



**Methodist** Relief &  
Development Fund



**What does the Bible say  
about changing the world?**

in association with

**Premier**  
CHRISTIAN RADIO

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But let justice roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream!  
**Amos 5:24**



*Photo on this page: Fisherfolk going to sea near Tangalle, on Sri Lanka's southern coast. This boat was provided by ACT International after the tsunami in 2004.*

*Photo on cover: Tsunami survivor Roji Zamsudeen throws his fishing net, provided by ACT International, into the Indian Ocean.*

*Both photos: © Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together*

## Introduction

### **What does the Bible say about changing the world?**

High levels of poverty and injustice seem to be an ever-present part of our world. You couldn't be blamed for thinking 'What can I possibly do?' It can feel as if we are swimming against the tide in our quest to help the poor and the marginalised. Is it worth it?

The resounding answer is yes. Throughout the Bible we find a God who is consistently concerned with the plight of the poor and the forgotten. Jesus' passion for the poor and the disadvantaged was evident while he was on earth. Our challenge as Christians is to live in a way that reflects God's love and acceptance for the marginalised – some of whom live in our own communities.

This study pack encourages us to fight against compassion fatigue, and to keep giving and loving – even when we don't see immediate results. It suggests actions we might take when confronted with policies that ensnare the underprivileged in a never-ending cycle of poverty.

'Changing the world' sounds like an ambitious claim, but the Bible invites us to collaborate with God in making a difference while we are here. Of course, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the world's problems, but we are not engineering the change by ourselves; we are participating in God's plan. Helping people in need is an integral part of our faith, and we grow spiritually as Christians when we put others first.

We hope that these studies will help you in your quest to become a world-changer.

## Week one – fighting injustice

### ► Discussion starter

Your group leader will start this session with a question.

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### ■ Bible reading: Amos 5:3-12, 21-24

### || Discussion questions

1. What kinds of things had caused God to be so unhappy with his people? (Amos 5:7-12)
2. What do we learn about God's feelings towards the poor from these passages?
3. Israel was enjoying a time of prosperity during Jeroboam II's reign. Many people were living in rampant luxury - sleeping on expensive beds whose wood was inlaid with ivory and drinking wine by the bowlful. Meanwhile, the poor were being shamelessly exploited. Can you think of some modern-day examples of this scenario?
4. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. What does this passage tell us about God's view of people with wealth?
5. Read Amos 5:21-24 again. What would be the equivalent message in modern-day language?
6. Why might people become complacent about the high levels of injustice and poverty in the world?
7. Amos was not a priest - he was a lay person, but with God's help he was able to speak out against the injustice of his day. What, if anything, might stop us from doing the same?

### ● Activity 1

Read 'The pursuit of justice' on page 18. In what ways can we speak up for those who do not have a voice in our own communities?

### ● Activity 2

Watch 'Hole in the Bucket'. Why is there a hole in this family's bucket? How would you react if this family turned up on your doorstep offering you money?

## ▶▶ Action

In 1998, 70,000 people from across Britain gathered in Birmingham to ask the G8 to cancel unfair debt for developing countries. It was one of the biggest demonstrations ever seen in the UK. As a result of this pressure, millions of pounds of unfair debt were dropped. There is still more to do, and you can help by demanding justice for the poor. Send a letter to the International Development Secretary and ask the UK government to act quickly on debt relief for poor countries. Visit [www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php](http://www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php) for more information.

## † Prayer

Create in us a new heart  
A thirst for righteousness where greed resides  
A hunger for your hope to touch victims of power abuse

Create in us a renewed resolve  
To be your voice contradicting injustice  
To reach out as your hands moulding a fairer world

Create in us a deeper passion  
For defending those oppressed by obstacles of debt  
For seeing goodness flourish throughout the earth

Lord, God of all justice and compassion  
Hear our prayer.

*Jubilee Debt Campaign*

## ▼ For further study on issues of justice

Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Deuteronomy 16:19-20; Proverbs 31:8-9; Jeremiah 22:13-17

‘Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.’  
*Martin Luther King, Jr*

## Week two – living compassionately

### ► Discussion starter

There are an estimated 33 million people living with HIV in the world. How many of them:

- (i) Live in Africa
- (ii) Live in Asia
- (iii) Live in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- (iv) Live in Latin America
- (v) Live in North America, Western and Central Europe
- (vi) Are children (under 15 years old)

What is your immediate reaction to these statistics?

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### ■ Bible reading: John 8:3-11

### || Discussion questions

1. What characters do we find in this story? What do you think each of them was thinking or feeling?
2. What do you think Jesus was writing in the sand? What message do you think Jesus was sending to the woman's accusers?
3. The woman in John 8 was caught in adultery – an offence punishable by death under Jewish law. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' approach?
4. What does the word 'compassion' mean to you? As a group, produce a definition of the word 'compassion'.
5. Read Story 1. Are there people in our community that we might stigmatise in a more subtle way? What steps could we take to build bridges with them?

### ● Activity

Read 'HIV/AIDS in Zambia' on page 18. Why do you think HIV/AIDS carries such a stigma in Zambia, and elsewhere in the world? In what ways could we help to lessen the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and other issues?

## ▶▶ Action

Read Luke 7:11-14. Write verse 13 on a card and carry it around with you as a reminder to act as Jesus would when you meet people this week who live on the periphery of society.

## † Prayer

God, grant me the spirit of courage,  
That I may have the strength to fight injustice;  
Give me the spirit of challenge,  
That I may not accept the status quo without question.  
Give me the spirit of compassion,  
That I may see the world from other people's viewpoint.

I ask for the spirit of gentleness,  
That I may listen to the voice of the poor  
Without trampling on their dreams in my rush to action.  
God, grant me your Spirit,  
The spirit of truth, justice and hope.

*Adapted from a prayer by Linda Jones/CAFOD*

## ▼ For further study on compassionate living

Luke 6:6-10; 13:10-17

### Story 1

Sikira's life changed in 2004 when she found out she was HIV positive. She lost half of her body weight and her husband sent her to live with her mother. Sikira used to own a hairdressing salon, but was too sick to carry on working and had to sell the equipment to pay for her medical treatment. For three years, people wrote on the walls of Sikira's compound 'maison de SIDA' - 'house of AIDS' in English. Sikira said: 'I kept rubbing it off but someone would rewrite it.' Sikira now accesses anti-retroviral treatment from an MRDF partner in Togo, where she lives, and has gained weight again. This local organisation also provides nutritional support, counselling and home visits, and is actively fighting against the stigma and discrimination that people living with HIV and AIDS face. Sikira has re-opened her hairdressing business and is living with her husband again – he took her back when she regained weight and began to look healthier.

'One of the greatest diseases is to be nobody to anybody.' *Mother Teresa*

## Week three – giving graciously

### ► Discussion starter

Your group leader will take you through an activity.

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### ■ Bible reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-11; 9:6-8

### || Discussion questions

1. What do we learn about the Macedonian churches from 2 Corinthians 8?
2. In what sense can giving be viewed as a 'privilege'? (2 Corinthians 8:4)
3. What lessons do you think Paul wanted the Corinthians (and us) to learn from the Macedonians?
4. In what senses did Jesus 'become poor'? (2 Corinthians 8:9). See also Philipians 2:5-11.
5. 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for cheerful is where we get our word 'hilarious'! What can we infer from this for us today?
6. What principles for giving emerge from these two passages?
7. Paul commends the Corinthian believers for excelling in faith, gifted speakers, knowledge, enthusiasm and love. He encourages them to excel in giving (2 Corinthians 8:7). What areas of ministry does your church excel in? What areas of ministry do you think your church needs to excel in?

### ● Activity

'There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread' - *Mahatma Gandhi*. Your group leader will take you through an activity.

### ►► Action

Find a way to give graciously this week, e.g. bake a cake for someone, make a donation to a local charity, visit a friend or neighbour who would appreciate your company.

† **Prayer**

Loving Father

You have made us your people,  
Richly provided us with good gifts

And called us to live for you;

May gratitude be in our hearts;

May generosity be in our hands;

May justice and righteousness guide our feet

And may the life of your kingdom and the joy of heaven be found among  
us.

May Christ who for our sake became poor make us rich in everything –  
in faith, speech, knowledge, giving and love.

*Stewardship/Steve Pierce*

▼ **For further study on giving**

Mark 12:41-44; 1 Kings 17:8-16; Matthew 6:2-4; Luke 6:38

In 2008, a small house group from Royston Methodist Church sent this letter to MRDF with a cheque for £135.

‘Dear Sir,

We have collected this money over 2007 from our small group of Bible study members, mostly pensioners. We were greatly touched after studying world poverty, and the work you do in other countries. The group felt they had to do something and each week after the meeting each person put money into the kitty to help make a miracle. Please use the money in any way that will help.’

## Week four – seizing every opportunity

### ► Discussion starter

Your group leader will take you through an activity.

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### ■ Bible reading: Esther 4:10-17

### || Discussion questions

1. To put this passage in context, why do you think Esther was afraid to go before King Xerxes?
2. 'Look after No 1' is a common attitude. Do you think the actions of Mordecai and Esther challenge this? If so, in what way?
3. As a group, develop three principles for doing the right thing under pressure using Esther's example.
4. The book of Esther does not mention God. However, it is generally acknowledged that he was not absent, but working on behalf of the Jewish people throughout. Read Esther 4:14 again. What does this teach us about God's response and our responsibility in the face of adversity?
5. Jewish people still read the story of Esther every year to remind them of how God delivered them from total destruction. What can we do to remind ourselves of the times God has helped us in difficult situations?
6. Read 'Rising to the challenge in Uganda' on page 19. How do you think you would have reacted if you lost your main source of income? What can we learn from Margaret's response to the crisis?

### ● Activity 1

Think about your circle of influence - at work, school, college, university, home. What kind of impact are you having on the lives of these people? Your group leader will take you through an activity.

## ● Activity 2

Draw a line to match each quote with the person who said it.

(a) 'An individual has not started living until he (or she) can rise above the narrow confines of his (or her) individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.'

Mahatma Gandhi

(b) 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.'

Martin Luther King Jr

(c) 'A "No" uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a "Yes" merely uttered to please, or worse, to avoid trouble.'

Edmund Burke

Do you agree with any of these statements? Why?

## ▶▶ Action

Labour Behind the Label is calling on the organisers of the London 2012 Olympic Games to make sure that workers producing merchandise for the Games have their rights respected.

Write a letter to Lord Sebastian Coe, Chair of the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, asking him to ensure that workers can make complaints directly and confidentially when there are problems, and that companies making Olympic goods declare their locations and audit results.

Visit [www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php](http://www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php) for a draft letter or write directly to Lord Sebastian Coe, London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, One Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LN.

## † Prayer

All-powerful God,  
Open our eyes that we may see  
every opportunity you have for us to make a difference.  
Give us ears to hear you  
and the courage to act according to your will,  
In Jesus' Name.  
Amen

MRDF/Audrey Skervin

## Week five – working together

### ► Discussion starter

Your group leader will take you through this activity.

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### ■ Bible reading: Nehemiah 3:1-12

### || Discussion questions

1. Phrases like 'next to him' and 'next to them' occur 28 times in this chapter. What can we infer from this?
2. Most of the groups participated in the rebuilding work, but some people didn't take part. Who were they? Why do you think they didn't take part? Nehemiah and the workers were successful in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, in spite of this lack of co-operation. Does this affect the way that you see non-participants?
3. What tips for leading or working in groups can you glean from the way Nehemiah went about the work?
4. Why do you think the writer was so careful to record all the detail of Chapter 3?
5. Read 'Using groups to effect change' below. In what ways could this community benefit from working together like this?

### ● Activity

Imagine you are asked to put on an event to change the world in some (possibly small) way, e.g. a Christmas dinner for the homeless, organising a march or a group of people to write to their MP, a coffee morning to raise money for a good cause. Pick one idea and discuss what talents/experience/resources each member of the group might contribute. Following Nehemiah's method, how would you ensure it was successful?

### ►► Action

As a group, decide on an event and put your plan from the activity into action.



## Prayer

Father,  
Give us a heart of co-operation  
A mind to love  
A spirit of peace  
So that your will can be done  
For Jesus' sake.  
Amen

MRDF/Audrey Skervin

### Using groups to effect change

In Nakyelongo, Uganda, collecting water used to be a dangerous job, mainly done by children. Many of them would walk for miles carrying heavy containers to an 'unprotected water source' – essentially a muddy puddle. They would have to wade through the mud to get to the water, sometimes avoiding snakes as they did so.

In 2007, with funding from MRDF, this community was able to start building its own well. Like the Judaeans under Nehemiah, different groups of people were responsible for different tasks. Children and women carried the stones to the site, a water technician contributed his expertise, a local mason led the men in the construction and digging efforts. They finished the well in 2008 and can look forward to a healthier future.



*A local mason and men from the community construct a well together in Uganda*

## Week six – walking in hope

### ► Discussion starter

Read the following statements and say whether you think each is true or false:

- (i) International trade is worth £2 million a minute
- (ii) Unfair trade has cost Africa £139 billion over 20 years
- (iii) The poorest countries have a 0.5% share in world trade
- (iv) Two-thirds of world trade is controlled by corporations
- (v) 5,000 people are employed in Brussels to lobby the EU on behalf of companies.

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### ■ Bible reading: Romans 8:18-27

### || Discussion questions

1. What does the Bible passage suggest about suffering?
2. 'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us' (Romans 8:18). What do you think the word 'glory' means in this context?
3. Romans 8:21 says that creation will be liberated from 'bondage'. In Greek, the word means moral corruption, decay, ruin, depravity and wickedness. In what ways could this verse help us to remain optimistic when faced with stories of evil and injustice? What does the passage say about why we should bother fighting evil and injustice? And bother praying?
4. How does the Holy Spirit help us to pray (Romans 8:26)?
5. Read 'Speaking up for the elderly in Cameroon' below. How is Francis making a difference in Cameroon? How effective do you think the act of campaigning can be?

### ● Activity 1

How have the six weeks helped or inspired you? Write a letter to yourself outlining what you have learnt over the last six weeks and what regular actions you will take from now on.

## ● Activity 2

As a group, bring to God all you have thought about over the past six weeks.

### ▶▶ Action

Trade could lift millions of people out of poverty, yet half the world's population remains poor because international trade rules are rigged in favour of the rich and powerful. Trade has the potential to generate wealth for everyone, but it needs to be fair.

Visit [www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php](http://www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack-actions.php) and help put a stop to the great trade robbery.

### † Prayer

Give us, Father,

A vision of your world as love would make it:

A world where the weak are protected and none go hungry,

A world whose benefits are shared so that everyone can enjoy them,

A world where peace is built with justice

And justice is built with love,

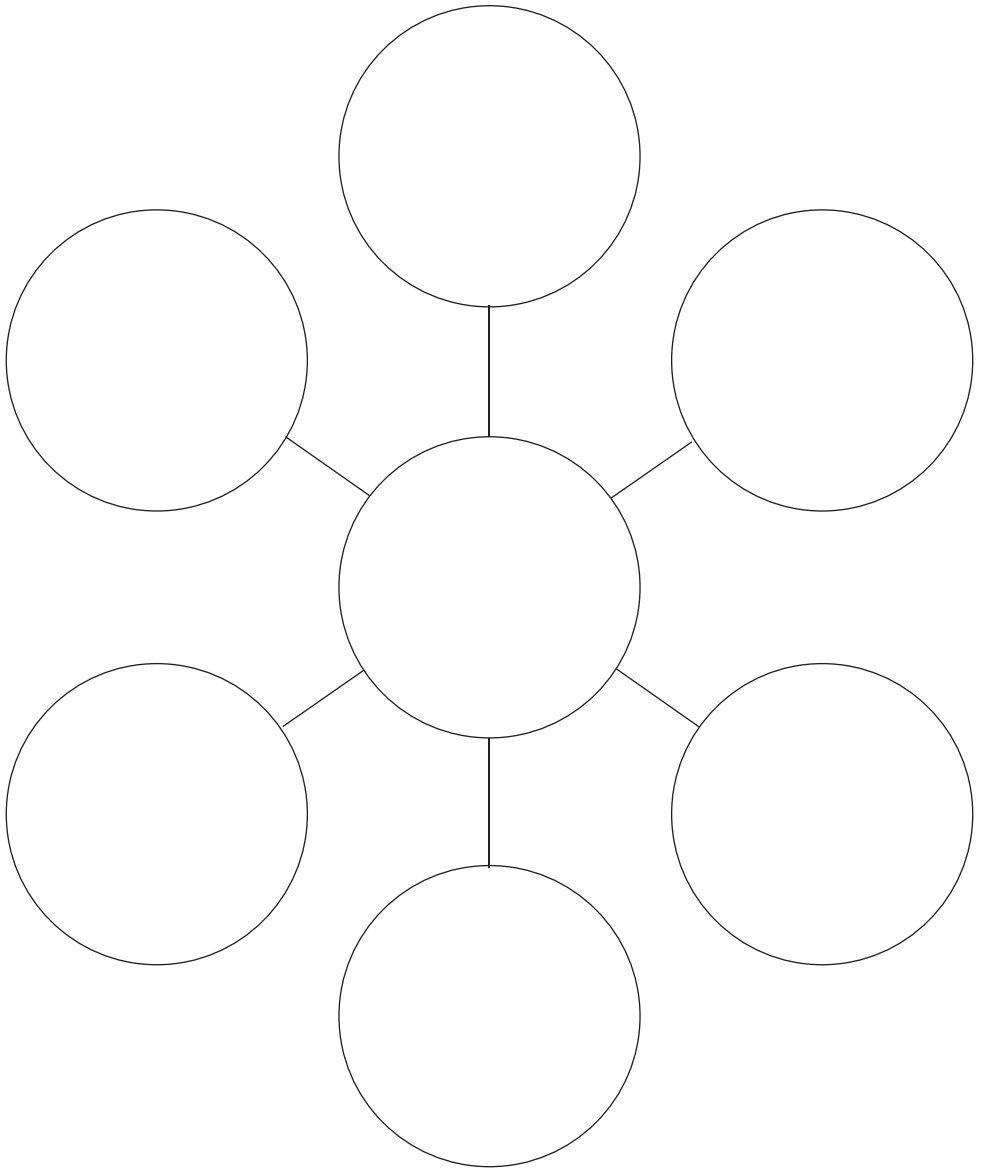
And give us the courage and strength to build it.

*Adapted from a West African prayer*

### **Speaking up for the elderly in Cameroon**

Francis Njuakom Nchii set up Cameroon Development Volunteers for Technical Assistance (CDVTA) in 1998. CDVTA, an MRDF partner, runs clubs for the elderly in North-western Cameroon, where they can take part in income-generation activities such as vegetable growing and bee-keeping. In many cases, the elderly are supporting themselves, and grandchildren, in their old age. Francis has also lobbied the Cameroonian Government to create policies that acknowledge the rights of older people and the Government has started to provide technical assistance to the project. CDVTA also encourages many of the elderly to vote. Francis's tireless work raising awareness of the plight of the elderly in Cameroon was recognised in 2008 when he received the Sheila McKechnie Foundation International Campaigner Award.

## Your sphere of influence



## Further resources

Listen to Sunday Breakfast on Premier Christian Radio between February 22 and April 12 to hear exclusive interviews, stories and prayers about some of the people and MRDF partners featured in the study pack. You can also listen to an audio programme online at [www.premier.org.uk](http://www.premier.org.uk). Extra resources to accompany each Bible study are also available online at [www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack.php](http://www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/study-pack.php).

- Week one: Fighting injustice  
[www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk)
- Week four: Seizing every opportunity  
[www.labourbehindthelabel.org](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org)
- Week six: Walking in hope  
[www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk)

### **Thank you for using MRDF's study pack on changing the world.**

MRDF makes small miracles possible for people living in the world's poorest communities through long-term development, emergency relief and campaigning against the causes of poverty. MRDF supports 44 local, community-based organisations in 22 of the poorest countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, helping individuals and communities to transform their lives and become more self-sufficient.

**To donate to MRDF or to sign up for regular news and updates by post or email, call 020 7467 5132 or visit [www.mrdf.org.uk](http://www.mrdf.org.uk)**

Premier Christian Radio offers a fantastic mix of great music, teaching and debate. Topical discussion, phone-ins, prayer times, true stories and amazing testimonies that will build your faith are interwoven with the latest national news and weather. Premier is delighted to be working with MRDF on *What does the Bible say about changing the world?* celebrating the contribution of everyday heroes from around the world.

**Listen to Premier across the UK on Freeview 725, Sky digital 0123 and [www.premier.org.uk](http://www.premier.org.uk) and in London on DAB Digital Radio and 1305 1332 1413 Medium Wave.**

## Stories from MRDF partners

### **Week one: The pursuit of justice**

From a young age, Mr Raju witnessed the mistreatment of the Dalits (formerly known as the ‘untouchables’) by India’s upper classes. He is a Dalit himself and his father was a bonded labourer. In traditional Indian societies, Dalits were regarded as impure and non-Dalits would be ‘contaminated’ if a Dalit touched them, and so they lived in segregated neighbourhoods. Prejudice continues today.

As a Christian, he was also moved by a deep sense of injustice and so Mr Raju set up Rural Action in Development Society (RAIDS), an organisation that assists Dalits in reclaiming land that has been given to them by the government and provides micro-credit schemes so women can access money to pay for some food and school fees, for example.

Since RAIDS was founded, Mr Raju and his staff have faced resistance and have been ostracised by communities, who cannot understand why they want to help the ‘untouchables’. A few years ago, Mr Raju was confronted by a man who grabbed him by the neck and pushed him against the wall. The message was clear – the people did not like what he was doing to empower Dalits. Despite such experiences, Mr Raju continues in his pursuit of justice for the Dalits.

### **Week two: HIV/AIDS in Zambia**

Abale lost both of his parents to HIV/AIDS before his second birthday. His aunt, who now looks after him, says it is a miracle that he did not contract the disease. The stigma attached to HIV/AIDS in this part of Zambia is so great that nobody attended Abale’s mother’s funeral service. Abale’s aunt moved him and his brother away from the community to avoid the isolation the family would have faced because of their association with HIV/AIDS.

Through its local partner in the Chipata district, MRDF provides training on HIV and human rights to Abale and children like him. Abale now attends the community school. His aunt says: ‘He didn’t know what killed his parents, but now he does and can avoid the same thing happening to him’. Abale says: ‘I know I have to be careful to lead a healthy life.’

## Week four: Rising to the challenge in Uganda

The price for export fish was high and so many people came to Lake Victoria to catch fish. Unable to afford boats and nets, but desperate to make money, some people started to poison fish as a way of catching enough to sell. The Government took action and imposed a fishing ban around the lake in 2000, leaving the women of the nearby Mukono District without their main source of income.

Margaret Nakato, and the local women's group that she led, seized the opportunity to spearhead a new initiative. MRDF supported the group by providing agricultural and livestock training and by donating cows. A few women in the community were given the animals when they were six months pregnant. When the calves were born, they were passed on to other women in the group. The recipients were soon able to get an income from selling cows' milk and the manure acted as an organic fertiliser for their crops. The women are now able to pay their children's school fees, medical expenses and save a little in the group's credit scheme. The organisation now has 11 women's groups and has branched out into other activities, such as bee-keeping and mushroom-growing.

Margaret said: 'Before, I saw women with no sense of direction. But now they say, "I'm going to build a farm or I'm sending my children to school."'



Abale (centre) sits with his friends at the community school



Francis Njuakom Nchii receives the Sheila McKechnie Foundation's International award for his campaigning work from Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Week six)

Photo on back cover: Isaac Komakech carries water home in the village of Amuca, Uganda  
© Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together

## Poverty, injustice, natural disasters... Our efforts can seem a drop in the ocean. Can we help turn the tide?



The Bible, and MRDF's overseas work, are full of everyday heroes: ordinary people who have done extraordinary things. They seized the opportunities they had – and we can too.

Inside:

- six in-depth studies on Bible characters
- engaging group discussion questions
- profiles of people who are transforming the world today
- ideas for individual and group action

MRDF makes **small miracles** possible for people living in the world's poorest communities.

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**Methodist** Relief &  
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