



Fall 2006 Newsletter

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<http://chris.kingsu.ca/~stephewm/Micah>

An introduction to the Micah Center

ROY BERKENBOSCH
MICAH CENTER DIRECTOR

"I've spent the last four years watching people die."

With those stark words Stephen Lewis begins his Massey lectures, "Race Against Time." He goes on to describe the devastation caused by AIDS, hunger, and injustice, ending with a compelling summons for the people of the world to sit up, take notice, and act for the sake of all those who suffer.

Lewis's message has ancient resonances in the words of the Hebrew prophet Micah who said that what the Lord requires "is to love justice, to show mercy and to walk humbly with God." This message is echoed in the words of Christ who said that he had come to announce good news for the poor, freedom for captives, and a day of Jubilee for those in captivity. Christians therefore ought to be in the front ranks of those who join in the struggle for justice everywhere, especially among the poor. It must be central to the identity of all Christians.

The need is urgent in the lives of women, children and men around the world who experience daily poverty, hunger, isolation, disease, and the injustices and disempowerment that both cause and derive from these. Nearly 1.2 billion people live in perpetual poverty with the consequences of hunger, disease and death. Nearly 24,000 children die daily because of hunger and malnourishment.

The Christian imperative to seek justice and to love mercy underwrites much that we do at The King's University College. Professors here have

staked their careers on bending the resources of their discipline in the direction of God's shalom-shaped, justice seeking Kingdom; the Honduras Water Project, Micah Action & Awareness Student Society, the I.S. conferences on Food, Worship & Justice, Peacemaking – all of this, from Presidential addresses to convocation speeches to student publications, bears witness to a community commitment to understanding and responding in faith and obedience to Micah's challenge.

So what is the Micah Center? It is an effort to energize the various social justice initiatives at The King's. Specifically, the Micah Center advances student awareness of justice issues and creates opportunities for experiential learning opportunities around the world through internships. So far three internships have been sponsored through Micah: Jonathan deKoning in Haiti; Bri Vos in Bangladesh; and Lindsay Vander Hoek in Tanzania. The Micah Center also offers scholarships for students to attend events such as the Faith and International Development conference in Grand Rapids MI, the URBANA conference in St Louis, MO, and more (see announcements in this newsletter).

Senate has recently approved the offering of a certificate in Micah studies at King's. Students who participate in 3 credit or 6 credit Micah internships and who take the newly designed Micah Challenge course (THEO 374) can earn a certificate while earning the degree of their choice.

These are exciting times for the College. In the midst of financial challenges, the bigger vision of helping students grow a global vision for justice and renewal has not been lost.

The Center is under the direction of Roy Berkenbosch, who is always looking for students who can offer some assistance.



The Micah Center builds on King's history of enabling students to respond to injustice and poverty through experiences such as the Honduras Water Project.

/Adrian Benoit

Monitoring child health in Tanzania

LINDSAY VANDER HOEK
CRWRC INTERN

I have been in Tanzania since September 13, and aim to leave on December 17. Time has flown by over the past weeks, slowing down rarely.

I am working with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in Tanzania, with Steve and Jan Michmerhuizen, who both have advised me along the way during my work here. The goal of my 13 week internship (to fulfill a requirement for my environmental studies degree) is to tell the story of a village called Buhumbi. The focus is a growth monitoring program, for which, beginning in 1993, mothers in the community have come to weigh their



Community health workers and mothers weigh a young child.
/Lindsay Vander Hoek

children and record whether they are a healthy weight for their age. Data such as this has been recorded accurately for ten years, and I have the privilege of working with it.

So far I have developed a database so the information can be looked at from many angles. Using this, the goal is to compare the rise and fall of the weight of the children, and the months or years in which that occurred, with things such as rainfall and crops harvested in the community. (Another part, and highlight, of my time here has included helping with participatory research in Buhumbi community to find information about the last ten years of rainfall, harvests and sicknesses).

The community health program has a goal of keeping 90% or more of the children (under five) in the right weight for age category. For the most part it has been a resounding success, and the program enjoys much enthusiasm from the community.

The report will take a deeper look at some of the stories behind the data – what has gone on in Buhumbi, what community programs there are, what kind of patterns are seen in the weight/health of the children over the years, and what types of things seem to have an effect on the children's weights.

This is only the "physical," "in paper" results of my time here. In another light, though, other aspects of my time here include learning about working and living cross-culturally, seeing what kinds of work non-government organizations do and how, developing relationships, the struggles and joys of this type of work...the list could go on.

A Week With Micah 6:8

a unique service learning opportunity for college and university students

Reading Week 2007 (February 17 - 25)

in the Jane/Finch area of Toronto (<http://jane-finch.com>)

this project provides a hands-on opportunity to learn about the various issues related to social justice, with specific themes relevant to multi-racial urban communities.

the week will include service projects, reflections, devotions, worship & social events.

cost (includes program, meals & lodging): \$125.00 plus your own transportation costs to Toronto

applications will be accepted until January 15, 2007

The Micah center will provide \$300 subsidies for up to 5 King's students. For details and registration forms, see Roy Berkenbosch or Megan Edwards.

Community development in Bangladesh

BRIANNE VOS
CRWRC INTERN

It's 5:30 am and I am awaked again with the dawn call to prayer...so begins my day in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Living within hearing distance of three different mosques makes for an exotic alarm clock. By the time I untangle myself from the mosquito net over my bed, the street below my window is alive with noise and energy: rickshaw bells, street sweepers, vegetable sellers, paper buyers, car horns.

I have spent the past three months living in Bangladesh, working with CRWRC and their partner organizations - SATHI (urban) and PARI (rural) - studying community-based, integrated development. It is a very interesting time to be in Bangladesh as national elections are on the horizon and political tensions are running high. Many of these tensions have spilled over into outlets that have created obstacles for my work. We are currently in the middle of the fourth country-wide blockade which has brought all transportation to a grinding halt.

However, despite the crippling political situation, I have been able to do some amazing things this fall. I've walked through urban slums where 10,000 people live within one square mile in shelters built of newspaper. I've sat on the dirt floor of a straw hut and eaten fish with local rice farmers. I've followed Bengal tiger tracks through the Sundarban mangrove forests, walking knee-deep in mud.

Though I still have a month left to finish my work here, I am on the final phase of my study. I will spend the next few weeks living in Dhaka, compiling the information I've collected over the past months into a manual that will be used for training new staff and sharing best practices with other organizations.

The community-based development CRWRC Bangladesh initiates with its partners is unique, remarkably successful and sustainable. By taking a grass-roots approach and motivating the participants themselves to begin savings-based credit, SATHI and PARI have seen their working areas



A community group investigates books from a box library.

/Brienne Vos

transformed. Entire families and communities are accomplishing in a decade what they never dreamed possible in a lifetime: farmers' children are going to college, early marriage is becoming unacceptable, parents are getting skill training, starting businesses, saving money and planning for the future. Most importantly, these changes are lasting because the people themselves have brought them about with their own motivation, finances and determination. These results have enormous potential to be replicated across Bangladesh and in other areas of the world as well

Through my studies here I've been able to have very meaningful conversations with the people who are deeply committed to this development. Gabriel Rozario, the director of PARI, told me that "self-help" development is very new in Bangladesh and when other organizations hear about the exciting things that are happening in PARI, they are astounded and ask him, "how does it happen? Do you have some sort of magic, Gabriel?" He smiled at me and said "I tell them yes! It is magic! I say to them come visit, come live with our organization, meet our people and you will see the magic."

I have lived with the organization, met the people, seen the magic and now it is my honour to help share the stories of the success I have witnessed.

Students act to Make Poverty History



Councillor Michael Phair proclaims October 17 "Make Poverty History Day"
/Nancy Olthuis

TRIXIE LING
MASS LEADER

Micah Action/Awareness Student Society (MASS) is the student arm of the Micah center. The goal of MASS movement is to promote action and change regarding issues of social injustice on both a local and global stage. We hope to advocate for radical change and mobilize students to take action and make an informed difference in a broken world as servants of Christ.

We want to encourage students to be active participants in bringing awareness of social justice issues to our community. Our past MASS initiatives have included: an on-campus letter writing campaign lobbying Alberta's government for responsible use of its billion dollar budget surplus; successfully advocating for sweatshop-free King's apparel; a "Leave Your Car at Home Day" to bring awareness of the environment; a Fair Trade Day selling local fair trade goods and showing a movie about "Trade not Aid" in support of an orphanage in Africa for children with disabilities; and an AIDS Awareness Week recognizing World AIDS Day on December 1.

Another successful event put on by MASS at King's was the "Make Poverty History Day" on October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The Make Poverty History campaign, active in over 70 countries, calls for more and better aid from the government, cancellation of the debt of

the world's poorest countries, trade justice, and an end to child poverty in Canada.

To recognize October 17, a 100 foot "Make Poverty History" banner was wrapped around the school. Bringing awareness of poverty and speaking out against the impact of poverty in Edmonton, Councillor Michael Phair on behalf of the Mayor of Edmonton proclaimed October 17 as "Make Poverty History Day." Representatives from local organizations such as the Edmonton Food Bank, Edmonton Social Planning Council, The Mustard Seed and Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation spoke about poverty in Edmonton. The event ended with multiple Juno Award winner Bill Bourne performing and speaking on poverty.

In all these we see that as disciples of Christ, we are called to not just follow Jesus but to be like him, to be one who loves justice and righteousness. I hope that we can all take up Micah 6:8's call "to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God."

FAITH & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

CALVIN COLLEGE

GRAND RAPIDS, MI

FEBRUARY 1-3, 2007

A conference for students centred on a practical theology of development, especially with respect to peacebuilding and reconciliation, global health, environmental care, and economic justice.

Cost (includes all sessions, 7 meals, and 2 nights lodging on campus): \$40 US plus your own transportation costs to Grand Rapids

For more details, go to
www.calvin.edu/academic/ids/conference

THE MICAH CENTER WILL PROVIDE TRAVEL SUBSIDIES FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF KING'S STUDENTS. SEE ROY BERKENBOSCH FOR DETAILS.