

Christian Aid Week 9 – 15th May : What’s wrong with world trade?

‘International trade between my country and the West is like an antelope and a giraffe competing for food which is at the top of a tree. You can make the ground level but the contest will still not be fair,’ says Dr Robert Aboagye-Mensah, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, a Christian Aid partner.

In Christian Aid Week, 9-15 May, people around the country will be joining together to highlight the fundamental imbalances of world trade.

Christian Aid is working with other organisations to campaign for trade justice – not free trade – with the rules weighted in favour of poor people. It is calling on world leaders to stop forcing poor countries to open their markets. Poor countries must be allowed to protect and support their vulnerable farmers and developing industries. Then trade can become a positive force, which will help them out of poverty.

Christian Aid’s campaigning is rooted in the Christian faith. It is clear that throughout the Bible, how the poor are treated is critically important. ‘Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, therefore I command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land”.’ (Deuteronomy 15:11) Christian Aid believes that the Biblical principle of giving special help to the poorest people should be applied to the current global trading system. Instead of expecting traders in the poorest countries to compete on equal terms with those of the richest, trade rules need to give explicit help to the poor.

How you can get involved:

If the rules of international trade are to be rewritten so that they are weighted in favour of the world’s poorest people, more and more people need to join the Trade Justice Campaign.

- Sign and send the prayer and action card. For Christian Aid Week, special cards have been produced which can be sent to the government to call for justice in world trade. When the government receives postcards in huge numbers it both challenges it to do what is right, and strengthens its position when it negotiates internationally. Cards should be available at your church in Christian Aid Week. If not, call 01252 669639 to order some.
- Wear the trade justice badge. This is a simple but effective way to help spread the campaign message. The badge, pictured above, is based on a set of scales, and highlights the imbalance of world trade today. The figure at the centre represents hope and the power of ordinary people to tip the balance in favour of the world’s poor. Badges cost £2 each, plus

Top five facts about world trade

1. International trade is worth US\$10 million a minute.
2. Poor countries account for only 0.4 per cent of world trade. Since 1980 their share has halved.
3. The United Nations estimates that unfair trade rules deny poor countries US\$700 billion every year. Less than 0.01 per cent of this could save the sight of 30 million people.
4. The three richest people in the world control more wealth than all 600 million in the world’s poorest countries.
5. Global trade is regulated through policies and priorities set by international institutions, including rules made at the World Trade Organisation and conditions attached to loans provided by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. These bodies are controlled by governments.