

INTRODUCTION - IAN WILLIAMS

Concern Universal (CU) is a diverse & strengthening organisation; a growing entity focused on the people it exists to serve and comprising of trustees, volunteers, staff, partners & many others; a web of human relationships dedicated to responding effectively to injustice; to reducing poverty; to advocating for the rights of people & communities.

Established in 1976, CU has passed the milestone of its 35th Anniversary. More than 500 staff members are now working 'shoulder to shoulder' with more than 50 in country partners and in excess of 2 million programme participants per year. CU has country programmes in ten countries with activities extending to 12 countries; it is increasingly well connected at an international level & well placed to have an increasing impact & influence in the future. Since its inception, over £123 million has been secured facilitating activities with the world's poorest people. Taken together, these foundations – combined with the ongoing harnessing of the passion, commitment, skills and experience of the people in its web – means that CU can achieve something remarkable in the coming years. Its voice can truly make a substantial difference on the local, national, regional and global stage. Because of its roots in different countries, CU will continue to listen, learn to remain relevant and effective.

In a global context that is shifting fluidly and rapidly it is an enormous challenge to remain relevant and effective. CU must move swiftly. It must keep on its toes to understand the times and the challenges. It must lead and create positive change, not just respond to it. Thus a growing importance of advocacy: of practical programmes that combine with efforts to influence policy at operational and strategic levels. CU cannot afford to be complacent or to accept the status quo! Yet at the same time it must be balanced & sensitive; also humble in the face of the oftentimes out-standing courage, perseverance and example of the people & communities CU works with; finally, it must remain true to the values that have underscored CU so well since the beginning. CU has 'evolved' over the past 35 years. This evolution has been proactive as well reactive. On the one hand, for instance, CU reacts to people in need. On the other, CU has been proactive in ensuring that development is not carried out 'for people' but facilitated 'with people'. CU's preference for working with local structures and organisations is based on a simple principle & conviction that people have a right to own their challenges, solutions and progress - CU's role is to be a sincere partner and facilitator in the process.

This is the story of CU to date. It is comprised of the following sections and I would like to thank everyone who has kindly contributed towards writing this revised history of CU. It represents an archive of interesting material and photographs. The expectation is not that people will read it from beginning to end and it has not been designed in that way;

- The history commences with an insight about CU's **origins**: two accounts are provided, one by Loughy Kennedy (pages 3-7) and the other by the late Raymond Kennedy (page 8-9)
- Following this, further insights about CU, especially its **early years**, are provided by Joan McGee (pages 10-14), a founder trustee; the original from 2002 has been updated by Ian. During the early years from 1976 to the mid/late 1980s, CU was largely voluntary run and - while international activities were at a relatively low level compared with latter years - a sound basis for future development was put in place.
- The period from the **early 1990s to 2007** is then commented on in general by Ian (page 15-18). This is followed by individual accounts regarding each Country Programme provided by the Country Director's and their teams (page 19 onwards). The names of CU's current Country Director's appear next to each Country section. This review reflects a period of considerable increase in the scale and scope of CU's response.

Different sections are complementary and interlinked and - as much as possible - details are not repeated if they are covered elsewhere.

A positive track record and reputation has been gained and an international structure is now in place. It is anticipated that the next phase of CU's development will see a progressive gearing up of impact, influence and scale.

The story of CU is a story about people. CU - the organisation – has not, and never should be, the important thing; it is simply a means to an end. It is also not a story about a handful of people, of a few impressive leaders that have 'made it all happen'. That would betray the reality. It is far richer and more diverse and interesting than that.

As an international & interdependent organisation, encouraging autonomy and decision making at every level, CU's history is about many people – partners, volunteers, staff, donors, supporters and many others – who have worked together and have led the development of activities at a variety of levels. Each person is like a piece of a jigsaw and every piece is important to the overall picture. Some are mentioned below to illustrate and bring life to the narrative, but it is far from comprehensive.

Furthermore it is hoped that people will feedback to improve this revised version. Many thanks to all involved for bringing the history this far!

ORIGINS - PART ONE 'CONCERN IS LOVE IN ACTION' LOUGHY KENNEDY

A speech by John O'Loughlin Kennedy, at a CU event in June 2006

Despite being a great admirer of Cardinal Newman, it is only in the past few years that I became familiar with his poem "Lead Kindly Light". It is really a prayer for guidance, an expression of trust, of readiness to let God guide his steps without asking to see "the distant scene". In the last verse Newman suggests that the guidance may have been there, even before the prayer was uttered. This is often a characteristic of love in action; to anticipate the needs of the loved one. We see this illustrated every day in the beauty of Mum and Dad thinking and acting in the best long term interest of the child, long before the child has any inkling of what a "best long term interest" might be, and later on, as parents, allowing the child the freedom to be, the freedom to make his or her own decisions, even when they know they could make much wiser ones themselves!

Newman's prayer relates beautifully to the start of 'Concern'. Kay and I had no idea of what we were initiating when we called the first meeting in our home in Dublin on 19th March 1968. In Newman's terms we were guided to take that first step without any notion of what "the distant scene" would be.

At this early stage we coined the title *Africa Concern* for our initiative. When we became involved in Asia, this gave way to *Concern*. We later set out to establish independent organisations in the USA (1972) and England (1976). However, the registration authorities in both these areas declined to register the single word *Concern* on its own, so the titles *Concern America* and *Concern Universal* were chosen. For related reasons, *Concern* (in Ireland) in the 1990s changed its official title to *Concern Worldwide*. All three organisations, *Concern Worldwide*, *Concern Universal* and *Concern America* thus share a common origin in the meeting held in Dublin in March 1968.

The inspiration for that first step had come through my brother Raymond, a Holy Ghost missionary to Nigeria, temporarily ministering in California, who had managed to make his way back into the blockaded area known as Biafra in December 1967. He had brought us a harrowing story of starvation, deprivation and disease, caused by a military blockade that was preventing the movement of goods and people in and out of the area. It was even preventing news of the war itself from getting out. Another brother, Colm, negotiated Raymond's trip in and out on an arms flight under cover of darkness to a secret airstrip. It just happened that Colm worked in aviation and had known the operator of the arms flights for years.

The history of Concern in Ireland, the United States and England is a story of people: good generous people, with skills, experience, knowledge, contacts and commitment who just happened to be there when they were needed and who were not pursuing their own agenda but "responding to the felt need" of

others. Some just seemed to come out of the woodwork at the time but the links to many had been forged long before.

In the earliest days in Dublin, so many essential things just happened by chance that, with the benefit of hindsight, it became apparent that there had to be more than chance at work. We later realised that some of the pillars of *Concern* were being put in place long, long before we took any initiative. Most of those pillars were people. A caring providence had been anticipating the needs of *Concern* for some time.

If Raymond was the person who challenged us to take the initiative, and then came back from California to help manage it, Fr Mike Doheny C.S.Sp. was the long-term enabler. Kay and I had both been deeply influenced over the years by Fr Mike. He was a lovely man as many of you fondly remember. He promoted the theory that you should do a good thing when the opportunity presented itself, that you shouldn't waste time looking for the very best thing and he advised never to go asking for permission from authority unless you absolutely have to have it. This was in the days when Canon Law was often interpreted as preventing Catholics as a group from undertaking works of mercy without the permission of the Bishop. Fr Mike's constant advice was that one should trust the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the very controlling society that was Ireland in the 50s and 60s, Fr Mike set people free. He encouraged people to attempt things, to follow their star, to launch out into the deep. "Bash on regardless" was a favourite phrase. He was careful not to fall into the trap of being just another controller himself! He never tried to *manage* the people he encouraged. He left "the distant scene" in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Without his formative influence, Kay and I would not have felt it was for us to make a start – to try to do something -- about a situation five thousand miles away. Without his influence we would not have started off deliberately on an ecumenically inclusive basis and we certainly would not have had the courage to persevere when the problems mounted and in the face of opposition from so many in church and state. And, believe me, there were lots of problems...and plenty of opposition.

Kay and I had done a very effective course in Christianity called the *Cursillo* in Kilkenny a few years before we were married. This influenced our thinking, spiritually. It also meant that we had become very friendly with another vital person, the local Bishop, Dr Peter Birch. This turned out to be crucial. He agreed to be a patron as did the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Alan Buchanan. The names of the Bishops among the patrons on our letterhead were absolutely vital in a religious country. It gave a kind of reassurance to our supporters that the appeal for Biafra was acceptable to the various Church authorities. However, it should be made clear that this was a lay initiative and the real power behind the movement came from the response of the public in terms of donations and of the individual volunteers who came to help.

The most consistent example of how Providence anticipated the needs of *Concern*, (and I'm speaking of *Concern* as an ideal) was in the way in which

people came forward to share knowledge, experience and skills, almost as they were needed.

We had launched the Biafra appeal for £100,000 on the 28th June 1968 and we passed that target seven weeks later, going on to raise £3 ½ million in two years— the equivalent of over £50-60 Million in to-days terms. People just seemed to want to help - and this was not limited to Ireland. A self-starting committee of advertising executives volunteered their services some weeks before Bishop Joe Whelan, of Owerri, in Biafra, came to Ireland. With their help we got him to launch the appeal. They did a masterful job of raising awareness. A Church of Ireland lady who happened to be on our committee happened to know Bishop Cockin, the Anglican Bishop of Owerri, and persuaded him to come to Dublin at the same time and co-launch the appeal. (She did not tell us at the time that there was a romantic sub-plot being worked out. We attended her wedding to the Bishop a year later). Civil Servants cut through red tape. A friend in the Post Office got them to install a telephone in a matter of days although the normal waiting time then was up to 18 months. A businessman lent us three staff members to cope with the administration and donations.

The speed of the response and the extraordinary achievements are chronicled in a little booklet that we published at the time. It is called “90 days”. Ninety days from the date of the appeal marked the arrival of our very own 500 ton ship, *M.V. Colmcille* in West Africa loaded to her marks with relief supplies. Prior to that, a larger chartered vessel, the *M.V. Korbach*, had delivered more than 2,000 tons to Sao Tome to be carried in over the blockade by the famous J.C.A. airlift (J.C.A. stood for *Joint Church Aid* but was the pilots dubbed it *Jesus Christ Airlines*). Later we established a supplementary airlift from Libreville Airport in Gabon using two chartered aircraft.

In doing all this we had help from charitable organisations all over the developed world. *Concern America* was started in Stockton, California by relations and in-laws, Úna and Séan O'Farrell and Peig and Paul Fairbrook. Its initial achievement was when Paul heard that the Sher-I-Bangla Hospital in Dhaka had no kitchen. Paul knew about institutional kitchens and catering and he “responded to the need”. He designed the kitchen, got all the equipment donated, shipped it out and went himself to supervise the installation. However, *Concern America* really matured and found its feet under the direction of Marianne Loewe and Denis Garvey who moved it to Santa Ana. As things settled down the great strength of *Concern* again turned out to be people; the number and quality of the young people who were prepared to give their time and expertise, and in some cases their lives, to serve the needy in far flung parts of the globe and often under the most stressful conditions.

Rachel Shirley was one of those. She served as a *Concern* volunteer in Bangladesh where her dedication was only exceeded by her bravery. She had opened a medical centre in a camp where the hated Bihari minority had gathered for protection. There were people who warned that Rachel would

pay with her life for her initiative. In 1975, Rachel was living in Manchester when she suggested to Fr Mike that there were enough "veterans" in England to start a support group. Raymond was Executive Director in Ireland at the time and was enthusiastic about the idea. Council agreed to sponsor the establishment and underwrite the early running costs. Rachel has been actively involved with Concern Universal ever since.

We very deliberately structured Concern Universal as an autonomous company rather than as a subsidiary. *Response to felt need in a spirit of loving service to the people of the developing world* would be the unifying principle. This would be given substance by having some council members in common. They would be co-opted by one council on the nomination of the other. Ironically and very sadly, this very arrangement - intended to facilitate amicable co-operation and compatibility of policy making - ultimately precipitated divergence and separation.

Most of the people invited to set up the UK organisation had an established connection with *Concern*, but there were two exceptions. In England, Raymond had two long time friends, both going back to his days as a missionary priest in Nigeria. One had been a newly qualified volunteer teacher, who taught in the mission school for several years; Joan Thomas from Cardiff, now better known as Joan McGee. The second was a parishioner, Don McLeish from Sligo, who was working in Owerri, Nigeria, and had helped Raymond with some of his development initiatives. Raymond had a good capacity for making friendships that endured, sometimes through thick and thin.

Both Don and Joan responded generously to his request for help. Pillars of Concern indeed! They both became members of the Board of CU and have stayed the course through thick and thin. Their dedicated service in various capacities over a period of thirty years is part of the history of Concern Universal that others are better qualified to chronicle than I. Indeed I know that a history from 1976 onwards has previously been produced and will be updated ahead of Concern Universal's 30th Anniversary celebrations next year. Looking back I would say that establishing Concern Universal in England was a much harder task, lacking the extraordinary wave of public interest and involvement that carried us in Ireland through the earliest years. Yet despite this, Concern Universal developed momentum over the years and since the early 1990s has undergone a tremendous period of growth and development with substantial country programmes established in ten countries with cross border initiatives extending to a total of 13 countries.

All these years later, I would like to express my admiration, however, for all the Board Members, staff and partners of CU, and for the manner in which CU has found its own way and developed its own style, particularly in three key areas:

1. preserving its autonomy while co-operating widely,

2. keeping faith with its founding principles while learning and adapting from its experience and harnessing the best in the maturing discipline of Development, in particular working in partnership and responding to the needs of the organisation's partners, and the communities they serve, rather than putting Concern Universal first or implementing the formulas of donors . . . while at the same time:
3. Keeping pace with developments in management practice and theory.

Reference to the Board of CU brings to mind one of the most loyal, long term, unassuming and dedicated members who is no longer with us. Friedenstern Howard is remembered by us all with great affection for his caring, unselfish and gentle ways. May he rest in peace.

To-day we celebrate a milestone in recognition that Don McLeish has bowed out of active involvement in the day to day affairs of *Concern Universal* during the past year and now has the new position of Honorary President. For my part, I am honoured to offer him on your behalf, our thanks and admiration for a lifetime of prudent judgement and considered effort in the best long term interest of *Concern Universal*. I want to thank God for anticipating the needs of Concern Universal by giving us Don McLeish. On behalf of myself and of all here present -- and I am sure Raymond would concur - I want to thank Don for responding to the call so wholeheartedly and with such perseverance. I want to thank him also on behalf of countless people we will never know or meet, our brothers and sisters in the developing countries, who have benefited from the work of this splendid organisation over the years.

ORIGINS - PART TWO: RAYMOND KENNEDY¹

A development and emergency relief charity became increasingly well established in Ireland in the late 1960s and early 1970s: today known as Concern Worldwide, its Council of Management met in Dublin in 1975 and examined ways in which to increase its contribution to development. The Council of Management were also conscious of the wishes of those who had worked for the organisation since its founding in 1968 and who at that time were resident in England, either because that was the land of their birth or in the meantime they had settled there. Furthermore they took into account an earlier group of people who had given years of their lives to working in Nigeria – in association with members of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, including supporting communities during the humanitarian crisis in Biafra. They also reflected on the many agencies in England - like Vegfam - who supported initiatives overseas with them.

Against this background, the Council decided to set up a 'sister' organisation in England, or rather to invite English people to set up a 'sister' organisation with which the Irish based organisation would work in close harmony. The general aim was to be the same for each: to respond to felt need in developing countries. In a special way the response, focused on at the time, was to emphasise the sending of volunteers: and therefore development workers from England as well as from Ireland went to developing countries to share needed skills.

So letters of invitation to join in founding a new development organisation were sent to people in England who had worked with the Irish organisation previously such as Rachel Shirley, Elizabeth and Martin Schweiger, Robin Needham and Val Batchelor. They were also sent to people who had previously worked with Catholic Fathers Mike and Kevin Doherty and Raymond Kennedy in Eastern Nigeria such as Don McLeish, and Joan McGee. Friedenstern Howard of Vegfam responded positively to the invitation to be a founder member.

Conscious of the need to have genuine developing country representation from the start, and also of the desirability to have some opening to the universities, we persuaded Irene Khan, then a student of Law at Manchester University, to join CU at a governing body level. That left us beginning with nobody known to the general public to commend our proposed work for their support. Following this, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire V.C. agreed to be our patron, while Bruce Kent offered to join as Trustee for a single three-year term to help get us on our feet. It was he who directed us to Chethams of London, solicitors, who quickly negotiated our being incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in May 1976 and later in December of the same year as a recognized charity. The Charity Commission at the time

¹ Raymond sadly passed away on November 3rd 2004. An obituary in the Irish Times on November 13th 2004 was titled: 'Raymond Kennedy: Humanist that helped feed Biafra'

refused to allow us register as simply 'Concern'. They insisted that we add a 'qualifying adjective to the abstract noun' and so we compromised to become Concern Universal.

Four members of the Irish organisation - including Brian Pearce, the Deputy Executive Director based in Dublin at that time - were invited to sit on the first Board, while four of our members joined theirs. A loan of ten thousand one hundred pounds was made to help get CU going, and we sent our first volunteer development worker to join one of their overseas programmes.

Our early emphasis was on people to people. At first it was all one way, but progressively it became a two-way traffic. In light of various developments in the early years, CU fairly soon became fully autonomous. Bringing us to the present day – and as CU has developed country programmes in recent years, for instance – we have networked with Concern Worldwide at in Country levels in the same way we would co-operate with other NGOs.

CU'S STORY - THE EARLY YEARS

JOAN MCGEE AND IAN WILLIAMS

CU then was born to no riches but with some wise and influential godparents and some willing but inexperienced nursemaids. It had no home but was eventually given shelter in a room in Ogle Street, W1, courtesy of generous Fathers Cox and Fudge of St. Charles Boromeo Church. This arrangement, with a small rent, continued until 1987.

CU's commitment was to the very poor in developing countries. By 1977 Concern Worldwide already had a good track record in emergency and development work in Nigeria, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Yemen. Several of the initial Trustees of CU had worked in these countries; Robin Needham, for example, the Deputy Chairman, had worked with Concern Worldwide in Bangladesh (and later resigned his position to go as a volunteer to the Kampuchean refugee camps on the Thai border). At first then it was natural for the British non governmental organisation (NGO) to concentrate on recruiting volunteers to work in the field where its Irish counterpart had a strong presence. But it did also support specific projects, some of the first of which were a rural health scheme in Chem Chem and a pig breeding project in Makoko, both in Tanzania. Others followed – wells for Sierra Leone schools, help to Cheshire Homes in Zambia and Ethiopia, a community hall for Kiambu, Kenya, tube wells and a home for vagrants in Bangladesh, a water cart with bullock for a very poor area in Southern India, a community centre in Sri Lanka. By 1980 CU had good links with British Community groups such as Salfords Community Aid Project (SCAP) which raised money initially for a water tank in Nangua, Tanzania, and later went on to support health workers in Bangladesh and many other projects. Other groups followed in the 'Home Counties', the Midlands, and further north: COAT, SMOAT, TWOAT, SPAN, all keen to link people's generosity (and relative prosperity) in the UK to specific needs among less fortunate people internationally. Many of the early, small projects mentioned already were the fruit of these links. SPAN have continued to support CU to the present day.

Over the past thirty years CU's interests have extended to other countries, primarily in Africa, Asia and Latin America. While continuing to raise funds in the UK, it has also seen its remit as partnering funding agencies in Britain, the EU and more widely. This aspect of CU's work has developed enormously. The key figure in establishing CU's reputation for efficiency and integrity with the EU in Brussels was Tom Haighton. He came to CU's Board early, bringing a history of relief work with the United Nations, linking it to the work of NGOs. His professionalism probably enabled us to survive in the early days when the other people most involved were the Chairman, a young family man with a full-time job in the Manchester area, and two housewives coping with young children in South London, the Treasurer and Secretary. In 1981 Tom Haighton secured EU funding for a relatively big project, aimed to help mothers and children in Sao Paulo, Brazil. A few years later, a British CU volunteer, Willis Duncan, went to work there and CU's successful support of this initiative continued for many years so that 'Vila Alpina' is still flourishing now. In the

1990s our work in Brazil extended to the North East of the country where we now have a small team working alongside several local partners mainly on projects with children. Tom Haighton eventually retired to concentrate on growing his vines in the South of France.

In 1986 another South American link was made which was to lead to a further long-term commitment: a group in London responded to a volcanic eruption which had created an emergency situation in Armero in Colombia. CU was asked to ensure that the funds were channelled safely to those in need which it did through the NGO CINEP (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular) in Bogotá. Later CU supported a volunteer and there is now a multi-faceted programme in Colombia under a Country Director (who is that same initial volunteer).

In the same year a big step was taken when CU appointed a full-time Executive Director in the person of Alo Donnelly. With his dedication and vision, his creativity and willingness to take risks in a cause in which he totally believed CU grew and strengthened. The following year our turnover began to increase and the base moved from London to Kent where eventually we were able to rent more substantial office accommodation².

In various developing countries, crisis after crisis exercised the consciences of people in Europe and elsewhere. Where possible, CU responded. The civil war in Mozambique, for instance, caused a huge flow of refugees into small, poor, neighbouring Malawi. CU recruited people with appropriate skills and this soon became its first major international programme. Ian Williams was appointed CU's first Country Director in 1990. He subsequently took up the post of International Director/Deputy Executive Director in the UK office (in 1993) and Executive Director after the tragically early death of Alo Donnelly in 1998. When the Mozambican refugees eventually returned to their own country, CU went with them but also stayed in Malawi to work with the local population who had so generously given hospitality to their neighbours. Malawi by this time was, like many African countries, suffering from the terrible effects of HIV AIDS, another issue which CU is deeply engaged with in its work. The commitment to Malawi also brought fresh blood and strength to the Board of Trustees during the 1990s in the persons of Comboni Father Tiziano Laurenti and the retired (but ever active!) Anglican Bishop Donald Arden. More widely Fr Tony Bryne, a person who had been very actively involved with the Biafran crisis (reference his book, *Airlift to Biafra*), and with substantial international experience since, also joined the Board for a period.

CU has tried always to help in disasters, man-made or natural - and most "natural" ones are largely man-made in some way. CU's response has been focused on the countries where CU works since the early 1990s. It would be impossible even to list all those disasters that have occurred in the past twenty-five years – floods in Bangladesh, drought in Ethiopia, hurricanes in

² At first CU rented office accommodation in Rochester Following a brief spell there, it moved to two different offices in Chatham; first to a small premises in New Road Avenue and later to 14 Manor Road (from around 1994 through to mid 1999).

Central America. Sierra Leone exemplified this tragic modern story in the 1990s. CU had had a limited input there, as it had in other West African countries, but in the early 1990s civil war in Liberia led to an influx of refugees to Sierra Leone and CU's substantial engagement began. The situation deteriorated further and by 1996 CU was involved in a major programme, including emergency food interventions, with an in Country office and team. Notably Gerry Carthy, Mwende Munuve, Matthew Lake and Jason Jones commenced work with CU in Sierra Leone. During this time, CU began work in support of Sierra Leone refugees in Guinea. Gerry became director for the region covering Sierra Leone, Guinea and The Gambia. Whilst Matthew went on to work in Bangladesh (Country Director) and the UK (International Director, Asia and Latin America), Gerry and Mwende relocated to Malawi before being based in Kenya (as International Director East and Southern Africa and Country Director respectively). Gerry has also held other key leadership roles including as Acting Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director during important periods of CU's development. Samson worked in the UK before transferring to Malawi as CU's Country Director there.

In Sierra Leone CU played an important role in establishing inter-agency collaboration both at a strategic planning level and on inter-agency joint assessment teams to register and verify needs. Given the level of 'all out war' that subsequently developed in the country in the late 1990s, CU was forced to relocate its support office to Conakry in neighbouring Guinea where CU had opened an office and we supported work for some time in Sierra Leone before eventually withdrawing altogether. The inter-agency legacy remains in Sierra Leone to this day and the work and stature of the Church continues with rehabilitation and development programmes.

Our involvement in neighbouring Guinea and The Gambia increased. Ghana and Nigeria too were included within the CU West Africa Regional focus led by Paul O'Hagan who succeeded Gerry as the West Africa Regional Director in 1998. Paul, Matthew & Gerry are now International Directors for CU providing support for West Africa, Asia & Southern America and East & Southern Africa respectively.

Unlike these West African countries, where social and economic crises exist in a context of natural wealth, Bangladesh is a country which is naturally poor. CU has a long-standing commitment to working there, in two principal areas but with other, smaller off-shoots. In Cox's Bazaar the focus was initially on rural health, with extensive training programmes for medical practitioners and birth attendants. This extended to Chittagong. In the South West and cross border CU works with the Dhaka Asania Mission and other partners on a variety of projects, including rural literacy programmes and all kinds of work with women's groups. After working as Country Director in Malawi, CU's current Chair, Nicola Mushet, worked as Country Director in Bangladesh.

All this work is CU's "raison d'être". Photos and films help to illustrate and inform supporters. No history of CU should leave out a great early publicist, Father Michael Doheny. Until he was incapacitated by a stroke in 1987 Mike gave all his time to visiting and filming in developing countries and then

fundraising for Concern Worldwide, Concern America and CU on speaking tours in Ireland, the United States and the UK. His brother, Kevin, shared his vision. Where Mike did the publicity bit, Kevin spent his life working internationally wherever the need was deemed to be greatest - in famine-stricken Ethiopia and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and, increasingly, with refugees. CU had strong links with him in this work. Another film-maker who worked with Mike Doheny was Paul Gane, who also served CU as Chair for a short period. Others who took their turn in the Chair were Raymond Kennedy and Brian Pearce; but for most of CU's first twenty-five years the Chair was Don McLeish. These are all people whose passion for justice grew out of their experiences in Africa.

For several years, Alo had considered developing work at a greater level in Ireland; to take steps to develop a programme that would be part of CU's wider strategy and properly integrate development education, fund raising, etc. Against this background, in 1996, it was a relatively natural step (given CU's origins) for CU to establish Children in Crossfire (CIC) as a programme based in Derry / Londonderry with Richard Moore leading this.

In 1999 it was decided to move the CU office from Chatham to Hereford. Accommodation was found in a central situation in a building of the 'Society of Friends'. The move to the charming Welsh border seems to be proving a healthy one. It has bedded down firmly into a local community which has been supportive in terms of volunteer help and provided a welcome intro into schools, churches and businesses, their connections reaching to beyond the city of Hereford to the whole area and into the West Midlands/Border Counties. It would be premature to predict that the thirty year old may have found its long-term UK home but certainly the organisation is sufficiently satisfied about its base to direct all its restless energy into its work.

It is evident from this brief history that as it has grown to adulthood CU has been fortunate in attracting the support of 'giants' of commitment, imagination and drive. It has been served well and faithfully by many friends who have not made it to the headlines. One of these is the late Frieden Howard, who was the Director of Vegfam. Early in our history we had, through the link with Vegfam, a mutually supportive relationship with Find Your Feet, a charity led by the late Carole Martin. CU is committed to value of collaboration and partnership at all levels and has worked with many other NGOs over the years, one of the most consistent relationships being with Aidlink in Ireland led by the charismatic and committed Anne Cleary as Executive Director. It is worth mentioning that Alo Donnelly and others involved with CU were part of the Aidlink's origins. Notably also Caritas Germany has been important in CU's history especially appreciating the guidance and support of their inspiring (recently retired) African Director, Eugen Blyler. CU has been supported by multiple funding partners – the litany is too long to give in its entirety.

CU has at times flourished, at times floundered, stumbled, and once or twice almost died. At thirty, it is more stable and mature but still dynamic, optimistic and idealistic.

Some of the founding group are still there – Don McLeish, now as Honorary Chair (since 2006), Rachel Shirley and Joan McGee. Raymond Kennedy - whose brainchild CU originally was, and who remained strongly supportive in later years (albeit in the wings rather than centre stage) - sadly passed away in 2003. The founders held firmly to the tradition and to the Christian-based philosophy which has informed CU's ethos throughout its history. The staff are a major strand in the story - hard working, professional (paid or volunteers), charismatic in their leadership qualities. These and the local partners are the greatest strength of CU. They work alongside all the people whose needs the organisation strives to understand and meet. The world faces huge and emerging challenges such as climate change that have a tremendous impact on all of us and especially on vulnerable communities. Because the problems are so great, it would be easy to give up hope and do nothing. CU has always believed that if you can't do it all you must do what you can – and do it tirelessly, professionally, perseveringly and even with good humour. Ad multos annos!

EARLY 1990s TO 2011

IAN WILLIAMS

CU's story from the early 1990s to 2011 is remarkable! Based on an increasingly positive experience with a fledgling programme in Malawi (from the late 1980s onwards), CU looked toward a new horizon in 1993: it articulated a clear goal - to establish substantial programmes in ten countries.

Great progress was made from the mid 1990s: today CU has ten country programmes with activities that extend to a total of 12 countries; through the huge efforts of more than 500 staff and over 50 country partners, more than 2 million people participate in CU's work each year. Along the way a new NGO, Children in Crossfire - grown as a programme or seed within CU - was established. Furthermore, over the past few years there has been a quantum leap in the scale and ambition of unrestricted fundraising in the West of England/Welsh Border counties area: in late 2006 there was just one regular staff member and a handful of volunteers; numbers of regular supporters have since increased from 250 to over 4,000; there are now 15+ people employed in the fundraising team and an increased network of volunteers. The approach is characterized by integrity and a coherent integration and presentation of our work across the organisation.

Shaped by a decentralised and 'bottom up' driven strategy renewal process, CU continues to look forwards to new horizons. This is not for the sake of the 'organisation', but instead - within a fast changing environment that demands a forward thinking and sustainable approach - the people and partners it exists to serve.

In setting out on that journey in the early 1990s, CU had as a springboard experience of working with many small scale initiatives in a wide variety of countries (from the late 1970s and through the 1980s). This provided a web of relationships that could be nurtured. CU also had experienced governance and a number of partnerships with organisations such as Vegfam, Aidlink, Caritas Germany that could be built on. Above all, in mixing these ingredients together, CU was willing to take risks! It put people - their participation and their rights and needs - at the centre. CU was passionate about responding to the injustices and inequalities that were articulated through dialogue and deeper understanding - rather than imposing a blueprint of what it thought was best. The late Alo Donnelly, CU's first Executive Director (1986-1998), once commented: '*we have one criteria, no criteria*' when explaining his conviction that CU ought to keep open minded and flexible to enable the most appropriate strategy to emerge in any given country or situation³.

³ It can be reasoned that such an approach is consistent with principles of 'community first' or 'people/development first' articulated in the timeless book by Paulo Freire, the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. This approach is the foundation for subsequent developments such as 'Training for Transformation', Adult Literacy (reference REFLECT for instance), various concepts concerning 'Sustainable Development' (e.g. work by Robert Chambers) and so on.

CU had learned by the early 1990s that it could transform its levels of impact, influence, scale and scope of activity from a more targeted approach – the deeper our understanding of a context the more appropriate and lasting our response would be. Hence its aspiration to establish ten well rooted country programmes (rather than continue with smaller scale activities in a wide number of countries). With little financial resources, CU's growing team and partners had extraordinary entrepreneurial ability, energy and commitment.... Yes, there were mistakes along the way. But lessons were learnt. Paramount to building momentum was the tenacity of Country Director's and their teams and CU's unflinching belief that if the need is well founded and the programme emerging good, funding should be sought and secured. This enabled more solidly based strategies to form as each cycle of renewal went by. Whereas before there was very little guidance, today CU has a great deal: for instance the articulation of CU's Advocacy Guide and Toolkit and creation of CU's modus operandi, or 'Operations Guide'. CU also now has well established systems to back up country programmes. However, the challenges are still great. Despite its progress, CU remains on a 'knife edge' in many respects. Moving forward continues to require great resourcefulness.

Whilst CU's in county NGO partnerships have evolved considerably over the years, a host of relationships has also developed more widely. This initially mainly stemmed from contacts at a European level, though it has since branched out well beyond this. Collaboration has spread in various ways; for instance, to working in innovative ways with businesses notably Tetley, Haygrove and Coaching Partners; or to engaging in a wide array of arrangements with Governments at district, regional or national levels; with Trusts and Foundations, the relationship with William Cadbury in West Africa and the UK and the Leadership Trust; or, in relation to international NGOs, to greater strategic co-operation with organisations such as AFAP (Australian Foundation for Peoples of Asia and the Pacific), that has enabled funding to be sourced from AusAID, RIJ (Refugees International Japan) in Tokyo, Project Concern International (PCI) in California, US, Aidlink in Ireland and so on. While these have been forged in the recent past, collaboration with one particularly long-standing partner, Concern America, goes right back to CU's origins. CU believes in partnership and in a 'collaborate to compete' approach: ultimately not with the sights on competing with other NGOs (or indeed business or governments) but rather, more profoundly, competing with the attitudinal and behaviour change issues that warrant urgent attention in our world. Many of CU founders had great courage in fighting for change and improved human rights - by way of illustration, Irene Khan who was until recently General Secretary of Amnesty International. This was an important factor in endeavouring to develop country programme momentum with very limited resources – for instance, Raymond Kennedy, when sometimes signing off his correspondence to Country Director's in the early 1990s, added with 'good courage' realising the oftentimes acute pressures faced.

In its leadership approach, CU believes in autonomy on the one hand with participation across CU on the other: CU's country programmes lead activities locally supported by a dispersed international management team and an

office in the UK⁴. With respect to the latter, CU continues to avoid having this considered a 'head office': whether in the UK - or for that matter elsewhere – this would not fit with CU's approach. Indeed, a lasting legacy from the early to mid 1990s is an organisation, and set of relationships and values, where responsibility is respected and encouraged, and where people are able to simply 'get on with it'. This is notwithstanding that key decisions are debated and shared and that there is an increasingly well established understanding in place of what decisions are taken centrally and which are taken locally - defined in CU as 'Common Law' (most recently reviewed in early 2007).

Since mid 2006 Don McLeish has been CU's Honorary President and he was at the heart of CU from the start. As Founding Chair, Don helped the organisation successfully weather the many storms that arose. His impact, as that of Alo Donnelly's, was hugely instrumental in so many ways and in setting CU on its path. More recently, under Nicola Mushet's (2006-2010) and Oley Dibba Wadda's (2010-2011) tenures as Chairs of trustees, the ongoing positive transformation of the governance of CU continues to align itself with the changing challenges faced. Dan Bishop, before being a Managing Director of a business, worked with CU in Malawi and the UK; he is now Vice Chair. Another Vice Chair in recent years, Peter Ayres, has a background in international business. During the 1990s CU benefited at a board level from the business and wider international experience of Colm Lennon & Finbarr O'Donovan. More recently - and from the West of England business community - Mike Lloyd was one of CU's trustees. . People not there, but who served in recent years before moving on include ex West Africa team members, Robin Todd (now Country Director in Malawi) and Tracey Deal. Rosemary Collie served on CU's board and had extensive experience in various sectors. CU's Profile document provides a background to all CU's current trustees.

Humanitarian emergencies have caused immense suffering. The number of these is likely to escalate with climate change and the impact is likely to be particularly acute for many vulnerable communities that CU works with. Whilst CU's emphasis has been on facilitating longer-term sustainable development initiatives, it has also responded substantially to emergencies in the places where it has country programmes. Against that background, CU's growing emphasis has been on disaster preparedness, especially recognising that many communities that CU engage with are either about to confront a disaster, are living in one or have just emerged from one. Whatever the circumstances, the primary focus continues to be with people: as one man, Kavithi wa Ngundi, said to Gerry Carthy, former CU International Director for East and Southern Africa, in the midst of famine in the 1980s, '*we endure famine so that we can look forward to a future for our children*'. CU believes

⁴ In 1999 it was decided to move the CU office in Chatham, Kent to Herefordshire (21 King Street, Hereford). CU bedded down quickly into the Welsh border/West-Midlands, winning, for instance, a '*Community Business of the Year*' award as early as 2002; it won this award again in 2010 and has been shortlisted on two other occasions.

that it is critical to be in relationship with people at all levels and at all times so that people stay at the centre in all that we do.

Each Country history that follows picks up on the fact that a very significant number of people have been actively involved with CU for many years. In the UK there is a similar story and this includes, notably, David and Zina Fear: based in Devon, they continue to actively advance the work of the organisation, particularly building up the base of Trust & Foundation support. They were CU's first international staff in Bangladesh in the early 1990s.

Established as a programme in CU in 1996, Children in Crossfire (CIC) is now fully independent. CIC became a registered charity in Ireland in 2001. CIC initially focused on fundraising and development education work on a cross border and cross community basis. It has developed from this springboard as Richard's team and CiC's work has grown in reputation and influence. There have been major positive exchanges with various CU country programmes over the years and key international initiatives as a result: in 2002, for instance, the sight of Irish, Kamba, Maasai, Colombian and English people dancing in the plains of Kenya was a sight to behold; this was part of a four year EC co-financed multi-country development education programme; the sharing of tribal conflict in from other parts of the world was understood by young people from both sides of Northern Ireland's sectarian 'Troubles' - there were tears of sadness and joy on that wonderful occasion for shared humanity. Don McLeish was CIC's Chair until recently and remains a board member. Richard continues as its Executive Director. CIC celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2007

Until 2010 CU had 3 International Directors, Matthew Lake, Paul O' Hagan and Gerry Carthy (covering Latin America and South Asia, West Africa and East and Southern Africa respectively). Now Matthew Lake has wider responsibilities (as detailed on CU's Organogram). Catriona Lennox led CU's Public Fundraising from 1996 until early 2010 until Rich Thunder took on this responsibility, handing over to Alison Palfrey in late 2011. Blaise White has overall responsibility for Finance and Services working alongside Emer Fogarty, based in Dublin, Kristina Hill and Chesca DeLuca. The first person leading Finance at a staff level was Peter Sheward who spearheaded this from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s. Trevor Henderson then took on the position to be followed briefly by Emma Hillyard before Blaise's appointment. Ellie Chowns and Victoria Seaman, now Assistant Company Secretary, worked closely with Matthew in the programme team in the UK; the team now includes James Treasure Evans and Beth Houghton. Debbie Stenner is Marketing and Communications Manager and she works alongside Alex Sherry, as Marketing and Communications Assistant. After working for 13 years as CU's Country Director in Malawi, and previously in the UK and Sierra Leone, Samson Hailu is now based in London as International Funding Co-ordinator working with Clive Caffall as Marketing Researcher. Over the years many people have played a key role at a UK office level, including Catherine Bockett, Dan Bishop, David Hillyard, Jason Hayward Jones, Sandra Harber and Catherine Elliot to name just a few.

CU now looks forward.

Given the global need, nothing other than a further metamorphosis is called for. This requires new streams of thinking and energy to be combined with the existing values, people and relationships that have served CU. Notably Richard and Kay Harvey's commencement of a 'gap year' with CU in 2007 offered outstanding potential in this regard following Richard's retirement from CEO at Aviva (in July 2007) and Kay's wide breadth of experience. They are both Patrons of CU now and have been very proactively involved and tremendous advocates of CU; along the way they have encouraged generous and influential people to be involved such as Hugh Pym, Chief Economics Correspondent of the BBC.

Many new opportunities and challenges will present themselves in coming years and CU can approach these with growing confidence knowing that the timeless 'community led approach' will underline all strategies and hopefully guide us to untiring service, compassion and ever increasing professional standards that truly deliver in a cost effective and timely way: as one Regulo (Village Elder, Mozambique) said during a seed distribution initiative after inquiring 'which agency is it?' - 'ah, Concern Universal, that's ok, they always keep their word'.

MALAWI – ROBIN TODD

Crisis in Malawi: Between 1988 & 1994 the people of Malawi welcomed and provided protection and assistance for one of the largest refugee caseloads on the African continent. During this period this small and very poor nation extended remarkable support in camps and integrated Malawian villages to over 1.5 million Mozambican refugees fleeing from their war torn country. CU arrived in Malawi in response to the refugee influx and worked with Malawian communities and the refugee communities they were hosting. The work was mainly in Dedza west and Ntcheu and included the provision of safe water, income-generating activities, support to vocational training centres, and kitchen garden nutrition projects. It is humbling for any newcomer to CU Malawi to reflect on the tremendous effort during that period of the Malawian people, government and those early pioneers of CU Malawi – a mix of Malawian staff, international team members, diocesan partners, and support from the CU UK office.

Growth and development of CU Malawi: By 1994 the refugees had returned to their now more stable country and Malawi itself was embarking on a new future with the arrival of multi-party democracy. The transition to multi party democracy was helped in no small part by CU who worked closely with the Catholic Church (especially Monsignor Roche of Mzuzu Diocese and Fr. Tony Sherin of Zomba Major Seminary, who were at the forefront of the democratic transition). CU embarked on a period of expansion of its development support continuing to work in the impoverished communities that had supported the refugees. CU began also to shape a programme of support to local partners – community organisations, NGOs and churches working in community development activities. This work was motivated by the simple purpose that guided CU's work: "To empower Malawians to identify and achieve their own development objectives".

Between 1994 and 2007 CU's work in Malawi has grown significantly. A number of core programmes are at the heart of this work and have been responsible for the excellent reputation CU now has for its responsive development and emergency work in Malawi.

A large sustainable livelihoods and food security programme is the flag ship of CU with projects in Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka and Phalombe district. The aims of this programme are to improve household food security, increase income, improve local infrastructure and develop community organisations to participate in the development process. These aims are achieved through activities in agricultural extension, soil conservation, natural resource management, nutrition education and marketing. Water and environmental sanitation activities and microfinance are an integral part of the sustainable livelihoods effort and are substantial programmes in their own right.

The water and environmental sanitation programme provides safe water, primarily through the construction of bore holes and shallow wells, hygiene education and training for community groups in how to look after water

supplies. CU's experienced team of engineers, hydrologists and drillers have provided support to communities in Thyolo, Dedza, Ntcheu, Blantyre, and Chikwawa districts.

CU started establishing its own microfinance operation in 2000 with the fully-fledged operation commencing in January 2003. The objective for this has been to respond to the growing awareness that access to credit and other financial services is critical for the sustainable development and improvement in living standards of poor rural communities. CUMO (Concern Universal Microfinance Operation) now operates in Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka, Lilongwe rural, Phalombe, Salima and Mangochi districts providing an innovative range of products including short term credit, agricultural loans, and crop insurance. In 2007 CUMO was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee with a board of experienced professionals and senior CU staff responsible for its direction and performance.

Capacity building support to local organisations is an integral part of CU's Malawi programme with considerable opportunity for such work in the years of the new democracy which saw the rapid emergence of civil society organisations working across all sectors. CU has been involved in the introduction and establishment of organisational development services and training across a wide number of programme and organisational areas including participatory and gender sensitive approaches, financial management, project management, proposal development and donor liaison for a broad range of local organisations. CU continues to provide such support as well as the provision of grants to support organisations programme work.

The most significant challenge for any development organisation, CU included, that has emerged over these years since the 1992 political change has been the impact of HIV and AIDS on every individual Malawian and every household and community. Despite tremendous efforts and successes in addressing the causes and consequences of this devastating disease, the HIV prevalence across the population in 2007 stands at 14%, with much higher levels in high risks groups. CU's HIV and AIDS support work became a primary focus of CU development efforts in 2003. This innovative work has expanded enormously and CU now addresses issues of prevention and behaviour change, care and support, and impact mitigation for our staff and families and the communities we work with. CU has gained considerable experience of adapting and shaping its core programme work to be effective in the context of HIV and AIDS and all the constraints and challenges that brings.

Guided by a series of country strategies, CU now aims to concentrate its development activities in a number of priority districts chosen primarily on the basis of poverty statistics and home to some of the poorest communities in Malawi. CU has been working in Dedza and Ntcheu districts since it started its operations in Malawi. Despite enormous improvements in the lives of many people, in these districts there are still communities that CU has not been able to support so these districts remain a part of CU's country programme. Three more districts are now included as priority districts –

Balaka, Thyolo and Phalombe. CU is committed to a holistic response to the development challenges of these districts and anticipates working in these districts for the foreseeable future.

CU Malawi established a permanent Emergency and Rehabilitation programme with dedicated staff in 2002 to enhance its response to the frequent emergencies that Malawi faces. These are caused by a wide variety of factors including an increasing population (despite the impact of HIV and AIDS) with the subsequent pressure on productive land, adverse weather conditions, inappropriate farm practices and weak governance. The emergency programme was fully challenged and responded effectively to the droughts and subsequent food shortages in the 2002-03 and 2004-05 seasons when massive support was provided to communities that had harvested either very little or nothing at all. In 2005-2006 almost 5 million people in Malawi received food aid support with CU involved to a very great extent in this.

CU's programme efforts are supported by advocacy and networking activities. CU participates in a wide range of development networks and committees. CU's latest country strategy developed in 2005 committed CU to deepening and expanding its operations in its core programme areas whilst reaffirming and consolidating some of the principles that underpin its work. These include working through and with local partners, participation of all those with a stake in the development process, raising awareness around basic human rights as a major cause of Malawi's ongoing and worsening poverty, building household, community, civil society and local government capacity, and sustainability of this work and effort. CU has recently committed to enhancing its own research effort to support the appropriate development of its work.

In 2004 CU Malawi took an important step in establishing its own in country advisory board to provide local guidance to the development of its work. A significant challenge that CU Malawi now faces is continuing to raise the financial support to maintain the diverse and extensive development work it has established over the last 12-13 years and indeed to expand this work which is the desire of CU as it strives to assist communities in their fight against increasing poverty. Whilst there are many committed donors and a great deal of confidence in CU's work the competition for funds is increasing year by year and CU needs to be on top of its game in developing winning proposals to respond to well defined community needs.

KENYA – MWENDE MUNUVE

CU has been supporting projects in Kenya through local partners since the mid 1990s. In November 2000, CU opened a field office in Nairobi to primarily support CU operations in Kenya. Consistent with CU's organisational vision and values, the CU Kenya programme is – and will continue to be developed on the basis of relationships with key stakeholders; primarily local partners and their constituencies, Government line Ministries and other development agencies.

Making a little do a lot and using micro-project funding - such as the EU Block Grant - CU gained a vital foothold to become established. In this way CU began support in Kenya as in many other places where initial small grants were used to develop capacities, gain a deeper understanding of community needs and develop longer-term organisational and funding strategies. In 2000/01, CU worked initially with two partners in two districts; Makutano Community Development Association (MCDA) in Machakos and Mitamisyi Poverty Alleviation Program in Mwingi. Over the past 6 years, both organisations have developed to be lead agencies in their respective districts, transitioning from CBOs to NGOs and serving large numbers of people.

By early 2007 CU had included four more districts with substantial programmes in all six districts. The new districts and partners include Garissa & Ijara districts (working with Womankind Kenya - WOKIKE), Wajir (with Wajir South Development Association – WASDA) and Kajiado (with Maasai AIDS Awareness Programme – MAAP). The districts are located in the Provinces of North-Eastern, Eastern and Rift Valley and are within the Arid & Semi Arid Land (ASAL) zone characterized by low rain fall, frequent drought (flash flooding), mixed farming and large areas of pastorism. In 2002, Kenya elected a new president (Mwai Kibaki) and government. While major challenges of corruption, poverty, poor infrastructure etc. remain, the five years of the Kibaki-led government has seen improvements, especially in the economy and at district level where collaboration with district authorities is a major positive part of CU's strategy.

Over the years, CU has been able to realise it's strategy by extending to six districts, developing and supporting Local Organisation implemented programmes, collaborating closely with government at district and national level, networking with wider agency groups and national networks. CU and Partners are now respected and appreciated at district and national levels.

Over the past 7 years, relationships with key people has been central to the positive evolution of CU Kenya. With partners, the hallmark of our relationship is a mix of warmth and professionalism. This allows for a high level of trust and partnership at all stages of programme work. As stated, the relationship with government ministries, administration and coordination is central to programme capacity and sustainability. Relationships with donors and supporters continues to grow strongly and is underlined by close continued collaboration e.g. with Anne Cleary of Aidlink (no longer working on projects), Pete Spaarman of Cordaid, Francis Chabari (formerly of Cordaid, GTZ) and

lately USAID, Heather Elkins of the EU, Richard Moore of CiC, Kevin Vang & David Brett of AFAP, Dr Karanja of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Asif Khan formerly of AusAID, Lucy Kimiri of AusAID and a host of wider associates from local civil society agencies, Church groups etc. Relatively speaking, Kenya has a highly qualified workforce in all strata of society (business, legal, private, research, state bodies and para-statal etc.). CU fully utilizes this capacity through outsourcing work e.g. events management, short to long-term consultancies, support work etc. The model works well and means that the CU office holds a minimum of personnel – 5 full-time staff in total. CU also employs the IAWG Administrative Secretary housed in OCHA at UN HQ in Nairobi.

The CU regional office is also housed in Nairobi. Consistent with CU's cost efficient approach, the regional office comprises of one person and provides support to Mozambique, Malawi and Kenya. The three country teams work very well together and have effectively developed and delivered regionally funded programmes. In addition, CU is now an active member of the Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) and several wider regional initiatives that focus sector specific initiatives. This assists in keeping CU up to speed on current discussion and developments in various sector issues and best practice development – noting that Nairobi is the largest centre for UN outside of New York, USA and has more than 50 international regional organisations covering three large regional zones i.e. Chad & Sudan, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (that now extends to Cameroon, Zambia and the Central African Republic).

MOZAMBIQUE – HELENA SKEMBER

CU began working with the people of Mozambique when they fled to Malawi as refugees as a result of the Renamo / Frelimo conflict (17 years of conflict). So from the beginning, CU in Malawi & Mozambique have had close ties. With the return of the refugees to Mozambique during the early 1990s, it was natural for CU to be part of re-integration and development initiatives to continue the support we gave when they were refugees in Malawi.

Some important assessment visits were made to review the possibilities with a focus on Tete, Nampula & Niassa Provinces. Following these assessments CU tried to source funding to support most needy projects e.g., in 1993 EU Block Grant funds were allocated for a water micro-project with the Camboni Fathers in Nampula. Later, in 1995, a review of ongoing micro-project activities was carried out & the way forward was considered – a small emergency response ensued and, most important, the decision to open a CU office in Lichinga, Niassa Province, Mozambique.

Links had already been established with the Anglican Diocese in Niassa, who had invited CU to work there. In light of the research undertaken, the high level of needs of the area and the lack of NGOs, it was deemed most effective to focus efforts in Niassa. It is worth noting, as with other CU country operations, that initial positive links were first made through Church groups working on the ground. And this was a first for CU in terms of beginning to work with the Anglican Church.

In 1995 CU, along with the Anglican Diocese of Niassa, Dan Church Aid (DCA) and the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) agreed a wider strategy. This strategy invited CU to take on a role of 'support' organisation for the Anglican Diocese in Niassa. Based on this strategy, a five-year rural development programme was funded by the EU, DFID, and DCA with income from the Diocesan Training Centre. This provided a solid basis for CU to begin facilitating work more substantially in Mozambique.

The programme was titled the 'Kuchijinji Development Programme' which represents 'people meeting under a tree' which was where 'Kuchijinji' started ... Kuchijinji is an acacia thorn tree.. The name & reputation of 'Kuchijinji' is now known far & wide and is testimony to the achievement of that five year programme especially.

CU's initial involvement was focused on working within the KDP. Christopher Brady, as CU's first Country Director, began the work of CU in this regard & Mark provided hand over support at the outset. Key CU and partner representatives played their part, for instance, Bishop Paulino of the Anglican Diocese & Bishop Dom Luis of the Catholic Diocese were remarkable people who oversaw the transition from conflict to rehabilitation and peace. Concern America supported the programme in a variety of ways from the beginning.

There is an important thread running through the development of the CU Programme in Mozambique, as evidenced in the MOUs (Memorandum of

Understandings) established between CU & KDP, CU & Nampula Diocese, CU & UCA and CU & the Diocese of Lichinga. From the start, CU wanted to work in a support relationship to local partners serving their beneficiary groups. Within the context of the initial programme, CU endeavoured to nurture this approach.

The focus of the CU Mozambique programme became centred almost 100% on Niassa Province as a number of micro-project activities came to an end in Nampula. With a base in Lichinga, it was possible to develop the core components of a support relationship, delivering projects with strong community involvement and ownership. The external evaluation carried out by the EU in 2001 of the initial project provides evidence of this.

As well as working with the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses, a partnership was developed with the Union of Co-operatives & Associations (UCA). This was important as it brought CU into another relationship with an organisation from a predominantly Muslim context. So, in essence, CU was involved with two Christian Church Partners and one Muslim and a wide range of traditional faith groups as well; an important balance as the portfolio of partners and activities developed with a primary focus on serving communities with full community participation.

Harold Tessendorf followed Christopher as the second Country Director and Rosario Santana later took over as third Country Director in early 2001. Harold had previously worked with CU in Sierra Leone and a main part of his brief, supported by Rosario, was to further establish CU as an organisation in Mozambique working in support of local partners which included the opening of a CU Office and a move out of Kuchijini where the office had been located. This move facilitated a necessary 'distance' from the management of Kuchijini and allowed for much more access to other existing and potential partners. The transition worked very well. While the programme faced challenges, there were important advances and CU is now seen as a lead agency in Niassa in both HIV-AIDS & Adult Literacy and has strong programmes in Food Security, Water & Sanitation and a good programme in support of the Catholic Diocese Community Health Programme.

The Managers of CU Mozambique at the moment are Helena Skember - Country Director, Manirambona Consolate - Senior Programme Manager and Agostinho Cigarro – A&F Manager. CU Mozambique programme receives direct support from the CU Regional and UK Offices. CU Mozambique works in 9 districts of Niassa Province in Partnership with the following local organizations: Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), Catholic Diocese, Farmers Union (UCA), Association of PLWHA (KWIMUKA), Association of PLWHA (OLAKA) and Association of Blind and visually challenged people of Mozambique (ACAMO). In Maputo Province, CUMoz works in Matutine district in partnership with local development Association – HLUVUKU.

The on-going strategy of CU Mozambique emphasizes the importance of developing and sustaining strategic relationships with Partner NGOs (old and new), government ministries and donors. Memoranda of Understanding

(MOU) are in place to guide CU's collaboration with partners. All CU Partners have developed structures; collaborate well with government and have strong community based focus and capacity. We are open to learning from communities and partners as well as providing them with the skills and technical support they need. CU is active in the development of provincial and district strategies in support of Irish Aid & ASDI plans (who have bi-lateral relationships with GOM & who focus on Niassa Province).

In August 2006 CUMoz opened a sub-office in Maputo Province allowing for closer links with national agencies, government and donors and allowing CUMoz to open a programme in Maputo province as well as to consider initiating programmes in other provinces. While opening a sub-office in Maputo was a positive strategic move, Niassa Province will remain the mainstay of the CUMoz programme over coming years. The dual provincial approach will also facilitate wider learning and programme opportunities. The focus of our intervention in Niassa province will be HIV and AIDS, Adult Literacy, good governance, decentralization & Capacity building. The focus sector of our intervention in Maputo province will be Water and environmental sanitation & Capacity building within a wider poverty alleviation strategy

The current 2007–2010 strategy was developed through a participatory process involving local partners, communities and their leaders, local Government and staff members. The overall strategic objective of CU Mozambique is to empower Mozambicans to identify and achieve their own development objectives.

Our strategy in Mozambique emphasizes the importance of developing and sustaining strategic relationships with Partner NGOs (old and new), government ministries and donors and wider agency networking and collaboration. At the core of CUMoz partnership approach is a deep sense of value and respect for the processes involved in relationship building and the partner's development as a means to achieve sustainable community development.

The CU Mozambique programme over the next few years will remain focused on basic needs and poverty reduction while taking into account the emerging trends, particularly good governance and district planning aspects.

BRAZIL – ANGELA BRIGHTLING

CU's story in Brazil is one of partnership and support, progressively developing its work and experience from child-focused activities, initially on a parish scale, to the promotion of child rights on a Statewide scale, broadening more recently to include women's rights and the empowerment of poor communities to access basic services that improve the quality of their lives.

The current CU Brazil programme stemmed from two main projects in the industrialised city of São Paulo in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as a portfolio of smaller block grant projects. Working in partnership with Fr Eamonn McMahon of the Spiritan Order, two major community crèches were constructed in the São Paulo districts of Vila Alpina and Vila Diva. Both facilities continue to have a strong impact on the lives of some of the poorest children and their families from the region, attending thousands of children over the years, reducing the risk of them joining the huge numbers of "street children" of São Paulo. These crèche facilities also provide parents of the children with the opportunity to seek employment, as well as providing orientation courses on health, hygiene, home administration and family planning, thus helping to improve the families' standard of living.

In late 1996 Angela Brightling (current Country Director of CU Brazil) was contracted as Assistant Coordinator of the Vila Diva project. Seeing a need and an opportunity for CU to revise its vision & activities in Brazil, a proposal was prepared to consider expansion to the dry impoverished north-east region to incorporate a project focusing on children at risk. With this in mind a co-financing proposal was prepared for the Casa Pequeno Davi (CPD) project located in João Pessoa, capital of the State of Paraíba, being approved for EU co-financing in October 1998. In July 1997 Angela was recruited to the CU Country Director role dividing her responsibilities and time between the Vila Diva and CPD projects. The construction of the Vila Diva crèche came to a successful conclusion in December 1998. With that, CU Brazil's focus switched entirely to the poorest region of Brazil, the north-east, working initially with the CPD project with a view to improving their response to the situation of some of the poorest children and adolescents from João Pessoa.

Identification of the early programme strategy was driven by the overwhelming needs of children in Brazil, in the north-east region and especially in the State of Paraíba, where CU has been based since 1997. Paraíba is the 3rd poorest State in Brazil with a Human Development Ranking comparable to that of India and Kenya and with certain areas comparable to that of Bangladesh, Gambia or Guinea. Half of its population of 3.6 million live below the poverty line. It has the 3rd worst social indicators in Brazil with regard to the situation of children, with proportionally the highest number of working children, high levels of infant mortality (40.8/1000 – national rate is 25/1000), malnourishment, illiteracy, abuse and sexual exploitation of children and their exposure to violence on a daily basis.

With children as its focus, in 1999 the CU programme in Brazil incorporated a further two partners, Pastoral do Menor (PaMen) and Associação Comunitária Nova Vida (ACNV), reaching disadvantaged and vulnerable children from 05 cities and towns in Paraíba. All 03 partners helped to shape the CU programme, influencing the inclusion in 2000 of a fourth partner, the Child Rights Forum, an umbrella body for child focused civil society organisations (CSOs) in Paraíba. With the inclusion of this partner, and funding from the EC, DFID and Irish Aid, the Brazil programme broadened and developed, focusing, from 2001 to 2006, on the well-being of children and the promotion and defence of child rights throughout the State of Paraíba, reaching 86 organisations and 10,000 children directly, apart from their families and communities. The programme focused on the strengthening and unification of CSOs and, through them, the mobilisation of children, their families and communities, to influence the implementation of Child Rights policies.

Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Whilst the country enjoys middle-income status and has significant economic and political influence internationally, 20 million people live in extreme poverty and 40 million on less than US\$2/day. Much remains to be done to ensure that people's rights are understood and respected. This, together with our partners and those they work with, shaped the direction of our most recent programme and influenced, since 2006, the development of projects that envisage the empowerment of poor communities to access basic services that improve the quality of their lives – services such as health, sanitation and education. In 2007 the 'Community-led Advocacy Initiatives (CLAIM)' joint project commenced in Brazil and Colombia. In partnership with CPD, PaMen and ACNV, this project reaches 5 communities from four towns and cities in Brazil.

With a view to further increasing impact and broadening the scope of the programme, in 2005 relations were established with a potential new partner, Cunha - Coletivo Feminista, a Paraiban NGO that focuses on women's rights on a local, State and national level. We are currently working in partnership on a women's rights and income-generating project with rural women living in the dry, semi-arid area of the state.

Whilst civil society is traditionally relatively strong in Brazil there are, nevertheless, few organisations in Paraíba with the organisational capacity necessary to make a sustainable impact on the situation of poverty. Therefore, Concern Universal's geographical niche as only one of two international agencies in Paraíba, together with our partnership approach and strong experience with rights issues, places us in a unique position to strengthen and complement local partners towards our joint goal of respect for rights and reduction of poverty. This is accomplished with a small team currently consisting of the Country Director (Angela) and two Brazilians, a Programme Officer (Marivete) and Finance/Admin Officer (Roseane).

After a long drawn-out process, CU finalised its registration in Brazil as a national association in March 2007, becoming known locally as Associação Concern Universal Brasil (ACUB). This presents a number of opportunities,

including enabling the receipt of funds from Brazilian sources. Fulfilling Brazilian regulations, the association has a non-remunerated board of directors, consisting of three people, two Irish (including the CU Country Director) and one Brazilian. The association has 10 founding members, which include CU as an honorary member with specific powers, represented by the current CU Chair – Nicola Mushet. The members consist of one representative from four of our local partners, three representatives of other local well-established and respected NGOs that have a similar vision to CU, and two representatives from the local federal university – one of whom has done consultancy work for CU Brazil in the past. Considering their collective experience and links with CU throughout the years, this group was invited to take on the additional task of being an in-country advisory group and it is anticipated that they will play an important role in the strategy review to take place in the near future.

Partnership - current partners are:

Casa Pequeno Davi (CPD). A partner of many years, CPD works directly with 400 of the most vulnerable children, their families and more recently the communities where they live – some of the poorest in João Pessoa, capital of Paraíba. CPD won an important award recently as the best known NGO in João Pessoa.

Pastoral do Menor (PaMen) is the child-rights wing of the Catholic Diocese that Concern Universal has supported for many years. It incorporates 08 community based groups with similar aims that work with 600 of the poorest children, their families and communities from the peripheries of 05 cities/towns in Paraíba.

Associação Comunitária Nova Vida (ACNV) is a maturing and committed partner, working with 350 vulnerable children, their families and more recently the communities where they live in the town of Sapé, 43 km from the capital city, João Pessoa.

On different levels, all three of the above partners play an important child rights advocacy role locally and regionally and are well networked with a diversity of organisations, government bodies and local media.

Cunhã - Coletivo Feminista (Cunhã). With gender disparities and abuse of women's rights a grave problem in Brazil, Cunhã works on a local, state and national level to promote equality in gender relations, and play an important advocacy role to improve women-focused public policies and contribute to the realisation of human and social rights.

The Child Rights Forum (Forum). The Forum was a key element of the child rights and well-being programme that finished in 2006. The support this programme offered enabled the Forum to develop its membership base to 86 child-rights focussed organisations and groups, providing training and a hub for networking and advocacy initiatives at the local and state levels. The Forum are not involved in our current programmes, but it is expected that talks on possible future collaboration will take place in the near future.

COLOMBIA – SIOBHAN MCGEE

The spirit which inspires CU's work in Colombia is one of service, of helping those in need to help themselves; learning, teaching and sharing skills and knowledge to enhance people's lives and widen possibilities. It is not one of giving objects, but of helping people to improve their own lives and that of their community; empowering people to permit them to realise their full potential. CU tries to promote harmonious development: people in tune with their environment and with themselves, their families and their communities, also aware of being part of one world, where all should be equals. Siobhan McGee has been in Colombia since 1988 and as staff member with CU since 1993. As Country Director she works with a very committed team based in Ibaguè, Tolima. This is made up of a coordinator of projects, five educators, a financial assistant and a secretary. They form a multi-disciplined and very experienced team, well rooted in the reality of the region. There are also nursery assistants, kitchen staff and many volunteers from the community.

CU began working in Colombia in 1993. Responding to the Armero volcanic disaster in the north of the department of Tolima, work began assisting both those displaced by the disaster and the host communities. Subsequently Concern Universal supported the needs of those living in peri-urban areas of Ibaguè, the capital of Tolima. Concern Universal's office was established in one such peri-urban community, Tierra Firme. From here, Concern Universal was able to support a series of initiatives, responding to the needs of communities, initially local to Tierra Firme but as the team's experience and capacity grew, eventually to cover all the communities within the geographic area that forms the diocese of Ibaguè. These projects included social and health education, mother and child development and training for young people; integrated community development, including income generation and community group formation; promotion and protection of rights, including child rights, the promotion of civil action, peace education, development education and Human Rights.

CU's history in Colombia demonstrates a coherent process of development. In the geographical sense, it has developed in the department of Tolima, including both rural and urban areas. The progression has been from a village and hamlet level to the peri-urban areas of the capital town of the department and then moving out to the whole department. The sectors in which CU has worked have followed a logical progression, beginning with preventative and educative health, moving on to community development programme, to peace education, development education and rights based work. The emphasis on Human Rights is the logical conclusion of CU's involvement with beneficiaries and deeper understanding of the causes of their problems and needs. CU is concentrating particularly on the rights of women, children, young people and displaced people.

In the relationships with partners, the Catholic Church is a strong and permanent partner, which is present in all parts of the country, so the Social Pastoral branch of the diocese of Ibaguè is CU's long-term partner. CU in Colombia aims to include other partners, probably Social Pastoral branches in other dioceses in different parts of the country, in coming years. CU Colombia

is a member of a number of networks and proactively collaborates with international and national agencies.

CU Colombia is partner driven in its identification of needs and investigations for proposal writing, in a participatory, community focused process. CU concentrates on their vision of sustainable development through education, supported by Human Rights, poverty reduction and gender related issues, also including disaster preparedness and consciousness of sharing one world. The priorities have been defined in a participative process to formulate strategy as follows: Democratic Culture and Human Rights to increase respect for and understanding of Human Rights; Poverty Reduction to improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable; Health and Prevention to enable beneficiaries to mitigate health risks to reduce mortality and morbidity; Sustainable Development to enable people to preserve natural resources and to care for the environment and Development Education to increase the understanding of development and the interconnected nature of people and events around the world.

The fourteen years of experience have permitted Concern Universal to recognize the importance of training those with the ability to share lessons widely within their communities, such as teachers and other community leaders; capacity building to improve and strengthen the ability of individuals and community based organisations to fulfil their potential as agents for change, addressing sustainability issues as appropriate; partnership to improve existing partnerships, such as joint proposal development, and to develop new partners; networking with other organisations, government departments, donors, local and international NGOs, Concern Universal offices worldwide to share experiences, using a variety of communication tools and to learn from others to improve the effectiveness and impact of our work and finally prevention which is vital in all senses, health, disasters, violence and others. Concern Universal Colombia was registered in the country in 1993 and has a fiscal reviser and auditor and governing board of five people all operating as required by local law. Testimony from a displaced woman : "Since we arrived at the area called 2nd June in Ibagué, made up of people displaced by the violence, many people have come to talk to us, promise us things and then generally to ask for our votes ! For this reason most neighbours here had become full of resentment, defeated by the trauma of displacement plus this treatment. Concern Universal Colombia came to work with us, taught us our rights, helped us to form associations, and assisted us to grow as community, with respect, tolerance, truth, solidarity and love. We can trust each other now and be real friends in moments of difficulty. We have begun to believe again that life can improve and that we can become proactive in making it happen. We are now able to work together, express ourselves, analyse our needs, find solutions and even interact with government and other organizations. In the association we are working for health, education, food security, plus paved roads and pavements for the area. " Eva Mape.

GUINEA - HOUSSEINI OUDRAOGO

From the beginning the CU effort in Guinea has been a team effort involving at different stages significant effort of individuals at all levels of the organisation. When times have been hard everyone has “put shoulder to the wheel” to turn situation around. CU first came to Guinea in 1995 at the request of Bishop O’Riordan of Kenema Diocese in Sierra Leone. At the time the organisation had a larger country programme operating in neighbouring Sierra Leone and was working with five main local partners, namely Caritas Makeni, the Diocese of Kenema (KDDO), National Catholic Health Office, Children Affected by War and the Archdiocese in Bo. From 1992, thousands of people fled Kailahun in Southern Sierra Leone following the beginnings of the Revolutionary United Front insurgency. In 1994 and 1995, the numbers grew to hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans fleeing the growing ‘rebel war’ in Sierra Leone to the Gueckedou region of Guinea. The Diocese of Kenema had already sent two priests from the Diocese to minister to the refugees in 1993. However, Bishop O’Riordan wanted to try to meet some of the social and humanitarian needs of these populations and requested CU to support it in setting up an extension of the Kenema Diocesan Development Office (KDDO) in the refugee camps in Guinea. As a result of a joint exploratory mission including CU (Gerry Carthy and Mwendu Munuve), KDDO and CRS, the Catholic Mission for Refugees (CMR) was set up. CMR had established offices in Gueckédou by December 1995 and an expatriate CU programme co-ordinator, Zahra Osman Guelle, was appointed. Some of our Guinean staff are among the longest standing members of staff with CU in West Africa (e.g. Nouhan Taoure a driver has worked for CU since 1995).

CU and CMR immediately began implementing agriculture, food security and skills training projects with refugee populations. Before long the two agencies were operating in all the camps in the Gueckédou prefecture. However, CU quickly realised that the level of poverty of Guinean host populations was almost on a par with that of the refugees but were generally neglected by humanitarian actors. In order to ensure equity of treatment between the two populations CU began a second partnership with *Organisation Catholique pour la Promotion Humaine* (OCPH) which is the development and humanitarian wing of the Diocese of Kankan and an MOU was signed in 1998. By 1997 CU/OCPH were implementing similar projects with the host Guinean populations in Gueckédou prefecture working with the Gueckedou parish level OCPH. In the interim another partnership was formed with a group of concerned Guinean, Liberian and Sierra Leonean forestry and agriculture technicians who wanted to do something about the environmental degradation associated with the refugee influx (Community Action Against Deforestation – CAAD). This group of people now formerly registered as *Secours Rapide Rural* (SRR) began implementing environmental protection and food security projects with CU support. Sarah Muscroft was CU’s Projects Coordinator from 1996 to 1998. The relationship with CMR was at times problematic and this scaled down in 1998 and was then renewed in 1999 under new leadership by the then Field Director David Reside. For a short period of transition from the leadership of David Reside to David Wright, Maladho Diallo provided interim management cover with strong support from

Paul O'Hagan. The programme funding situation was reaching a critical point during this time and as David Wright was coming on board two major grants were secured from DFID and Caritas Germany.

By 1999 and 2000 work was scaling up again with CMR as they engaged in child protection (UAC FTR) and SRR and OCPH linking the host and refugee communities through their activities. However, at the end of 2000, the programme went through a crisis when rebels from Liberia and Sierra Leone attacked Gueckédou and Kissidougou. CU and all partner offices were systematically looted and destroyed and contact was lost with partner staff for up to six weeks. After being trapped in the office for a number of weeks some of our Guinean staff spent days in the bush on foot fleeing the combat. Even down to the seat cushions virtually all assets were looted in Gueckedou before the office was eventually destroyed by mortar fire. Small grants from RIJ and Oxfam GB came on line at a critical juncture to help us rebuild the programme. At this time CU partners OCPH and CAAD were some of the very few humanitarian actors present on the ground in the Forest region when all INGOs and UN agencies had stopped their operations for security reasons. The emphasis of the programme switched from rehabilitation to emergency relief. Despite this crisis, CU-Guinea, with the support of its donors and the ongoing commitment and energy of its partners scaled up activities significantly using the leverage of the above pilot grants. The field office was relocated to Dabola in the centre of the country and activities extended to Dabola, Dinguiraye and Kankan prefectures. SRR and OCPH engaged in significant emergency sanitation & non-food item distribution programmes while CMR became the most effective organisation working with Unaccompanied Children in the refugee camps funded by ECHO, DFID, Caritas Germany and RIJ etc. There was a relatively substantial increase in staff size at this time funded by emergency grants.

Until the end of 2002 CU and its partners had a sizeable engagement in Sierra Leonean refugee camps in the Dabola and Kissidougou Prefectures. This work included emergency sanitation, environmental protection and food security interventions. At the end of 2002 it was decided to end this work as most of the Sierra Leonean refugees were to be repatriated by early 2003. This permitted CU Guinea to target scarce resources towards working with Guinean populations in the poorer northern part of the country known as Upper Guinea. Under the leadership of David Wright, CU-Guinea's emphasis turned to rehabilitation and sustainable development although every single project was still on a short-term basis. In line with its Country Strategy Plan of 2000 CU also continued to expand its portfolio of partners. 2002 saw the beginning of relationships between CU and two new partners: *Association Sauvons les Enfants Déshérités* (ASED) in Dabola, who specialise in child protection and education, and *Association de Développement Economique et Social de Dinguiraye* (ADES-D). ADES-D provided CU with the opportunity of extending its activities into a new prefecture in the north of Guinea, which is among the poorest in the country. CU's expansion continued the following year with the addition of Ballal Guinée to its portfolio of partners. This NGO had been working in some of the poorest areas in Guinea (Mali, Tougué and Koubia) since 1997. They had significant experience in Participatory Rural

Appraisal (PRA), promotion of community based natural resource management, literacy training, agriculture, and construction and renovation of schools. With Ballal Guinée, CU also extended its geographic coverage to Middle Guinea, and was now active in the two poorest regions in the country, in addition to maintaining a strong activity in Forest Guinea.

In 2003, CU began a number of new initiatives. Most significant was a five-year project, co-financed by the European Union and with partner OCPH, targeting women's groups engaged in market gardening in Upper Guinea. This was the first time that the funding horizon was extended beyond 12-18 months. Through a variety of small projects it also started developing what was considered as an innovative low cost drilling technology (tube-well) as well as accessible rope-pump technology to provide water for market gardens and drinking water for villages.

In addition to assisting the most vulnerable communities in Upper Guinea OCPH/CU also provided support to Guinean Returnees fleeing the Ivory Coast conflict that broke out in 2002. Phillipe Adapoe was engaged in a finance role in 2003 and later applied for the CD position for which he was successfully appointed and remained in that role until end 2006. This population without a recognised status is trying to resettle in their communities of origin, mostly the poorest and most arid parts of Upper Guinea, having lost most of their livelihood assets in the Ivory Coast. In 2005, OCPH/CU implemented a one-year pilot project funded by Refugee International Japan (RIJ) to ensure the schooling of children of Returnees; this was upscaled the following year to include income generation activities (market gardening and small trade & crafts) to facilitate the socio-economic reintegration of adult Returnees. Today, OCPH is the only organisation that is bringing a sustainable response to the needs of this forgotten population. A major 5-year proposal to intensify this response while at the same time extending support to the Returnees' host communities in Upper Guinea has been developed

At the end of 2006 post Phillipe's departure Amadou Allahoury became Country Director for a brief period of 3 months before moving back to his home country of Niger. From January 2007 Joelle Plumerel to present has been acting Director. In 2006 and 2007, CU's operating environment was marked by increasing social unrest triggered by an unprecedented economic crisis, as well as the poor governance, corruption and incompetence of President Lansana Conté's regime. Three general strikes took place over that period. The third, which paralysed the country in January and February 2007, also severely disrupted the Country Programme. After a peaceful start at the beginning of January, the social movement was later met with brutal state repression and the declaration of martial law, which left thousands injured and over one hundred and fifty people dead. Unable to support its partners effectively during that time, and faced with the threat of a military coup followed by counter-insurgency, which could have plunged Guinea into a conflict similar to that which engulfed neighbouring Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990's, CU decided to temporarily relocate to the International Director's office in Banjul. From there it played a key role in responding to the crisis by producing and disseminating strategic analyses and information on

the humanitarian situation in the country to interlocutors at senior levels within the international community. It also advocated resource mobilisation to respond to the emergency humanitarian needs arising from the crisis. The crisis and uncertainty about returning to Guinea led to a delay in recruiting a new Director.

Fortunately, the mobilisation of Guinea's civil society eventually paid off and led to the nomination of a consensus prime minister and new government. The country programme resumed its operations thereafter. But the current stability in Guinea is precarious and highlights the relevance of integrating Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response into all long-term development interventions. Partners ASED, Ballal and OCPH are working with CU to prepare and implement projects in the fields of civic education, youth employment and food security in the urban and rural areas of Upper and Middle Guinea most affected by the crisis. These actions aim to address post-crisis needs and to prevent future similar disasters. The second component of CU-Guinea's EPPR strategy focuses on the prevention of cholera and other water-borne diseases in the Forest Region with SRR. SRR have a proven track record in the construction of wells and latrines, as well as sensitisation to good health and hygiene practices.

In future, while continuing to develop sustainable development interventions with and for the communities it serves with existing partners, CU-Guinea will also remain responsive to the emergency needs arising from the country's unstable political and economic situation.

NIGERIA - OUSMAN TOURAY

Nigeria has been in the organisation's orbit since its origins. In the 1960s, three people instrumental to the development of CU worked for extended periods in Nigeria i.e. Don McLeish first Chair of CU, other founding members Joan McGee & Raymond Kennedy plus the late Alo Donnelly, first Executive Director of CU.

The Biafran conflict, emergency response to this and the massive support of the public in Ireland provides a key piece in the jigsaw of understanding the organisation's roots. Raymond Kennedy was the catalyst who mobilised others in the UK to establish CU in 1976.

Jake Otonko, a Nigerian priest from Ogoja studying for his PhD in Leuven University and the former Nigerian Ambassador to Belgium, helped to mobilise a group of parishioners at the English speaking parish in Brussels to raise funds for development work in Ogoja. Named the "Little Friends" of Ogoja in Brussels, one of whom was Sean Doyle a senior diplomat at the EC and who knew CU while he was EC Delegate in Bangladesh. He recommended CU's involvement given our experience in providing local partners with both technical and management support and introduced us to the Catholic Diocese of Ogoja. Thus, the diocesan leadership invited "Little Friends" in April 1999 to become partners in the development process of the diocese and a joint assessment was made by the "Little Friends" supported by Paul O'Hagan.

This led to a systematic process of engagement for CU in a formal working partnership with the Justice and Development Peace commission (JDP) of The Catholic Diocese of Ogoja, Cross River State (CRS). This relationship was developed in stages: a) invitation of the Catholic Diocese Ogoja b) initial assessment of capacity and experience c) training in strategic planning d) training of Diocesan volunteers in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) by Falie Baldeh (Voice of The Poor Report) and joint comprehensive needs assessment of Cross River State e) design of a WES project and EC NGO Cofinancing proposal by Bruck Aregai (formerly of CU Malawi) during 3 months f) the formal agreement and signing in January 2001 of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a framework for on-going collaboration for five years f) establishing a presence in Calabar (the state capital of Cross River) by opening a country office and putting in place appropriate staff and logistical capacity to support JDP, as well as to identify and develop further partner relationships.

Falie Baldeh, who made a significant contribution to advancing community based approaches in all CU programmes in West Africa led the programme as Country Director from 2002-2004. Anna Herremans was acting Director for approximately six months and she made an important contribution in improving finance and admin systems. Robin Todd (2005-2006), now serving the organisation as a trustee, was recruited as a Project Support Officer and later successfully applied as Director. During this period substantial work was achieved in diversifying the partner base to the current portfolio of 5-7

organisations. The sectoral areas of engagement were more clearly defined in terms of WES, GROW, VALUES etc. projects with the cross cutting themes of partner capacity building and Emergency Preparedness, Prevention & Planning (EPPR). Major long-term projects were funded in all these areas placing the programme on a solid footing (2 EC NGO Cofinancing; 2 EC ACP grants; Comic Relief; BLF and DFID CSCF). Mike Mishiki replaced Anna on Finance and later successfully applied as Director prior to Robin's departure in 2006. Since then the team has been significantly expanded with the new grants that have come on line prior to and post Robin's departure and 2 field offices have been opened headed by Ousman Touray in Ikom (Cross River State) and Lucky Palmer in Abakaliki (Ebonyi State) supported by Amy Hause.

The lessons that learnt over the years, the progress we have made and the respect gained locally have enabled us to continually refine and improve our development programmes. For a variety of political, ethnic and cultural reasons Cross River State has been neglected by successive national governments. The resultant situation is one in which extreme poverty persists in the midst of abundant natural resources. The state is blessed with high rainfall, fertile soils and the largest area of virgin rainforest in West Africa. In contrast a self-assessment of poverty conducted in 2004 showed that 73% of households considered themselves to be poor (77% in rural areas). Cross River State has the lowest percentage population with access to safe water (30%) of all the southern Nigerian states, whilst the percentage of the population with access to adequate sanitation coverage (23%) is well below the national average. These figures, combined with other disturbing socio-economic indicators (e.g. a recently conducted survey indicates that Cross River State still has one of the highest HIV infection rates in Nigeria with 6% testing positive for HIV), has led to the state being designated as a 'priority' state for development by agencies such as the EC. As a result Cross River State will remain the focus of our operations over the next three years as our work and achievements within the state embody all the comparative advantages of CU as described in the paragraph above. At the same time Concern Universal's work in Nigeria has now grown to the extent where we are ready and able to expand the geographical coverage of our operations whilst remaining true to the values and strengths of the organisation.

As a result in July 2005 we took the decision to expand our work into Ebonyi State. Ebonyi borders Cross River State and was selected as our next focus of operations for a number of reasons. These include the fact that cross-border conflicts between Ebonyi and Cross River State (particularly in the Izzi/Ukelle and Ikwo/Obubra axis) have led to suffering and hardship, loss of life and developmental setbacks for thousands of people living in these areas; the fact that Ebonyi State, recently created in 1996, is widely recognised as being the 'least-developed' state in the South-East of Nigeria; the fact that the Ebonyi State Government has showed a willingness to work closely with development partners and that the state scored well in the 2005 SEEDS benchmarking exercise; and the fact that there is a great similarity between many of the development issues and context found in areas of Ebonyi State and neighbouring Cross River State (where CU and partners have built

considerable expertise and understanding). Since making the decision to expand to Ebonyi State in July 2005 CU has spent almost twelve months gaining a thorough understanding of the development context of the state, building relationships with NGOs and government agencies and collecting information to inform our future work. This process culminated in a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) carried out across Ebonyi State in April 2006. So as of 2006 Concern Universal's work in Nigeria is focused on two neighbouring states - Cross River and Ebonyi - where we have experience, rooted-ness, respect and understanding of the development context.

Community-based poverty assessments form the basis for all Concern Universal programmes. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) conducted throughout Cross River State in 2001 identified water and sanitation, girl and women's empowerment, primary health care and agricultural improvement and livelihoods enhancement as the priority development areas for rural communities. Project and programme specific assessments carried out in the five years since the PRA have reinforced these findings and the fact that they remain true to this day. Concern Universal expanded its operations into Ebonyi State where a PRA conducted in April 2006 has been published ("Ebonyi Speaks"). This PRA was conducted in a random sample of 24 communities across Ebonyi State and has identified water, primary health care, secondary education, expansion of road networks, provision of rural electrification and agricultural improvement as priority development areas for rural communities. Concern Universal's work within Cross River and Ebonyi States over the next three years will be broadly targeted at meeting the needs of rural communities in a sustainable, efficient and cost-effective manner using innovative approaches where appropriate.

SENE-GAMBIA – SARA JAITEH

CU received its Certificate of Incorporation in 1995 and was registered as an NGO in the country in 1997. In 1992 Fr. Phillip Crowe CSCP, who was the Parish Priest of St. Edward's Parish in Bwiam, contacted CU requesting the organisation's consideration of supporting the St. Joseph's Family Farm Project (SJFF), which he initiated. The focus of the initiative was on enterprise development through livestock & egg production. With strong APSO support, especially that of Patricia Wall who was the APSO Regional Director for many years and a very important supporter/advisor of CU in the whole region.

David Connors was recruited as Programme Manager of SJFF in 1994 (1994-96) and was based in Bwiam. David Connors counter-parted with Marcel Badji who later took on full managerial responsibility for SJFF. During this time a first EC NGO cofinancing grant was approved (WDIRDP) and the Gambia programme was incorporated within the wider CU West Africa programme supported by Gerry Carthy with additional financial systems support from Mwende and the team in the UK.

A major impetus to the development of the programme was the approval of two successive EU co-financing grants to work with SJFF. In 1996 Paul English (1996-98) was recruited to lead & develop the programme. Initially he was based in Bwiam for one year and then as new partnerships and demands developed, CU relocated and set up an office in the urban Greater Banjul Area in 1998. During this period upon strong interest and recommendation from the European Development Fund (EDF), CU began to engage with The Njawara Agricultural Training Centre and Methodist Mission Agricultural Programme. A multi-partner programme initiative was approved by EC co-financing in 1998 (FSTP) and other donors. By this time a very small team was established consisting of a coordinator, secretary and driver.

In late 1998 the Regional Director West Africa position was re-located to The Gambia with Paul O'Hagan taking up this position and Rob Donnelly (1998-2000), previously having worked with CU in Malawi, was recruited as The Gambia Country Director. Strong links with other agencies and a growing profile were developed. Links with networks and donors based in the Senegalese Capital Dakar flourished. Andrea Stewart (2000-2002) assumed much of the programme management responsibilities post Rob's return to the UK while Paul O'Hagan provided overall leadership. An MOU was agreed with The Department of State for Agriculture in 2002. An increasing awareness and understanding of context and in particular relation to the Casamance region of Senegal emerged. John Marsh, post a period on two short-term contracts, was successfully recruited as Country Director in late 2001. This was a period of substantial growth of the programme both in terms of funding and partnerships. He was given a Gambia-Senegal brief with an organisational intent to engage and develop the programme on a cross border basis.

The team grew considerably and partnerships extended to include The Gambia Red Cross Society etc. Programme focus and strategy included a)

food security and farmer training b) enterprise development including marketing ventures in horticulture, groundnuts and livestock c) emergency preparedness and response and d) HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. This forms the basis of the current strategy. Niall O'Connor was recruited as Country Director in 2003 and with the team to date has built on previous experience and the programme has continued to grow and diversify with notably one long term project being recently approved for work in Casamance, Senegal (DFID CSCF).

GHANA – MACDUFF PHIRI

It's been 8 years since CU established a permanent base in Ghana. CU's engagement in Ghana began with the invitation of The Catholic Diocese of Sunyani and as a result an initial assessment visit was made to Sunyani in October 1998 which included Gerry Carthy, Don McLeish and Paul O'Hagan. David Wright was deployed in 1999 to take forward work at first. David Wright with support from Falie Baldeh led the Bilance (now Cordaid) Partner Capacity Profile and Assessment Study for the Diocese as a requirement requested by the SDDO's principal donor. This formed an excellent basis for an on-going relationship of capacity building support to a variety of NGOs by CU. This assessment was carried out over a period of seven months using PLA techniques and resulted in a revised structure and programme focus for the SDDO. Falie Baldeh was interim Director for a period of 3 months post David's departure to Guinea and during this period links were developed with the Diocese of Wiaso in line with the then strategy to diversify the partner base. Niall O'Connor took up the Country Director role in 2001. A PRA was carried out with further support from Falie with Wiaso Diocese.

As with the start-up of all new CU Country Programmes, the origins of the Ghana programme was done using a lot of 'wit' and resourcefulness as funding was tight. For instance, Colm Lennon one of CU'S former trustees and a long term supporter of CU's work donated funds to help the programme's establishment and The Diocese of Sunyani provided our accommodation/office rent free for 2 years. The WA Cadbury Trust following a visit to Ghana in 2000 was also very important in enabling us to develop momentum started. William Cadbury's strategic support of CU's work in West Africa has been extremely important over the years. During this period based on the original PRA project development took place and this formed the basis of all project funded until work began in Northern and Upper West Regions in 2005. The first real funding break came with an Irish Aid NGO co-funding grant for work in Agricultural marketing – the priority need arising from the original PRA. This was followed by a substantial in-country grant for the FCO in-country for rural women and girl child education.

Ros Harper took over from Niall for a brief period and then Eddie Smyth took the reigns in 2003. At this time proposals previously developed by Niall and then later resubmitted were funded (EC NGO Cofinancing and IA HRD RWGCE). With IA EPR funding a project officer was engaged and Robert Gyamfi undertook an LNGO assessment in order to enable CU in Ghana to diversify its partner base. This further built the partner base of CU, establishing relationships with three local NGO's; Professional Network North (ProNet) in the Upper West Region who had a focus on water and sanitation, Partners in Participatory Development (PAPADEV) in the Northern Region who were a committed HIV/AIDS NGO and the Farming Services and Credit Union (FASCU) in the Brong Ahafo region, an agriculture and environmental protection organisation.

Support was gained in 2003 from the EC and Irish Aid Abuja for the Rural Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP) in the Brong Ahafo region. It is

a project that sees 50 local communities developing their ability to maintain a lifestyle without affecting the environment that has sustained their way of life for so long. Fire volunteers have been trained and have recruited more supporters to prevent the destruction of forest, crops and buildings by the sweeping bushfires that occur in Brong Ahafo every year, a large programme of tree planting has taken place to go some way to redressing the destruction of forest over the past 20 years and communities have been supported with alternative less harmful means of income generation that take advantage of their local knowledge.

Also in 2003, the British High Commission, in support of the aims of the REEP project, gave support to a project to develop women's groups and support them with a sustainable livelihood. This livelihood consisted of the rearing grass-cutters, a local rodent and considered delicacy across the Northern Gulf of Guinea states. They are normally bought from local hunters but the methods used, such as burning to drive the animals out, and poisoning, produce serious problems for the surrounding environment with most fires left to rage and often burning out of control, ruining crops and forest land, killing wildlife and destroying homes.

With funding from Irish Aid to support the development of local capacity to respond to emergencies, which continues today, both ProNet and PAPADEV were supported in tackling some of the major issues in their respective regions. ProNet have been successfully developing communities' access to water and sanitation through the drilling of boreholes and the building of hand dug wells with community labour, constructing latrines and establishing water and sanitation committees comprised of people from within the community who promote sanitation and raise funds for well maintenance. PAPADEV have been training local personnel as peer educators who pass on their training to their fellow community members on ways how to prevent the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus and sensitising the population to the plight of those living with HIV/AIDS.

A long standing relationship with the Australian High Commission in Nigeria was further developed when diplomatic coverage was split with the opening of a new AHC in Accra. Building on CU experience in Guinea and The Gambia a project was conceived with ProNet and the AHC for the piloting of an Australian drilling technology, known as the tubewell. It is a hand auger that can dig to over 20 ft deep, takes less than a day to train the drillers and complete the drilling.

Eddie left in 2006 and was succeeded at the helm by Angela Russ. Angela had been working with Eddie for nearly a year before being appointed to the position. Angela continued working with PAPADEV and ProNet but added NCRC to our partner base to continue the work on REEP. She, with the rest of the Ghana team, worked closely with PAPADEV to develop extra funding opportunities. Angela also uncovered a second HIV/AIDS partner, this time in the Brong Ahafo region, the Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), with whom we are on the verge of finalising an innovative HIV/AIDS project in cooperation with the French Embassy. The main leap for CU in this period though was with the approval of a Big Lottery Fund application for a

women's empowerment project in 45 communities in the Upper West which will start in August 2007 with ProNet. It is testament to the development of ProNet and the work so far completed by CU that a project of this scale could be taken on.

With the above partnerships, CU was able to develop a solid understanding of the development context of the Brong Ahafo, Northern and Upper West regions in particular. This engagement and initial experience is shaping Concern Universal's understanding of the Ghanaian development context.

In 2007 Anglea returned to England and was succeeded by our current director MacDuff Phiri. In order to build a wider understanding of the national context, MacDuff and Paul visited and established relationships with many of the main INGOs based in both the North and the South of Ghana. In particular positive relationships exist with WaterAid, VSO, GTZ, Action Aid and CARE International etc., where working collaborations continue to grow. Meetings have been held with the donor and diplomatic community and regular lines of contact have been established with the Japanese Embassy, the Australian High Commission, the European Commission, the British High Commission, USAID, UNDP, WFP, FAO, DFID and Irish Aid etc. These efforts have assisted CU determine its niche in the light of the following findings:

Sanitation: Less than 10% of the population has access to adequate sanitation (CWSA 2002). Even Accra and Kumasi, Ghana's two largest urban centres, had outbreaks of cholera in 2005.

Water: Of the rural population only 44% have access to potable water (UNDP, 2004). (Other studies give lower percentages as their definition of 'potable' is more exact.)

Women: Women face social, economic and political discrimination. The most extreme manifestation being the witch camps of Northern Ghana where over 8000 women have been held since their exclusion from their communities for 'causing' polio, cerebral-spinal meningitis and other village problems.

HIV/AIDS: HIV rate ranges between 1.9% -2.6% and is higher in the Eastern Region and in communities on the western border. ART is only currently available in Accra and Kumasi.

Governance: Democracy is inconsistent with patchy functioning of decentralised government (ISODEC, IDS-UK).

Civil Society: Civil society is at a nascent stage with NGOs lacking capacity and POs almost non-existent.

Environment: Environmental degradation is out of control. Last year alone 24.6 million hectares of vegetation were lost as a result of bushfire, the equivalent to a loss of 3% of GDP (GoG 2005).

Agriculture: In spite of being the source of livelihood for more than 60% the population, majority of agricultural crop production in Ghana is based on rain-fed subsistence crops grown by smallholder farmers with limited use of fertilizers, and other agro-inputs. Consequently, yields are typically low and crop failures are common. About 90% of farms in Ghana are less than 2 hectares in size. Post harvest losses are high (>35% of total agricultural output) due to lack of infrastructure (MCA Ghana, 2006).

Considering the ongoing Government Policy of Decentralisation it is particularly important that the civil society sector in Ghana be strengthened. This will enhance their ability to work closely with local government (the District Assemblies) to ensure that they are adequately addressing the needs of the poor in their areas. CU will continue to work towards the strengthening of our local NGO partners and government institutions and we will continue to look for partners to add to our current base.

BANGLADESH – STEPHANE BONDUELLE

From the first small, yet meaningful, interventions in the early 1990s, Concern Universal's programme in Bangladesh has evolved into a coherent portfolio of development activities that directly benefits almost 650,000 of the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Concern Universal's fifteen years in Bangladesh have been characterised by substantial progress achieved through practical hard work. It has been – and continues to be – underpinned by the ethos of service, the hallmark of Concern Universal. The result is a distinctive programme that is as much marked by its diversity in geography and sector as by its unity of purpose.

Raymond Kennedy laid some of the foundations for Concern Universal's Bangladesh programme by establishing the relationship with Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM). That relationship has continued to thrive through projects aimed at improving functional literacy for adults (FETLI), combating human trafficking and disaster preparedness and response. Built on the mutual respect between our two organisations, it has been able to flourish through the excellent personal relations between President, Kazi Rafiqul Alam, Deputy Executive Director, Ehsanur Rahman, and successive CU Country Directors.

As Concern Universal's first staff in Bangladesh Zina and David Fear made great strides towards the introduction of the health programme. By the end of their two-year stint in the Cox's Bazar, in the south-east of the country, they could look back with justifiable pride at the successful completion of the first phase of Concern Universal's primary health care programme (1994-96), and the introduction of the second phase (1996-99). And to them goes the credit for recruiting key staff, some of whom remain with us today, who were pivotal to the success of Concern Universal's formative years in Bangladesh.

Dr Zamani Rahman played his part in shaping the project before Rita Meynen joined in 1997. It was not long before Rita stamped her inimitable impression on the project, notably by a complete overhaul and revision of the project's guidelines. The team in Cox's Bazar, by then approximately 70 strong, ensured the successful completion of the second and third phases of the primary health care programme. A 2001 evaluation of the third phase noted in particular the strong motivation and commitment of the project staff, and the substantial progress that the project had made.

Guiding Concern Universal's country programme from 1996 to 1997, Nicola Mushet introduced a stronger focus on gender, an area of vital concern in the context of today's Bangladesh. That focus found its expression in a new partnership between Concern Universal and Nari Uddog Kendra (NUK). Concern Universal supported NUK in projects aimed at improving conditions of women garment workers, boosting the participation of women in local government, and in a primary health care project. Nicola was replaced by Matthew Lake, who moved to Bangladesh from Concern Universal's Sierra Leone programme in late 1997. Matthew engineered the second phase of DAM's FETLI programme and NUK's primary health care project among other achievements. Matthew handed over the reins to Tom Woodhatch who

oversaw the opening of the Concern Universal Dhaka office, the commencement of joint planning with our India partners, and the start of our work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Tom was replaced by Catherine Whybrow, who successfully took the country programme to the next level, with a renewal of the country programme strategy, the update of many organisational documents, and the commencement, among others, of our Disaster Preparedness work. In early 2007, Stephane Bonduelle took over at the helm in Bangladesh and under him the work of Concern Universal continues to flourish.

At present Concern Universal Bangladesh is implementing: 1) Institutional Development of seven local partners (five in Bangladesh and two in India), 2) Disaster Management programmes including Disaster Preparedness (DP) / Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects with implementation through one main partner NGO and mainstreaming DP through programming for seven partner NGOs, and a Disaster Response (flood) project, 3) A Human Anti-Trafficking project (women and children), and 4) Local Health Services projects supporting a total of 23 Clinics in remote and hard to reach areas deprived of Health services. CU Bangladesh is also developing the capacity of its national staff allowing minimum employment of expatriate staff.