SLIDE 1 – LOGO

The annual World Development Appeal of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland offers congregations the opportunity to learn more about and to support the valuable and vital work of sustainable development undertaken by our development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund. Focusing 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 to address them.

It also seeks to enable congregations to ‘go wide’ in their understanding of sustainable development by presenting an informed picture of practices that seek to build, within communities, the capacity for a shared vision of the future that is not dictated by context, culture, or circumstances.

*The 2023 World Development Appeal*

Around the world, millions of people have been forced to leave their homes for many reasons, including conflict, climate change and land grabbing. These people often have to leave with little notice, settling in new places with few resources. Displaced from their homes, they have to start from scratch.

SLIDE 2 – INTRO TO COMMUNITY AND CONTEXT

Sierra Leone is a country of 8.8 million people on the West Coast on Africa. Its climate and soil make it an ideal place to grow oil palm to produce palm oil, a product used worldwide to make chocolate, biscuits, toothpaste and detergents, to name just a few. The palm oil industry is huge worldwide, with around half of all supermarket products containing some sort of palm oil. Large multinational companies have taken advantage of this demand, seeking suitable land for their enormous oil palm plantations.

In the Malen Chiefdom of Southern Sierra Leone, a massive 45,000 acre oil palm plantation took over much of the community’s land. Many of the village chiefs had leased land to large multinational companies, generally over the heads of the local farmers who relied on the land to make an income. For many of these farmers, the only option was to move on, leaving their homes and what they had worked for.

SLIDE 3 – HAWA

One of those affected was Hawa, a young mother of three. Her family had two plots of land where they grew crops to sustain the family and earn some income. When the palm oil company came, the village chief wanted her family to lease the land to them. Her father refused, but the company took the land anyway, giving him very little compensation.

Hawa was forced to leave her village and travel with her children to the neighbouring village. Her husband left to find opportunities elsewhere and she had not heard from him for months.

SLIDE 4 – NEW OPPORTUNITIES

When Hawa arrived in the neighbouring village, she found a warm welcome and opportunities to start again. With a small plot of land, she was able to grow cassava, sweet potatoes and other fruits and vegetables. She also fished in the nearby river.

SLIDE 5 – THE VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOANS ASSOCIATION

Perhaps the biggest help to Hawa has been the VSLA, the Village Savings and Loans Association, which was set up with Christian Aid support for the women in the village. The women contribute to a fund, which is held in a secure, padlocked box. There are three padlocks, with keys held by three different women. From these contributions, small loans are distributed to the group members to facilitate small retail and agri-business initiatives. All the women talked of the positive impact this box had on their lives. Hawa used her resourcefulness to be able to join the scheme, sourcing waste from the palm oil extraction, processing it and selling it to generate some capital to join the group.

While other lenders would charge large amounts of interest, these VSLA boxes give the women of the village control, empowering them and transforming their lives in a way that may otherwise not be possible.

SLIDE 6 – JUSTICE AND OUR CHOICES

These communities have to face regular injustice as the interests of a few take over the interests of those who have little. Christian Aid and their partners continue to fight for justice for these communities.

Though the injustice perpetrated by such large players seems overwhelming, we can make choices that make a difference. Check the products in your house – how many contain palm oil? Are there any that you can swap for something else next time you shop? When you’re shopping, look for products labelled “sustainably sourced palm oil”. Can you encourage friends and family to do the same?

Small changes can make a big difference.

SLIDE 7 – PROJECT IN BANGLADESH

The Appeal will also support Tearfund projects, including those in Bangladesh, working through the local church to equip communities to reduce the impact of climate related disasters.

In Bangladesh, catastrophic flooding can spell disaster for already vulnerable communities. Regular flooding not only brings crop loss, disease, displacement and death, it sets communities back and pushes them further into poverty.

The local church is equipping communities to reduce the impact of disasters through resilient housing, community planning and diversified incomes, meaning communities have room to truly thrive, even in the face of disaster. For families, it means they aren’t starting from scratch every time a disaster strikes. This journey from crisis to resilience is essential to see lasting transformation; whole communities lifting themselves out of poverty for the long term.

SLIDE 8 – PRAYER POINTS

Pray for the World Development Appeal and the parts of the world that it seeks to support.

SLIDE 9 – THANK YOU

Thank you for your support of this year’s World Development Appeal.