###

#

# **Summary Document**

The annual World Development Appeal of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is really rather remarkable. Year by year, it offers those who comprise Presbyterian congregations across the island of Ireland the opportunity to learn more about and to support the valuable and vital work of sustainable development currently undertaken by our development partners, Tearfund and Christian Aid. Each year the Appeal highlights a particular project which becomes the ‘lead’ or ‘focus’ project for that twelve-month period and ownership of this lead project cycles between our development partners: in 2018, a Christian Aid project was highlighted; for 2019 a Tearfund project will be front and centre. This focus on a particular project gives congregations the opportunity to ‘go deep’ in understanding some of the challenges of sustainable development in a particular location and to see how the partner agency, working with communities there, is seeking address them. A range of materials, including information on the country and project highlighted, is provided to assist congregations in this.

The World Development Appeal, however, also seeks to help congregations within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland broaden their understanding of what the work of sustainable development entails. It aims to provide an insight into what good sustainable development practices look like and how they build, within communities, the capacity of every man, woman, and child to share a vision for their future that is not necessarily dictated by their context, culture, or circumstances and to discover within themselves the resources and resilience to work towards seeing that vision realised. As the Appeal enables congregations to ‘go wide’ in their understanding of sustainable development, so it helps to build up an informed picture of the nature of sustainable development work. A picture of the challenges which it can encounter on the ground; a picture of the obstacles which may have to be overcome; a picture of work that is, by its very nature, long-term; a picture of work that doesn’t hand down ‘quick fix’ solutions but instead builds up from within a community-owned response to shaping the future. A picture where people are raised up to understand that they are shaped and made in the image of a loving Creator, that they are possessed of a dignity and worth because of that, and that even when they find themselves in places and situations that seem very far from God’s plans and purposes for His creation, still He has plans for their welfare, plans “… to give [them] a future with hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Through the World Development Appeal congregations are offered a remarkable opportunity to, as global disciples, understand the frontlines some of the poorest communities around the world find themselves on and to join them on the journey of discovering that the stories of how God works in His world hold out hope for them of transforming how they are in relationship with one another, and with the world around them. They are offered the opportunity to broaden and deepen their knowledge of what this looks like on the ground through the valuable experience of our development partners and the partner agencies they work with ‘in country’. And, as global disciples, they are called to share God’s heart for His world, demonstrating God’s love through their practical and prayerful support and declaring the good news that our God is a redeeming and a restoring God; that “Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.” (Psalm 126:6)

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

The challenges and difficulties that can face the work of sustainable development are numerous, and they can impact the task of communicating how that work is progressing as well as how the work itself is carried out ‘on the ground’. The World Development Committee felt that impact early this year when it became clear that the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to which a return trip had been planned as part of a four-year road map, was going to make such a visit defeasible. Some re-routing was required and so, in consultation with our development partner, Tearfund, the choice was made to visit Mozambique to see the work Tearfund’s partner, CEDES (Comité Ecuménico Para O Desenvolvimento Social), was carrying out there via the Church and Community Transformation process.

This allowed the Committee to remain true to its desire to highlight the challenges of sustainable development in fragile and dangerous places – Mozambique definitely qualifies as such. The country’s position, lying on the tropics and bordered by the Indian Ocean, means that it is very vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and droughts which makes food security a major issue for the Mozambican people. A tenuous peace holds between government and opposition forces in the country. The country remains one of the poorest in the world with 80% of Mozambicans living on less that $2 a day and over 50% without access to clean water, And Inhambane province, where the community featured in this year’s Appeal is situated, is one of the poorest districts. Here, families tend to rely on small-scale agriculture for their survival but at least a third of households are food insecure due to the frequency of natural disasters, the impact of climate change, and the use of outdated farming techniques.

Yet with the help of Tearfund’s partner, CEDES (The Ecumenical Committee for Social Development), communities like the community in Inhassoro, Inhambane province, are discovering that they can sow seeds of hope for the future. CEDES, under Tearfund’s guidance, trains facilitators such as Horácio Valoi, to deliver ‘umoja’ training sessions. ‘Umoja’ is a Swahili word meaning ‘togetherness’ and through the ‘umoja’ process members of the community, including importantly members of the local church, come together for Bible study. Through their engagement with God’s word and the stories of how God is at work in His world, members of the community are enabled to focus on identifying and using the resources they have at their disposal to lead and control their own development. As one Mozambican pastor whose community has been involved in the ‘umoja’ process states; “We are no longer powerless; we have a vision and we are empowered to achieve it.”

In Inhassoro, CEDES has helped the local community to move away from traditional ‘slash and burn’ farming methods used over large areas of land. Instead, the community is encouraged to form co-operatives and one large plot of land is broken down into smaller beds for each person. When the co-operative meets together they carry out a Bible study and alongside this CEDES staff train the people in conservation farming techniques (more information on conservation agriculture is contained in the background information on Mozambique document). Conservation farming techniques have enabled the community to produce better quality and a greater quantity of crops such as green peppers, onions, kale, and cabbage, and to do so outside of the traditional growing season in a semi-arid region where climate change is affecting both the length of the rainy season and the pattern of rainfall, making the scant water resources available even more precious.

But the transformation wrought by ‘farming God’s way’ doesn’t end there. All of this is done through helping the community to realise the potential of the resources they have in their own hands and empowering them to use these to shape, for themselves, a more sustainable and secure future. The local church is encouraged to take the lead in this, understanding that it is called to care for the whole of believers’ lives, and identifying development initiatives that can be taken in the communities which it serves. As CEDES works with households and they come along to Bible studies at church and become part of a farming co-operative, relationships are changed – within families, between families and the church, between the church and the community. People get to know each other, they deepen their understanding of the problems and challenges the other faces, and they learn that they need one another, that by working together they can be resilient and have hope for their future, even in the fragile environment of the place they call home.

Alongside this CEDES encourages people to participate in savings and loans groups or SHGs (Self Help Groups) using the small surplus income which they can generate from their produce plots. This enables families to improve their living conditions and even to educate their children. Small businesses are also created within the neighbourhood which means that people don’t have to travel to the nearest big town to buy things they need but instead do so locally, supporting the local economy and assisting in its further development. Church leaders, too, notice the difference with the community able to contribute to the raising up of new church buildings and with people coming to church willing and able to tithe and contribute to the work of the church on a regular basis.

These are immense changes in the life of a community where people were frequently food poor in the ‘hungry months’ between April and August and often perceived themselves to be vulnerable to their circumstances rather than as those possessed of the capacity and resilience to overcome them. This year’s World Development Appeal video tells something of their story and invites us to share their joy as they reap the harvest of ‘farming God’s way’, not only from their fields, but in their homes, churches, and community. It invites us to hear their thankfulness for Word and work which have given them ideas, inspired their vision, and grown their confidence for the future. It invites us to hear afresh that our God is a remarkable farmer. “He [Jesus] said therefore, ‘What is the kingdom of God like?... It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.’” (Luke 13:18-19)

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

Each year, the bulk of Appeal funds received are divided equally between partners and projects supported by Tearfund and Christian Aid, with 5% going to the Council for Global Mission’s partner church relief and development initiatives. These partners and projects are selected by the World Development Committee from a number of proposals submitted by TF and CA on a theme agreed by the WDC, and full accounting is available 18 months after the launch of each annual Appeal. The funding supports our development partners’ projects, as well as monitoring and ongoing evaluation to ensure your money is being put to the best possible use and is securing the sorts of sustainable development outcomes, in the long-term, highlighted in the Appeal materials.

The funds raised through the 2019 World Development Appeal will support a number of our partners’ projects. Alongside the lead project supporting the work of Tearfund’s partner, CEDES, in Mozambique through training ‘umoja’ facilitators and assisting with the purchase of seeds and organic fertilisers, the monies raised will continue to support the work of the Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (UCBC) in the DRC and also projects in Chad, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria focused on building the capacity of small scale farmers through training in conservation agriculture techniques. The funds directed towards Christian Aid will be supporting a poverty alleviation through sustainable farming project in Bangladesh which is also highlighted in this year’s World Development Appeal materials (*‘Catherina’s Cassava’*) and projects in Burundi combating sexual and gender-based violence, and with the young Women’s Christian Association of Palestine aiming to empower marginalised women in the Bethlehem area to access resources and generate income to improve their and their family’s quality of life. The Casa Noeli project in Ariquemes, Brazil, which was the focus of last year’s Appeal will also continue to receive funding in 2019/20.

The World Development Committee express their grateful thanks for your engagement with this year’s Appeal and prayerfully commend it to you. It is our hope that, both as individuals and as a corporate body, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will be enriched through such engagement and through gaining a broader and deeper understanding of the challenging work of sustainable development. Work, with our development partners, that holds at its heart a vision of God’s kingdom being built, even in the midst of a broken and sinful world, as people come to understand themselves as God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule. Work that urges us to pray ‘Thy kingdom come’, in us and in the world around us, and so to recognise our responsibility to partner with God in being, at least in part, the answer to our prayer until that day when all things are made new, when “… the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them: they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them.” (Revelation 21:3)