

Week five

Justice for all

▶ Getting started

Trade Justice: What's the problem for Kenya?

- A new agreement to make 'a level playing field' in trade is currently being negotiated. In return for Kenya's access to EU markets, Kenya has to allow EU companies free access to its markets.
- In future, international companies and producers with advanced technology, economies of scale – often supported with EU subsidies – will directly compete against Kenya's smaller domestic traders.
- Kenya has experienced problems when similar trade policies were imposed through conditions on aid and debt relief. They led to a drop in government income, as taxes on imports declined, and resulted in massive unemployment.
- For example, in the cotton industry, cheap goods flooded the market, putting cotton farmers out of a job. Without money to invest in cotton farming and textile manufacturing, textile production in Kenya is now a fifth of what it was in the 1980s.

Which of these do you think is the best solution for Kenya?

- a) Try to make an alternative trade agreement with the EU
- b) Devote time and effort into negotiating this trade agreement
- c) Invest in preparing farmers and industries for change
- d) Pull out of the negotiations, they are clearly unfair.

Imagine you are Kenya's finance minister. How do you feel about your country's future? And about taking part in these negotiations?

The EU, of which the UK is a member, is currently negotiating these trade deals called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, including some of the world's poorest countries. They could affect the livelihoods of 750 million people.

■ Bible reading: Micah 6:1-2, 6-12

|| Discussion questions

1. What kinds of sins or injustices are discussed in these verses?
2. Why do you think trade is highlighted as an example of injustice? How might this passage relate to contemporary trade agreements?
3. How do the Israelites at first try to respond to the accusations (v.6-7)? How does this contrast to v.8? Why do you think worship or offering sacrifices was not sufficient?
4. How can Micah's example encourage us to speak out against injustice? Why is it sometimes hard to do this?
5. Consider how we could act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God:
 - as a nation, when making trade agreements
 - as individuals, when our nation is involved in making unfair trade agreements.
6. Micah's words gave the people of Israel a 'wake up call' about the injustice present in their nation. Have you ever received a similar 'wake up call'? How did you respond?
7. Read Micah 7:18-19. Why can we remain hopeful? What ultimately happens to human injustice? What might this mean for our current trading practices?

▶▶ Activity

In 2007, Germany has the presidency of the EU, and hosts the G8 summit of rich country leaders in June. Write to German Chancellor about EPAs.

† Closing prayer

Jesus,
You turned over the traders' tables,
kicked up a fuss,
shouted and screamed,
suffered and died,
challenged injustice.

We repent of the times when we
have kept our heads down,
have shut our mouths,
have played it safe,
ignored injustice.
Forgive us and breathe your Spirit
into us we pray.
Amen.

MRDF/Sarah Hagger