



CHURCH ACTION
ON POVERTY

Church Action on Poverty Review 2006

**Working with churches, people in
poverty and others to develop lasting
solutions to poverty in the UK**

CAP Review



Working with churches, people in poverty and others to develop lasting solutions to poverty in the UK

Summary

This paper sets out a series of proposals regarding the future direction of Church Action on Poverty over the next 5-10 years, adopted by CAP's Council of Management in July 2006. These proposals arise from a 12-month 'stocktake' process; involving the Council of Management, CAP staff and key partners (principally via the National Poverty Consultation in March 2006).

Summary of Key Recommendations

1. We should play to our strengths and our unique selling points, along lines of "National campaigns and local innovation to tackle the root causes of poverty in the UK":
2. We should collaborate and share resources with partner organisations to draw on the skills/resources that CAP doesn't currently possess:
3. We should develop a network of local partners to pilot and innovate new/best practice in participation, empowerment and long-term sustainable solutions to poverty.
4. CAP should build on the learning and expertise we have developed through Debt on our Doorstep, Participatory Budgeting, sustainable livelihoods, schools of participation etc
5. CAP should increase our work/profile within churches, including particular efforts to expand our reach/support within evangelical churches.
6. We should seek to build a small but strong staff team on the basis of the existing core posts, including a new post of Communications and Supporter Relations Manager.
7. We should continue to build up size and diversity of CAP's core income streams to ensure our financial sustainability

Section One: Background to the Stocktake

1. CAP's Mission and Strategic Aims

The CAP Council agreed a statement of CAP's strategic mission and aims just over 2 years ago, summarised below:

CAP's Mission

To work with people living in poverty, the churches and others to overcome poverty in the UK.

CAP's Aims

A sustainable livelihood for all

People living in poverty will achieve income security and paid employment which promotes dignity and justice.

A voice for people living with poverty

All poor and marginalised people will have an effective voice in shaping decisions, which affect their lives.

A church that is mobilised to work with others to overcome poverty

The churches will actively promote a 'bias to the poor' both internally and externally and will form alliances with those of good will from all faiths and none.

An organisation which is effective and sustainable

CAP will model best practice in governance and delivery of its programmes, and ensure our own ability to continue to take forward our mission into the future.

2. Objectives of the stocktake

The overall purpose of the stocktake has been to review and (re)define CAP's positioning as an organisation, in relation to the current and potential changes in the nature of poverty, the church, anti-poverty sector and the wider political/economic context over the next 5-10 years, to ask some fundamental questions about CAP's strategic direction as an agency, including whether there are any options for long term partnerships and/or mergers with other organisations – in order to achieve maximum impact on the churches, poverty and exclusion in the UK.

3. Specific Objectives

- To identify and explore options for maximising the sustainability of CAP as an organisation, either independently or via some formal relationship with one or more partners, over the next 5-10 years
- To assess our impact to date at community, regional/devolved nation and/or national levels with a specific focus on what has worked (or not) and why, and what options there are for taking forward the work at each level
- To examine the "models of change" (both implicit and explicit) which have underpinned the programme to date and should underpin the work in the future
- To identify the human and financial resources, skills and structures needed to deliver a (re)defined CAP.

4. What others have said about our work over the past 12 months

"The work of Christian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including Church Action on Poverty, Christian Aid, Tear Fund, and CAFOD make particularly powerful contributions."
Faithful Cities, the report of the Commission on Urban Life and Faith

- On CAP's Living Ghosts campaign to end asylum destitution:

"I am delighted that Church Action on Poverty's main campaign this winter - "Living Ghosts" – aims to highlight the problem of asylum seeker destitution and to lobby for change."
Maeve Sherlock, ex-Chief Executive, The Refugee Council

"The Living Ghosts campaign has shown again – just as with Make Poverty History – that when the churches work together with others of goodwill, they can still be a positive force for change in society. Our challenge is to stand up, speak up and be counted".
United Reformed Church *Reform* magazine

- On CAP's work of mobilising churches to work together to tackle poverty:

"I have been encouraged by CAP's willingness to explore partnerships and new ways of working in the last twelve months. I am grateful for the Living Ghosts campaign and for the more general work around poverty networks and the impact they could have. A national initiative across the churches to address the issues of domestic poverty is long overdue and I think CAP is well placed to be at the heart of such activity with the Just Church campaign."
Rev Malcolm Duncan, Movement Director, Faithworks

'CAP's conference managed to bring together Christians from different traditions with different perspectives on how poverty needs to be overcome. If CAP can continue to build its contacts across the whole church, then it can represent the whole church and have a greater impact on the crucial and complex issue of poverty.'
Jon Kuhrt, Director of Development and Regeneration, Shaftesbury Society.

- On the Fair Finance conference, which CAP organised in November 2005:

"The DOOD Fair Finance conference in November, 2005, was a seminal event that will have positive implications for years to come. It was a call to action and to organize the voices for fairness in lending. Across the EU, politicians, consumer representatives, faith-based leaders, academics, the media, lenders and others are raising the quality of the dialogue about the need for fair finance. In great part, this is directly attributable to the work of DOOD and CAP."
John Taylor, President of the US National Community Reinvestment Coalition

Section Two: What do we want to achieve over the next 5-10 years?

2.1 What kind of change and how do we bring it about?

- CAP should be focussing changing public attitudes, empowering the grassroots and enabling people in poverty to have more control over their own lives; as well as national legislative and policy changes.
- CAP's change strategy should focus on using the national media; building strong broad-based alliances and popular mobilising, with less emphasis on formal parliamentary processes and behind the scenes lobbying
- CAP itself needs to change to reflect wider social change, build stronger alliances, tackle unpopular causes and consider multi-faith working.
- Giving a voice to people in poverty, using stories and direct encounter is one of the most powerful tools for change.
- There is also considerable potential to work with 'changemakers' – individuals who can act as agents of change within local churches/communities

2.2 Engaging the churches

- CAP's traditional core constituency within the churches (mainly theologically liberal) is suffering long-term decline in numbers and resources.
- CAP needs to give more consideration to engaging with those parts of the church that are growing in numbers, resources and energy.
- The growing interest amongst evangelicals in social action is a key opportunity, although it is not one that CAP is currently well positioned to take advantage of.
- This may necessitate a shift in language and theology, to take more account of issues of personal responsibility/conversion (although this is contested!).
- The Just Church programme provides an excellent opportunity to engage with a broader theological and denominational spectrum across the churches.

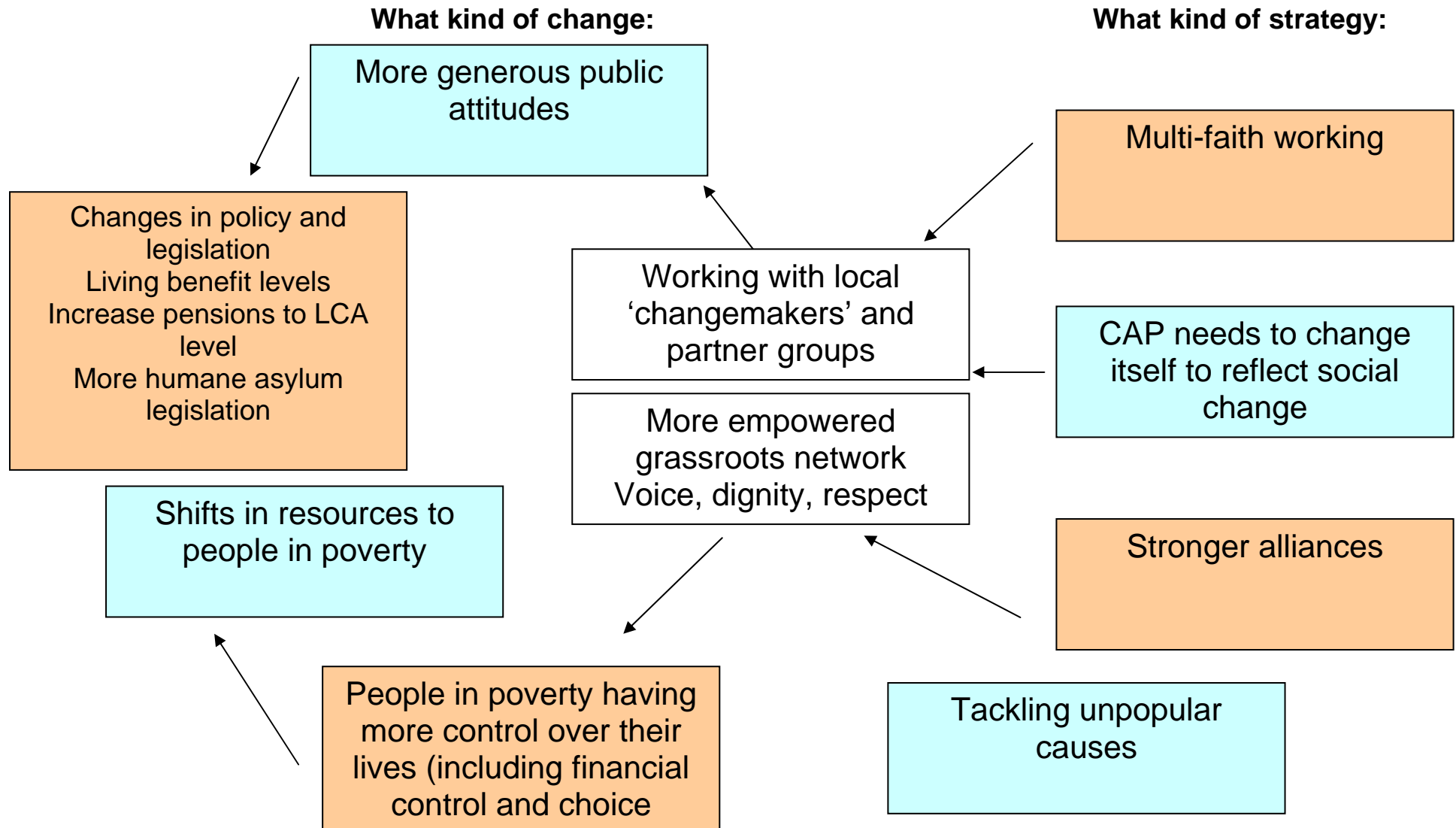
2.3 The staff view: How CAP achieves impact

The CAP staff held a 24 hour residential earlier this month, which identified a number of key learning points in relation to how CAP can achieve maximum impact in relation to its Strategic Aims – which confirm and re-iterate much of what the Council has also said. For a list of these findings see box on page 6

2.4 The partners' view: Working together to achieve change

The National Poverty Consultation identified 4 proposals for future change strategies for the next 10 years, set out in appendix one. These in various ways each placed emphasis on the need for long term programmes to change attitudes within the churches and society through grassroots action and story telling, supporting local 'changemakers' and building a powerful national coalition for change.

Models of Change: What Changes do we want CAP to help bring about?



Achieving impact: Key Learning from CAP staff meeting 4/5 July 06

Local People: We are good at building an authentic grassroots base...

- Grassroots based network – gives CAP authenticity and legitimacy, and ensures that what we do is rooted in authentic experience of people living in poverty
- Participatory development programmes (e.g. Schools of participation, sustainable livelihoods etc) – have long lasting impact at local level.

National Voice: We are good at national campaigns that achieve impact

- Our Local people/national voice approach gives CAP credibility and is really distinctive (most groups do one or other well, but not both).
- CAP provides 'vertical' links to influence power holders – enabling our grassroots work to have maximum impact - few others provide this link.
- Lobbying at national level is both important to challenge Government and achieves great impact if it succeeds.
- Clear campaigns – punchy and powerful

... But we need to deepen our relationship with key grassroots constituencies

- Build better relationships with individuals in poverty - currently a lack of linkworker(s) – provides a reality check on what we do and for people with power
- More resources and support for CAP groups – both new and existing ones
- Build stronger relationships with activists – a database of who we can call on
- Pay greater attention to how we communicate (i.e. use more accessible language)

Church Action: We are good at connecting with churches and others to achieve impact....

- Identifying issues which churches engage with from a moral/biblical imperative – increases our impact
- Our Church connections – receiving backing from but remaining independent of the institutions – are our roots and provide ready-made connections.
- Partnerships – adds credibility and access to more resources, including money

... But we also need to be alert to new ways of engaging churches

- Paying close attention to what is happening in the churches:
 - We won't have a constituency in a few years time if we don't
 - How do we represent our Christian ethos: Where is God in CAP?
 - Faith action on poverty (inter-faith dimension?)
- Engage with different sections of the church – where the energy is
- Better identification of and dialogue with movers and shakers in churches to enable the above to take place.

We can also be more effective in capitalising on our work

- Deeper connection between different parts of CAP:
 - Staff feeling connected
 - Synergy between projects – feed of and inform each other
- More effective dissemination of the tools, approaches and learning from our work, including playing on the 'global learning' dimension.
- Events need to be better followed through and capitalised on in terms of CAP's profile/membership/commitment

Section Three: What organisation and resources are needed to deliver the strategy over the next 5-10 years?

3.1 The potential for collaboration/merger with other agencies

The stocktake examined the potential for CAP long-term collaborations and/or mergers with other organisations:

- There are no immediate opportunities for CAP to merge with any other agencies
- There are, however, several organisations with whom there is significant potential (and advantage) in seeking greater collaboration, including Church Urban Fund; Evangelical Alliance; Faithworks; Housing Justice and the planned joint social action/public affairs agency of the Methodist/Baptist/URC churches.
- Just Church and the proposed 'Make UK Poverty History' coalition offer a strong basis for building collaboration with these organisations.
- Collaboration could significantly increase CAP's profile (and long term supporter base) within evangelical churches and the mainstream denominations.

3.2 CAP's core staffing needs

The Stocktake identified that whilst there is no great desire or need to dramatically expand CAP's the existing staffing structure, there are a number of changes which will enhance the team's overall effectiveness:

- Investigating in a new post of Communications and Supporter Relations Manager
- Where funds permit we may buy in additional 'core' expertise in media/marketing/communications - but the exact mix to be determined.

3.3 CAP's long term financial sustainability

- CAP's financial situation is much improved compared with 12 months ago.
- CAP has a diverse range of sources of core income. Unrestricted income has increased over the past 2 years as a result of successful marketing and campaigns activities.
- This has come about as a result of a significant increase in regular giving by standing order, and new core grants secured during the past 12 months.
- There are no grounds for complacency – continuing to expand CAP's core supporter and donor base will continue to be a priority for the foreseeable future.
- There are a number of opportunities to continue to expand CAP's core income – continuing to grow our donor and supporter base, a sensitively managed legacy appeal, personal approaches to selected potential high value donors – and a major fundraising campaign linked with CAP's 25th anniversary in June 2007.