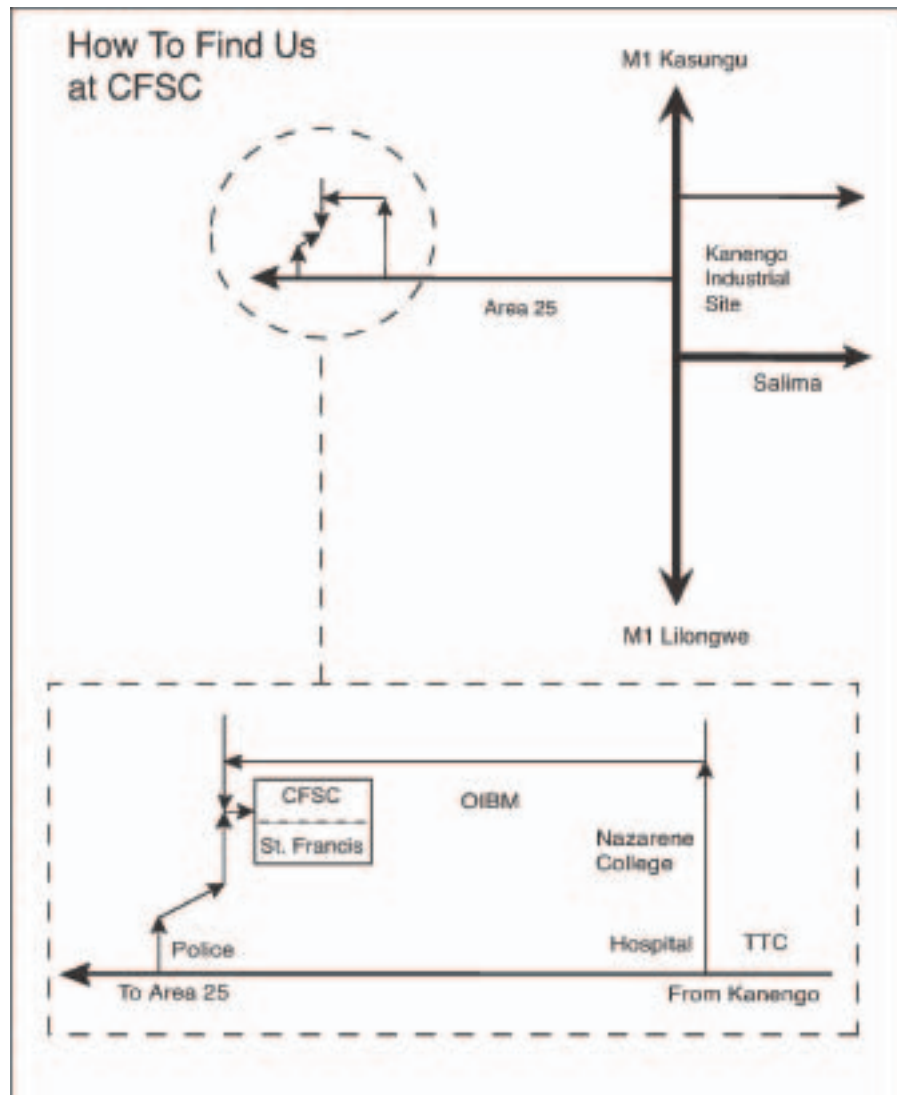


The Centre for Social Concern



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Annual Report of Activities Undertaken by CfSC in 2008

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ACRONYMS

AFCAST	African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching	DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
AMECEA	Association of Conferences of Bishops for East and Central Africa	ECM	Episcopal Conference of Malawi
		EPAs	Economic Partnership Agreements
ARIMA	Association of Religious Women in Malawi	FDP	Forum for Dialogue and Peace
BNB	Basic Needs Basket	MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development	MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace	MOU	Morandum of Understanding
CfSC	Centre for Social Concern	NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
CRS	Catholic Relief Service	PLO	Parliamentary Liaison Office
CST	Catholic Social Teaching	TVM	TV Malawi
CWO	Catholic Women's Organisation	UDF	United Democratic Front

(NCA) and some of its partners in raising awareness about this modern day slavery. It is also part of the local and international networks combating trafficking.

Through its director the CfSC is represented on a number of boards of NGOs, networks and other organisations in Malawi and Zambia. This helps us to be exposed to a wide range of issues and contribute constructively to civil society in Malawi.

6.C. FUNDING PARTNERS

The Centre appreciates the partners that make it possible to continue its work. They all have their specific way of 'partnering' and all of these are appreciated.

Our oldest partner is CORDAID. We thank them for the trust they give us. That many of our activities like the Basic Needs Basket and the Press Review have not been interrupted over the years is due to their respect for southern organisations and their positive, critical support.

MISEREOR has continued to assist the Centre with some of its research work, the inter religious dialogue and Catholic Social Teaching efforts.

TROCAIRE being locally present have assisted the Centre with funding but also with capacity building of its staff in relation SPSS and designing an Advocacy Strategy. They have shown that there are benefits attached to having a resident office in a country.

Norwegian Church Aid is now in a third year of partnership with the CfSC. With their assistance the Centre continues awareness campaigns on human trafficking and documenting cases of trafficking.



CRS has partnered the Centre in its efforts in inter religious dialogue and conflict management.

The GTZ Forum for Dialogue and Peace has helped the Centre in continuing the interfaith intervention in Mangochi through the Mangochi Interfaith Office.

The Missionaries of Africa who have supported interfaith work and our Interfaith Social Teaching efforts.

The parish of Rucphen in the Netherlands, who supports orphaned youth to access school and helps us with our Library.

The 'Weerter Missie Thuisfront' who have over the years repeatedly come to our assistance in a variety of needs.

The ASVB who have generously assisted with infra structural needs like housing for our orphans, a school block and library building.

The many friends of the CfSC who contribute generously coordinated by Mr. B. Bakker and his wife Truus.

We would not be able to operate and continue to operate with the support of these organisations and individuals and acknowledge this with thanks.

Picture above: Start of the procession at the AMECEA opening Mass at Lusaka Archdiocese cathedral 28/06/2008

partners, it is difficult to show to the various respondents. Why should they volunteer information so they seem to ask. In order to respond to this, the Centre organises meetings with various groups and has produced pamphlets explaining the how and why of the surveys. Some small successes are communicated to them and especially how they can benefit them. This work will assist the respondents and other groups we interact with to increase their understanding on how markets function, on how they can access some of these markets, on how they can increase their incomes, on how they can and should claim their rights and entitlements by holding duty bearers responsible to deliver etc.

At another level the Economic Justice Programme engages the faith community leaders and tries to mobilize them through imparting good information on issues such as the EPAs and how they affect them. The Centre also tries to challenge them concerning other issues which it is advocating on like the Tenancy Labour Bill. It has invited the same group of people to be part of faith reflection through its homilies and faith reflections.

The BNB engages the NGO world and the faith communities through the publication of its surveys and accompanying advocacy through press releases for each month under review. The replies we get are such that this service seems to be appreciated very much. In our advocacy we try and give praise where it is due but also put forward our analysis, recommendations even when critical towards policies of government or to the NGO world. Apparently some recommendations were taken on board like the way maize is bought and sold.

6.B. NETWORKING

The CfSC attended numerous meetings related to its programmes. These include:

Meetings IMF and World Bank at the occasion of delegations visiting Malawi. The Centre continues to propose that some of these meetings be tripartite: simultaneous participation by government, civil society and the IMF/WB. It also proposes that these meetings be minuted so as to make the engagement more fruitful.

The participation in the civil society manifesto organised through some TROCAIRE partners and the outcome of a consultation with its partners. This work took our staff into the field for wide-ranging consultations with the common folks at grassroots level.

CfSC was involved in preparing the Malawi delegation's contribution to the AMECEA meeting of bishops in Lusaka. It also attended this meeting and expects to be part of the implementation of the action plan. This is also a sign of its close co-operation with the Catholic Secretariat and through the same with the Catholic CCJP.

The CfSC has interacted with religious congregations, religious societies, priests and others in the Catholic Church and appreciates this. Without the cooperation of these groups it would not be possible to reach out and reach especially those we target who are first of all the poor.

We participated in and gave inputs to meetings on the Social Teaching of the Church. These meetings were either organised through CRS or CAFOD in conjunction with CCJP.

The Centre has interest in promoting the Social Forums, held at various levels and is actively participating in their organisation. Its staff participated in the Southern African Social Forum in Swaziland at the end of October.

In the area of human trafficking the Centre cooperates with Norwegian Church Aid

PREAMBLE

Malawi seems to be on a long and at times painful journey towards democracy. Seeing the way the then minority government of Mutharika has to dance, cajole and fight to get the 2008 Budget passed shows the seriousness of the matter. The root cause is still the third and term bids for the Presidency of Bakili Muluzi, the predecessor of Mutharika, and the refusal by society at large to allow him to have either. So he plotted the next best thing: to have a puppet state president so that he could continue to rule from behind the scene. The puppet he thought to have found in Mutharika but the reality proved him wrong. Mutharika proved to be far from a puppet, going as far as to ditch the party that put him in power and to start a new party: the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Ditching the United Democratic Front (UDF) meant that he also ditched the electorate's mandate. Ever since he has been seeking support, he has been establishing, seeking after a mandate. One obvious way would have been to have new elections, but the Constitution does not allow for this. But since many of Malawi's Members of Parliament are not very principled, and in contravention of the now (in)famous Section 65 of the Constitution, about 60 out of 193 joined the DPP and many in so doing have 'crossed the floor'. Only six were elected in by-elections on the DPP ticket. Five of those are alive. This has meant that his support in Parliament while having already the problem of being a minority, is very tenuous. The threat of being impeached was and is not imaginary. Attempts have been made and this has been detrimental to the proper functioning of the Parliament.

To complicate things further there is a lot of anger among opposition members especially



its leadership. The former president Muluzi has repeatedly said that he will take over State House, that he is not afraid of his opponent but that his opponent fears him. Having been cheated out of 'rule by proxy', rule from behind the scenes, he is a very angry person. Mr. Tembo has repeatedly said he was cheated out of the presidency. Both want to see things reversed. In the meantime the ruling party is trying to get by through playing the injured one. The Budget is essential they say, you cannot eat Section 65. Again and again, they seem to get away with it. The fact that the economy has been performing well and that there have been bumper harvests two years in a row has helped. Mutharika has used all kind of means: he even went as far as playing the general public, wooing chiefs, churches and civil society to stand up against their elected

Picture above: UDF placard in Mangochi

representatives, pushing them to demand that their MPs pass the Budget; he equated the non passing of the Budget to treason and finally threatened with the army. The last measure was to stop paying parliamentarians their salary. All this has led one party to say they want to burry the gauntlet till next year May 2009 and the general elections.

The compromise worked out by religious leaders seemed to have created a win-win situation, giving both protagonists what they wanted, but again it is government, which does not seem to trust even agreements brokered by religious leaders and a Morandum of Understanding (MOU) signed before some of the highest officers in the land.

Having convinced the opposition in 2007 to pass the Budget, the president made a little used word well known by “proroguing” Parliament. Many of us had to look it up in our encyclopaedia and interpret it by reading up on history! A similar scenario was played out again in 2008. Therefore the opposition did not want to give an inch. The downside of this is that Parliament cannot function normally and bills that would help some of the poorest people in Malawi do not even get to the first reading in Parliament. So while democracy is not working as it should, the economy is relatively sound. Is this belying the often mentioned opinion that democracy is the better system to deliver to the people at large the best possible conditions? The CfSC through its Basic Needs Basket has found that a strong economy, economic growth does not necessarily translate in better conditions for the poor. Is it not the role of a well functioning democracy that the conditions of the poorest are improved on? Has at the best of times Malawi’s democracy delivered to the poor? In other words is Malawi’s democracy a real democracy,

promoting social justice or has it simply been another way for a small minority to enrich themselves at the cost of the silent majority?

In this climate of hostility between ruling party and opposition, the constitutional review does not seem to make great progress either. It is another victim of poor political governance.

Looking over 2008 it seems that we are forgetting that human rights are one and undividable. This means that one cannot just look after socio-economic rights while suspending the civil and political rights in the same way that the opposite is true. In terms of the Malawi scene, one cannot do only the Budget, or Section 65 on its own, but one has to justice to both. In the end what is at stake is the dignity of all Malawians: our human dignity as expressed in the many declarations and covenants concerning the rights of all human beings. This year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the declaration of human rights. The human dignity enshrined in them should be the motivation for our behaviour both economic and political on a purely human level. In addition, Malawi calling itself a God Fearing nation, should in this fear of God find another strong reason to do all it can to help human beings to live lives of human dignity, that is to really be in the image of God (Genesis chapter 1).

Commentators have frequently referred to dictatorial tendencies in our top leaders. Calling them “Mose wa lero” (the Moses of today) smacks of “mpulumutsi”, a word used to for H. Kamuzu Banda. In addition to this, the Ngoni in Mzimba have started calling the president “Ngwazi” (hero), another word used for Kamuzu. Would it be then that these commentators are good observers?

Intra-party democracy is the victim of the ‘big man syndrome’. In conventions all

clearer picture of the extent of trafficking in Malawi the Centre has build into its awareness raising a tool for feedback on cases of trafficking and continues documenting these. In the course of this numerous workshops have been held for groups like the Catholic Women’s Organisation (CWO), Association of Religious Women in Malawi (ARIMA) and some diocesan CCJP groups. On occasion, youth groups were exposed as well as priests who were not directly targeted. Several cases were documented and some exposed through the press and radio. Posters and pamphlets were produced and handed out.

While the awareness raising is appreciated the feed back on actual cases of trafficking has not kept pace with the number of people exposed. It is becoming clear that those whose lucrative ‘business’ is exposed, don’t like this and some of our partners in the field start recognising that this work may entail some danger to themselves.

The Centre recognizes that there may be need to assist some of these groups in their efforts of reaching out to various communities in their parishes and mosques. We will try to strike a balance between the expressed wish of parishes in Malawi to become self supporting and the need for some form of assistance.

Malawi has in the meantime in the classification of countries by the USA on the

6. SOME ISSUES FROM EVALUATION

6.A. STAKE HOLDERS REFLECTION

The CfSC has successfully engaged the people it is interacting with in its regular and occasional surveys. These include market personnel, vendors, shopkeepers etc. in the Basic Needs Basket surveys. Similarly the



issues of human trafficking returned to a tier two position which is closer to the reality on the ground than the previous tier one classification. The work of the Centre in uncovering the state of trafficking has contributed to this greater realism.

Internationally the Centre and its partners have stepped up networking in view of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. It is known that the demand for prostitution will increase and it is feared that this may also increase the demand especially for women to fill this gap. Trafficking usually follows. Lack of proper legislation which specifically criminalizes trafficking in human beings in Malawi and other SADC countries with the exception of Mozambique, will hamper a strong response to the challenge which the 2010 World Cup poses.

CfSC engages its regular respondents when we are doing surveys of a more occasional nature. The project officers try and explain what the spin off may be for the people, something which is not always easy. In the same way that it is difficult to show the impact of advocacy to various funding

Picture above: Caring for our children’s future through helping parents become aware of the dangers of trafficking.

secondary school and some 25 to attend technical training. We have now gone the full cycle from form one (first year secondary school) to form four (last year) and the on average two years of technical training. According to the available possibilities and the exam results, some of these youth are training to be carpenters, bricklayers, while others are being trained as auto-mechanics and computer operators. Accountancy, business studies, community development and hotel management are some of the other possibilities. While some are learning the more humble trade of tailoring and designing clothes. With the help of friends in the Netherlands we were able to buy a house near the Salesian Youth Technical Training Centre. This gives our youth attending this institution a chance to follow courses more conveniently. The Salesian Centre does not offer boarding facilities. We hope that those who learning a craft will become all-rounder through some additional training in fields other than their specialization. In that way they can more easily find work and be able to assist people better.

The Centre is grateful for the support received from various quarters but more especially for the creativity and work done to source funding in the Netherlands. Through these efforts we receive the needed funds to keep this programme going, while at the same time the fund raising activities keep sections of the Dutch public informed about needs of youth far away and raise their awareness about this issue.

5.C. THE PRESS REVIEW

Throughout the years of its existence the CfSC has published the Press Review. It is now a living continuing resource giving us access to the happenings of the last 6 years. Researchers into debt and trade and other

issues have used the review. NGO's and religious congregations who make year end reports about events in Malawi have acknowledged the help they have found in the review. So while this resource is appreciated by subscribers, their number has however hardly increased.

The AMECEA meeting in Lusaka in June 2008 spoke about a church that is more vigilant, on top of things that are happening. A church that can act proactively and not run behind the facts. Especially because in so many parts of the African continent this has led to great suffering. In view of such a more vigilant church, that is not just running behind the facts, the Press Review can render the service of having a better informed church and general public, that is both in the leadership of the church and its membership. The end of year publication summarising the whole of the year is more analytical so as to provide information which goes beyond the mere facts, deepen our understanding, and so can better inform action.

Therefore the Centre intends to continue to render this service and will appreciate any form of comment, critique and suggestions as regards its use.

5.D. AWARENESS RAISING ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The programme on human trafficking is continuing to reach out further a field through several Catholic organisations and to Muslim communities. Other organisations have taken on the responsibility to work with other target groups like various other Christian churches. Since human trafficking is relatively unknown and may sound distant to most Malawians, the Centre is still continuing with awareness raising campaigns. What is publicly known about trafficking is the tip of the iceberg. To make sure society gets a

positions are up for competition except the top job. Whenever one is made to believe that primaries are free and fair either the use of money or of a public vote instead of a secret ballot show the contrary. Even the position of running mate causes some problems to most parties. Hence the talk of fishing outside one's own waters for a running mate. All this so far has been speculation and rumour. The primaries to choose party candidates to run for Member of Parliament, which are now being held seem to pit some of the heavy weights against each other. But only one candidate can run for each party in each constituency. There are accusations and counter accusations. If only I can make it one can almost hear them think. In spite of some of the disputes and unrest caused by primaries they are necessary as the 2004 elections have shown that not to consult the people can cost dearly. The UDF lost many seats to other parties and especially independents. Does all this show that the position of MP is too lucrative, with big salaries and big allowances, enticing people from across the spectrum who want take a piece of the cake including even those who apparently have little support to compete. In this quest for a seat in the August House, women are short circuited and complain that they are not given a real chance

As the Bishops say in their letter published at Pentecost 2008:

2.1.1. INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY

Within our political parties, the Party constitution and the leaders have to provide ways and means to make it possible for all members to participate fully and give aspirants the opportunity to freely contest for key positions. What is required are some of the following:



(i) A **Party manifesto** which spells out the vision and mission of the Party, its strategies and objectives for creating a better Malawi;

(ii) A **Party constitution** which will stipulate the terms for intra Party democracy;

(iii) **Intra Party elections (primaries)** which determine who will stand for the Party in the elections in a ward, a constituency or the country;

(iv) **Conventions** or some kind of General Meeting should take place, where aspirants will be allowed to compete for various positions within the Party including the presidential candidacy and the chairpersonship and also where constitutional issues will be looked into.

Picture above: The urban family, the centre of ur work with the BNB.

Some of the consequences of not paying attention to these elements, as we have already seen, are the following: dictatorial tendencies in party leaders and those who surround them, disgruntled party members, factionalism in parties, and break up of parties. Our conviction is that it is within the political party that democracy starts; it is also here that it starts to fail! The symptoms of this failure are when parties give in to the big-man syndrome, when young new blood is not allowed to enter into political leadership and when enough space is not given to women to compete for positions.

We urge all members of all political parties to do their duty and take their responsibility already within their Party. In this regard, we urge especially our lay faithful who are directly involved in politics and indeed all people of good will to allow Truth and Justice to guide them.

The late publication of party manifestos may be a symptom of a lack of democratic culture. A sign of what the Speaker of Parliament suggested: Malawi politics are unpredictable: political parties can reconfigure depending on prevailing winds. Politics are linked too much to personalities and regions, or sometime religion, and not enough to a vision which can entice people to develop themselves, solid policies and good implementation strategies.

TV Malawi (TVM) and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) have continued to struggle with a budget of one Kwacha each for the second year in a row. The non-political, non-partisan programmes have suffered as much as the political partisan ones. A case of the means exceeding the

cause or inappropriate means used to correct a wrong. If the medicine also kills the healthy part of the body, another medicine should be looked for.

The issue of corruption raised its head only on special occasions like world day to combat corruption or the publication of the annual report by Transparency International, or the sentence handed out to Mr. Sam Mpasu.

An actual issue is the doubt about Muluzi's candidature. Standing as he wants to do in such circumstances holds the party and the whole nation at ransom. If the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) will rule that he cannot stand it will cause unrest in the country. It will leave the UDF in a quandary and practically sideline them. It will do little good to cause of democracy, which he purports to have upheld all along.

On the international front, Malawi seems to be realigning itself, away from traditional partners like Taiwan to Mainland China. Approaches have also been made to Iran, apparently with some success. For Malawi it is probably a case where it can find better conditions, help with few strings attached. Many observers however have noted that haste is seldom good when making momentous decisions.

Finally, using on the spur of the moment language may backfire: when the opposition stayed away from the opening session of Parliament it used words coming from the president's own mouth. He is alleged to have said: they call me a cat, let them wait and they will see that I am a leopard. When quizzed why they stayed away from Parliament the opposition answered: we were afraid of the leopard. We fear the leopard!



changed. The conference spoke about the use of charcoal, firewood and subsequent deforestation. Bushfires, use of chemical fertilizers and many other ways in which Malawi has become a net contributor to global warming. To bring about change and use our resources as faith communities to do so, was the main objective of the conference.

As one outcome the Centre wants to inject this new concern in its already functioning Forum of Faith Communities for Trade Justice. Some of the inputs in the conference have been published as an insert in the Lamp Magazine. The national conference will be followed up by two regional conferences, one in the south and one in the north.

5. BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL

5.A. LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRE

In an effort to assist young people to work towards a better future, the CfSC continues to improve the services rendered through the library and reading room. We were able to purchase more books for secondary school and tertiary level students. This makes it possible for more students to access the popular resource books at the same time. We have also added books for the lower forms of secondary school and so the use of the facilities has increased. For those who are doing re-schooling and/or learning a trade we have a series of new books catering for their studies. So the library continues to be very much responding to a felt need.

The next step will be to have the type of magazines that can be of help to our clients. Suggestions have been made that the young

people can be assisted by an experienced teacher so as to use their time in the best way possible. This may be one of the ways forward.

All the success of the library has put much pressure on the infra structure and we are thinking of extending the library so as to better meet the demand. (At the moment the overflow of clients is met by a few tents, but this is only a temporary measure.) The new building project is pending the request for funding we have submitted to various organisations being met.

5.B. SUPPORT OF ORPHANED YOUTH TO ACCESS SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

For four years now, in conjunction with the neighbouring parish of St. Francis, the Centre has supported 50 youngsters to attend

Picture above: Participants at the Climate Change Conference held at CfSC in November 2008.

Option for the Poor', the 'Common Good' and 'Subsidiarity' into their press statements in order to give them more weight. This is taking into account that Malawi is referred to as a "God Fearing Nation".

We also try publish at least one booklet in the vernacular language. Possibly this year we will publish a summary of CST in Chichewa in a further effort to make this teaching better known. It is a summary of the 'Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching'.

4.B.II. THINK TANK

In an effort to continue to contribute to CST development the Centre held one meeting of the 'Think Tank', which was much appreciated. In it we looked at the impact of climate change on the environment in Malawi. This was in preparation for a conference to be held in November, which looked at the role the faith communities can play to sound a wake-up call concerning the environment which is impacted by climate change caused mainly by the Northern countries but also locally. We also hope that this conference will put the environment on the political agenda for the coming Elections and produce sufficient awareness for people at all levels to do something about stemming the tide of environmental degradation and the local causes of climate change. This Think Tank was initially meant to form a Malawian branch of African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching (AFCAST). This has not yet materialised but the intention is still there.

The CfSC has contributed to workshops organised by CRS and CAFOD on CST and continues to be part of a steering committee looking into the implementation of the said social teaching at grassroots level.

The CfSC also participated in the Meeting of the Association of Conferences of Bishops for East and Central Africa (AMECEA) in

June 2008. The conference had as theme: Reconciliation through Peace and Justice. It took a clear stance whereby the church pledged to become more proactive (intrusive) concerning the actual issues of grave concern in Africa, which contribute to untold suffering of its people. The conference agreed that the church cannot remain on the sidelines. It must be vigilant, know what is actual and can be expected in the coming years as impacting Africa; it must be ready to analyse and act in a manner that can prevent some of the conflicts etc. that cause so much suffering for so many of its people. In the preparation for this conference the CfSC cooperated with the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) in preparing for it and planning after it. The planning by the Malawi team was one of the best of the delegations present and things are now geared up to engage on the establishment of a Parliamentary Liaison Office (PLO). The Centre hopes to continue this level of cooperation.

4.B.III. FAITH COMMUNITIES CHALLENGED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the grave problems for Malawi is the state of the environment. The Centre has been intending to contribute to raising awareness among and mobilizing of the faith communities on this issue. Sometimes the misunderstanding of biblical passages has led to exploitation of the environment. The command to multiply has been taken very literally and may have contributed to population pressures in many parts of the world. As we now are very much more aware humanity is facing one of its biggest crisis because of global warming and the subsequent climate change with its disastrous effects on the environment. While much of this has been caused by the unbridled use of natural resources and consumerist economies, Malawi cannot control this. What Malawians do internally can be

THE CENTRE'S RESPONSE

1. THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN: 2008-2010

The Centre has started with a new strategic plan covering the years 2008 to 2010. This was done after a small evaluation of the previous strategy. Generally the evaluation encouraged the CfSC to continue on the way it has so far developed. The Centre was challenged to be more specific about its interaction with the various levels of

2. THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS PROGRAMME

2.A. THE BASIC NEEDS BASKET

The Basic Needs Basket (BNB) has slowly become the centre piece of our activities in relation to poverty eradication. Through it we have put before the general public what it takes for a family of six in the urban areas (Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba) to stay alive. The CfSC has done so for the past five years. This has been appreciated and many people are using it when negotiating their salary packages with employers. It has been used to help determine the threshold at which low income people have to start paying taxes. Some students of the economy use it to keep their finger on the pulse of the economy.

Studies on food security, the rising cost of food and access to food have used the basket. The interviews of 'satellite households' have raised issues, which have been taken up either by the Centre or human rights organisations like the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). It has guided the Centre in unveiling the coping strategies of the poor. It helps us to see how current socio-economic strategies related to the ecology and culture impact their

stakeholders. As a result of this evaluation we have reorganised somewhat our programmes. They are now divided into four: The Social Conditions Programme, The Economic-Trade Justice Programme, Religion as Transformation, and Building Human and Social Capital. The Accounts and Administration Section assures the Centre that it operates smoothly.

lives. Furthermore the basket helps the Centre to tap into issues related to access to local markets in the way that our Economic Justice Programme looks at the international markets (see below). It has raised the issue of access to health services; the trading and hoarding of maize and its accompanying rising cost.

The CfSC has gained a reputation of staying for the long haul. Many NGO's start excellent work but find it hard to continue



Picture above: Collecting data at Kawale Market, Lilongwe, for the Baic Needs Basket

either due to funding or personnel. CfSC has proved that it does continue to deliver. It also assures that the data collected is of the highest quality and so, as a consequence, are the surveys that are published monthly. This implies regular monitoring of the trained volunteers who collect the data.

2.B. OCCASIONAL RESEARCH

In addition to The Basket, the Centre has been doing research on specific issues. This year we surveyed the 'access to health' of those who are in our catchment area. The results have still to be made public. Through this type of occasional surveys, researches, we want to advocate for improvement in specific areas of concern that have surfaced through the Basic Needs Basket.

We also have continued to prepare for the Rural Basket. This goes hand in hand with supervising the data collection in the urban centres. We must always assure the validity of our data. The Rural Basket will have another look. We will establish what the people in the target area actually have as eating habits, and determine what they need in dialogue with them. After having established this over a period of time by following a number of specific households closely on a weekly basis we will then establish the cost and availability of the needed items. It will need careful analysis and adjustment of our methods to make optimal use of the potential of such close involvement over a longer time with grassroots communities.

Advocacy on the basket has improved over the last year, through regular press statements, monthly radio programmes, phone-in radio programmes, email and the Internet. Our website www.cfscmalawi.org now also publishes findings of the BNB and press statements. In the advocacy efforts we not only give the information but we give

recommendations to various duty bearers and remind the right-holders of their entitlements but also their responsibilities. These recommendations and comments are linked to faith reflection and the social teaching of the faith communities. Thus they become even more empowering. The raising of the tax threshold level from MK6,000 to 9,000 is one instance where we can claim some credit for the work being done having results. The intervention by government on fixing minimum and maximum prices for maize is also a recommendation the Centre gave prior to it being done by government. Brochures are ready for printing to inform various stakeholders about the BNB and why it can be of interest to them. A Basic Needs Basket manual is being produced. It contains a detailed explanation of the basket, especially on the methodology and its usage. It targets especially the BNB field assistants and project officers as well as students interested in this area.

The Centre also tries to establish links between the local causes for poverty to be so persistent with international causes, the international trade relations, etc. This area will get more attention in the year to come. In some instances it is easy to see the links, like in the case of the increase of the price of fuel and thus transportation and chemical fertilizers. While the global economic meltdown has helped lower the price of fuel and fertilizers, it is not yet certain how it will influence the performance of the economy in Malawi. It will need careful monitoring. One obvious result will be the lack of money available for loans on the international money market, but if this will affect the availability of money on the local market is not certain.

2.C. SOCIAL PROTECTION

Over the last ten years, poverty levels have remained stagnant with 52% of the

FDP continue to support some of the activities.

In the meantime, besides its ongoing activities of monitoring and supporting the interfaith community groups, the Project has worked with the youth and women. In an effort to create synergy between the different programmes and projects run by the Centre, awareness raising meetings have been held with Mangochi groups on human trafficking and economic justice.

The Project has attracted some interest both in Malawi and

outside. Groups of missionaries were briefed coming from about ten different countries. The Project can therefore be seen to have had a great impact and will continue to do so in the near future.

To garner more support, the CfSC met with ambassadors of EU countries in Lilongwe and briefed them on the interfaith situation in Malawi. This meeting needs to be followed up. It seems the Irish mission in Malawi might be interested to support the interfaith project role out to other districts.

An easily accessible short publication was written about the Mangochi Project so far. This will also be published in the local vernacular. The purpose is to make the work done in Mangochi more fruitful and accessible to many more people.

4.A.II. THE LIKUNI CONFLICT MITIGATION

The Centre has mediated between traditional believers and Muslims in Likuni. The mediation effort was not fully finished when it appeared that some more time was needed to come to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the



conflicting parties. The mediation was suspended indefinitely. Evaluating the mediation effort it became clear that people at the grassroots level did want very much to go on and be reconciled, those who are in the coordinating umbrella organisation of the Muslims and the traditional authority responsible for the Gule Wamkulu were not yet ready. It also appeared that the situation on the ground had calmed down and has remained as such ever since so that there is no more open conflict. At present the CfSC is assessing if the time is ripe for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

4.B. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

4.B.I. HOMILIES FOR LENT AND ADVENT

The CfSC has continued to adapt homilies for Advent and Lent. They are used in many parishes and Small Christian Communities and are appreciated for showing the social implications of the gospel. It is an activity which the Centre wants to continue and possibly even expand on.

The CfSC staff is making a conscious effort to introduce such themes as 'the Preferential

Picture above: Members of the Local Advisory Committee, the Mangochi Interfaith Project.

now pegged at MK9,000 or the rough equivalent of US\$64 per month. At the same time it abolished the over 30% bracket all together. The cost implications to the revenue collector of each MK500 lost by raising the taxation threshold is known and made public. However the cost of abolishing the 35% tax bracket has not been given the same exposure. It was justified by the Minister of Finance as a way to promote investment and saving.

Taxation as a tool to reduce the gap between poor and rich, and to help the stronger shoulders to carry the heavier burden is well known, but apparently not always well accepted. The Centre, in its pursuit of better conditions for the poor, wants to study the

4. RELIGION AS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

4.A. INTER RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

4.A.I. THE MANGOCHI INTERFAITH OFFICE

This year we witnessed the closure and evaluation of the pilot phase of the Mangochi Interfaith Office Project. The Centre was at the origins of this initiative by carrying out the initial research on which the intervention was built and which in turn was implemented by the 'Forum for Dialogue and Peace' (FDP). In the course of the implementation the role of the Centre was downplayed, yes even forgotten. However, the CfSC was part of the steering committee made up of FDP, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and the CfSC. This meant that through regular meetings the CfSC continued to guide the project. It also functioned as consultant and helped organise some of the key activities, such as the training workshops on conflict management. The CfSC also took part in the evaluation process.

The great joy and also surprise was that the Project really made a difference. Mangochi now is quiet which could not be said of the district about two years ago. At the Project's

possibilities of increasing the threshold for the low incomes and to offset this by reintroducing the 35% or even 40% categories of paying tax and by further expanding the taxation base. A study will be commissioned with the above purpose and should be ready in the first quarter of 2009.

The Centre hopes that with this study it can also contribute to civic educate citizens on their duty to pay taxes as a way of expressing that they are part of the larger household that is the state. As in our own households we may more easily accept our duties and responsibilities, much is still to be desired when looking at the whole nation.

closing ceremony witness after witness gave the same testimony. Some were prepared statements but most spoke from the heart and in an improvised way. Most who spoke expressed the desire that the Project should continue at least until beyond the 2009 elections. This was based on the evaluation and the perception of the stakeholders. The Forum For Dialogue and Peace could not continue to supervise the Project and therefore had to enact its normal exit strategy. This meant that all the assets of the programme would be handed over to the District of Mangochi.

Because of having been caught unaware, most people went into a mild panic. Thanks to the District Assembly, and especially the District Commissioner, a formula was found to assure the continuity of the Project's continuation. The Centre for Social Concern took over from FDP and will administer the Project until December 2009. It was agreed that the assets of the interfaith office are to be used solely by the Project and to top it all off, the District offered office space to help the Project saving considerable cost. CRS and

12,608,000 people of Malawi living under one dollar per day. Of the 52%, 22% are ultra-poor, living under USD 0.20 per day.

This group lives under severe conditions of chronic poverty and is unable to meet their daily needs. A proportion of this group, around 10%, is not able to participate in productive activities because they are destitute and labour constrained, as seen in the elderly, child-headed households, disabled or the chronically ill. The latter group has largely been ignored and never been meaningfully targeted by any kind of social protection intervention, and as a consequence, experience severe destitution.

Vulnerability in Malawi is increasing. The extent to which people are vulnerable depends largely on their ability to cope with shocks and changes to their livelihoods. Malawians are more vulnerable today because they are less able to deal with changes than they were in the past. For example, repeated shocks mean that people's assets have declined, savings have been eroded and informal networks are less willing or able to provide assistance.

The Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme in Malawi is a pilot and should contribute to the development of the Malawi Social Protection Policy and Framework.

Social Protection defined:

"Social Protection in Malawi constitutes policies and practices that protect and promote the livelihoods and welfare of people suffering from unacceptable levels of poverty and/or are vulnerable to risks and shocks."

To date, Social Protection is gaining momentum in Malawi, as the Government has established a national level Social Protection Steering Committee and a Social Protection Technical Committee. It has also committed more staff in favour of managing, guiding



and coordinating Social Protection interventions and it has committed themselves to set aside a certain percentage of the annual Budget for social protection. Government's Social Protection vision is "To eliminate extreme poverty" and its goal is "to empower the poor to contribute to social and economic growth."

In the course of 2009 the CfSC Social Conditions Programme, in corporation with its Economic Justice Programme, will monitor the implementation of the Social Protection projects in Mchinji district more specifically in the same area as where it will pilot the rural needs basket. The aim is to ensure social accountability and efficiency among both the planners and implementers for the sake of the targeted beneficiaries. The project especially aims at establishing the impact of Cash Transfer programmes on the beneficiaries.

Picture above: Some of the most vulnerable, Malawi's children

3. ECONOMIC JUSTICE-TRADE JUSTICE

This programme, having been devoted to debt cancellation, has gone through some readjustments. Since Malawi achieved the completion point in 2006 and the indicators established by the IMF were right it got debt cancellation. The issue of moneys freed through this cancellation of debt will be monitored in the year to come. It has disappeared somewhat from the discussions on the Budget, may be because the wrangles surrounding the passing of the Budget did not allow for in depth discussions.

3.A. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

One of the obvious issues is the question of the pro's and con's of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Malawi took a different stance from most countries in region by not even signing the interim agreement. This was against the advice of the Ministry of Trade, who disagreed with the civil society opinion that Malawi should not sign. Everyone thought that after having been given the nod by the parliamentary committee, Malawi would sign. It is the personal intervention of the state president which changed all this. He pleaded for caution since we have in the past rushed headlong into agreements without realising all the implications. The Centre applauded the president's decision through a press statement and encouraged the nation to research better what is the best way forward for Malawi. Being a least developed country, and by the looks of things remaining such for the years to come, Malawi has the option to follow the 'Everything But Arms' arrangement which still applies under the Cotonou Agreement, the successor to the various Lome Agreements.

The Centre studied existing documentation and is working in cooperation with Grasp (an international advocacy effort supported by

Cordaid) on a Malawi specific study to profile more clearly both the benefits and losses Malawi will sustain by joining or not joining EPAs. The balance so far is in favour of opting for the Everything But Arms deal and use this to the fullest.

The international trade area in general and the Economic Partnership Agreements in particular are difficult to understand. The implications they have for the life of the poor in Malawi are not easily recognised. Therefore it is difficult to get support among civil society groups and to mobilise them because of not seeing the implications of these agreements. Even without a conclusive study, which once and for all could establish the impact of the international trade relations on poverty in Malawi, it remains clear (be it not scientifically proven) that it is the greater cause of poverty, more than corruption, poor administration, lack of capacity and all other manner of local causes. That is why the Centre thinks it has to continue to be involved in this area through the faith communities and other channels.

This work with the faith communities is by direct exposure through short workshops, publications, and the distribution of materials explaining the topic. While we have encountered some constraints on transportation, this work continues. Faith leaders encouraged the Centre to continue and to use the press both printed and electronic media more often. The use of radio drama has been commended and should continue. In this context the CfSC is creating a synergy between its Religion as Transformation Programme, the Social Conditions and the Economic Justice Programme. Because it is through faith reflection on the issues that the true extent of the problems becomes visible and the motivation can be strengthened for people of

faith to be committed for change. It also continues to make the link between what happens on the international scene and how this impacts on people at the lower end of the ladder of development. In terms of programming this means to link the findings of the Basic Needs Basket with both internal and the external trade relations, thus creating another synergy.

Looking at the future some other interesting studies like on Kaunjika (imported second hand clothing) and cross border trade hold promise to map out further trade related issues and the role the market plays in all these.

3.B. TOBACCO TENANTS

Since its establishment, CfSC has been involved in matters related to the plight of the workers on the tobacco estates. It has done so in line with its commitment to the option to the poor. It sees that one way to structurally assist the struggle of the tenants for human conditions of service and remuneration, as opposed to slave labour conditions, is by the passing of the bill on tenancy labour. Therefore CfSC is still continuing with its push to get the draft Tenancy Labour Bill passed in Parliament because the draft legislation is a very important tool which has been designed to address some of the hardships experienced by the workers in most tobacco estates in Malawi. The bill has gone through several revisions but has not yet gone to Parliament for enactment into an enforceable law. Among many other reasons CfSC has established one why this bill has encountered resistance. Many parliamentarians are interested parties in this draft legislation since they are among the owners of small and medium size tobacco estates. According to many surveys on tobacco growing in Malawi, these types of estates are also the ones where the tenants meet with the worst



working and living conditions. Civil society organization too seem not to be interested in the issues of the tenants either despite a lot of publicity with the media houses. The CfSC has tried to mobilize various Human Rights NGOs but to little avail. The Forum of Faith Communities on Trade Justice has responded more positively, encouraging the Centre to continue and step up its efforts to assist the tenants. In the end even while they are the biggest producers of hard currency, forex, in Malawi, the tenants are left to carry the heaviest burden with very little remuneration while the rest of us continue to import luxury goods and use the foreign exchange generated through the sale of tobacco that is through the exploitation of the tenants.

3.C. TAXATION JUSTICE

Malawi has tried to raise the threshold for low income earners to start paying taxes. It is

Picture above: Grading and bundling tobacco