

In This Issue

Focus: Agricultural Revolution in Progress

Back to the Bible: Response to Climate Change Victims

Blessings by Offering: Witness the Struggles in Mountain Areas

Take Action: Happiness is Caring for Creations

Editor's note

Today, climate change is no longer just a textbook term. Recent studies have shown that global warming directly impacts grain production, with developing countries being hit the hardest.

This issue of *SHARE* introduces Zimbabwe's farmers' new initiative to earn a living - the 'agricultural revolution'. In addition, we will enter the mountains in northern Thailand and learn how local villagers deal with frequent natural disasters. Through Chief Executive Dr Chan Pui Si's experience in poverty alleviation and verses from the Bible, we hope to encourage everyone to stand up for the poor, for who the climate crisis has severely struck.

Focus

Peace in Turbulent Regions of Myanmar

Written by Edward Lai (Senior Programme Officer)

'Around three years ago, my fields looked just like this,' said James Shawa, a farmer from Zimbabwe, Southern Africa, pointing to a neighbouring cornfield with withered, yellow leaves. For days, he worried that he would not have a good harvest. However, when he adopted a new farming method, his corn grew after hard work and dedication. The crop James had wished for finally arrived.

'We use the resources that the Lord has given us, and we receive His blessings,' James said while putting freshly picked corn onto the firewood. Through the smoke, James and his children smiled.

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Nearly 70% of the African population rely on farming for a living. A poor harvest reduces the farmers' income significantly and may push them to the brink of famine. With more extreme weather events under the climate crisis, the scope and scale of these situations have become ever more frequent.

'Breadbasket of Africa' No More

According to a study published last year in the Nature Climate Change journal, human-induced climate change has seriously impacted global food production. Since the 1960s, global agricultural productivity has dropped by more than 20 per cent compared to a context without climate change, a decrease equivalent to the total increase of agricultural yield for the past seven years. Studies have also shown that although technology has improved the efficiency of agricultural production, this has not kept up with the speed of environmental damage when the impacts of climate change are factored in.

Climate change hurts agricultural production most in developing countries located in the temperate zones, including Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe was once known as the breadbasket of Africa and was a prominent exporter of wheat and corn. Today, various political factors have led to the collapse of its economy; citizens have had to face food crises. In rural areas, tens of thousands of citizens face food shortages, insufficient rain, droughts, storms and unstable weather, impacting their agricultural harvests.

Furthermore, most farmers in Zimbabwe own less than two hectares of arable land. Without solutions to combat climate change, no matter how hard they work, farmers will not be able to use their land to earn a living.

CEDAR has supported its partner Foundations For Farming in Zimbabwe for many years. This organisation teaches farmers to respect nature and use conservative farming techniques which fit the order created by the Lord to allow them to earn their living sustainably. Zimbabwe's government department responsible for agriculture and education has recognised the organisation's efforts.

In recent years, the organisation has also cooperated with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in training government personnel to help promote the farming technique 'Pfumvudza' (meaning new season in Shona, the mother tongue of 75% of the people of Zimbabwe) in various regions. They hope to cultivate a new national 'agricultural revolution', which will ensure every farmer has enough to eat.

Pfumvudza is a farming technique based around conservation; it is distinctive in that it requires less land and human labour but produces more crops. In the past, most farmers in Zimbabwe believed that larger land size and mechanised farming were needed to increase food production. However, these methods were unsustainable, as the demands for labour and money were too much for local farmers. In addition, these techniques ignored the fundamental principle of farming by degrading the quality of the soil, leading to results that were completely opposite to the farmers' initial intentions.

Less Land, Richer Yield

Under the Pfumvudza farming method, each farmer (with an average family of six per household) would only require 16 x 31 metres of farmland. Under careful management taught by CEDAR's partner, the number of crops produced by the land would enable an entire family to become self-sufficient and support the family's financial expenses. This field may be only one-tenth of the size of the land used by local farmers, but it can yield ten times as many crops.

With a smaller field, farming preparation becomes more manageable. The plants are evenly distributed by our partner's strict horizontal and vertical measurements. Farmers use seeds and basal fertiliser prepared by our partner and farm according to four important principles - 'on time' (plan ahead, prepare well, farm according to the season), 'adhere to high standards' (perform each procedure with full effort and with honesty), 'no waste' (to not waste soil, water, sunshine or other resources given by the Lord, and to cherish time and opportunities), and 'to always be happy' (to have a grateful heart, not lay the blame on others, to faithfully abide by the previous principles while depending on the Lord). In the process, among other things, farmers remove weeds, compost, sow seeds, use dead leaves or grass or other agricultural waste to create an overlay, and add fertiliser to their crops.

During the process, farmers do not use a plough on the soil. Apart from preserving the soil structure, this also allows the soil to become fertile and rich because of nutrients in the organic overlay.

After months of practice, farmers have seen the results of the Pfumvudza farming method. Many farmers, like James Shawa, have eliminated the risk of food shortages and have been able to support their families. They were also able to self-sustain by selling their agricultural products to meet their family's needs, including sending their children to school.



A farmer and her daughter were benefited from the project.

On-site Training. Be a Good Guardian

We are delighted to see the results of Pfumvudza and the strong support it has gained from the Zimbabwean government. However, this farming method emphasises the continuous renewal of farming mentality, techniques, and ways of thought; thus, on-site training and experience-sharing within communities are vital.

In view of this, since 2019, CEDAR has supported the partner to provide agricultural training to impoverished communities in Mashonaland Central. It will extend the communities' training provision to some communities in Mashonaland East. Some communities contain more sandy soil; the soil becomes dry and infertile in the dry season, and

nutrients are easily washed away. After the farmers in these communities implement conservative farming methods, they will strengthen the soil structure and improve its quality, thus increasing their yields.



Beneficiaries and community educators of Pfumvudza.

With CEDAR's support, farmers benefiting from conservation farming have become facilitators within their communities. They have provided theoretical and practical training to 15 locations in their communities and set up Pfumvudza model farms to allow trainees to practice these methods.

They also teach trainees financial management skills and use spiritual platforms to share how they can be good guardians of the Lord's creations on earth. From 2020-to 2021, more than 1,000 people were benefitted from CEDAR's program.

The road to ending hunger is long, but as the communities in Zimbabwe, steps have been taken, and communities have been rising to solve the issue of food shortages.

(Some of the photos are provided by CEDAR's partner.)

Back to the Bible

Response to Climate Change Victims

Written by Wendy Fung (Church pastor)

Scripture: James 2:5, 14-17

This passage is not related to climate change, but when we ponder the causes of climate change and how it affects the poor, the principles in these verses are still applicable. The scriptures mention that the Lord makes people rich in faith, but it does not mean that believers need not show their faith by deeds. And one of the expressions is to care about the needs of the poor.

Eighty per cent of poor people in the world are farmers living in rural areas. Climate change increases the number of extreme weather events, including droughts, flooding, and storms that cause crop failures. Farmers then have to borrow money for food or wait for aid. Or they have to wait for the next harvest and have all the crops sold to repay their loans. However, extreme weather events have become more frequent that farmers cannot harvest every season, resulting in food shortages. For example, in Kenya, a drought that lasted for a few months in 2021 put all 2.1 million people into starvation, and many precious wild animals died from dehydration.

Climate change results from excessive emission of

greenhouse gases, many of which are from wealthy countries. But some of them are from developing countries. Developing countries generally have looser environmental policies, attracting wealthy countries to set up manufacturing factories. As a result, they also account for the emission of greenhouse gases.

Nine years ago, I visited Ethiopia with CEDAR Fund to review their partners' work and saw how local churches utilised resources from foreign churches to help those in need. For instance, we visited a village where foreign churches sponsored the canal's construction so that a large area of farmland could be irrigated and villagers could save time fetching water. A brother in Christ said to me, 'you are from one of the best places in the world, and today, you come to one of the poorest places in the world, so your worldview is now balanced.' Since then, I have known that the world is not just a place I live, that I do not need to be satisfied by many materials. My life has become plainer to have more capacity to help those in need. In daily life, I have reduced my carbon footprints. These small actions seem ineffective in tackling global warming, but the impact can grow massive if we engage more people in these small actions.

Put into Practice:

Take a look at your daily meal (like origin and capture method), the energy consumption (like electricity and water consumption), and skincare and sanitising products (like whether they contain microplastics), and see if we could change anything for nature.

Editor's note: Please go to CEDAR Fund's devotion app for more devotionals about creation care. To download: link.cedarfund.org/app-244

Blessings by Offering

Witness the Struggles in Mountain Areas

Written by Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

Many tribes live at the country's border in Northern Thailand, mostly farmers. Because of poverty, many of them have never received a good education or learned any effective farming method. They live in mountain basins and receive no services or support from the government. In addition to the worsening extreme weather events because of climate change, river floods in rainy seasons cause soil erosion, and droughts lead to a lack of water sources. Both circumstances affect the harvest. To continue farming, farmers have to purchase more chemical fertilisers, increasing their financial burden and damaging the lands.

CEDAR Fund has been supporting Upland Holistic Development Foundation (previously Upland Holistic Development Project) since 2013 and has supported their community development work in the river basin at Maenawang of Chiangmai in Northern Thailand. Our partner taught villagers from 10 communities to protect soil and water resources. On the one hand, it was to protect the environment; on the other hand, it improved the farming conditions to increase harvest and improve their life. Our partner has also built water tanks for villagers to tackle water

shortage problems and hygiene issues. Villagers learned to turn the spaces next to their houses into vegetable farms. Besides, our partner teaches villagers about watershed management to solve soil erosion and droughts issues. By observing the topography on maps, they build sand dams in rivers to stabilise the river bed and reduce the aftermath of flooding or droughts.

This scheme has helped many residents, with Jaha Jatu of Lahu being one of them. Jaha's father died early, making him quit school when he was young to help his mother farm for a living. In the past, he only planted one type of crop. After several cycles, the same nutrients were absorbed, speeding up the consumption of nutrients in the soil. Moreover, he did not know about soil protection that soil erosion quickly occurred in rainy seasons. When our partner started working in Jaha's community, he was very interested in soil protection. He learned and adopted agroforestry that increased his harvest, diversified his produce, and improved soil quality. His farmlands are now a model in his community. He will use fewer chemical fertilisers and plant more species of crops to increase his income and improve his family's life.

At the frontline, we have witnessed environmental, and life challenges villagers like Jaha face. Yet they do not give up any learning opportunities. We hope you keep walking with us and care for the forgotten neighbours in poverty.

'Care for the Disaster-stricken Poor' Donation Campaign:
link.cedarfund.org/share244.

Take Action

Happiness is Caring for Creations

Written by Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

Caring for the created world is a significant and complex issue. We may have lost hope and motivation because of living in the Apocalypse. Nonetheless, our Chief Executive, Dr. Chan Pui Si, shared the encouragement and acknowledgement of her poverty alleviation and environmental protection work in an online talk, 'Caring for the Created World in the Apocalypse Regardless of Success or Failure', on 6 January evening.

Pui Si noted that disasters happen every day and around us, and the difference is whether they are in front of us, in the news report, or not even reported. She exemplified the floods and droughts in India last year that anthropogenic climate change certainly plays a part in it. Disasters happen every year, and they worsen, reflecting wealthy countries' excessive land consumption and the reality that developing countries pay the price.

Yet, while working for poverty alleviation, Pui Si always finds the wisdom of the Bible and new creations. For example, in a development project in Thailand, farmers referenced the Bible's sabbatical year in their fundamental practice. They planted for six years and let the land rest in the seventh year without fertilisation. Surprisingly, different species of crops could be grown on that land afterwards. Indian communities affected by climate change also had their adaptability. For instance, residents used drink bottles to make life jackets to prevent villagers who could not swim from drowning. Moreover, Indian churches constructed disaster prevention

facilities, such as escape routes and road networks, enhancing residents' awareness of disaster management. Pui Si said, 'when you are in it, you can see how the world keeps restoring and adapting.'

The participation and change of residents have given hope to Pui Si and have manifested God's blessing. It was full of encouragement and acknowledgement for her. And she was not alone along the way; she collaborated with individuals, churches and organisations, which was a fantastic combination, as she described.

If you want to know more about the relationship between creation care and poverty alleviation, please subscribe to and watch the YouTube Channel Creation Care HK. And if you would like to join this fantastic combination, grab the chance now.

China Graduate School of Theology (CGST), Mission to New Arrivals, CEDAR Fund and other organisations are co-organising the second 'Creation Care and the Gospel Conference: Hong Kong' at CGST from late September to early October this year. The conference will have keynote speeches, workshops and field visits. Please visit CEDAR Fund's Facebook page or Instagram account for more information.



Screenshots of the online talk

2021/2022 Operating Statements

In the period of Jul 21 - Jan 22

Income	HK\$ 11,140,909
Donations	8,597,550
Grants	-
Appeal for Relief	2,496,557
Other Income	46,802
Expenditure	HK\$ 12,573,896
Development Projects - Asia	4,406,722
- Middle East	194,755
- China & HK	1,261,007
- Africa	1,778,370
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects	1,987,235
Partnership Development	1,812,112
Administration	1,133,695
Surplus/(Deficit)	HK\$ (1,432,987)

The annual budget for 07/2021 to 06/2022 is HK\$23,129,000. Please support CEDAR and our partner's work with your prayers and donations.

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