

Seeds campaign: case study on women farmers in Kenya

For the past two years CAFOD supporters have been calling on the World Bank to stop pushing countries to enforce new seed laws. These laws include restrictions on small-scale farmers' rights to save, share and sell their seeds.

Your parish might have been one of the 763 who supported last year's letter from Salina - a small-scale farmer from Bangladesh who wrote to the World Bank urging them to return seeds to the hands of farmers.

The World Bank has so far been receptive to our campaign. From their detailed responses to our letters, and meetings with CAFOD staff and supporters, through to engaging in a public discussion with CAFOD partners, we are reassured that the World Bank is listening to us. Yet still the change we so urgently need remains far from materialising.



Our latest research from Kenya

CAFOD and our partner BIBA-Kenya (Biodiversity and Biosafety Association Kenya) recently conducted research into how Kenya's 2012 seed law has impacted women, who constitute up to 80% of Kenya's agricultural labour force.

This law is similar to those promoted by the World Bank and is designed to regulate and strengthen the commercial seed sector. By examining the impacts of Kenya's seed law, we can gain insight into how the World Bank's programmes are likely to affect millions of women farmers around the world.



Kenya's seed laws are not working for women

As in many low-income countries, in Kenya seeds are accessed through two systems:

- The commercial sector which involves government and commercial plant breeders developing new certified seed varieties which are sold on the market.
- The farmer-managed seed system, which is built on farmers saving and breeding their own seeds based on the specific characteristics of the soil or climate of a region, and/or the cultural or nutritional needs of a particular community. These are then sold, swapped or shared amongst farmers.

The research involved interviewing women farmers to hear how the new laws have impacted them. Women and men may choose the varieties to be grown for the family or community, but women do the work of saving, exchanging and selling seeds. The report found:

- A reduction in the number of local seed varieties available, with some varieties now extinct – making it harder to work as seed producers.
- The cost of certifying seeds is beyond the reach of most women farmers.
- Despite continued high demand for indigenous seeds, fewer women farmers are saving seeds because of fears over the sanctions associated with the new laws. Limited access to credit means that women may not be able to afford to buy certified seeds. Together, this means women are slowly losing their access to, and control of, seeds.

We will soon be publishing our new report 'Seed systems and gender equality' as part of our Fix the Food System campaign. Stay updated at cafod.org.uk/latestcampaigns

CAFOD Campaigns Update – October 2024

You are receiving this update as part of your volunteering agreement with CAFOD. If you want to stop volunteering or discuss your volunteering role, please contact your local CAFOD representative. Or for any queries email Helen Moseley hmosley@cafod.org.uk or call our Campaigns hotline on 020 7095 5692. Photo credits: CAFOD

Looking ahead to the Jubilee Year 2025



Pope Francis has given the 2025 Jubilee Year the theme of Pilgrims of Hope, inviting Catholics to renew our hope and discover a vision that can "restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone". A Jubilee or Holy Year is a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation, occurring every 25 years and involving the cancelling of debts, a period of rest for people and the earth, and land being restored to the landless. This means that 2025 is a natural time for us to focus on the issue of the global debt crisis.

Low-income countries are facing the worst debt crisis in history – more severe than the crisis of the 1990s and the Jubilee 2000 campaign which saw \$130 billion of debt cancellation. Then, debt was largely owed to other countries or international development banks, whereas most of today's debts are owed to private creditors, many of whom impose exceptionally high interest rates. Debt payments are absorbing huge amounts of budgets in countries that are home to the world's poorest communities, making it impossible for governments to invest in essential public services or urgently needed climate measures. **We have a new reflection guide for parishes on the themes of Jubilee** as we approach the year, which includes reflections on debt as well as other themes. **Order your copy at cafod.org.uk/shop**

Faith in Action online: Saturday 23 November – save the date

Our annual online campaigners' conference will be on Saturday 23 November from 10am to 2.30pm. We'll look ahead to the Jubilee Year 2025, hear live from one of our policy experts at COP29 in Azerbaijan, a debt campaigner from Sri Lanka, and we'll be joined by a new MP. This event is very popular every year – sign up at cafod.org.uk/FIA



We have a CAFOD campaigners' Whatsapp group!

For those who are interested, we have a Whatsapp group specially for CAFOD campaigners, so that we can quickly share new actions, key developments or invitations to events with you. (We won't bombard you with messages, and of course you can leave at any time).

If you'd like to join, scan this QR code with your phone, or you can text us on 07553 040 376 to ask to be added. Any queries, email Helen on hmooseley@cafod.org.uk

It's not too late to welcome your new MP!

St Anthony of Padua parish, Oxford (right) sent a signed congratulatory card to their new MP, Anneliese Dodds. It's not too late to send a card or an email to your MP introducing your parish and saying that you look forward to engaging with them on the issue of global poverty.



At a recent parliamentary event about the global debt crisis, an MP told a CAFOD staff member that she had decided to attend the event after some of her constituents raised the issue with her. Which goes to show how valuable it can be to raise things with your MP!

Prefer to receive this by email?

If you would prefer to receive this update by email rather than post, please email Helen on hmooseley@cafod.org.uk. The update will be attached as a PDF, so it's suitable for reading on a computer, not a phone. We send around six a year, and once a year in spring we will send you printed resources in the post. If that would suit you, just let us know and we'll do that for next time.

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