



## Co-Directors' Update Sept. 2020 Carol Bremer Bennett

As World Renew prepares to enter our seventh month of COVID-adaptive programming, I am filled with overwhelming gratitude for the ways in which churches and individuals have given of their resources to strengthen hope for the vulnerable.

One of the most inspiring letters that I read this summer came to World Renew from our church partners in Lebanon and Syria, written by a volunteer serving with Syrian refugees. I would like to share some of the words from that letter; may they remind you of why we are all called to the mission of living justice, loving mercy, and serving Christ.

*"Our friends, it is no secret to say that the entire world is going through very difficult circumstances, a long-lasting war on Syria and the economic collapse in it, the economic and political unrest in Lebanon, the crisis of [COVID-19]. The Church teaches us that in such circumstances pure love appears, and volunteers have shown their willingness to act despite the risks, of course with precautionary measures taken. It is our hope that your help and giving will continue during these most extreme conditions.*

*We trust you, and that we will complete the march together, despite the difficult circumstances, for the good and for humanity."*

The march does indeed continue, carried on by communities participating in World Renew's [work](#) across the globe. We have remained active in each of the countries where we were working prior to COVID, and all of our programming has adapted to physical distancing requirements. In addition to our community development programming, World Renew continues to maintain an active presence in responding to disasters during this pandemic.

### Disaster Response Services (North America)

We continue to find ways to serve communities in new ways despite the limitations of this time of COVID and are so grateful for the donations that have empowered us to create nimble response plans:

- Donations for Hurricane Laura, the strongest hurricane to hit the US coast in 164 years, are ongoing. [Our response](#) is focused on meeting the basic needs of storm survivors and assisting local recovery organizations in getting established in order to provide immediate assistance.
- Plans are underway to work with the Mennonites to provide experienced coordinators to work with day volunteers in the Gladwin, MI area in response to a flood.
- DRS has been asked to remotely train community health workers in Rio Grande Valley, Texas to do Unmet Needs Assessments in their communities.
- Two to three volunteers are traveling to North Carolina to build laundry trailers for a Methodist response to communities who lost this service.
- Planning is underway in Iowa to use day volunteers to respond to the straight wind damaged homes across many counties in the state.
- Work continues with Bridge Street Ministries to rehab their 100-year-old building so that they can better serve their neighbors.
- DRS is working on how to respond to a request to do Long Term Recovery Organization Start Up training remotely for a recently flooded community.



- New grants are in process for North Carolina, Georgia and Puerto Rico to pay for materials and local contractors so that people are restored to their homes in the absence of volunteers.

### International Disaster Response

In the midst of the pandemic, the broader work of the International Disaster Response team has not slowed. The US \$2.4 million response continues to assist families recovering after the 2018 earthquake and tsunami on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Cash, voucher and in-kind emergency food assistance continues to reach displaced families in Colombia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Bangladesh, Yemen, and Syria, and our small responses addressing the needs caused by the COVID-19 are ongoing. Longer-term agricultural training is being carried out across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and the efforts of our teams in Nepal and the Philippines continue. Please pray for those affected by disasters and for the work of the IDR team and our partners.

In addition, due to the [August 4 explosion](#) in the port of Beirut, we are working with our partner in Lebanon to double our food assistance vouchers to now include Lebanese families, those affected by the blast and in crisis due to the failure of the Lebanese economy. These efforts are only possible because of the generous support of our donors. The Canadian Government match through the Humanitarian Coalition inspired incredible generosity at a time when many are struggling financially -- with over \$420,000 donated by Canadians (which qualified for government-matched support), and \$80,000 by donors in the United States. This support will allow us to support families through the difficult winter season.

In each area of programming, hope has been made strong for the vulnerable thanks to Christ's faithfulness shared through your prayers and gifts. Thank you for your ongoing care.

### End of Year Initiatives

Finally, as we turn towards the close of 2020, World Renew is launching a number of initiatives, each adapted to respond to a specific area of need catalyzed by the pandemic.

- World Hunger 2020--In the aftermath of COVID-19 nearly 1 billion are suffering from food insecurity. You can join World Renew in responding to this critical need by giving at [worldrenew.net/worldhunger](http://worldrenew.net/worldhunger) and by registering for our Facebook Live Event on November 1, World Hunger Sunday. On average, it takes World Renew \$200 to equip a farmer with the training, tools, and seeds to feed his or her family for a year. Join us to better understand communities experiencing high need and the part you can play in bringing food to every table.
- Tamar Campaign--Gender-based violence is the shadow pandemic that has cast its influence across many homes now undergoing additional financial hardship, lack of food, and pronounced isolation. This December, we partner with organizations across the CRCNA to educate and advocate for the many women and children facing gender-based violence. These 16 Days of Activism will raise awareness and funds for the vulnerable.
- Gift Catalog--Each year, donors to World Renew celebrate the birth of our Savior by purchasing from our gift catalog to provide a vital source of hope for communities journeying out of poverty. This year, we include gifts that respond directly to the impact of COVID-19 on families and their communities. Explore the gift catalog for yourself at [worldrenew.net/gift-catalog](http://worldrenew.net/gift-catalog).