

Upper Thames Group of Churches : Global Mission – an introduction

For several months, our vicar - Debbie - has challenged the PCCs of St. Sampson's, Holy Cross, St John's and All Saints' to consider 'global mission'. Our church members are outward looking and we respond well to urgent appeals for help following earthquakes and floods or during conflict in other countries. However, we have been encouraged to further develop our awareness of and support for communities affected by on-going poverty in other countries. This could be achieved by establishing links with thoughtfully selected Christian charities. After careful consideration, the PCCs have identified two suitable charities. These are Compassion UK and E3 Initiative. Furthermore, it is proposed that our churches could support one particular project run by each charity. Over time, as projects are completed and new needs emerge, our focus could shift to different projects.

The information which follows provides an introduction to the two charities and, for each, a project which would be the focus of our support through regular prayers and fundraising. Further information and an opportunity to give a donation will be provided at the joint benefice service at St Sampson's on 10 March 2024.

Compassion UK - written by Laura Brierley

I contacted Compassion UK in order to find out how our churches could become involved in supporting the work of Compassion UK. I was put in touch with Daniel Gbegbe, Partnership Manager for Compassion UK, whose area covers our postcode. Daniel was keen to come to Cricklade and met with Linda Tuck and me.

Daniel shared information about Compassion UK. Compassion is based in the US and is a Christian charity working to release children from poverty. According to their literature, Compassion is: Christ centred, church driven and child focused. Child sponsorship is a major aspect of the work of Compassion which supports more than 2 million children in 29 countries; each of its programmes is run in partnership with one of over 8000 local churches who know their communities inside out.



In addition, Compassion funds many projects such as developing resource centres or establishing bore holes. It also responds to particular needs. For example, additional fundraising was needed for Togo recently because the effects of drought experienced there. This clearly links with our Eco Church work and concerns about climate change. It seemed

logical to PCC members that an appropriate focus could be Compassion's intervention towards 'Meeting immediate needs and preventing the next food crisis in Togo (TG-230155)'. There is clearly a need:

- It was estimated that approximately 390,000 people in Togo will face acute food insecurity this year. That's more than the whole population of Plymouth.
- This means 77.5% of Compassion-supported households in Togo can no longer afford at least two meals per day.
- "There is not enough food, let alone food that is nutritious enough for children."
- Undernourishment in West Africa has jumped from 10.1% in 2015 to 13.9% in 2021. This compromises both a child's physical and cognitive development.
- Sadly, one in 15 children in Togo don't even make it to their fifth birthday.
- With low agricultural returns combined with inflation and erratic weather, families in Togo are struggling to survive.
- Leaders at Compassion are looking to support 1,000 caregivers by boosting food availability and strengthening agricultural systems in the following regions; Savanes 1, Savanes 2, Binah, Doufelgou, Haho Nord and Haho Sud.
- This intervention will target nutrition and food security in the long-term by equipping caregivers to not just improve yields and productivity, but to also learn and adopt sustainable practices.

There is plenty of information available on the website. Go to www.compassionuk.org . Use the menu and go to 'Get Involved' where you can find out a little about church partnership. Or go from the menu to 'Pray and Connect' and explore the resources or magazines.



A representative from Compassion UK is due to give a presentation at the 10 o'clock service at St Sampson's on Sunday 10th March. Please come along and find out more.

Background to E3 Initiative

E3 Initiative is a UK registered Christian charity working with communities affected by poverty, HIV and AIDS and gender based violence in Southern Africa. We partner with local churches because they understand local issues first-hand and how to respond in a sustainable way. Training and financial support enables their leaders to overcome the huge challenges they face and transform people's lives by sharing the Gospel in word and action in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

I (Sarah Smith) have worked for E3 part-time since 2006, developing and coordinating E3's communication and fundraising activities. I have visited the work in South Africa and Malawi twice and it has been so exciting to see firsthand the difference that support from Christians in the UK is making in our partner communities. I look forward to reporting back to you as the project progresses and the children's centre is built and used.

Helping build a centre for orphaned and vulnerable children in Msinga in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



E3 partner, Zimele Wethu, helps families escape the cycle of poverty through Self-help Groups (SHGs). Women in rural communities are mobilised into groups where they are trained and meet weekly to save small amounts of money and access loans to set up small businesses. The SHGs also set up social projects to improve life for others. Group members have a vision to construct a simple building to house a Children's Centre, which they will run as volunteers.

- 50 children will come for meals before and after school so their tummies are full, and they can concentrate properly on their lessons. Without this support, children are sleepy in class, go to bed hungry and this is a constant worry for their grandparents, guardians, older siblings and teachers.
- They will also attend Life Skills lessons to develop skills to make good decisions in life and thrive, as well as receiving help with homework from local school leavers who will volunteer.
- 20 children from 3 months to 5 years will attend the preschool, benefitting from a safe, nurturing and stimulating setting. They will have two nutritious meals a day.

Your prayers and donations will bring support, hope and joy to children living in extreme poverty...



We lack a meeting place and a kitchen to prepare meals. Currently we meet, prepare and serve meals outside once a week. When it rains, we are unable to operate, which leaves a big gap for the children who really need our support daily. Having our own centre will be such a blessing to the whole community.

Madlala, Self-help group member

The women have faith that their vision will become a reality, but it will take them years to achieve without your support!



Who will benefit from the centre?

15% of the children live in child-headed households
51% live with elderly grandparents
34% have single parents with **no income**.

Children are vulnerable because of

- Abandonment and neglect by their parents
- Death of parents or guardians
- Lack of livelihoods
- Patriarchy and abuse

Fundraising target: £11,000



Project detail and budget

The building work will progress as funds are raised.

Building plans: A 10 x 7 metre squared building with a kitchen so they can prepare meals, a storeroom and hall. Two pit latrines outside (not simply a hole in the ground, but a proper toilet with a cess pit below).

Labour: the SHG women have contracted a local builder and will work with his employees. They will be supervised to make bricks and will gather sand and rocks from the riverbeds for the construction of the building. Water is a challenge locally, so they will also help with drawing water from the nearby river. One of the SHG members, Lungisile Nkala, has building skills and experience of building rondavals (round African huts).

Fundraising target: £11,000 **Raised to date:** £2,650

The local community is contributing £700

(2 x wheelbarrows, 4 x spades, 6 x buckets, 2 x water storage drums, 2 x block making moulds, collection of river sand, labour at minimum wage for 4 people for 2 hours per day for 40 days) – an amazing contribution from people living in poverty!

Your support is such an encouragement to the women in Msinga



Pictured above is a Self-help Group meeting. They save, access loans, support each other in their daily lives and study the Bible and pray.

Photo left: the women currently prepare and serve meals outside. When it rains heavily, it's impossible to cook and serve meals and the children miss out. The new centre will enable them to provide meals and support daily and all year round.



PROJECTED BUDGET FOR CHILDREN'S CENTRE IN MSINGA, SOUTH AFRICA

FUNDRAISING TARGET £11,000

Concrete Foundations	£2,800
Materials for walls	£2,000
Roofing materials	£3,100
Professional Bricklayer	£1,700
Two pit latrines (foundations, walls, roof, seat set)	£500
Transportation of materials	£900

e3 initiative

