

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON 2011-2012 ACTIVITIES



CWDF now has a mailing list of 80: a combination of individual members and those representing campaigning groups and churches receive our mailings about 6 times year. This is supplemented by email circulations of Diary updates and event flyers to a somewhat wider group of recipients so as the "spread the message" of CWDF's activities and those of its constituent groups.

Chester Zoo's Field Conservation

ORANGUTANS AND SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL
Presented by Cat Barton

Monday 12th March 7pm
St Peter's Church, The Cross,
Chester

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM

The CWDF Committee would encourage members to publicise our meetings- and those of our groups and organisations as widely as possible. We should not only speak to the converted!

During the year we changed our regular meeting venue from the Quaker Meeting House to St Peter's Centre - where the accommodation is more spacious. Some of our bi-monthly meetings have also been held in Best Building at the University, thanks to the much-valued hospitality of the Department of Geography and Development Studies.

These bi-monthly meetings were:

May 9th 2011 (AGM): Ged Edwards, Director of the Sustainable Blacon Project on the aims and achievements of their work.

July 11th 2011: Shaun Williams on the work of Third World Hope, a small charity he has founded, providing support for orphanage projects in Malawi.

September 12th 2011: Ros Raizada on the work of "Windows for Peace", helping towards dialogue and understanding in the Middle East.

November 14th 2011: A change from our usual format, with no invited speaker, so as to give members an extended opportunity to share our ideas and plans for the coming year.

January 16th 2012: Heather Swainston of CDEC on "Global Learning, the challenge ahead".

March 12th 2012: Cat Barton, of Chester Zoo on Chester Zoo's field conservation "Orangutans and Palm Oil".

In addition, we held an extra meeting on 26th September 2011 when **Stephen Mosley**, MP for Chester, visited the Forum for an exchange of views and ideas on development issues.

At our November meeting the Forum agreed to invite Stephen to become a Forum Patron, thereby continuing the valued tradition of "Westminster link" provided by our previous MPs Christine Russell and Gyles Brandreth. Stephen was delighted to accept this invitation, so now becomes Patron alongside Lord Harrison of Chester and Christine Russell.

CWDF has continued to benefit from its relationship with the University of Chester's Department of Geography & Development Studies, and we appreciate the continued contributions of Gill Miller in arranging or facilitating a variety of events.

One highlight of the University link was the event on 28th November 2011, a talk by **Ambassador Werner Matias Romero from El Salvador** about his country's disaster preparedness, and policies and strategies to adapt to the realities of climate change.

International Development Studies
Chester World Development Forum
Encouraging Local Action for a Fairer World

Dealing with Disasters in El Salvador

Presentation by **Amb. Werner Romero**,
Ambassador of El Salvador to the UK.

El Salvador, one of the smallest countries in Central America, is vulnerable to hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, land slides, and hurricanes. Ambassador Romero will talk about El Salvador's disaster preparedness, risk policies and strategies to adapt to climate change in this developing country.

Monday 28 November 2011 7.30pm
Best Building CBB115
Chester Campus

Coffee available from 7pm.
Admission free.

University of Chester
Everyone Welcome

Likewise at the University on 30th January 2012 **Malcolm Egner of the Dalit Freedom Network UK** gave an illuminating talk on "India's Dalits: human trafficking and slavery".

Then on 16th April we heard a presentation from **Lotifa Begum from Islamic Relief** on the theme "1.4 Billion Reasons" - concerned with the Global Ambassadors initiative, designed to encourage local action to help combat global poverty.

CWDF benefits from the expertise of the University's printing department, producing excellent posters and flyers. Posters and flyers for non-University events are produced by CWDF member Richard Johnson.

Over the year CWDF participated in three public campaign events:

"Tea Time for Change": On 9th June 2011 three of our members attended a lobby in Central Hall, Westminster. The lobby focussed on International Development, and our members met Stephen Mosley MP. CAFOD led this event and Andrew Mitchell, Cabinet Minister for Overseas Development was in the line up of speakers.

"Bearing Witness": On 1st October 2011 a number of us took part in a day of workshops and seminars on the theme of climate change. It was held in Manchester, planned to coincide with the lead-up to the Conservative Party conference. The seminar sessions were followed by an ecumenical service in Manchester Cathedral and finally a march through the streets, with band and hymn singing. We were warmly received, even applauded by onlookers, so soon after the Manchester riots. The day was superbly organised, jointly by Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund, and the Stop Climate Chaos coalition - joint working at its best.

"Thirst for Change" was another CAFOD-led initiative, planned to coincide with World Water Day on 22nd March 2012 when we had a stall outside St Peter's and attracted a good level of interest and signatures on the cards urging David Cameron to take action on the issue at the forthcoming G8 Conference. Our stall was reinforced with the CAFOD exhibition in St Peter's.

Throughout the year CWDF member Richard Johnson has been helping to develop the role of St Peter's in highlighting the good work of local and national groups - alternating between those with a domestic and an international focus.

Among a number of initiatives at St Peter's the **"Cuppa Sundays"** month-by-month programme has been a big success, with the proceeds of

refreshment sales going to the various causes as well as giving them exhibition space.

Our programme is enlivened through our links with Alexander's Cafe Bar, a widely known venue for gigs of various kinds. Forum member Heather Lannin has helped develop these links and facilitated a number of music evenings at which funds have been raised for DEC disaster appeals and occasionally for CWDF itself. The most recent events were the **Musical Showcase** evening on 18th December 2011 and the **Open Mic Night** on 15th April.

Initiatives such as the "Tea Time for Change" lobbying at Westminster, the ecumenical service and March in Manchester, and the recent World Water Day activities in Chester have been very positive events which reinforce key messages - also serving to raise our own spirits.

But the present world, European and national situations all conspire to dominate the political agenda, and key international development issues, often longer term, do not get the attention they deserve. That was very evident in the minimal publicity given to the international meeting in Durban in December 2011 on climate change. Tax evasion and tax haven and their effects on the British economy are mentioned, but the harm inflicted on developing countries is seldom highlighted.

There remains much to do. Those who have been in the Forum for some years know we are committed to a "long haul". Our varied meetings have given us valuable insights into many challenges; we must continue to use every opportunity to inform others, and to act in ways that reflect our motto "encouraging action for a fairer world."

During the year Gerald Grant decided to stand down as Treasurer, and this role has now been taken over by John Tacon, subject to confirmation at the AGM. We are grateful for all the work Gerald has put in, and very pleased that he will remain a Committee member. Our thanks also go to Carol Murphy and Daphne Peers, standing down as Committee members. Their input has been much appreciated.



*Kath Stephenson & Bernard Payne
On behalf of CWDF Committee, April 2012*