



World Toilet Day: Saving Lives Through Sanitation

In the United States, we have the privilege of taking toilets for granted. They are everywhere--just a part of our daily lives. Many homes even have more than one, and they can be found in most public places. Even on a long stretch of highway, one can almost always be found when needed. But in other parts of the world, toilets save lives. Sanitation is among the first, most urgent concerns following a major disaster, and also in the ongoing development work that we support around the world. That's why today, November 19, is recognized as World Toilet Day in the humanitarian development and disaster response communities.



In September of 2018, an earthquake off the coast of Sulawesi caused a devastating tsunami on the Indonesian island. More than 5,300 people are known to have died. In the aftermath, needs were overwhelming, and thousands were left without basic necessities like food, water and shelter. Through our partners, Week of Compassion was able to help provide 235,000 liters of water daily to those in need. In addition to the fundamental necessity of clean drinking water, WASH [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene] was a primary concern. When a sanitary means of waste disposal is not readily available, disease begins to spread quickly--compounding conditions that are already unthinkable.

That's why our partners at Church World Service were focused on meeting this need from the very beginning: getting clean water to more than 13,000 people a day; delivering hygiene and sanitation information; and installing multi-stalled latrines in camps where families were taking temporary shelter. With the help of health promotion volunteers-- recruited from within the community to share healthy sanitation practices with their neighbors-- they were able to prevent the spread of disease and improve overall quality of life in these camps as families look ahead to the future.

"I get so happy when I visit a camp for a second or third time and the mothers tell me stories about their successes," says Juarni, a volunteer who was a health post worker before the tsunami. "Including that their families are now using the communal latrines and that their children are back to the habit of washing their hands before they eat." Women like Juarni are organizing as change-agents to improve the overall health of their friends, families and neighbors.

More than just meeting the needs that arise after a disaster, CWS approaches WASH as an ongoing, proactive strategy for community resilience and disaster risk reduction. Those that have access to clean water and sanitation before a disaster are healthier and more stable, and are better able to cope with the aftermath when there is a disaster. Because it is so fundamental to the health of communities, safe water, sanitation and hygiene is a key issue of international development, and is a Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations.

WASH related projects are a common thread across the whole spectrum of Week of Compassion responses. Providing clean water sources, hand-washing stations and yes, toilets, are among the first steps in many of our global development projects; a

first critical need when responding to disaster, and even a primary consideration in refugee relief. As people are relocated to a new environment, safe waste removal is a first consideration.

So today, we celebrate our partners around the world who are meeting this critical human need for millions; and we pray that this basic necessity that we take for granted might become a life-changing reality for those in need around the world.

Photo: Week of Compassion; In response to the tsunami in Central Sulawesi, our Church World Service partners are providing 235,000 liters of clean water daily.

2019 Week of Compassion Response Map since October 22



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|---|--|
| 1 Syria, Emergency Winter Relief | 2 Texas, Tornado Relief (5) |
| 3 California, Wildfire Relief | 4 North Carolina, Hurricane Florence Recovery, Fire Relief |
| 5 Missouri, Tornado Relief | 6 New York, Hurricane Florence & Irma Long-Term Recovery |
| 7 India, Drought Relief | 8 Japan, Typhoon Hagibis |
| 9 Tanzania, Women Health Support | 10 Congo, Emergency Flood Relief |
| 11 Gaza, Emergency Relief | 12 Sierra Leone, Women Empowerment Support |
| 13 South Africa, Livelihood Support | 14 Middle East, Resolution and Peace Building |
| 15 Serbia, Children and Education | 16 West Timor, Food and Nutritional Support |
| 17 Indonesia, Food and Nutritional Support | 18 Moldova, Women Empowerment Support |
| 19 Republic of Georgia, Women Empowerment Support | 20 Bosnia, Women Empowerment Support |

Mission

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world.

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