



## Supporting your work for Justice and Peace with young people

### Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of the imaginatively titled 'BOVA'd?'. This newsletter is produced by Bosco Volunteer Action, the Salesians of Don Bosco's overseas volunteering organisation in the UK. It aims to encourage and support instances of development education within youth work; raising awareness of problems confronting developing countries and presenting actions which can be taken. Sent out 6 times per year and then available from [www.salesianyouthministry.com](http://www.salesianyouthministry.com), 'BOVA'd' brings together information, links and resources relevant to justice and peace issues from a large number of charities and campaign groups. In time it is hoped that it will also include materials sent in by those on the mailing list.

Many thanks to all who have signed up (from across the world), but we want more! If you like what you see, please encourage others to join by emailing [bova@salesianyouthministry.com](mailto:bova@salesianyouthministry.com). Perhaps you could suggest it to confirmation catechists, youth group leaders, school councils, teachers, chaplains, Priests, Sisters and Brothers, justice and peace group secretaries or other interested individuals.

An explanation of the format:

Section	Explanation	In this edition
Hints and tips	Suggestions of best practice in development education	Images of the developing world and the risk of disempowerment
Focus	An in-depth look at one particular issue, figure or organisation	Debt
Odds and ends	Other resources, events and links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee voucher scheme</li> <li>• Debt event</li> </ul>

Our aim is to support you in your work, so please contact [bova@salesianyouthministry.com](mailto:bova@salesianyouthministry.com) with any feedback, suggestions or items for inclusion.

Best wishes

James

# Hints and tips

## Images of the developing world and the risk of disempowerment

One of the activities we do with BOVA volunteers during their training involves asking them to quickly jot down 5 words or phrases which “represent Africa to them” (and I’m using Africa here just as an example). Average responses include lions, elephants, vast skies, starvation, war, street children and so on. We then read the essay ‘How to write about Africa’ by Binyavanga Wainaina, a Kenyan author. This is a powerful satire about the way Africa is represented in developed countries – all about negatives images of people and romantic images of land and animals (available online at <http://www.granta.com/extracts/2615>).

A similar exercise is to ask people what they think of the following:

*“They eat a food made from the seeds of a type of grass, cooked once and then burned, which is smeared with a product from an animal. They eat this with the albumen from a bird. Traditionally this is only eaten at certain times of the day”*

What shocks/disgusts them is simply a description of scrambled eggs on toast!

The point is to challenge their perceptions. Yes, Africa has poverty, war, starvation and so on. But it also has people going about everyday life. Children play games! There are universities! Lawyers and doctors! I’m sure you get the point. Developing countries are not completely without capacity – and in the end they must develop themselves. Support is required from external sources (development aid for example), but what comes first is a need for rich countries to stop abusing them. The image I use is that we give a certain amount while taking far more – thus the first stage required is *justice* not charity.

This is a difficult balance to maintain when working with young people. The images of poverty, shocking statistics and so on are powerful motivators – which is why they are the images we are so familiar with from TV appeals, leaflets and so on. However, if we are not careful there is a risk of providing young people with a limited picture of developing countries. A young person at a youth club once suggested to me that we just need to set up a number of supermarkets across Africa and everything would be fine – he had no concept of Africa being lots of countries with cities and shops etc. Freire noted the importance of the voice of the oppressed (*“histories of oppression and suffering must be recounted... Memories of hope, too, must be offered... These should include the voices of the oppressed and respect for their integrity and subjugated knowledge”*); from ‘Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter’, edited by McLaren and da Silva 1993, p77). We must try to find ways to respect the humanity and dignity of people in developing countries by presenting a more complete picture and where possible using their own words and images.

So...

- Try to make use of images and words from the countries under discussion
- Avoid using only negative images (e.g. all starving children); include pictures or videos of ‘normal’ activities which your young people can relate to
- Talk about justice not charity
- Be aware of the message you put across and beware of too much oversimplification

Next time:

*The pover-tree; root causes of poverty*

# Focus

## Debt

*“The world's most impoverished countries are forced to pay over \$100 million every day to the rich world in debt repayments, while poverty kills millions of their people.”*

<http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/>

Remembering the 2 barriers to action introduced in the last edition (don't know about it, “What's it got to do with me?”, “There's nothing I can do”), any session on debt needs to help your young people:

- Understand why debt is a barrier to development in the developing world
- Be aware of the links between our lives in the UK and debt
- Find ways in which we can take action

The resources and links below should help you to do this. There are many more available, but I've sifted through and chosen those which I feel are best.

### Debt is a barrier to development in the developing world:

- 'The Sticker Game' <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/The%20Sticker%20Game+2351.twl>  
A simple game (and v easy to prepare) which introduces the concept of debt and how it can lead to poverty
- 'Debt, poverty and changing the world'  
<http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/Debt%20poverty%20and%20changing%20the%20world+3969.twl>

An excellent powerpoint presentation explaining the debt problem and its consequences.

- CAFOD Debt factsheet <http://www.cafod.org.uk/secondary/all-resource-packs-/aid-debt-and-trade/debt-factsheet-pdf>

Excellent (and accessible) background information

### Raising aware of the links between our lives in developed countries and debt:

- **Film** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daOAeB-zlIA> (if you will not have access to the internet while working with young people download it using the Youtube downloader which is free and very useful – Google it.)

**This film is amazing – if you do nothing else please watch this film – only 3 minutes long.**

- Debt busters game <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/Debt%20Busters+2352.twl>  
Good, but a bit more time-consuming in preparation
- Debt Diamonds <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/Debt%20Diamond+2355.twl>

More in-depth discussion activity suitable for older youth.

### Taking action:

- For the most up-to-date immediate actions (petitions, campaign emails and so on) please see <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/?lid=3105> (or national equivalent if you are not in the UK).
- An even better result is if your young people sign up for regular campaigning emails about this issue  
<http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/Sign%20up%20for%20our%20enews%20and%20alerts+2001.twl>
- You could also raise money for a campaigning organisation such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign.

*You think you're too small to make a difference? Then you've obviously never slept in the same room as a mosquito.*

- African Proverb

## **Prayer** (From Jubilee Debt Campaign)

May I have the spirit of courage,  
that I may have the strength to fight injustice;  
May I have the spirit of challenge,  
that I may not accept the status quo without question;  
May I have 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 voices of the poor  
without trampling on their dreams in my rush to action.  
May I have the spirit of truth, justice and hope,  
That I may rest and work in the vision of a new future  
Where all are linked by the bonds of humanity,  
Not enslaved by the chains of debt

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Next time:

*Trade*

## **Odds and ends**

### **Jesuit Refugee Service voucher scheme**

How would you cope if you had no cash? How would you manage if you could only buy things in one named supermarket? This is the situation faced by some asylum seekers, who receive support from the Government in the form of £35 in supermarket vouchers per week and rarely have the choice of which vouchers they receive. How can they pay for medical expenses, bus fares and so on?

The answer is that they often end up selling them on the black market (for £20 cash). An alternative is offered by the JRS, who exchange these vouchers for cash at face value, usually once a month, to enable asylum seekers to buy other things that they need.

You too can help – and at the same time show solidarity with asylum seekers.

If you, your youth club, parish etc shop at ASDA, Tesco or Sainsbury consider exchanging vouchers through JRS. It costs nothing but the postage and can make a real difference to people's lives. For more information please email [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net)

### **Debt Event**

Advance warning: National event about Global Debt - JOURNEY TO JUSTICE, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, International Convention Centre, Birmingham <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/?lid=3814>

Global debt will be the focus of a future edition – I hope to attend this event, possibly with a group organised by BOVA.