

Equality, A Christian Ethic 2 Corinthians 8:14

Currency in Crisis

The **Zambian Kwacha falls to an all time low against the Pound and the Dollar – a 70% drop in 6 months.**

On Sunday the 25th October President Edgar Lungu called for a nationwide day of prayer seeking divine intervention to save the Zambian economy.

Zambia's main source of income, copper exports, suffered this year due to a global drop in commodity prices. This coupled with the electricity cuts has seriously affected the economy resulting in price rises on all imported goods including fuel and food. With salaries low, the people cannot afford higher prices consequently there is a general feeling of despair across the country.

On the day of prayer all football matches were called off, with bars and restaurants

forbidden from opening. The majority of the 15 million people, most of whom are professed Christians, supported the President's call. It was a remarkable display of the country's faith, something difficult to imagine in other so called Christian countries.



President Lungu is reported to have quoted David Livingstone who knelt and asked God to make Zambia a "beacon of Christianity". Also at the end the President is reported to have said, "I personally believe that since we humbled ourselves and cried out to God, the Lord has heard our cry. I appeal to all of you to do your best and leave the rest to God."

This show of faith reflects the effect that the years of Gospel witness has had on the lives of the people of Zambia. We could be sceptical of the President's motives, or the people's simplicity; nevertheless it was a powerful display of a nation's faith. Poor they may be, yet many are rich in Christ. Perhaps such times of hardship are divinely ordered for a greater purpose.

The Peanut Butter Plant

The engine room of sustainability

The processing Plant is fundamental to achieving the sustainability goals of Share Africa Zambia (SAZ). Providing job opportunities and developing skills that add value to farm produce creates meaningful work that rewards people with a fair income. To expand these opportunities the Plant must increase revenues by adding products and extending the market base.

New machinery delivered in September has secured the continuity of current production – the new machinery has eliminated bottlenecks and circumvented single points of failure. However with only two basic products it is difficult for supermarkets to accept SAZ as a serious supplier. We are therefore keen to expand the product line to make ready-made breakfast foods and cereals. A US company is helping with various recipes and processes but it will be up to SAZ to raise the required capital.

The plant also needs ISO accreditation in order to obtain a license for export. With the Zambian currency at an all time low now is an opportune time to sell to neighbouring countries. A prerequisite to getting the ISO standards will be to build new toilets and washrooms.

In recent months the power crisis in Zambia has seriously affected production. Each day there is no power before 14.00 hrs., and although the Plant has a standby generator the cost of running it for extensive periods is just too high. Since the power shortage is likely to last till early next year we have been forced to change the working hours from day-shift to back-shift. Women with small children are finding it difficult but unfortunately the circumstances have left us with little choice. Hopefully the power crisis will be resolved soon.

In spite of the power problems peanut butter sales in the past two months have been enough for the Plant to break even - but we must keep pushing.

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Outgrowers Scheme

Crop Yields DOWN 65% - Emergency food supplies may be required before Christmas

The rains this year have been poor, particularly in the areas where we are sponsoring farmers. Groundnuts need rain at the time of flowering for the nuts to swell but because the rains stopped early the nuts never matured which resulted in a 65% drop in harvest across the area. Although the unpredictability of the weather is a recurring problem for rural farmers, the affect of crop failure on communities that depend on crops for food can be extremely devastating. People are already consuming their emergency supplies and by the end of the year they will be out of maize as well as other food stocks.

The problem is exaserbated since they have no cash to buy food which means they are left hungry and helpless. It seems phenomenal that for decades these same people have managed to survive through similar circumstances but yet not without human loss; sadly the young children are the first to suffer.

A further knock-on effect is that many of the farmers received a loan to help them plant and weed their fields but now they have no money to repay. SHAREAfrica has therefore written off the debt and will plan to replenish the fund in the coming months.

Last year emergency supplies were given to the most vulnerable and it is likely that the need will be even greater this year. Conditions are currently being monitored so the extent of the problem won't be known for a few weeks. The Government does hold emergency food stocks but it is unlikely that they will act unless there is a national emergency. Pockets of affected areas such as we have

identified in the Eastern Province are unlikely to receive help.

Although small-hold farming remains a complex balance between the people and the elements, the situation is not altogether hopeless; there are things we can do to help. It involves training, better methods of planting, more drought resistant seed, testing soil conditions, applying appropriate fertilisers, better overall management, and so on. Such solutions may seem simple yet according to other agencies they have proved in the past to be effective.

These dear people are our fellow believers in Christ. Our principle of Christian 'equity' means we cannot walk away. As Wilberforce said when he saw the conditions of slavery - *'You may choose to look the other way but you cannot say you did not know'*. Knowing the conditions as we do makes us more determined to find a solution.

Next year the number of farmers on our programme will be reduced to a more manageable size. This will allow us to spend more time in training so that some of the improvements mentioned above can be implemented. We believe it is better to focus on a few who have potential so that they in turn can train others.

This coming season we will appoint six or seven lead farmers who will each manage a small group of about 10 farmers. (The total number on the scheme will be between 60 and 70). Since each farmer will be asked to plant larger fields we expect the overall acreage to be similar to last year. We also intend clustering the farms so that equipment can be shared.

"Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house" (Prov 24v27).

Plant with very few filled nuts



Hand shelling groundnuts



The New Hall in Mgawa - Near Chipata in the Eastern Province



On the 31st of October around 600 people gathered for the official opening of the new hall at Mgawa. The interest and enthusiasm expressed by the village people was amazing, yet it was somewhat strange to see how they embraced such a lovely building while they themselves continue to live in mud brick houses with grass roofs. To them a building represents their faith; a place to pray, to praise and to proclaim the Gospel. When plans were being drawn up they insisted that it be built to seat over 300; they said they would fill it. They also wanted glass windows, wooden benches and VIP toilets (Ventilated Integrated Pit-latrine which basically is an outside toilet with a ventilated septic pit). They have no such luxury in their homes.

The conference was attended by believers from the surrounding villages as well as representatives from other denominations, village head men and counsellors. Four chiefs attended plus two representatives from other chiefdoms. For the people the presence of the chiefs made it an extra special event.

The Gospel was preached in the native tongue, foundation teaching was given, and the work of Share Africa Zambia (SAZ) was explained. There was much singing as well as a quiet time for prayer and reflection. At midday the multitude was fed with beef, chicken and nshima – and they were all filled.

It is wonderful to see how God has worked in this remote area. A group of 14 local believers have committed to take the gospel to the villages. Some use bicycles that were provided by SAZ a year ago. Bibles purchased by Samuel Kapanji from our Bible fund were made available for purchase at a small price.

There is however a great need for basic teaching. We trust the assembly work will be established through help from brethren like Samuel Kapanji and others in SAZ who will be able to make regular visits. (It is 4000 kilometres from Lusaka and requires at least 2 overnight stays).

We thank those who contributed to the new building. Above all we trust that the Lord's name will be praised and the people in the area will be blessed.

Before we left the elders asked if we could help them with a bore-hole. They said that the nearest bore-hole, which is some distance away, is over-utilised and that people have to queue for water. As well as bringing additional benefit to the community, a bore-hole near the hall would provide water for a baptismal tank.

NOTE: The hall was built with funds that came from the sale of a Gospel Hall in Scotland. While we are sorry to see assemblies close, it is possible that sale proceeds from old buildings can be used to rebuild new ones, so that the Lords work continues to prosper.

Gathering for the Conference



Preparing Lunch



The Farm A successful first year



Bagged Peanuts

We are pleased that Share Africa Zambia farm has done better than many of the out-growers. This was due mainly to the larger field size, the quality of seed, the application of fertilisers and the use of a ripper for furrows. We will use the experience when training other farmers.

Although only a third of the 100 acre field was cultivated the 12 tonne harvest covered the cost of the farm as well as providing enough seed for the farmers to plant this season.

We have now cleared 75 of the 100



Farm Workers

acres field which means we hope to triple the yield in 2016. If we can achieve this then we can support more farmers as well as generate income for fertilisers and herbicides. The challenge with a large field is finding the labour required to manually plant, spray and dig, at a time when other farmers are doing the same.

Further improvements in productivity can be made by purchasing a digger and harvester since digging by hand is slow and inefficient with many nuts being left in the ground.



Preparing for Planting

The tractor has been a great benefit especially in larger fields. Most farmers however cultivate small fields with different crops since they want to limit their risk of failure. If they were willing to allocate 10 acres solely for groundnuts then a tractor would help greatly.

Please pray for Mwewa and Mussa who are responsible for the farm and the out-growers. It is a tough environment and they have much resting on their shoulders. However they are committed in their belief that the work of SAZ is a work for the Lord.

New Assembly Hall in Lilongwe, Malawi



It was a great joy to meet with the believers in Lilongwe on 1st November for the Breaking of Bread, ministry and gospel preaching in their new hall. They are a small company and face great challenges, especially as the local community is predominantly Muslim. However they suffer no persecution and have freedom to preach the gospel.

Work still needs to be done to provide glazing as well as plastering inside and out and additional benches.

Please pray for these dear believers that the Lord will be pleased to use them in bringing souls to Himself and that their new hall will be used to His glory.

The work SHAREAfrica and Share Africa Zambia currently centres on helping the poor among the Lords people in Zambia. Our four areas of interest are: **Assembly Support** - Helping with buildings and the purchase of Bibles; **Farmer Support** - Providing seed, equipment and training to smallholder farmers; **Food Processing** - Creating jobs to add value to farm produce; **Orphan Support** - Paying school fees for orphaned and vulnerable children.

We are grateful to all who support the work. "With such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13v16)