

ISSUE 7

Lasting Promise

YOUR LOVE

GOES FARTHER

(In Mali)

**SURROUNDS THE
HARDEST-TO-REACH**

(In our own backyard)

**CREATES
EMPOWERED
FUTURES**

(In Nepal)



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

WHEN THE HARDEST-TO-REACH IS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

As a **Partner in Lasting Promise**, your steadfast compassion reaches our neighbors in the most remote corners of the world, and the people that need it the most, in their most urgent times.

But did you know that the hardest-to-reach can be right in our own backyard?

Most shipments of Lutheran World Relief Quilts & Kits start at the Port of Baltimore, only a few miles from our Maryland headquarters, before making their way to neighbors across the globe.

But following a horrific accident, the ships themselves became the final destinations — and the seafarers were the intended recipients.

On March 26, 2024, a cargo ship named the Dali crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing the bridge to collapse and tragically killing six construction workers. This accident trapped 10 other ships and their crews in the port for weeks. Without visas to leave their ships, these crews lacked essential supplies and access to get them.

Because of gifts like yours, LWR responded immediately, partnering with the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center to deliver critical aid to those trapped on the ships.

"Most seafarers are men," the center's Executive Director Rev. Joshua Messick says. "They usually have one towel and can't wash it often because fresh water is scarce when you're surrounded by saltwater. You'd think we handed them a bar of gold when we gave them these Personal Care Kits. **THANK YOU.**" ○

◀ Crewmaster Zhu Cong Xiang accepts LWR Quilts & Personal Care Kits from Rev. Joshua Messick.



See for yourself at
lwr.org/backyard

Lasting Promise

MAGAZINE

Issue 7 (2024)

EDITOR:

Niki Clark

ON THE COVER:

Deba Souko worried it would take a miracle to help her grandson grow in her barren community in Mali. What it took was your compassion. Read how they are now thriving on page 4.

(Jake Lyell for LWR)



YOUR LOVE AWES ME...

in its expansiveness, how it reaches even the most unreachable of neighbors. Your gifts not only plant footprints in the future, transforming it with hope and potential, but they also land in places that others deem impossible.

I hope you find the stories inside these pages proof of the powerful change that is possible — even for our hardest-to-reach neighbors — when we work together. You are a beacon of light to myself, and to our many neighbors who are empowered because of you.

As always, I'd love to hear from you. How can we better communicate your deep and profound impact? Your stories often inspire others to join the Partners in Lasting Promise society. Please reach out to me confidentially to find out more.

Thank you for your Christian partnership and stewardship.

In Gratitude,

LEE GRANT

Planned Giving Manager
LGRANT@LWR.ORG



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friend,

The adages are infinite. If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else... We rise by lifting others... Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others... A rising tide raises all ships.

We are designed for community. Jesus Christ gave himself to us as the ultimate form of community — through his flesh and blood in communion. When one of us suffers, the weight is felt by all.

That's why I am so humbled to present this issue of **Lasting Promise** magazine to you. The service you do on behalf of our neighbors around the world — in Mali, Nepal, Tanzania, and as you'll see, even our own backyard — lifting them up, empowering them, walking along with them, is nothing short of awe inspiring. And exactly how Christ calls us to be.

Thank you for your steadfast support as a **Partner in Lasting Promise**. For investing in a better future not only for our neighbors in need, but for all of us. Because your love brings us one step closer to the world we all envision — one forever flourishing in dignity, justice and peace.

Thank you for your continued dedication to a better and brighter future for everyone. I pray you find these stories as uplifting and hope-filled as I do. They are merely a drop in the bucket of your life-changing impact. Together, we can create the compassionate community God intended for us all, **until we reach every neighbor.**

In Christ,

**AMBASSADOR
DANIEL SPECKHARD**
President and CEO



MIRACLES IN MALI



Deba Souka holds her one-year-old grandson Aliou. (Jake Lyell for LWR)

DEBA SOUKO held a simple prayer for her grandson Aliou: that he would grow up healthy and strong enough to care for her one day.

Recently, however, she worried it would take a miracle.

The miracle was you.

Deba lives in a close-knit family compound of mud houses in the Ségou Region of Mali, alongside Aliou, her four sons, daughter and daughter-in-law. Four years ago, she lost her husband to a long illness, and since then, she has been a pillar of support for her family. Deba cares for Aliou while his mother works as a hired farm worker in nearby fields. Previously she spent a large portion of the day cooking for her family but as food stores diminish, she is doing it less and less.

Soaring prices, extreme weather and brutal hunger

She and her family have farmed their small plot in Mali for generations, but extreme weather shifts — including long droughts followed by flooding — and rising prices have made it increasingly difficult to produce enough food.

“These times are difficult,” Deba says. “Eating three times a day is not a certainty.”

Her daughter-in-law, Aliou’s mother, became so malnourished, she stopped producing milk, depriving her son of essential vitamins and nutrients. As a result, Aliou too became malnourished. He couldn’t even walk.

Community child health volunteers stopped by the home on a routine screening visit. When they measured his arm with a color-coded tape meant to diagnose malnourishment, Aliou’s arm was red — the most severe level.

As miracles often go, the timing was divine.

Your kindness arrived right on time — in the form of a fertilizer and millet kit. The millet, a protein-rich starch, provided immediate sustenance for the hungry family. With two sacks of fertilizer ready for the next growing season, Deba is filled with hope for a bountiful harvest, alleviating her worries about where the next meal will come from.

Because of you, Deba breathes a sigh of relief for today, and one for tomorrow too.

“After your evening meal, it’s hard to get sleep worrying until the morning: Will I find breakfast for the children the next day or not?” she says. “But if, thanks be to God, you do have millet in your house that you can use every morning, there is nothing more reassuring than this. We thank God for those who have provided us with the kit.”



Baby Aliou is a strong, healthy toddler because your love surrounded him. (Jake Lyell for LWR)

With regular access to healthy food, Aliou is now on a steady, upward track. The rice porridge from the kit has become a staple of his diet and he is eating very well.

Aliou is not the only one growing — so are Deba’s dreams. Now that she can feed her family and is healthy enough to work again, she hopes Aliou, a strong walking toddler, can attend school and achieve great things.

Your compassion is turning Deba’s dreams into reality. **Thank you for being the miracle.**

Listen to Deba’s story in her own words!



Community Health Liaison Bina Diarra measures Aliou’s upper arm circumference as part of a nutrition and growth screening. (Jake Lyell for LWR)



STRONG ENOUGH ON THEIR OWN

At this very moment, your Christian stewardship is at work in the world — reaching some of the most remote, most vulnerable neighbors, wherever they need it most. **Your compassion allows us to walk with these neighbors for the long-term, accompanying them until they are strong enough to walk on their own.**

In Tanzania, you've done exactly that. After more than a decade of partnership — building capacity and training health care workers — we've handed back the reins to our empowered neighbors to keep moving forward. **Thanks to the dedication of friends like you!**

Dalin Bakari Ngalanga waits following trachoma surgery at the Mkuranga District Hospital near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. (Gregg Brekke for LWR)

Trachoma is a bacterial eye infection that can cause painful swelling and even blindness. It's one in a group of over 20 conditions called Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) found mainly in resource-limited settings. **Globally, NTDs affect over 1 billion people.** Despite their profound impact, they have historically received very little attention and health care workers have received even less support to address them.

Empowering our neighbors to move forward

The love of donors like you has supported critical work in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, rallying against diseases such as lymphatic filariasis in Haiti, visceral leishmaniasis in South Sudan and trachoma in Tanzania. Diseases barely known outside the medical community and yet all too familiar to the dedicated health care workers who tirelessly mobilize and advocate for those who are affected.

In Tanzania, your kindness provided training, medicine and supplies, equipping health workers like Nurse Hawa Rashid Msangi. Working out of the Mkuranga District Hospital near Dar es Salaam, she performs trachoma surgeries and provides relief to people who are suffering.

Because of supporters like you, we have nearly eliminated blindness due to trachoma infections in the region.

**Here at Lutheran World Relief, we often say
our goal is to work ourselves out of a job.
Thanks for getting us one step closer!**



Sophia Mohamed was in pain for years before receiving surgery.



Nurse Hawa received training, medicine and supplies to help patients facing trachoma. (Gregg Brekke for LWR)



Over 16 million people

are no longer at risk for trachoma

750,000+ households

received door-to-door screenings

12,000+ people

have received sight-saving eye surgery

87% of districts

have eliminated trachoma

Your generosity has trained **3,658 community case finders, 57 screeners, 76 assistant surgeons and 23 surgeons.** These professionals will be working to support their districts in trachoma elimination efforts far into the future.

CHANGING LIVES ONE BITE AT A TIME

Did you know that one of the most powerful ways your love is transforming futures around the world is through the humble — and delectable — chocolate bar? Lutheran World Relief has long recognized the profound power the cocoa sector has on impacting people, profits and the planet.

Here are three reasons we love cocoa, and you should too!

COCOA FARMERS CAN EARN A LIVING WHILE HELPING THE PLANET.

Trees that produce cacao pods — where cocoa comes from — benefit from natural shade. By planting larger canopy trees to protect their shorter cacao crop, farmers are contributing to a more sustainable environment. And with your help, they are receiving financial incentives for doing so too! Addressing poverty and combatting climate change? Sounds like a sweet deal to us.

GUATEMALA



What's the difference?



COCA

The source of cocaine. In regions where coca is present, growing cacao has been a sustainable and much safer alternative for farmers.



CACAO

The raw and unprocessed version of cocoa, it is bitter and is an oval-shaped, yellow pod that contains white pulp and seeds, also known as cacao beans.



COCOA

The dried and fermented seed of the cacao tree, cocoa can be processed into many forms — including cocoa powder, liquor, butter or chocolate.



NICARAGUA



COCOA CAN BRING SMALL-SCALE FARMERS HIGHER PRICES.

Like wine, cheese, coffee or whiskey, cocoa has distinct profiles that help potential buyers discern and appreciate its flavors AND increase its market value. By collaborating on a Cocoa Flavor Map, featuring 85 different flavor profiles from El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru, our farmers are now garnering international acclaim and access, ensuring that their hard work and dedication is getting its sweet reward.

PERU



COCOA CAN ADVANCE WOMEN.

In Peru, women's voices were often silenced when it came to matters of business. Because of friends like you, women in the cocoa sector are now being sought out for their input and have access to capacity building, networking and training. The results? Better quality cocoa and higher prices, meaning female leaders are getting their share of the profits, and guiding the growing industry to greater heights.

Watch their story at lwr.org/gold



Craving a sweet treat?

Check out Qori Warmi's 3-Pack Chocolate Bar Sampler now offered by LWR Farmers Market. Sourced in Peru, Qori Warmi Chocolate is sustainable and empowers the women who make it. Order today at lwrfarmersmarket.org.

CHANGING THE COURSE WITH COMPASSION



Laxmi Chaudhary holding a pot of prepared “pigeon peas,” a snack she sells out of the grocery store she operates

Imagine your compassion as a hug. It has traveled thousands and thousands of miles, soaring over oceans, reaching past mountains so high they seem to pierce the sky. It stretches down bumpy gravel roads where few cars can pass. In a small village in western Nepal, just miles from the Indian border, it reaches its destination — a petite woman dressed in a vibrant blue sari. She holds her head proudly, knowing the feat of her survival. But her eyes are sad. She is weeping, recalling her painful childhood, even though nearly 20 years have passed.

Her name is Laxmi Chaudhary, and your hug surrounds her, filling her with comfort and a strong sense of empowerment over her future. She has had a tragic past, but because of your compassion, she is healing. Her children will not be handed down her pain.

Laxmi is sitting in her family’s one-room home that doubles as her store. Her husband Binod, daughters Anuja and Anuska and her widowed mother-in-law Pradeshani are with her. The loving family that surrounds her is a world away from Laxmi’s growing up.



Laxmi and her daughters behind the counter of her grocery store.

REJECTION, TRAUMA AND LOSS

Never accepted by her abusive father, Laxmi's trauma started as soon as she was born. Abandoned by her father as an infant, she was working by age 2 and sold into indentured servitude by age 7. The practice, a form of slavery, only ended when it was outlawed by the government when she was 14. She attended school for two short years and then earned money collecting firewood and selling small rocks for gravel.

She thought she had finally found happiness when she married Binod, a kind and loving man. But at six months pregnant, an accident resulted in a miscarriage and costly surgery. The couple had to take out a loan with an exorbitant 60% interest rate. They had to move to India for three years to make enough money to get out of debt. Laxmi gave birth to their eldest daughter there, later returning home to open a small store while Binod worked in India to support the family. Every day felt like a struggle for survival.

"You are here to show us the way. Now it is up to us to step on the path."

Laxmi Chaudhary

YOUR LOVE IS HEALING — AND EMPOWERING

Everything changed when your love arrived, empowering Laxmi and others through a program for youth and women entrepreneurs. During the 15-day-long workshop, attendees learn practical and tangible skills such as customer service, food hygiene and bookkeeping. Such learnings can go a long way to transforming small businesses into resilient and steady forms of income: ones that can profoundly change the course of our neighbors' lives.

Laxmi learned how to cook popular snacks and received items that helped her set up a small cafe in the shop where she could serve her new food offerings. With your kindness, she was also able to register her business, making her eligible for certain government subsidies. As a result, she's doubled her income and Binod no longer needs to travel to India.

Laxmi is proud to give her daughters a good education — her oldest hopes to be a doctor — and the life she never had as a child. And she is grateful for friends like you who have made this life possible.

"I want to thank them very much from the bottom of my heart because they have encouraged me," she says. "You are here to show us the way. Now it is up to us to step on the path. We are very happy that we were able to move forward with such support." ○



Laxmi and her family in front of their home which also serves as the storefront of the grocery store she operates.



A SIGN OF THE TIMES

YOUR LOVE HAS NO BOUNDS OR BOUNDARIES when it comes to helping our neighbors in need. That's why health care workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo are being taught sign language — ensuring that clinics are welcoming and accessible to all.

Dr. Furaha Bisimwa is one such doctor using sign language in her practice. She learned as part of a program teaching care and prevention for survivors of sexual attacks. This program, provided by supporters like you, also provides clinics with PEP Kits, which prevent HIV and other diseases and are given in the immediate aftermath of an assault. Survivors must take the medicine within 72 hours of an attack to prevent disease.

The stigma following an assault is extreme and can be even more so for those with disabilities. For many, being able to speak to a medical professional in their own language can be extremely comforting. ○

IN HER OWN WORDS

Dr. Furaha, pictured above, is one of the inspiring health care providers trained in sign language. She shared a video — *especially for you* — to show her gratitude for all that you do.



Watch at lwr.org/sign



"It really changed my life. All the mothers and children who were malnourished before are now better because of Lutheran World Relief. They distributed seeds and taught us how to grow new vegetables."

*Mary Nyadala Maker,
South Sudan*

OKRA SOUP

Mary Nyadala Maker shows off the eggplant and okra that was grown from seeds she received — because of your love! A widow in South Sudan, she fled with her family when violence came to her village only to face extreme hunger. She now has a thriving garden and provides healthy and nourishing meals for her family. They especially enjoy okra soup. Try it at home with this simple recipe. ○

INGREDIENTS

- > 2 cups of sliced **okra**
- > ½ cup chopped **onions**
- > 2 diced **tomatoes**
- > ½ teaspoon of **baking soda**
- > 1 tablespoon **oil**
- > **Salt** as needed
- > 3-4 cups of **water**

INSTRUCTIONS

- > Place 1 cup of water in a pot.
- > Add baking soda, chopped onions and bring to a boil.
- > Add okra and 2 more cups of water.
- > Cook for 15 minutes, until okra is tender.
- > Add tomatoes.
- > Add oil and salt to taste.
- > Heat 5 more minutes and then serve.

**Originally published on
TasteofSouthSudan.com*



◀ Cutting up okra for soup.

//NEXTDOOR

Meet your neighbor **ROSETTE**. A doctor and project facilitator in the Democratic Republic of Congo — a country where violence against women has doubled since 2001 — Rosette is guiding survivors and her community to a path of healing and change.

With the support of friends like you, Rosette helps survivors with trauma counseling and therapy while ensuring women can access free medical, psychological, and legal care. As a facilitator, she also trains and empowers others in her community to recognize opportunities for women's advancement.

“Women are underestimated in our community,” Rosette said. “Women didn’t know they could have their own role. They thought only men should make decisions. But since the training, a woman now knows that she also contributes to her community and her home. **She must have a voice.**”

Because of your compassionate care, neighbors like Rosette are lifting up their communities — one woman at a time. **THANK YOU.**



IGNORANCE IS

(FILL IN THE BLANK)



“On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.” Luke 17:11 *NRSV*

One of my favorite stories from the Bible is the healing of the 10 lepers, but not for the reason that most of us think about. While it can be used as a reminder about giving thanks, it is the opening verse that appeals to me: On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

This is not the way to Jerusalem. In fact, this is not the way to anywhere. This is a place people avoid and send others that they want to avoid. This is where lepers go...and it is a place Jesus goes.

I would rather be ignorant to places like that. We know the phrase, ignorance is bliss. It's true. If I don't know about something, I can't be expected to do something about it. Yet, our faith compels us to live with our eyes wide open and see the pain, suffering and injustice that is occurring in the world, not avoid it, and then dare to believe we might be able to do something about it. Jesus goes ahead of us and then invites us to follow because the needs of our neighbors are real. This makes our mission clear and compelling.

When you became a [Partner in Lasting Promise](#), you chose to live out your faith and follow Jesus to the places in the world we would rather not know about and often, actively avoid.

Thank you for following Jesus through your relationship with Lutheran World Relief. ○

Rev. Tim Krick



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