

Lifelines

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ELCA WORLD HUNGER AND LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE
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Fall 2017



ELCA World Hunger
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



The Rev. Daniel Rift

Director,
ELCA World Hunger
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Often, we read the Ten Commandments as a catalog of “You shall nots.” Actually, Martin Luther’s explanations of the commandments are an invitation to deeper participation and care for the neighbor. For example, for the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not kill,” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life’s needs.” We have been liberated by God’s grace and are now free to serve the neighbor. In “The Freedom of a Christian,” Luther points out, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has healed us, set us free, and given us new life. The stories in this issue of LifeLines are stories of people of faith walking together, bound to one another by the gift of grace. This gift invites us to go beyond merely preventing the worst to participating in the best that God’s healing of the world has to offer. They are stories of hope, of God’s presence and our service, freely given, so that all might know the abundant life promised in Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for this work.



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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WHY WE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

This issue of LifeLines features stories from some of our trusted partners in the work to end hunger and poverty. This work begins with faith in God's abundance and God's promise. We believe that every community is blessed, even those communities whose gifts and talents might be hindered by the challenges of poverty and hunger. In God's promise, we are captivated by a faith that assures us God is at work transforming our world. As we accompany one another and share our gifts together, we participate creatively and courageously in the work God is doing to reconcile us to God, to one another and to all of creation.

Our work together begins with building mutual, inclusive relationships, grounded on our faith in God and in the wisdom that the best solutions to a community's challenges come from the community itself. Every project we support begins with listening to our neighbors in local communities and accompanying with the expertise we have learned over the years as they work to end hunger for good.

For us, cooperation is not just an option, it is key to understanding that God has bestowed gifts to all. It is in working together that those gifts are knit into opportunity.

Our companion church relationships and our membership in The Lutheran World Federation help us join with fellow Lutherans to end hunger. But we don't stop there. Our network of trusted partners – such as Lutheran World Relief, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and Church World Service – equips us to participate in the work God is doing in even more places around the globe. The long relationships we have with our partners give us confidence that this work will reflect our faith and be guided by the same deep commitments ELCA World Hunger has to mutuality, inclusivity and sustainability.

Throughout this issue, look for examples of these relationships at work.



Income



Income-generating activities help families pay for essentials like food, medical costs and school fees, while microloans enable starting or upgrading small businesses. These and other long-term solutions to ending hunger and poverty are at the center of the programs supported by ELCA World Hunger.

Golden Manna: Honey brings reliable income for families in Hungary

Honey is a sweet addition to any meal, but for families in the rural county of Somogy, Hungary, honey is an important step on the path to sustainability. Through its Backyard Model Farm project, the Lutheran Conference and Mission Home in Hungary is working with the families to provide a reliable source of income in an area where poverty and marginalization can make opportunities hard to see.

The families in Somogy share several characteristics. All have children under the age of 16; all are members of the marginalized minority of Roma in Hungary; and none have stable employment. Yet all the families also are working hard and learning skills to manage apiaries and community gardens for food and profit. Their work is supported in part by gifts to ELCA World Hunger.

In this three-year project, the Lutheran Conference and Mission Home has provided community-garden space and has taught the families how to produce fruit and vegetables and raise chickens. Central to the project is the community apiary - 25 beehives for the families to tend, which last year produced 300 kilograms (661 pounds) of flower honey. The families helped package and market the honey under the name Golden Manna. When sold at markets, each of the families gets a share of the profits. Working with local experts, they are gaining the technical skills they will need to tend the bees into the future.

It has not all been easy. A recent infestation of mites reduced the bee population across Hungary, and the families in Somogy had to place their hives in a professional apiary. Soon, though, the Lutheran Conference and Mission Home hopes that the beehives can return to the families' care, and this part of the project will continue. The success of their early harvests gives them hope that, when it does, the families will have the skills and support they need to enjoy the sweet bounty of God's creation for years to come.



Bilateral partnerships are a key way our church responds to hunger around the world. Through strong relationships with Lutheran churches in nearly 60 countries, ELCA World Hunger **accompanies our neighbors as they develop and implement solutions** to hunger and poverty that are inclusive, effective and tailored to the particular needs and assets of local communities.



Lead farmer Zoltán, left, stands with Szabolcs Vég, the founder of Backyard Model Farm in Somogy, Hungary.



Agriculture



Agricultural programs help families grow food to nourish themselves and build safer, healthier communities for the long term. These are some of the ways ELCA World Hunger accompanies communities as we work to put an end to hunger - for good.



Cacao seeds, training sweet additions for farmers in the Philippines

Fe Bustamante, her husband, Vicente, and their daughter, Lea, live in Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Fe and Vicente are smallholder farmers who work hard to feed their family. But changing climate conditions, natural disasters and conflict have made things difficult for farmers like Fe and Vicente.

Thanks to the Cacao FEAST project, Fe and Vicente have recently accessed valuable learning opportunities to improve their livelihood. The program is funded in part by gifts to ELCA World Hunger, in partnership with Lutheran World Relief and the Cacao Industry Development Association of Mindanao.

The project provided them with start-up inputs, such as seeds and shears, and training on cacao seedling growth, nursery management and business management. Fe and Vicente put in the hard work.

Fe and Vicente used to grow only one crop - corn - leaving their main income source susceptible to natural disasters and a changing climate. Now they've diversified, and they grow bananas, okra, other vegetables and cacao - the plant that produces the beans that will eventually become chocolate.

Why cacao? The price is higher than other traditionally grown crops - like coconut and banana. It can also be harvested throughout the year, grown under mature trees and is less vulnerable to severe weather than many other crops. So far, more than 2,000 farmers have been trained in cacao-based diversified farming practices, including Fe and Vicente.

The training they received went beyond business practices. In the Philippines, men traditionally farm and make most family decisions, while women work at home and raise the children. The project's Household Development Approach encourages the inclusion of all family members in budgeting, household and farming activities.

Fe and Vicente say they used to fight a lot about money, but since the project, they now know where the money is coming from - and going. They know how to budget. And they realize that they have to work together for their farm - and their family - to be successful.

The Cacao FEAST project is funded in part thanks to your gifts to ELCA World Hunger through its partnership with Lutheran World Relief.

"ELCA World Hunger has been an important partner for Lutheran World Relief in places like Uganda, Nicaragua and the Philippines, helping to move some of the world's poorest and most isolated communities **from survival to sustainability**. Our work with ELCA World Hunger serves as a bridge for U.S. Lutherans to the developing world, channeling their generosity toward their brothers and sisters overseas who face poverty, injustice and human suffering."

- Daniel Speckhard, president and CEO, Lutheran World Relief



Education



When children can attend school, they can secure better opportunities for their future. Programs like literacy training and vocational education also help teens and adults get jobs and increase their earning potential.

“ELCA World Hunger and The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) are two expressions of the same vocation: to serve people in need. Therefore, what the LWF is doing in Dadaab is what you are doing in Dadaab. This is what it means to be a communion of churches.”

- **The Rev. Martin Junge**
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation



A brighter future for young refugees in Kenya

Decades of conflict have displaced more than 2 million people within Somalia and in the surrounding countries. In neighboring Kenya, more than 300,000 Somali refugees have found asylum.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million Christians in 98 countries. LWF is one of the lead humanitarian agencies at work at two refugee camps – Dadaab on the east side of Kenya and Kakuma on the west. ELCA World Hunger is partnering with LWF to accompany refugees in both camps.

About 250,000 refugees currently live in Dadaab, one of the world’s largest refugee camps. LWF is providing community services, assistance to people with disabilities and the elderly, cash assistance, education, sustainable livelihoods and peace and protection.

“Education transforms lives and leaves a lasting impact on communities,” said the Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary, LWF. “I am grateful for the generous support of ELCA World Hunger, which equips the LWF to provide education for 20,000 refugees in Dadaab.”

This year, besides providing education to about 20,000 children in Dadaab, LWF plans to offer livelihood trainings to more than 290 youths, assist about 15,000 refugees with cash assistance, and train 30 religious leaders in coordination and mobilization.

In the Kakuma refugee camp, where more than 170,000 refugees currently reside, child labor and exploitation are common. Children carry out paid activities inside and outside the camp, and there are reports of Kenyan children from the host communities entering the camp to find work.

Children fetch water, wash clothes, drain sewage water, wash utensils in hotels, make bricks and clean their employers’ compounds. They also work in shops, empty garbage, collect scrap metal to sell in town, conduct construction, collect firewood, carry food rations and are exploited in sex work. All of these violate the children’s right to education and protection from exploitation as laid out in the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Gifts to ELCA World Hunger are supporting the ongoing Anti-Child-Labor Campaign in Kakuma that helps keep children in school. This year, LWF plans to reach 900 children through the campaign, providing them a path out of exploitation and into education that can help shape a brighter future. LWF will also provide vocational training for 30 older youths and train 100 community leaders on children’s rights.

ELCA World Hunger and LWF partner to walk alongside our refugee neighbors as they seek a brighter future.



Lutheran Disaster Response



Lutheran Disaster Response brings hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. Our approach is comprehensive and extensive.

After the media leaves, Lutherans stay

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has a reputation for serving communities even when other agencies have packed up. Working mostly behind the scenes, our church is able to respond readily through an extensive worldwide network.

That network includes partners, social ministry organizations and synods, for which the ministry provides training, consultation, assistance and funding. LDR also works globally with The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Church World Service (CWS) and companion churches.

Michael Stadie, program director, LDR-U.S., attributes the program's resiliency and sustainability to the ELCA's strong partnerships around the world. In the United States, he said, the social ministry organizations affiliated with LDR know who the local coordinators are, making it easier to facilitate help on the ground.

HURRICANE MATTHEW

Florida, North Carolina and Georgia were hit hard by flooding when Hurricane Matthew dumped rain in September and October 2016. Nearly a year later, LDR is still working with Lutheran Services Carolinas after the agency was awarded the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster case management contract.

Sharei Green, LDR program communicator, said the work mostly involves guiding people through the assistance process to get their homes rebuilt. "It's assessing whether people have insurance, asking if they had flood insurance, and helping them sort through the paperwork associated with getting FEMA assistance," she said.

The disaster work actually started early—as the hurricane was forming in the Atlantic Ocean. "Social ministry organizations and synods started working together via phone calls before the hurricane even hit," she said.

HURRICANE SANDY

Five years after Hurricane Sandy hit the Northeast, volunteers are still working through Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey to help rebuild homes. New Jersey was especially hard-hit, Stadie said, and many people lost their homes on or near the shore. "Our affiliate is doing volunteer management in rebuilding," he added. "Believe it or not, there are people who are just now getting their homes rebuilt."

Alex Elefante, disaster recovery coordinator for Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey, said that over the past five years more than 4,400 volunteers have worked tirelessly to renovate and rebuild homes. While Elefante estimated that the volunteers have worked on 354 houses, another 27,000 still await repair.

"We're making progress, but it's slowly happening" and wouldn't be possible without the volunteers, he said.

LOUISIANA FLOODING

The ELCA happened to be meeting for the 2016 Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans when devastating rainfall flooded Louisiana. "We were actually there when it happened in the Baton Rouge/Lafayette area, and a member of the assembly stood up and asked if we could pray for those who lost their homes," Stadie said.

LDR did more than pray, helping assess the situation and working with Upbring (formerly Lutheran Social Services of the South) to provide aid. More than 150,000 applications have been filed with FEMA for assistance.

DAKOTA TORNADOES AND FLOODING

Two years later, LDR is still working with Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota to help American Indians recover from tornadoes that caused flooding on reservations in 2015. This was the first time that tribal lands got a federal declaration apart from that of the state, Stadie said, adding, "LDR is in conversation with our local partners on long-term recovery."

All LDR staff agree that helping those in need is what Lutherans are called to do. "Because Lutherans are at work in communities and in the congregations, we walk with people every day through their lives," Stadie said. "LDR is just another way for us to walk with people. Our disaster response is a natural outreach of being the church. We were there before the disaster, and we'll be there after."

As you read this, LDR is working with local affiliates to respond to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in the Caribbean and the southern United States. This work, too, will continue for years to come. **To support these efforts, visit ELCA.org/disaster.**

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