

Classis Quinte Report – fall, 2020

Submitted by Peter Bulthuis, Canadian Director of Church and Community Engagement

The churches of Classis Quinte continue to be a blessing for participants in World Renew's programs; who struggle with poverty or live in crises not of their making. Thank you for your continued financial support for the communities being served on your behalf, particularly in Kenya. The Christian Reformed Churches in Classis Quinte have donated \$199,061.19 for all of this work.

Much of the work and its delivery have certainly changed since before mid-March of this year. All the activities in which World Renew is involved, have pivoted. This report will give some examples of the ways in which your agency is now delivering the global support you care about.

This report is a snapshot in time; it was written during mid-August; situations will likely have changed when this is read. What is sure, is that God remains faithful, his church is kept in His hands, and World Renew is continually working to respond to the situation as it changes.

This report is accompanied by a video which will have been sent to the stated clerk, Joan Crawford, specifically for this meeting of Classis Quinte.

A. General Updates:

Responding to the seismic changes around the world, every team of World Renew has shifted its direction and emphasis, though not their vision: World Renew *envisions a world where people experience and extend Christ's compassion and live together in hope as God's community*. Every team has doubled down to ensure that global participants receive the support that is required and has been promised; that immediate COVID-19 needs are being met; that constituents in Canada receive transparent reports; that the love and grace of God is being shared in innumerable ways.

World Renew has continued to work with Diaconal Ministries Canada in providing webinars dealing with help and health during Covid, learning from inequality during Covid, and World Renew's global response to Covid (four already so far). We are currently developing webinars dealing with racism in Canada. That same partnership has lead Diaconal Ministries Canada and World Renew to grant over \$60,000 to 16 churches who have applied for funds to offer support in their communities. The number of participants being supported weekly, is over 1000 persons.

If you have the opportunity, do open this page: www.worldrenew.ca/corona.

B. Upcoming Important Dates and Activities

World Renew is grateful for the support that has been given for almost 60 years, as we continue to be *compelled by God's deep passion for justice & mercy, we join communities around the world to renew hope, reconcile lives, and restore creation*. This would not be possible without the power of God and his sustaining providence, and the love, care and support of the donors and the churches in Canada and the US.

Through the fall and into the winter, various church campaigns occur that are meant to educate and encourage folks in the churches to participate in the work of World Renew.

These campaigns focus on:

Oct. 12: Thanksgiving. This focuses on greater learning about World Hunger, through the *World Hunger curriculum* which is distributed through the churches, and will likely be distributed online this year.

Nov. 1: World Hunger Sunday. Continued emphasis on the World Hunger Campaign.

Dec. 25: An offering for World Renew.

Throughout the Advent season, the *Gift Catalogue* will be distributed (paper and online, along with the opportunities of using "The Giving Tree").

C. Community Development: Pivoting to include COVID-19 Responses

Unfortunately, more than 300 million people in Africa, which is 40% of the population of Africa — and 2.4 billion people globally — lack access to clean water. Women and girls are often responsible for gathering a family's water and in some remote African villages walk up to 4 hours/day to do so. Around the world, women consume 200 million work hours/day

collecting water. As family water collectors and keepers, women are important agents for health in the fight against COVID-19 and other diseases.

Suggesting simple things like storing household water in frequently washed, covered containers can improve health. For instance, where installing systems for running water is challenging, or as an interim measure, tippy tap water systems can quickly be implemented to provide clean water hand-washing stations. Just a jug of water, a foot pedal, and some soap, all suspended on a wooden frame, ensures clean hands and helps prevent the spread of disease.

In communities where **World Renew** local partners have already constructed water systems, we are helping them to spread the word about vital sanitation and hygiene principles. Our partners are safely sending local instructors or using radio and cell phones to share messages about handwashing with soap and clean water, safe water storage, proper waste management, and other practices to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 and other diseases. As well, **World Renew** partners are teaching and equipping mothers to use clean water in cooking and gardening so they can protect their children from serious waterborne illnesses and also keep their little ones healthy with home-grown, nutritious food.



Clean water can help stop disease transmission, and prevent water-borne illnesses; clean water delivery is sustainable when the community is involved with every step of its provision.

D. International Disaster Response (IDR)

World Renew's IDR response is based on three pillars: *prevention* of the spread of the virus (information distribution), *protection* (appropriate equipment), and *provision* (continued food distributions). In the past short while, World Renew has supported 1.2 million people in 17 countries, with soap, food, masks and more.

One example of the provision is in **The Philippines**.

"COVID-19 dampened the spirit of many families, especially the poorest among the poor but our simple way of helping them rekindled their hope," said Jeff Cosico, World Renew's Program Manager in the Philippines.

An elderly woman staring in happy disbelief at a large amount of food she is allowed to carry home. A mother crying with relief over powdered milk for a small child who had not had milk for days. A group of blind massage therapists exclaiming "thank you!" as they gather essential food items to take back to their hungry family members.

These are just a few of the hopeful sights World Renew staff witnessed as relief packages were distributed to 575 families in the Philippines who have been struggling because of a loss of daily wages as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For this COVID-19 response project, World Renew partners identified and prioritized vulnerable beneficiaries such as elderly people, people with disabilities, nursing and pregnant women, rickshaw drivers, security guards, and farm labourers. Nearly half of the households that were given these packages had few other forms of support as the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Most of the families were living on an income of under 5,000 pesos per month (approximately \$135 CAD) but then they lost their daily wages with the "stay at home" restrictions.

For the 575 recipient households, these food packages and hygiene items—funded by the ACT Alliance and the generosity of World Renew donors—have been a blessing and a lifeline during this difficult time. On their behalf, Jeff says with gratitude,

nga
(Thank you



"*Madamo gid salamat!* very much)!"

Another region where World Renew continues to respond, is in Lebanon, both supporting Syrian refugees, and in assisting response efforts in Beirut. On Tuesday August 4, an explosion took place in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, causing enormous damage, killing at least 137 people, injuring 5,000, and leaving more than 300,000 homeless. Hospitals are struggling to cope. In addition to the loss of life and health impacts, damage to buildings and infrastructure has been extensive. In the port where the explosion took place, major grain silos, which store a significant amount of the country's grain, have been destroyed. This loss is causing significant concerns for the nation's food security. The port in Beirut is



also a key point of access for humanitarian aid within the Middle East region. Reports from partners suggest that humanitarian assistance that was on ships in port when the explosion took place have been destroyed.

According to Nabil Costa, Executive Director of the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD), **World Renew's long-time partner**, "this calamity could not have come at a worse time for a country on the brink of financial collapse and social implosion while the number of coronavirus cases have surged in recent days."

(As of August 10) Our partner in Beirut, MERATH, the relief arm of LSESD, is well-positioned to respond to the needs of affected communities, and World Renew has already committed to at least \$10,000 in humanitarian assistance. It is expected that early efforts will focus on the distribution of essentials like food and hygiene kits, but this will become more clear in the coming days. As more information becomes available, it will be shared.

Christian School, Beirut; 5 km from the blast site.

E. Refugee Settlement Activities:

During COVID-19, World Renew's Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement team has been actively engaged with providing support to all sponsoring churches. With the start of the pandemic, travel restrictions were put into effect.

- some churches who were expecting refugees to arrive soon had to shift plans abruptly as travel was cancelled.
- other churches who were currently assisting families who had arrived had to be flexible and creative in their support and settlement of newcomers now in the new context of COVID-19.
- other churches have continued to submit new applications for future sponsorships.

In all these different situations, the Refugee Program team has provided information and support to churches through email, phone and zoom meetings. Regular 'COVID-19 Update' letters have been shared and included information about sponsorship gathered from various official sources.

As travel is gradually reopening, the refugee team is now assisting churches in developing quarantine plans for newcomers. Churches have adapted and responded well and in creative ways to the challenges of sponsoring and resettling newcomers during COVID-19; churches continue to reach out in support of refugees through the submission of new sponsorship applications.

The following are some statistics of the work of churches and the Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Team in sponsoring and resettling refugees:

42 CRCs and 25 bCRCs/community sponsors are currently waiting for refugees to arrive. These sponsors have submitted a total of 108 sponsorship applications (60 for CRC, and 48 for BCRCs)

20 CRCs and 12 bCRCs/community sponsors are currently settling 141 of newcomers

29 CRCs and 8 bCRCs/community sponsors are currently working on submitting applications for 161 refugees

We are grateful for the continued accompaniment of sponsoring churches and for their love and compassion shown for the many refugees that had to flee their homes for safety in a new land, assisting newcomers to feel welcome and to find a new home in Canada in this challenging context.

F. What else can the people and the churches of Classis Quinte do?

-Pray for the communities and partners with whom World Renew works around the world, that God will sustain them, and help them to thrive, even in this Covid-19 time.

-If your church has not done so yet, consider sponsoring a refugee of family. Contact Rebecca Walker at rwalker@worldrenew.ca.

-Pray for the many refugees waiting for travel to resume as their situation in countries of asylum are precarious and are deteriorating further with COVID-19.

-As you prepare your budget for the year 2021, consider including World Renew as a line item, to support the work that it does on your behalf.

Encourage your church to partner with a church or community outside North America. Call the office.

Contact Peter Bulthuis (pbulthuis@worldrenew.ca ; 800-730-3490, ext. 4237), or Maria Oliveira

(moliveira@worldrenew.ca , ext. 4319) for more ideas on how we can help you achieve your ministry objectives. To learn more about World Renew's ministry and/or to sign up for our regular newsletter, please visit www.worldrenew.ca

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada