



Christian
World Service

Food

About the theme



When I was Hungry...

This December Christian World Service marks 75 years since the first Christmas Appeal for “the millions in the east and the west, who are hungry, cold, and homeless”. These words from Archbishop West Watson from the then National Council of Churches have shaped work that started in Greece and moved from Palestine to the rest of the world. Your gifts have touched three generations of people, sharing food, warmth, shelter and justice.

The words of the appeal refer to words in Matthew 25: “When I was hungry”. Jesus was very clear about our responsibility to share food with those who had none. Living among very small peasant farmers, day labourers and fishing people, he would have felt the pressure of people who quite simply did not have enough to eat. Many of the stories we have in the Gospels have food associations and links. Praying the words “Give us our daily bread” come from a hungry place.

Finding a path out of hunger is no easy journey, but the work we do together with our local partners is giving more people the support they need to improve their

livelihoods. Loving your neighbour as yourself demands this kind of action.

The promise of Christmas is that life can be better. Change comes not by force or through power but in the birth of a baby. Jesus was born at a time when life could be brutal in Galilee. His message of love in action spoke to people then as it does to us today. God is with us as we search for new ways of living that are sustainable and compassionate.

For 75 years, hunger has been on the Christmas Appeal agenda. Our partners are doing all they can to address the causes of hunger and challenge the ways that people are made hungry by injustice and conflict. Tea pickers on Sri Lanka’s plantations established in the colonial era have suffered decades of exploitation. In a few moments, one more family leaves their home and land in South Sudan in fear of the violence that is enveloping the village.

Your donations to the Christmas Appeal for people facing hunger and fear will give them food and a path to a better livelihood.

Please pray for our world, that all people everywhere will have what they need to sustain life.

We give more than Food

Food is one of the most basic human rights, yet access to food is often highly political.

Many of CWS's partners are helping rural families improve livelihoods by growing better gardens. Compost, mulching, organic pest control, water management, saving seeds and multi-cropping are common features of an agro-ecological approach combining traditional practices with learnings from science.

Through decades of working to stop the scourge of hunger, CWS has learnt many lessons. First on the list is that there is no technical solution to hunger. No amount of green revolutions, golden rice or fancy machinery will solve a global problem that has deep social and political roots. For every innovation in mainstream agriculture, there have been detractors. Indian farmers have rightly pointed out that to modify rice genetically to add the Vitamin A missing in their diet will not alter the fact that they cannot afford to grow rice, or they might prefer to have land on which to plant rice and traditional foods that already contain Vitamin A.

Although small farmers produce the majority of food people eat, their interests have been neglected for decades. Governments and global markets have benefitted the big and the powerful. Developing countries have been unable to protect production of staple foods in free trade agreements pushing millions of small farmers off their lands. Forced to import cheap subsidised rice from the USA, Haiti's rice farmers found few alternatives except the harmful production of charcoal from the trees that had kept top soil from washing down its steep hillsides or migration to informal settlements on the edge of its cities.

Those who seek technical solutions tend to ignore the political causes of hunger.



Without access to land and water, rural people cannot grow food. In the name of efficiency, the World Bank pushes governments to consolidate landholdings. Scrambling for shrinking resources at home, corporations are involved in landgrabbing - buying land and the associated water rights.

At the same time, the global food economy has consolidated power. Food corporations have reached deeper into the food chain, controlling the process from the planting of seeds to the way food is consumed. Land grows feed for animals so the new middle class can buy more meat and dairy or plants for biofuels to meet energy demands.

No longer able to grow food, families are dependent on what they earn. Exploitative working conditions, high unemployment and low wages have made livelihoods more precarious.

Everywhere threats are increasing – climate change is making farming unpredictable.

Fish stocks are dwindling and damage to the environment is destroying water supplies and fertility. Long-term conflict in places like Syria and South Sudan is a huge threat to people's livelihoods. Covid-19 is the latest challenge to the lives of people everywhere.

In Sri Lanka, the Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform has proved an effective advocate for what they call "regenerative" agriculture, combining traditional farming and new research to restore its land and people. Part of the food sovereignty movement, they want people to have control over how food is produced and distributed. They know hunger is political.

Monlar has challenged World Bank policies that threaten small farmers and their government on the price paid to farmers for the rice they grow. For years, they have watched as large farmers have shut down shared irrigation sources. They have won a

commitment by the Department of Agriculture to research and develop greater support for small farmers.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Even before the arrival of Covid-19, hunger was on the increase. The Food and Agriculture Organisation [reported](#) that there were ten million more hungry people in 2019 than the year before. Twice as much as our total population. Now with Covid-19 poverty is on the rise everywhere. A preliminary assessment predicts this number will rise to 83 -132 million more people this year. However, the more support we can give now, the better people can meet their needs for food, water and justice in the year ahead.



Families will be able to plant better gardens with seeds, plants, tools and training in low-cost agro-ecological approaches. More people will get emergency food or cash vouchers to meet their urgent needs because of disaster or Covid-19. Underpaid and exploited workers will have the support of local partners negotiating for fairer wages and better living conditions. Our partners can open up new discussions to develop strategies that will improve food security, build safer communities and enhance climate justice.

In numbers

- 690 million people were hungry last year.
- In 2019 an estimated 2 billion people did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.
- An estimated 21.4% of children were stunted and 5.6% overweight.
- Most conservative estimates shows healthy diets are unaffordable for 3 billion people. A healthy diet costs on average five times as much as one that meets the basic energy needs through a starchy staple.
- On a preliminary assessment, Covid-19 will add 83 -132 million people to the total undernourished.
- Two thirds of people who are hungry live in rural areas.

- Of 570 million farms, more than 475 million are less than 2 hectares.
- In low income countries more than 2/3 workers are employed on the land.

Zero Hunger



The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits the world to universal goals. The [second Sustainable Development Goal](#) aims to eliminate hunger and malnutrition including stunting by 2030. Food security, increasing the productivity and income of small-scale food producers, prioritising more sustainable and resilient food production systems, encouraging diversity and increasing investment sit alongside efforts to improve trade and commodity markets as ways to reach this goal.

“Give Us Life”

Psalm 80:18b

When I was hungry

Support the 2020 Christmas Appeal to give hungry families good food and the basics of a sustainable life.

75th Anniversary Christian World Service

donate now

christmasappeal.org.nz

Another Story from Fiji

Every day Dev heads off to kindergarten, always tidy and willing to work. He takes the familiar path along the old tyres and planks of wood that mostly protect him from the swamp below. His mother has sent him in freshly pressed clothes, first to pick up a lunch at the Vunalagi Book Club and then to school. His father left early in the morning to see if he can find some work and earn a little money so there will be some food to share.

When Dev arrives at the church hall where the Book Club is held, he waits quietly. He doesn't say a word, but his big dark eyes fill with wonder when he is given a lunchbox filled with a banana, cabbage curry and a roti (bread). It is the biggest lunch he has ever seen.

Thanks to the Food Bank run by the Pacific Conference of Churches and volunteers who make the lunch from the vegetables they grow, Dev, Aarav and other children will eat a nutritious meal.

“ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

Matthew 25:35-36

