

FAMILY *to* FAMILY, VILLAGE *to* VILLAGE

Frequently asked questions

QUESTION: There are many countries around the world in which hunger, disease, and government corruption are taking a toll on the people. Why was Zimbabwe identified as the focus of the *Family to Family, Village to Village* program?

ANSWER: It's true that there's no shortage of places where people are suffering, but when it comes to the world's worst countries in which to live, Zimbabwe ranks at or near the top of most lists. Zimbabwe is also home to the largest national Conference in the world-wide network of Brethren in Christ churches, and that means many thousands of our BIC brothers and sisters are experiencing unimaginable hardship on a daily basis. We look forward to the time when we will partner with Zimbabwean churches in building for a bright tomorrow. For now, we are standing with them through their long, dark day.

QUESTION: We would love to help feed a Zimbabwean family for a month, but we aren't able to give \$75 at this time. Can we give less?

ANSWER: Gifts of any amount are gladly accepted by the *Family to Family, Village to Village* program. Your gift will be combined with those of many other individuals, families, and "villages" (Sunday school classes, small groups, and kids clubs) in one glorious total that we'll forward to Brethren in Christ church leaders in Zimbabwe along with your prayers, words of encouragement, and love.

QUESTION: Rather than being combined with all the other gifts to *Family to Family, Village to Village* and then distributed at the discretion of BIC church leaders in Zimbabwe, we prefer that our gifts be designated for a specific Zimbabwean church. Can you make that happen?

ANSWER: During this prolonged time of hardship for our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe, fairness in how aid is meted out is very important. We North Americans must be careful not make requests which, while helping us to feel better about giving, can damage relationships and make life even more difficult for the very people we are seeking to help.

So the answer to this question is no, we cannot—nor do we want to—impose our own preferences on how *Family to Family, Village to Village* funds are distributed in the country. Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Zimbabwean BIC Church, and World Missions staff in the country have worked out a detailed plan for ensuring that all districts that contain BIC churches benefit equally from the *Family to Family, Village to Village* program. We hope that one of the outcomes of *Family to Family, Village to Village* is that North American Christians will learn the importance of honoring the advice, practices, and structures of our sister churches around the world.

QUESTION: I've heard about food and other aid being stolen as soon as it reaches Zimbabwe. How do we know that assistance provided through the *Family to Family, Village to Village* program is actually reaching Brethren in Christ and other people who need it?

ANSWER: The advantage of working directly with BIC World Missions workers and local churches in Zimbabwe is that we have much more control over the distribution of food and other supplies. Unlike the big international aid agencies, we don't stockpile "stuff" in warehouses that can attract the attention of thieves and/or government officials. On a monthly basis, the General Church finance office in North America transfers a manageable amount from the *Family to Family, Village to Village* account into the

Zimbabwe account. This gives BIC workers in Zimbabwe access to U.S. currency, which is crucial now that the Zimbabwean currency has been dollarized. (Due to soaring inflation, the Zimbabwean dollar was abandoned earlier this year; the only currencies widely accepted throughout the country are the U.S. dollar and the South African Rand.) A month's supply of food and other supplies are purchased and then distributed to BIC churches through the discretion of the district overseers. Ours is a relatively low-key operation and small enough in scale so as not to attract too much attention from the wrong folks.

QUESTION: What's the use of a program like *Family to Family, Village to Village* when President Robert Mugabe and his corrupt government do more harm than we can possibly do good?

ANSWER: The *Family to Family, Village to Village* program is about much more than providing food to hungry people. It's also about raising up advocates who will speak out on behalf of justice in Zimbabwe wherever, whenever, and to whomever they can. Poverty, hunger, and disease are symptoms, not the problems that are dragging Zimbabwe down. Aid programs are "tourniquets" that can help keep the country from bleeding to death while we pray for and advocate on behalf of change in the government of Zimbabwe.

QUESTION: Should we worry that a program like *Family to Family, Village to Village* will create dependency among people who are aided by our gifts? How does giving people "fish" rather than "teaching them to fish" affect the impact of *Family to Family, Village to Village*?

ANSWER: There's a lot of truth to the old giving fish vs. teaching fishing adage, particularly in situations where persons receiving assistance possibly could have helped themselves. However, the problem for Zimbabweans isn't that they don't know how to fish. They have the skills and the desire to care for themselves. They are eager and ready to return their country to its former status as the "breadbasket" of Africa. The prob-

lem for Zimbabweans is that a corrupt government has (metaphorically speaking) scooped up all the fish for itself. So while we pray along with Brethren in Christ in Zimbabwe that change will come to their land and the people will once again be able to "fish" for themselves, we have the joyful privilege of sharing from our own abundant catch.