



News from Tzedek

Tzedek Returns to Zimbabwe

Tzedek's volunteer scheme began in Zimbabwe 12 years ago but after returning there for several years, the political situation became so volatile that the programme had to be discontinued and volunteers instead went to Kenya and Ghana for their African encounters. At the time of writing, Zimbabwe remains extremely unstable. The rate of inflation is nearing 1,600% and unemployment stands at more than 80% of the population. There are reports of increasingly aggressive encounters between government forces and opposition demonstrators. The poor of Zimbabwe need long-term help to enable them to help themselves. **Katie Schenk** explains what Tzedek is doing, how it is helping and recalls her own experiences in the country in 1995.

After an absence of six years, Tzedek has resumed funding activities in Zimbabwe. Trustees recently approved a new grant to a Zimbabwean non-governmental organisation (NGO), Inter-Country People's Aid (IPA), renewing a long-standing relationship.

IPA specialises in working with vulnerable urban communities, with a special focus on children. Previous IPA initiatives supported by Tzedek have included income-generating initiatives such as soap-making and paper-making; projects which are the living embodiment of Maimonides' highest level of tzedeka; helping people to improve their living circumstances and move towards self-sufficiency and independence from aid (Mishneh Torah, Mattenot Ani'im 10:7-14).

Through the new project, Tzedek will support vocational training for seven students to increase their skills in building, welding and garment making, so that they can set up their own businesses and train others. The project will build on the experiences of a previous vocational training initiative in 1999-2000 when Tzedek volunteers Karin Shmueli and Deborah Syme (nee Levin) worked with IPA to develop a vocational training scheme for students in the settlement of Dzivarasekwa Extension.

In 1995, in the first year of Tzedek's volunteer programme, I worked for IPA at



Children of Dzivarasekwa Extension



Dzivarasekwa Extension. Euphemistically known as a peri-urban informal settlement, and formerly described as a squatter camp or slum, Dzivarasekwa Extension was home to several thousand people who had been displaced in the round of evictions that preceded Queen Elizabeth's visit to Zimbabwe in 1992. Located 15km outside Harare, after the tarmac dual carriageway through the city became a single unpaved track through the mud, Dzivarasekwa Extension consisted of rows of wooden huts; each a single room with a corrugated iron roof shared by all family members.

My job was to support IPA's programmes in Early Childhood Education. I worked with two pre-school teachers in a wooden hut to develop creative and stimulating activities with which to engage more than 100 children, aged between 3 and 6. We developed teaching materials to initiate enjoyable educational activities requiring minimal external resources. Outdoor physical activities were a recurring favourite, and the children certainly taught me a few new dance moves!

I left Zimbabwe after that summer having gained new insights into the realities of working in development. It was at

Dzivarasekwa Extension that I first heard people talking in hushed tones about deaths that were suspected to be AIDS-related. My first visit to Africa became a turning point, providing me with inspiration and passion to pursue a career in public health, researching one of the major challenges facing Africa today; AIDS. The link to my Jewish identity is no coincidence and I am honoured to see the principle of tikkun olam (repairing the world), a fundamental expression of our Jewish heritage, reflected in my daily work.

Ten years after the summer that I worked with IPA in 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe launched 'Operation Murambatsvina' or 'Operation Restore Order'. The programme was to enforce by-laws forbidding all forms of alleged "illegal activities in areas such as vending, illegal structures, illegal cultivation." The initiative resulted in mass evictions and demolitions of homes and businesses in some of Zimbabwe's poorest and most vulnerable communities. According to UN estimates, up to 700,000 people saw their homes or businesses destroyed, and up to 2.4 million people were affected by the associated upheavals.

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Zimbabwe continued...

Netball at Dzivarasekwa Extension school



During winter and against a backdrop of severe food shortages, the settlement of Dzivarasekwa Extension was among the later settlements to be targeted during this programme. It was systematically destroyed on Friday 8th July 2005. Residents were left out in the open as their homes were bulldozed or occupants were ordered to destroy them.

As we approach the two-year anniversary of the destruction of Dzivarasekwa Extension, its former residents are scattered. Some returned to the rural areas to live with family members. Those who had been allocated stands in New Hatcliffe were allowed to return to them while others were moved on again to the newly established settlement of Hopley Farm. The effects of Zimbabwe's economic decline, the loss of informal trading opportunities and deteriorating social services have combined to create traumatic conditions of deprivation. Many children have been

orphaned and rendered vulnerable by the effects of HIV and AIDS. Family and community safety nets that were traditionally relied upon for support are now stretched to breaking point. Food shortages and access to schooling remain critical issues. Children's right to protection from abuse is under threat from this risky environment.

However, IPA continued working with its former partner communities starting with Caledonia holding camp, which was set up by the government for the displaced residents, offering psychosocial support and emergency support for water and sanitation facilities. IPA has since extended its operations to new sites, continuing to work among people displaced by the operation. IPA's activities aim to identify distressed communities with a special focus on children, provide material relief, enhance community coping strategies and contribute towards Zimbabwe's National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and

the National Response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Tzedek's new grant to IPA addresses the needs of out-of-work youth by building their skills so that they too can move towards self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. Making this grant to IPA represents Tzedek's appreciation of the vital work that IPA is doing, despite ongoing economic adversity and instability. We are proud to renew our relationship with this dynamic organisation that has evolved to meet changing circumstances.

I recall fondly the teachers and the children with whom I worked at Dzivarasekwa Extension, and pray that wherever they are, they still dance.

Katie Schenk is a Trustee of Tzedek and a former member of the Overseas Project Group and the Volunteer Programmes Group. She now lives in America and travels frequently to Africa to conduct research on how to provide support to children and families affected by AIDS.

Zimbabwe in Brief

Population:	12.9 million
Capital City:	Harare
Languages:	English, Shona, Ndebele
Life Expectancy:	37
President:	Robert Mugabe
Unemployment:	80% of population
Rate of Inflation:	approx 1,600%

India themed Fundraiser brings in over £1500

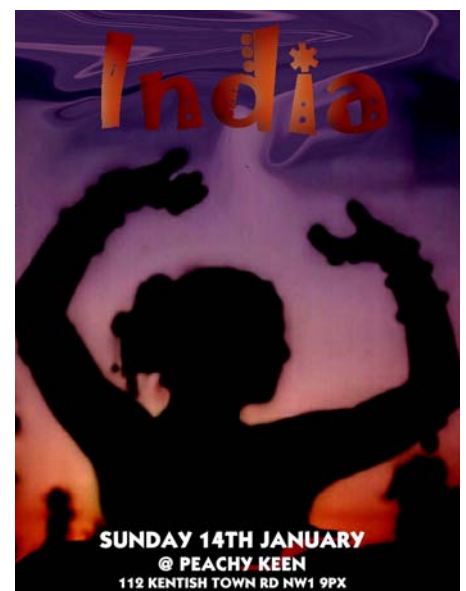
by Mathew Freedman

Over the last year, Tzedek has been developing its events to attract young people within and outside the community. Aiming both to raise funds for the valuable causes Tzedek supports, and to publicise international development issues, the events have so far been a great success. The Carnival, held last year in association with the Tibet-Jewish Youth Movement, featured live saxophone accompanying DJ Little Miss Tan. It attracted 150 people and raised more than £1000.

In January, we held our latest event, Dreams of India, which tried to create an authentic sense of India. With

chilled eastern music, incense sticks, images of classic Indian dancing and Kosher Indian snacks (generously provided by David Bagel Bakery), the modest Kilburn venue certainly had a feel of India. With sight, sound, smell and taste covered, so many people attended that it also felt like a packed Indian bus.

The event drew in more than 120 people and roughly £900 was taken on the door. With an appeal during the event by Tzedek activist Adrian Sieff, many people also made further donations or signed up to direct debits, raising a further £600 per year. Fundraising is a crucial part of Tzedek's work and we look forward to the next event, currently in the planning stages.



Overseas Project Group (OPG) Update



Ilana volunteering with farmers in central Uganda

Hello from the new chairs of the Overseas Project Group

Together with Amir Gross, **Ilana Levene** recently took over as co-chair of the OPG. She is currently studying graduate-entry Medicine at Oxford University. She spent 2006 volunteering with farmers in central Uganda, sharing agricultural techniques to deal with the environmental challenges of deforestation, climate change and rapidly increasing populations in the developing world.

My time in Uganda showed me that the most effective form of development is what springs from the grassroots of its own accord, not what's imposed by well-meaning Westerners, or inexperienced governments. There are so many people out there who want to change their own lives, and the lives of others in their community, for the better. They have the energy, the compassion, the understanding and the vision to do it, but not the resources.

I know that I have done nothing to deserve my extraordinary wealth, in terms of free health care, electricity, water that I don't have to boil before drinking, cheap food, education and all the safety nets of British society. So I feel I have an overwhelming responsibility to remember how rich I am and to try to share it with others, in a partnership that treats those who have also done nothing to deserve their lack of resources, with dignity. The most powerful lesson I learnt was how poverty traps people,

how all the doors are closed to you and how terrifyingly vulnerable you become. I give my time to Tzedek to try to help even a small number of people in the developing world to grab hold of the freedom to control their lives.

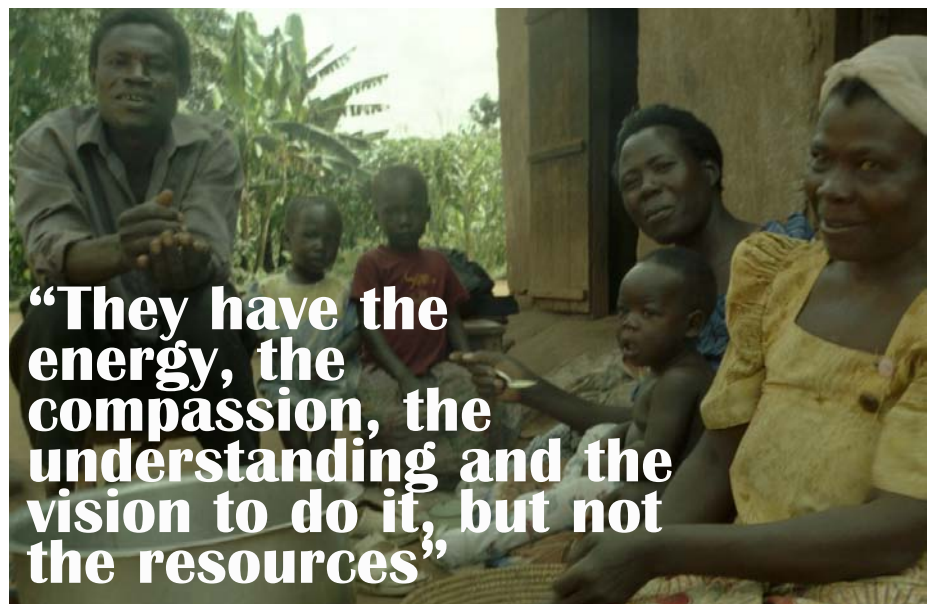
In the Overseas Projects Group we receive applications from groups in the developing world to support their projects. We try to treat them as our partners even before we consider their application. For example, in pointing out areas where they haven't given us enough information, or giving suggestions of how other partners we have supported have made their projects more sus-

tainable. We received an application in February from a group in India who wanted to buy dairy cows as an income generating activity for women. Their budget was impressive, with money requested for training the women in how to care for the animals, and money for vet fees if necessary. The women would be building the shelters for the animals and performing all the labour. We asked whether they had considered passing the first calf of each cow on to other villages, and they agreed that this would make the project even more sustainable.

Other applications we have considered recently have been a Ugandan group wanting to set up a soap factory and a Peruvian group wanting to add a crèche and library to their centre, training poor youths in vocational skills. We try to judge all applications against Tzedek's core values; is it from the grassroots? Is it a sustainable project? Is it relatively small-scale? Will it relieve poverty? Is the project open to all, regardless of race or religion? Working with groups who are so far away, language and cultural barriers are often difficult to negotiate, but it's the most effective way to really make a difference.

If you are passionate about helping others who are trying to relieve poverty and you have a little experience in this area, we would love you to join us.

Email i_levene@hotmail.com for more information.



“They have the energy, the compassion, the understanding and the vision to do it, but not the resources”

Why Religious Jews have a duty to help alleviate Poverty



At the Limmud Conference in Nottingham in December, Tzedek's chair of trustees Clive Lawton ran a seminar in which he discussed the Jewish response to poverty with eminent scholar **Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo**. Here, Rabbi Cardozo explains why he believes religious Jews have a responsibility to do something to help alleviate poverty.

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin (1817-93), the last leader of the illustrious yeshiva of Volozhin, Russia, asked why the first book of the Torah, Bereshith, is also called Sefer Hayashar - the book of those who are upright. He explains that this is due to the fact that the three patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov, the main figures in this book, were men of uncompromising straightforwardness. While there are many people who are perhaps righteous and even pious, the Avoth were greater than that. Their concern for their fellow men, even when they were immoral idolaters, was almost unlimited. Avraham challenged and even bargained with God not to destroy the people of Sedom who had fallen to the lowest possible level of moral behaviour. Although by the law of God they were liable to lose their lives, still Avraham did not let up and kept pleading with God to save them. Yitzchak showed tremen-

dous patience with his depraved opponents who did everything to make his life miserable but in the end he did even more to appease them than what they had even asked for. Yaacov went out of his way not to hurt and even to please his father-in-law, Laban, who had broken all the rules of decent behaviour towards his son-in-law and had exploited him in ways which not even the pious would be able to bear. This, says Rabbi Berlin, is the great trademark of the patriarchs and as a result the book of Bereshith is also called Sefer Hayashar. True Judaism is not the kind of tradition which asks its followers to turn the other cheek, but it does demand concern for even the most foul among men as long it does not lead to disastrous consequences. Rabbi Berlin says this is because we have to realise that without such compassion, mankind will not survive.

When contemplating the poverty, disease and the lack of hope which afflicts so much of our world, I am reminded of the words of Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin: The obligation of Jews to shower infinite mercy on the world. This is also borne out by the fact that God commands Avraham to be a father to all the nations (Bereshith, 17:4), which means nothing less than being a man who shows great compassion for God's creations and to be the one to whom the nations can always turn for spiritual if not for physical help. And just like Avraham is asked to be a father to the nations, so are all Jews.

In the aftermath of the Tsunami which hit South-East Asia in December 2004, the State of Israel went out of its way to help wherever it could to alleviate the pain and distress of those fallen victim to the catastrophe. Besides sending rescue workers, doctors and nurses, money

and food, it asked its private citizens to help financially and to do anything in their power to help out. Israelis, as real Jews, responded in unprecedented ways. In fact Israel's aid worked out at the highest per capita donation of any country in the world. This was even more remarkable taking into account what Israeli Jews had been through in recent years. Whatever our own tragedies we will not forget the world at large, although a good part of the world often seems to forget us.

What happened in Asia was not just a local event but a global disaster which will live on for many more years to come. Our conviction that we are secure in our homes and that nature is a reliable companion was utterly shattered. There is no way we can be certain that we will still be alive in the next five minutes. Ultimately our Emuna, faith, was challenged but also enhanced. We are now aware that we live by Divine mercy only. As such we are able to rediscover why many of us have decided to opt for a religious life. Religion, after all, is the art of living in wonder. It is a call to protest against taking things for granted.

Jewish people all over the world should take the same level of concern for the world's poor as they did for the victims of the Tusnami. Religious Jewry cannot permit itself to make the slightest impression of indifference even when it concerns those who have little in common with us and are no lovers of Israel. Religious Jews should be at the forefront of humanitarian concern not withstanding the attitudes of the people who are in need of our help. Just as it would have been easy for Avraham to turn his back on the upcoming disaster in Sedom and even argue that it would be wrong to interfere in God's plan concerning wicked people, so religious Jews could make the impression of making a similar mistake and argue that poverty is the hand of God and consequently not for man to interfere.

Just as Avraham never considered such an attitude, so religious Jewry should do everything in its power to show that it is its duty to help and show passion in every way possible. To do anything else is contrary to Jewish authentic teachings.

But besides all this, Jewish religious leaders should send a message to all of the people of Israel and not less to all of mankind that the time has come to realise that the world is a different place than we imagine it to be. There are moral and religious values which are worthwhile fighting for and there are many other concerns, such as our physical pleasures, our need for honour and often extreme comfort, our hates and loves, which occupy millions of us and which are not worth our while spending so much time and energy on. In our vulnerability we grow up and become aware of what is important and what is not. To make ourselves, and others, aware of this is also equally our task as a father to the nations.

Jews should act with great responsibility and show that they have not forgotten their duty to function as the father to the nations. This would in turn create great respect for the Jewish Tradition throughout the world and no greater sanctification of God's name could be achieved.

May the Holy One, blessed be He, have mercy on all the world's poor and may He make an end to all human suffering.



**“Israel's
(Tsunami) aid
worked out
at the highest
per capita
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any country
in the world.”**



Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo is a Dutch-born author and lecturer. He is Dean of the David Cardozo Academy, an adult education institute in Jerusalem.

Volunteering in India



Tzedek's Volunteer Programmes Group (VPG) is currently recruiting and selecting volunteers to spend two months in Calcutta, India this summer, working on small-scale, self-help, sustainable development projects. **Emily Colman**, who volunteered in India in 2005, shares some recollections.

Life is what you make of it. This may be true for the privileged, but what about the millions of people we hear about on the news and in the newspapers living in the 'Third World'? Those who don't have the opportunities to live out their dreams; those who have no choice but to contend with poverty and violence every day.

One of Tzedek's aims is to educate about issues of development and the huge disparities that are prevalent in our world today. Travelling through these deprived countries sometimes just isn't enough to be able to get a clear perspective on the situation. In 2004 I spent six weeks travelling through Northern India. It is such a fascinating place, full of wealth and splendour, yet with such horrific poverty. It is quite unimaginable and deeply unfair. I was completely taken by the country, but I wanted to learn more about people's lives there.

In 2005, along with a group of

Tzedek volunteers, I found myself in Calcutta, India. After an eye-opening orientation of the city, the language, history, buses, food and synagogues, I started to work with a local non-governmental organisation (NGO); the Society for Environmental and Educational Development (SEED). It is a wonderful NGO that protects, supports and educates thousands of people. It is heavily involved in helping children who find themselves living on the railway platforms and streets of Calcutta. These children are surrounded by abuse, drugs and little protection, doing what they must to survive.

But what could I do to help? I certainly wasn't going to be able to change their lives, or alter the socio-political conditions with which they struggle. Firstly, I had to learn about their lives; what they need and what I would be able to achieve. All the volunteers in worked very hard while

we were there, using their skills and knowledge to help the NGOs, whilst always trying to learn about and understand India's difficulties.

Being a part of the SEED family and being welcomed into their lives and the lives of the children they protect made that summer the most memorable and meaningful of my life. SEED and the boys there are still part of my life and after that time in Calcutta, I continued my fascination with India and overseas development through further university study.

Volunteering with a local NGO is a wonderful way to see and learn about another country and to be able to do something for other people; to give something back without changing the world, but just leaving a small, positive impression on a few lives.

Clive's Column



We have just celebrated Pesakh, our festival of freedom. Not only are we commanded to celebrate the freedom but we must remember the slavery, and in a visceral way. It must bring tears to our eyes.

This year, two hundred years after the abolition of the British slave trade, we cannot yet dry those tears. There are still many real slaves around the world; indentured workers with no hope of escaping their employers, paid subsistence wages, if any. Even in the UK, domestic workers from around the world are trapped by the unintended consequences of their only being here because of their job as maid or servant. They cannot leave because, if they do, they'll be sent home to presumably fairly unsympathetic treatment on

“Tzedek stands with those condemned by current injustices and inequalities in the world” **Clive Lawton**

the part of the ruling classes from which they might seek their next job.

Slavery is not all whips and pyramids. According to Jewish tradition, we do not have to wait for Pesakh to come round to commemorate our freedom. Every week Shabbat brings it to mind. The ability, even the requirement, to stop work ensures that no-one can enslave our spirits, even if we are grindingly poor. Many of us have family stories of great-grandparents struggling from day to day just to get by, but Shabbat let them be kings and queens for a day, not because of their lavish possessions or great feasts, but because they had self-respect and hope of better times and confidence that they weren't alone - which is the sine qua non of survival.

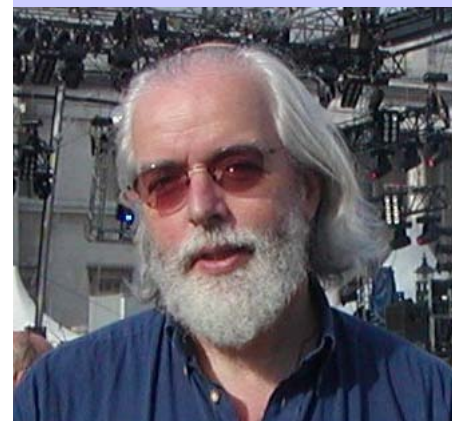
Tzedek stands with those condemned by current injustices and inequalities in the world, not only to provide material help but also a genuine level of respectful fellowship, so that people in another part of the world know that they are neither forgotten nor friendless.

We Jews should not rest while there is injustice in the world, so we must take this festival of

Pesakh as a prompt to redouble our efforts to abolish slavery in the world. The job was only started 200 years ago - actually it was started 3,500 years ago - and we must strive to finish it.

In Tzedek, we seek to do so by calling upon Jews to recognise our brothers and sisters in hardship, to remember slavery and our message of freedom, and to live up to the ideal that all people, created as they are in the image of God, deserve dignity, hope and self-respect. Wonderfully, all over the world, in circumstances that would rapidly defeat us, people manage to retain that dignity and self-respect. All Tzedek asks you to do is stand with them.

**Clive A Lawton,
Chair of Tzedek's Trustees**



Editorial: Tenda Wema Nenda Zako

A Swahili phrase meaning "Do Good and Go Your Way"



Joel Clark in Kenya in 2005

Welcome to Issue 2 of Arevut - as you can see, it is changing and improving all the time. I am delighted that Hilary Bentwood has brought her design expertise to the newsletter and is responsible for the fantastic new format you see before you. Katie Schenk, Tzedek trustee and former volunteer, has also joined the team and will be helping with editorial content. Her insights into the troubles in Zimbabwe this month are truly eye-opening. This is a cause that Tzedek should be proud to be supporting. The next edition of Arevut is due out in late June - if you'd like to get involved or make any contributions, please forward your ideas to me:

joelsclark@gmail.com. The success of this newsletter depends on you.

When I volunteered in Kenya in 2005, there was one thing that bothered me above all else. Tzedek offers its volunteers the best opportunity they will ever have to come really close to African and Indian lives. Instead of just gliding through a country and seeing its tourist attractions, volunteers meet and work with people who live in tremendous hardship. In Kenya, I met African people who showed enormous resilience in the face of disease, unemployment and very often a lack of hope. The mother cooking food in a restaurant all day

long so that she can support her daughter. The child born into poverty who has no toys to play with and may not be able to afford a proper education. The young man suffering from AIDS; sitting in his dingy little house, waiting for the pain to ease, wondering if it ever will. Meeting and befriending these people was an opportunity I will forever be grateful for and will never forget. But what bothered me most was the position we, as westerners, inevitably fall into. We get onto the plane, spend 2 months in a country and then we have a great privilege; a return ticket. We see poverty and we sympathise with the plight of the people we meet. But then we leave. They cannot. There is often no way out for them.

In Kenya I tried to explain how I felt to a good friend. He told me something I will never forget. Tenda Wema Nenda Zako. A local Kenyan expression, translated from Swahili as "Do good and go your way." Don't expect thanks or grand gestures for whatever small thing you are able to do. Just do it, and then go your way. It makes a lot of sense, especially to Tzedek. Whatever we do in our lives, we all live in exceptional comfort. We must be grateful for that but we must not take it for granted. We must do something, however small, to help those living in poverty. And once that is done, it is time to leave. Tenda Wema Nenda Zako. It means a great deal.

Joel Clark _____

The times they are a-changing

These are exciting times for Tzedek. The organisation is about to recruit a new, full-time director and will soon bid farewell to its development officer, Steve Derby. Look out for the next issue of Arevut, which will include all the details. Due on your doorsteps in late June.

If you would like to contribute or get involved in Arevut, please email: joelsclark@gmail.com

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