

World Vision Today

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Articles about the Middle East in World Vision Today's Autumn 2001 issue generated an unprecedented amount of mail—and letters are still coming in. We will print a selection of these in an upcoming issue of World Vision Today.

World Vision Today

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On the cover

Anizio Senyange, 12, feeds a goat he received from World Vision. Goats are among the top-selling items in World Vision's Gift Catalog.

Photograph by Jane Nandawula

CORRECTION: Two photos were incorrectly credited to Amber L. Anderson ["Building Up Chicago," Autumn 2001]. The photos were taken by Kimala Lee.

World Vision Today, a free quarterly publication, affirms people responding to God's call to care for the poor by providing information, inspiration, and opportunities for action, linking them with children and families in nearly 90 countries where World Vision ministers. In an effort to be careful stewards of our resources, this publication costs less than 35 cents a copy to print and mail.

We welcome your comments and feedback. Letters to the editor must include the writer's full name, home address, and daytime telephone number, and should be sent to: The Editor, **World Vision Today**, P.O. Box 9716, Federal Way, Washington 98063-9716, e-mailed to WVToday@worldvision.org or faxed to (253) 815-3445. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Submitted photos will not be returned. Please send address changes at least 30 days before moving and enclose the address label clipped from a current copy or return envelope.

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From the President | Richard E. Stearns

A Tale of Two Catastrophes

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us..."

—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

A YEAR AGO, WORLD VISION HAD SCHEDULED

a September prayer breakfast in New York City to coincide with the United Nations Special Session on Children. The U.N. conference was the first to focus on children in more than 10 years—a significant event intended to focus the attention of the world on the tragic conditions in which hundreds of millions of children live.

I planned to speak to several hundred pastors on "The Catastrophe that has Befallen the World's Children." Tragically, on Sept. 11 the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked by terrorists and a new catastrophe thrust itself upon the world. The U.N. conference was cancelled and children were pushed from the world's agenda.

World Vision is in the business of responding to disasters, whether natural or man-made, but this tragedy was unique. While more than 5,000 lives were tragically lost, there was not the usual destruction of homes and communities or the creation of large refugee populations common to most disasters.

At first, World Vision wasn't sure how to respond. We are not experts in search and rescue. But then we realized that the injury inflicted on the country was far more spiritual in nature than it was financial or physical. A spiritual wound can only be healed through a spiritual cure. Unfortunately, of the hundreds of millions of dollars given so generously to help the victims of this disaster, the faith community—the "relief workers" best equipped to heal such spiritual wounds—received very little of the funding.

We concluded that the best way to help was to assist churches in New York and Washington, D.C. We established the American Families Assistance FundSM to help the faith community do what it does best: meet the spiritual needs of people. At the prayer breakfast, I encouraged them to reach out into their communities with the "spiritual disaster relief" that only the Gospel can offer. I promised them that World Vision would do whatever we could to help them.

Indeed, as Dickens wrote, these have been "the best of times and the worst of times." If we saw the worst that humanity can offer on Sept. 11, we also saw the best of humanity in the days and weeks that followed. We saw acts of tremendous heroism, gestures of deep sympathy, and an amazing outpouring of generosity to help victims. We have seen church attendance rise as millions of people have sought comfort and answers to the profound questions raised by the events gripping our nation. It was exciting to see hymns sung in baseball parks, schools, and on the steps of the Capitol. It was inspiring to hear our president call for the prayers of the nation. Just days before, faith was not welcome in the public square.

But as I spoke to the pastors, I also felt compelled to speak to the other catastrophe, the one affecting the world's children. I observed that the events of Sept. 11 found America joining a sad

fraternity: the fraternity of pain and suffering to which scores of nations and millions of people belong because violence, injustice, and poverty are a part of their daily reality. Before Sept. 11, the United States had been largely insulated from this kind of violence, pain, and injustice. Now we too have felt grief similar to that of families living in places like Rwanda, Kosovo, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A terrorist act had forced the cancellation of the U.N. conference, but it must not be allowed to push children from the world's agenda. The tragedy we've experienced can propel us to remember other innocent lives lost needlessly, like the 30,000 children who die each day of largely preventable causes related to violence, injustice, and poverty. Violence often rises up out of despair. Injustice and poverty beget anger, and anger begets hatred. World Vision has spent more than 50 years trying to replace despair in the lives of children with hope. Our God is a God of hope, and we have seen the daily miracles wrought by clean water, full stomachs, educated minds, and a loving touch.

Perhaps my friend Leighton Ford said it best in a letter to his 12-year-old grandson, Benji, right after the attack. He suggested that he and Benji could sponsor a child together: "We wouldn't change the whole world, but maybe we could change one life, and let him know that God cares." (Visit our Web site, www.worldvision.org, to see the full text of Leighton's letter and other thoughts from prominent Christians.)

It is indeed "a season of light and a season of darkness; the spring of hope and the winter of despair." Out of this unspeakable evil, we have seen so many signs of hope and love. The God who brought about the redemption of the world from the defeat of Calvary can also bring light out of this darkness. The beautiful acts of compassion demonstrated by World Vision sponsors in the lives of 1.7 million sponsored children all over the world will also bring about a harvest. It will be a harvest of hope and not despair, of love and not hatred. ■



Rich speaks at "Remember the Children," an event in Washington, D.C., honoring terrorist victims and promoting children's emotional needs.

The first plane hit the South Tower during math. “It was so loud, so loud,” said 18-year-old Celenia Becerril, a World Vision child sponsor. Through the classroom window Celenia saw a gaping black hole and fire coming from the building. *Oh my goodness, there must have been an explosion*, she thought. Leaving her books behind, the college freshman dashed outside her school, just blocks from the Twin Towers. There she witnessed people falling from the sky. “I didn’t know if they were falling or jumping. That made me panic.” When the second plane hit 18 minutes later, she dropped to her knees and prayed: “God, I don’t want to die. Please protect me.”

The second plane crash triggered a human stampede. *I’m going to be killed. I’m going to be trampled*, Celenia thought. She ducked inside a deli and called her father, a 17-year NYPD veteran. “Stop panicking, stop crying, and get out of the area,” he told her. Celenia made her way to her grandfather’s Lower East Side apartment. Minutes later they watched New York’s tallest

Renewal at Ground

Through its American Families Assistance FundSM, World Vision is working with local churches in New York to bring spiritual comfort and healing to a city wounded to the heart.

zero

▲ Sept. 11 changed Celenia’s life. “I don’t take things for granted . . . I keep saying, ‘God, you changed my life.’”

BY KARI COSTANZA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JON WARREN

buildings disintegrate, killing thousands, including two students from her school. "When I saw that, I was hysterical. I couldn't believe I was just there. Thank God. He got me out of there."

Later that night Celenia and her family visited her father, on duty protecting the area now called Ground Zero. "Thank you, Daddy, for saving me," Celenia told him.

THE CHURCHES UNITED

For Marcos Rivera, Sept. 11 was a day of terror and thanksgiving. His son Matthew, 15, attended school three blocks from the World Trade Center. Marcos dropped Matthew off at school and went to the Primitive Christian Church, where he is senior pastor. When the first tower fell, Marcos said he "freaked out" and rushed into the sanctuary, locking the door behind him. "Lord, have mercy on us," he prayed. Then Marcos began ushering frightened people into the church, all the time wondering about Matthew. Was he hurt? Was he alive? He was putting up an easel telling people to come in, rest, and be safe when Matthew appeared, covered with soot. "I let the easel drop," he said. "It was as if Matthew was born again that day."

The Ground Zero Clergy Task Force was also born that day with Marcos as a founding member and World Vision as a partner. The task force is an interdenominational mix of local pastors and churches who are ensuring that churches are there for the victims, rescue workers, and for the troubled, frightened millions of New York City. The dream of uniting the churches had been years in the making, but Sept. 11 thrust the plan into high gear.

WORLD VISION RESPONDS

In response to the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., World Vision established the American Families Assistance FundSM to help individuals and churches affected by the tragedy. World Vision set up a command center at Marcos' church, with computers, phones, fax lines, a Web site—everything the task force needed to link people with help. "World Vision came in as a partner right away," said Marcos. "The reputation that World Vision has in the world—when people hear they are partners with us, shoulder to shoulder, that kind of eases the tensions."

It was tense on "the pile" where pastors prayed with rescue workers and blessed mangled bodies. In addition, churches began preparing short- and long-term plans to assist victims



▲ Pastor Marcos Rivera and son Matthew. Escaping Ground Zero, Matthew told friends, "We're going to church. My father is there."

spiritually, financially, and emotionally, through grief and trauma counseling. The task force and World Vision are committed to helping the "hidden victims" of the tragedy. "Tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs since Sept. 11, and disproportionately, they're people with lower income jobs," says attorney Jeremy Del Rio. Jeremy's father, Abounding Grace Christian Church Pastor Rick Del Rio, was among the first clergymen on the scene after the attack.

New York changed that day. Now coats sport patriotic pins. Tiny flags, big flags, flags on shirts, bandanas, and scarves, are for sale everywhere. The Empire State Building—again New York's tallest structure—is awash in red, white, and blue light. But mixed in with national pride are the raw emotions of shock, horror, fear, anger, and grief.

WORLD VISION RESPONDS **AFGHAN REFUGEES**

World Vision has committed more than \$1 million to assist the deepening humanitarian crisis among Afghan refugees. Some 12 million people are suffering from a drought-induced famine in Afghanistan, and a decade of war has already created 4 million refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees now predicts that an additional 1.5 million people will attempt to flee to neighboring countries.

In early October, World Vision shipped emergency supplies, including tents, cooking utensils, and blankets, to the region



from its Denver, Colo., warehouse. The organization is also providing relief and health supplies through the British agency Ockenden International for refugees on the Afghanistan-Iran border. Meanwhile, World Vision teams are gearing up to care for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

"Humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people will not only save countless lives during the winter, but can be effective in stopping the cycle of poverty and hate," said World Vision President Rich Stearns.

HOW CAN WE CARE ABOUT THE WORLD?

The pain and devastation of Sept. 11 can actually help us grow our hearts.

BY DR. ROBERTA HESTENES

In September, we saw the face of evil frighteningly close. We were shocked to see such suffering on our own soil. As we continue to grieve, we could easily turn protectively inward and shut out the pain of the world. Or we could allow these events to grow our hearts and minds, to enlarge our giving and acts of caring—both here in the United States and around the globe.

The evil we saw in this country can remind us of the struggle against evil going on all over the world, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable. Millions of innocent children and families struggle, as we do, to get on with their lives, but the obstacles they face are enormous. Especially now, they need our help to find a way forward into a future of hope. With hope, all things are possible.

Helping others heals our wounds, and it allows us to become instruments of healing to a hurting world. Now more than ever, it's essential that we intensify our commitment to efforts that advance stability and peace in the world. World Vision does more than put Band-Aids over gaping wounds. World Vision works

to meet immediate needs while programs such as child sponsorship provide long-range solutions that bring hope to refugees and war victims, vulnerable children, and poor families and communities.

HEALING THE NATION

World Vision, best known for its international programs, also ministers to urban communities in the United States. In New York, World Vision is working through local churches to assist traumatized, grieving families. Although the physical needs are great, the lasting impact on New Yorkers will also be emotional and spiritual. World Vision plays an important role in that spiritual healing while coordinating with other agencies to help affected families.

BATTLING OPPRESSION AT THE ROOT

Where there is oppressive poverty, injustice, or utter hopelessness, there hatred and extremism can flourish. World Vision battles the root causes of terrorism by offering life, hope, and tangible care to the neediest people around the globe. World Vision staff

serves all people regardless of race or religion.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

World Vision sponsors have an intimate way to share their compassion with one child, one family. Sponsors personify the best of our hopeful, generous nation to children overseas. Their support provides opportunities for children to realize their God-given potential. And just as sponsors are a name and a face representing what is good to a young person in another country, the sponsored child helps us focus our prayers—and puts a human face on people and places very distant from us. Helping strangers become friends instead of enemies is a great ministry of reconciliation.

Dr. Roberta Hestenes, World Vision's Minister-at-Large and a theological professor, is former senior pastor of Solana Beach Presbyterian Church in Solana Beach, Calif., and former president of Eastern College.



LOSING A HERO

Anane Crandon can barely stand straight for grief. Sadness weighs her down and bends her forward at the waist. Anane was evangelizing in Union Square shortly after the attack when she saw a poster of a missing police officer. It was her brother, Uhuru. He was last seen rushing into the World Trade Center to save lives on Sept. 11. He left behind a son and baby daughter.

Seeing Uhuru's face on that poster, Anane collapsed. Evangelist Sondra Berry Young was there to catch her. "She fell

◀ Anane Crandon, in white, worshipping at Abounding Grace Christian Center. Abounding Grace is a founding member of the Ground Zero Clergy Task Force.

THE WORLD RESPONDS **OUR PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU**

Within hours of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., messages of prayer and condolences flooded in from World Vision offices around the world—many from colleagues who know firsthand what it's like to live amid war and violence. Here's a sampling of the sentiments:

It's a shocking experience to see what happened in the United States. Thank God all our staff in New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., are safe. Please be assured that our prayers are with you. We pray also for all our sponsors and donors, as we are concerned that some of them may be among the victims.

—Trihadi Saptoadi,
national director, World Vision Laos

Please know that there are many Palestinians who are praying for the American people at this time.

—Nassim Nour,
operations manager, World Vision Jerusalem

The Congolese community, sponsored children's families, and World Vision

Democratic Republic of Congo staff were terrified to hear of the deadly devastation caused by terrorists. We can't bear watching the horrific scenes of the crashes. Please forward our deep condolences to World Vision staff, donors, and all those hurt by the shattering violence.

—Kasongo Mutshaila,
operations director, World Vision DRC

The thoughts and prayers of World Vision Indonesia are with those who have been affected by the attacks. May God provide you and all of the American people with his strength and wisdom in facing this horrible tragedy—that they, despite this atrocity, could become the channel of his blessings and love for others in the world.

—James Tumbuan,
national director, World Vision Indonesia

We declare these actions inhuman, and join our prayers to the pleas of world citizens working for peace for our children's future, so that these manifestations of terrorism and violence do not prosper in any place on our planet.

—Milagro de Castro,
national director, World Vision Honduras

I just wanted to let you know that we are praying for America, a country that has tried hard to use its economic power to help others so much. May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep you all safe and secure in him. May God raise his hand upon America and protect the nation from all enemies.

—Jonas Njelango,
national director, World Vision Liberia



▲ Rich Stearns with Fire Chaplain John White.

feel like a princess," said Anane, covering her face as if trying to block out the pain. "He was my best friend."

Through the American Families Assistance FundSM, World Vision has reached out to families like Uhuru's, making donations to New York's Port Authority and Fire Department, both checks earmarked for widows and orphans. Fire Chaplain John White accepted World Vision's check on behalf of the firefighters.

A SHARED WORLD VISION

White, president of Firefighters for Christ International, had flown to New York right after the attack as part of a stress debriefing team. At first, the firemen were reluctant to talk. "By the third day, there were guys coming one after another," said John, who would listen and pray with the firemen. John learned about the power of prayer from his Sunday school

► Abounding Grace's Pastor Joseph Maldonado, pictured with his mother, Maria, says, "We're seeing a great, great revival."



teacher, who encouraged the class to pray for the children of the world—not to have a small vision, but a world vision. "She was [World Vision founder] Bob Pierce's Sunday school teacher, too, and you may know what happened after that," John says.

What may happen next in New York has many frightened. There are rumors that New York gangs may retaliate against the Muslim community. Through CitiVision, a New York parachurch organization, World Vision is funding "Revenge to Glory," a night of breakdancing, music, and testimony by former gang members-turned-Christian. The event attempts to redirect youth violence and anger—transforming hate into hope. "We plan for evil very easily, but we don't plan for good very easily," said Walter Sotelo, with CitiVision. "Gang members don't know what to do. We want to give them the specifics that they need. Options."

► Rosemary Martes looks forward to getting away from the city to attend a World Vision-supported weekend camp.

GETTING AWAY TO GOD

There are options for kids who need spiritual revival. World Vision is funding a weekend camp through CitiVision. It's a chance for youth to take the train upstate to enjoy God in the quietness of nature. "The children, particularly, have been confronted with the reality that their city has been attacked. They need a break from the fear, the tragedy, the terror, the smoke, the smell, the anxiety, the uncertainty." The camps, said Walter, "become a point of memory—a spot where their minds will forever be tattooed with a beautiful experience that came out of a horrible reality."

Rosemary Martes, 13, is eager to get away. "Everything that's going on just makes me want to break down and cry," she said. Rosemary has been to the CitiVision camps before. "Something happens when you get away from everyone; there's no homework, and all you have to do is follow God."

NORMAL NO LONGER

Classes are again in session at Celenia Becerril's school, the Borough of Manhattan Community College. It had been used as a temporary morgue. Celenia makes her way past police barricades every day to get to class. She wears a paper respirator to protect her lungs from smoke and airborne debris.

What Celenia saw that horrible day changed her. She hasn't slept through the night since Sept. 11, but she feels closer to God. "I don't want to go back to normal," she said. After the attack, Celenia increased her time as a church volunteer and stopped watching television news. She also plans to train as a counselor at the weekend camps.

A devoted child sponsor for five years, Celenia now feels even more of a bond with Erick, the 6-year-old Guatemalan boy she



sponsors. "I send everything World Vision sends in the mail; the stickers, the Christmas story books, everything. I love it because Erick sends me pictures and hand prints and drawings." She hopes to meet him one day. "Now I know what it's like—almost—to live like Erick. Now I know what it's like to be afraid. I was never afraid before. Now it's so different." ■

AMERICAN FAMILIES ASSISTANCE FUNDSM

In response to Sept. 11, World Vision formed the American Families Assistance FundSM to help affected individuals, families, and communities. World Vision works in partnership with Concerts of Prayer Greater New York, a nonprofit, interdenominational Christian ministry, and in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide transitional and long-term assistance for needy families. At press time, funds have benefited:

- THE GROUND ZERO CLERGY TASK FORCE:** Helping New York churches set up a referral center to match people with the help they need.
- POLICE AND FIREFIGHTERS BENEVOLENCE FUNDS:** Assisting hundreds of widows and orphans of personnel killed in the line of duty.

•**WEEKEND CHILDREN'S CAMPS AND "REVENGE TO GLORY":** Programs to help traumatized children seek spiritual healing, and an event to provide positive alternatives for gang members threatening retaliation against the Muslim community.

•**"UNITED WE RISE":** An Oct. 11 candlelight memorial service, funded in part by World Vision, memorialized the New York victims. The event was held in Brooklyn and broadcast throughout New York City and across the country.

•**YOUTH WITH A MISSION (YWAM) KIOSKS:** Funding 25 prayer stations and a command center in midtown Manhattan.

To give, call toll-free (800) 700-4911. For victims and churches who can help, call (800) 975-7535. Or

visit www.worldvision.org for updates, pastors' resources, and much more.

Any contributions to the Fund that remain unused after January 2003 will be redirected to help needy children and families in New York and throughout the United States.

AMERICA PRAYS

James Dobson, Franklin Graham, Max Lucado, and Prayer of Jabez author Bruce Wilkinson led a national prayer vigil on Sept. 15 linking more than 1,000 churches across the country. Organizer John C. Maxwell asked World Vision to help administer the \$5 million raised so far for churches in New York and Washington, D.C.



For Anizio, an orphan in Uganda, a goat is not just a source of milk, but also a playmate.

GIFTS THAT give

SINCE 1997, WORLD VISION'S GIFT CATALOG HAS BEEN A MUCH-NEEDED alternative gift source for American families seeking meaningful ways to honor their loved ones. For about the same price as a few CDs, a sweater, or a PlayStation® set, these items sent in the recipients' names have had significant and lasting impact for children and families in the developing world.

World Vision Today journalists asked families around the world who have received catalog gifts to tell us what they've meant. See how treasured a Bible is in Mozambique, or how something as simple as a chicken can make a family's day. We also contacted people in the United States who purchased items through the catalog. As these stories convey, the Gift Catalog is a perfect opportunity for those who have so much to serve those who *need* so much.



JANE NANDAWULA/WORLD VISION

CHICKENS

[Honduras]

\$100

provides a brood of chickens to one Honduran family

CHICKENS ARE SCAMPERING EVERYWHERE IN VIDAL Flores' yard, clucking, pecking at dirt, and poking at each other. Vidal, 52, a farmer and part-time carpenter, watches, a smile breaking beneath his mustache. You wouldn't think chickens could bring change to a family, but these have.

"We are poor people," says Vidal. "On days we have no food, at least we have eggs. If we don't have eggs, we eat a male chicken. That makes our day."

The Flores family lives in Choluteca, Honduras, a two-hour drive south of the capital, Tegucigalpa. Their house is small, well-kept, and sparsely furnished, much like other houses in this poor area of southern Honduras—only this house has no mother.

When Vidal's wife, Evarista, 45, suddenly died, Vidal became a single father to his six children, ranging in age from 7 to 21. "My life changed completely," he says. "You have such confidence with a wife of 30 years. Everybody knows what to do. With her missing, everybody has had to work very hard."

One of Vidal's daughters, Wendy, 19, needs special care. She is deaf and has never spoken. Problems sustained at birth make it difficult for her to stand. Wendy leans against the side of Vidal's house, just watching. She giggles when the chickens dash by.

Some months ago, Ernesto Flores, World Vision's local agronomist, came to Vidal's house with 14



chickens and a rooster. In Honduras, more than 3,000 families are receiving chickens purchased through the World Vision Gift Catalog.

The chickens provide many benefits. "Their eggs provide protein," says Ernesto, "and they give families a chance to eat meat." World Vision chickens are vaccinated, which protects them from diseases that can devastate a brood.

These same chickens also benefit others in the community. Five months after Vidal received his chickens, which had produced 22 more, he gave 15 back to World Vision to be distributed to another family. That family will start its own chicken coop, and in five months, they too will give 15 chickens to another family through World Vision.

Ernesto taught the family to make chicken feed from corn, sorghum, vegetable leaves, salt, and beans. "It's very practical," Vidal says. "It helps us multiply every grain of corn and sorghum." He's teaching other farmers the skills he has learned.

World Vision will soon help Vidal construct fish ponds on his property to raise tilapia for the family to eat and sell. "World Vision is a great help," says Vidal, "but the best help they give us is what they put in our heads."

—by Kari Costanza

Honduras has one of the three highest malnutrition rates in Latin America.

Crop loss and damage from 1998's Hurricane Mitch worsened nutrition levels.

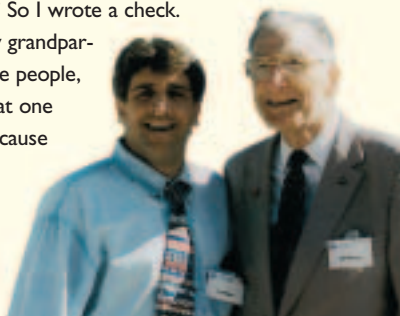


YOUR STORY

My decision to buy a \$72,000 health clinic in Mali came from a profound whisper—when God whispers to your mind but you absolutely know it in your heart. This has only happened twice, and both whispers have been related to doing God's work. I was looking through the Gift Catalog and thought, *I'm going to do this. I just don't know how.* Three months later, I sold my company. It went from "How am I going to raise the money?" to "I've got the money." So I wrote a check.

I gave this gift in honor of my grandparents and in honor of Mali—of the people, of their will to survive, and of that one little child who will be helped because this region now has a clinic.

— Carl Keller, of Smyrna, Ga., with his grandfather, Dr. Lloyd Perez.



SPONSORSHIP [Guatemala]

\$312

changes a child's life through a year of sponsorship

SPONSORSHIP HAS DONE A LOT FOR 4-YEAR-OLD Virgilio Obel Martinez's family. His father, a peasant farmer, and illiterate mother often cannot provide healthy food for their other 11 children in El Limón, Guatemala. Now that World Vision has trained Virgilio's parents in healthier cooking methods and vegetable gardening, the children do not suffer from malnutrition.

decided that they urgently needed a better home. The new place, made of cement with a tin roof, "is really beautiful," says Virgilio's sister, Maria, 6 (pictured left). "I can sweep and it looks really clean." She washes off some plastic flowers, explaining, "Now we want everything clean, because we don't have so much dust anymore."

—by Brenda Solares



Best of all, they received a new house. The family used to squeeze into a one-room dwelling made of adobe and straw with a dirt floor. World Vision staff, in agreement with community members,

More than six of every 10 Guatemalans survive on less than \$2 a day.



MATERNAL/CHILD HEALTH CARE [Bangladesh]

\$36

provides care for three new mothers in Bangladesh

IN THE SPRAWLING SLUMS SURROUNDING BANGLADESH'S capital, Dhaka, families live on the slim salaries brought in by rickshaw-pulling, vending, and odd jobs. They often can't afford health care. World Vision's low-cost health services target the most vulnerable members of the population: mothers and young children.

mother, Nasima Khan, who lives with them. Counting the health care and sponsorship benefits, Shakila says gratefully, "These are all really special gifts from God."

—by Raphael Palma

Shakila Parveen, 25, received pre- and post-natal care for both her children, including immunizations and check-ups—services that would be out of reach on her husband's salary as a driver. It's evident that 6-year-old Farhana Anwar Popy and Fardeen Anwar Raihan, 1, are healthy and active. As a sponsored child, Farhana also receives educational benefits from World Vision.

"All the family members get medical treatment from the [World Vision] project," says Shakila's

Only 14 percent of births in Bangladesh are attended by trained health staff.



Emergency Food [Angola]

\$500 distributes one ton of food in Angola

ANGOLA'S CIVIL WAR HAS TAKEN MUCH FROM MARIA Martins, 35—and it may not be finished. Nine months ago her family fled their home because of rebel fighting. Now her family is scattered. Her husband and one child are sick in the hospital in Malange. Four of her other children may be in the capital, Luanda, but Maria is not entirely sure. She lives in a mud-and-thatch hut in Cambondo, northeast Angola, with her youngest child, Tatinha Francisco, 1. They're among 1,700 people taking refuge here around a small health post and a half-destroyed church.

One thing Maria can depend on is World Vision's food distributions that provide maize, cooking oil, lentils, beans, and salt. Together with the sweet potatoes and potatoes Maria grows in a small plot behind her house, it's the only food she has. "If World Vision had not supplied us with food, we would have died," Maria says.

It's too risky for Maria to return home, so she stays put, despite the difficulties. In order to cook, she must collect firewood, but it's increasingly hard to find as the local population swells. Her search now takes her into fields that might hide land mines.

Still, World Vision's assistance encourages Maria. "When we arrived in Cambondo, we had no hope left for the future," she says. "Thanks to World Vision, we can now face the future again." —by Robert Michel



ROBERT MICHEL/WORLD VISION

On average, two children die of starvation every day in the conflict-ridden town of Malange, Angola.



ROBERT MICHEL/WORLD VISION

YOUR STORY

This past Christmas, my husband and I felt we had everything. We requested nothing for Christmas, nor gave out lists to anyone. We told each other that we really wanted to make a difference. We agreed to pick out gifts from the World Vision Gift Catalog and gave each other spending limits equivalent to what we would have spent on "things." My



husband asked for Bibles to be sent to those who needed them, and for vaccinations. I wanted to give a goat to a family. We filled out the forms and sent them in. What we didn't expect were the tears that flowed as we received the gift cards explaining the gifts given in our names. I

made small holes in the cards and put them on the tree. Some friends who came over for parties asked what those cards were about. We told them about the Gift Catalog. But the best surprise was when we took down the tree a week after Christmas. Our 3-year-old was already done playing with his new toys, but we know these gifts were tangibly eternal and would continue to give to those we blessed. It was our best gift to give—and to get.

—Vikki and Kevin Spencer, Greensboro, N.C.

Medical care [Mexico]

\$110 provides one year of health care and shelter to a street child in Mexico City

FOUR DAYS AFTER CARLOS HERNÁNDEZ, 16, ARRIVED at Niños de la Calle, World Vision's shelter for street children in Mexico City, the staff took him for a medical check-up. "I don't feel any sickness, except in my ears," he told the doctor. "A few days ago I got into a fight with other guys and they kicked both of my ears. I hear fine, but they hurt a lot." The doctor found some bleeding but determined that Carlos' ears would heal, with antibiotics and rest.

Despite Carlos' history of inhaling *pedra*, or pure marijuana, his lungs, chest, and stomach checked out fine. The doctor noted that the teen is undernourished and underweight for his age—good meals and vitamins provided by World Vision should help. "Carlos has a tooth cavity that must be fixed, or he'll lose his molar. You should take him to a dentist," the doctor advised the program worker. Also, Carlos needed a body lotion to treat his dermatitis, caused by living on the streets.

Carlos returned to the shelter to take his medicine, provided by World Vision, and to enjoy a bed all to

himself, three meals a day, and—best of all—the care of the program staff.

"If I could meet the person who paid for my medical care, I would say many thanks," says Carlos. "I really do not believe it that somebody helped me. He does not know me and still is trying to help me. That is something cool. I will never be able to pay him back. I can only offer my friendship."

—by David Muñoz Ambriz

An estimated 14,000 children live or work on the streets of Mexico City, where they are vulnerable to violence, drugs, malnutrition, and HIV infection.



Goats [Uganda]

\$50 gives a dairy goat to a child-headed household in Uganda

FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE LITTLE ELSE IN THE WORLD, a goat is a tremendous gift. Rosemary, 14, Anizio, 12, and Sanya, 8, live on their own in Rakai, southern Uganda. Their father died of AIDS in 1998, followed by their mother in 2000. Goats from World Vision provide the children's only source of milk.

Anizio enjoys caring for the goats. "They are fun to milk, and they are not too huge to play with," he says. When he's at school (World Vision sponsorship pays his fees), a neighbor helps to feed the animals.

Eventually, the goats will also supply valuable income for the children. "When they multiply, we will sell [the offspring] and use the money to acquire skills," Anizio explains. —by Jane Nandawula



JANE NANDAWULA/WORLD VISION

One out of every six people is an orphan in AIDS-devastated Rakai province, in southern Uganda.



DAVID MUÑOZ AMBRIZ/WORLD VISION

BICYCLES [Uganda]

\$180 provides a bicycle to a child-headed household or a health worker

IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR JOHN MARY MAYOMBWE, 17, TO get to school. The son of a single mother in Masaka, Uganda, John depended on World Vision sponsorship to pay his school fees for St. Mugaga, the nearest secondary school. Once it was financially reachable, however, there was still the distance between home and school—six miles each way. John would trek some 60 miles a week on foot.

Then World Vision gave him a bicycle. John breaks into a smile at the mention of this gift. “I like this bike,” he says, and explains that he often gives fellow students a ride.

By cycling to class, he also keeps his shoes cleaner, which saves on shoe polish. For John and his mother, every little bit helps.

—by Jane Nandawula



JANE NANDAWULA/WORLD VISION

Bicycles are a primary form of transport in Uganda—of people as well as goods.

A bicycle can help a person carry up to four times more weight over a longer distance than they can manage on foot.



FOOD [Indonesia]

\$90 feeds a child for 18 months in Indonesia

WORLD VISION'S FEEDING PROGRAM BROUGHT 1-year-old Supiatun back from the brink of death. The baby girl's health suffered when her family fled ethnic conflict in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, hiding in the jungle for more than a month. When they reached Madura Island, Supiatun was severely malnourished.

In Madura, Supiatun came under the care of World Vision's therapeutic feeding center. She began to rapidly improve, gaining two kilograms in less than three weeks. “It might not be a significant gain for a normal-weight person, but for a malnourished child, each kilogram makes a lot of difference,” explained Dr. Everthardus Sitompol, one of the center's doctors.

“She is now cheerful and loves to play with everyone here,” said Dr. Endang Widyastuti, a World Vision Indonesia health officer.

The child's mother, Sumaiya, kissed the hands of the feeding center staff. “Thank you for saving my daughter's life.”

—by Mira Renata



JOHNSON TOBING/WORLD VISION

Supiatun before feeding (right) and after (above).



ENDANG WIDYASTUTI/WORLD VISION

Approximately half of Indonesian children under the age of 2 suffer from malnutrition.



BIBLES [Mozambique]

\$30 provides Bibles to three Christians

MY HOME HAS BEEN LIT, MY LIFE HAS BEEN changed and enriched,” says Isabel Chissano, 37. What brought about this transformation? A Bible from World Vision—Isabel's first.

Reaching into a small basket where she keeps her most treasured possessions, the mother of five in Gaza province, Mozambique, pulls out the Bible. “It is not something we eat or drink, but it nourishes us. It fulfills us. When I look around my home, I see light, I see hope. I see a message of hope engraved in my children's every gesture.”

Isabel has five children—Francisco, 17; Emidio, 14; Lidia, 15; Ludovico, 11; and Ivanoldio, 5 (a World Vision sponsored child)—whom she supports through farming and livestock-raising. “When I was their ages, we didn't have a Bible at home,” she explains. “Looking back, this led to an emptiness that negatively affected my life. Very often, I took the wrong turn.”

Isabel often reads the Bible aloud to the children. They usually ask questions. The answer is always in the Bible, Isabel says. “In it we find out about things that happened, things that are happening, and things that are still to happen.”

With God's Word to guide her, Isabel is full of hope for her children's future. “This is what I want other mothers to feel like. This is why, since I have received this Bible, I make sure I share it with them,” she says.

Because the Bible is translated into the local language, Shangane, its contents bring immediate and personal joy. “God is speaking to us. His voice is echoing all over our home in our own language, thus showing he is indeed one of us and with us,” Isabel says. “I am indeed his daughter, we are indeed his children.”

—by Eleuterio Fenita



ELEUTERIO FENITA/WORLD VISION

Many families can't afford Bibles in Mozambique, ravaged by a brutal civil war from 1978-1992. Pastors often copy Scripture verses by hand to distribute to congregations.



YOUR STORY

One Christmas Eve morning, my youngest daughter, Emily, came to me with the World Vision Gift Catalog. She had chosen “feed two children for a month in Ethiopia,” or something like that. She looked me in the eye and said, “Dad, I do not want to talk about it a lot, but would you please help me and write out a check for \$40?” Thinking that she wanted me to pay for it, I was about to explain to her that we support children and microenterprise development projects through World Vision already.

Fortunately, before I could say a word, she unceremoniously dumped a star-shaped box on my desk containing \$40 in coins and small bills. “I counted it out myself,” she said, “and there are a few pennies too many, but you can keep them. When you are done, I would like to have the box back.” It took me a minute to compose myself. I gave her a big hug, and after blinking back a few tears of joy, I wrote out the check.

To see the heart of Jesus in my little girl that Christmastime was much more than I could have wished for.

—Herb Schiller, Warren, NJ.



Trees [Dominican Republic]

\$30

plants 10 fruit trees for a family in the Dominican Republic

IT'S STILL EXCITING EVERY TIME ROLANDO GOMERA Alcántara collects fruit from his citrus trees in Guayajayuco, Dominican Republic, near the Haiti border. "In the past, we would pay five pesos [30 cents] for an orange to eat," he says. "Now we are reaping them, thanks to World Vision." He received mango, orange, and lemon tree seedlings a few years ago, and now the fruit-laden groves are flourishing, boosting his family's diet. Soon he will have enough extra fruit to sell at the market.

The tree seedlings have been a boon to farmers like Laureano Contreras, a father of nine children (including 11-year-old Felicia, shown left, who is sponsored by World Vision). Arid Guayajayuco used to be an unforgiving place for crops, and families felt helpless. With seedlings, agricultural assistance, and a new piped water system, "I am excited," Laureano says. "I don't want to leave, because World Vision is helping us work the land."

Pausing to collect ripe mangoes that had fallen to the ground, Rolando opens his arms and exclaims, "If I could ever get to meet the person who gave me this gift, I would repeatedly say, 'Thank you.'"

—by Sarat Arias



SARAT ARIAS/WORLD VISION

Farming is a major occupation in Dominican Republic, where half of the labor force works the land.



GIFT CATALOG MANY WAYS TO GIVE

GIVE ALL YEAR ROUND. It's not just for Christmas. Use World Vision's Gift Catalog for birthdays, anniversaries, or any special occasions. World Vision sends a card free of charge to your loved one, describing the gift you've given in his or her name.

GIVE ONLINE. It's easy—and secure—to purchase items over the Internet. Go to www.worldvisiongifts.org to browse and buy. With a few clicks, you can choose your items,

fill out the recipients' information, make a purchase, and even customize your gift card.

GIVE AT THE OFFICE. Acknowledge important relationships with business clients, associates, and employees through the Gift Catalog. Skip the traditional fruit basket—give fruit trees to farmers overseas instead.

GIVE THROUGH YOUR CHURCH. Share the Gift Catalog with your Bible

study, youth, or Sunday School group. It's a tangible way for families to teach their children about giving, as Christ commands, to those in need.

SHARE IN A GIFT. Go to the "How big is your vision?" section of the catalog to find out how you can combine your gift with others' to provide big-ticket items like a school, well, or health clinic for a needy village.

my Best Gift

THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES ARISE TO give and receive gifts. Some stand out as especially meaningful. These friends of World Vision tell us about their best gifts.

Best gifts given

TWILA PARIS:

MY HUSBAND, JACK, HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN incredible support to me, both emotionally and practically, even though he has

struggled with his health over the years. He has always preferred working behind the scenes to being in the spotlight. The year that Bette Midler released the song, "Wind Beneath My Wings," I had the lyrics done in calligraphy and framed it

for him on our anniversary. It didn't cost much, but it meant a lot.

—Christian recording artist Twila Paris is a World Vision Artist Associate and sponsors a child in Honduras.



TERRI OWENS/WORLD VISION

they don't want to eat their food, and we pray together for her every night.

—Actor Blair Underwood is a World Vision child sponsor.

MICHAEL PASSONS:

THE BEST GIFT I HAVE EVER GIVEN WENT TO a small family in El Salvador. A very poor mom and four kids with very few possessions gave me a great blessing by allowing Avalon to come into their home and bring them food, clothes, and toys that we purchased in a nearby village. I



TODD BARTEL/WORLD VISION

BLAIR UNDERWOOD:

THE BEST GIFT I'VE EVER BEEN ALLOWED TO give was to sponsor a young girl in Ethiopia. Her name is Genet. I met her on a trip to Ethiopia with World Vision in

thought I was the gift-giver that day, but the look on those little kids' faces when they saw a toy for the first time, and the joy I felt in helping others in need, were very unexpected gifts for me.

—Michael Passons (pictured above wearing a cap), a member of the Christian recording group Avalon, sponsors a child in El Salvador.



CATHERINE BAUKNIGHT/WORLD VISION

Best gifts received

ALEX TREBEK:

NOT COUNTING MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, the greatest gift I've ever received is one that I do not remember. However, the circumstances surrounding it, I'll always remember.

I was a junior at the University of Ottawa in the late '50s. My father had

just lost his restaurant and our family was experiencing some hard financial times. There was no extra money. I couldn't even afford the train fare to go home for the Christmas holidays. At that time, I was dating a woman named Michelle. Her family invited me to their home for dinner. When I arrived, her younger brother,



DAVID WARD/WORLD VISION

Pierre, who knew of my circumstances, rushed to the Christmas tree, grabbed a gift that he had purchased for his sister, and gave it to me. I can't remember what it was, but I was so surprised and moved that I couldn't speak. That moment has stayed with me for nearly half a century.

—Alex Trebek, host of the television game show "Jeopardy!," sponsors a child in Bangladesh.

MARGARET BECKER:

THE BEST GIFT I'VE ever received was forgiveness. Forgiveness—the selfless act of saying, "I forget your shortcomings and remember only commitment to love you"—that is the greatest gift of all.

—Christian recording artist Margaret Becker is a World Vision Artist Associate. She sponsors two children, one in Ghana and one in Niger.



News

► In 1999, the average number of personal computers per thousand people in developing countries was 17, compared with almost 350 per thousand in high-income countries. (*World Development Indicators 2001, World Bank Group*)

► As of early 2001, 33 countries and more than 60 million people faced food emergencies of varying intensity. (*The State of Food and Agriculture 2001, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization*)

► In a study of 375 deaths among humanitarian aid workers between 1985 and 1998, 68 percent were attributed to intentional violence. (*Johns Hopkins University's Center for Refugee and Disaster Studies*)

► Each year, infectious diseases kill 14 million people, more than 90 percent of them in the developing world. (*The World Health Report 2000, World Health Organization*)

Good News



The Rev. Chipeta (right) with Wilfred Mlay, World Vision vice president for Africa.

PIERCE AWARD WINNER KEEPS ON GIVING

"A dream has come true," said the Rev. Thomson Chipeta, founder of an orphanage in Mchinji, Malawi, about receiving this year's Robert W. Pierce Award for Christian Service. The honor, bestowed annually in memory of World Vision's founder, comes with a \$10,000 prize. Chipeta, as a co-recipient, will receive \$5,000—and it's already earmarked for the children in his care.

Chipeta, who grew up as an orphan, took in 10 of his own grandchildren when two daughters died in the early 1990s. Today, Home of Hope (financially assisted by World Vision) nurtures 186 children, many of whom lost parents to AIDS. Chipeta intends to use his award winnings to help the orphans pay for schooling.

At the award ceremony, Malawi's First Lady, Madam Patricia Shanil Muluzi, said, "We need to follow the living example of the Rev. Chipeta, who has heeded God's message that we must love one another and do works of mercy." That same day, the Home of Hope received its newest member, a 1-day-old boy whose mother had died in childbirth. Chipeta named him Bob Pierce.

CRISIS UPDATES

CHAD

Food aid has reached Chad's central Sahelian belt hit hard by last year's drought. Families who were once reduced to digging in anthills for edible wild grains are now sustained by maize provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) and World Vision. Following a desperate appeal by Chad's government, the WFP supplied food for 375,000 people and asked World Vision to take the lead in distributing it in five regions.

Djimié Abdelkerim, 38, received a month's worth of food for herself, her four children, and her elderly, blind mother. It was a welcome alternative to the meager morsels she extracted from anthills. "We had our meal made of good cereal for the first time yesterday," Djimié said. "May God bless those who worked hard to help us survive this year."



With maize from World Vision, Djimié Abdelkerim no longer has to raid anthills for food.

SUDAN

The cost of childbirth in Sudan is high—in human life. One woman in 21 dies from pregnancy- or delivery-related problems, and 67 of every 1,000 infants die soon after birth.

Childbirth is a safer prospect in southern Sudan's Upper Nile district of Waat, now that World Vision is training traditional birth attendants (TBAs). Health services are poor in this impoverished region of 25,000 people, and women must rely on TBAs with limited skills passed down from older generations. Complications during childbirth are common, and many babies die from neonatal tetanus, a bacterial infection spread through the use of dirty or contaminated instruments. World Vision staff discovered that 20 of 50 infants recently born in Waat villages died of such circumstances.



World Vision provides basic supplies so that traditional birth attendants can conduct clean, safe deliveries.

"Our women know a lot about life, but they have no education," explains one village chief. "Our daughters are really suffering in birth, so we appreciate that our TBAs are receiving this training." World Vision equips TBAs to provide prenatal, birthing, and postnatal services for pregnant and lactating mothers, which is expected to reduce incidences of maternal and neonatal deaths. Organizations like World Vision are the only source of health care and training in southern Sudan, devastated by an 18-year civil war.

SPONSORSHIP

ARMENIA'S CHILDREN NEED SPONSORS

"Our children are like flowers that wilt in front of our eyes. We are helpless to do anything," said Margo Ezikyan, a mother of three in Gyumri, Armenia. World Vision's child sponsorship program, recently launched in the area, brings hope to these families.

Armenia, a former Soviet state, has suffered an economic downturn in post-communist times. Some 260,000 children live in families that survive on less than 30 cents a day. More than 70 percent of adults are unemployed. Social systems, including health care and education, have deteriorated. World Vision started working in the country in 1988, providing relief after a severe earthquake killed 25,000 people.

Gyumri, once a lively industrial city, has never recovered from the quake. Only half the neighborhoods were rebuilt. The rest of the buildings remain partially demolished, with crumbling foundations and iron construction rods making for a hazardous environment for children. When it rains, one community, Mush, becomes a muddy swamp that even four-wheel-drive

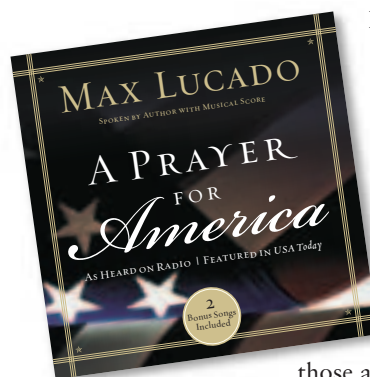


Arousyak Brsoyan and her granddaughter, Klara, live in Armenia's impoverished earthquake zone where World Vision is working.

vehicles have difficulty navigating.

World Vision's work in Gyumri will focus on education, prevention of child abandonment, care for disabled children, small business development, and agricultural support. Child sponsorship will provide food, clothes, and schooling for 1,500 children from Mush, Ani, and Austrian—all needy Gyumri communities. To sponsor a child in Armenia, please call toll-free (800) 777-5777.

MAX LUCADO'S "A PRAYER FOR AMERICA" CD



In response to the events of Sept. 11, Max Lucado offered a prayer before thousands of people at a national prayer vigil, America Prays. His humble words spoken to a merciful God inspired those present and gave hope to many who were struggling. Max Lucado has since recorded the prayer. The Integrity Music CD, which also includes two inspirational songs by Don Moen, is available in stores. The artists are donating all royalties and profits to World Vision's American Families Assistance FundSM to help those affected by the Sept. 11 tragedy. For more information, go to www.worldvision.org.

DOES YOUR CHURCH WANT TO MAKE SOME NOISE?



An estimated 600,000 students will participate in World Vision's 30 Hour Famine next year. The theme for 2002 is "Make Some Noise." Youth across the country will go without food for 30 hours on Feb. 22-23 (but participants can do the Famine anytime). The funds they raise and collect from sponsors—in person and online—benefit children and families in Peru, Tanzania, North Korea, Rwanda, and the United States.

To sign up (it's free), to get materials, or to find out more, call toll-free (800) 7-FAMINE, or go online at www.30hourfamine.org.



Story and photographs by Raphael Palma

DOCTOR'S ORDERS



The entire children's ward of the Bogra Christian Hospital is under Suprotik's care.

World Vision helped Suprotik Ghagra, a boy from a minority tribe in rural Bangladesh, aspire to the medical profession.



AS A YOUNG BOY LIVING IN RURAL BANGLADESH, Suprotik Ghagra had to fill out a sponsorship form for World Vision listing possible future professions. On a whim, he checked the box marked "medical doctor."

Suprotik, 32, smiles at the memory on a break from his rounds at Bogra Christian Hospital in Bogra district, about 140 miles northwest of Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital. He credits World Vision not just for providing the means to his lofty dream, but for helping him conceive it in the first place.

Suprotik comes from the Garo tribe of the northern forests, far removed from cities and modern conveniences. Numbering only about 100,000, the Garo are a poor people who live off the land. Growing up in Rangrapara, a village in the Haluaghat sub-district, Suprotik assumed he too would be a farmer.

World Vision changed his mind. A project in partnership with the Garo Baptist Convention began caring for local children, including Suprotik, in 1972, and soon expanded to serve the community through food-for-work programs. "The Rangrapara Community Development project was initiated to develop ethnic people's socio-economic situations," he says. "It helped me dream."

And it helped him make good on his goal to become a doctor. "World Vision sponsorship came to my life as a special blessing from God," he says. His sponsor, an Australian woman, supported Suprotik's education from age 5 until he finished his MBBS—Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery—when he was 21. The generous sponsor provided moral support as well. "For a long time her letters were with me," says Suprotik. "They were my precious treasures,

"Only healthy children can build a healthy community and nation."

—Dr. Suprotik Ghagra

inspiring me in achieving my goal." After graduation, he moved from place to place for work, unfortunately losing the letters in the process.

Bogra Christian Hospital is his most recent move. Suprotik, one of only 400,000 Christians in a predominantly Muslim country of 130 million people, is pleased to work at a Christian facility. In a few short months he has become quite popular with the Bengali mothers who bring him their sick children, usually suffering from malnutrition, diarrhea, or respiratory infections. He's responsible for the entire children's ward, and treats more than 38 patients a day. With a gentle, playful manner, he coaxes them to tell him how they feel. "Children are ever innocent. They are so dear to me," says the unmarried doctor.

Suprotik explains that the scarcity of medical professionals in Bangladesh causes great suffering. There is just one doctor per 12,000 people in the country. Quality treatment is a dream for many Bangladeshis. "I will be satisfied forever if I could solve a tiny portion of this problem," he says.

Being a good doctor isn't just about education and training, Suprotik believes. It is also about love. He has a theory that one cannot care about others unless he was loved in his infancy. Suprotik, the fifth of seven children, thrived on the devotion of his parents, the Rev. Sashibhuson Dio and Nayami Ghagra, his teachers, and World Vision staff. His father, a Baptist pastor, raised him to know God's love.

The family's closeness sustained them during arduous days. His parents had to work hard to cultivate rice on the few acres of land that had enough sunshine. Suprotik remembers, "I used to till land with the traditional bullock plough and weed the green rice field when I could make time in my school-going days."

He knows he's needed back in impoverished Haluaghat, which lacks doctors as much, or more, than other parts of the country. He plans to return someday. "I want to serve my community," he says. "I feel guilty as I am away from my own people who long for my presence."

But for now, he's busy in Bogra, working long days at the hospital. He spends his off-hours studying medical books—Suprotik

wants to become a pediatric specialist. It's a difficult schedule, but he is determined, driven by his love for children. "Children are the best gifts of God for each parent. Only healthy children can build a healthy community and nation," he says.

As a doctor, Suprotik believes he's paving the way for World Vision to make a difference in other Bangladeshi children's lives. "World Vision sponsorship discovers children's talents through education," he says. "I want to make children healthy so they can fully exercise their potential." ■



Suprotik spends his precious free time studying to be a pediatric specialist.

FAST FACTS BANGLADESH

- Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with 130 million people sharing an area slightly smaller than Wisconsin.
- Islam became the state religion in 1988. About 88 percent of the population is Muslim; 10 percent are Hindu; and the remaining 2 percent are Christian, Buddhist, or animist.
- Bangla, the principal language, is one of the most extensively spoken tongues in the world.
- Cyclones pound low-lying Bangladesh almost annually. The worst was in 1970, when a cyclone and its resulting floods killed 500,000 people.
- Despite the society's patriarchal structure, Bangladesh has had two female heads of government: Begum Khaleda Zia (1991-1996), and the current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina Wajed.

hurricane mitch 1,000 days after nicaragua

In Part II of
“Hurricane Mitch:
1,000 Days After,”
we look at Nicaragua
and how World
Vision’s “first-in,
last-out” response
following the 1998
disaster changed
a community forever.

BY KARI COSTANZA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JON WARREN

IT’S BEEN RAINING IN POSOLTEGA, A COMMUNITY 70 MILES north of Managua, Nicaragua. Thunder rumbles from the volcanoes that form the eastern skyline. Johana Barrios tromps through the soggy, green woods near town; her heavy, brown work shoes crush every small branch they encounter. The limbs snap and crackle, the ground’s sharp retort to the mountains’ soft booming. Johana stops near a mound of dirt shaded by an umbrella of lemon, orange, and papaya trees. The drip-drop of rain punctuates the volcano’s muted exclamations. She stares down at a human skull. Another body has worked its way out of the mud. It happens when it rains.



SOIL THAT BOILED

In Spanish, Posoltega means “soil that boils.” On Oct. 30, 1998, the soil boiled over. After days of continuous rain dumped by Hurricane Mitch, a side of the Casitas Volcano that towers over Posoltega gave way. A swell of water rushed down, an earth-made tsunami of mud, rocks, and trees. Two thousand five hundred people died, buried in the mud. Two communities completely disappeared. One was Johana’s home. She survived, she says, because she was at work that day in another town. Her aunt, uncle, and seven cousins all died.

Johana, then 22, worked for Nicaragua’s Ministry of Health. She was charged with the grisly task of burning the bodies of the dead to prevent an epidemic of diseases. Wearing a surgical mask, gloves, and boots, Johana worked tirelessly for weeks, burning hundreds of

mud-covered corpses spread over miles. “I didn’t eat or sleep well for two months,” she remembers. “I wondered if I was burning my own family.”

World Vision acted within 72 hours of the tragedy, shipping food, clothes, and medicine by helicopter. The slide had destroyed 1,500 homes, 50 wells, bridges, schools, and farms. It had completely cut off land routes. Helicopters were the only way in—and out—for nearly a month.

World Vision had worked in Nicaragua for 13 years, but not in Posoltega. A small staff set up relief operations. Johana was impressed. “I liked World Vision, their training and methodology, how they educate communities, teaching them better health practices and how to prevent disease.” World Vision staff stayed in Posoltega to launch a new community development project. In early 1999, they hired Johana as community health director.



MOBILIZING MOTHERS

Buenas!” Johana calls as she greets families on the daily rounds she makes on her bicycle. Today she is meeting with Reyna Acosa, 22, a health-brigade volunteer and mother of Greybin, 2. Reyna’s husband, Jose, 26, sits in a hammock in their new home, built with World Vision’s help after the hurricane. A line of sweat trickles down his bare chest. Greybin, a World Vision-sponsored child, alternates between sitting in Reyna’s lap and chasing chickens from the house. Johana instructs families to keep animals out of their houses for cleanliness. Greybin takes this directive seriously.

World Vision has mobilized women in this community in a powerful way. “We are trained,” Reyna explains, as Jose listens attentively, smiling with unconcealed pride. “We meet with moms and speak about how to prevent sickness and get better nutrition. We learn the importance of breastfeeding for at least six months after a baby is born. We also learn to make nutritious food.”

Food was scarce after Mitch, especially protein-rich beef. The mudflow wiped out most of the livestock. Now World Vision encourages the use of soy. It is less expensive than beef and can be tasty. Soy has been around this region since the mid-80s, when it was sold rather than eaten. Now

At a soy workshop, World Vision’s Johana Barrios and local women prepare fritters. Their next goal: growing their own soy.

prepared in bimonthly workshops, soy is an economical way to boost protein levels, especially for children.

The soy workshops take on the lively atmosphere of a family reunion. Apron-clad women, young and old, chop, mash, and mix, turning soy into every kind of food imaginable, from milk to fritters to an oatmeal-like mush. There is laughter and chatter as the women work, stirring a soy mixture in a cast-iron pot over a fire, surrounded by an audience of excited, hungry children.

When the food is ready, the children eat first, drinking soy milk from plastic cups and eating a smorgasbord of soy-based dishes from plates they balance on their knees. Soy has helped them grow stronger and stay healthier. After every child is served, the women eat. Then the men bring their plates and appetites forward.

GOD SENT AN ANGEL

After the hurricane, “God sent an angel: World Vision,” smiles Yohana Castillo, 27, the mother of three sons. “World Vision brought back our joy.” Donors sponsor 600 children in Posoltega, including the boys in the Castillo family.

Because of sponsorship, Yohana says, her three boys go to school. Without child sponsorship, she could not afford books, clothes, or shoes. Her husband’s salary—\$1.70 a day—only covers their food.

The Castillo children are examples of the hope that education brings. Junior, 10, wants to be an engineer, “or maybe an agronomist,” he says. Dany, 8, wants to be a doctor or a policeman; Abner, 6, a teacher.

“Life is much better now,” Yohana says, remembering how they lived before Hurricane Mitch. Before the storm,

Below, World Vision’s Jose Luis Flores teaches farmers to contour the land. Right: Yohana Castillo and her sons.

people made their homes from palm fronds, pieces of plastic, and sugar cane.

“Before World Vision came, most of these houses were just shacks. Just one bed could fit in them,” says neighbor Gustavo Rodriguez. With materials supplied by World Vision, the new houses are stronger—made from cinder blocks and cement, with zinc roofs to keep out the rain.

CULTIVATING TEAMWORK

As Yohana watches her sons set up the backgammon board, her husband, Armengol, works in a sunny field. The mudflow during Mitch cut gul-

lies into the land—some 20 feet deep and wide enough for cars to drive through. It uprooted crops and stripped away soil.

The land is now under the care of World Vision agronomist Jose Luis Flores, 24. The university-educated farming specialist has introduced organic farming to this community to rehabilitate the soil and increase crop value. “People here are very receptive to new methods,” Jose Luis says, standing on land that will one day blossom with organic orange trees. “They work hard and are organized.”

World Vision encouraged Posoltega farmers to work in teams. Today, a group of 10 men has gathered to contour the land



and plant trees. As Jose Luis explains the concept of contouring, two oxen wait to drag a heavy plow through the soil, their tails wagging wildly. “We use botanical pesticides,” he explains. “We tell farmers not to throw anything away; we can use it.”

Jose Luis brings youth, innovation, and expertise to his job. He is evaluating each farm in the community and sending soil samples to Managua for testing and evaluation. Data in hand, he will do a short- and long-term plan for each farmer’s plot.

From building wells and latrines to reconstructing hurricane-damaged homes, World Vision staff have encouraged short-

Clockwise from top left: Workshop leader Celia Formes stirs soy. Virginia Chavez smiles at her daughter, Marcela Reyes. At the weekly Bible study she leads, Nora Chavarria prays for the victims of Hurricane Mitch and for comfort for survivors.

term solutions and long-term vision in every aspect of neighborhood development. “Before, we were not organized,” says Julio Cruz, a community leader. “Now we are 100 percent organized. The whole community participates in most of the activities—for example, constructing the houses. We worked in brigades.

“The staff spend their time trying to find out our needs,” Julio continues. “They work as a team. World Vision had workshops to help us overcome the pain

and step ahead into development. World Vision is a great blessing from God.”

A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Thankful hearts flourish in Posoltega, in part due to World Vision’s strong Christian witness efforts. Staff trained 16 teachers to conduct Bible studies for adults, teens, and children. “World Vision shares the gospel through everything they do,” says Nora



Above: Abner Castillo checks out a friend's soy lunch. Below right: Johana Barrios and Marbelí, mother and daughter after Hurricane Mitch.

Chavarria, a 30-year-old mother and Christian witness leader. "World Vision staff are excellent—because they have love. That's the most important thing."

Every Wednesday, teams meet to pray, sing, study the Bible, and plan for the weekend. On Saturday mornings, they go into the community, sharing the gospel and praying for the sick. "There has been a spiritual rebirth here," Nora says. "Many souls have come to Christ."

It means a lot to Posoltega residents that World Vision came—and stayed—after Mitch. "Most of the nongovernmental organizations who came after Mitch have left," says Cristobal Gradis, a leader from a nearby community. "World Vision is still here."

Felicita Zeledon Rodriguez, who was mayor during the 1998 mudslide, lives across the street from World Vision's office in Posoltega. She watches staff at work daily. "They are capable, accessible, and humanistic," she says. "They are concerned about creating a high-standard

organization. World Vision staff have friendly hands that help us. Thanks to God and World Vision, we are returning to normal. It's amazing."

THE SCARS MITCH LEFT

It is amazing to find so much hope in the footprint of a volcano that caused an unspeakable level of heartache. One hundred seventy-five children were orphaned by the mudslide, including 10-year-old Marbelí. Marbelí is beauty waiting to happen. Her wide-set, almond-shaped, brown eyes match the dark braid of hair hanging down her back. The braid hides a scar she will wear forever, a permanent reminder of Hurricane Mitch.

Marbelí was eating breakfast when the mudslide roared down the mountain that awful day in October. With a terrifying, incomprehensible sound filling her ears, Marbelí dropped her fork and began to run, trying to flee under a barbed wire fence. The wire gouged her



back deeply, but she escaped. Her parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters did not. Hurricane Mitch left Marbelí alone. But not for long.

Johana Barrios, working her gruesome job burning bodies for the Ministry of Health, cared for Marbelí when the girl's back became infected, cleaning her wounds daily. It took a month for the

infection to heal. Emotional healing has taken longer. "Marbelí cries when she hears the rain," Johana says, "but she doesn't wake up screaming anymore."

Johana knows. She is there to comfort Marbelí when the rain comes. The World Vision health promoter is Marbelí's mother now, having adopted the girl. The two study every night together by a lantern's glow. Johana is in her second year of studying psychology, taking Saturday classes at a nearby university in Leon. She wants to be better equipped to help her community heal. Marbelí is proud of Johana and the job she does for World Vision. "It's an important job," she says. "They help kids."

Thunder sounds from the Casitas Volcano as high in the mountains, nature unleashes another attack on itself. It may rain tonight, but this afternoon, relaxing in the comfort of her new mother's lap, Marbelí has nothing to fear. ■

WORLD VISION'S ROLE IN HEALING AFTER MITCH

- Beginning a child sponsorship program with 600 children. The number of children served will increase to 1,600 in 2002.
- Training 80 mothers to conduct soy workshops for better nutrition and 100 breastfeeding consultants to reduce infant mortality.
- Reactivating four community wells, damaged by Mitch. Cleaning seven more.
- Repairing one school and constructing two new classrooms. Cleaning seven more.
- Delivering school kits to more than 600 children.
- Distributing new clothes and shoes to 100 families.
- Organizing agricultural teams to work the land and teaching organic farming.
- Training 16 Christian witness teachers in Bible study.
- Distributing zinc sheeting to repair damaged roofs for 35 families.
- Preparing a natural-disaster plan to help save lives in a similar tragedy.

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Love for the Least

How can we show the world that we are God's children?

HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 6 years old. Dirty face, barefoot, torn T-shirt, matted hair. He wasn't too different from the other hundred thousand street orphans that roam Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

I was walking to get a cup of coffee when he came up behind me. With my thoughts somewhere between the task I had just finished and the class I was about to teach, I scarcely felt the tap on my hand. I stopped, turned, and looked downward. There he stood.

"Pao, senhor?" ("Bread, sir?")

In my five years as a missionary in Brazil, there were daily opportunities to buy a candy bar or sandwich for these little outcasts. It's the least one can do. I told the boy to come with me, and we entered a sidewalk café. "Coffee for me and something tasty for my little friend." The boy ran to the pastry counter and made his choice. Normally, these youngsters take the food and scamper back to the street without a word. But this little fellow surprised me.

I went to the other end of the café and began drinking my coffee. Just as I was getting my derailed train of thought back on track, I saw him again, standing on tiptoe at the entrance, bread in hand, looking in at the people.

He saw me and scurried over, standing about eye-level with my belt buckle. The little Brazilian orphan looked up at the big American missionary, smiled a

smile that would have stolen your heart, and said, "Obrigado." ("Thank you.") Nervously scratching the back of his ankle with his big toe, he added, "Muito obrigado." ("Thank you very much.")

All of a sudden, I had a crazy craving to buy him the whole restaurant. But before I could say anything, he turned and scampered out the door.

Years have passed since

that day in the café, and I'm still pondering this question: If I am so moved by a street orphan who says thank you for a piece of bread, how much more is God moved when we pause to care for one of his children?

For when we care for those in our world who need food, shelter, healing, or hope, we come nearer to knowing God.

God wants his children to find him. And though we cannot earn God's love, we can acknowledge him as Lord of our lives by sharing our hearts with those whose hearts are broken. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Mt. 25:35-36).

How can we show the world that we belong to God? What is the sign of the saved? Scholarship? Willingness to go to foreign lands? An ability to amass an audience and preach? Skillful pens and hope-filled volumes? No.

The sign of the saved is their love for the least.

Those put on the right hand of God will be those who gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, warmth to the lonely, clothing to the naked, comfort to the sick, and friendship to the imprisoned.

Jesus doesn't say, "I was sick and you healed me . . . I was in prison and you liberated me . . . I was lonely and you built a retirement home for me . . ." He doesn't say, "I was thirsty and you gave me spiritual counsel."

The least. Like my little Brazilian friend. Like the old fellow down the street who has no family. Like the single mom who could use a helping hand and an encouraging word. Like the millions of children going to bed hungry tonight, wondering where they'll find a scrap of food tomorrow.

A little love goes a long way. Jesus knew that. He was the first to love "the least." Can we do less? For when we do the same, we bring honor—not to ourselves, but to the One who showed us how. ■



Max Lucado is an author, pastor, and World Vision child sponsor.

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