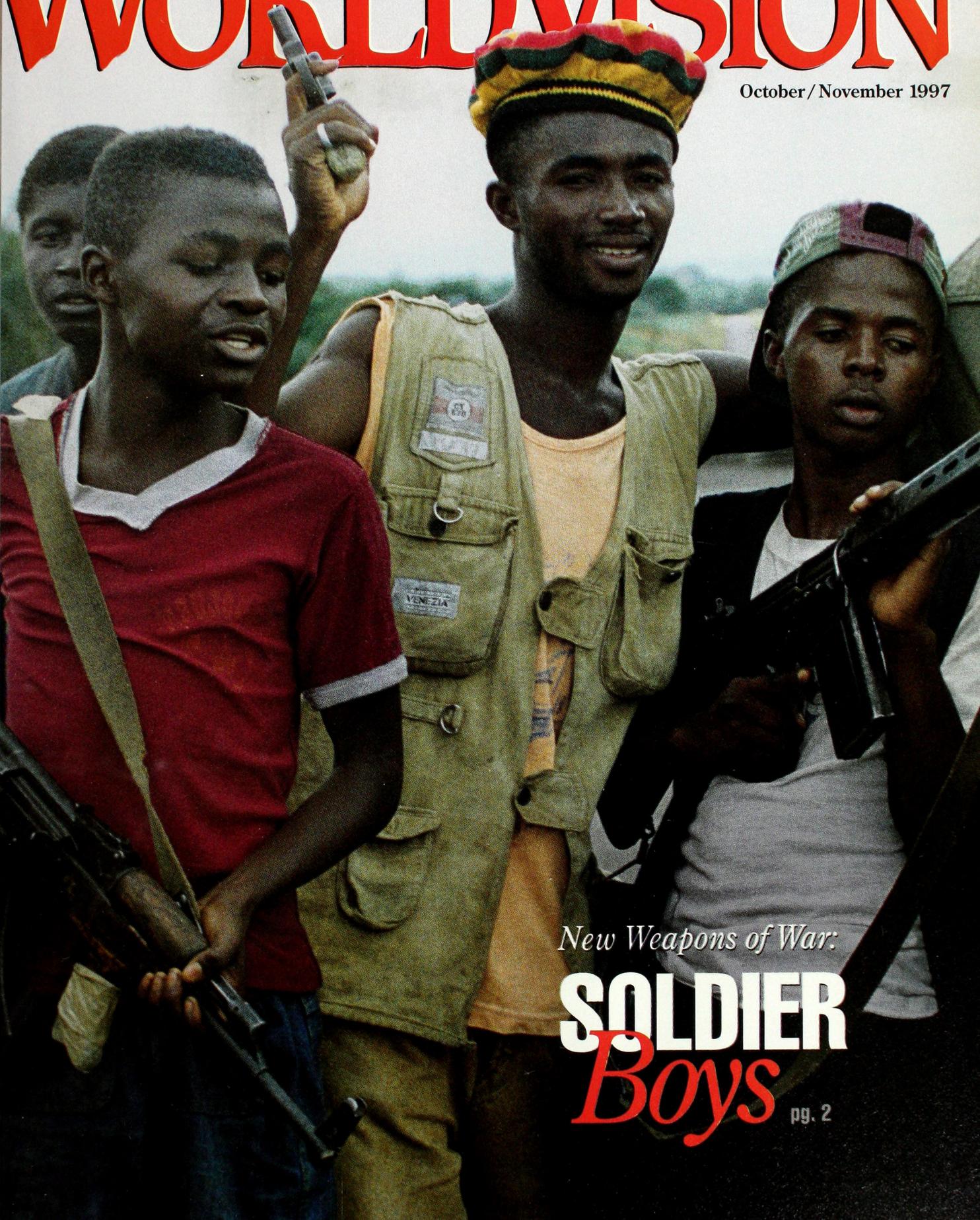


WORLD VISION®

October / November 1997



New Weapons of War:

SOLDIER *Boys*

pg. 2



Children younger than 15 were part of the fighting forces in at least 25 conflicts around the world last year.

BY SUE LOCKETT JOHN

SOLDIER *Boys*

At the age of 10, Charles was awakened by two armed men, dragged from his hut, and lashed to several other abducted children.

He watched helplessly as his captors looted his village. They loaded a sack of stolen millet on his back. "It was so heavy, I trembled and fell three times. I was warned that if I fell again, I would be beaten," he says, recalling his all-night march into Joseph Kony's brutal and inappropriately named Lord's Resistance Army.

"In the morning," he continues, "I refused to eat, asking the rebels where they were taking us and saying that I wanted to go home. I was warned that if I continued refusing to eat and complaining or asking questions, I would be beaten to death."

Thus began a northern Ugandan schoolboy's two years of fighting with a vicious armed group, one of many in battle zones around the world that use children to bolster their numbers and serve their needs.

Life improved for Charles and about 100 other child soldiers when they were captured by some of the LRA's opponents across Uganda's northern border in southern Sudan. The child soldiers soon were handed over to Ugandan authorities. They, in turn, sent them to World Vision's Center for Traumatized Children of War in the northern town of Gulu, Uganda.

Weak and emaciated at first, Charles relished regular meals of porridge, maize, meat, fish, and beans. He received medical treatment, clothing, counseling and, most importantly, hope. Hope of rejoining his family and returning to school. Hope that time and trauma therapy would help diminish his nightmares and the memory of pleading eyes in a boy he helped flog to death.

Children such as this 14-year-old who joined the Contra rebel forces during Nicaragua's civil war (1981-1990) sometimes were fatherless, their fellow guerrillas providing the only "parenting" they ever had.



AN ADULT-SIZED PROBLEM

Children younger than 15—some under 10—were part of the fighting forces in at least 25 conflicts around the world last year, according to “The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” a United Nations report overseen by Mozambique educator Graça Machel. It’s an adult-sized problem with frightening implications both for youngsters who have witnessed and participated in atrocities and for societies that must come to terms with a generation that started killing at a morally tender age.

Caring adults and organizations like World Vision, however, are working for these children’s future. In camps, special schools, and training centers worldwide, they’re struggling to undo the damage done by warring adults who

have exploited the vulnerability and pliability of youth, turning children into instruments of terror and robbing them of their childhoods. And they are helping to restore the mental, physical, and emotional health of children who have been to war.

IN THE RANKS

It’s an uphill fight in a world wracked with vicious, localized wars that increasingly target civilians. If awareness is the first step, the process moved forward last year with Machel’s U.N. report based on 24 case studies of child soldiers over the past 30 years.

Calling child soldiering “one of the most alarming trends in armed conflict,” the U.N. report estimated that 200,000

youths under 16—some as young as 7—saw armed conflict in 1988 alone. Because governments and rebel groups deny or downplay the role of child soldiers, no one is sure of the numbers, but the humanitarian agency Save the Children put the figure at 250,000 in 1996.

Most children start their military days in support positions, as guards, porters, food handlers, or messengers, according to “Children: The Invisible Soldiers,” a report by Rachel Brett of the Quaker U.N. Office in Geneva and Margaret McCallin of the International Catholic Child Bureau.

However, the report continues: “Size and agility (and greater expendability) also mean that children are given particularly hazardous assignments. ... Children are used in the front lines either routinely or if required for a large-scale battle. Inexperience and lack of training results in a high number of casualties: ‘these children are massacred like flies.’”

World Vision’s Bosnia operations manager Chalon Lee notes that one of the more tragic aspects of this worldwide problem “is that children are easily manipulated and child soldiers are often used for the more dangerous missions due to their lack of perspective on fear and death.

“War is sometimes more a game for them. But once killing has become easy and normal for the child soldier, it’s difficult to reorient them to a sane and healthy focus on life. They have no alternative reality once the war is over.”

WHO AND WHY?

Overwhelmingly, child soldiers come from the most vulnerable segment of their societies. Brett and McCallin found they tend to be:

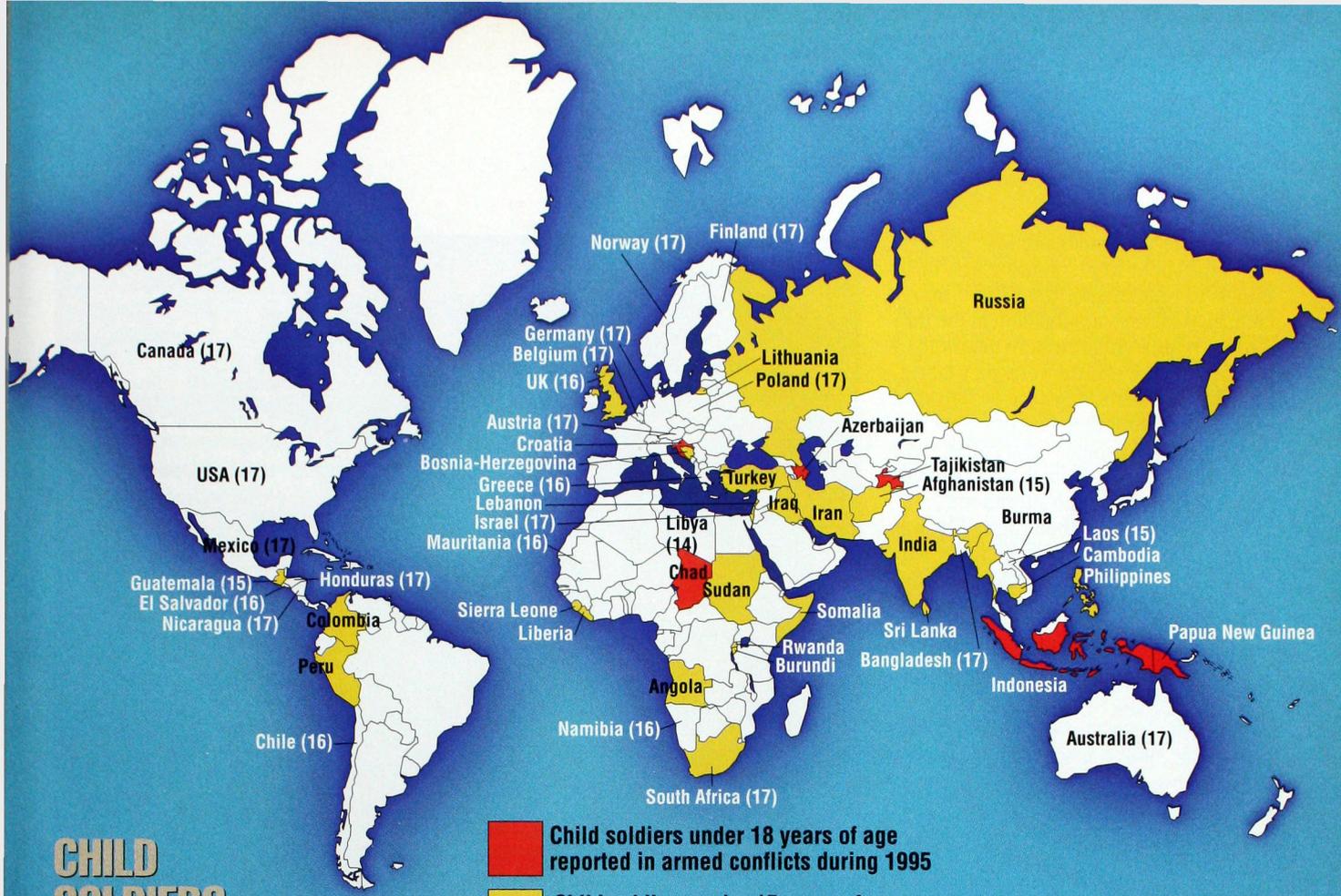
- poor or otherwise disadvantaged;
- from the conflict zones;
- from families disrupted or nonexistent, often due to one or both factors above.

A large number volunteer “to find some means of survival or support, sometimes at the most basic level of feeding the family,” the report says. Some children are lured by promises of food,

A boy from the Kurdish Democratic Party in northern Iraq gazes admiringly at his soldier father. His rebel clan call themselves Peshmerga, “those who face death,” and have been fighting the central government since 1961.

KEVIN MCKIERNAN





CHILD SOLDIERS AROUND THE WORLD

SOURCE: *Armed Conflicts Report, 1996*
(Waterloo: Project Ploughshares)

clothing, or pay. In the midst of deprivation, points out a Sri Lanka case study, "the gun can also become an entry point to food and survival."

When children see family or culture suffering at the hands of an opposing force, revenge and honor make powerful recruiting tools. For these young soldiers, fighting makes sense, says Kathleen Kostelny, senior research associate at the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development. However, she says, their deep feelings can lead to a lifetime of terrorism.

In countries where government forces and rebel groups build dwindling ranks through forced conscription, poor youths are taken from streets, schools, or resettlement areas. Those separated from their families have almost no support or protection.

Worst of all, in trouble spots like northern Uganda children are kidnapped as an act of terror as well as induction. The youngsters at World Vision Uganda's Gulu center are among an estimated 3,000-6,000 kidnapped by the LRA. They tell of peers who tried unsuccessfully to

escape and were beaten or hacked to death, often by other child soldiers.

THE IMPACT

The abuses of the LRA—like those of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge in the 1970s and, more recently, Liberia's Small Boys Units—not only have terrorized their victims but revolted the world. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy last year called the abducted children "victims not only of war but of the unconscionable failure of adults to protect the lives and welfare of their children."

Phyllis Kilbourn, for one, was galvanized to act after seeing Liberian troops gather up boys by the truckload in 1990 for the infamous SBUs. Later that year the war forced Kilbourn, a 23-year missionary with Worldwide Evangelization for Christ, to leave the country. Back in the United States, she earned her doctorate in education, writing her dissertation on psychological trauma of children in war. Never far from her mind were faces of Liberian children she knew—a 5-year-old deafened when he fired a bazooka

too close to his ear; a 14-year-old mother of a baby born of rape; youths addicted to conscience-numbing drugs and alcohol.

Out of her research and compassion came Rainbows of Hope, WEC's new global program for traumatized children. Her book, *Healing the Children of War* (MARC Publications, 1995), aids caregivers ministering to children who have suffered the deep traumas of war.

"Caregivers don't need elaborate therapies," she says. Rather, they need ways to talk and listen to children, to restore stability, to create safe opportunities for expression through art or play, and to support family ties whenever possible. She knows that, in the words of the U.N. report, the "most important factor contributing to a child's resilience is the opportunity for expression, attachment, and trust that comes from a stable, caring, and nurturing relationship with adults."

Resilience is what helps some kids cope—at least short-term—with the psychological stress of physical and emotional loss, brainwashing, and abuse. Little is known about the long-range effects of war experiences on children from differ-

ent cultures and backgrounds.

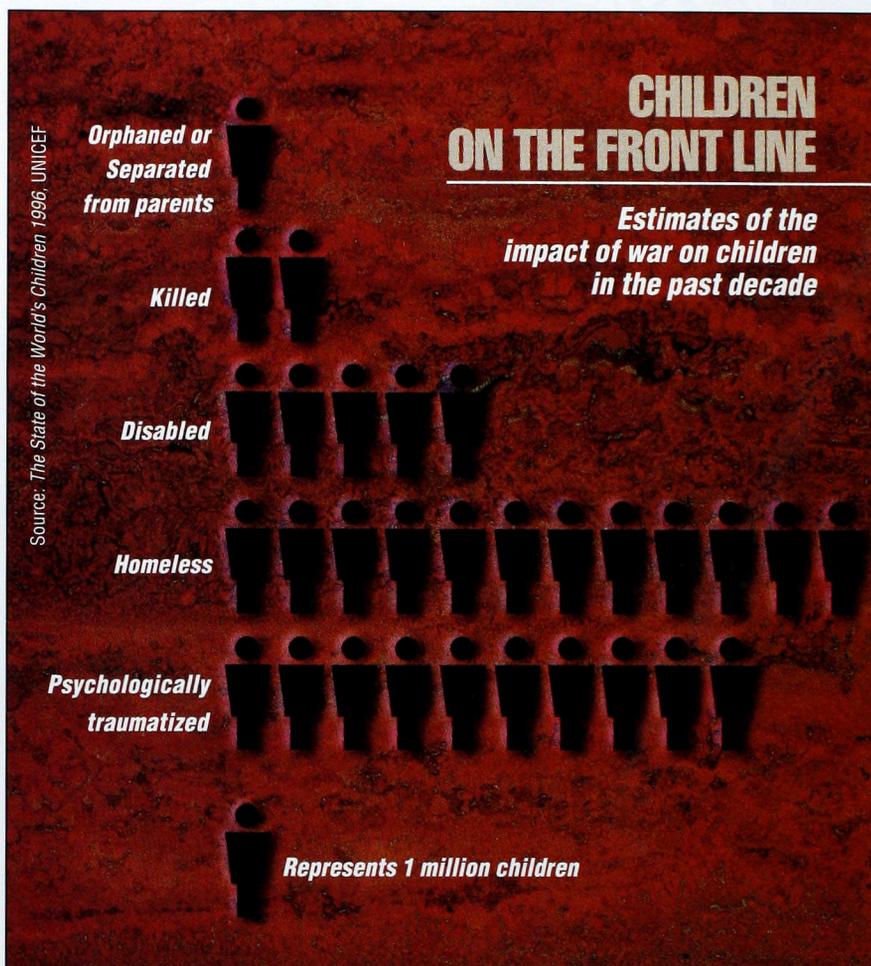
Cambodia holds some clues in its efforts to rebuild after the Khmer Rouge campaign of mass annihilation in the mid-1970s. "Where children were taught to be murderers, the effects were very stark," recalls Jim Owens, a Seattle pediatrician whose relief work took him twice to Cambodian refugee camps. "They often were very frightened—afraid they'd be hurt, that people would come after them."

When healing took place, it was largely due to other Cambodians who provided long-term counseling, modeling, and exposure to positive values. Even those successes were few. "They had been through horrible experiences, things they'll probably deal with for the rest of their lives," Owens says.

The effects linger today. "Cambodia is a volcano that has not settled after its eruption," says Sanjay Sojwal, World Vision communications specialist. "The children of war who are now parents have not reconciled with their past." As a result, he observes, many see their marriages and livelihoods fall apart, and their children often end up on the streets.

SIGNS OF HOPE

Working with these children is not easy, says World Vision Nurse Christine Lawino, who oversees the health and



THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Kathleen Kostelny, senior research associate at the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development, has studied children in war zones around the world: Mozambique, Northern Ireland, Cambodia, the Gaza Strip, Nicaragua. She wants to know how to reach the young people killing and dying less than a mile from her office in Chicago.

And not just there. Poverty-plagued inner cities may bear the heaviest burden of youth violence, but drive-by shootings and senseless murders trouble suburban and rural America as well.

A 1996 University of Pennsylvania study of 228 suburban sixth graders found that 82 percent knew someone, witnessed, or were themselves victims of a robbery, beating, stabbing, shooting, or murder. For the 209 inner-city children surveyed, the exposure rate was 97 percent.

While federal statistics showed a hopeful decline in the number of youths under 15 arrested for violent crimes last year, Kostelny and others continue to be concerned by what she calls the "culture of violence" surrounding children today.

Being exposed to violence leads to violent behavior in some chil-

dren, warns Kostelny. "Most kids who become killers have been very abused or grown up with community violence or both," she says. "And research shows that a child who is aggressive at the age of 8 will be aggressive at the age of 30, unless there is intervention."

Over the past 10 years, Dr. Jim Owens, medical director at Echo Glen, Washington State's high security youth facility, has seen a "major increase" in the most frightening young offenders of all: those without remorse or any perceptible sign of respect for human life. "They are the hardest for us," he says, "because there's nothing to work with."

These kids have missed out on the bonding and learning that comes from nurturing, supportive parents, explains William Womack, a psychiatrist at Echo Glen and associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Washington in Seattle. They've never been cared about, so they don't know how to care. To grow up as responsible adults, children must have caring, involved parents or other significant adults modeling moral behavior.

Therein lies the hope and the call. "Make sure there's a caring adult in each child's life from an early age," urges Kostelny. "Care for your own children, and take care of other children in the community. Be a mentor, that one individual in a child's life who can make a difference."

That alone won't remove the violence, poverty, and other problems in many children's lives, but it can help them cope and learn to care.

—Sue Lockett John

nutrition of the Gulu center's 400-plus former juvenile soldiers. In addition to tending to physical and mental injuries from beatings, forced marches, starvation rations, and sexual abuse, she promotes emotional healing with traditional *rakaraka* dancing and music.

"Behavior change is difficult," she says. "They come wild, having forgotten how to live in civilized society. They are usually lazy, stubborn, and used to violence. But I am excited by my contribution in helping them come to terms with their past and restart life afresh."

Where hope exists, it lies both in the resilience of youth and determination of adults—the Christine Lawinos and Graça Machel—who care about the children and their future. And it rests in practical programs providing culturally sensitive, transitional help. In Rwanda, formal education for children who wonder how they'll support themselves after spending their school years in military units is combined with vocational training especially focusing on agriculture, small animal husbandry, carpentry, and tailoring.

In Suchitoto, one of the towns most affected by El Salvador's 1980-92 civil war, a World Vision literacy program serves youngsters like Mario Roberto Zepeda. For nine years he fought alongside his family in the countryside, losing his father as well as his childhood to the war. At 15 he had never been in a school.

"I always wanted to learn how to read and write," he says. "There were friends who offered to teach me." Now 19, he is a volunteer literacy teacher, a member of his community committee, and a student in agriculture school.

FACING THE CHALLENGES

Important as it is to provide culturally appropriate rehabilitation, job training and family reunification, child advocates know the initial challenge is to keep children from going to war at all.

Machel's United Nations report calls for a global campaign to demobilize all child soldiers and to "eradicate the use of children under the age of 18 years in the armed forces." Now an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ban can make a difference, according to Dr. Eric Ram, World Vision's director of international health and relations in Geneva, Switzerland.

"It won't solve all the problems, but it will be a step. It will make it possible to apply pressure," Ram says.

Wars not only create a demand for child soldiers, but destroy the families, communities, and other supports that children need. Until wars cease, the best way to protect children will be to support families. "No group in society is so vulnerable as children separated from their families for whatever reason," states the report on "Invisible Soldiers." Economic and education programs can help families give their children alternatives to military or rebel conscription.

World Vision and other groups are improving the lives of children and families in areas affected by or vulnerable to conflicts, and alerting others to the dangers facing children in war. And more indi-

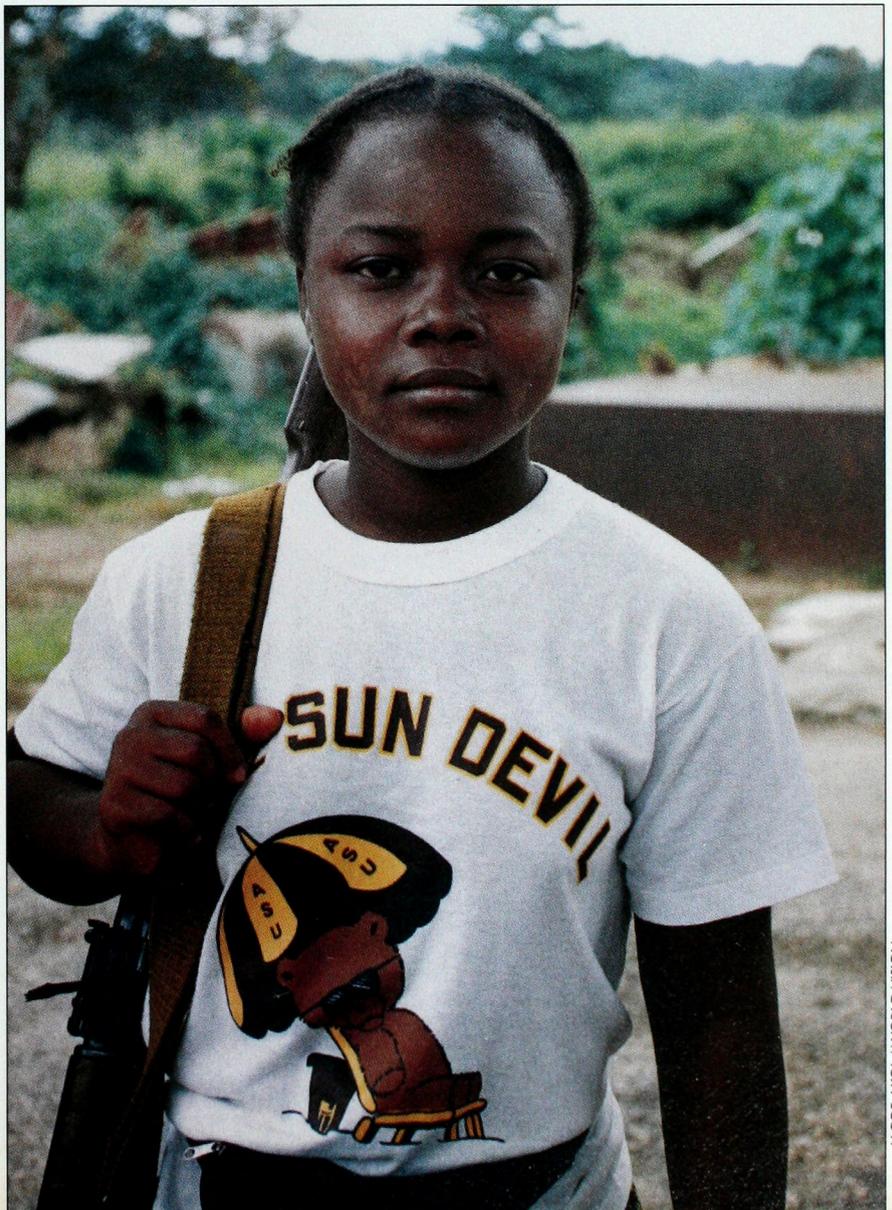
viduals and churches are taking action in culturally appropriate and effective ways, Kilbourn says. More than 400 college students responded to her Rainbows of Hope presentations at InterVarsity's Urbana 1997 missions conference. Her office in Fort Mill, S.C., receives applications from prospective helpers around the world.

"It's exciting," she says. "It's as if God is saying, 'It's time for children.'" ☉

Sue Lockett John is a free-lance writer in Seattle, Wash.

World Vision journalists contributing to this article were Robby Muhumuza in Uganda; Tim Andrews and Rob Jenkins in Liberia; and Celia Ceron in El Salvador.

In Liberia, 13-year-old Suzi Saydee left the fifth grade to pick up arms and "free my land." But girls forced into military service often become soldiers' sexual slaves.



From AFFLUENCE to ALTRUISM

BY RON SIDER

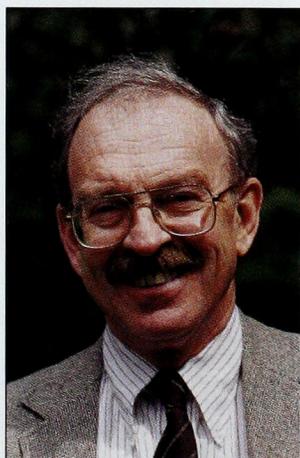
A state senator from Pennsylvania once argued that his constituents were so poor they simply could not afford to pay another cent in taxes. He cited a letter from an irate voter as proof. This good person had written announcing that her family could not possibly pay more taxes. They already paid income taxes and sales taxes, she wrote, and besides that they paid for licenses for their two cars, summer camper, houseboat, and motorboat.

Many of us actually believe that we can barely get along on the \$35,000 or \$45,000 or \$60,000 that we earn each year. When our income goes up, we convince ourselves that we *need* that much more to live comfortably.

How can we escape this delusion? Perhaps we need to be reminded that thousands of children starve every day; that more than 1 billion people live on one dollar a day.

The problem, we know, is that the world's resources are not fairly distributed. North Americans, Western Europeans, and rich elites around the globe are an affluent minority in a world where more than half the people live on two dollars a day or less. How will we respond to this inequity?

The 18th-century evangelist John Wesley gave a startling answer. Reflecting on the words of the Apostle Matthew



Ron Sider

(6:19-23), "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ...," Wesley said Christians should give away all but "the plain necessities of life," which include simple, wholesome food, clean clothes, and enough resources to carry on one's business. Wesley lived what he preached. Sales of his books often earned him £1,400 annually, but he spent only £30 on himself. The rest he gave away.

We need not agree with Wesley's precise formula to see that he was struggling to follow the biblical summons to share with the needy. How much should we give? Surely Paul's advice to the Corinthians applies to us: "I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want ...

that there may be equality" (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

Rich, generous Christians could dramatically reduce poverty in our world if we would become partners with God's poor. For example, one of the greatest success stories of the past 20 years is the explosion of micro-loans. Millions of desperately poor people have received loans of \$75, \$200, or \$500 so they could start tiny businesses and thus provide a better living for their families. We now know that micro-loans produce stunning transformation in poor communities.

Almost all of us can afford \$500 to help a poor family to improve their standard of living by 50 percent in a single year. We have the money. And we know what to do. Do Christians today have that kind of generosity and courage? Will we pioneer new models of sharing in our interdependent world?

Today we live at one of the great turning points in history. The present division of the world's resources must not continue. Either generous Christians will persuade their affluent neighbors to transform present market economies so everyone can share the good earth's bounty, or growing divisions between rich and poor will lead not only to more starvation and death but also to increasing civil strife and war.

Christians should be in the vanguard. The world will change if Christians obey the one we worship. But to obey means to follow. And our Lord lives among the poor and oppressed seeking justice for those in agony.

In our time, following in his steps will mean more simple personal lifestyles. It

Rich, generous Christians could dramatically reduce poverty in our world if we would become partners with God's poor.

will mean transformed churches with a corporate lifestyle consistent with worship of the God of the poor. It will mean costly commitment to building societal systems that work fairly for all.

In spite of widespread materialism, I am not pessimistic. God regularly accomplishes his will through faithful remnants. Even in affluent nations, millions of Christians love their Lord Jesus more than houses and lands.

I can hear people saying, "I want to do my part, but the task is so complex and my time and resources are so small. How can I make a real difference?"

This is where Evangelicals for Social Action, a group in which I'm personally involved, can help. ESA, based in Philadelphia, Pa., is a biblical movement helping Christians combine social transformation with evangelism and spiritual formation. ESA's Generous Christians Campaign will offer concrete help to Christ's people all over the United States to move from affluence to generosity.

The Generous Christians Campaign will bring the needs of the poor and powerless to a broad audience through the media and public speaking. Marking the drive for generosity is a revised edition of my book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, first published two decades and this year reissued by Word publishing company.

None of us can support all the things that are needed to overcome poverty: community development, micro-loans, better social systems, affordable housing, personal conversion, transformed churches, less materialistic lifestyles and cultural institutions. All these things and more are crucial. Yet you should not feel guilty because you can support only one or two. God made you and me finite.

What we can do, however, is link arms with other Christians who also want to be effective partners with the poor. The Generous Christians Campaign can put you in touch with a wide range of Christian ministries doing many of the things that are crucial to reducing poverty—from child sponsorship to small business loans, from relief and development work to holistic inner-city ministry and promotion of good public policy. All of the following groups are partner agencies in the generous Christians Campaign: World Vision, the Christian Society of the Green Cross, Bread

for the World, the Christian Community Development Association, Opportunity International, and Habitat for Humanity.

We all can work together, learn from each other, challenge each other to greater faithfulness, and together become more effective servants of the kingdom of God. If at this moment a few million generous Christians blessed with material abundance join hands with the poor around the world, we will decisively influence the course of history. 🌐

For further information about the Generous Christians Campaign, phone (800) 650-6600.

Ron Sider is professor of theology and culture at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa. He is also founder and president of Evangelicals for Social Action, 10 E. Lancaster Ave., Wynnewood, Pa. 19096; (610) 645-9391.

Portions of this article were adapted from Ron Sider's book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

SMALL SACRIFICES = BIG DIVIDENDS

A pair of movie tickets twice a month (\$25)

can buy literacy training for three women in Mali (pictured below).

Two music compact discs (\$30)

can buy three months of food for a family of four in war-ravaged Sierra Leone.

One pair of Levi's jeans (\$45)

can buy one year of medical care for a former street child in Mexico.

One pair of Nike's shoes (\$80)

can buy four academic scholarships (including school supplies, clothing, and tuition) for street children in Vietnam.

A three-month membership at a health club (\$90)

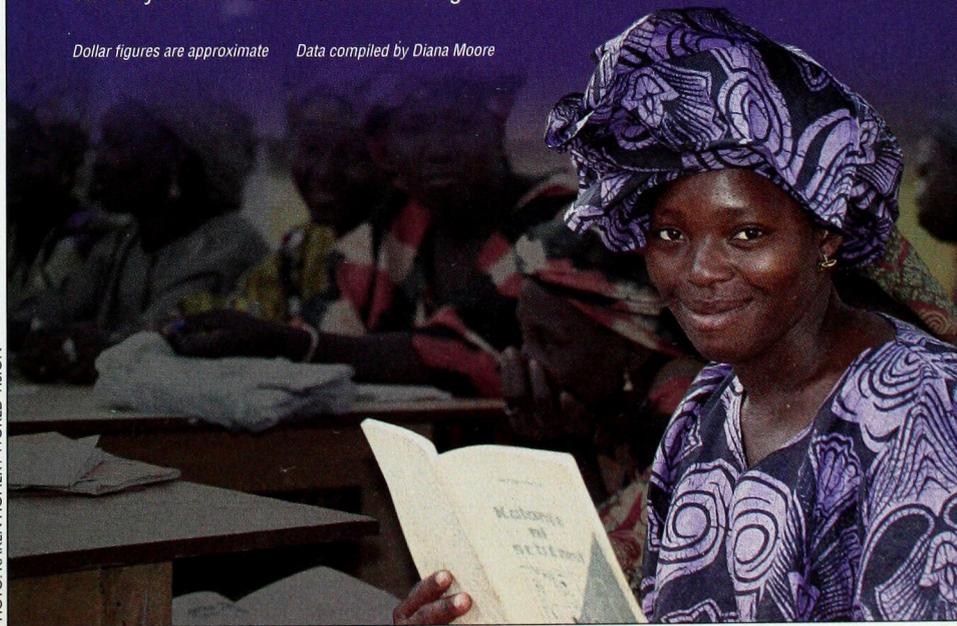
can buy seeds and farming tools for two African families.

One day's admission to Disneyland for a family of four (\$125)

can buy medicines for a whole village in Peru.

Dollar figures are approximate Data compiled by Diana Moore

PHOTO: KAREN HOMER / WORLD VISION



Central Africa's Refugees:

As civil wars in Central Africa flared and raged over the past several years, millions of people fled homes and lands seeking safety, shelter, and subsistence. The vast masses, destitute, often malnourished and ill, struggled for the barest survival within their own countries and across nine national borders.

In 1996 nearly 2 million refugees crowded into squalid camps scattered throughout the region. People who escaped Rwanda's genocidal slaughter in April and May of 1994 crossed paths with victims of more recent conflict in Zaire and long-simmering strife in neighboring Burundi. While many have returned home, others remain uprooted.

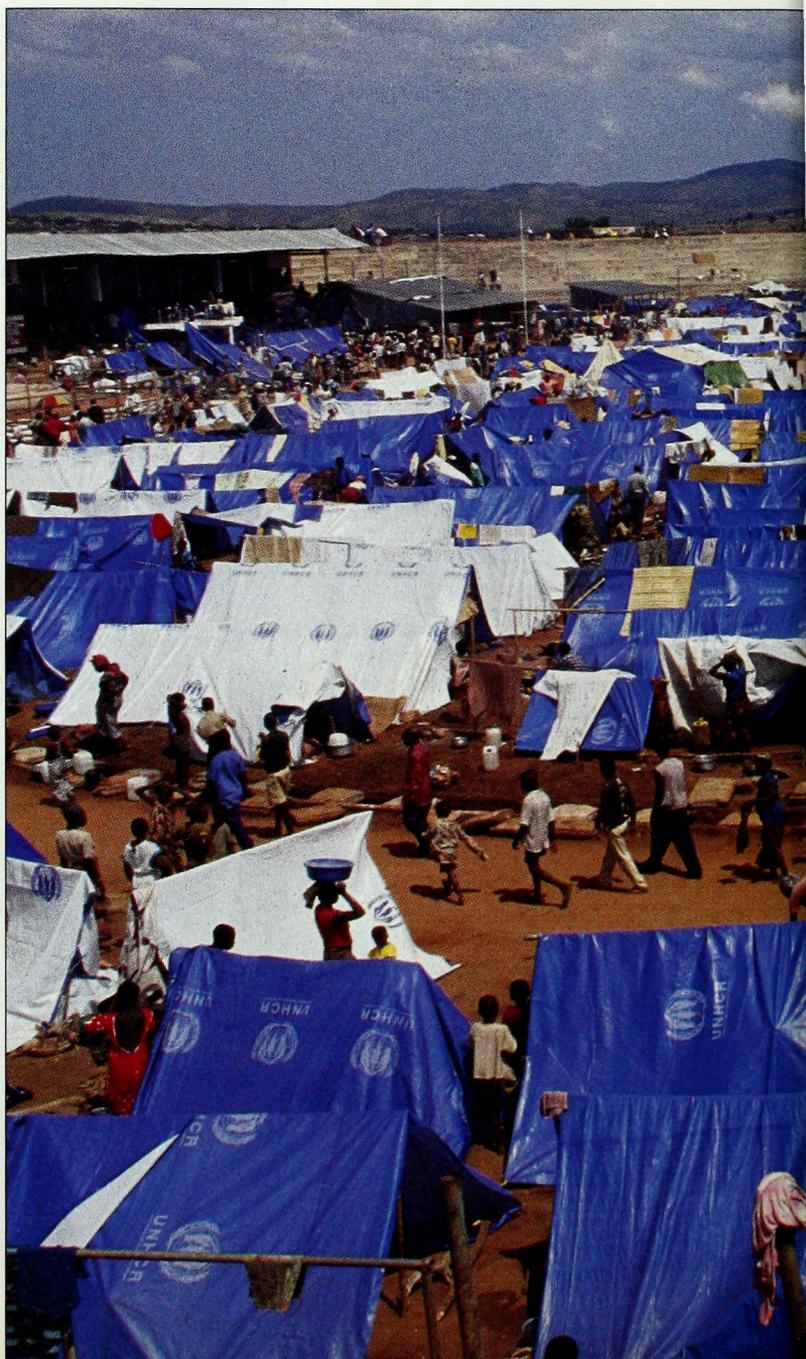
World Vision, along with other humanitarian agencies, has carried assistance to the displaced families and lost children in many countries of Africa's heartland:

A "mini-city" of plastic tents housing 1,875 families sprang up last November in Lake Tanganyika Stadium, Kigoma, Tanzania. World Vision quickly assembled health, sanitation, and water facilities and constructed a food center for the refugees fleeing fighting in Zaire.

SHELTER

in the Storm

BY BRUCE BRANDER



BURUNDI World Vision is helping to resettle people displaced by civil strife between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. The conflict continues throughout the Maryland-size country. In Tutsi-controlled Bujumbura, the capital city, the agency works in partnership with Africa Revival Ministries in an emergency surgery facility and a 30-bed clinic. In the Hutu-dominated countryside, its staff helps more than 5,000 orphaned and lost children with relief needs and school supplies, while training and supporting volunteer social workers to further aid the youngsters.

CONGO/ZAIRE In the former Zaire in the early 1990s, many thousands of families in the southern region of Shaba (now Katanga) fell victim to "ethnic cleansing." Deprived of livelihood and homes, they settled in abandoned buildings and train cars. World Vision relief teams brought food, medicine, and other aid, then organized transportation for many northward to the Kasai region, where they were resettled.

As 2 million refugees fled Rwanda after the gruesome 1994 massacre in their homeland, many settled in the town of Goma in eastern Zaire. World Vision managed the world's largest refugee camp there for more than 300,000 Rwandans.

After Zaire's civil war that in May 1997 deposed former dictator Mobutu

Sese Seko, the agency offered therapeutic feeding to malnourished people and immunized children against disease. Workers also helped displaced citizens resettle in their homes with food, household supplies, seeds, and agricultural tools.

A World Vision sponsorship program that began in 1988 helps meet the needs of 13,000 children while offering community services in health care, evangelism, education, agriculture, and development of clean water sources, sanitation, and small businesses.

RWANDA In 1994, following 100 days of mass slaughter of at least 500,000 Tutsi

SCOTT KELLEHER / WORLD VISION





ethnic people and moderates of the Hutu group, World Vision cared for lost and orphaned children. Workers reunited many youngsters with families and arranged and financed adoption for others. When some 800,000 Rwandan refugees returned from Zaire late in 1996, the agency helped many with agricultural assistance, rehabilitation of houses and communities, and reconciliation programs. One-third of the population needed food aid in 1997.

TANZANIA Since 1994, World Vision has brought food, shelter, and medical care to refugees from Burundi, Rwanda, and

Zaire. While people from Rwanda and Zaire have been returning to their countries, more refugees from Burundi have arrived. Meanwhile, the agency, working in Tanzania since 1970, maintains more than 70 child sponsorship and community development programs in the country.

SUDAN Long laboring among millions of local people displaced by years of civil war in southern Sudan, World Vision in 1997 also supplied food to refugees from Zaire, who since have returned.

UGANDA World Vision was on hand to help refugees fleeing here from early stages of Zaire's civil war. As the conflict moved westward, the refugees returned to their

PHILIP MAHER / WORLD VISION CANADA

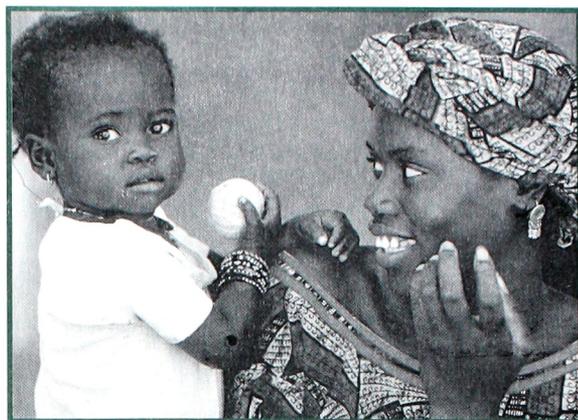


Refugees sought safe passage across Lake Tanganyika to World Vision transit camps on Tanzania's shores. They left behind the rapidly deteriorating nation of Zaire, which would fall to rebel forces in May 1997.



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1 + 1 = 2 to help children in need.

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If your employer is listed, inquire at your personnel office about having your gifts to World Vision multiplied through the matching gift program; then obtain a matching gift form and mail it with your next contribution. You may need to fill out only one form a year, even if you intend to give several times. Check with your matching gift program administrator for details.

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GAP, INC.
The GaryWilliams Company/The Piton Foundation, r
GATX Corporation, d,r
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OwensIllinois, Inc., d

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THE PITSTON COMPANY
Pittway Corporation, d
Polaroid Corporation, d,r
PQ CORPORATION, d,r,s
Premark International, Inc., d
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If your employer (or parent company) is listed in this brochure, your gift to an eligible community service or environmental organization could at least be doubled.

Please take a moment to get a matching gift form from your personnel office and follow the directions to initiate a match.

Thank you for making the extra effort - and for your doubled support!

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NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
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SUITE 400, 11 DUPONT CIRCLE,
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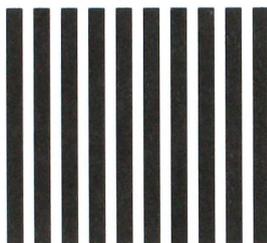
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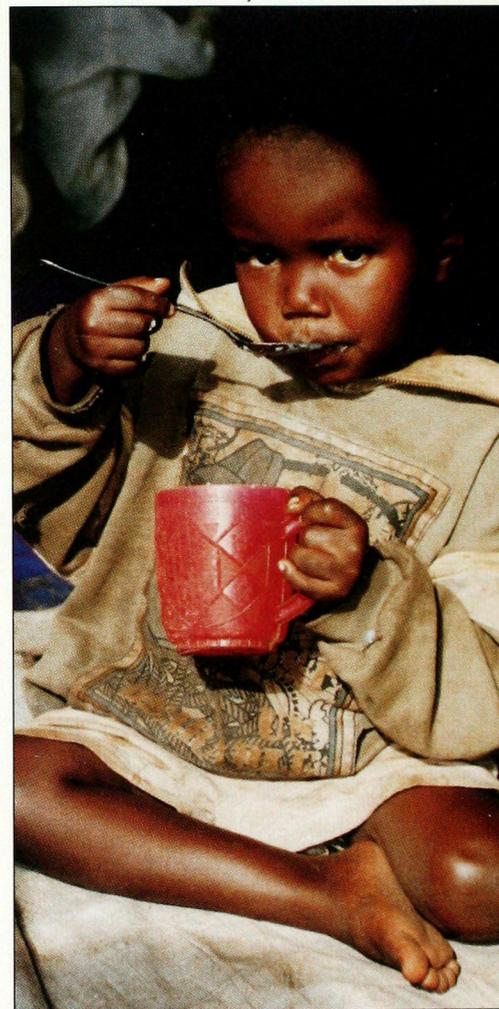
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MARGARET JEPHSON / WORLD VISION



JACOB AKOL / WORLD VISION

Three-year-old Ishimwe's family arrived in a World Vision transit camp in Tanzania on New Year's Day, 1997. Ishimwe's father said soldiers had been killing people near their village in northern Burundi.

By placing a 32¢ stamp on the envelope you can help World Vision save money it will use to help the needy.

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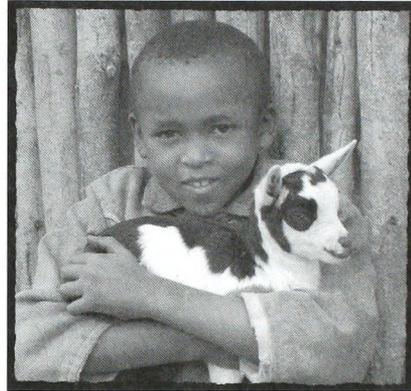
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See your company's matching gift form for full information on matching gift eligibility and program limitations.

PREPARED BY



Alphonse Mushubomweza, 8, and his family were given this baby goat to help generate income when they returned to their home in Rwanda, enabling them to build a better future.

Will you help restore the lives of returning refugees in Central Africa?

On behalf of children such as Nyirahakazimana and Alphonse, will you help families in Central Africa today?

Your gift can reunite children with their parents, feed the hungry, provide shelter, and give the tools and training needed to rebuild lives, demonstrating Christ's love in tangible ways.

Yes! I want to help enable Central Africans to return home and restore hope. I'm enclosing a gift of \$25 \$50 \$75 Other \$ _____ 8723HA7-L00

Yes! I want to sponsor a child. I'm sending \$20 now to cover the first monthly payment. I prefer to sponsor a boy a girl living in Africa Asia Latin America Middle East where most needed. HA7-L02

I can't sponsor a child, but enclosed is my gift of \$ _____ 1700HA7-L01

a check payable to World Vision.

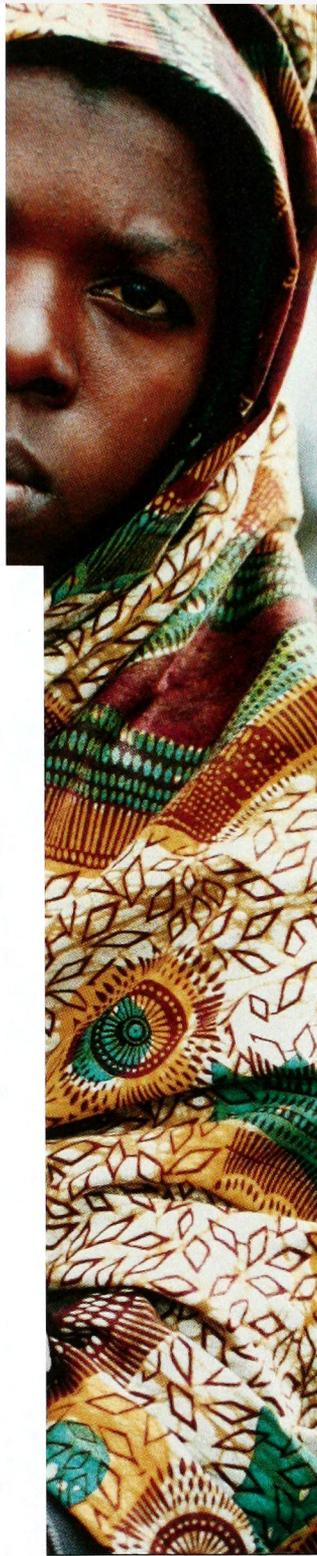
a credit card payment: VISA MasterCard American Express Discover

No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Please tear off and return this portion.

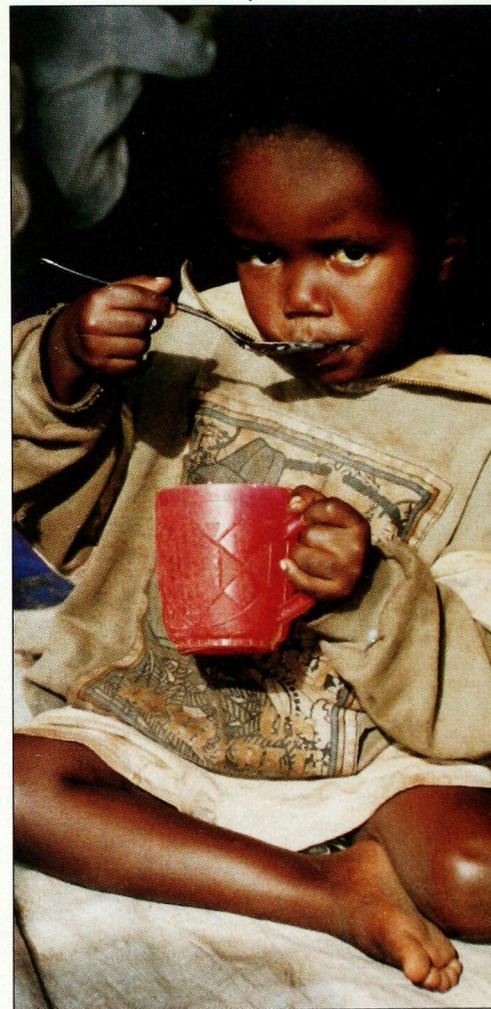
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ZAMBIA World Vision workers aided people fleeing southward from civil war in Zaire. With the end of the war, most of these people returned to their homeland, newly renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo. World Vision has assisted local people in Zambia with child sponsorship, drought relief, and development projects since 1981. 🌐

MARGARET JEPHSON / WORLD VISION



JACOB AKOL / WORLD VISION

Three-year-old Ishimwe's family arrived in a World Vision transit camp in Tanzania on New Year's Day, 1997. Ishimwe's father said soldiers had been killing people near their village in northern Burundi.

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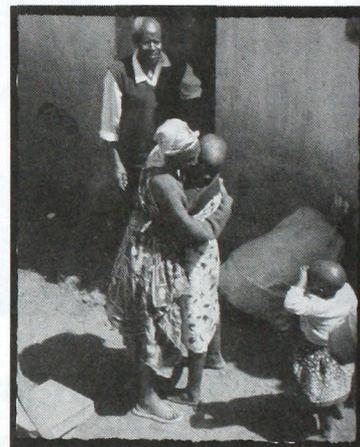
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PREPARED BY

Hope Realized in Central Africa

When fighting erupted in 14-year-old Nyirahakazimana's Rwandan village, she and her grandmother escaped, not knowing if her parents survived. After two years in a refugee camp, Nyirahakazimana and her grandmother ran away amid a hail of rebel bullets. In the stampede of fleeing refugees, the two were separated.

World Vision staff found the young girl and drove to her hometown. When the truck stopped, she bolted into the arms of her grandmother, who had arrived three days earlier. Nyirahakazimana then learned something she dared not hope: Her parents were alive. Overcome, the child wept for joy.



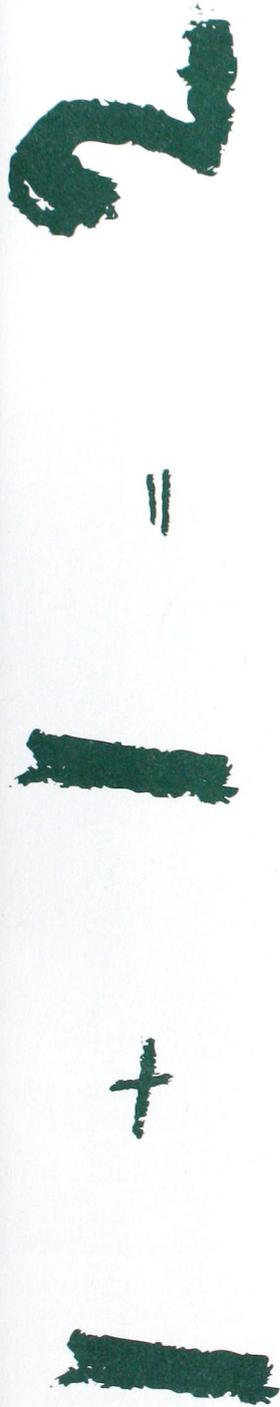
After being separated in an attack on their refugee camp, Nyirahakazimana and her grandmother were reunited. "God bless you. God bless you," repeated the girl's grandmother to World Vision staff. "I didn't think I would ever see her again."

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Though the future of Central Africa remains uncertain, some refugees are returning home. But the journey back is difficult, for many hometowns have poor food, water, or farmland resources. World Vision is meeting the critical needs of refugees still in camps and those who have arrived home.

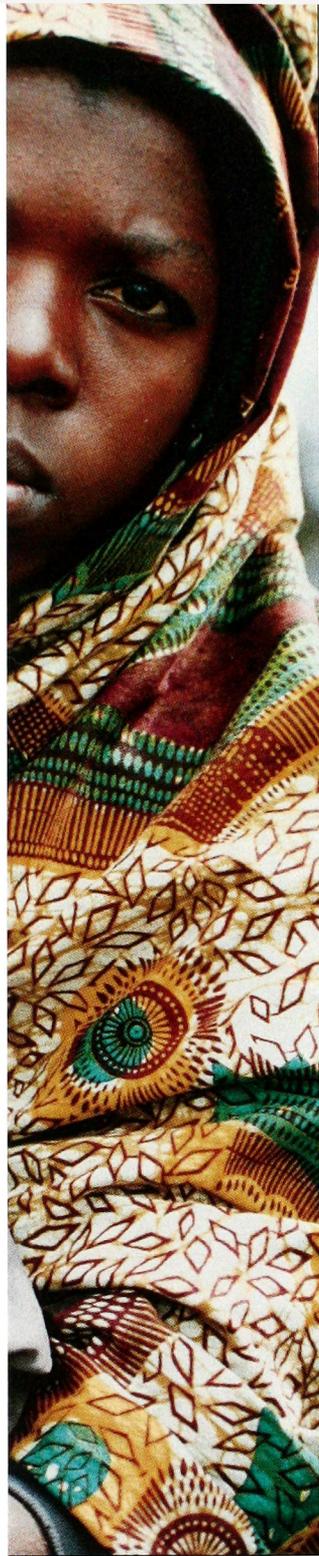
Please pray for peace and restoration in Central Africa.



You can **DOUBLE** your financial gift to World Vision without increasing the actual dollar amount.

FIND OUT HOW THROUGH CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS TO WORLD VISION.

Children,
their
lives
are
at
stake.

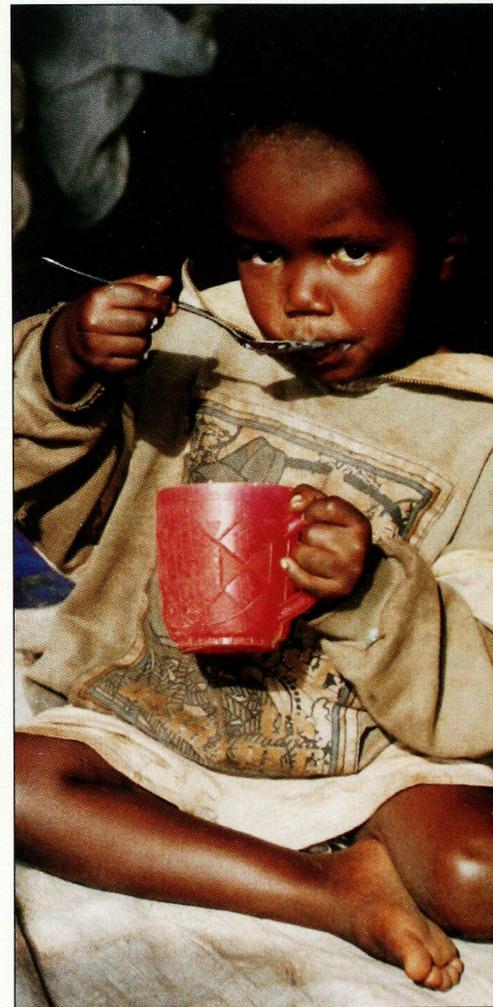


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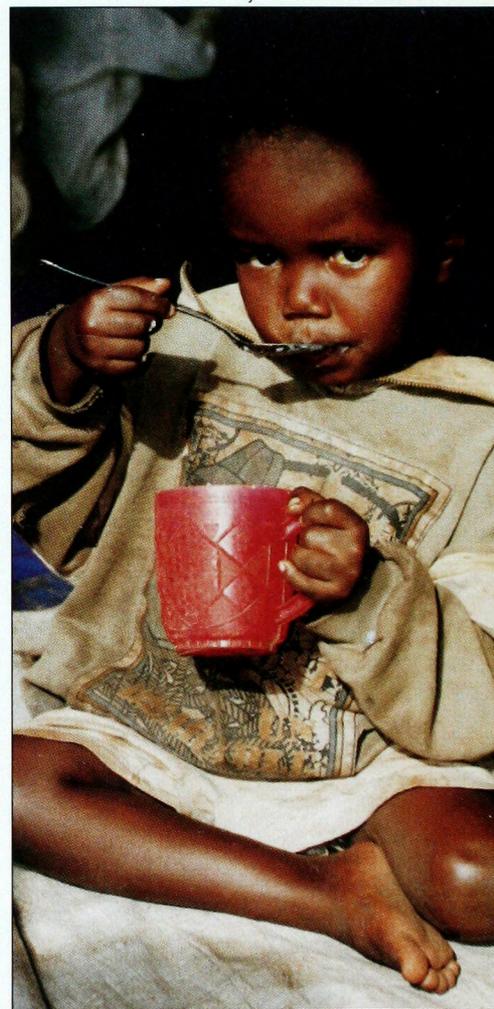


Makurushema, 22, fled Rwanda in 1994 after her husband was killed in the civil war. Now she has returned with her children, Bikovaimana, 7, and Urwibutso, 2 and a half (pictured). Parents making the trek on foot from camps in the former Zaire often tied children to themselves with string so they would not be separated.

homes. With a 25-year history of work in Uganda, World Vision carries on more than 80 child sponsorship and community development projects here, with special focus on AIDS orphans.

ZAMBIA World Vision workers aided people fleeing southward from civil war in Zaire. With the end of the war, most of these people returned to their homeland, newly renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo. World Vision has assisted local people in Zambia with child sponsorship, drought relief, and development projects since 1981. 🌐

MARGARET JEPHSON / WORLD VISION



Three-year-old Ishimwe's family arrived in a World Vision transit camp in Tanzania on New Year's Day, 1997. Ishimwe's father said soldiers had been killing people near their village in northern Burundi.



Its democracy only two and a half years old, Haiti struggles against obstacles, detractors, and its own growth pains as it moves into the future with cautious but indomitable hope.

No one said that rebuilding Haiti would be easy.

Late in 1994, the Caribbean country's military dictatorship stepped down and former Catholic priest Jean Bertrand Aristide returned from exile in the United States to the presidency. The streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince, were shoveled clean of garbage and primed with newfound hope for this poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Now, however, Haiti once more seems to be running toward national ruin.

Smoking piles of refuse again litter the streets; electricity is sporadic; traffic lights quit working long ago; roads are so full of potholes that vehicles drive on the shoulders. Public restrooms are any open spaces on the street. Rivers are like cesspools around gigantic mounds of garbage. The countryside is denuded of 90 percent of its forests and 50 percent of its topsoil. And Port-au-Prince is so crowded that personal space is a luxury even the country's mega-rich can't afford.

Haiti's literacy rate is stuck at 20 percent. Up to 85 percent of the people are jobless. The government is mired in ineffectiveness and corruption (some say that Aristide himself embezzled \$4.5 million). Political assassinations are reported regularly, the police still commit human rights abuses, criminals rule the streets, and nothing works.

As one newspaper columnist said recently, "Searching for signs of progress is like looking for tourists: there are none."

While pessimists jump off the country's bandwagon almost daily, there are still reasons to hope. As World Vision Haiti Director Salnave Sylvestre said recently, "We have come a long way. Haiti has been under oppression 30 years and suddenly we become free. We call it a second independence. We are like children still learning to walk."

Indeed, its spirited people, its fledgling democracy, and people worldwide who still care and pray for Haiti proclaim the country far from finished. Here are at least 10 signs pointing to the country's eventual recovery:

CAN HAITI SURVIVE?

Ten Reasons for Optimism

1. DEMOCRACY LIVES

From 1986 to 1994, Haiti saw eight presidential changes. Two years ago, Rene Preval succeeded Aristide as president, marking the country's first peaceful transition from one freely elected leader to another. Despite the massive problems he faced, Preval has survived.

Preval and his government are trying to help the country. Last April, Preval donated one month's salary to northwest Haiti where people are so hungry they are eating dogs. A group of legislators donated \$300 of their monthly salary.

To combat rising human-rights crimes and political murders, the Haitian National Police established a Special Investigations Unit that has fired or jailed most accused offenders.

And while people might grumble about the government, they still value its rule. "We have a democratic space today that we never had before," said Marilyn Allien, a World Vision communicator in Haiti. "We feel more at ease to act, to denounce wrongs."

2. THE ECONOMY SHOWS FLICKERS OF NEW LIFE

Most economists agree that Haiti's economy still needs deep structural reform. But after 15 years of deterioration it's slowly beginning to grow.

An influential businessman said of Preval, "He is totally committed to economic reform. At least he is trying to do the right thing and has inspired some confidence in the private sector."

Economic reforms have increased Haiti's attractiveness in the eyes of international investors. Strong efforts have been made to limit the budget deficit, the inflation rate stayed below 20 percent last year, and tax collection increased.

In the 1980s, Haiti was a primary producer of garments, shoes, sporting goods, electronics, handicrafts, and other sewn and hand-assembled items. Most of those businesses fled during the U.S.-led embargo that followed a 1991 coup against Aristide.

Today Haiti's assembly industry once again shows signs of strength. A 1996 survey found 94 firms providing 19,442 jobs in assembly industries. Other overseas businesses operating in the country include Citibank, American Airlines, American Rice, Texaco, and Esso.

The Haitian government also has taken some steps to improve food production. In 1995, Aristide started granting state

land to poor peasants. Last year, Preval granted one-acre plots of land to more than 1,600 families to grow rice and corn.

Haiti is now the fifth leading producer of mangos in the world. Another cash crop with vast potential is coffee. In 1990, the U.S. Agency for International Development launched a \$7.3 million project to improve Haiti's coffee bean crop and market it in the United States. During the project's first year of sales in 1995, farmers exported 150,000 pounds of gourmet Haitian Bleu beans to the United States. In 1996 the amount doubled.

3. INTERNATIONAL AID CONTINUES

It's a simple fact: If Haiti is going to develop, the international community must fund the country. Haiti's government is almost broke, and 70 percent of its budget comes from international lending institutions like the World Bank and donor nations like the United States which provided about \$100 million in food aid to Haiti for 1996 and 1997.

While the country has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid over the past two years because of governmental delays in ratifying a budget, Preval's revival strategy—privatizing national industries and initiating other painful cost-cutting measures—is sound. It is expected to bring in more than \$1 billion for investment in roads, ports, airports, communications, tourism, and agriculture over the next few years.

In February 1997, the European Union signed an aid program with the Haitian government to provide 148 million ecu (\$188 million) in grants over the next five years.

Last May, the government paved the way for privatizing state-owned enterprises (including the electric and telephone companies), freeing up more than \$80 million from international monetary institutions such as the World Bank and donor countries to help start development and ease poverty. Some authorities expect that aid could increase to more than \$500 million.

4. SHARING THE WEALTH

More than 325,000 Haitians reside in the United States. It's said that each working Haitian supports up to 20 people in the homeland.

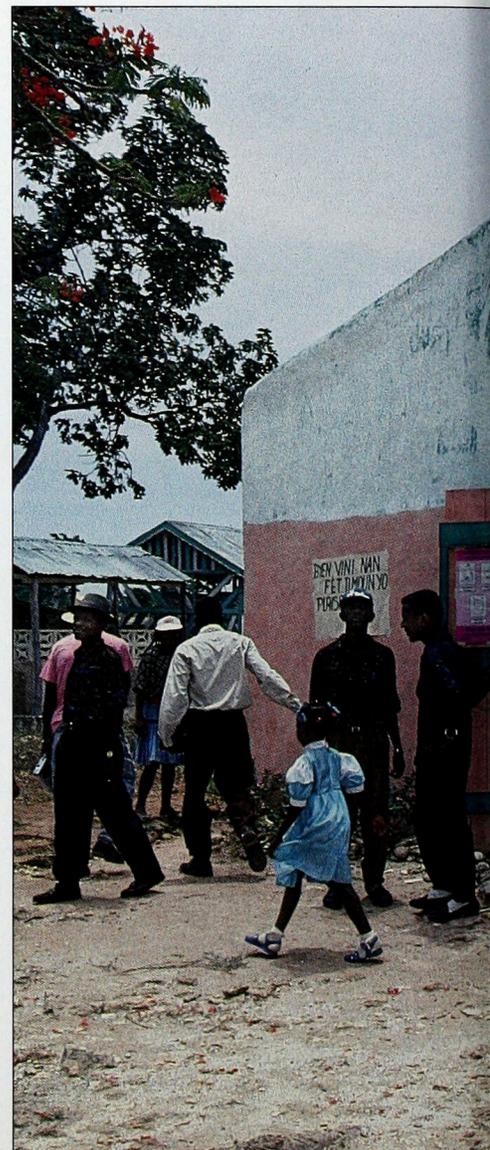
"Haiti has a tremendous contact with America," said David Befus, a World

Vision consultant in Haiti. "Three jumbo jets a day, all full of Haitians, land and depart in Haiti and the United States. There is a lot of support for Haiti's economy coming in from family remittances."

When Dr. Laurent Pierre-Philippe, 54, a native of Haiti residing in Columbia, Maryland, won \$10 million in Florida's state lottery, he did not buy a fancy house or a luxury car. Instead, he committed much of his newfound wealth to help build an airport, create major roads, and modernize the port near his hometown of Port-de-Paix.

5. AN UNSHAKABLE SPIRIT

"We have all kinds of problems," said Lycius Percival, a seller of dried fish in Cap Haitien—"no electricity, no safe



our courage. We survive with our integrity intact.”

water, garbage piled in the streets. There is no steady work. I have six kids, I'm healthy, and I can't get a job. But I am full of hope for my children.”

“Everything is essentially broken here except the human spirit,” U.S. Ambassador William Swing said.

Even scholars of Haiti have difficulty explaining this optimism. One of the most distinguished, Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, could say only that “Haitians are survivors.”

“I have lived in Cuba and all over the Caribbean,” said Michael Tarr, a longtime resident of Haiti. “Nearly everywhere else, people this poor give up. They sit on the curb and stare into space. But here they get up every day with hope.”

In churches such as this modest structure on La Gonave Island, people come to worship God in ever greater numbers. Evangelicals make up 30 percent of Haiti's population.

“Our biggest strength is our courage. We survive with our integrity intact,” said World Vision worker Jean-Claude Louis.

6. ART KEEPS THE SPIRIT ALIVE

Haiti's culture and art are thriving. Colorful murals on downtown walls, internationally acclaimed writers, and vibrant music all draw Haitian people into a powerful sense of community.

A young Haitian-American writer, Edwige Danticat, had her first novel nominated for a 1995 National Book Award in the U.S. “That's hopeful,” Allien said. “This gives an example to our young people that they don't need to be a politician to become famous and rich. They can go

into the arts, they can be writers, they can be artists.”

The Baptist Haiti Mission, high in the hills above Port-au-Prince, is one of the leading sources for quality crafts, including paintings, embroidery, and metalware. Impressive art decorates public buildings, fills galleries, and is sold on almost every street corner.

But perhaps Haiti's most important art is its music. *Ragga*—which mixes *compas*, the Haitian pop music, with Jamaican rapping, American hip-hop, and dance music—is the big favorite. At last year's pre-Lenten Carnival, the most popular song was *Si Yo Vle*, which pointed a finger at government corruption. “Songs have become the equivalent of an op-ed page, played in even the smallest towns,” *The New York Times* reported.

One of the most important events in Haiti in 1997 was a benefit concert performed by the Fugees, one of the world's most popular bands today, and one with Haitian roots. Former President Aristide said, “Through [the Fugees], Haiti can tell the world how it's not just poverty we have here. We are rich from our culture.”

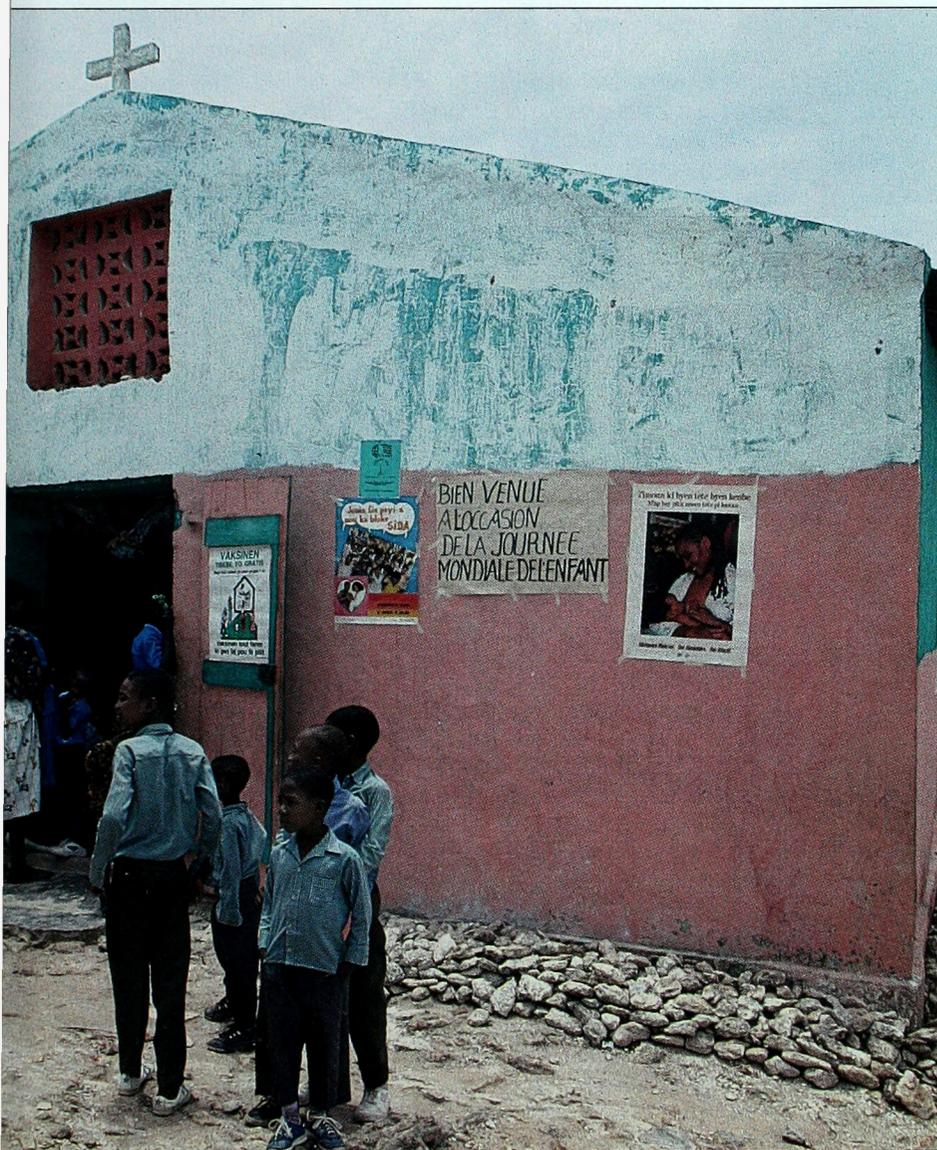
7. WOMEN LEAD THE WAY

“Women are more practical,” said Misha Gaillard, one of Haiti's leading political activists. “When they decide to do something, they do it, whereas the men are more talkers than doers.”

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “Women are the center of street commerce here ... and account for about three-quarters of the retail business.”

Said Fred Leopold, who heads up World Vision's microenterprise program in Haiti, “It has been proven that if you give \$100 to a man and \$100 to a woman, the woman will multiply much more of that initial loan than men.” For that reason, 90 percent of World Vision small-business loans go to women.

From politics to human rights to the economy, women are the backbone of Haitian society. Over the past 12 years, Haiti's women's movement has been vital to progress. Said Clorinde Zéphir, who heads one of Haiti's largest women's organizations, “We are creating a space whereby women are becoming actors, vis-à-vis the leaders of the country. By becoming people who must be listened to, we can bring up issues that interest women—gender issues, inequalities—and we can also address



BRUCE BRANDER / WORLD VISION

"If Haiti is still standing, it is because many people"

the general issues of running the country that impact women. This country will not change if the conditions facing women are not addressed."

Significantly, the national Truth and Justice Committee is headed by a woman. Its mission is to shed light on severe cases of human rights violations and to promote reconciliation.

8. COMPASSION OF OUTSIDERS

Some 160 overseas aid agencies work in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil alone. Nongovernmental agencies like World Vision provide up to 75 percent of available services in health, education, and water supply, as well as

much-needed reforestation.

Many of the efforts are small. The House of Hope provides medical care, education, food, spiritual and vocational training, and small-business support for 29 girls. The girls live in a home in a Port-au-Prince residential area and attend school and church nearby.

Other organizations operate on a much larger scale. In 1996, World Vision donated more than 151,000 fruit and forest trees to subsistence farmers in 35 communities on La Gonave Island, off mainland Haiti, and provided training in tree care and tree harvesting techniques. The project aims to halt deforestation, recurrent droughts, loss of topsoil, and flash floods. The fruit trees also will generate income and food for farmers.

Because the nongovernmental organizations in Haiti provide so much needed aid to the country, they also wield significant influence. "We have an opening to change things in a way we didn't have before," Allien said. "Now we can put our finger on some of society's ills and address these issues publicly."

One of Haiti's most tragic social problems involves more than 300,000 child domestics who work in people's homes with little or no legal protection. In 1990, World Vision and 30 other organizations, including Christian Children's Fund, Save the Children, and UNICEF, founded the Haitian Coalition for Defense of Children's Rights. In addition to helping these children with schooling, health care, and food, the coalition is also lobbying the government to change laws pertaining to the children.

Perhaps most significantly, many of the organizations working in Haiti do so in the name of Christ. "Haiti will not reach transformation without the gospel," World Vision's Sylvestre said. "I mean a change of the people's

heart, a change of behavior, and a change of their way of thinking. The only way that you can arrive at that change is through the gospel. And the gospel is at the core of everything World Vision is doing."

9. SMALL BUSINESS IS BIG

Only about 15 percent of Haiti's 7 million people have real employment, and most of the rest have never drawn regular wages. Many people earn as little as \$50 a year. Yet people go to work with an energy that belies their nation's misery and poverty. Much of Haiti's economy spills into the streets, where Haitians sell anything they can: television parts, toggle switches, old wiring looted from walls, rubber sandals, dented cans of herring, and blond hair dye.

The answer to Haiti's economic woes, Sylvestre said, is microenterprise. "Making credit accessible to hardworking, capable people who have been marginalized by the commercial credit system will transform their lives and lead them to self-sufficiency."

Last year, World Vision started offering Haitian tradespeople small loans through its Fund for the Economic Development of Small Enterprises. The fund lends individuals up to \$1,000 (though usually much less) on the basis of their earning potential in agriculture and forestry, hunting and fishing, cattle and goat raising, and small manufacturing. It also provides training in production and sales methods.

In 1996, 45-year-old Dineen Vitale and her seven children survived on the \$5 a week she earned selling peanuts in Les Cayes. Then FODEPE provided her a loan of \$40, which she used to purchase flour, sugar, rice, and spices to resell at a local market. Within four months, she paid off her loan and was making a profit of \$15 a week. "I am so happy," she said, "because now for the first time I can send my children to school."

FODEPE currently has \$126,000 available for loans. It has applied for an additional \$200,000 from international aid agencies. "Over the next five years, we expect 3,000 families to become self sufficient through loans from FODEPE. That's about 12,000 people," said FODEPE's Executive Director Fred Leopold. At least 25 other agencies have microenterprise programs, aiding more than 100,000 families, Leopold said.



BRUCE BRANDER / WORLD VISION

Among scores of international organizations working to rehabilitate Haiti, World Vision's reforestation efforts on La Gonave Island bear fruit.

re praying for it.”

10. GOD LIVES IN HAITI

“If Haiti is still standing, it is because many people are praying for it,” Sylvestre said.

Prayer is the one thing that keeps Sem Marseille, general secretary for the Christian Bible Society in Haiti, optimistic. “I think prayer is what has kept us from social explosion, major carnage, and bloodshed. We have to keep praying and encouraging others to pray, and encourage Americans to pray for Haiti.”

And they are praying. In 1995, Diana Kunce of the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Wash., organized a 72-hour nationwide prayer summit for Haiti. Hundreds of churches participated. When she visited Haiti shortly after the summit, she asked a young Bible student if he knew about the summit. He replied that several churches in his village also participated.

In the village of Mapou, the pastor of the Free Methodist church told Kunce that a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit was bringing people to Christ, and several local witch doctors converted to Christianity after the summit.

“Though human tragedy prevails in Haiti, the church is growing stronger,” she said. “Christians in Haiti are focusing on the power of God to pierce the darkness with his loving grace and light. The Haitians find their strength and hope in the promise of God’s word and through prayer.”

As a result of Christian missions and agencies working in Haiti, and Christians praying and actively working on Haiti’s behalf, the church there is growing. The evangelical church, first introduced to Haiti in the 1930s, makes up 30 percent of the population. The two largest groups are Seventh-day Adventists and Baptists. The fastest growing group, the Church of Christ, has reached 6,000 members since 1985.

FINDING HOPE IN HAITI

In many ways, trying to find reasons to be optimistic about Haiti is hard. Yet, Gaillard said, “Even if what is being done is limited or of limited success, it’s already a great deal. And since it already exists ... it can be built upon and improved.”

“To live you have to hope,” Sylvestre said. “We’ve learned from years of oppression. We see what oppression does to people. From this, we will make a better world so that our children will not suffer the same thing.”

Profile #1

THE POWER OF ONE



“The Continuous Child Care Agreement provides us a wonderful opportunity to make a life-long commitment to sharing our own inheritance with precious children – to give them hope and a more promising future.”

*Marci and Joseph Palumbo
Somerset New Jersey*

When Marci and Joseph Palumbo married, each brought a World Vision sponsored child to their new family. When deciding how to invest a recent family inheritance, they saw the Continuous Child Care Agreement as an ideal opportunity to make a long term commitment to children and others in need.

“We could wait until we establish our family and careers, or we can put the future of these children as one of our top priorities now. Once you are aware of the dire poverty, hunger and illiteracy, you know you must offer what you can.

If even one little child learns to read, becomes a good parent or community leader, that is our reward.”



1-800-426-5753

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Luke 12:34

The Power of One...

A series of donor profiles of those who know their gifts have the power to touch a life, that in turn can transform a family and even an entire community.

For more information on how you can help alleviate hunger, poverty and ignorance through a Continuous Child Care Agreement to World Vision, please complete and mail to: World Vision, P.O. Box 70084, Tacoma, WA 98481

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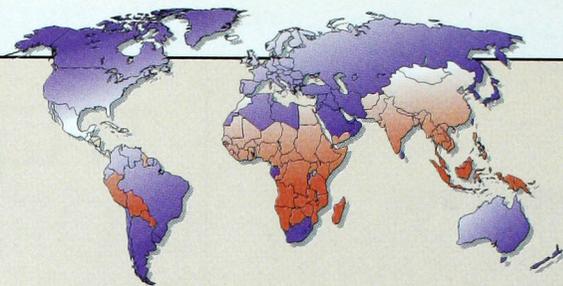
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WORLD VISION NEWS



DANCING GREETES LOST CHILD

After three years as a refugee of warfare, 13-year-old Hategekima has come home to his family in rural Rwanda.

During chaotic genocidal slaughter in his homeland in 1994, the boy and his family were parted in a tide of more than 2 million fleeing people. Hategekima ended up across the western border, in a squalid refugee camp in Zaire.

Late in 1996, civil war in Zaire scattered more than 1 million of the refugees. Tens of thousands poured back into Rwanda. Hategekima fled into Zaire's jungles with thousands more.

"Sometimes local people gave us food," he says. "Sometimes we went without. Many people died in the forest."

After months of wandering, the boy and 50 other children emerged from the jungle. United Nations workers wrapped the bony, ghostlike figures in gray blankets and carried them by bus to a therapeutic feeding center.

The boy's next stop was a World Vision center for unaccompanied children at Nyamata south of Rwanda's capital, Kigali. There tracing teams were working to locate families of 118 other children. Within days, 110 of the youngsters were home.

Hategekima, arriving in a World Vision vehicle, ran to meet his mother, Odette. His tearful grandmother told the team, "I thought he was dead. I had given up."

And how would they celebrate, a team member asked?

"We'll dance!" answered the grandmother. And dance they all did.

"I thought he was dead," says the tearful grandmother of 13-year-old Rwandan refugee Hategekima.

MONGOLIAN CHILDREN THRIVE WITH WV CARE

I have seen change in my daughter," says Adya, who lives in the poorest sector of Mongolia's capital city, Ulaanbaator. "She used to suffer from rickets. At 2 she never tried to walk, and she could not talk."

Now the chubby child named Otgontuya is talkative and friendly and walks from her home to the World Vision-supported day-care center where she gained both skills.

As the Central Asian country struggles from communism to a free market economy, funds for nurseries have dried up. In the impoverished slum of Tolgoit on the outskirts of the city, World Vision opened its nursery in a traditional nomad tent of white felt. The center offers food, health care, play, and education while parents are freed to earn much-needed income.

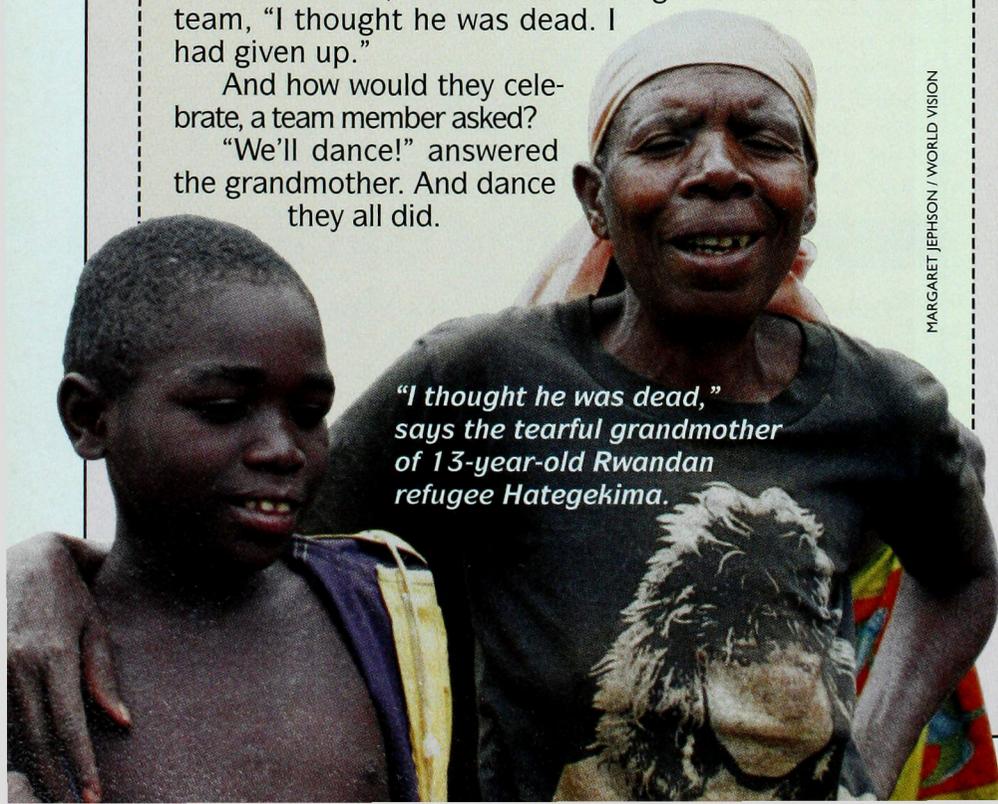
Under the Mongolian system, most children begin education at age 8. Nurseries customarily have given no attention to physical or mental development.

"Mothers are continually amazed at how much their children are learning," says the project coordinator, Dr. Narantsetseg, who studied medicine in the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. "They can sing, draw, count, and do so many other things."

SMALL BUSINESS LOANS HELP FARMER, COMMUNITY

Not long ago, the 3,500 people in the Guatemalan town of Aldea Chirijuyú walked for an hour to reach the store where they bought bread and other staples. Meanwhile a young Mayan farmer, Arcadio Ajquijay Sitan, his wife Rosa, and their three daughters barely lived on an annual income of \$250. A World

MARGARET JEPHSON / WORLD VISION



WORLD VISION PRESIDENT BOB SEIPLE
WITH ONE OF HIS SPONSORED CHILDREN



*Who
is my
neighbor?*

For me,

Sponsoring Wondimu Bekele is a fulfillment of Christ's command to love our neighbor.

Each day 34,000 children die of preventable causes. In response, World Vision's child sponsorship program provides health, nutrition, and educational opportunities in a loving Christian environment for more than 1.1 million children in 43 countries.

Please, won't you be a good neighbor to a child in need today? Your help will transform a child's life and his or her entire community.

Bob Seiple



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1 800 777 5777**

I will sponsor a child for \$20 a month. I prefer to sponsor a boy girl living in Africa Asia Latin America Middle East.

Enclosed is my first monthly gift of \$20 to help a needy child and his or her community.

Please bill me later.

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CHILD SPONSORSHIP, P.O. BOX 70050, TACOMA, WA 98481-0050

WORLD VISION
AA7WSW

Vision small business loan program changed all this within three years.

In August 1994, Arcadio received a loan of 1,375 quetzales (\$229), investing the money to grow beans, lettuce, and corn on his small patch of land. Within a year he repaid the loan.



BRENDA SOLARES / WORLD VISION

From the crops grown on his small patch of land, Arcadio Ajquijay Sitan was able to pay back his first World Vision business loan within a year.

With a second loan of \$500, Arcadio opened a small store stocking bread, salt, sugar, beans, and potatoes. With Rosa's help, the family saw their daily earnings rise from \$2 to \$25 as townspeople flocked to the shop.

A third loan helped Arcadio buy a pickup truck to carry corn and beans grown by friends and neighbors to a distant market, saving middlemen's fees. With this debt scheduled to be repaid this year, he looks with satisfaction on a more prosperous community that can shop conveniently in their own town. His family income has grown to \$8,620 for 1997.

SIGHT-IMPAIRED CHILDREN ASSISTED IN CHINA

World Vision is providing special education and learning aids for more than 300 sight-

impaired children in the Guangxi region of China. The agency helps pay school fees for the youngsters, while supplying them with Braille textbooks, Walkman-type radios, language cassette tapes, and visual-aid equipment to improve their learning skills.

Children from impoverished homes receive monthly living subsidies. The program also offers training to help teachers educate and care for the children.

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QUESTIONS AND WARNINGS

“Never again” has been replaced by “Again and again.”

The phrase appears as you leave the concentration camp. Stenciled into concrete and hopefully burned into the moral center of our collective being, the words arrest the visitor: “Our fate for your warning.” This is Majdanek, in Eastern Poland, and the holocaust that inspired the generation of World War II to cry out “Never again” gave it another monument to damning memories.

It is now abundantly clear that time and the passing of generations have dimmed the memory and diminished our will. The present generation began with Cambodia’s “killing fields.” More recently, we felt the shudder of Bosnia. Burundi continues its “slow burn” form of genocide. The Nuba Mountains of Southern Sudan cry out for its occupants who are systematically being eliminated from the face of the earth. “Never again” has been replaced by “Again and again.” Perhaps the Jews at Majdanek died in vain?

I am peering into the darkened church at Nyamata, Rwanda. More than 6,000 Tutsis were killed here in the genocide of 1994. The bones still lay where human beings were macheted and shot, in the sanctuary and the Sunday school buildings surrounding the church. Frightened villagers fled to the church for sanctuary. Virtually all of them would die there. When the Tutsi regained power, this church became a national memorial, the bodies unburied so that the world could see, and remember, and be warned once again.

the innocence of children through genocidal rage?

Adjacent to one side of the church are tables full of skulls. Rows and rows of faceless remains, each bearing silent witness to those less-than-human instincts (and less-than-animal instincts!) that have proliferated globally in the latter years of the 20th century. Surrounding the tables, I see a blue protective tarp with the United Nations’ insignia. Where was that “protection” in April 1994? Why the impotency of thousands of U.N. armed peacekeepers stationed a mere hour away?

The thin metal cross at the front of the church is strikingly simple. Framed this day by a beautiful African sky, it seems strangely out of place. Perhaps we need to see a suffering Jesus again. Put him back on the cross to remind us once more of the tremendous cost of a reconciled relationship. The triumphalism of Easter morn’ has dulled the memory of the one who chose to stand in solidarity with a suffering humanity. In Rwanda’s darkest hour, part of that suffering comes from the knowledge that the record of the church was not much better than the accomplishments of the United Nations. And so another question remains unanswered: Why wasn’t the Christian faith able to transcend the demonic forces unleashed against it?

There are skulls on the altar in the front of the sanctuary. At the very least, this is strange and confusing symbolism. Did death have the last say? Was Christ’s suffering in vain? Did we miss the warning?

Off to one side, I notice my traveling companion embracing his 20-year-old daughter. She is crying. Like us, she is overwhelmed. Nothing in life prepares us for this kind of unspeakable horror. I realize too that my generation has failed her. Once again, we have passed on to those who follow all of the problems that this generation has failed to solve.

There are too many genocides that have been allowed to happen since the warning was incarnationally posted at Majdanek. Why? Is it because our political systems are incapable of producing leaders necessary for today’s global challenges? Is it because my generation has become known for producing superb politicians with electable traits, but never to be confused with leadership? Is it because our grandiose mission statements, formulated by our multinational institutions, ring hollow when matched to the reality of a diminished will for global engagement? Is it because the church has expended itself on comfortable buildings and a user-friendly gospel that has cheapened our faith to the point where it has lost its transformational power?

In Rwanda, the social fabric has been severely torn, and no one quite trusts any of society’s institutions. Might this be a global trend as well?

Our visit to the church is over, and we drive away. We are silent as each of us reflects on a tragedy bigger than Nyamata. We have witnessed the failure of memory, a failure of will, and a failure of faith. God forgive us! God help us! ☉

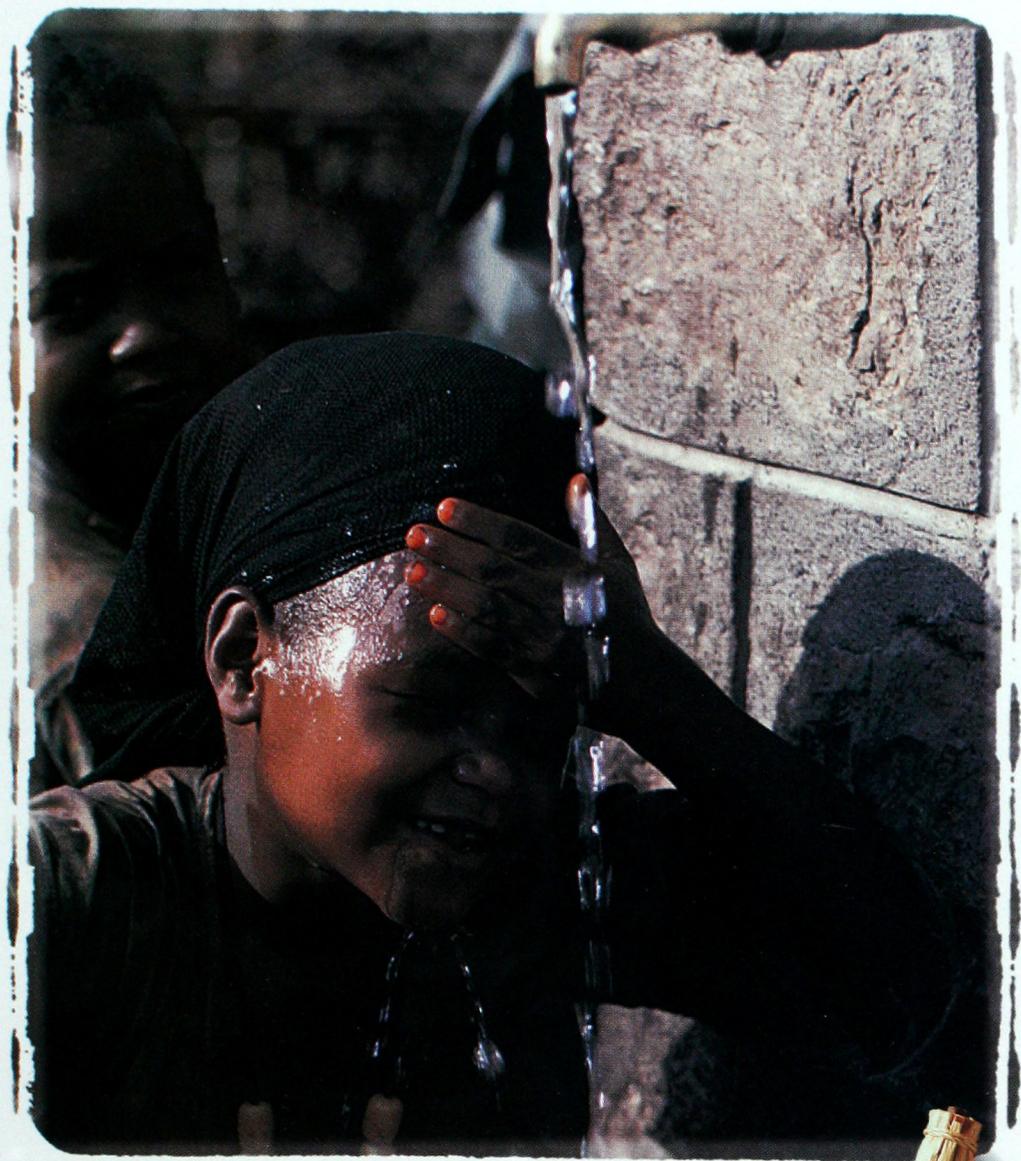


The altar of the Rwandan church where 6,000 Tutsis were killed: Did death have the last say?

As with any genocide, there are more questions than answers. This day is bright. A variety of birds is singing. Flowers are blooming. How did such a beautiful setting—how did people who grew up in such a beautiful country—contribute to this horrific scene?

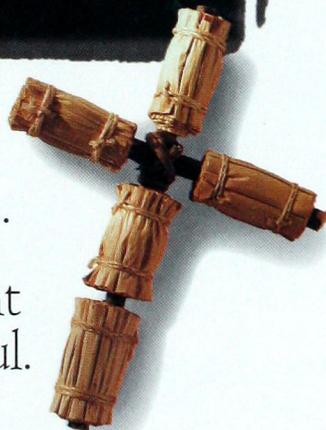
There is a terrible odor in the church. Three years after the killings, the stench of death remains. Is it real or imaginary? I suppose it doesn’t really matter. In Rwanda, the imagined has become reality.

Close by, there is a Sunday school class. The skulls are small, piled in a corner. This is where the children met their fate. What force but the demonic could destroy



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Profile #3

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