



CWRD UPDATE

THE COVENANT WORLD RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026



As Covenant World Relief and Development marks its 80th anniversary, we pause to reflect on what has sustained this ministry throughout the past eight decades. We give thanks for God's faithful provision expressed through the generosity of Covenanters across the years.

For CWRD and our partners, a consistent financial base is essential, but true sustainability goes beyond finances. It is rooted in healthy organizations and leaders, a commitment to continuous learning, and intentional investment in the people who carry the work forward. For this reason, CWRD engages with partners not only through ministry grants but also through organizational capacity building grants. These grants allow us to come alongside partners as they discern areas for growth and develop plans to address them. Often this includes connecting organizations with one another for shared learning through regional consultations.

The grants address areas of growth the partners themselves identify, from the critical work of board development to creative initiatives such as visual story-telling training. At times they focus on developing emerging leaders; at others, they strengthen entire teams. In this newsletter, you will find stories that reflect this full spectrum—each one designed to build lasting organizational sustainability.

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"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

HEBREWS 13:16
.....

As we celebrate this milestone year, I invite you to help strengthen CWRD for long-term sustainability as we seek to equip our partners to **build healthy, resilient organizations that are truly built to last.**



NILS CLAUSON, DIRECTOR

FERTILIZING THE
ROOTS OF LASTING IMPACT

What Is Capacity Building?

What does it take to create real, lasting change? It's easy to point to programs and numbers—supplies distributed, wells dug, communities served. But lasting impact goes deeper. **Capacity building strengthens the skills, systems, leadership, and resources organizations need to fulfill their mission effectively and sustainably.**

Covenant World Relief and Development's organization capacity building grants invest in that deeper work. Rather than funding a single project, these grants equip local partners to grow in areas such as leadership development, program design, research, communication, and financial management. The impact is not always immediate. Like roots growing beneath the surface, capacity-building takes time, trust, and patience.

Over time, those roots support stronger organizations, healthier communities, and more sustainable outcomes. This ensures that partners can adapt, innovate, and respond to the needs around them for years to come.

Serafina addressing the 2025 graduation class of the Malkia Program.



Freely in Hope—Serafina

Serafina Njoki knows firsthand what it means to have someone invest in your future. As an alumna of the Malkia Program run by Freely in Hope in Kenya, she experienced the life-changing impact of vocational training and mentorship. Today Serafina leads the very program that helped shape her.

As Malkia Program coordinator, Serafina has spent three years providing life skills and vocational training to women working in prostitution. **Under her leadership, 35 women have graduated, with the most recent cohort achieving 100 percent retention.**

Several graduates have launched their own businesses or found steady employment.

Freely in Hope continues to invest in Serafina's growth. Through a CWRD capacity building grant, Serafina is pursuing a certificate and diploma in project management through the Kenya Institute of Management. The grant will also fund visits to peer organizations in Kenya and Uganda, expanding Serafina's knowledge of best practices for serving vulnerable women. The investment is a direct reflection of Freely in Hope's core belief that when survivors are developed into leaders, entire communities are transformed.

AGIR-RDC—Storytelling

AGIR-RDC has spent years advocating for vulnerable people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, running programs in mental health, economic reintegration, and community mobilization. The stories were there, but the tools to tell them well were still developing.

Through an organizational capacity building grant, AGIR-RDC invested in changing that. **Nine staff members and volunteers received training in proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation, photography, video, social media strategy, and online advocacy. The goal was to build a team able to document their work and make a compelling case to partners and donors.**

AGIR-RDC's leadership recognized that better storytelling strengthens credibility, funding, and ultimately their ability to serve more people. **They committed to sharing those skills with other local organizations, recognizing that stronger Congolese voices benefit the entire region.**

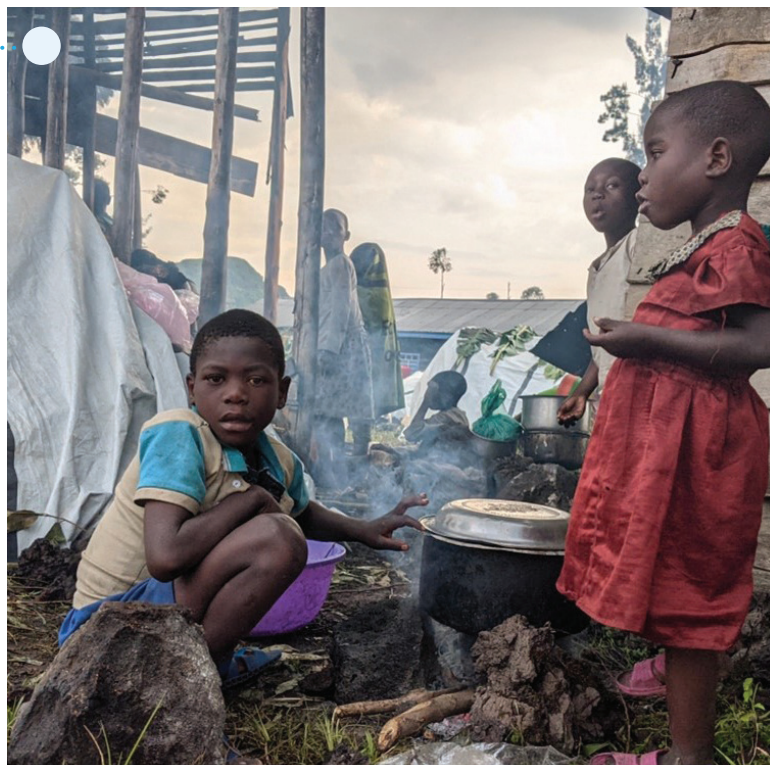


Photo captured by AGIR-RDC staff following storytelling training.



Zimele Wethu—Internships

In the townships and rural communities around KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Zimele Wethu Foundation has spent years building networks of woman-run self-help groups. These groups spawn small businesses, manage savings programs, and design projects to grow food for their families, among many other initiatives to serve the community. But with hundreds of groups across a wide-spread region, the need for hands-on support had grown beyond what their staff could manage.

With support from a capacity building grant, Zimele Wethu brought on interns who fanned out across Swayimane, Msinga, rural Durban, and Willowfontain. They helped business owners untangle financial records, supported farmers with planting cycles and pest control, and introduced branding basics.

One specific example was the work on adult literacy. **Many older members had relied on younger people for bookkeeping. When the younger generation moved on, the knowledge went with them. Interns worked to change that, building skills that last a lifetime.**

FUNDEFAM—Keyla

In 2011, at seventeen years old, Keyla Castro Amaro wrote a reflection titled “Sparks, Flames, and Torches,” describing a vision shaped by her childhood in the Cerro de la Campana neighborhood of Monterrey, Mexico. Surrounded by poverty, violence, and family instability—yet grounded in a strong church community—Keyla sensed an early calling to make a difference. What she described as a “spark of faith” was a conviction that changing the life of one child could transform an entire future.

Over the years, that spark grew into a deeply rooted commitment to her community. Through her leadership with FUNDEFAM and the long-running Kids’ Club, Keyla has created spaces where children are nurtured, supported, and reminded of their worth. She now serves as the director of FUNDEFAM.

At a critical moment of transition for FUNDEFAM, a capacity building grant made it possible to invest in intentional mentorship and leadership development. With extended time for guidance and formation, Keyla was able to learn alongside experienced leaders—strengthening not only her own capacity, but the long-term stability of the organization.

Today, FUNDEFAM continues to build programs, form partnerships, and strengthen initiatives that serve vulnerable families. The vision Keyla named as a teenager remains the same, but now it is rooted in a growing organization, prepared to sustain and expand its impact for years to come.



Shanti Nepal—WASH Research

For more than 15 years, Shanti Nepal has walked alongside communities in Nepal, addressing one of development work’s most persistent challenges: helping people sustainably change hygiene and sanitation behaviors. They have seen Open Defecation Free campaigns succeed in some villages and fade in others. Over time they realized the answers were already in their project data, if they had the tools to uncover them.

With support from a Covenant World Relief and Development capacity building grant, Shanti Nepal launched its first formal research initiative within the Jwalamukhi Total Sanitation Project in Dhading. Staff received research training, data was collected using the DigiWASH mobile app, and a WASH expert guided the process from design through analysis.

The goal was to better understand what drives change and what hinders it, so future work can be more focused and effective. Even with extensive experience, Shanti Nepal is still looking for ways to improve their community impact.

THE IRENE HILL FUND: GROWING A LEGACY

CIRCA 1980

Irene Hill attends a presentation by director Cliff Bjorklund and is **INSPIRED** to give to Covenant World Relief.

EARLY 2000s

Fund begins to **OFFSET** administrative and operational costs.

2001

Covenant World Relief receives **\$684,494** from Irene Hill's estate.

2010s

Fund **EXPANDS** to include capacity-building, leadership development, and vision trips.

OCTOBER 31, 2001

Covenant Commission on World Relief **VOTES** to establish the Irene Hill Fund investment account.

PRESENT

Fund continues to **SUSTAIN** operations, invest in leaders, and support long-term transformation.

The Irene Hill Fund began with a powerful act of generosity. While little is known about Irene Hill herself, her legacy continues to shape the work of Covenant World Relief and Development in profound ways. After attending a presentation by then-director Cliff Bjorklund, Irene chose to include Covenant World Relief in her estate plans, an intentional act of faith that would impact generations. In 2001, her bequest of \$684,494 established the Irene Hill Fund as an investment account, creating a sustainable resource for the future of the ministry. **From the beginning, the fund helped cover administrative costs, allowing an extraordinary percentage of donations to go directly to partners.** Over time, its purpose expanded. Today, a portion of the fund supports emergency response, vision trips, and most significantly, capacity building equipping partners and local leaders with training, resources, and networks needed to strengthen their communities and lead lasting change. The Irene Hill Fund continues to grow through careful stewardship and additional bequests, serving as a powerful reminder that planned giving is not only about financial provision, but also about legacy.

Irene Hill may not have known the full impact her gift would make, but her decision continues to multiply hope, empower leaders, and sustain transformation around the world. Her story invites us to consider: what legacy might we leave behind?

Our team would appreciate the opportunity to visit with you about your planned giving and legacy.
CONTACT US AT CWRD@COVCHURCH.ORG.



Growing Disciples Who Love Their Neighbor



Kids Helping Kids is a flexible discipleship resource designed to help children follow Jesus by loving others. Through stories of children around the world and the work of Covenant partners, kids begin to see their place in God's global family.

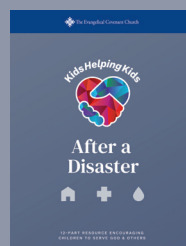
Each session invites children to **engage Scripture, reflect on real-world needs, and respond in meaningful ways through prayer, generosity, and action.** Whether used in Sunday school, midweek programs, VBS, or camp settings, Kids Helping Kids helps churches create shared faith experiences that form compassion, deepen understanding, and encourage children to live out their faith together.

Explore the Curriculums



Caring for God's Creation

Invites children to care for the earth as an act of worship. Kids will discover how stewardship reflects God's love and learn practical ways to care for creation in their own communities.



After a Disaster

Explores how disasters affect children and families around the world. Kids will learn how the church responds in times of crisis and discover ways they can offer care, prayer, and support.



Refugees Around the World

Helps children understand displacement and see refugees as neighbors. Kids will develop empathy and explore meaningful ways to respond with compassion and welcome.



Peacemaking

Encourages children to become peacemakers in everyday life. Kids will learn how faith shapes the way we respond to conflict and pursue reconciliation.



Clean Water

Introduces the global water crisis and its impact on children. Kids will learn how access to clean water changes lives, and they will be invited to take simple, tangible steps to bring hope to others.



Vulnerable Children

Shares stories of children facing hardship and the hope found through Christ-centered care. Kids will be invited to respond with compassion and consider how they can support and encourage others.

Access the Curriculum

All Kids Helping Kids resources are available for download and designed to be adapted for your ministry setting. You can choose individual sessions or the full series, depending on your needs.

Visit covchurch.org/kids-helping-kids to download the materials.

We'd love to hear how you're using Kids Helping Kids—share your stories and photos with us at CWRD@covchurch.org.



Covenant World Relief
and Development
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The Evangelical Covenant Church

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Covenant World Relief and Development is funded solely through gifts specifically designated to CWRD. **We fully depend on churches and individuals like you to continue this ministry.** To learn more about giving to CWRD, please contact us at cwrdd@covchurch.org.