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**SUMMARY**

The annual World Development Appeal of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to highlight, to inform about, and to support some of the vital and valuable work of sustainable development currently undertaken by our development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund. And this is work that is challenging: it is work that does not readily call forth easy answers to the issues that it seeks to address; it is work that cannot impose a solution; it is work that, to be sustained and to develop, cannot offer a ‘quick fix’. Rather, this is work, that in the name of Christ, seeks to hold out the potential of a transformed and transformative reality, for some of the world’s poorest communities and which seeks to build the capacity, beginning from within such communities, that will allow both men and women to flourish and to know the dignity that is theirs as bearers of the divine image.

The work of sustainable development is not simple. It is hard work. It encounters obstacles as it is worked out ‘on the ground’. It is most often long-term work as it seeks to build, within communities, a shared vision for a future different to that which tradition or cultural norms, which economic or social injustice, might dictate and to release every member of the community – men, women and children – to have a voice in the development process that will move them, together, towards that vision. It is a work of faith and courage, of endurance and of hope.

Through the World Development Appeal, we have the opportunity to express our solidarity with the ‘rightness’ of such work and with communities embarking on journeys towards discovering for themselves new ways to be in their relationships, with one another and with society around them. We have the opportunity to draw on and to learn from the valuable experience of our development partners, and importantly, their partner organisations on the ground. And, above all, we have the opportunity to partner with God in the work of, little-by-little, pulling back this world towards the ‘goodness’ of his creation until the day when Christ will make all things new. Not only this, the World Development Appeal holds out a challenge to each of us on our respective faith journeys: it can be, for us too, a place of transformation as we grapple afresh with what the Lord requires of us, namely *“… to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God.”* (Micah 6:8)

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The 2017 World Development Appeal introduced a new approach to the remit of the WDA, linking together, in our ongoing partnership with Christian Aid and Tearfund, the 2017/18 Appeal with those of the following three years under a common, overarching theme – the challenges of sustainable justice in fragile states with a particular focus on gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence. The aim is, in adopting this approach, to return in years three and four of the cycle, to the partners highlighted in years one and two in order to learn from them how the work they are engaged in has developed and might continue to develop in the longer term and also to deepen our understanding of the challenges they have encountered. It is the hope that, through such an approach, the World Development Committee will be able to give a deeper insight into what contributions to the Appeal achieve and also equip congregations with a better understanding of the pace and of the often hard and long-term nature of sustainable development work.

The 2018 Appeal invites you to learn about and to support Christian Aid’s partner, the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC), in the work being done to address gender-based violence, and in particular the work of the Casa Noeli dos Santos safe house in the city of Ariquemes.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is particularly pervasive in Brazil. Recent research has shown that every 24 seconds a woman is beaten by a partner or ex-partner and in a 2017 nationwide survey almost a third of girls and women said that during the previous year they had suffered violence. Despite improvements in public policy and law, the reality is that gender-based violence is firmly rooted in a certain kind of machismo culture. The city of Ariquemes has a population of a little over 100,000 people and is situated in the Jamari Valley in north-western Brazil, just across the border from Bolivia. The city depends economically on mining, fishing, and logging, with open mining, in particular, seen as the root of much of the violence and inequality in the region which was flooded with workers from out of state. By mid-2010 Ariquemes was facing a serious problem with violence against women and a public meeting was held in which the mayor made a call to see if there was any interest in opening a safe house for women experiencing gender-based violence.

The church community in Ariquemes responded and within 15 days the Casa Noeli became a reality. An institution was set up to run the house administratively and by 2014 the development service of the National Anglican Episcopal Church had established the partnership with Christian Aid which has allowed for the rental of a better house, the purchase of furniture for the house, improved infrastructure, and improvements in the work undertaken with the women themselves… but there is much more still to do.

The safe house is where a woman can come after she enters a formal complaint, about GBV, in a police station. The existence of such a house means that the woman does not have to return home to a violent partner or to rely on the support of family members who may well side with her partner. Women stay at Casa Noeli for different lengths of time but the maximum length of stay is usually three months within which time they receive support to work through their needs and to be able to move on with their lives. The house acts as a gateway for women to access services related to health, education, employment, and legal support and becomes a reference point and source of advice for the women who pass through it – women numbering some 1500 over the past six years.

The parish which supports the safe house, which serves nine other cities in the region besides Ariquemes, also serves the community of Sao Paolo San Pedro, supporting this financially poor rural settlement pastorally and in securing land rights. Work amongst the women of the community, carried out with a Christian ethos, deals with topics such as self-care and self-esteem, allowing for the introduction of discussion regarding violence against women in a more subtle way. The hope is that in the future the men in this community will also be engaged in discussion which empowers them to see that there are other options available to them as to how they treat women over and against those presented by their education or the way they were raised.

This year’s video highlights the importance of the work of the Casa Noeli dos Santos safe house, hearing from Fabiola, who herself has used the services provided there, and also from the driving force behind the work of the safe house, Rev Elineide Ferreira, who shares some of its story as one telling the everyday truth of what it is to provide sanctuary in a dangerous world.

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Each year, the bulk of Appeal funds received are divided equally between partners and projects supported by Christian Aid and Tearfund, 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 CA and TF 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 2018 World Development Appeal will support a number of our partners’ projects with a focus on promoting positive masculinities for boys and young men and enhancing opportunities for girls and young women, encouraging both to become active citizens and promote social wellbeing, thus benefiting not just participants but the wider community. Within the new four-year model, Tearfund will continue to use some of the funds channelled to it to support its development partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo as they seek to raise the status of women in society and affirm their dignity and worth as bearers of the divine image through ongoing programmes of education and training which, over the long-term, deliver sustainable development at its best as these women return to their communities and become agents of transformation for them and indeed for their country.

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 corporate body, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will be enriched through such engagement and through an increased understanding of the challenging work of sustainable development that holds at its heart a vision for righteous and joyful justice among humankind, one in which men and women may flourish and live in peace with one another, having rediscovered the truly human identity for which they where created. Engaging with such work is, as Rev Elineide puts it, “… putting into practice what the gospel says, putting into action what we hear every Sunday or any day that we are involved with the Word of God.”