



# Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) MISSION NEWS

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Ravi Segar SJ

## INDIA: from charity to justice

Plucking tea leaves in Totapara tea estate, near Uttar Salbari, about 100 kilometres away from Siliguri, North Bengal.

## The poor demand their fundamental rights

Fr Joe Victor SJ, Director of SEED – Social and Educational Empowerment in Dooars

Food insecurity is perhaps the greatest cause underlying the inhuman predicament of over 240,000 workers living in 288 tea estates in North Bengal. The families of tea estate workers survive by a sheer miracle on daily wages of 85-90 rupees (less than US\$2), six days a week, far below the minimum wage.

And yet the vast majority is deprived of most government benefits because they are not classified as being Below the Poverty Line (BPL) and because of serious drawbacks in the Public Distribution System (PDS) of food schemes

for the poor. Malnutrition and health problems are on the rise in the estates, together with unrest, forced migration and human trafficking.

To highlight the plight of the tea estate workers and villagers of North Bengal, members of the Darjeeling Jesuit Province took the lead in organising a march as part of the North Bengal Right to Food Campaign. The Jesuits joined 20 non-governmental organisations and trade unions, to hold a march on 11 March in Siliguri town, which drew 2,500 people from across Darjeeling

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## 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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## A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

From charity to justice: this is the theme running through almost every story in this issue, the cry we hear from people who are poor, marginalised and who suffer injustices across the globe, even in our own backyard.

In this newsletter, we focus on the Right to Food Campaign in India. This campaign, supported by Jesuits, marks a shift from seeing food as a need, gift or privilege, to considering it a fundamental right of every human being. If we accept that food is a right, this implies that we also have a right to a secure livelihood, to work and social security, and access to land. It is part of a larger movement, a rights-based approach to development that moves away from handouts to making governments responsible for guaranteeing people's rights. At the same time the capacity and power of grassroots organisations to demand the fulfillment of these rights need to be strengthened.

This approach turns works of charity and development upside down and has profound implications for the Church, as we read in the article of Fr Cedric Prakash. Not that it is a new idea. For over 40 years, Don Samuel Ruiz, Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas in Mexico, denounced the injustices and poverty suffered by the largely Mayan communities in his diocese, convinced that there can be no peace without justice.

The 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits in 1974 realized that the promotion of justice is an integral dimension of the profession of faith. In a context of injustice and inequality, loving the poor requires that we ensure that people's dignity and human rights are respected. More than 34 years later, the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation saw that socio-economic structures cannot be transformed without cultural and religious change.

Just last week Fr Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator SJ, the Provincial of the Jesuit Eastern Africa province, gave a keynote address in Toronto. He described our mission today as one of "social justice, reciprocity and solidarity", which puts us on an equal plane where we all have the same rights and responsibilities.

This is our mission reflected in these pages: to transform our world so that we can all live with dignity.

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# INDIA: from charity to justice (continued from cover page)



Shiju Mathew SJ



Joe Victor SJ

(Left) *The Right to Food* rally in Siliguri, North Bengal; (Right) Sr Subeshna Thapa giving a talk to animators from tea estates as part of the *Right to Food Campaign*. The talk took place at Uttar Salbari, about 100 kilometres away from Siliguri.

and Jalpaiguri districts. Flyers were distributed in Bengali, English, Hindi and Nepali. A memorandum, unanimously passed at the convention that followed, urged the inclusion of all tea workers in the BPL category. Follow-up activities are under way.

Traditionally, Church agencies have focused on education and pastoral care. Still now, about 45% of the Darjeeling Jesuits work in education, 11% in pastoral ministry, 10% in social work and the rest in training and administration. While this work continues to be very important, today the Jesuits in Darjeeling are putting greater focus on rights-based initiatives: addressing justice issues related to the tea estates, monitoring the PDS, the rescue and rehabilitation of child labourers, and other problems. In short, they are responding to the cry of the poor who want respect for their rights, as guaranteed by the Constitution, acts of parliament and orders of the Supreme Court.

One fledgling Jesuit initiative is SEED (Social and Educational Empowerment in Dooars), which is conducting a survey in two tea estates, Mogulkata and Totapara, to identify major issues affecting the workers and to address them together with government officials. Regular meetings are held with tea workers and lay

leadership is being built. There is animation of self-help groups in three estates and in Mujnai tea estate, which is badly affected by frequent closures, evening coaching classes are held for children.

This is only the beginning but we vow to proceed in spite of the hurdles to make a difference in the lives of the struggling people. ■

<http://seed.jesaonline.org/?p=274> 

The Right to Food Campaign is an informal network of organisations and individuals committed to the realisation of the right to food in India. The campaign considers that everyone has a fundamental right to be free from hunger and believes that the primary responsibility for guaranteeing basic entitlements rests with the state. This has led to a sustained focus on legislation and schemes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS).

[www.righttofoodindia.org/pds/pds\\_intro.html](http://www.righttofoodindia.org/pds/pds_intro.html) 

# Being prophetic in India today

Fr Cedric Prakash SJ



In the early hours of 16 November 2011, Sr Valsa John was brutally murdered in Pachuvara village in Jharkhand State. A member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, Sr Valsa had made Pachuvara her home since 1995. Her mission was to join the tribal people to protest against their displacement and exploitation by the powerful coal mafia. That Sr Valsa's life was constantly under threat was beyond doubt. She repeatedly said so to her family and close friends and filed a complaint with the local police – to no avail.

## The reality in India

Today, millions of dalits, adivasis and other vulnerable communities are still subject to gross exploitation and alienation in India. Many do not have access to clean drinking water, quality healthcare, education, housing, and two square meals a day.

Faulty and unjust land acquisition policies have allowed multinationals and other big corporations to systematically target the land

of the poor, causing large-scale displacement. Marginalised minorities are at the receiving end particularly in Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Right-wing fundamentalist forces have directly and indirectly curbed their freedoms and ensured they are treated as second-class citizens.

## A new awakening

In response, India is finally seeing a wave of people's organisations and protests. The Church in India is part of this, waking up from a deep slumber and moving beyond a charity-based approach. Church organisations and individual Christians are becoming more vocal and visible in India in a radical shift towards accompanying people in their quest for justice and peace.

In January 2012, JESA (Jesuits engaged in Social Action - Gujarat) went through a significant exercise: each member attempted "to listen to the cry of my people..." for justice, liberty, equality; a cry for dignity, for genuine access to what

is rightfully theirs, for meaningful accompaniment towards a more just and humane society. Challenged by these cries, JESA (Gujarat) members decided on a paradigm shift in their response and got involved in the Right to Food Campaign. Today this campaign is spread across 900 villages and 50 urban slum settlements in Gujarat alone. What is heartening is that Jesuits in other parts of the country have also started to get involved.

## The challenges ahead

The martyrdom of Sr Valsa is a challenge to the Church in India. The Church must accompany marginalised people in tangible ways in their struggle for a more just society. In doing so, the Church should demonstrate unflinching courage to take on powerful vested interests, even at the cost of certain privileges. In February 2012, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India issued a powerful statement at the close of a meeting in Bangalore: *We sensed in our hearts our country's yearning for a Better India... The Church... recommits herself to being a prophetic Church, taking a decisive stand in favour of the poor and marginalized.* Some efforts are being made...but the Church in India has to do much more to be truly prophetic. ■

To read the bishops' statement in full, go to <http://cbci.in/Statements.aspx> 

Fr Cedric Prakash SJ is award-winning Director of Prashant, the Ahmedabad-based Jesuit Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace.

Top picture: Christian Fuchs/JRS



SOJASI

CJJI partner SOJASI offers training in sustainable agriculture to poor people in Himalayan villages.

## PHILIPPINES: helping flood survivors start over



Zarah Allin/JRS

Rebuilding after the floods.

Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro city in the southern Philippines is helping survivors of Tropical Storm Washi to rebuild their lives. The survivors were left homeless and lost everything after flash floods wiped out parts of Cagayan de Oro on 16 and 17 December 2011.

Tropical Storm Washi is the worst natural disaster to have hit Cagayan de Oro and its neighbouring city, Iligan, in recent history, claiming more than 1200 lives, destroying 10,000 homes and displacing 300,000 people. When the disaster hit, Xavier University set up a relief centre to receive and redistribute emergency aid, offered shelter to those left homeless and treated the injured at the university clinic.

Following an order by the President prohibiting people from returning to the flood-prone Cagayan River deltas, the university donated five hectares of land in the uptown village of Lumbia to serve as a permanent resettlement area for survivors. About 500 families displaced by the floods are being relocated to this site. Work began on 30 December 2011. CJI has sent a donation to fund this resettlement effort. ■

## JRS launches strategic framework

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), a partner of CJI, has published its strategic framework for the years 2012 to 2015. Set up in 1980, JRS is present in more than 50 countries worldwide, implementing its mission to accompany, serve and defend the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Built on the faith and values that have consistently guided JRS, the framework lays down its vision for the coming years, main strategic goals and means to achieve them, and outcomes foreseen.

The Jesuit Father General, Adolfo Nicolás SJ, described the plan as “creative and inspiring” but also “full of challenges”. He said: “It will surely demand hard work and involve considerable risk, but this challenging plan gives real promise of continued success in caring for those who are least and last among us.”

The framework spells out strategies to improve the capacity to respond in emergencies, to better serve urban refugees, to promote tertiary studies and excellence in education, and many others.

jrs.net 



Times of Malta

“Boat people” rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. Compassion for “humanity at the edge”, expressed concretely in flexible and focused responses, is one of the goals of the JRS strategic framework.

# The legacy of Don Samuel Ruiz García

Danielle Vella



UN photo/Jerry Frank

Weaving cloth in the village of Navenchauc.

The prophetic legacy of Mexican Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, a tireless defender of the rights of the indigenous people of Chiapas, was celebrated during a recent ecumenical event in Toronto that also underscored the alarming violence and injustice in Mexico today.

Don Samuel, known affectionately as “jTatic” (Mayan for “father”), died on 24 January 2011 at the age of 86. As bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas for 40 years (1960-2000), he

denounced the injustices and poverty suffered by the largely Mayan communities in his diocese and was a key mediator in peace talks held in the nineties between the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

The Toronto prayer service and public event, held on 29 February 2012, was organised by CJI together with Development and Peace, the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice, KAIROS, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Loretto Sisters and the United Church of Canada. The keynote speaker, Fr José Avilés Arriola SJ, Vicar for Justice and Peace of San Cristobal de Las Casas, recalled jTatic as a “persistent collaborator in building the Reign of God in the here and now”. He talked about the legacy of jTatic: his option for the poor, his firm belief that there can be no peace without social justice, and “his accompaniment of the indigenous peoples in their struggles”.

This accompaniment included the creation of a broad-based indigenous pastoral ministry with “its own liturgy, theology, and spirituality”. The other main speaker, Bishop Mark MacDonald, national indigenous bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada, underlined this achievement: “That Ruiz was able to make the Church truly aboriginal without sacrificing its universality is most inspiring.”

Fr José, who was ordained by Ruiz and worked with him for many years, said: “The legacy of jTatic Samuel is completely in force in the present situation Mexico faces, when there is greater corruption, violence, poverty, and

(continued on next page)

## Teacher trainees head to Darjeeling

A group of teacher trainees headed to Darjeeling in May for a one-month internship in a pilot project that is a joint effort between CJI and the Faculty of Education of the University of Toronto (OISE). The group consists of four teacher-candidates who will graduate in June, another

university student, a lecturer at the Faculty of Education, a United Church Minister and Sr Jane McDonnell, a Sister of Loretto, who will be leading the group.

“All are most willing, enthusiastic,” said Robert Lato, an instructor at the University of Toronto

who designed the international internship programme together with CJI and the Darjeeling Jesuit Province. Bob is a long-time supporter of the work of the Jesuits in Darjeeling and has been to India many times, the first time as a high school student in 1967.

economic, political and social deterioration.” Historic causes have been “deepened by an unjust economic system in which the rich are every day richer at the expense of the poor, who are every day poorer.”

The Mexican priest said things had worsened during the current presidency, “especially because of the poorly named ‘battle against organized crime’.” When he took over in 2006, President Felipe Calderon declared war on Mexico’s flourishing narcotics trade. “This lamentable war has been costly,” continued Fr José. “At the end of 2011, there were more than 60,000 dead, mostly young people; 250,000 internally displaced; more than 10,000 disappeared; and between 110,000 and 120,000 orphans and widows.”

The drugs war is taking its toll on human rights. Mexico’s military and police allegedly commit widespread rights violations in their efforts to combat violent drug cartels, including killings, torture and disappearances. Human Rights Watch (HRW) claims that these violations

persist and are creating an atmosphere of impunity.

Fr José ended by quoting the words of Don Samuel: “The peace that we seek cannot be separated from justice... Peace does not fit within a conservative attitude. On the contrary, Peace... requires free men and women to actively and creatively struggle through non-violence for a more just and humane world. It requires all of us.” ■

“We are on the side of the abandoned, of the indigenous, of the marginalized people who are at the bottom of society. And not only because they are the majority and the most needy but because, theologically, there is where the Church should be.”



PWRDF

*Don Samuel Ruiz*

## NEPAL:

### Canadians see impact of their support

“The school is loved and respected by the community.” This was the conclusion reached by a group of Canadian friends of CJI who visited Moran Memorial School in eastern Nepal in March this year.

In 2011, the Eyrie Foundation donated \$10,000 to the school. The three Eyrie Directors, Bosco Lau, Dominic Lee and Bob Stobie, as well as Moon Tang, travelled to Nepal to learn more about the school, its 510 students and their families.

Moran serves poor children from a neighbouring tea estate and of the Rajbanshi tribe who live in surrounding villages. Dominic Lee wrote in a report that the community is fond of the school, so much so, “some graduates return to the school as teachers and staff although they may make more money

somewhere else”. The school has graduated four classes so far, “the first generation in their families to receive formal education”.

The nine-day trip of the Eyrie group included visits to other Jesuit projects: schools; the St Xavier Social Centre; and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). ■



Clarence Joseph SJ

Roy Sebastian SJ, formerly Principal at Moran Memorial School.

## AFRICA: continent of hope



Fr Fraterne in St Mary's Cathedral, Calgary.

Close to 100 people gathered at St Mary's Cathedral in Calgary on 26 January to listen to Fr Fratern Masawe SJ in an event organized by CJI and Jana Drapal of the Social Justice Office of the Catholic Diocese of Calgary, with the help of Fr Charlie Pottie SJ. Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director, also addressed the gathering. Fr Masawe spoke of the tremendous changes taking place in Africa thanks to greater access to education, to which the Church has contributed significantly, to technology and to greater participation of people in democratic governance. Fr Masawe, Fr Pottie and Jenny Cafiso also had meetings with a group of long-standing supporters of Jesuit projects in Darjeeling as well as with Bishop Frederick Henry and others in the diocese ■

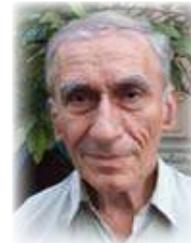
## Making Jesuit projects self-sufficient

*Fr Jorge Serrano SJ*

A meeting held in Rome in April was another step forward in an initiative that aims to make Jesuit provinces and projects around the world more sustainable. This project was initiated by the former Jesuit Superior-General, Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, in 2007, to ensure that Jesuit provinces and projects become more self-sufficient, build capacity, tap into local resources and rely less on support from the "global north".

As Assistant Treasurer for Development Resources of the Society of Jesus, I am supported in the implementation of this project by an advisory team, which includes CJI Director Jenny Cafiso. It was this team that met at the Jesuit Curia in April to review performance indicators of five Jesuit provinces where a 'flagship project' has been implemented.

## Fr Lawrence Abello



Fr Lawrence Abello SJ, a Canadian missionary, died on 22 January at St Xavier's College in Kolkata. He was nearly 81. Born in Saskatchewan, Fr Lawrence joined the Jesuits in 1956 and volunteered for the Darjeeling mission. He earned a PhD in physics and held two patents for a conversion device enabling a gasoline engine to be fuelled with hydrogen. Despite his accomplishments, Fr Lawrence lived simply and immersed himself in the service of the poor.

## Jesuits in Syria need help to respond to emergency

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) is launching an appeal to support Jesuit aid efforts in Syria. Some half a million people have been internally displaced by the escalating violence in this country. In the cities of Aleppo, Damascus and Homs, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the Jesuit community in Syria are welcoming displaced families and distributing medicines, food, blankets and other essential items. They need our support to deliver emergency aid to more families. With 1,900 Canadian dollars, a family of 10 can be supported for up to six months. To donate, please contact CJI (details on page 2) or donate on-line at: [www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca](http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca)

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