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Canadian Jesuits International (CJI)

MISSION NEWS

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Tseltal women in Chiapas sort coffee beans by hand.

RE-DIGNIFYING WORK: The experience of the Tseltal people of Chiapas, Mexico

José Andrés Fuentes and Alberto Irezabal have worked alongside indigenous communities for over seven years; José is executive director of Yomol A'tel and Alberto works with social business projects.

It's early morning when a small coffee producer wakes up. He has a quick breakfast and leaves his home for the coffee plantation. After a one-hour hike through mountainous terrain, he spends several hours harvesting coffee and then he returns home carrying a 70kg bag on his shoulders. The value of that bag, which represents the value of his work, is unknown to him due to the volatility of market prices; but usually it won't be enough to cover his family's subsistence. After going through more than eight intermediaries in several countries, this coffee

will reach someone's hand in the form of a \$4 latte, while the producer will receive less than 2% of this value.

Never in human history have we produced so much wealth, yet without creating a just and humane distribution system for it. The majority of the population is excluded; only a few are able to enjoy the comfortable life this economy has produced. Such economic exclusion and increasing inequality affects especially people living on the margins (peasant farmers, migrants, indigenous

(continued on page 3)

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

A major highlight for me in the fall was to meet Pope Francis. The occasion was a private audience organized by the Jesuit Refugee Service to commemorate its 35th anniversary on 14 November 2015. Pope Francis pledged support for the JRS Global Education Initiative and its Mercy in Motion Campaign (see p. 6).

I am deeply grateful for this encounter with Pope Francis. I told him how he has inspired me to continue our work for justice. That is because justice and the option for the poor are central to his papacy, as illustrated by his recent declaration of a Jubilee Year of Mercy, which began on 8 December. This is a year when “divine mercy will stand wide open to everyone,” as “a force of renewal of social relationships, a force of planning for a different economy, which places the person, work and family at the centre rather than money and profit.”

The theme of this newsletter, “the dignity of workers and sustainable economic development,” responds to this call for social renewal and planning for a different economy. We focus on viable alternatives to the dominant neoliberal globalized economy. In the cover article we feature the work of one of the members of Comparte in Chiapas, Mexico. Comparte is a network of 16 Latin American organizations which CJI is now supporting. It seeks to empower key local actors and workers to shape the social, political and economic environment where they live in sustainable ways.

The work of Comparte, along with the work in Jamaica and Darjeeling and other places highlighted in the newsletter, translate concretely the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*: “Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work” (*LS*, 128).

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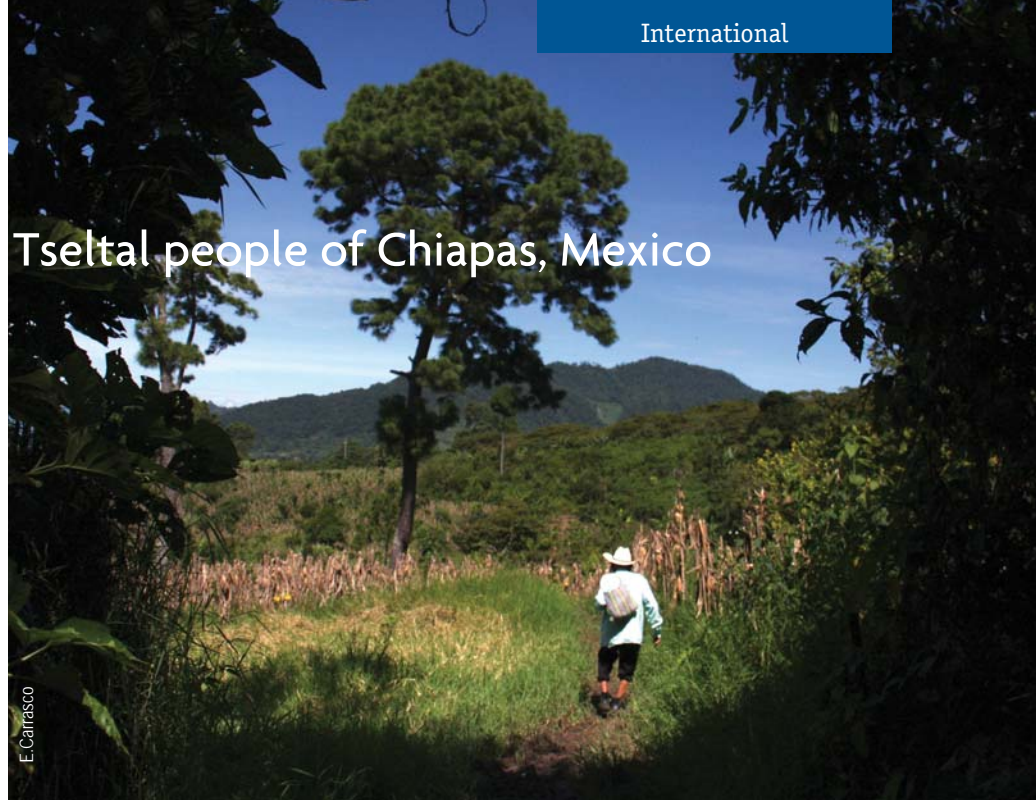
Re-dignifying work: The experience of the Tzeltal people of Chiapas, Mexico

people, etc.), where not even a hard day's work is enough to live on.

In the rainforest of Chiapas, Mexico, we can witness this unfair economic system first hand. This region is characterized by its isolated rural indigenous population living precariously and lacking the kind of group organization that can bring added value to coffee, the economic engine of the region. The glaring lack of equipment, infrastructure and capacity oblige small coffee producers to sell their product at very low prices to local intermediaries known as “coyotes.” Due to the volatility of the stock market, the pressures of climate change and the lack of government services, indigenous families struggle with extreme economic uncertainty and adversity. Ultimately their work, their source of income, becomes the first link in a chain of oppression.

And yet, it is here, on the margins of society where we encounter hope. It is in this context that people develop their vocation or life project, namely, working to achieve a livelihood with dignity. As Pope Francis put it so well in his recent encyclical:

Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. (Laudato Si', 128)



A Tzeltal farmer in Chiapas on his way to work.

Yomol A'tel, which means “working together, walking together, dreaming together” in Tzeltal (see www.yomolatel.org) is a cooperative or social business working in the rainforest region of Chiapas. Its work is focused on the creation of sustainable economic alternatives and the promotion of social inclusion. Fostered by the Jesuit Mission of Bachajon, it brings together 350 families from 64 indigenous communities and 70 workers and collaborators in several cooperatives and social businesses. By conducting its activities based on the indigenous Tzeltal worldview, which is rooted in solidarity and communal living, its objective is to maximize the social benefits generated by economic activity, rather than the accumulation of capital. After several years of work, these families have managed to sell their coffee directly to the final consumer through Capeltic coffee shops, founded in collaboration with Jesuit universities in Mexico (www.capeltic.org), thus completing their own value chain and defining their own income.

These advances for the Tzeltal people of Chiapas would not have been possible without linkages to different social stakeholders such as universities, foundations, corporations, networks, and social movements. It was in this spirit that Comparte was born (see www.desarrollo-alternativo.org), a network of several Jesuit social centres in Latin America that works for economic alternatives and that seeks to dignify the work of people on the margins through capacity building, joint commercialization of products and a better analysis of their territories.

There are many alternative organizations that struggle to find new ways to re-dignify work both in rural and urban contexts. They are working together to build livelihoods, achieve social justice and defend their land. And it is to this end that the Jesuit initiative Comparte is working.

Note: Canadian Jesuits International is a partner of Comparte and so far has contributed over \$45,000 to its work. ■

Jamaica: From immediate needs to self-supporting, liberating work

Fr Rohan G. Tulloch SJ is director of Jesuit Youth Ministry (Jamaica) and pastor of St Anne's Church and Holy Name of Jesus Church

When a woman is empowered, the entire family is empowered. Today we see the truth of this statement personified in Charlene Maxwell, one of five children living with her mother in the community of Denham Town, in Western Kingston, Jamaica. Charlene is a teacher at a local Catholic primary school. She was able to accomplish this dream through a tertiary education bursary that St. Anne's Church offers annually. In many ways, church is a second home for Charlene. She has been very active in the parish community; she is part of the sign language group, the dance group, the music ministry, and she is a lector. The church community provided her with the necessary exposure to see that dreams are not only possible but can also be realized.

Charlene has the distinction of being the first member of her family to obtain a tertiary education. When asked how this felt, she responded, beaming with pride, "I am one of the fortunate few who is able now to assist my mother and brothers and sisters." While the church paid part of her fees, her mother covered the remainder by selling items in the local market.

Charlene Maxwell.



R. Tulloch

In the wider community of Western Kingston, there are few young women like Charlene. In fact, Charlene is the exception rather than the rule. Western Kingston is plagued with gangs, poverty and numerous other social ills.

There is no quick fix to economic poverty. Here at St. Anne's Church and Centre of Concern, we have a two-pronged approach: we try to address immediate needs but we also try to provide important opportunities so that people can provide for themselves in the long run. As an example of the first approach, St Anne's distributes groceries to people in need. On Tuesdays, about 120 people receive a bag of groceries with rice, peas, canned mackerel and whatever other items we can afford.

Yet our goal is not dependency, but liberation. True liberation comes when people realize their God-given giftedness and are enabled to support themselves and their families. This introduces the second prong of our approach. St Anne's believes education is important. We assist students attending high school, and each year three high school graduates, like Charlene, receive a bursary to obtain a tertiary education. But people have varying abilities, and not everyone has the ability to become a teacher. Being conscious of that, we have initiated other projects to promote self-sufficiency. There has been a sewing program for women in the community, a wellness centre to prepare people for the work world, and our latest project is poultry raising. Four families are involved in actually raising the chickens and then a wider community gets involved to prepare them for market and to sell them. These programs are all supported by wealthier Jamaicans and by groups like Canadian Jesuits International.

Today we celebrate, joyfully, the achievements of Charlene Maxwell. She gives us a reason to hope and to believe that good things can take place in Western Kingston. So we continue to labour for good things to happen here. It is indeed better to teach a woman to fish, than only to provide a fish. ■

India: Workers' rights, employment and dignity

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

For generations, the tea plantation labourers of North Bengal, India, have been deprived of their rights and benefits and subjected to exploitation by tea plantation managers as well as government agencies. The latter have denied them many benefits such as ration cards and land ownership rights and have said that the social welfare of tea workers is the responsibility of plantation management. Tea plantation managers for their part have deprived workers of most of the benefits enumerated in the Plantation Labour Act (1951), such as the right to primary education, proper medical services and just wages, and they have also made statutory benefits into fringe benefits. The blatant violation of labour laws and lack of corporate social responsibility on the part of employers and the apathy of government agencies have resulted in loss of human dignity and deplorable living conditions for labourers.

For the past two years, in an effort to address these issues, the Jesuit-run Human Life Development & Research Centre (HLDRC) has conducted leadership training sessions, social awareness workshops and socio-economic analyses in five tea gardens of the Terai region in Darjeeling District and in four closed gardens (i.e., gardens that are shut down or abandoned due to financial or other problems, leaving workers and their families to

Community leaders engage in social analysis with HLDRC.



P.Toppo



Women's self-help group at Sayedabad, with chairs they rent for celebrations.

fend for themselves) of Jalpaiguri District. These initiatives have led to the formation of grassroots-level leaders who are trained to demand rights guaranteed under government schemes. About 30 community leaders have also received paralegal training to take up issues involving land and property disputes.

This work is not without challenges and frustrations, however. Government agencies are often not cooperative; other social organizations do not like to collaborate on tea garden problems; and some beneficiaries also appear indifferent. Sadly, even some church leaders in some areas resent our presence and become quite critical of our rights-based approach to development instead of engaging in pastoral work.

Nonetheless the work continues, and in addition, HLDRC has introduced goat and pig rearing, cash crop cultivation, and other alternative livelihood and community-enhancing activities. For example, a women's self-help group (SHG) at Sayadabad tea garden has bought chairs and tables that it hires out for community celebrations like weddings; a men's SHG at Nandovita is now growing ginger as a cash crop to help generate additional household income; communities at the Dharanipur and Salbani closed gardens have started subsistence cultivation as well as cash crops with the help of a new water pump; and a women's SHG from the Dagapur tea garden have initiated a toilet-making project by tapping local government funds. Such activities encourage self-reliance and promote workers' dignity and well-being.

Canadian Jesuits International supports the work of HLDRC in the Jesuit Province of Darjeeling. ■

Mercy in Motion: The Global Education Initiative

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) director Jenny Cafiso participated in the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) council meeting from 7–9 October 2015 in Rome. High on the agenda was the Global Education Initiative of JRS, which aims to educate 100,000 new students in the next five years. JRS hopes to fund this initiative through its new Mercy in Motion Campaign, which coincides with the “Year of Mercy” declared by Pope Francis. According to Pope Francis, works of mercy are based on “love ... as a force of renewal of social relationships, a force of planning for a different economy.” Also at the October meeting, Fr Peter Balleis SJ ended his eight-year term as international director of JRS. He is succeeded by Fr Tom Smolich SJ.

More recently, on 14 November 2015, Mercy in Motion was officially recognized and supported at an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican. The goal is to raise US\$35 million in recognition of JRS’s 35th anniversary this year. In attendance at the audience were JRS council members, including Jenny Cafiso, JRS regional directors, major donors to the campaign, and a group of refugees, including Syrians for whom the pope had special words of comfort and solidarity.

Canadian Jesuits International supports the educational work of JRS among refugees in a number of countries around the world. If you would like to contribute, please visit www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/to-donate. ■

Jenny Cafiso greets Pope Francis at audience with JRS.



Networking for Justice

Canadian Jesuits International participated at a meeting of Jesuit social justice networks in Loyola, Spain, from 17–20 November 2015. Organized by the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) based in Rome, 55 Jesuits and collaborators from the Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN) – which focus on ecology, migration, the right to education, and governance of resources – as well as the Xavier Network gathered to share their experiences and plan for better coordination and engagement. SJES Secretary Fr Francisco Javier Álvarez de los Mozos captured the intent when he said: “I dream that we can become a large and much better structured body serving the needs of the poor in the world. Networking is a must today. It respects local autonomy while at the same time allowing us to work together for a common cause.” (For more, see jesuitnetworking.org)



Jenny Cafiso and Miriam Lopez-Villegas of CJI seen here with other participants at the Network for Justice meeting.

Jenny Cafiso and Miriam Lopez-Villegas represented CJI and, in addition to plenary sessions, met with the Xavier Network and the Governance of Natural and Mineral Resources (GNMR) Network. ■

Outreach and solidarity

Throughout the fall, schools and parishes were busy learning, engaging in social justice issues and supporting CJI's work. These activities ranged from study sessions on social justice to fundraising for CJI projects through activities such as selling homemade pies at Holy Rosary Parish in Guelph, a dance organized by the Eyrie Foundation for Nepal, and a harvest sale at St Edward's Parish in Duncan, BC, in support of Jesu Ashram in Darjeeling, India. CJI staff have also participated in workshops on the crisis in Syria held at St Mary's High School in Pickering, on the impact of climate change at St Patrick's Parish in Markham, and at the *Just Us* Youth Social Justice Symposium in Kemptonville, ON. ■



Canadian delegation at the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice.

Teach-In for Justice

From 7–9 November 2015, Canadian Jesuits International led a delegation of students and educators to the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ) in Washington, DC. This year 34 Canadians from Champion College, St Paul's High School, Loyola High School and St Bonaventure's College High School participated. It was the second year that CJI has led a delegation.

The theme of the Teach-In was "Bridges," which the Canadian delegation had an opportunity to discuss as a group, examining how

they could build bridges in Canada between themselves and those whose voices are not being heard. In addition to plenary sessions, there was a public witness on Capitol Hill, a meeting with discussion of Aboriginal rights in Canada, a visit to the Canadian Embassy, and a learning session at the Center of Concern, where staff talked about their work with multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. (For more, see <http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/2015/11/21/2015-justice-teach-in>.) ■

Successful farmer-training project in Zambia

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) is delivering final reports to the Canadian Government on the Global Affairs Canada-funded organic farming training program at Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC) in Zambia. The three-year, \$1 million project – of which KATC and CJI raised \$250,000 – has officially ended and was an overall success.

Under this project, KATC trained 100 Zambian farmers in organic agricultural production, thereby ending reliance on expensive and environmentally damaging chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It featured year-round production of organic crops through rain-fed and irrigated cultivation using compost made with manure

from the rearing of small animals. To ensure success, the project also provided infrastructural development, extension services for farmers, and the facilitation of farmer cooperatives, capacity building and access to markets.

As a result of the project, not only were many farmers trained – 60% of them women – but a total of about 825 people in their households benefitted directly and thousands of people on neighbouring farms are believed to have derived some benefit through demonstration. There was a marked increase in household income due to the project and also improved nutrition due to higher-quality produce. This is a great example of worker empowerment and the dignity of work and self-reliance! ■

Panel on Syrian Crisis



C. Hincks/CJI

L. Almously and M. Lopez-Villegas listen as F. Nakhla speaks about JRS in Syria.

On 1 December 2015, CJI hosted a panel discussion on “The humanitarian response to the Syrian Crisis.” Three panelists shared their first-hand knowledge of the crisis: Fouad Nakhla, a Syrian Jesuit who has worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Damascus; Loae Almously, a Syrian refugee living in Canada who worked with JRS in Jordan; and Miriam Lopez-Villegas, CJI’s International Programs Coordinator who worked with Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

The event held at Loretto College in Toronto was well attended by more than 120 people. CJI director Jenny Cafiso moderated the discussion. The event was co-sponsored by the Mary Ward Centre and JRS Canada. ■

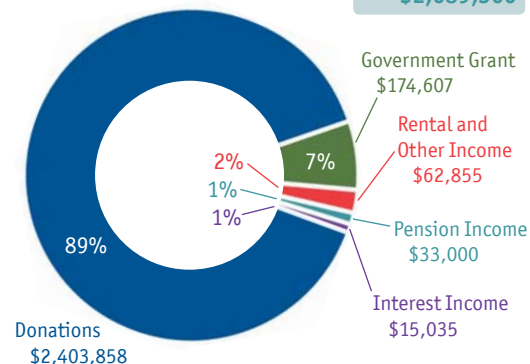
International visitors

CJI staff had the opportunity to meet with three international visitors in the month of October. The first was **Fr Joseph Afulo SJ**, Jesuit Provincial for Eastern Africa. Fr Afulo shared details about projects in his province and noted especially a renewed emphasis on education. Second was the visit of **Fr Anand Pereira SJ**, from Kohima in northeast India. CJI will be helping to coordinate Canadian support for Jesuit projects in education, peace, legal aid, and other areas in that region. Finally, CJI met with the director of the Philippine Jesuit Aid Association, **Fr Herbert Schneider SJ**, to review projects, including the Ateneo de Zamboanga Medical School, where CJI helps to support students. ■

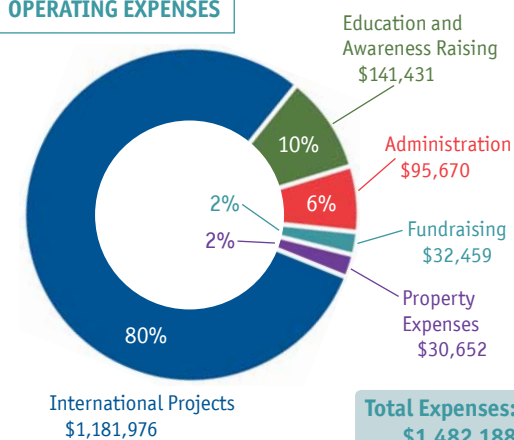
Canadian Jesuits International Statement of Operations 1 August 2014 – 30 June 2015

OPERATING REVENUE

Total Revenues:
\$2,689,366



OPERATING EXPENSES



Total Expenses:
\$1,482,188

The amounts reflected in the graphs above do not include gains or losses in the market value of CJI’s investments. Most CJI investments are earmarked for specific projects. This provides some stability for project partners for their ongoing work against periods when donations may fall short.

NEW YEAR APPEAL!

Support CJI and help to fight poverty, unemployment and workplace injustice in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Your contribution will promote economic development and the dignity of workers and families on the margins of society.

Please give generously by making a one-time or a regular monthly donation.

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!