



MISSION NEWS

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI)

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The politics of famine

Food distribution for internally displaced people at Doro Refugee Camp in Maban, South Sudan.

Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator SJ is President of the Jesuit Conference of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar

As the saying goes, when two elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers. It isn't an accident of nature or a geographical happenstance that hunger, starvation and famine are hitting vulnerable populations in Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen, and Somalia with particular ferocity. Millions of people bear the brunt of this crisis, not counting the cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels decimated by drought. The condition of children affected must leave the conscience of the global community in tatters. At a time when conventions and protocols on the rights of the child abound, millions continue to succumb to the ravages of famine – dead, stunted or brain-damaged for life.

Common to the plight of our fellow humans in these hunger-stricken countries are three underlying problems, all with major political dimensions. First, there is severe **political dysfunctionality** compounded by economic and social collapse and varying degrees of violent conflict. This political dysfunctionality creates the perfect storm for famine and food insecurity to thrive. Take, for example, South Sudan, one of the most fertile countries on the globe boasting nine months of abundant rainfall. Over the last four years, a ruinous civil war between an autocratic government and marauding bands of rebels and militias has reduced the country to a nation of refugees and internally displaced persons,

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A. Wells/JRSEA

The vision & mission of CJI

The vision of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The mission of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

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A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

In February 2017, the United Nations declared that 20 million people, including 1.4 million children, were at risk of death in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria due to food shortages. Since then, thousands have died despite the efforts of some UN agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and churches.

In Canada, leaders of different faiths launched a national appeal called “Pray–Give–Speak Out.” The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops participated in this initiative and invited CJI to be one of three Catholic agencies to mobilize support. We were humbled by the generosity of Canadians. CJI alone received close to half a million dollars for the humanitarian response.

However, we know we have to ask the bigger questions. Why has this major crisis been largely ignored by the media and by politicians? How is it possible that 70 million people worldwide will need emergency food aid this year, the highest level in decades?

With this issue of the newsletter we begin to address these questions. Chronic food insecurity is a direct consequence of human action and political decisions. In the cover article, Fr Orobator examines the politics of famine, including institutional dysfunctionality, armed conflict, global warming and underfunding. In the second article, we learn how food in India is used as a political tool to control the local population. Then, in Latin American, our partners tell us how the economic and political model followed in three different countries is stripping people of their land and undermining their capacity to grow food.

As people of hope, we not only respond generously to immediate crises, but, as Pope Francis urges, we commit ourselves to *the common good*. This means looking at our own role as global citizens and addressing root causes. It means finding sustainable development models and strategies and working towards integral human development based on just relations.

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The politics of famine

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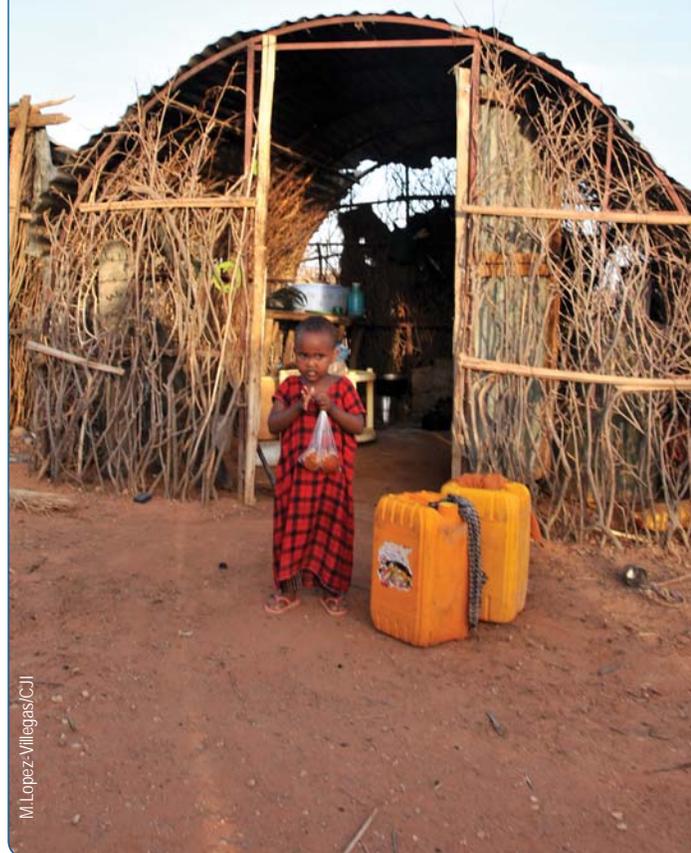
stalked by hunger and starvation. The crisis in South Sudan is now largely forgotten by the international community, just like the protracted war of attrition in Yemen, the ongoing civil war in Somalia and the terror-ravaged communities in northeastern Nigeria. The result is the same: millions of hungry and starving women, men, and children.

A second major problem is **global warming**. Although farmers and herders in East Africa have decades of experience in negotiating the harsh climate and geographical terrain of the region, nowadays they are unable to cope with changes in the weather patterns. Over the last quarter of a century rains have become infrequent, erratic and unpredictable. Yet the gods are not to blame. The increasing frequency of the drought cycle is primarily a consequence of human-induced climate change. While some political powers bicker about the politics of global warming and indulge in diplomatic posturing to evade and thwart proactive measures, drought upon drought upon drought has left people in the horn of Africa famished and permanently food-insecure. Weak governments can no longer cope. Humanitarian agencies are overwhelmed by an ever-increasing number of hungry people. And children are the worst affected. On top of malnutrition they are afflicted by diseases like measles, cholera and diarrhea.

A third noticeable feature of the present crisis is the scandalous problem of **underfunding**. Resources for humanitarian and relief efforts pale in comparison to the staggering amounts of money

wasted on arms and ammunition, particularly in South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. The crisis of hunger and famine is seriously underfunded. UN agencies, like the World Food Program, and local and international non-governmental organizations struggle to win the support of governments and funding agencies. Perhaps there is donor fatigue. Or we have become desensitized. Whatever the cause of underfunding, the international community bears a vital political responsibility for tackling the root causes of hunger and starvation. This requires a global compact of solidarity in which stronger nations support weaker ones.

In his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (“On social concerns”), St John Paul II wrote that solidarity “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (no. 38). At times such as this, solidarity “helps us to see the ‘other’ – whether a person, people or nation ... as our ‘neighbour,’ a ‘helper’ (cf. Gen 2:18–20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God” (no. 39).



M. Lopez-Villegas/CJI

A makeshift kitchen in Dollo Ado Camp in southern Ethiopia provides food and water for Somali refugees.

Confronting the menace of hunger, starvation and famine is a spiritual and moral imperative incumbent on the global community. Food insecurity in Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere, reflects our collective failure to practise the virtues of the common good, solidarity and compassion. Rains won't grow livestock or crops overnight. Firm and persevering political action is needed to address structural factors that cause famine and food insecurity in the medium- and long-term, and to get ravaged communities back on their feet.

Whether a person, people or nation, under present circumstances, Jesus' words in Mark 6:37 apply: “You give them something to eat!”

CJI is supporting famine relief in East Africa through its Jesuit partners. See update on p. 6. ■

India: Food and the politics of denial

Fr Lalit P. Tirkey SJ is Director of the Human Life Development and Research Centre in Darjeeling, India

Early this year, major newspapers and TV stations in India proclaimed with pride that India had replaced the United Kingdom as the world's 5th largest economy. In the TV debates that followed, some panelists were at pains to explain that despite enormous economic growth in recent years, India nonetheless has one of the highest per capita rates of malnutrition, according to the World Health Organization. The outside world often gets only half the truth about India, where the richest 10% own or control 80% of the country's resources. One of the images that has shamed the nation is that of tons of rice and wheat rotting in warehouses while some sections of rural India, including those in the tea gardens of West Bengal where we work, have experienced hunger, malnutrition and even death by starvation as recently as 2015.

To ensure all Indians have access to food, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) lobbied the government intensively for more than a decade. This relentless pressure eventually resulted in passage of the 2013 National Food Security Act (NFSA) under which 800 million people or 67% of India's population could access food grain at a highly subsidized rate. At first it appeared as though the problem of food

and hunger was solved once and for all. But since it was left to each Indian state to implement the Act, the public was left to the whims of state governments.

In the state of West Bengal, the government placed all the tea garden workers in a category at the bottom of the poverty index. But it did not implement the NFSA until January 2016, three months before state elections – and after about a dozen people had already died in the Bagra-cote Tea Garden. Only then, cynically expecting people to vote for its candidates again, it began announcing schemes and freebies for the poor. But there was another, more subtle politics at play. The government manipulated the Act, which clearly states that the distribution rights of food grain to eligible households must go to women's self-help groups or co-operatives recommended by the local administration. Instead, following an application by the Tea Planters' Association, it handed over the distribution rights to tea garden managers. The government also connived with managers to discontinue the "tea garden industrial ration" whereby each permanent tea worker was entitled to 30 kg of food grain per month at a subsidized rate. This saved managers Rs 660 (C\$13) per month for each permanent worker. When asked why the ration was stopped, the government spokesperson said, "It's government policy." Period.

Lok Manch field workers undertake a community survey.



Lok Manch

In response to this situation, NGOs jointly submitted a memorandum to the Minister of Tribal Development. Signatories included the Human Life Development and Research Centre (HLDRC) of the Darjeeling Jesuits and the Darjeeling Unit of the *Lok Manch* (People's Forum) movement. A reply to our memorandum is yet to be received! But undeterred, NGOs including HLDRC and Lok Manch organized two massive rallies in the city of Siliguri during the past year, each with about 5,000 people.

The people in this region of India are demanding their rights and an end to the politics of denial, which deprive them of food and other legal entitlements.

CJI supports the work of HLDRC and Lok Manch. For more, please see www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/india-hldrc and www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/india-lok-manch. ■

Comparte: On the politics of food sovereignty

The Comparte (“Share”) program of the Jesuit Conference of Latin American Provinces (CPAL) is a community comprised of 16 social organizations which seek to promote sustainable economic practices. CJI asked some of our Comparte partners in Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala to reflect on the impact of public policies on food sovereignty, that is, local control over the way food is produced, traded and consumed, in their countries.

What impact do public policies have on food sovereignty in your communities and what is required for change?

By implementing a neoliberal agenda, **Mexico** has been polarized; wealth is concentrated in a few hands and the majority of people are marginalized. NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) does not include provisions to reinvest in rural communities. With its removal of tariffs on basic grains like maize, foreign grain flooded the Mexican market. As a result, 5 million farmers were unable to compete and forced to abandon their livelihoods. In addition, a government program called *Procede*, intended to regularize collective ownership of land, has instead enabled foreign companies to acquire land. Another program called *Sin Hambre*, intended to fight hunger, now merely gives hand-outs, ignoring the roots of hunger and failing to support small-scale farming.

Rampant impunity in Mexico has generated disillusionment, anger and impotence. Our vision and way of life, as well as our daily work and projects, must challenge the current political-economic model even at the cost of losing privileges. We know we must maintain permanent resistance. Our fundamental commitment is for social justice. We must not lose hope.

In **Colombia**, food has been commodified since adopting policies promoted by the World Trade Or-

ganization. Arable land is exploited for industrial purposes, generating only a few jobs. This leaves insufficient space for agriculture and forces small-scale farmers to migrate to urban areas. Access to potable water is also problematic, exacerbated by privatization. In short, neoliberalism concentrates capital, depletes the environment and degrades our human condition.

The greatest evil we face is corruption in both the public and private sectors; the basic ethic of service is lacking in the leadership of the country. We cannot wait to act, however; we must move forward with projects that generate the needed alternatives.

In **Guatemala**, the Ministry of Agriculture focuses its programs on subsidizing silos and fertilizers. Programs aimed at combatting malnutrition are used for political, partisan purposes; the levels of corruption are alarming. The Convention on Biological Diversity aims to patent seeds, natural assets and ancestral knowledge. National Law 4897 excludes local communities from areas where mining operations are located – operations that pollute, use massive quantities of water and adversely affect people’s health. Neoliberalism imposes drastic reductions in public spending and encourages state intervention on behalf of those who are economically powerful.

We are unable to guarantee that our families will have enough to eat

when laws are enacted for the benefit of seed corporations like Bayer and Monsanto and for expensive, imported inputs. We need the political will to integrate different cultures and diverse ways of farming and eating.

What are your particular organizations doing?

The CIIESS (Centro Internacional de Investigación de Economía Social y Solidaria) of the IBERO University in **Mexico** works with organizations and social enterprises. In Chiapas, the Bachajón Mission promotes social and economic solidarity as well as alternatives to the *Procede* program for regulating communal land.

In **Colombia**, IMCA (Instituto Mayor Campesino) works with farming communities to generate knowledge, manage social-economic projects and advocate with the government. It also promotes small-scale agriculture and participates in the Agroecological Movement for Latin America and the World Committee on Food Security.

In **Guatemala**, SERJUS (Servicios Jurídicos y Sociales) collaborates with community organizations to present initiatives for legal reforms. For example, it seeks recognition of the people’s right to water and for a council of indigenous peoples to make decisions on the use and sustainable management of resources like water and land. ■

Pray–Give–Speak Out: Update on the Famine Relief Appeal

Canadian Jesuits International is one of three Catholic agencies invited by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to participate in an inter-faith campaign called “Pray–Give–Speak Out.” The campaign is raising awareness and mobilizing Canadians to be in solidarity with the more than 20 million people affected by famine and hunger in northeastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

Lelia prepares food for her family in Gendrassa Refugee Camp in Maban, South Sudan.



Since the campaign began on 7 June 2017, CJI has raised \$460,880, of which \$428,035 qualify for matching funding from the Federal Government’s Famine Relief Fund. We are humbled by the response and are deeply grateful to all who have promoted or donated to the campaign!

CJI is working with partners on the ground through the Jesuit Province of Eastern Africa. We have already sent support for feeding programs in South Sudan, in Jabel Kheri, Akol Jal and Cuiebet districts, and also in Kenya, in Lodwar, Pokot and Baringo districts, where people fleeing violence and famine have gone. This initial amount will reach 585 households, equivalent to 2,925 people. We will continue to support people in these areas in the coming months.

CJI is also working with other Jesuit agencies like the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Xavier Network to scale up our response and to identify and reach areas that have not yet received emergency assistance.

For more information or to donate, please visit www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6588. A big THANK YOU! to all who have promoted or donated to this important campaign. ■

2018 Caribbean Solidarity Trip

Please join CJI for an immersive learning experience in the Dominican Republic!

The Caribbean Solidarity Trip is an opportunity to learn about social justice issues. Jesuits are working closely with people in the region to promote human and social development.

The trip is geared toward teachers, other educators, parish leaders, and anyone interested in a justice and solidarity focused experience.

Highlights of the trip will include:

- a meeting with sugarcane workers to learn about community organizing for sustainable development
- a day trip to the Haitian border to meet Jesuit Migrant Service staff and learn about the challenges of working at the border
- visits to inner-city neighbourhoods in Santo Domingo where Jesuits work and live
- learning about the impact of the mining industry and the local environmental movement
- a visit to Alta Gracia, an ethical clothing company, to learn about the garment industry and free trade zones.

- a visit to Centro Bonó, a social action centre run by the Jesuits

Dates: 30 June – 7 July 2018

Cost: \$1,500 CND. This covers all accommodation, meals, in-country transportation, trip organization, guides, honorariums, and support for partner institutions in the Dominican Republic.

Participants are responsible for their own insurance and travel to and from the Dominican Republic.

For more information and an application form, contact Uju Umenyi (uumenyi@jesuits.ca) or visit www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6735.

Schools outreach

St Bonaventure's College is a JK – Grade 12 Jesuit school in St John's, Newfoundland, with a strong commitment to international social justice. Last year, it held several outreach and fundraising activities, including a coffee house, a popcorn social and a wreath auction. Students raised over \$2,000 for CJI's "Go for Dollo" Giving Tuesday campaign, which helped pay for a new roof for a skills training centre in Dollo Ado refugee camp, Ethiopia. Thanks, St Bon's!

St Mary's Catholic High School in Pickering, Ontario, also held several events last year that focused on raising awareness and funds. Students sold hot chocolate for "Go for Dollo" and held a 24-hour fast to raise awareness about the needs of refugees. They also raised money for Hurricane Matthew relief

In brief ...

and for CJI's Famine Relief Appeal. Altogether, they contributed \$7,600 to support the work of CJI's partners. Thanks, St Mary's!

Remembering Fr Schultheis

On 20 June a Thanksgiving Mass was held at St Jude's Parish in Weston, Ontario, for Fr Michael Schultheis SJ, who died in Liberia on 14 April 2017. Fr Michael was a pioneer in the field of education and service of refugees in Africa, where he worked for many years. A member of the Oregon Jesuit Province, Fr Michael had numerous Canadian connections and visited CJI many times. See www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6576.

Visit of Fr Gonzalo Ituarte

On 30 May, Fr Gonzalo Ituarte OP from Chiapas, Mexico, spoke at a public event in Toronto. He focused on the legacy of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, the mediation work between the Mexican government and the Zapatista movement, and the Church's inculturation efforts in Chiapas. The event was co-sponsored by CJI. For more, see www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6737.

Mission Co-op Sunday

In August 2017, Fr Greg Kennedy SJ and Deacon Roshan Kiro SJ participated in the Mission Co-op Sunday program of the Archdiocese of Toronto. They spoke at Holy Family Parish and St Vincent de Paul Parish respectively. CJI receives a share of the collections from these events for its partners' work. Thank you, Fr Greg and Deacon Roshan!

Fr William German SJ

CJI honours the memory of Fr William German SJ, who died at the age of 92 on 4 July 2017. Fr Bill was a member of the Society of Jesus for 73 years and a faithful friend of CJI.

In 1950, Fr Bill was assigned to teach in Ethiopia. After 3 years, he was reassigned to Darjeeling, India. Fr Bill served in Darjeeling for over 30 years as a teacher, headmaster, chaplain, retreat director and pastor. Darjeeling was always in his heart.



Fr William German SJ

Fr Bill is well remembered by those who knew him as a deeply compassionate and joyful person, an eloquent speaker, a good listener, and someone who radiated God's love. See www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6763. ■

Youth for Others Day 2017

On 25 April, CJI hosted its 5th annual Youth for Others (Y4O) Day. Over 60 students and educators from 6 high schools in the Toronto area participated. This year's theme was "Journeying to Change." Keynote speaker Loae Almously shared his family's experience of fleeing Syria for Jordan, where Loae worked with Jesuit Refugee Service, and then of moving to Canada in 2015. Workshops were given on a broad range of countries and social justice issues. For more, see www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6496. ■

Students and educators at Y4O Day 2017.



Br Paul Desmarais' visit

The director of Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC), Br Paul Desmarais SJ, was in Canada in the summer of 2017 visiting family, friends and supporters. CJI is grateful for the time he spent with us in July, promoting organic agriculture and the work of KATC in Zambia.

On 9 and 11 July, Br Paul spoke on “sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty in southern Africa” at public events in Guelph and Toronto. The latter event also included Fr Greg Kennedy SJ, who shared his experience at Finca Villa Loyola, a Jesuit agricultural initiative in the mountains of Nariño, Colombia, and Dr Christina Vanin from the University of Waterloo, who spoke on ecofeminism and integral ecology.



Br Paul Desmarais with three members of the Mission Possible group in Guelph, Ontario.

While in Canada, Br Paul also met with the media, with numerous donors and with Global Affairs Canada in Ottawa. CJI wishes Br Paul all the best back at KATC, where he has served for more than 45 years. ■

Celebrating Sabrina Yung

On 31 May, CJI held a special thank you celebration for Sabrina Yung, who has been a faithful volunteer at Canadian Jesuits International for many years and officially retired from this role in May. Years ago, Sabrina also served as an employee of CJI when the Toronto office was located at Broadview and Danforth.



Sabrina Yung

with CJI as an employee, as a volunteer and now as a retiree. She is known and respected by Jesuits in Canada and overseas. Her historical memory, her gentle presence and her passion for the people we serve will be missed very much.”

We know we will still see Sabrina from time to time at our events. We want to say a big THANK YOU to her for her tremendous support and dedication! ■

According to CJI director Jenny Caffiso, “Sabrina heart and soul has been

Giving Tuesday

This year Giving Tuesday is on 28 November. As the “opening day of the giving season,” it focuses on giving, volunteering and rallying around our favourite charities and causes. Please join us in our second annual Giving Tuesday campaign and help us spread the word about the work of CJI and our partners in supporting livelihoods. Share a CJI livelihood story with friends and support one our projects!

For more information, including resources to use in your storytelling, visit www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6739. ■

GIVE TODAY!

Please support CJI. Your contribution will help to bring justice and build peace in Africa, Asia and Latin America, especially in communities facing conflict and hunger.

Please give generously by making a one-time donation, a regular monthly donation or a bequest in your will.

All donations are tax deductible. All personal information is held in accordance with Canadian Government Privacy Policy.

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Thank you for your support!