



NEWS RELEASE

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CHRISTIAN AID TO UNITE FAITH & BUSINESS TO TRANSFORM POOR COMMUNITIES



Christian Aid has launched The Salt Network, a group for business leaders who are committed to improving their company practices in a sustainable way, both locally and on a global scale. It will support leaders within business big and small, to improve business practices at their company and influence others in their sector to change their practices. It will also give them an opportunity to provide financial support to entrepreneurs in developing countries, through a special Christian Aid fund.

The new business adventure is responding to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which set an ambitious target to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all.

A workshop earlier this month gave the network's first members the opportunity to identify real, tangible actions they could take to improve their business practice and influence others. They were joined by Matti Kohonen, Christian Aid's private sector policy advisor, and Quintin Lake, Research Fellow at Ashridge and Director at Fifty Eight which advises companies on ethical supply chains.

The intention from the outset was to ensure the network is action focussed and this is being achieved already with 70% of members now planning to implement a change in their business practices as a direct result of engagement with the network. The pledges members have made

include assessing the risk of modern day slavery related to subcontractors and building staff awareness on the subject.

By 2020 the network aims to have regional hubs in developing countries, with members exploring three themes a year, their first being 'business & human rights'. Future themes are likely to include good investment, creating a value based business and tackling inequality. The programme has been designed to accommodate busy schedules: much of the learning will be online, with members meeting face-to-face around three times a year.

Additionally, Salt members are pledging to support Christian Aid's work financially, enabling small and growing enterprises in the developing world, with little access to finance and technical assistance, to grow and become sustainable. This fund will support fledgling businesses, benefitting their employees, suppliers, customers and the wider community.

An injection of capital from the fund will help rural enterprises to access business development support, technical assistance and affordable loan finance. Many of the business that will be helped are led by women, many of whom have been identified for their great transformational potential.

Christian Aid's Salt Business Network manager, Helen Howe, said: "As the UN rightly points out, responsible business and investment are both essential if we want to see this type of transformational change in the world. Christian Aid is responding to this by seeking to build ever closer relationships with the private sector and inviting business leaders to work with us, and with each other, to create a unique movement that unites the strengths of faith and business to tackle global poverty. This network will be motivated to learn about, support and engage in sustainable solutions for the world's poorest communities, reframing what it means to be in business.

"We believe together we can be more ambitious and more effective in the work we do – learning from each other, supporting each other, thinking more creatively and inspiring each other to do better and achieve more."

Ends

Photo: Salt business network manager, Helen Howe with Salt members Julia Howl, Olu Ogunbode, Chris Sheldon & Stewart Ritchie at the first workshop

If you would like further information please contact Helen Howe on 07710 917799 or email salt@christian-aid.org. 24 hour press duty phone – 07850 242950

Notes to Editors:

1. Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in around 40 countries at any one time. We act where there is great need, regardless of religion, helping people to live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance in tackling the root causes of poverty as well as its effects.

2. Christian Aid's core belief is that the world can and must be changed so that poverty is ended: this is what we stand for. Everything we do is about ending poverty and injustice: swiftly, effectively, sustainably. Our strategy document Partnership for Change

www.christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf explains how we set about this task.

3. Christian Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. Further details at <http://actalliance.org>

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