CHAPTER VI

FAMINE RELIEF ACTIVITIES

The Central Provinces had been most unfortunate in having numerous famines during the whole of the nineteenth century. The inhabitants of its various regions underwent sufferings from these famines almost in every decade. Comparatively less severe famines occurred in the sixth, seventh and eighth decades. The reports of the famine commissions and the Gazetteers give harrowing tales of these occurrences. In 1803 the first famine of the nineteenth century appeared in Nimar and Hoshangabad Districts due to the failure of rains. It is still remembered as 'Mahakal' when the grain was sold eight pounds per rupee. ¹ On account of its severity in Nagpur District many cultivators had to sell their children for slavery in order to buy food to remain alive.² In the next decade a famine visited Seoni and Mandla Districts in 1829 and another one occurred in Raipur and Bilaspur Districts in 1828. In 1832 the famine affected the vast land of the Narmada Valley and Nagpur region. Heavy mortality occurred in Betul and Wardha Districts.³

In 1845 the area of Nimar and Chhattisgarh was visited by a drought which caused severe distress. The rust destroyed the wheat crop of the northern districts in 1854. This famine was much remembered by the people of Sagar due to the heavy mortality caused by starvation and sale of children for grain.⁴ In 1858 famine visited Bundelkhand and the Vindhyan regions. The last decade of the nineteenth century was the

¹. Imperial Gazetteer, p.52.
³. Imperial Gazetteer, p.52.
worst for the Central Provinces. There was almost a cycle of famines creating much distress. The excessive winter rains spoiled the crops of the northern districts in 1893. The rust destroyed the whole wheat crop in Sagar and Damoh Districts in 1894. The rice crops of the Provinces were destroyed by the late rains in 1894 and 1895. The rains suddenly stopped in August and September in 1896 and caused a severe famine. The year 1897 was a very bad year for all the districts except Nimar, Chanda and Sambalpur. The dreadful famine caused deaths at the rate of 69 per kilometre. The price of rice reached 12½ pounds per rupee in Balaghat District. In 1899 the rains failed completely throughout the year. This grave failure was for the first time ever known in the Central Provinces when many districts received only one third of their average rain fall. This caused damage to both the crops. The altogether out turn for the Province was a quarter of the normal. The prices of food grain went high being 1 to 3 pounds per rupee. The following years were also the years of scarcity and shortage. In all these years of famines the crops failed and climate made it impossible to plant new crops. In many regions grass, vegetation and fruit trees perished and wells, streams, tanks and lakes dried up. The food, fodder and water famine so caused resulted in hunger, starvation, thirst and death of a very large number of human beings, beasts and birds. Hundreds of villages were deserted by their inhabitants and the grass and mud huts fell down for lack of repairs. The homeless people wandered from place to place in search of food, water and work. Towns became overcrowded by the refugees. Cholera, dysentery, fever and smallpox epidemics and crimes accompanied such calamities and multiplied suffering and mortality. The shrill cry of the famine-stricken mobs and the moanings of sufferers were heard all day and night.

2. Imperial Gazetteer, p.63.
Though the famine relief work tended to involve the missionaries in a work that apparently evinced no direct bearing upon the focus of evangelism—preaching of the Gospel—yet in the typical Indian context of appalling poverty augmented by the dreadful prospects of frequent outbursts of famines over unbelievably long periods, the relief activities in retrospect appear to have sharpened their evangelical focus. They had to wash their hands of their lives in the bargain. Their immense sacrifices provided a humanitarian background to their evangelism which in ordinary times would have faced the hostility of those profoundly committed to paganism and religious superstitions.

In the beginning the missions were not aware of the enormities of these famines and were not prepared for any famine relief programme. Whatever little contribution was made by them was only casual, personal and without any sanction from the parent organisations abroad. But with the growing intensity of famines increasing desolation and mounting deaths by epidemics, when the relief work became so gigantic that the official efforts of the Government alone could not meet the heavy demand on its economy and cooperation of the missions was sought by Lord Elgin in fulfilling the tremendous responsibility, the missions of all denominations responded whole-heartedly, although famine relief did not constitute a part of their defined activities. Faced with dreadful occurrences at different places and times they made provision for relief work and rendered memorable contributions to the humanitarian work independently as well as in cooperation with the Provincial Government during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The first method of relief they adopted was the distribution of money to meet the immediate and urgent demands of the sufferers for food.

The Scottish Church distributed Rs.2400 among 100 boys in Bhandara and
Rs. 1400 in Nagpur Districts among 40 girls. Nearly 1000 famine-stricken
people received sufficient money daily to get a meal. Rev. Wharton and
Mr. Shah of D.C.I.M. gave Rs.400 a day for four months and a few
thousand rupees were sent to farmers at Harda. A sum of Rs.1500 was
given in exchange for rice by E.S.N.A. at Baitalpur in 1897.

Subsequently, the greater parts of the missions' famine
relief funds were spent in feeding and clothing the needy people. This
was done with the idea that the help in kind would be more appropriate
than the disbursement of money in cash. Notwithstanding their
prejudices against the missions the afflicted people came in flocks to
the mission stations in search of food, clothes and shelter. The missions'
response to them was momentous. They did whatever was possible within
their limited means and capacity to provide relief to the destitutes by
giving essential commodities to them. As the famine afflicted people in
their distress went to the extent of selling their children for a crumb
of bread, the missions opened free kitchens where rice and dal were
cooked to be passed on to the needy. The Mennonites of Dhantari directed
the operation under Rev. Page's supervision and fed 1400 persons daily.
J.A. Resseller of the same mission was allotted 2300 bushels of American
corn which he sold to the government. Out of its sale money he bought
3000 blankets and distributed them among the poor in 1900. Rev. Muller
and Rev. Fletcher of Kurku Mission, Betul, found hundreds of people
beseeching for food in 1898. They provided them with two spoonfuls of
dal and rice cooked together and two chapatis of jowari and water. Their

1. Minutes of the Foreign Mission Committee of U.F.C.S. May 10, 1898
article A.
2. Franklin, J. : A Short History of India Mission of the Disciple of
Christ, p. 4.
3. Historical Record of the Mission Station, Baitalpur 1919, p. 3.
E.S.N.A. Archives.
5. ibid, p. 47.
mission fed as many as 2000 people and spent Rs.10000 which it received from the friendly organisations in U.S.A. in 1900.

Other Christian missions also came forward to help the destitutes. At Seoni-Malwa the F.F.M.A. opened a cheap food shop from where the commonest grains were issued at the rate of 2 pounds per diem (penny) to each famine card holder. It also distributed clothes to 200 people during the famine of 1898. In the following year 480 persons were given a meal every day. Two old women were fed for two weeks, one widow for one month, and two mothers with babies in their arms and several old men for several months under the superintendence of George Clark. At Hoshangabad, six women and 100 girls were supported, and 1000 Hindus and Muslims were fed daily. The soup-kitchen of Hoshangabad distributed cooked food with a combination of five parts of rice and one part of lentils, boiled in water with some oil added to it and a plateful of fresh boiled vegetables, in all weighing three and half pounds per person every day at noon. F.Kilbey of Itarsi received 14 tonnes of American food grain which he sent to other mission stations for local distribution. He used to visit the famine-effected villages and ask the poor to assemble in the patel's house where tickets were given to them for obtaining food grain from the mission station.

Rev. Gill of the C.M.S. began famine relief at Jabalpur in March 1897 where more than 880 people received food for six months. Christchitt opened a kitchen at Murwara(Katni) where 110 children were fed. At Marpha(Mandla) 534 persons were helped. In 1898, the mission received a considerable pecuniary help from the 'Manson House Fund'. Nearly 600 people were relieved through this fund, and with the grain

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1. Latter from Joseph Taylor to the Secretary of F.F.M.A. quoted in Our Missions 1897, p.68.
2. Ibid, p.151.
supplied by the 'New York Christian Herald'. At Mandla and Marpha £4000 were spent on penny meals. Rev. E. D. Price of Marpha received a donation from Miss A. Boyd, which enabled him to purchase grain for relief purpose. He collected grain from 190 kilometres and brought it on three hundred oxen-carts, protecting it from thieves and dacoits by a company of bowmen and spearmen specially formed for the purpose. He distributed eight hundred pounds of grain daily. The soup-kitchens were opened at Banjaur, Curramgaon, Singhpur, Basadongri and Deori in Mandla District. At Patpara nine hundred children were relieved in soup-kitchens. In the year 1900, clothes and blankets were given to seven hundred families in thirty villages of Jabalpur District and with a gift of maize sent from America 1400 children were fed daily in five children's kitchens.

Another mission which shouldered a large share of responsibility during the famines was the Disciples of Christ. Centres at Harda, Timarni and Rahatgaon in Hoshangabad District were opened where food and clothes were given by Rev. Wharton and Dr. Shah to three hundred people for five months. The children's kitchens were supervised by Miss Thompson where full meals, clothings and medicines were supplied to them. Wharton collected a large quantity of grain which enabled him to help many Gonds and Kurkus. His helper Jagannath received cart-loads of grain and used it to feed thirty people daily during the famine of 1897. Children's kitchens for homeless children were opened at Bina in Sagar District. At Mingeli in Bilaspur District, Anna Gordon started a kitchen where little ones received 'Horlicks Milk' four times a day and 1500 cotton blanket sheets were distributed. In 1900, food was given to

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1. Proceedings of C.M.S. 1898, p. 213.
2. Ibid.

D.C.I.M. Archives.
one hundred people in eighteen villages. At Rahatgaon one hundred persons were supported and food worth £ 203 was supplied. Children's kitchen at Bilaspur was opened on receipt of $ 3000 through 'Christian Herald'. One hundred and fifty women were fed daily at Damoh in 1897.

The Scottish Church adopted similar methods of relief activities at its centres. It started a kitchen during the famines of 1899 and 1900. In Chanda District the sufferers were too many to be fed and their attitude as a whole was fatalistic. They grumbled against wages as insufficient, and their cry in the kitchens was for more food. Two grain shops were opened at Nagpur where grain was sold cheaply every Monday for eight months. On the following day grain was distributed to those who were too weak to work. Clothes were sold cheaply for schools and famine relief works and in few cases distributed free to the poor. Some blankets were provided by the 'Woollen Mills' of Kanpur at the cost price and were sold to the needy at one-third of actual price. At the sub-centres of Dhapawara and Patasaongi money was given to the needy and the relief kitchens supplied the daily dinner of dal and rice to four hundred people. In Bhandara District cooked food was distributed free.

The E.S.N.A. opened soup-kitchens at Bisrampur in Raipur District where not a grain of rice was harvested in 1897. Its price rose to twenty pounds per rupee which was four times higher than the usual rate. Five hundred people were fed daily at Baitalpur at a cost of Rs. 7500 which the mission received through the Christian Herald. During

2. Ibid. p. 52.
the famine of 1900 Rev. A. Stoll and A. Hagenstien organised kitchens at Baitalpur and Parsabhader in Raipur District with the rice and corn imported from America which enabled them to feed 2000 children daily for several months. The Swedish Mission at Sagar fed five thousand people daily for six months during the famines of 1896 and 1897. For quite a long time 1400 persons were given their daily portion of grain. The relief kitchens were opened at Khurai (Sagar), Chicholi, Nimpani (Betul) and Seja (Chhindwara).

The Methodists started the famine relief work at their stations in 1897. At Khandwa in Nimar District food grains were distributed to the farmers while they were sowing and caring for the growing crops and in Narsinghpur District 3000 bushels of grain was distributed as a help to the farmers during the rains of 1896-97. Rev. C. B. Ward of Sironcha received help for relief work from 'Flower Family' of New York. Mr. Titus and Shiv Charan became most invaluable helpers in Bastar during 1897-1900.

Besides the distribution of food, grain, clothing and money a good deal of construction work was taken up under the famine relief programme. A considerable amount of the famine funds was spent on public constructions and mission buildings. While both served the purpose of providing livelihood to the poor, the former added to the public convenience and the latter greatly enhanced the value of the mission property.

A leper asylum comprising seven buildings was made by the Disciples of Christ at Harda in 1897. Rev. Wharton constructed a hospital

1. Rinman, Miss V.: In the Heart of India, p. 29.
building at Timarni and a well was dug at Charna village. Under the supervision of Rev. Rambo, the buildings for school and orphanage were completed in 1899. The Christian Herald of U.K. contributed Rs.31000, and Rs.1000 to the construction work. These amounts came through 'Ford Radstock Fund' and 'British Christian Women Board of Mission'. At Mungeli some temporary sheds were erected which were later on replaced by the new blocks. The road-repairing work was also taken up to face unemployment at Mungeli and Timarni, for which the centres received $3000 from the 'Christian Herald'. Dr. Louis Clopsch of the 'Christian Herald' visited the famine-stricken areas in 1900 and allotted a sum of $1500 to the Harda school, $200 to the Damoh orphanage and $900 to the Mungeli bungalow and school. 

The Methodists also opened the construction works at their various stations. More than three hundred people were engaged in building dormitories, mending roads and digging wells. At Sironcha Miss Barnsberger and Miss Blackmar reported that the mission grounds were covered with the rubbish of the building works. Rev. C. S. Ward received a sum of £5000 for famine relief from Lord Radstock and Messrs Morgan & Scott through Bishop Thoburn. He was able to undertake a 200 feet long building project at Jagdalpur costing Rs.6000 in 1898-1899.

The Mennonites included several public work projects in their famine-relief-operation programmes. They dug three tanks at Hatkesar, Sonil and Navagaon in Raipur District, which served as the water reservoir. Seventeen wells were dug in different villages. A six kilometres long road was made of rock and moram from Dhamtari leading into the country side under the charge of Rev. Hessel. He employed

six hundred and sixty two persons for digging a ditch around Sunderganj Mission compound, Dhamtari in 1899. The number of employees was raised to 1500 when a project comprising a kitchen, poor house, an orphanage, a hospital and a bungalow was taken up in 1900. The famine relief projects were marvellously organised. Hesseller divided the unemployed persons into gangs of various sizes, each consisting of a mate, five diggers, twelve carriers and six children. A clerk was appointed for twenty gangs. He planned work, took attendance and paid daily wages which were fixed according to age, sex and nature of work. A clerk received five to fifteen rupees a month, the mate six to eight pice per day, the diggers five to six, the carriers four to five, and the children three pice a day. At one time some 3000 persons were working on tanks and 6000 on roads.

Quite a good number of building projects were undertaken by the F.F.M.A. Samuel Baker of Hoshangab had undertook judicious disbursement of 'Manson House Fund' which was started in 1896. In 1897-1898 nearly 2000 persons were employed in digging a tank at Itarsi, a well at Seoni Malwa and 200 persons in mending roads at Seoni Malwa, for which the municipality recorded its hearty thanks. At Hoshangab ad town three hundred people were given work at an expense of £700 a week. At Lahi village a stream was dammed up to irrigate a considerable area of land and the banks of a river were deepened in 1898. A forty feet deep well was dug through 12 feet thick rock. At Bankheri and Sohapur 300 and 1000 persons were given jobs respectively in 1899. Thirty people were employed in laying cemetry at Sohapur and sixty in hedging crop fields at Seoni Malwa. During the famines of 1899 the mission received a

1. Lacon, J.A.: The Mennonite Church in India, p.15.
fund of £10045 for relief work.1 With this amount a tank at Itarsi was made larger and a well deepened at Rasulia village. A jungle work in 270 acres of land near Moorram river was taken up by A.R. Taylor. He employed two hundred men on two diems a day.2 The people who worked on the project of a large tank, two roads and the house buildings were paid in cowries (shells); one pice was equivalent to 108 cowries. A man could make 800 cowries a day.3 3000 people worked on a tank at Seoni Malwa and 1500 people on Seoni road under the supervision of George Swan. A road at Hoshangabad was constructed between the mission compound and the bazar. At certain places its level was raised to 18 feet and a masonry bridge was built up to the height approved by the Chief Commissioner.4 Another road was made from the mission compound to the railway station.

Several other public projects, though meagre but not negligible, were prepared by other missions. Rev. Gill of C.M.S. began famine relief at Jabalpur in 1896 by erecting 40 grass huts and a poor house to meet the immediate problem of accommodation.5 Rev. E.D. Price employed 300 persons in the construction work at Deori, Patpara, Narpha and Mandla town. Various jobs like building works, cutting and sawing of timber, brick-making, cutting grass for thatching etc., were provided. The Swedish Mission built two orphanages at Sagar and Chhindwara in 1897.6 Two orphanage buildings were constructed by the Scottish Church at Bhandara and Wardha at the cost of Rs. 10000 and Rs. 4500 respectively in 1900.7 At Dhapawara (Nagpur) an old well was dug deeper for pure water and the dilapidated walls of the old fort were repaired. The roads leading to the main streets were raised.8

1. Pumphrey, C.J. and Newman, J.E. (Eds.): Our Missions, p. 57
2. Ibid, p. 131-A diem was equivalent to one penny.
5. Proceedings of C.M.S. 1897, p. 213.
7. Minutes of Foreign Mission Conference, Sept. 18, 1900, No. 44.
The E.S.N.A. opened relief work on the availability of funds in 1897. Two tanks at Bisrampur and Ganeshpur were deepened. Some new tanks were dug up in other villages and several roads were made. A leper asylum was constructed at Chandkurhi by Rev. Nottrott at the cost of £420.

In the words of John Lampard of Balaghat a period of famine always resulted in a discovery of a number of children without means of subsistence and apparently without parents or other relatives responsible for their maintenance. These orphans, instead of being considered as a burden to the missions, were accepted as a sacred trust and hallowed gift placed in their hands by Jesus Christ who said, "Whenever you did it to these my little ones you did it the same to me". To meet the requirement, several orphanages were opened by the missions of all denominations with full sense of responsibility. An orphanage opened at Nagpur by Rev. Hislop of Scottish Church was developed by Baba Pandurang. Another orphanage for girls was started during the famine of 1895-1896 under the charge of Miss Whitton and Miss Lendrum. The number of girls in that orphanage increased from 40 in 1896 to 155 in 1900. At Wardha Dr. Revis had five orphans in 1895 and at Bhandara there were 228 boys in the orphanage in 1899.

Long before the severe famines, Rachel Metcalfe of F.F.M.A. had opened the orphan work in Hoshangabad District in 1881. In 1895-1896 the mission came across numerous starving children who ate grass chaff, dirt or anything they could steal and conveniently eat. Out of these destitutes, 533 boys at Seoni Malwa and 350 girls at Hoshangabad were

2. Minutes of the Conference Methodist Church in India, Jan. 1898.
4. Ibid.
admitted in the orphanages. Henry Isaac Robson rescued 45 children from being dashed violently to the ground to be killed and sent them from Seoni Malwa to John Lampard of Salaghat as orphans. Mr. Muller of Kurku Mission received a letter from J. Denning of Nasirghur describing the awful stories of famine of 1896 in Jabalpur, Damoh and Sagar Districts where people were so maddened with hunger that they killed and ate up their own children. Therefore, rescue work was immediately started, but the task of selection was not an easy one. Muller and Fletcher gathered fifty-five starving children at Sagar, who were wailing and beseeching for food. After two days twelve boys were sent to the orphanage at Elichpur, fourteen girls to Duni and thirty-six to Bhainsdehi. The American Mennonites came to India only with the aim to help the famine victims. In 1899 Jacob Burkhard and his sister took charge of 180 children in the orphanage which was erected by Dr. Page at Sunderganj compound at Dhamtari. The orphans increased numerically to 339 in 1900. Rev. N. E. Lundborg of Swedish Mission felt puzzled to see a great surge of the famine victims at Sagar. He constructed a large building and used it as an orphanage for 500 children out of which 200 were sent to Chhindwara orphanage in 1896. The E. S. N. A. opened three orphanages in 1897 at Birsamur, Baitalpur and Raipur where 373 boys and girls were lodged.

The C.M.S. started an orphanage for boys at Mangalaganj near Chiraidongri in 1885 under the charge of Rev. H. P. Parker who admitted 207 children. J. Fryer opened an orphanage at Patpara in 1898 with 111 boys and 82 girls. The number rose to 400 within two years. The

2. Ibid., p. 37.
3. Rimman, Miss V. : In the Heart of India, p. 28.
Jabalpur District presented heart-breaking sights and sounds. At the mission stations of Panagar, Garha and Barela boys and girls were seen wandering helplessly about the roads and jungles. It was a pitiful sight to see human beings searching for grass, seed and leaves and gathering weeds to boil and eat. Miss Branch rescued 13 of such children at Barela and sent them to Gill's orphanage at Jabalpur. They were brought in baskets slung over the shoulders. Miss L. Deauble started an orphanage with 105 children at Burwara (Katni) in 1899. Rev. Gill also started an orphanage at Katni with 190 boys and girls in the same year.

The Methodist Mission initially started an orphanage in 1886 with 4 boys and 4 girls at Burhanpur under the charge of Rev. J.C. Miller. The total number increased to 100 when Miss Flicker came to take charge in 1890. More than 250 orphans were rescued in 1885 at Khandwa by Dr. Felt and C.P. Hard. Rev. G.K. Gilder opened an orphanage at Raipur in 1900. John Lampard saved 30 children in 1897 and 80 in 1898 and placed them at Bihri (Balaghat). Many mothers came to Rev. J. Denning of Narsinghpur, where the famine was growing acuter and urged him to take their children. He selected the most needy and sent 300 of them to other mission stations. He rescued another 500 orphans and placed them in the 'Lal Mahal' which was purchased for the purpose from the local raja. Rev. C.B. Ward started orphanages for girls at Yellandu and Jagdalpur. An orphanage was opened at Sironcha by Miss Blackmar and another one at Chanda by Miss Fuller. The Disciples of Christ Mission established a girls orphanage at Bilaspur and a boys orphanage at Damoh under the famine relief project. Elwin Gordon sent 24 boys to Damoh.

3. Ibid, p. 734.
from Bilas pur in 1894. Alfred Earnest and Gordon opened orphanage at Hungeli and rescued 500 children in 1900. Rev. Rambo had 500 orphan boys under his care at Damoh. This place was selected as a permanent boys' orphanage.

Rev. G.L. Wharton of the D.C.I.M. estimated that more than 10,000 orphans were rescued from starvation, homelessness and death in the province during the last decade of the nineteenth century. How best to arrange for the future of the orphans was a difficult and challenging problem before the missions. The missionaries became their Maa-Baap (parents) and rendered parental duties to the helpless poor children. They were provided with accommodation, food, clothes, medicine and education until they grew up. Thereafter boys were given suitable jobs, mostly pertaining to their ancestral ones or trained in some other useful crafts. Some were sent to agricultural farms. The aim was to make them economically independent before they came to own a family. The girls were trained in home work and domestic crafts. Some were trained as nurses and compounders. Whenever they were married, they were given all the things which were essential in a home viz. a box, a brass dish, a plate, a drinking cup, an iron pan, cooking vessels, a basket, a quilt, a winnow, a bottle for oil, soap, a spool of thread, a needle and buttons etc.

During famines the missionaries were moved by the desperate condition of young widows and deserted wives who were exposed to grave temptations and needed a helping hand. Shelter homes were erected for these poor and helpless women, where they found protection and a source of livelihood along with their children. A Women's Home was started at Jumerati Bazar in Hosangabad by the F.F.M.A. under the care

of Clara Hooper supported by donations from India, America, New Zealand and England. Widow-Homes were opened by the Methodists at Raipur and Chanda. Rev. Denning rescued 100 widows at Narsinghpur and sent them to Jabalpur. The D.C.I.M. admitted 60 widows and deserted wives at the Mungeli Women's Home. A Home was established for untainted girls at Chandkurhi in 1897 by E.S.N.A. The U.F.C.S. opened a home in 1900 with seven women at Nagpur under the care of Chhoti Bai. All such destitute women who were given permanent home were in course of time initiated into Christianity. Many of them were given in marriage to the adult Christians and rehabilitated. Others were given regular work and provided with food, clothing and other essential things.

The worst sufferers from famines were the lepers who had no place in society. The missionaries became their only hope. A leper asylum was established by the E.S.N.A. at Chandkurhi with 95 inmates in 1897. In the same year the C.M.S. established an asylum at Patpara with 31 inmates and the U.F.C.S. at Bhandara and Wardha. In 1899 the Mennonites did the same at Dhamtari with 160 inmates, and the D.C.I.M. at Harda and Mungeli with 88 inmates.

During the famine years shelter was also provided to a number of blind people. A home for them was established at Parsabhader (Dhamtari) by the E.S.N.A. At this place many people helped themselves by various jobs like cotton-spinning, rope-making etc. Several dispensaries and hospitals were also started during the famines where free treatment was provided to the epidemic-stricken people. This benevolent activity of the Protestant Missions has been given in a separate chapter on medical activities.

1. F.F.M.A. Reports etc. 1892-1900, p.38.
The atrocities of famines made a very adverse impact on the economic life of the poor artisans. Vagaries of nature had destroyed their source of living. Most of them were compelled to sell out or mortgage their land and leave villages in search of food, job and shelter. Their cattle had either died or were sold out. It was very difficult for the farmers to cultivate land in the next season and equally difficult for the artisans to revive their small cottage industries based on crops. In this state of acute distress financial assistance only could have enabled the farmers and artisans to have a fresh start in life. That much-needed help was rendered by several missions. The F.F.M.A. gave loans to two hundred poor farmers of the famine-affected regions for raising crops. In 1898 mission land was leased near Lahi village in Hoshangabad District to the wandering landless farmers under the care of Nathu Lall, an Indian Christian, to enable them to settle down and restart their farming profession. The Scottish Church rendered financial help to twenty families of weavers at Nagpur in 1900 for purchasing yarn, repairing their huts and resuming their hand-loom industry. For the rehabilitation of several farmers at Wardha, Dr. Revie supplied mats, bamboo, quilts, blankets, clothes and grain to them. The Methodists helped 200 weavers at Manjrod (Khandwa) to earn their livelihood by weaving a coarse kind of cloth to be used for clothing the famine-stricken children. At Narsingpur, wooden poles and 180 logs of timber were given for house repairs to those who were unable to buy them. The D.C.I.M. provided seeds for cultivation to fifteen villages around Chaura. At Bilaspur along with the provision of grain seeds, bullocks were also provided. Similar relief was given to the

farmers at Damoh. The Swedish Mission distributed money at Nimp ani (Betul) to 800 cultivators to save their lands from being mortgaged. Some of this money was returned by the farmers with thanks after reaping the crops. A reserve fund was built up to help them in times of future distress.

While engaged in doing famine-relief work independently in diverse ways, the missions of various denominations extended their cooperation to the Government whenever and in whatever form it was demanded. On a call from Lord Curzon in 1900 that there were ample fields for private generosity both in supplementing that which the state could do and often in pursuit of that which the state could not do it at all, many donor agencies stepped forward to ease the burden of the suffering humanity. Among them were 'The New York Christian Herald', 'The Bible Advocate', 'The Christian Standard' and 'Lord Radstock Fund', besides many other private contributions. The Government tried to deal with them directly, but these agencies chose the missions as the best instruments for the utilization of their funds. The missionaries made the best use of these charity funds obtained from abroad and rendered great humanitarian service to the famine-effected people by all possible means. They also extended their fullest cooperation to the official machinery constituted for the purpose in preventing starvation and preserving life by supplying food, medicines, clothings and beddings, and maintaining orphanages as well as training and teaching centres for their rehabilitation.

A very cordial and mutual cooperation could be noticed at several places and in several schemes. When the huts of mud could not hold too many orphans at Damoh, Rev. Rambo of D.C.I.M. secured two rooms

1. Rinman, Miss V.: In the Heart of India, p. 29.
in police-lines for the purpose. The missionaries volunteered to supervise the orphan work started by the Government. Both mission and Government clerks were employed to register names, castes and villages of the victims and every precaution was taken to guard the children's castes. Mrs. Franklin taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and Dr. Mary McGavran looked after the medical work. In 1898 fifty boys and 175 girls were turned over to the mission orphanage. The mission also supervised the Government relief works at fifty villages for which it was granted an allowance of two shillings per head. When the government opened some public works at Dhamtari, Captain MacNabb, the Deputy Commissioner, asked the missionaries to act as Famine Relief Officers and supervise the work of 9000 persons. It was suggested that the unskilled labour should be paid by the Government and the mission should pay the skilled one. The Government also supplied dal and rice to the relief kitchens. During the famine of 1899 and 1900, Resseller and Page distributed Rs.69805 of Government money at Dhamtari and the neighbouring areas, and a large share of the missions' building expenses was borne by the Government. Rev. Gill of the C.M.S. managed the government relief works in Mandla and Jabalpur Districts. Rev. Julius Lohr of E.S.N.A. was entrusted with a large amount for relief work at Bisrampur and Jacob Gass was in charge of 1000 persons at Raipur. Many orphans were handed over to Miss Brown of the Scottish Mission at Nagpur in 1900. In Bhandara District Mrs. Anandrao and Mrs. Venkatrao assisted the Government in the distribution of money as incentive loans. They were made members of the Indian Charitable Relief Fund. Joseph Taylor of the F.F.M.A. was also a member of the committee. He employed 1000

2. Lapp, J.A.: The Mennonite Church in India, p.47.
3. Folder 83, 2b, Hist. Re., E.S.N.A. Archives.
people at Itarsi in road making at the rate of two annas a day for each
worker. The Swedish Mission accepted 500 orphan children sent by the
Government to Sagar. The Government collected 95 orphans at Balaghat
and sent them to the Scottish Mission at Bhandara with a promise of
Rs.5 per mensem for each child. Mr. Napier, the Settlement Officer of
Bhandara, was of great service in securing a site for erecting the
orphanage buildings.¹

The famine relief operations of the Christian missions
left a far-reaching impact on the Central Provinces. The contemporary
missionaries evaluated the effects in several ways. The very first one
was that the missions succeeded in saving thousands of lives by various
means of help rendered to the needy in the nick of time, specially to
the lower class people, the orphans, the sick, the respected purdah-
observing women, labourers and tribals. They were satisfied with the
exhibition of the usefulness of Christianity in practice on the one hand,
and on the other with the recognition they received from the public,
often with the remark, "Sahib, your name will remain; this is a great
work."² For the first time the people realised that the missions meant
good to them. The C.M.S. reported:

"We believe that many of these poor
people, touched by our humble love,
have learnt about the divine love
and believe in their hearts."³

As a result of their work the missionaries could come into
closer contacts with the people which had a lasting effect on their
work. It promoted goodwill and helped in minimising the opposition and
prejudices against them.⁴ Even the intelligent high caste Hindus and

³ C.M.S. Annual Report 1897, p.213.
⁴ Letter from Denning to Leonard dated Narsinghpur, January 14, 1897.
  Methodist Archives.
Muslims were much moved by the kindness shown to them and opened their hearts to more favourable hearing. Thus the famine relief brought the missionaries and the local people into a close intimacy and the missionaries availed of the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to the multitude they fed.\(^1\) It was possible for them to put pressure upon the destitutes to embrace Christianity, but as a matter of policy they refrained from baptising them while the famines continued, lest they might feel scared and refuse to accept any help from the missions. They took care to see that as few as possible were converted to avoid the sudden numerical rise of 'rice Christians'.\(^2\) Some of the missionaries refused to baptise for fear of antagonising the people, while some others suggested caution. They preferred to wait till the destitutes became more familiar with Christianity in the daily classes held for the 'intendents' or 'enquirers'.\(^3\) This policy was adopted even in the orphanages. In fact the missions' point of view was to show love and compassion towards the suffering humanity which would pave the way for conversion instead of hastening its process by compulsion. This proved successful. Their benevolent famine relief work became an important factor in the increase in conversions, spread of Christianity and emergence of Christian colonies during the last decade of the nineteenth century in several parts of the Central Provinces.

Many missionaries received gratitude for their outstanding work, specially at those places where they were the only relief agents and where the relief organisations of the Government were exceedingly inadequate.\(^4\) The Chief Commissioner of the Province sent letters of appreciation to them and the Viceroy of India decorated many of them.

2. Rinman, Miss V.: In the Heart of India, p.29.
with medals. In recognition of his public service Julius Lohr of the
E.S.N.A. was appointed as the Honorary Magistrate at Bisrampur and was
decorated with the Kaiser-i-Hind medal. Rev. J. Gass of the same mission
was honoured thrice with the medals of Kaiser-i-Hind, the Silver
Jubilee and the Coronation. Rev. J. Dougals of the Scottish Church and
Hiralal of the D.C.I.M. were awarded Kaiser-i-Hind medals.

Though the famine-relief work done by the missionaries
helped in the spread of Christianity in India as a whole, certain
missions had a grudge which they expressed in soft voice that it was
not sufficiently realised how much they had suffered for want of
necessary improvement at their critical time. They had insufficient
accommodation at various centres of relief work which demanded personal
supervision over every kind of work. Vigilance was essential to save
the mission property, avoid waste of material, maintain sanitation, store
tools in safety, and settle numerous disputes among the people. The
missionaries in charge of the Government orphanages, kitchens, and poor-
houses had to send a daily account of their expenses to the authorities.
They always faced the problem of getting good and honest local workers
who never sought an opportunity to enrich themselves and never cared
for neglected and the needy ones. The children gathered in the
orphanages or camps were often ignorant of decent habits and were
victims of sickness and illiteracy. The missions cared to see them
grow as good citizens.

An enormous amount of money was spent on the famine
relief, rescue homes and orphanages which drained out the limited
resources of the various missions, necessitating constant appeals to

1. Lohans, H.R.: Mission Work of our Evangelical Church in Chhattisgarh
   India, p.43.
   Folder 82-2 Gas 59.E.S.N.A.Archives.
the 'Home Boards' for more money. The worse thing was that the basic responsibility of the missions namely that of preaching work in the villages was held up and the evangelistic work virtually came to a standstill. The ladies had to leave their special work among women in order to help the relief work. The hopeful English education had also to be suspended or neglected for want of personnel. The greatest loss was the loss of lives among the missionaries who had so much over-taxed themselves physically and mentally that they met with premature death and thus many an able life was sacrificed at the altar of humanity. For years the vacuum created by their death could not be filled.

Despite these irreparable set-backs and losses, the missions were satisfied that their philanthropic activities were an embodiment of the living Gospel in action. They furnished opportunities to them to propagate the Gospel through humanitarian work which proved to be in many ways more dynamic and effective than mere routine preaching. The philanthropic social work gave to the foreign missionaries a sound footing in Indian society. It enlarged their sociability and brought about the emergence of full blooded evangelism through their daily personal and intimate contacts with the people in the twentieth century. Thus the cause of evangelism was greatly served in diverse ways by the famine-relief work undertaken by the missionaries in the Central Provinces.