

## **Dr Daleep Mukarji (Director, Christian Aid)**

**Introduction:** Dr Daleep Mukarji has been the Director of Christian Aid since 1998. Born in Lahore, now part of Pakistan, he and his family moved to Hyderabad in south India, where he grew up. He was trained as a doctor at the Christian Medical College in Velore, and then worked in a small mission hospital in the state of Andhra Pradesh. He then worked for the National Council of Churches in India and for the World Council of Churches. He studied Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Social Policy for Developing Countries at the London School of Economics. In 2008, he was awarded an OBE for his services to poverty eradication. I now ask Dr Mukarji if he would come and speak, and make the presentation of the Niwano Peace Prize to Gideon. **Tony Williamson, Trustee, Strategies for Hope.**

**Daleep Mukarji:** At a very personal level, and on behalf of Christian Aid, I'm delighted to be here. When I used to work with World Council of Churches I helped start some of the HIV and AIDS work there, and I am still involved in that. And at Christian Aid, with the help of Rachel and her team, we have given HIV and AIDS enormous importance, and thanks to the team and to the work they do with and through our partners we are known in this field. I am particularly delighted that we in Christian Aid - and you've invited me - to recognise a person of great courage and distinction, in the person who we are going to recognise in the giving of the award. In some mysterious way I am happy that he couldn't go to Japan to receive the Niwano Prize because there was Swine Flu there, and so we can celebrate it here. We are proud of you Rev Canon Gideon Byamugisha, because you are an inspiration to many of us. You are a leader. You are somebody who has shown that the integrity of speaking out can help change the lives of people. And so being part of the event that awards you the 2009 Niwano Peace Prize is important for me and Christian Aid. You are our Goodwill Ambassador for HIV and AIDS since 2004, and you have been a crucial pillar in our work to reduce HIV-related silence, stigma and discrimination with faith leaders and national leaders around the world. The Niwano award was first presented in 1983 and is often described as the Nobel Prize of the religious world, and is awarded annually by the Buddhist Niwano Peace Foundation to a living individual or organisation that is making a significant contribution to world peace through promoting, inter-religious cooperation. Canon Gideon is recognised for that. Because he was unable to be presented with the award in Tokyo, we are giving the award here.

Many of us have known Canon Gideon for many years, both at a professional and personal level, and we are delighted with his tireless commitment to his work; that it is not only recognised by us and the award, but throughout Africa and the world. He is a teacher by profession, an Anglican pastor, and somebody who is also trained in theology. Gideon was born in 1959, and learned in 1991 that he was HIV positive. He was the first practising Anglican priest to declare, publicly, and honestly, that he himself was HIV positive, breaking one of the most important barriers in the struggle against HIV, that of stigma. He is a canon of two cathedrals, one in Uganda and the other in Zambia, and the co-founder of ANERELA+, the African Network of Religious Leaders living with or Affected by HIV and AIDS (which has now become an international network), thus playing a critical role, not just in Africa, but throughout the world, in inter-religious cooperation in dealing with HIV and AIDS. He has inspired millions, and millions of people can thank you for what you have done in your personal life to help them to seek freedom from stigma, shame and discrimination - probably the worst aspect of the disease.

Amongst other responsibilities, he now heads the Friends of Canon Gideon Foundation, which continues to work closely with other key faith-based agencies and organisations, particularly in promoting the SAVE approach to work on HIV and AIDS. SAVE, an approach which we in Christian Aid take very seriously. An approach that is innovative and different, and as you have researched and shown us, more relevant and appropriate in many

countries. SAVE - S for Safe practices; A for Access to treatment; V for Voluntary and routine testing; and E for Empowerment - for youth, women and others in the community. Thank you for promoting this.

Canon Gideon has authored 4 books on HIV and AIDS and co-authored 2 others, and he has given talks and lectures on HIV and AIDS, and speaking in over 40 countries. He has presented statements at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Population and Development (1999), and on HIV & AIDS (2001, 2006). If I went through all the things he has done we could be spending quite some time here. But it is part of the recognition in giving him the award, and I think in fairness to the people who gave him the award and the outstanding work you have done, it is right we recognise what you have done in different places.

Canon Gideon has not only been a brave and innovative leader on the international scene on challenging stigma; he is also always open to working in difficult places on sensitive issues. This was illustrated when he went to work with Christian Aid's HIV team in Sudan with an Islamic colleague to help the Sudanese faith leaders and government to take up some of this work. Thank you for what you did there, because you helped break down prejudice, you helped get the government and the faith communities there to take this issue seriously, and you helped to bridge some of the barriers between the north and the south in Sudan.

As one member of the prize committee said, "Canon Gideon has turned personal suffering into a religious message of hope and courage and has matched it with constructive action that has provided inspiration and help to so many - as a mover and a shaker, he defends and protects all human beings and as a pastor he has shown outstanding leadership."

I think it is also right to recognise the work of Strategies for Hope, and I am glad that this is happening at your 20th anniversary, and I am glad that we in Christian Aid are partners to you, Glen and your team. Be assured of our support, our prayers and good wishes for your next 20 plus years. Be assured that we will be with you, not just with the film "What Can I Do?" on the work of Gideon and his vision and experience, but we will stand with you as you try do to things in Africa and elsewhere. Christian Aid's own strategic framework is called Turning Hope into Action. As a faith-based agency, we take the vision of hope in all the work we do very seriously, because if we do not go into these very difficult issues of poverty, discrimination, injustice and HIV and other things, without a sense that there is a way out, that there is hope, and that we can make a different world, you can give it up. Give it up so soon. So we like your title, we like your hope, and we would like to work with you.

Now, on behalf of the Niwano Peace Prize, I would like to read the official citation:

"The Niwano Peace Prize is hereby presented to the Reverend Canon Gideon Baguma Byamugisha. Being determined to turn personal suffering into a spiritual and social message of hope and courage, you have put your resolution into action. By publicly declaring that you are HIV-positive, you have since endeavoured to raise public awareness about HIV and AIDS, in your own country of Uganda, across the African continent and throughout the entire world. Through both your words and your actions, and with your persistence and creative leadership, you have mobilised religious leaders and faith communities to develop strategies for information, care and prevention. In addition you have championed the development of a positive message in HIV and AIDS education. The Niwano Peace Foundation, being deeply impressed by your extraordinary courage and dedication in tackling the problems surrounding HIV and AIDS, therefore takes great pride in presenting you the 26th Niwano Peace Prize for your outstanding service in humanity. This day, May 7th, 2009." (Signed by the President and Chairman of the Niwano Peace Foundation.)

*(Dr Mukarji presents Canon Gideon Byamugisha with the Niwano Peace Prize medal.)*

## **Reverend Canon Gideon Byamugisha**

### **1. On the Niwano award, Strategies for Hope and hope for the future**

Thank you for that wonderful recognition and appreciation. Thank you, Dr Daleep. Thank you Strategies for Hope for being willing to share your glory with me, my family, my partners, in the struggle against HIV and AIDS. Thank you all of you who have supported me along the way. This award is not for me alone. This award is for everyone of you who has contributed in first of all helping me to keep alive when I was supposed to be dead in 1998. This award is for every one of you who has affirmed my ministry be either employing me, as Christian Aid has done, or by affirming my ministry with sponsorship like World Council of Churches and Strategies for Hope and others have done. It's for all of you who have given me a smile on my face, and helped me to overcome the feelings of stigma, shame, denial, discrimination, inaction and mis-action. And it's for all of you who from today are going to rejuvenate and multiply your courage and commitment to see that we have an AIDS-free world. May God bless you.

The Lord Mayor of Oxford, the Executive Director of Christian Aid, my dear friend, Dr Nyambura Njoroge from World Council of Churches, all my working mates in Christian Aid, and our birthday guest of honour, Strategies for Hope, and all of you who have come to say thank you to Strategies for Hope. Someone said that without hope, there is no personal or collective motivation for growth and change. Although I have forgotten the book where I read it, and forgotten the author, I still keep that in my mind. That without hope there is no personal or collective motivation for growth and change. So we are grateful to Strategies for Hope for being the keeper tonight in fighting fear, in fighting stagnation, and replacing them with hope.

Strategies for Hope materials have been our school. For those of us who have been engaged in the struggle against HIV and AIDS. The school where we learn accurate information sharing. Strategies for Hope has the unique way of writing serious things in a simple language, for everyone to follow, understand and to put into practice. It's been our school in helping to change attitudes for safer and healthier living. It's been our school for learning how to communicate accurately, positively, graciously and compassionately against HIV and AIDS. It's been our school for learning how to advocate on sensitive issues; on issues of safer living; on issues of access to treatment; on issues of multiplying testing and empowerment; on recognising positive people and their role against HIV and AIDS. I am not sure, to be frank, if I hadn't read one of the Strategies for Hope booklets, called "Bridging the Gaps" - I don't know whether my ministry would have taken the direction it took. After reading it, and seeing how the examples of people who were positive had taken the bull by the horns and begun to do something in their home, in their work, in their country. I said, if it can be done in Côte d'Ivoire, it can be done in Uganda.

So thank you Glen; thank you Alison; thank you John; thank you everyone who is participating in making Strategies for Hope a school for all of us who didn't have anywhere else to learn from - since HIV and AIDS was a new epidemic that didn't have a history like any other. We thank all of the people who have supported Strategies for Hope along the way, who have been recognised and affirmed in your speech. And we thank those of you who will consider sponsoring and supporting Strategies for Hope, recognising that tomorrow they will begin their 21st birthday, and go on until we are able to come back to make a big toast, not only for Strategies for Hope, but also for having overcome new HIV infections, new AIDS-related illnesses, and new deaths. And, don't think that that is an impossible task. It is very, very possible. I am very confident, because there are three indicators why we can come back to be hosted by the Lord Mayor to celebrate the victory against AIDS.

1) We know how HIV is transmitted; we know how it is prevented. It's a very important weapon. If we were still groping in the dark as to how it attacks people, that would be a different story. The fact that we know exactly how it moves from a positive person to a negative person - if we can get the courage to put that into practice - then a toast is waiting for us.

2) We know how we can look after those people who are already positive like me, to live a longer, productive, peaceful, harmonious life, without putting those they love at risk of infection.

3) We now know how we can break the transmission chain from positive parents to their children. And that's a very important weapon - that for the first time we are beginning to see an AIDS-free generation, when those of us who are positive have lived our natural life and died our natural death, which we call inevitable death - and the new ones are not being infected. Then hooray! We come back to celebrate.