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Presentation at the Royal Geographical Society in London

Zimbabwe: Rising from the Ruins?

By Ben Freeth MBE

EXTRACT: OPEN-POLLINATED SEED PROJECT AND POEM ON HOPE

We continue to run our conservation agriculture farming courses to enable the poorest of our rural people to feed themselves. Last year we grew, packed and distributed over 4,000 "feed your family for zero dollars" starter packs. We've been demonstrating with *Foundations for Farming* how with a just a hoe and 4 kgs of open-pollinated seed that can be multiplied from one year to the next and the next, you can feed your family with zero dollars. This year we have 8,000 such packs to distribute. This brings hope. We are reaching the poorest of the poor - and in their poverty giving them hope and dignity so that they can feed their families.

An open-pollinated seed is an amazing thing of hope. From one such seed it is very quick to get many more seeds:

- In year 1 it can produce 300 seeds [200 grams]:
- In year 2 those 300 can produce 90,000 seeds [56 kg]:
- In year 3 those 90,000 can produce 27 million seeds [17 tons]: half a lorry load.
- In year 4 those 27 million can produce 8,1 billion seeds [5,000 tons] - or 167 big lorry loads.
- In year 5 those 8.1 billion can produce 2.4 trillion seeds [1.5m tons]; or 50,000 lorry loads.
- In year 6 those 2.4 trillion can produce 720 trillion seeds [450m tons]; that's 15 million lorry loads - that will feed the entire world!

We are producing and packing and giving out 50 million seeds a year to be multiplied and shared and given out so that whole communities can benefit. Amongst the poor we are bringing hope when hope seems dead.

I wrote a poem about this hope, because it is in hope that I would like to finish. I want to predicate it with a profound verse from scripture: *"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds."*

*Where is hope when hope seems dead - when the storms of life have battered us so;
When despair has crept in upon our souls and beaten us and laid us low?
Where is hope in those darkest hours - when the candle burns to a tiny stub
And the storms blow through the gaping doors and we're cast out on the rising floods?*

*Where is hope when lawless men carry out schemes out of selfish greed?
They are powerful - with impunity, and we're powerless in those hours of need.
They steal and kill and destroy and lie, and burn our homes and all the land
And leave great debts for others to pay, and leave us choking under sinking sands.*

*Is hope present when hope seems dead? Can hope arise from the desert sea?
Yes! Hope manifests in different ways: when people stand and refuse to flee
When courage rises to do kindness still for the oppressed with a kindly deed
When love triumphs - and forgiveness too, and God's Hand is grasped - so He can lead.*

*Yes hope is never lost forever - we find it beyond the self that sins.
We see hope when we go together and practice love from which all hope springs.
We see hope among the humble few, standing together in desperate need
For justice to flow in a desert land - where we plant with hope those hoping seeds!*

Thank you for being with us tonight and for your wonderful support.

BEN FREETH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MIKE CAMPBELL FOUNDATION