.blogspot.com



facebook.com/canadianjesuitsinternational



Thank you for your help

You can support our work with poor and marginalized people worldwide by making a **one-time** or a **regular monthly donation**. Or you could dedicate a donation in memory of or in honour of someone.

Please send your cheque to: Canadian Jesuits International (see details on page 2)

Donate on-line at:

www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca

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