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The worst of times

Afghanistan's children face
a growing hunger crisis

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A HEARTFELT
LETTER
FROM THE
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BORDER

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WATER BRINGS
NEW LIFE
IN ETHIOPIA



Beauty amid the pain

By Edgar Sandoval Sr.

AS NIGHT FELL AROUND ME and the temperature plunged, I watched several buses packed with passengers pull into the refugee camp in Albița, Romania. My heart broke as I saw mostly women and children pour out, all from Ukraine, in what has become the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.

Distressed and exhausted, most of the women seemed able to focus only on the immediate future—the next stop on their journey, the next meal, the next place to sleep. Better to focus forward than on the immediate past—leaving their husbands, other loved ones, and homes behind in Ukraine.

Talking with them, I couldn't help but think of other people I've met near borders. A physically disabled boy who fled fighting in South Sudan, crawling by himself through the jungle for a week to reach Bidibidi refugee settlement in northern Uganda. A Rohingya mom in a camp in Bangladesh, weeping as she described tying her children to her body with a scarf before forging a river. And in Colombia, families overwhelmed by having to start over after fleeing the economic devastation of Venezuela, a place I once called home.

Different circumstances—same desperation.

You don't need to be an eyewitness to be deeply affected by the world's suffering. News headlines from Ukraine break our hearts on a daily basis. And the stories from

World Vision U.S. President and CEO Edgar Sandoval Sr. talks with Ukrainian refugees Tatiana and her 4-year-old daughter, Arina. During a brief stop in Husi, Romania, Arina colored in World Vision's safe play area.



Edgar Sandoval Sr. is president and CEO of World Vision U.S. Follow him at twitter.com/EdgarSandovalSr.

Afghanistan of war-weary families on the brink of starvation are just as upsetting. How do we process all the pain?

I believe that the only way through it is to embrace not just the pain but also the beauty. Yes, the beauty—it's always there amid the suffering.

As Christians, we know that God is present in the pain. That's the starting point to embracing the beauty. And it's realized in our response to suffering. It's when we look at every person in crisis and see Jesus, heeding His words in Matthew 25:35—"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."

Seeing these familiar words come vividly to life at the borders of war and in refugee camps is unbearably beautiful.

At the Ukraine border, I saw beauty in the way Romanians stepped up to help families in desperate circumstances, including posting signs on store windows offering free food and drink for refugees. I saw it in our World Vision staff who showed up every day, working long hours in the cold to show love.

Beauty is also found in Afghanistan, in the brightness of a child's eyes as they receive treatment for malnutrition at a health center and begin to recover.

Our faith gives us an opportunity, even at the worst of times and in the most dangerous places, to bear witness to Jesus' victory over pain. To demonstrate our trust in His promise in John 16:33 that "in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Yes, Jesus has conquered all! That's what inspires us as His followers to respond to the bad news of the world with the good news of the gospel. To highlight the beauty of God's kingdom—on earth as it is in heaven—amid the pain.

Thank you for joining us in the world-changing mission to serve our brothers and sisters in need with the love and hope that is within us. That hope has a name: Jesus Christ! 🙏

"See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you
not perceive it? I am making
a way in the wilderness and
streams in the wasteland."
—ISAIAH 43:19

Embark

COME IN AND SEE THE WORLD

Travel the globe safely
this spring by seeing more
beautiful photo stories
from World Vision's work
around the world at
wvmag.org/photos.



Bangladesh

Sumiyami, 11 (front), and her friends Annaya, 11, Sumona, 12, and Humaira, 11, have fun together balancing on a rice dike. The girls are all members of a World Vision Child Forum in the Fulbari area. Each month they get together to talk about serious topics like child protection and child marriage.

IN A GO BABY GO! PILOT PROGRAM IN ARMENIA, CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS PARTICIPATED WERE

54%

MORE LIKELY TO PROVIDE NOURISHING, AGE-APPROPRIATE FEEDING



Ecuador

Parents participating in World Vision’s Go Baby Go! program, which targets a child’s first 1,000+ days of life, receive nutritional and health-related training to ensure they can care for their kids well during the critical first years.

The learnings don’t stop with physical health, though. World Vision staff also teach parents child-rearing techniques that help them understand the value of engaging more with their children—learning how to listen and help them work through their problems. This ensures that children stay on track developmentally as well as physically.

ANDREA PROAÑO/WORLD VISION





IN FISCAL YEAR 2021,
A GLOBAL TOTAL OF
70,685
WELLS AND WATER POINTS
WERE BUILT OR REPAIRED
THROUGH WORLD VISION
WATER PROJECTS.



Uganda

World Vision constructed an accessible, motorized water system in Omugo, a settlement that's home to 41,000 refugees from South Sudan. This water system plus a new, properly fitted wheelchair mean that 12-year-old Beatrice can now easily access clean water.

DERRICK KYATUKA/WORLD VISION



Philippines

Frederick, 40, finally has a motorized boat—the first that he can call his own since he became a fisherman at the age of 12.

Fishermen and coastal dwellers are among the poorest in Philippine society. Many lack their own equipment, so they must partner with others who have boats and supplies—but then they're forced to share their profits.

Things changed in April 2021 when fishing families

in Frederick's community received motorized boats and gillnets through a World Vision program—along with training on fishing methods, marine and coastline conservation, and proper handling of fiberglass fishing boats.

Frederick anticipates a weekly increase in income from 1,400 pesos (US\$28) to 3,500 pesos (US\$68), giving him the opportunity to lift his family out of poverty.

THROUGH WORLD VISION'S WORK,
EVERY 60 SECONDS
A FAMILY GETS THE TOOLS TO
OVERCOME POVERTY.

FLORENCE JOY MALUYO/WORLD VISION

COVER STORY | 12

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is becoming the worst in the world. Read how World Vision is responding.

Discover

EXPLORE THE ISSUES FACING PEOPLE IN POVERTY

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.
—PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Ukraine

World Vision Romania staff member Nicoleta Popa (left) greets children and women at the Ukraine border. Just three weeks after the conflict escalation began on February 23, 2022, over 3 million people had crossed from Ukraine into neighboring countries. The United Nations has declared this the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. World Vision staff and partners are working to support refugees, displaced families, and others affected by this crisis in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.

WORLD VISION STAFF



SCAN THE CODE

to learn about World Vision's latest response work for Ukrainian refugees.






LUKE ASLAKSAN/WORLD VISION

A girl in Chennai, India, wears a mask during the country's second wave of COVID-19.

COVID-19: Two years of response

By Sevil Omer

 **THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** has thrust children everywhere into a new world of uncertainty, with loss of loved ones, shuttered schools, and isolation from friends, family members, and community. But for many in developing countries, it's also brought increased poverty, hunger, and risk of child marriage and child labor. More than 6 million people have died from COVID-19 worldwide since the World Health Organization declared the pandemic on March 10, 2020. The pandemic has caused a global public health and socioeconomic crisis and reversed years of hard-won progress toward ending extreme poverty. For a generation of children, hopes and dreams of a better future are now threatened. "It's terribly upsetting," says Bill Forbes, global lead of child protection and participation for World Vision. "The waves of COVID-19 infections keep coming and hitting vulnerable communities and fragile contexts, aggravating

existing challenges and difficulties and creating new ones." Bill has listened to children's accounts of daily life as part of his work to understand the effects of COVID-19 and how World Vision can best serve children, families, and communities. The pandemic has created an environment of unease; children are feeling anxious, depressed, and lonely, he says. He voiced deepening concerns over the rising number of children globally who have been negatively affected by COVID-19. The figures are sobering:

- An estimated 1.6 billion young learners in 199 countries worldwide affected by school closures, with nearly 370 million of them in 150 countries going without school meals (often their only reliable source of daily nutrition).
- 100 million more children plunged into poverty, a 10% increase since 2019.
- 160 million children in child labor—an increase of 8.4 million in the last four years—with millions more at risk due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- Up to 10 million more girls at risk of child marriage over the next decade due to lingering effects of the pandemic.

"The challenges remain massive and continue to accumulate," Bill says. "It's a bleak picture, but

WORLD WATCH

there are beautiful parts of the picture as people courageously act to help children thrive under such challenges."

From day one, World Vision has been working to limit the spread of COVID-19; reduce its impact; and ensure children, families, and communities get the resources and support they need most. We're grateful for the generosity of our devoted donors and dedicated partners who have not lost sight of our shared ministry to serve the world's most vulnerable. From the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 to the time of printing, we'd reached over 78 million people, including nearly 34 million children, in over 70 countries, including the United States.


Our continuing response to both the current and lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is more essential than ever. While we remain committed to meeting immediate needs, guaranteed and equitable access to coronavirus vaccines, tests, and treatments is imperative. The rollout of safe vaccines is key to protecting the world's most vulnerable people and restoring hope and livelihoods.

In our sponsorship communities worldwide, we continue working with partners—including government officials, local health workers, and grassroots organizations—to protect children and their families. We've trained 199,735 faith leaders, who are highly trusted by their communities, to effectively reach kids and families with the information and tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including an accurate understanding of the benefits of vaccination.

"We hear children saying, 'We have to work to make a difference and be brave' and in the face of these challenges, there is courage," Bill says.

As the world continues to adapt to the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, children like Eulalie, who lives in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, are seeking a better life and future. Through World Vision's Empowering Children as Peace Builders project, Eulalie and other children in the camp are calling for an end to conflict and violence, and the building of a peaceful world in which they can achieve their dreams. Their strength, resilience, and courage give us hope.

"Growing up as a child, life always seemed fair. But COVID-19 proved me wrong, opening my eyes and making me realize that grass isn't always green. When I thought that the journey of achieving my dream career as a doctor had taken off, it was suddenly cut off when schools were closed indefinitely due to the pandemic," begins Eulalie as she recites verses from "Peace poem: Building back better from the pandemic."

"... COVID-19 has threatened to put us down. And now we are slowly but surely rising from the ashes of this pandemic," she says. 



SCAN THE CODE
to listen to Eulalie
recite the poem in
its entirety.

Discover 

Response highlights

As of March 7, 2022, we've served over

78M

people, including nearly 34 million children, in over 70 countries, including the United States.

41.4M

people reached through promotion of preventive behaviors



In the United States, in partnership with the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program, we distributed more than 3.6 million Fresh Food Boxes to nearly 14.3 million people across the U.S. through a network of over 1,300 churches between May 2020 and May 2021. In addition, 80,221 Family Emergency Kits serving more than 291,000 children and adults were distributed through 51 church partners.

17.6M
community members
provided with
preventive materials

9.1M
people reached
with food security
assistance

4.8M
people
reached with
psychosocial
support materials

2.2M
medical staff
provided with
personal protective
equipment (PPE)



BY ►► SEVIL OMER

PHOTOS BY ►► WORLD VISION STAFF

Discover ●

HUNGER IN THE LAND





A sick, malnourished Afghan child cries inside his family's home.

under 5—around 3.2 million—were expected to suffer from acute malnutrition by the end of 2021. About 1 million are on the brink of starvation.

They're children like 1-year-old Ahmad*. Orphaned 10 days after his birth, Ahmad couldn't stop crying during a checkup at a health clinic,

one of 21 operated by World Vision in four of Afghanistan's provinces.

"He has been having diarrhea and fever," said Aina*, an Afghan mother of six who is caring for Ahmad. Ahmad's sunken eyes and transparent-looking skin signaled severe deficiencies of vitamins and nutrients; he was suffering from acute malnutrition. "I think it is because he has been eating what we are eating. We do not have money to buy baby food or milk for him," explained Aina.

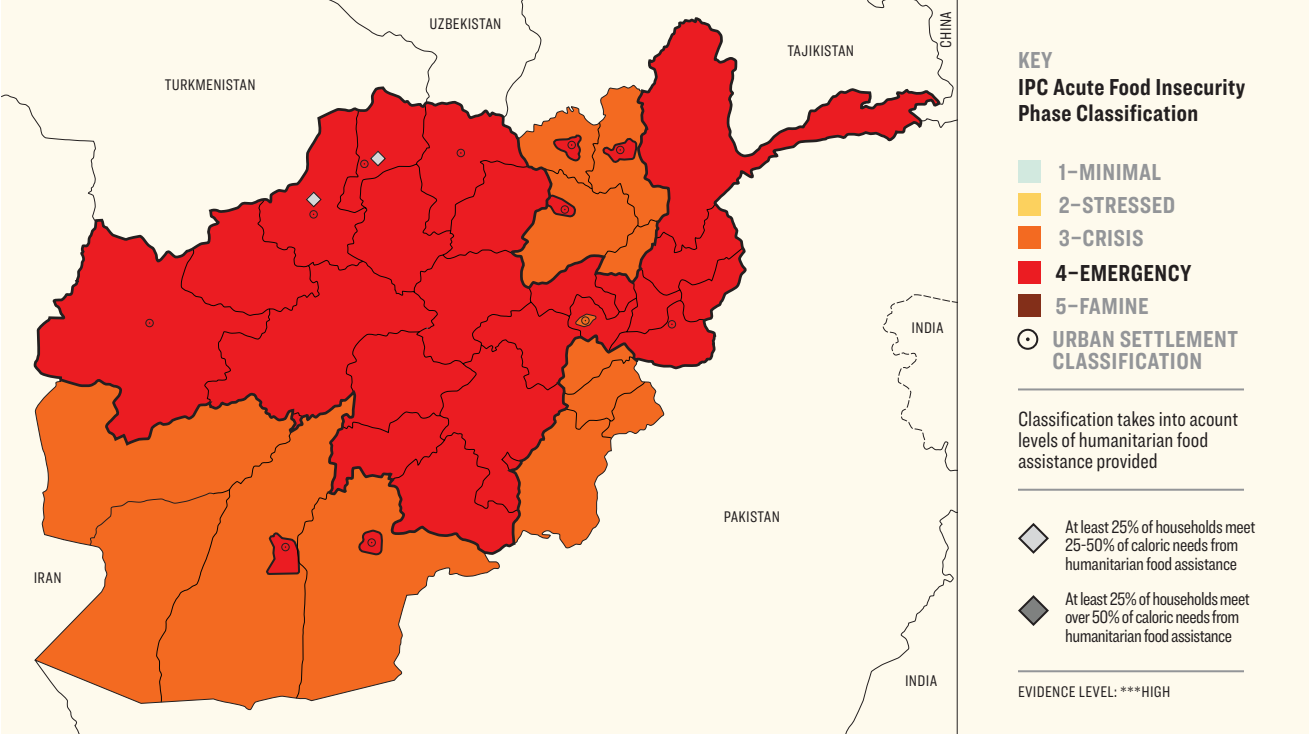
Conflict forced Aina and her family from their hometown three years ago. They found temporary shelter in a camp near Herat, the third-largest city in Afghanistan and one of World Vision's primary program areas. There they met Ahmad's mother and sister, who died during the upheaval

Poverty, conflict, drought, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic during the government's transition of power have led to increased hunger, a near-collapse of the health system, and the destruction of family livelihoods—all adding up to threaten mass child starvation. As hunger spreads, health clinics are filling up with malnourished children under 5 with symptoms such as pneumonia, acute diarrhea, and emaciation.

"My bones ache," said one World Vision aid worker returning from visits to clinics in Afghanistan. "Too many children are perishing."

An estimated 22.8 million Afghan people, more than half the country's population, are facing potentially life-threatening levels of food insecurity and malnutrition this year. Half of all children

PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY NOV 2021–MAR 2022



and unrest. Ahmad was his family's sole survivor.

Now, Aina struggled to keep Ahmad alive. She hoped doses of medicine and emergency food would bring life back into his weakened body. "This clinic is all the help that we get, and we are very glad," she says.

But more help is needed.

"Day by day, the situation is deteriorating in this country, and especially for children who are suffering," says Asuntha Charles, national director of World Vision Afghanistan.

That's why World Vision is committed to continue delivering life-saving aid to children and families, as we have in Afghanistan for 20 years—providing food, healthcare, access to clean water and sanitation and hygiene support, and more. Since September 2021, we've reached 449,646 people.

"Afghan children dream to be educated and enjoy fullness of life—they deserve nothing less," says Edgar Sandoval Sr., president and CEO of World Vision U.S. "We must act together now to



prevent an unprecedented humanitarian disaster and to support the children of Afghanistan and their families in the coming weeks and months."

DAYS BEGIN AND END WITH HUNGER

Nine-month-old Salma* weighed no more than a newborn, even with the multiple layers of clothing she was wrapped in. She was too weak to even cry.

A healthcare worker screens an Afghan child for malnutrition.



Above: A child eats a packet of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), a powerful, proven treatment for malnutrition.

Lower right: Children receive treatment at a World Vision health and nutrition program.

AN ESTIMATED 22.8 MILLION AFGHAN PEOPLE, MORE THAN HALF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION, ARE FACING POTENTIALLY LIFE-THREATENING LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION THIS YEAR.



“Children like [Salma] should be playing and enjoying their life,” says Asuntha, holding the girl. “But in a country like Afghanistan, they are struggling without food to eat. [Salma] is here because she is so malnourished.”

At the clinic, medical staff measure the circumference of children's upper arms to determine the extent of their malnutrition. The most severely malnourished are sent to specialist nutrition wards in hospitals. “Those wards are filling with children, sometimes several to a bed, and deaths are increasingly commonplace,” says Asuntha.

In September 2021, the poverty rate in Afghanistan hit 72%. According to the United Nations, an estimated 97% of the population could be plunged into poverty by the middle of this year. Increased poverty and ongoing conflict will lead to more families being driven from their homes.

Afghanistan's displacement crisis is one of the largest and most protracted in history, according to U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, with more than 5 million people in prolonged displacement. The number has shot up within the last year—many of them children who aren't getting enough to eat.

“Honestly, I couldn't sleep last night thinking of a small girl,” says Asuntha, “a 12-year-old who looked so much younger than her age. She looked 5 years old. She was stunted in growth, highly malnourished—

she was skin and bones. When I looked in her eyes, I could see she was pleading with me: ‘Please, can you do something? I want to be a normal child.’ I can't forget her eyes; they were trying to tell me what was in her heart, her very being—‘I want to survive, I want to live a normal life.’”

Against this backdrop of turmoil and food insecurity, communities are also running out of water because of drought.

In Badghis province, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, severe drought conditions led to the failure of the 2020 winter harvest and withered crops that were planted for the 2021 spring growing season. It's estimated that 60% of livestock have died or been sold off for minimal gain to provide for livelihoods, and that 40% of wells have dried up because of water scarcity. Dry conditions have continued through 2022.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)



HUNGER CRISIS FORCES AFGHAN PARENTS TO SELL CHILDREN FOR FOOD

By Asuntha Charles, national director of World Vision Afghanistan

IF YOU WERE STARVING and you knew that selling one of your kids could prevent the others from dying, would you do it?

For a moment, let's put aside the shocking reality that in Afghanistan you can purchase a child, a practice that's now increasing in response to the dire hunger situation in the provinces where World Vision's emergency response staff work.

Instead, I was thinking of the awful choices mothers and fathers are forced to make. I recall David Beasley, executive director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), pleading on BBC News for world and business leaders to step up and donate.

“Imagine that this was your little girl or your little boy, or your grandchild about to starve to death. You would do everything you possibly could,” he said. For most of us, it comes down to a decision to donate. For Afghan parents, it's the choice of which child to sell for food.

The situation in Afghanistan is so bad that my dedicated national emergency response staff—while running food aid programs in remote areas—have now set up an in-office fund to support families so they can stop selling their children.

Although these practices took place before the Taliban came to power, they've now worsened due in part to the hunger crisis. My staff recently even heard of one father who tried to leave his children at a mosque, such was his desperation. This is happening because food assistance programs like those we run, which meet the needs of many thousands, are being outpaced by the growing numbers of people facing starvation. Many of the previous activities run to protect vulnerable children have also not been able to restart following the change in national leadership.



Asuntha Charles, national director of World Vision Afghanistan, holds a child inside a health clinic.

Afghanistan is now facing its worst hunger crisis in living memory.

World Vision has worked in Afghanistan for 20 years, undertaking a range of humanitarian and development work, but the most critical activities at this moment include providing emergency nutrition through 21 mobile health clinics. Of the 3,600 children under 5 we treated in clinics in the Herat and Ghor provinces in October, 808 had moderate acute or severe acute malnutrition, and 2,694 received treatment for acute respiratory infections.

The medical staff in these clinics serve the most vulnerable, including people displaced by conflict and who live in poverty. It's heartbreaking to visit these clinics and meet young mothers who share stories of their struggles to survive on almost nothing.

Drought and conflict that had displaced tens of thousands created the initial conditions for this crisis. But an already bad situation has significantly worsened.

Thousands of people each day are trying to leave Afghanistan to escape the crisis or to find work and send money home. Left unaddressed, this crisis could provoke mass migration in the same way that conflict and food aid cuts drove the Syrian refugee crisis back in 2015.

It will take a massive international commitment and undertaking—among

those humanitarian aid organizations and U.N. agencies still in Afghanistan—to feed people over the coming months.

Globally, World Vision is the WFP's largest implementing partner. The WFP gives us food to distribute in the remote and mountainous provinces where we work in western Afghanistan. All of these are marked “emergency” red on a map managed by global food security experts who have assessed the food situation. In fact, most of Afghanistan is now red—and one phase away from a darker shade that signifies “catastrophe” or “famine.”

World Vision has reached more than 120,000 people with WFP food assistance since the start of October, and we're scaling up to serve vulnerable families across the country.

Please join World Vision in our continued efforts to ensure that children won't go hungry, and families won't have to make impossible choices like whether to sell their child for food.

The time to act is now. **+**
This originally appeared online in December.

With more than 15 years of experience in humanitarian assistance and community development, Asuntha is a strong advocate for women's and children's rights.

World Vision works to ensure thirsty communities are served, with a primary focus on providing households, schools, and health facilities with lasting solutions for clean water. As a result of this critical work, thousands of people are now able to access clean water through a solar-powered piped water network in Herat.

STAYING AND DELIVERING

World Vision is currently serving children and families in over 2,000 villages throughout Afghanistan, and we're well placed to continue responding.

In the face of this grave humanitarian crisis, we aim to help 1 million Afghans over the coming months through proven programs in areas including food and nutrition assistance; healthcare; child protection; and clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. We're also advocating for U.S. governmental policies that support funding for humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.

By partnering with local community leaders in Afghanistan for many years, we've been able to

Global impact fact

Over the last 10 years, 89% of the severely malnourished children we treated made a full recovery.

respond to crises and equip them to help create positive, sustainable change in their communities. Our work has included training hundreds of community health workers to distribute information and promote progress in areas that impact health, such as proper nutrition, access to clean water, the importance of latrines, and more—as well as training more than 300 midwives to care for pregnant women and their children before, during, and after birth. Increasing access to skilled birth attendants has helped to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates in western Afghanistan.

The COVID-19 pandemic created additional risks to Afghan children, including by limiting their access to education, health and social services, child protection activities, and safe spaces. In a country with a population of close to 40 million, only 5.7 million vaccine doses have been given, while 177,255 cases and 7,656 deaths have been reported as



Access to clean water remains paramount to the health and safety of children.



of March 23, 2022 (with actual figures likely higher). As of August 2021, our COVID-19 response—which includes scaling prevention measures to slow the spread of the virus, supporting health workers, and more—has helped protect 663,672 people, including 314,492 children.

Our dedicated staff will continue their work to empower families, children, communities, and local partners to prevent and respond to exploitation, neglect, abuse, and other forms of violence affecting children, especially girls. Our approach is to target the root causes of child homelessness, neglect, and disempowerment through programs centered on healthcare, school feeding, formal education, and life skills training.

Our recently launched start-up project to protect children is already benefiting over 400 households. “Extreme vulnerabilities and fear are at record

levels, and children are at greater risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation,” says Asuntha, the national director. “Families who are already struggling to survive destitution related to this conflict, a devastating drought, and the effects of COVID-19 are now resorting to the most desperate of measures to protect their children, including child marriage.

“History has shown that the resilience and fortitude of the Afghan people is extraordinary. But it has its limits. They are now at their most vulnerable—and we cannot abandon them.”

Help World Vision deliver essential aid to 1 million vulnerable children and families. See the insert between these pages, call 1.866.332.4453, or give online at wvmag.org/Afghanistan-hunger.

In partnership with the World Food Programme, World Vision distributes food rations to vulnerable families in Afghanistan.

New Life

How clean water transformed a
community—inside and out

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAMIRU CHEWAKA



W

WHEN 17-YEAR-OLD BEREKET DID

not appear at daybreak, her girlfriends, who had been waiting near her doorstep, trod toward the back of her sleeping room as lightly as they could and whispered her name. Awakened, she fumbled in the dark for her jerrycan, wrapped a shawl around her head and neck, and slipped out quietly with them.

“I had hard times waking up from deep sleep because of the energy I lost every day walking for hours carrying a water-filled container,” says Bereket.

Slinging the container by a strap across her back to the opposite shoulder, Bereket started a one-hour trek with Almaz, 14, and Nada, 13. The trio hurried in a bid to ward off the chilly morning air, get home quickly, and arrive at school on time. Bereket knew that if she arrived late, she would be denied entry, and a long absence would result in expulsion. She dreamt of becoming a teacher and wanted to work hard to succeed, but she felt held back. Many a time she was kept out. “I was very angry at the security guard but did not say a word. I walked back home feeling despondent,” she remembers indignantly.

Bereket, the fifth child of nine in her family, believed that only when her younger sisters grew to her age and took on her responsibilities would she be relieved. “Only then would I get respite, attend class regularly, focus on my education, and have spare time to attend Sunday school classes and rehearse songs,” she says.

Problems

THE VILLAGE OF DADA, IN SHASHOGO district in southwest Ethiopia, faced

a chronic, generational problem with water access. The local government could not feel the community’s gnawing pain. Its population of 149,000 depends on rain-fed agriculture. The farming community grows various types of crops and rears farm animals for ploughing and livelihoods. Community children, mostly boys, look after cattle and many school-age children were unable to go to school.

Traditionally, female family members, especially girls, bore the brunt of household chores like fetching water. Life has always been grim for these rural girls. They would spend two to four hours hauling water every day. As sole caretakers of minors, they had little time for themselves or to focus on their education. They were not able to taste the enjoyable moments that childhood offers.

When Bereket turned 12, her age now defined her role as a provider, and the beating sun and pouring rain did not deter her from discharging her new responsibility of gathering water. One day, as she trudged through a rain-soaked field and muddy alley, she tripped and fell, the jerrycan still on her back. She worried about the amount of water needed to wash off the mud and the time required to do so. She fell into despondency, losing hope for a better life beyond the horizon. “The ordeal debilitated my vision,” Bereket says.

Bereket and her friends walked two hours each way to collect water from an open pond, a distance of 6 kilometers, or 3.7 miles, from her home. The man-made pond is the only source for both people and livestock in Dada. Wild animals like hyenas, foxes, hedgehogs, and porcupines also share the water. “It is scary and repulsive to think that we share the resource with them,” says Bereket.

Despite her efforts, the water she brought home was not enough for drinking, washing dishes, and laundry for a family of 11. The family cattle and goats, tethered to posts around her decorated thatched-roof hut, also drank the hard-earned water.

Global impact fact

World Vision is reaching one new person every 10 seconds with clean water.



Bereket (right) and her friends Nada (middle) and Almaz (left) show how they used to make the arduous—and sometimes dangerous—6-kilometer journey daily to collect water from a contaminated pond.

The brownish-yellow pond has sickened Bereket several times, necessitating treatment for waterborne diseases such as giardiasis and hookworm. Prior to letting her youngest siblings drink, she would tell them to wait until the silt in the muddy water settled out. Still, her siblings were not spared from waterborne diseases either.

Some better-off households with tin-roofed huts could collect rainwater through eavestroughs and did not need to go to the pond during the rainy season. Unfortunately, Bereket's family's thatched-roof house could not alleviate her burden, since gutters cannot be attached to straw to collect and store rainwater for drinking or other uses. So, Bereket would need to make a second trip to the pond in the afternoon.

"I got my schoolbag off, grabbed the

jerrycan, which I considered my inseparable 'mate,' and hurried to the source, sometimes alone," says Bereket.

The daily four-hour walk affected her attention in school. "While class was in progress, I sometimes slumbered and a girl [who] sat next to me ... nudged me. I woke up confused and couldn't shake off that feeling for a long time," Bereket says. Her poor grades tempted her to drop out, but the thought engulfed her in fear; she knew the fate of a teen girl dropout. "My abhorrence of early marriage made me do whatever it took to avoid it," she says.

Dada Primary School, where Bereket was in her sixth year, also did not have tap water, which disrupted teaching and learning progress. Tamrat Makaro, the school head, says, "Small kids asked permission to go home to drink water and return, but they did not. We neither

barred them from leaving class nor provided them with the very basic need."

Dada Primary School had other challenges: It admitted far more students than its capacity. In Bereket's class alone, there were 100 students, with three students sharing one desk. It was not convenient to copy notes from a chalkboard or possible to sit comfortably. The cement floor was cracked, and everything was dusty. Every Friday, students teamed up to take water to school from their homes to clean their respective classrooms. Bereket, too, brought water she'd carried home from the pond.

Having their periods also introduced problems for Bereket and other girls, preventing them from fully engaging in school and excluding them from many aspects of daily life. "I had no access to sanitary products because my parents

could not afford [them]," she says. Instead, she stayed home three days a month during her menstrual cycle. "I did not tell anyone, even my mum, why I missed classes," Bereket says, hanging her head in shame.

The natural phenomenon was a social taboo in her community. Only a few of her classmates, girls, tacitly understood the cause of her absence. They helped her catch up by lending her their exercise books. "They were my teachers," she says, since they helped explain the lessons she'd missed.

Bereket gave various excuses at school for her frequent absences. "It's not that easy to tell male teachers such a thing like this, you know," she says, frowning. To add insult to injury, the school did not have a girls' latrine or handwashing facilities. "I had to hold off the natural call or make up an excuse to be off to respond to the urge," she remembers.

Changes

OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY AND well-being of children and their families, World Vision began to assess and address the Dada community's urgent needs. In 2020, a team of technical experts from the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) division drilled a borehole well in the village.

Bereket could not believe her eyes when she saw a drilling rig cutting into the ground and water spurting to the surface. She remembered seeing a faucet for the first time when she went to a town market with her mother. "If it was going to be constructed in my village one day, it'd be a marvel, I thought," Bereket recalls.

The WASH team completed installation of a water tap structure and handed it over to the district water office and community to jointly administer and maintain. "There was jubilation and hurrahs in the village," Bereket remembers. She says it was surreal for everyone, especially for her and her friends Almaz and Nada.

"We have nothing to complain

"My abhorrence of early marriage made me do whatever it took to avoid it."

—Bereket, 17

about the hardship any longer," says Almaz. "From that time on we started a life without a challenge because of World Vision's support."

A water point with four faucets is now located near Bereket's home, serving her and 1,600 others in Dada and beyond. The faucet she had viewed as a dream is now close by. She sees it as a miraculous intervention. "I envisaged such a time like this: a time when I would draw water from a faucet myself, stop walking long distance every day to the disgusting pond ... and arrive at school in time, have enough sleep, study with [my] fellow girls, and live a happy life," she says with a relieved sigh.

Nada says, "I thought that getting potable water at a close range was impossible in my lifetime, but it is here and real."

Yet World Vision wasn't done. In collaboration with the community, the organization built two blocks of eight classrooms and furnished them with 120 desks. In contrast to the previous class size, now 18 to 25 students learn per classroom.

Since the completion of the new classrooms, the girls' enrollment ratio has increased significantly. "In [the] 2021

academic year, we had 221 female[s] and 211 male[s] in the school, and that was absolutely a new trend even in Shashogo district," says Tamrat, the primary school head. "We are thrilled by World Vision's transformative works." Bereket is enjoying the new learning atmosphere, which has helped her improve her grades—ensuring her dream of becoming a teacher is within reach.

In addition to the new classrooms, World Vision built dedicated girls' restrooms and provided handwashing basins and sanitizers. It also formed a WASH club in the primary school through which girls are taught about menstrual health. Healthy sanitation and hygiene practices, strengthening education around menstruation and puberty, and challenging discriminatory taboos are some of the topics covered. Through this club, girls have free access to sanitary items. And participants are taught to pass along the healthy practices they've learned in their homes and community.

The school education system has changed for the better because of World Vision's support. Addise Erbato, 58, is the Shashogo district education office head. He says, "In eight out of 10 World Vision operation areas, there

Bereket (left) and her friends Nada (center) and Almaz (right) show how they used to transfer dirty water into jerrycans for use at home, knowing it would make them sick.



are no dropouts or absentees; 100% of school-age children are in school, and we are proud of the great organization.”

Erbato says the water tank that World Vision has installed in schools and the education it offers children on horticulture development has helped them practice gardening in school demonstration sites and in their respective backyards, all of which have improved their dietary habits and income generation for their families. “We cannot list out all the good things World Vision has done for our school community. We are grateful for it,” he says.

Children’s health has also improved. Cheerful kids playing in fields are one marker of World Vision’s impact. Endale Desalegn, the district health office head, says, “Because of World Vision’s provision of safe water and education on personal hygiene and safe environment, water-borne diseases and poor hygiene cases are no longer issues. Health coverage for under-5 kids has reached 100%.”

The school improvements, education on feminine hygiene, and provision of sanitary pads have been life-changing for Bereket. “The organization has solved the mother of all problems and it is on

us to work harder in school to recognize the good deeds,” she says.

Addressing spiritual needs

WORLD VISION ADDRESSES NOT ONLY communities’ physical needs but also their spiritual needs by partnering with local churches. In the program area that encompasses Dada village, staff offer capacity-building trainings to church ministers and Sunday school teachers and provide books and materials to Sunday school teachers and students.

Solomon Abate, pastor of Dada Selam K. H. Church, says that the village population was nearly 100% Muslim prior to World Vision’s presence. Ever since, there has been an extraordinary shift. In 1999, for instance, there were 283 attendees in his church, but that number has increased to 500 in 2021. “Many Muslim communities, especially youth in Dada, are rapidly changing their religious faith to Christian,” he says.

Bereket is one of them.

Born to Muslim parents, Abode Otoro, 70, and Amina Abode, 60, Bereket has followed the teachings and behavior of her Sunday school teachers, and as a



Finishing THE job

LAST SPRING we introduced you to our Every Last One campaign, which was launched to help empower children and families around the world with life, hope, and a future. As part of that effort, we’re working to help every person, everywhere we work, get access to clean water. Here are some updates:

In Rwanda, we’ve reached more than

613,000

people with access to clean water, and we’re on track to finish the job of reaching **1 million** people by the end of 2023.

In partnership with UNICEF, and with the help of child sponsorship funds, in Zambia we’ve reached

213,274

people with clean water—**27%** of the way toward our goal.

We’ve started building the team that will work to bring clean water to

650,000

people in Honduras by **2027**.

Please continue praying for this work so that more children’s and families’ lives can be transformed like Bereket’s!



Bereket (center, in blue jacket) celebrates with her friends. Her school has new classrooms, dedicated girls’ restrooms, and 100% attendance by school-age children.

result her mom has seen a difference in her behavior. “I encourage her to be firm in her belief in Jesus because it is all good. I think her enviable behavior is because of the theological teachings,” Amina says. “She is different in many ways from non-believers. She has escaped the mess the world is in. I know what many teens are trapped in. My daughter is free from those things, to my happiness.”

Bereket’s parents have nine children, all but one of whom are Christian. Their eldest son, Nuriye Abode, 45, is a father of 10. Although he remains Muslim, he has encouraged his three older children to follow Christ. Asked why, he responds, “I’ve [come] to understand that Christianity is a source of peace, love, generosity, and obedience. Christian

children are well-disciplined, and I have observed these values [in] my sister, Bereket, whose name means ‘a blessing.’”

Bereket affirms this, saying, “In fact the discipleship teaching has kept me out of all sorts of trouble that often come with teen age.”

Non-Christian community members who have benefited from World Vision’s programs are enthralled by the organization’s equal treatment of all, and many have accepted Jesus as their Savior as a result. Seyum Abose, 60, who pastors Kalehiwot Church in Bonosha, the capital of Shashogo district, diligently works with World Vision’s faith and development team to strengthen church ministry. He says that before World Vision’s work, Shashogo district

was 85% Muslim and only 15% Christian. “It was very difficult to preach [the] gospel, and [many] who dared fled the area for fear of persecution.”

Mohammad Hafebo is Faith-Based Forum co-chair and secretary of 65 evangelical churches in the district. He was born and raised Muslim in Dada village. He says that two decades ago, Dada was known for persecuting evangelical Christian believers of Muslim background. “I was the only Muslim person who, for the first time in 2001, received Jesus Christ as my Savior,” he says. He knew his decision would risk his life, but he trusted the Lord would protect him.

As a young man, he saw a boy hanging from a tree and being whipped by mobs because of his faith. He intervened,

“I know what many teens are trapped in. My daughter is free from those things, to my happiness.”

—Amina, 60

begging the whippers for mercy and saving the boy's life, but later fled his home village. Fellow Christians gave him shelter, fed him, and paid for his school fees. Upon graduation, he began to serve in the church. Years later, after World Vision began working in his village, he returned and was greeted by people who had begun to understand differences and accept similarities.

Mohammad has an avid interest in preaching the gospel among the new generation and supports World Vision's ministry, specifically strengthening Sunday schools. He admires the paradigm shift brought about in Dada. "It is World Vision that has brought harmony between the Christian and Muslim community here," he says. "When children become naughty and stubborn, parents in my neighborhood and beyond advise their children seriously to go to church," he laughs. Mohammad says the transformative works are bringing 2,000 new souls to churches each year, and today the population in Shashogo stands at 65% Christian and 35% Muslim.

Bereket today

NOW THAT CLEAN WATER IS JUST A THREE-minute walk from Bereket's home, she doesn't need to walk hours every day to a dirty water source, she doesn't miss class, and she never gets sick from waterborne diseases. She doesn't share a desk with other students and attends a school that is up to code. She even receives sanitary pads for free.

And she is living life to the fullest. Now her heart drives her to focus on being an ardent and vibrant follower of Christ through attending Bible study and fellowship regularly and singing praises to Him in children's choir.

"I always yearn for God's faithful presence in my life; to be an irrepressible follower of Christ," she says, citing Mathew 4:4 in which Jesus said, "It's written, people won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God" (CEB).

To quench her spiritual thirst, she meets with her church friend, Tigist, 15, to read the Bible and reflect on her understanding. In addition to World Vision's sponsorship program,

which has transformed her former dismay to hope and vision, she appreciates how the church that World Vision supports has helped her find lasting meaning in her life.

"Life is clueless without Jesus," Bereket asserts.

Bereket has chosen Jesus for her life. She cannot go without mentioning that World Vision's support has won her heart as well as those of her friends and every person in her circle. Bereket's good behavior, tolerance, and kindness have even influenced her Muslim friends Almaz and Nada. "She accepts us for who are, and we admire her character, which is exemplary," they say, smiling. "And we know where that originates." +

Help open doors for other children like Bereket by giving to the Clean Water Fund. See the insert between pages 18 and 19, give online at wvmag.org/give-water, or call 1.866.332.4453.

"Life is clueless without Jesus."

—Bereket, 17



No longer spending long hours collecting water, Bereket delights in Sunday school. She is one of 2,000 new Christians in her community.

SUMMER FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Want to be intentional with some of your kids' time off this year? Check out our list of fun family activities that help kids "play it forward" at wvmag.org/activities.

Inspire

MOTIVATING YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

STIR YOUR FAITH | 32

Meditate on God's words from Acts 2 that call Christians to faith-filled action.

IN THE KITCHEN: Honduran pupusas

By Laura Reinhardt

Take masa harina—a special flour made from corn that's been soaked in lime water—and add salt and water to create a dough. Roll it out and fill with cheese, beans, or pork. Lightly fry in a pan until both sides are golden. What do you get? A delicious Central American dish known as pupusas. The dish's simplicity belies its flavor.

Pupusas originated in El Salvador and western Honduras, and are extremely popular in Central and South America. They're similar to Mexican gorditas and Venezuelan arepas. A vinegary cabbage and onion mixture called encurtido usually accompanies the pupusas.

Experts believe that corn was first domesticated in Central America 4,300 years ago.

Since then, it's been a staple in Central and South American cooking.

For 4-year-old Ashley and her mother, Heidy, that staple goes a long way toward providing for their family. After receiving training through World Vision's Youth Ready program, Heidy started her own business. She caters for events in Tegucigalpa—the capital of Honduras—and she sells her homemade pupusas in local parks. Ashley reaps the benefits, which sometimes include a tasty lunch of pupusas. +




SCAN THE CODE to get the recipe!

LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION



A tapestry of love

Story and photos by Mridula Narayan

 **IN THE MIDST OF** fields of tall, green sugarcane are well-constructed roads that lead into one of the many villages that 28-year-old Neeraj looks after as a pradhan, or village lead, in the state of Uttarakhand, in northern India. As he walks through the village, voices of children calling out his name are heard from afar. Old men and women are beginning to crowd the streets. In a flash, people young and old surround Neeraj and try to talk to him. While some are simply eager to greet him, others want to share their problems. He is the head of their village (similar to a mayor in the U.S.) yet they seem fond of him for his friendly and loving nature.

“I want to give back to the families in these villages and do good things for them the way World Vision did for me and brought me to where I am today,” says Neeraj, dressed in fashionable dress pants, a short-sleeved shirt, and a cotton Nehru jacket—the attire of a modern-day politician in India. He adds, “I became a politician only because I believe that such a person has the power and influence to help people in every way.”

Neeraj’s father, Hukam Singh, 58, is a farmer, and his mother, Kanti Devi, 52, is a homemaker. When Neeraj was growing up, the family lived in a house built of tin sheets and hay. Hukam used to cultivate a small field, earning about US\$46 a month—which sometimes wasn’t even enough to feed Neeraj and his three siblings.

“When it rained, water would drip into our home through the ceiling,” Hukam says. “We struggled a lot because we were very poor. But World Vision supported my son’s education even up to college.”

When Neeraj was only 5 years old, World Vision began working with his village, connecting 60 to 70 children—including Neeraj—with sponsors.



Neeraj, 28, is a former sponsored child who now serves as a politician with the aim of helping children and families in his community. He donated his own money to build toilets in his village’s school so that girls could continue their education without complications or stigma surrounding their periods.

At that time there were no toilets, girls were especially discriminated against and abused, and most children had to work instead of attending school.

World Vision soon began children’s groups where boys and girls were taught about their rights, and they formed a child parliament from those groups in 2001.

“This was the best part of the journey,” Neeraj says. “I developed an interest in social activities from my childhood because of this child parliament. I was part of various ministries, and we were also taken to Delhi, Chennai, and other places to meet politicians.”


As he grew, Neeraj’s confidence about speaking in front of people also grew, and he began feeling concerned about social issues in and around his village. In 2011, he ran in his college’s student union elections and won. After graduating, Neeraj began working with political parties and learning from the leaders of his state.

“I can say this from the depth of my heart and with sincerity that if World Vision didn’t come into my life, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” Neeraj shares.

Now he is the head of several villages. A year ago, Neeraj placed closed circuit television cameras in the villages to help ensure the safety of girls and women. He initiated trainings on organic farming to help smallholder farmers cultivate better crops, and has been actively helping youth find jobs or providing them with entrepreneurial loans.

Neeraj ensures that none of the villages under his care face a shortage of water and electricity. He is also running for a seat in the legislative assembly to become a cabinet minister of Uttarakhand. He hopes to become the chief minister of the state in 10 to 15 years.

Kanti is thrilled about the changes her son has brought into their lives. “Earlier, we used to struggle for our own food. Now we provide food to those in need. I’m so proud of my son, especially because of his heart to help others, and World Vision is instrumental in bringing this change in his life as well as our lives,” she says, smiling.

Today, besides helping thousands of people in his hometown, Neeraj is also a proud World Vision sponsor of a little girl from Delhi. He has placed her picture on his office desk to show everyone his own sponsored child, whose life he believes will also be transformed through sponsorship. 

Global impact fact
Because of our community-focused solutions, for every child you help, four more children benefit, too.

Babli, Vishal, Rekha, and Sandeep were four children who participated in World Vision sponsorship programs in Neeraj’s community, though unlike him, they weren’t sponsored. After being impacted by World Vision’s work in their community and lives, all four of them also want to give back to others, thanks to the values instilled through those programs.

1 Babli TEACHER, 32

When Babli was in eighth grade, her parents said they could no longer afford her school fees. She was able to keep studying thanks to encouragement from the local World Vision children’s group and financial support from World Vision.



“I don’t want other girls to suffer and feel helpless without having a chance to be educated,” says Babli. “That’s why I teach girls in my community basic subjects for free. Education is extremely crucial for a family to move forward in life.”

2 Vishal LAB TECHNICIAN, 26

Vishal’s family had so little growing up that they couldn’t send him to school, but he was able to complete his education with World Vision’s help.



“Today, I’m employed in such a good company with a steady income because of being a part of every program that World Vision conducted in our community when I was a child,” says Vishal. “We were so poor that we didn’t have a proper house to stay [in], leave alone [money to] go to school. If I was supported to complete my education, I want to help other children like me. I’m already supporting a child from my community for his education.”

3 Rekha TAILOR, 25

With tears in her eyes, Rekha recounts how World Vision came to support her and her family when she lost her father. The sewing machine she received through World Vision changed everything, eventually giving her a career.



“I tell everyone in my community that I will teach them tailoring for free,” says Rekha. “I’m already training four to five girls. I know the struggles we faced and how much this machine has helped me. I want others also to have some skills to have a peaceful and better life.”

4 Sandeep BANKER, 30

Sitting in his cubicle at a national bank, Sandeep reflects on his childhood. “If not for World Vision,” he says, “I may not be sitting in this bank as a banker.”



“[World Vision] encouraged me, supported me, and provided all the guidance I required to be successful in life,” says Sandeep. “Now, I sponsor two children to help them complete their education. It was only the day I began sponsoring them [that] I felt satisfied with my life.”

Stir your faith: 6 ways to put faith into action

By Elisabeth Rickard



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

✚ WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME you lingered on a single passage of Scripture? In our consumeristic, driven culture, slowing down to savor just a few words for an extended time isn’t the norm, but it’s highly beneficial—especially when the words are God’s. For the next week, we invite you to consider a daily theme from Acts 2:42–47 (ESV) and allow these verses to stir your belief in how God works through His children.

FOR PARENTS

Head to wvmag.org/devo-kids to find kids’ activities paired with each day’s devotional.

READ

MEDITATE

REFLECT

DAY 1

Habit

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
—Acts 2:42

Notice the use of “devoted.” Was the burgeoning church all in for just a cause or a cultural trend? No. They were practicing the cornerstone of the body of Christ: Hearing the preached Word, meeting together, enjoying rhythms of daily meals and communion, and praying. These seemingly simple practices—and others like Sabbath and fasting—have been forming God’s people into His living kingdom for millennia. When we act on the belief that God’s kingdom power can flourish through formative habits, done in trusting and repetitive faith, we’ll grow.

Without the formational rhythms of spiritual disciplines, we won’t just happen to become people who live for God, but daily habits can turn us into people who believe in His promises through any circumstance.

How can you use a spiritual practice like one listed above to devote yourself to God’s truth?

DAY 2

Power

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.
—Acts 2:43

The story of Scripture, from beginning to end, is that God is creating a people for Himself and establishing His kingdom through them. God’s miracles aren’t meant only to display His power—though they always do that—but are also part of His plan to draw people to Himself.

Paul writes in Romans 4:17 that we serve a God who “calls into existence the things that do not exist.” If our Creator is powerful enough to resurrect life when death seems to prevail, can we believe that He’s powerful enough to do “wonders and signs” in situations or places that seem hopeless? A world of change is possible when Christians believe in—and act on—God’s power to do the miraculous.

What holds you back from fully believing in God’s power to work on your behalf?

DAY 3

Community

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.
—Acts 2:44

In contrast to what our individualistic culture tells us, we as God’s people are responsible for each other. We don’t get the option of living the Christian life in a vacuum, and Scripture doesn’t hold up isolated individuals as ideals. Again and again, the Bible emphasizes the body of believers and our shared—though messy—life in community.

What does it look like to have “all things in common” in a culture that not only prizes individualism but also praises dissension and contention? This simple yet difficult verse reminds us that God’s people are meant to share all of life. The parts we disagree on. The parts we’re annoyed by. The parts we’d rather not talk about. This is a radical call to the church in a day when divisiveness is increasingly normal. And it’s a beautiful way for God to display His goodness through His people to the world.

How can you engage even deeper in community with God’s people?

DAY 4

Generosity

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.
—Acts 2:45

God’s generous gift to us in Jesus is our best motivation for generosity toward others. And the early church comprised at least a few people who had seen the Father’s gift in person! This must be part of what made them such a radically generous group, going as far as selling what they had to provide equally for everyone’s needs. Remember what Jesus told the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22? “Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

That ruler made a choice not to believe that Jesus’ promise of eternal life was better than his many possessions, but in Acts 2, we see the opposite: a group of believers so bought in to Jesus’ promises of His abundant goodness that they care for others’ needs at any cost to themselves.

How does this verse challenge you? Ask God to speak to you about His generosity toward you in Jesus.

DAY 5

Faithfulness

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.
—Acts 2:46–47

Here we see a simple yet profound example of God’s children being attuned to His work in the world. They receive from God and praise Him, and others see this lifestyle as an example worth following.

In many ways, Acts 2:42–47 is a summary of the entire book, which can itself be summarized as the in-breaking of God’s kingdom, first among the Israelites and then throughout the world. It’s a story of God’s people allowing their belief in God’s kingdom to move them to action. When God’s children believe His promises, they begin to act in ways that demonstrate their belief.

What does the steadfast faithfulness of the early church teach you about how God works through His people?

DAY 6

Transformation

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
—Acts 2:47

Have you noticed how these six verses start? Every new sentence in this translation (and other major ones) starts with “and.” This simple transitional word means we must consider each verse in light of the others. Habits and rhythms, the power of God working through belief, God’s people in community, the outworking of generosity, and putting belief into action are all necessary and interdependent elements of how God uses His people to transform the world through His kingdom.

Believing God’s promises to us always changes us—our very identity shifts when we become His children. It’s part of what motivates us to join God’s mission of salvation and restoration in the world. Leaving belief in the abstract doesn’t advance God’s kingdom or display His power at work in the world. That’s why God asks His people to move their belief from their heads to their hands, and act. ✚

How has becoming a child of God transformed your life?

“You have help in your feet.”

By Laura Reinhardt

SOME GRANDPARENTS COOK with their grandchildren. Some play games together. Some make music. But Susy and her granddaughter, Siachen, walk World Vision’s Global 6K for Water. And they’ve done it for most of Siachen’s 8 ½ years.

It all started in 2013 when Susy strapped her infant granddaughter to her chest and walked 6 kilometers to raise money so that people around the world could have access to clean water.

Understanding the need

Susy doesn’t take clean water for granted. She lived in northern India for more than 18 years and learned that easy access to the precious resource wasn’t guaranteed. “I know how heavy it is to haul water just a few hundred feet,” she says. “You treasure your water so much. You have such a limited supply.”

Even when the COVID-19 pandemic required World Vision’s Global 6K to go virtual, grandmother and granddaughter still walked together to equip others with clean water.

The average distance that people in developing countries walk to get water is 6 kilometers (3.7 miles). Susy’s walk for water in India was significantly shorter, but it nevertheless helped her to empathize with the burden that many people around the world bear. She says, “I really feel for people who through their whole life don’t have access to clean water and travel a distance and only have dirty water.”

A June 2021 report from the World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program reported that 771 million people, or one in 10 worldwide, lacked access to a clean water source within a 30-minute round trip from their home.

“There’s always something you can do.”

When the 2014 Global 6K rolled around, Susy pushed Siachen in a stroller. From the age of 4 on, Siachen walked the 6 kilometers on her own two feet.

The event was fun, but the fundraising has really brought grandmother and granddaughter together. They always look for ways they can help others and the Global 6K makes it easy, especially for someone Siachen’s age. She’s learned that she can believe in people’s generosity and their desire to support a good cause.

“When you do have expectations of another person, they usually live into it,” Susy says. “You don’t necessarily have to say anything but show by your attitude that of course they can do this.”

Siachen is learning that she has power. She can use her own gifts and abilities to make a difference.

“You don’t ever think you don’t have anything to give. There’s always something you can do,” Susy tells Siachen. “You have help in your feet.”

That first year Siachen walked the Global 6K, grandmother and granddaughter passed out flyers to parents of her preschool classmates. Now they send emails and talk to people in person.

“Me and my nani have a lot of friends. And our friends donate money,” Siachen says, “to help get clean water for other kids.”

Indeed, they do have a lot of friends. In fact, in 2021, Siachen was the top youth fundraiser in the United States. She raised \$4,840.50, which means lasting access to clean water for 96 people. To date, Siachen and Susy have raised \$29,612—helping 592 people.

Encouraging others

Susy knows that people often stumble over having to raise funds. Her recommendation? Maybe try the 6K without fundraising the first time, just to see

what it’s like. And, she adds, “It’s a fun time to be together to help people.”

Many people, especially in Western cultures, don’t especially enjoy asking others for help, but Susy offers another point of view. Scripture tells us that it’s more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). “You’re giving people that opportunity to be blessed,” she says.

Visit wvmag.org/Global-6K to learn how you can be involved.

More fun together

By Laura Reinhardt

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Catherine and Vera have both participated in World Vision’s Global 6K for Water in the past, but for their senior year, they wanted to do something extra. So they organized a virtual bake sale to raise additional funds.

Both 17-year-olds are passionate about helping people around the world get access to clean water. “All people deserve ... clean water, to feel secure in this basic human right,” they say via email. “Our actions won’t solve the world’s issues at large, but we want to help people in our own small ways.”

Working together felt more special because they were able to hold each other accountable. “We both had the same goals and worked together to make [them] happen,” they explain. Their families, teachers, and peers supported them in reaching those goals with generous donations.

The Global 6K offers a unique way to be involved in the work that World Vision is doing around the world. “Just donating money can feel impersonal,” say Vera and Catherine. “Running the 6K puts us into the shoes of the struggle others face daily; feeling that challenge for just one day in no way compares to

And as Susy started Siachen on this journey, now Siachen offers advice to friends who might be considering joining in World Vision’s Global 6K.

“I would tell them you’re helping kids get clean water,” Siachen says simply. “You can do this. Stay strong.”

Good advice from an 8 ½-year-old Global 6K veteran. 🧡

the magnitude of the obstacle others face to get clean water, but it puts some of the struggle into perspective.”

Their joint efforts raised \$2,027, making them two of the top youth fundraisers for the event in 2021. But they’re quick to say that honor belongs to the generous community that supports their efforts.

And they’ve got advice for people who might be interested in trying this year’s Global 6K: “It’s cliché, but you can make a difference. If you raise enough money for one person’s clean water access, you’ve made a huge difference to that person. It’s not about racking up huge numbers or amounts of people—if you don’t participate, you can’t help, so go all out!” 🧡



SCAN THE CODE

to read an interview with Catherine and Vera.

Catherine (left) and Vera (right) have a fun day baking to fundraise for World Vision’s Global 6K.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY RISOLVO



One of Kathy Risolvo’s students drew Kathy as he sees her, a hero.

New labels

By Kathy Risolvo
Team World Vision runner

It’s really hard to put the [Chicago] marathon experience into words, because it is the most complex set of feelings I have ever had. Pushing my body to something I never saw possible was one thing. Raising way more money than I ever thought possible is another. Being in a crowd of over 30,000 people experiencing the same level of excitement and commitment was like nothing I could have imagined.

Thinking about the collective impact we had on people we may never meet blows my mind. But today I got to see firsthand the impact we have on those that we get to meet every day. One of my students showed me this. He needed to draw someone he looked up to (as a Peeps® candy) and he drew ... me ... as a runner ... with a Team World Vision cape!

The way the students responded was like nothing I could describe. They told me that when I got tired during the marathon, I could think of their faces and know that they were cheering for me. Some signed up for local 5Ks. Some brought in medals that they had earned. And some read books about the clean water crisis. What I can say for sure is that we were all changed by the experience. And it is just the beginning!

And I realized that for the past five years, I have been wearing a set of labels that I wouldn’t have chosen. Divorced. Single mom. Unhealthy. Scatterbrained. Messy.

But in this season, I got new labels. Committed. Disciplined. Runner. Loved. And this student saw a girl in a cape setting big goals and meeting them. So, I even get to wear the label “superhero.” And I cannot wait to see what God is up to next. 🧡

PHOTO COURTESY OF CATHERINE VU



KARI COSTANZA/WORLD VISION

A call to care

By Steve Poe

† A FEW YEARS AGO, when our church learned about how many children are trafficked into forced labor on Lake Volta in the west African country of Ghana, we were compelled to help. We began partnering with International Justice Mission (IJM), an organization that rescues and protects people from violence, slavery, and other abuses around the world. I love that my church is always ready to step up. God’s people should always be ready for opportunities to help the poor.

The Apostle Paul went on three missionary journeys and started the majority of the New Testament churches. In his letter that we now call Galatians, he talked about his trip to Jerusalem. He told Peter and the rest of the apostles that he felt God had called him to be an apostle to the gentiles—the non-Jews. The other apostles agreed, with one request: that as he went out and taught, to remember the poor.

Paul completely agreed, and in the book of Acts, you see that everywhere he traveled, he was consistent with two things: preaching the gospel message of salvation and taking an offering for the poor. From the beginning of the church, Christians have been helping the poor. It was the church that started most of the orphanages. It was the church that started most of the hospitals. It was the church that rushed to help those who were hungry.

Too often in America, we don’t really understand the needs of the poor, and we don’t take seriously our obligation or responsibility as Christians to help the poor. Luke’s gospel is full of examples of Jesus instructing us to help those in need. The church should be out in front leading the way when it comes to this. And that’s why our church couldn’t just be content with the work we had already done. We wanted to do more.

Already feeling burdened for the country of Ghana, we decided to go deeper by partnering with World Vision. Through Chosen®, our congregation agreed to come alongside children living in poverty, and as a result, more than 2,600 chil-

dren in Ghana got to choose their own sponsors. My wife and I have sponsored a child for several years, and we realized how much that has meant to us, so we decided it was time to sponsor another. We were chosen by a little boy named Balukdi, and we are so looking forward to connecting with him in the years ahead and speaking into his life spiritually as he matures so that he knows he is chosen and loved by the almighty God.

Everyone desperately wants to be loved, to be noticed, to be seen. Everyone wants to know that they matter. We were created by God to be in relationship with Him, and yet because of sin, that relationship has been broken, leaving us with a void, a sense of insecurity, or a feeling of insignificance. That’s why it’s so important to know that we matter to God, and to know that not only does He love us, but He chose us. Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit ...” Once I know that I am loved and chosen by God, it gives me a sense of security and confidence. It gives me purpose for today and hope for the future. I now understand my identity is in Christ.

By connecting with these children through a sponsorship relationship, my family and church will not only make a difference in each of their lives, but we’ll make an impact on the entire country of Ghana. When you’re willing to make a sacrifice, it’s then that we’re inviting the supernatural to occur. You’ll never see the impossible if you don’t step out and risk the comfortable for the sake of others. I truly believe God is going to do incredible things in Ghana, and our church and my family will get to be part of His work. **†**



Steve Poe is senior pastor at Northview Church in Indiana. He and his wife, Sandy, have two married children and seven grandkids.



Children’s special day in Myanmar

FINALLY, AS COVID-19 and conflict restrictions have eased in her community in Myanmar, 11-year-old Khaing (in pink, second from right) is able to attend a birthday party for sponsored children.

She joins other happy children scrambling on an old farming truck parked nearby, content after a delicious meal and fun games. They’re modeling their new World Vision hats. During COVID-19 restrictions children had to stay home, so this party is an especially joyful time for them, a time to heal. The virus has been devastating here. I lost my own mother to it.

My favorite verse is Matthew 19:14, where Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Whenever I photograph, the first thing that comes to mind is that I thank God I can work with children in these challenging times. No matter how difficult it may be around them, children are able to forget sadness and troubles for a while and remind us adults that we can create happiness and fun for them.

I look through my viewfinder and pray that God will allow me to capture the emotions I see, to create beautiful images of children. I pray with the children, too, before I photograph.

Parents love to see the photos of their children, to see their happy faces. They are especially proud that their children are involved in these programs. I also want to share fun pictures with our supporters, to show them we are doing our best. **†** *Saw Moo Kale lives in a community served by World Vision.*

Written and photographed by Saw Moo Kale, World Vision Myanmar communications staff member
Canon R
70-200mm lens at 145mm, 1/125 at f/5.6, ISO 100



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