



JOIN US IN THE MARGINS



7-Day Devotional for your Church Leadership





“Their cobwebs are useless for clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. They pursue evil schemes; acts of violence mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks along them will know peace.” Isaiah 59:6-8

VIOLENCE STEALS CHILDREN’S LIVES

- El Salvador is the second most violent country in Latin America, behind Honduras.
- After a gang truce in 2012, the El Salvador homicide rate dropped to 5 a day, but in early 2014 killings rose to pre-truce levels of more than 14 a day.
- Up to 70 percent of El Salvador’s youth are thought to be involved in a gang.
- The government’s “mano dura” or “iron fist” policy promotes no tolerance for gang activity, filling jails with gang members for crimes from petty theft to murder. Youth were also targeted for arrest based on appearance, location, and family ties.

ESCAPING GANG WARFARE

The effects of gang crime permeate El Salvadoran society, impacting children and youth the most.

Daniel Cuellar, 18, knows firsthand the dangers of gang violence and drugs.



Daniel Cuellar visits the grave of his friend who was killed recently; most community members believe his death is due to gangs.

When he was 13, older kids on his soccer team offered him alcohol and drugs. “I let myself be influenced by them,” he remembers.

Daniel’s newfound friends joined gangs, and even through Daniel didn’t, his association with them put his life in danger. On two occasions, gang members threatened to kill him.

“It’s an ugly feeling,” he says. “[Knowing] that someone wants to kill you... because several of my friends have been killed by the gangs.” Others have been shot or are in jail. Violence, poverty, unemployment, and family disintegration are also driving thousands of young Salvadorans to migrate to other Latin American countries and the U.S.

“They are disappearing,” Daniel says of his former friends and classmates.

A former sponsored child, Daniel attended a leadership workshop organized by World Vision. “They talked about life goals, always accompanied by biblical values, and this started changing my way of thinking,” he says.

He stopped drinking, doing drugs, and hanging out with the wrong people. He started going to church, reading the Bible, and realizing the importance of focusing on his identity in Christ. “Having God present gives meaning to other things,” he says.

Once Daniel turned his life around, he focused his attention on helping other to do the same. With World Vision’s support he started a youth club to provide kids with a positive alternative.

In El Salvador, World Vision programs empower young people to solve their problems with words instead of weapons and to gain vocational skills to earn income instead of taking the gangs’ easy way out of poverty.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for peace in El Salvador in which young people can grow to reach their potential.
- Pray that families provide a nurturing environment to oppose gang loyalties.
- Pray for churches and organizations like World Vision that seek to save children from gangs and drugs.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

After a church-brokered gang truce in 2012, the El Salvador homicide rate dropped to 5 a day. But gangs are no less powerful now, and killings have risen to pre-truce levels of more than 14 a day. What responsibilities do you see for church leaders in circumstances where issues of justice and morality have a political component? What is the individual’s responsibility to refrain from gang activity?



“The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.” Job 24:9

CHILDREN NEED PROTECTION

- There are 3.2 million child laborers in Bangladesh.
- In slums, almost one in five children are laborers, and only a quarter of them attend school.
- On average, Bangladesh child laborers work 28 hours a week and earn the equivalent of \$3.3 dollars a week.

CHILD OF GOD

Liza, 11, comes from a poor family with two brothers and sisters and an unemployed father. She lives in the village of Chandkhana, Rangpur City, in northern Bangladesh, one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country.

When she was six, Liza was convinced to leave her home to work as a housemaid in Rangpur. She earned 400 taka, about \$5 a month.

“We never had enough. My parents were bitter towards me, as I am a girl [and considered an economic burden]. So I decided to come out to work,” says Liza. “My employer assured me that I would be a part of their family. But that was not the case.”

“I had to clean all the rooms, cook for them, wash their clothes, and run all their errands,” Liza says. She never had a day off.

Liza hoped that in the city she would be able to pursue her education. But over the years, her life was bounded by the walls of the house where she worked.



10-year-old Sanima Akhter hails from a remote village in Gaibandha District in northern Bangladesh. Sanima has been working as a housemaid since she was very young in a house at Mondol Para in Rangpur City.

DAY TWO

IN THE MARGINS: BANGLADESH

Now things have changed for Liza. She is one of 1,000 children in Bangladesh who attend World Vision non-formal education programs. They also save money toward their future, especially for their continued education.

For almost a year she has been saving 10 taka, about 13 cents, daily.

“I use this money to buy exercise books and pencils, but also, in emergencies, for my youngest siblings and parents,” Liza says.

World Vision staff in Bangladesh say child labor is increasing and that two-thirds of working middle-class people employ children as domestic servants. They cook, clean, wash laundry, iron, run errands, and care for other children, the elderly, or disabled. Often they receive no pay, only food, lodging, and old clothes.

Other children work as street vendors, dodging through traffic to offer petty goods to drivers. Hundreds of thousands are exposed to extreme hazards in their daily work, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray that Bangladeshi children’s rights to protection and education will be respected.
- Pray that parents will value all their children and have the means to support them.
- Pray for the parents, government officials, community members, and development workers who are working to prevent child exploitation and labor.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Child labor is a complex problem, which largely stems from poverty. The savings program that is part of World Vision’s anti-child labor work in Bangladesh taps into the sense of independence that many child breadwinners get from earning an income to help their families. What ways can you think of to help children know that they are created in God’s image and of value far beyond what they can earn? Discuss how solving poverty is difficult, like rocket science.

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“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’”
(Matthew 2:13)

SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN ‘LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR’

- 5 million children have been affected by the conflict in Syria.
- More than 2.9 million Syrians have fled the country as refugees; more than half of them are children.
- Nearly 3 million Syrian children are out of school.

WHAT FUTURE FOR CHILDREN IN EXILE?

To mark three years of the conflict in Syria, World Vision invited children living as refugees to write a report — to share, in their own words, their biggest concerns and to propose solutions. In Irbid, Jordan, and Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, 140 children between 10 and 17 years old responded.

“We fled the flames of war, only to find ourselves surrounded by danger, explosions, kidnapping, and theft,” the children wrote. “We are unable to live peacefully. We live in constant fear that something will happen and affect our life or hurt us.”

Eighty-six percent of Syrian refugee children surveyed say they are exposed to violence in communities where they have taken refuge. They are also prey to physical and verbal abuse and burdened by lack of financial resources.



Haya, 10, a Syrian refugee in Jordan, shares her song ‘Syria is crying for her children.’

“We want to get back to our country and rebuild it.

We want to be in our country rebuilding again and again.

We want to be in our country rebuilding again and again.”

DAY THREE

IN THE MARGINS: SYRIA

The report references child marriage, financial insecurity, and bullying as key concerns for children. It also mentions racism and sectarianism.

“Our fears grow day by day that the war will rage on, that destruction will intensify, and that we will lose many of our friends and relatives who are still under fire in Syria,” a child wrote in the report. “What we fear most is our uncertain future. We are afraid we may never go home.”

After more than three years of conflict, 3 million Syrian children are out of school, many for two years. The reasons are many: schools destroyed or occupied by displaced families, teachers absent or deceased, and insecurity.

Syrian refugee children have overwhelmed school systems in neighboring countries. Still many find it hard to enroll and get to class, and others have to work to support their families. Aid agencies fear that the conflict is creating a “lost generation” of uneducated Syrian children.

World Vision and other agencies provide remedial education programs and Child-Friendly Spaces where refugee children can learn and heal, but funding is scarcely able to meet the needs.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for safety and security for children and families who have experienced violence in the Syrian conflict.
- Pray that children may return to school and be able to learn.
- Pray for peace in Syria and the Middle East.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The U.N. children’s agency says over the past two decades there has been a significant increase in targeting of school children and teachers and in deliberate attacks on schools. In Syria and other war zones, school buildings are used for military bases and students are recruited for armed groups. How can American churches and individual Christians stand in solidarity with children affected by violence and war in Syria? Does it matter what religion they profess whether or not to get involved?

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DAY FOUR

IN THE MARGINS: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:19)

BATTLING EXTREME POVERTY FOR LIFE

- Gemena, the largest city in northwestern DRC, had no paved roads, running water, electricity, banks, or post offices.
- One child in 10 dies before reaching age 5 in Gemena.

HOPE FOR CHILDREN’S FUTURE

The northwestern corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a forgotten land on the road to nowhere. In a desperate attempt to survive, isolated families flock to Gemena, the area’s largest city, only to realize there are no jobs, economic opportunities, or agricultural land. They build temporary mud huts on parcels they hope no one else will claim and scavenge for temporary labor that pays 50 cents a day.

Parents wake up early to beat thieves to the family’s precious crops, grown on rented land. They pick whatever meager fruits and vegetables have ripened — often the only morsels separating them from starvation.

Too often, grieving families can be seen carrying tiny caskets to an overcrowded graveyard. Tragically, most of these deaths could have been prevented.

Yet, through the prayers and sacrificial giving of a growing group of U.S. child sponsors, these families are daring to believe that a miracle is possible. Ledia, the new sponsorship program in Gemena, means “A new thing is coming to the village.” And it is.



Bwanzi Dungubako from Gemena holds her twin babies. The mother is writing a letter to relatives begging them for money to buy beans. The family only eats one meal a day, usually manioc (cassava) leaves. The last time they ate meat was 3 months ago.

DAY FOUR

IN THE MARGINS: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Parents share their excitement as they see improvement in their children's health through water and sanitation programs. Now three schools and two maternity clinics have been erected and equipped with plenty of help from community members.

Trained community volunteers ensure families of sponsored children and others in the community have the basic resources they need and remind parents about upcoming trainings. Grandmother Elise Zembe is among those learning how to ensure her grandchildren have good food to eat.

"There have been many days when we didn't have enough food for our grandchildren," Elise says. "But I learned how to feed them the right types of food, and they don't get sick as often. Now, with even a few peanuts or beans, look at how much energy they have."

"My dream for my children is that they follow God and that they have a better life than we have been able to give them," says Zelekumbi Zembi, another grandmother. "With the World Vision program, they will not suffer in poverty."

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray that the life-saving effects of clean water and sanitation will be available to everyone in Gemena.
- Pray parents will be able to provide the food their children need to grow and thrive.
- Pray that community members will grow together economically and spiritually.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Out of 187 countries, Democratic Republic of Congo is 186th on the human development index, yet the country is blessed with vast amounts of mineral wealth. Do you see a conflict in providing aid to people who are unable to tap into their nation's wealth? What role can the church play in helping them to see that the next generation benefits from economic growth from these resources?

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“But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.” Jonah 3:8

CHILDREN IN FEAR

- Of the 4.6 million people in Central African Republic, 2.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.
- More than 500,000 people have been internally displaced because of ethnic fighting.
- The U.N. children’s agency estimates more than 6,000 children have been recruited by armed groups in CAR.

CHILDREN WITHOUT HOPE

Thousands of children recruited as soldiers and sex slaves by armed groups in the Central African Republic have nowhere to go to escape violence, a World Vision child protection manager says.

Children are reporting that they are involved in militias because they are not going to school, don’t have anything to eat, or have no family to take care of them, says Edouard Ndong, World Vision’s child protection manager.

In Boali, northwest of Bangui, the capital, almost 1,000 children are part of one local militia; their numbers include more than 150 girls between 12 and 18 years old, say child protection officers in the area.

“The militia in Boali is willing to release children if there are programs to take care of them, but humanitarian organizations [including World Vision] struggle to find funding to establish such programs,” says Edouard, who was interviewed in Bangui.



The resilience of children in the middle of chaos is remarkable. People are taking refuge at the airport of Bangui, the capital city of Central African Republic. The airport is heavily protected by French and African forces, giving families some assurance of safety from the rampant conflict.

DAY FIVE

IN THE MARGINS: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

They also find it difficult to operate in many parts of the country where fighting continues, he adds. Edouard is among child protection experts from different agencies who are working together to address the crisis.

World Vision is urgently seeking funding for child protection programs. They will include Child-Friendly Spaces—safe havens for children that will provide emotional support to help them recover from psychological stress and local child protection committees to train community leaders and volunteers to care for abused children and prevent further harm.

World Vision food distribution in schools are feeding 54,000 children. For many it's their one good meal a day.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray that hostilities will cease in CAR.
- Pray that child soldiers and captives will be freed and find healing.
- Pray that families will be reunited.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The conflict in CAR has been characterized in the media as a sectarian or religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Others feel it is a political fight for control over the country. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers and a voice to help suffering children. What is our responsibility to engage with other faiths on behalf of the oppressed?

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“These double calamities have come upon you—who can comfort you?—ruin and destruction, famine and sword—who can console you?” (Isaiah 51:19)

CHILDREN FACE HUNGER, CONFLICT & DISEASE

- 4 million people—one third of the population—is severely short of food
- Internal conflict has driven 1.4 million people from their homes
- Malnutrition levels are extreme; 50,000 children could die by year’s end (2014) if they are not treated

A MOTHER’S STORY

Awol Adup, 30, struggles to raise her twin daughters in the northwestern city of Kuajok, South Sudan. The twins, Abuk Mondeng and Achan Mondeng are nearly 3 years old, but malnutrition has severely affected their growth and development.

Since last year, the twins have been suffering bouts of diarrhea and fever. They lost their appetite and became malnourished.

Many children in South Sudan are on the edge of survival due to a growing food crisis and deepening instability in the country. Aid groups have warned that without urgent action, 50,000 South Sudanese children could die by the end of 2014.

At the Agei Outpatient Therapeutic Program in Kuajok, where Awol took the twins, the number of malnourished children seems to grow every week. In the first five months of 2014, staff there admitted nearly the same number of children as in all of 2013.



Achan Monydeng eats Plumpy'nut® while seated with her mother at Agei Outpatient Therapeutic Programme Centre located in Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan.

DAY SIX

IN THE MARGINS: SOUTH SUDAN

“They were given [a peanut-based, nutrient-rich paste] Plumpy’nut® here,” Awol says*. “Children need soft and nutritious foods; I don’t have those foods at home.”

Awol and her husband are hardworking famers. They grow sorghum and groundnuts for food. Every morning, Awol tills the land to prepare it for the planting season. Then she goes to the forest to collect firewood for selling in the nearby market in order to buy food to bring home.

“Last year, our crops were destroyed by floods,” Awol says. “I don’t think we will harvest anything this year because of erratic rains.”

World Vision is working with other aid groups to prevent famine. Staff are providing food assistance, access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, and Child-Friendly Spaces, where children displaced from their homes and schools can go to play, learn, and get counseling.

**Plumpy’nut is a product of Nutriset and one of several supplemental food products used by World Vision.*

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray that children and their families will have the food, shelter, and security they need.
- Pray that hostilities will cease.
- Pray that farmers will be able to harvest a crop after this rainy season ends.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

After decades-long, brutal civil war, South Sudan declared its independence from Sudan in 2011. Now the fledgling country is embroiled in a bloody civil war. Discuss how war and violence in a country has led to the current near-famine conditions—double calamities as noted in Isaiah 51:19. What conditions have kept farmers from cultivating regular harvests? What is the effect on children—short- and long-term?

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“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” Matthew 10:1

BATTLING A CHILD KILLER - MALARIA

- Globally, 1,300 children under 5 die every day from malaria.
- 80 percent of cases and 90 percent of deaths from malaria occur in Africa.
- An African child has, on average, between 1.6 and 5.4 episodes of malarial fever a year.

NET GAIN FOR HEALTH

Malaria is draining the life out of Uganda.

The mosquito-borne disease is the second leading cause of sickness and death in the country, and one out of 5 children succumbs to the disease before the age of 5. Nearly half of all inpatient child deaths are from malaria.

Jackline Abbo, 7, vividly remembers her last bout a few months before.

“I felt heat in my body and pain in my chest. I vomited, and I coughed a lot,” she says. “I could not go to school, I could not get out of the house, I could not play, and I could not eat because I had lost appetite.”

When Jackline became ill, her mother, Sarah Akoki, took her to a nearby health center that had recently received a supply of malaria drugs from World Vision.



After recovering from malaria, seven-year-old Jackline Abbo helps her mother, Sarah Akoki, 32, peel sweet potatoes which they will cook for the family's supper.

DAY SEVEN

IN THE MARGINS: UGANDA

Uganda's Ministry of Health aims to reduce malaria-related deaths by 70 percent by the end of 2015. World Vision supports the ambitious goal by distributing bed nets, anti-malaria drugs, malaria prevention drugs for pregnant women, and rapid diagnostic tests. In 2013, World Vision distributed 500,000 bed nets in Uganda.

After nets are distributed in an area, community and faith leaders trained by the project staff incorporate malaria education and information about how to use nets in their sermons and community outreach messages.

Village health team members trained by World Vision are the first line of defense. They show and encourage families to hang their nets and always sleep under them. They share information on how to recognize symptoms and when to seek treatment.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for malaria prevention measures, like bed nets, to be available to all who need them.
- Pray for health clinics in Africa to have the diagnostic kits, drugs, and other supplies needed to treat malaria victims.
- Pray for new medicine and techniques to prevent more malaria cases and save lives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In its development work around the world, World Vision supports Christian pastors and other faith leaders to engage with the multiple needs of local children and families. To what places and people in need of care or justice are you and your congregation being called to serve?

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