



welt  
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For a world without hunger

# magazine

what we achieve together

**MALAWI:**

**Using nature as  
a model: A concept  
to fight hunger**

**AFGHANISTAN:**

**Strengthening education and  
hoping for peace**

**SYRIA:**

**Enough to drink at last**



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The seal of approval of the German Institute for Social Issues (DZI) certifies the efficient and responsible handling of the funds that have been entrusted to the organisation. As a sign of this trust, Welthungerhilfe has held the seal of approval since 1992

## Dear friends of Welthungerhilfe,

I am very pleased to welcome you to this second English edition of our Welthungerhilfe magazine. In a way, we 'know' each other already. In my role as Director of Programmes, I have regularly been reporting on my project travels here. As of September 2018, I have taken on the role of Secretary General, which does not feel so very new and different at all. For the past 20 years, I have worked wholeheartedly for this very worthy organization, first as a regional coordinator in Mali, then in Bonn, being responsible for the work in our project countries.

The wealth of ideas, the persistence and courage of our colleagues and the people we work with all over the world impresses me over and over again. When I talk to them on a day-to-day basis, read their news and reports or meet them, I often feel very enthusiastic about our work and think – what a great project, what an impressive story! Then, I usually want to know more and spread the news.

Our aim with this magazine is to present a realistic and dynamic picture of our work and the

lives of the people we work for. Every day, we witness how our various activities bear fruit. There is, for example, the issue of a land rights law in Liberia finally taking the interests of the farming families into account (p. 8). Or there are the farmers in Malawi, managing to increase the quality of their harvests and generating a larger output through trainings on permaculture (p. 10).

What enables us to inform the public, win over supporters and learn from each other, are the hands-on reports that our colleagues in the field deliver. I am very happy to share some of the touching stories with you in this issue of our magazine, stories that have an impact.

Yours sincerely



Mathias Mogge  
Secretary General



*The "Skill Up!"-program in Uganda trains Zainabu as a car mechanic.*



*The project beneficiaries' level of trust it what counts for Mathias Mogge. The success of a project depends on it.*

# Clear-cut rules for respect and quality

Accountability is about exchanging with communities, informing them about our work and enabling their participation. This strengthens our ‘help for self-help’ approach and makes our project work more effective. At the same time, Welthungerhilfe’s accountability measures also help us to monitor any cases of abuse, exploitation or corruption. Welthungerhilfe’s accountability advisors Ute Braun and Sonya Wellhausen explain how it works.



*Sonya Wellhausen is a Welthungerhilfe project manager and global advisor for accountability. She is based in Iraq from where she works on implementing the Core Humanitarian Standard in all our projects in the Middle East.*



*Ute Braun has been Welthungerhilfe’s accountability advisor since March 2018, based in our head office in Bonn in Germany. Her job is to introduce the Core Humanitarian Standard to all departments, to strengthen networks in the global North and to support the project countries in ‘the South.’*

## What exactly does accountability mean in your work?

**Sonya Wellhausen:** it’s about respect – towards the project participants, our partner organisations and all our national and international colleagues. Values such as transparency, respect or participation have of course always been important to Welthungerhilfe, but now we have a more systematic approach. We want to make existing standards, ethical principles and positions verifiable. We do this by applying the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (see info box) to systematically introduce its values into all areas of our work and all project countries.

**Ute Braun:** these rules offer concrete guidelines, which help us to do what is right and to improve and protect the quality of our work. When we started to implement the process, for example, we discovered gaps in the way complaints from communities were managed. That’s what we are currently focusing on improving.

## How does the complaints management work?

**Sonya Wellhausen:** in one of our projects, we distributed millet in a region of Kenya, via the World Food Programme. But the families preferred rice: they said that they were unfamiliar with this type of grain and that they didn’t know how to cook and prepare it. One way to respond to such a complaint would be just to say: stop making a fuss, you’re getting the millet for free, and it’s good for you. Or you react the way Welthungerhilfe does and say: millet is more nutritious than rice, so let’s organise a workshop on nutrition, work out some recipes and show you how you can prepare it. That way you treat people respectfully and enable them to make their own decisions.

## What other examples are there?

**Sonya Wellhausen:** in Liberia, we had people complain about the rubber boots that we had delivered to them. This helped us realize that we had bought low quality and needed to change the supplier. That unfor-

tunately does not work in all of our projects, but we are learning from this feedback for the future.

In Nepal, people asked us why their village wasn’t part of the project. That is a legitimate question and shows us that we must ensure to share information, so that people know beforehand what the guidelines and criteria for the selection of the target groups are.

## Is it wise to put an additional burden on distressed people by polling them?

**Sonya Wellhausen:** : people who are fighting for their survival know what their needs are and are interested in sharing their knowledge with us. In the future we want to take their experiences and opinions even more seriously than we have done so far. Even for emergency situations, there are short checklists regarding basic questions. People know, for example, which kinds of goods are available in their villages. And we want to support the local markets, not destroy them.

## Which forms of complaint management are there?

**Sonya Wellhausen:** that depends on the local situation. In the Philippines, almost everyone has a mobile phone and literacy rates are very high. So back when Typhoon Haiyan hit, Welthungerhilfe offered a free text messaging hotline. In South Sudan, however, only very few people own a mobile phone, rural areas have almost no coverage and many people are illiterate. In that case, we set up ‘complaint desks’ during food distributions. Everyone can place a complaint there. Additionally, there are local email addresses and we always make sure there is at least one way of placing



complaints anonymously – for example via a telephone hotline or a complaints box.

If we're talking about sensitive issues such as sexual abuse, exploitation or corruption, we also have a form on our website that makes anonymous registrations of complaints possible for both the project participants as well as staff.

**Sexual abuse in humanitarian organisations is an issue that is currently attracting a lot of publicity. How is Welthungerhilfe handling it?**

**Ute Braun:** we have a clearcut code of conduct that everyone has to adhere to and that new staff are oriented on from the start. Abuse of any kind and corruption are very sensitive issues, and we need to guarantee confidentiality to both sides – towards the victims but also towards the accused. That's what our anonymous email forms are for. If someone



reports a violation of our code of conduct, their identity will be protected. We also monitor and check responsibilities and mechanisms regularly: do complaints reach the correct department or person? Are there any loopholes that make it possible to sweep something under the rug?

**That sounds like a lot of work costing a lot of money. Is it worth it?**

**Sonya Wellhausen:** from an ethical point of view, it is our duty to support the right to self-determination of the people on whose behalf we receive donations. On a practical level, accountability improves the quality of the projects and actually reduces follow-up costs. If you want good and successful projects, you need to talk to people and ask them what they want and need. And you need to make it possible for them to be able to communicate whatever

is not working. That is the only way you can make corrections in time.

When we improve our systems and that way lose less money, it pays off in the end. Some of my colleagues were sceptical at first, because they worried the process would cost them time and energy. A year later, they came to me and said: "Wow, the complaints management has really helped us to improve the project, when can we continue?"

*The interview was conducted by Constanze Bandowski, a Hamburg-based freelance journalist*



*Photo centre: Sonya Wellhausen and her colleagues Trokon Bryant (l.) and Zinne Kpadeh (r.) are asking project participants whether they are satisfied with the work of Welthungerhilfe.*

*Photo left: this also includes the participation of the village communities*

*Photo below: projects improve when people have the chance to say what they need.*

## Fighting abuse, exploitation and corruption

As an active member, Welthungerhilfe began the implementation of a set of rules in 2012, meant to monitor quality, transparency, respect and the degree of participation. Since then, 250 organisations have signed up to the **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability**. Welthungerhilfe has introduced it in 19 of its 38 project countries so far, where it is now applied in our work. The Federal Foreign Office of Germany financed the pilot phase. Now, a team of Welthungerhilfe staff works on establishing the rules and values of these standards for all national and international employees, all partner organisations and project participants.





## Living under the most extreme conditions



*During her visit Jessica Kühnle heard countless stories of refugees' suffering.*

*Photo, top: People live in very cramped conditions in improvised accommodation.*

Welthungerhilfe staff member Jessica Kühnle travelled to Bangladesh in mid-November to find out for herself about the conditions experienced by the Rohingya people who have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. She visited some refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, including the Bhalu Khali megacamp.

*By Jessica Kühnle*

We are on the way to Cox's Bazar, and even at Dhaka airport the whole situation still seems unreal to me. With 120 kilometres of sandy beaches, Cox's Bazar is a popular destination for domestic tourism. Alongside families travelling to the coast to spend a weekend on the beach, there are staff from international aid agencies, like us, who are here to mitigate a terrible humanitarian disaster.

The scale of this disaster is enormous, and the size of the camps is shocking. In the course of a few weeks, 650,000 Rohingya people fled from Myanmar to Cox's Bazar, and every one of them is dependent on humanitarian assistance. Coordinating this is a huge challenge. Improvised camps are constantly springing up, sometimes in the space of a few hours. New

arrivals settle in rice fields, on hills, or by the roadside – anywhere that a spot of land is still available.

However, although these refugees are now in safety, they are living in horrendous conditions. There are not enough sanitary facilities – several hundred people often have to share a single toilet. Only a few people have any access to clean water. There is a high risk of catching infectious diseases like cholera, measles and polio.

### **Traumatised by unimaginable violence**

It is a drastic situation for newcomers in particular. Most families had to leave all their possessions behind when they fled. They have spent all their savings on travelling from Myanmar to Bangladesh



(across the river by boat) and on materials to build improvised accommodation.

Many refugees are exhausted after walking for days and traumatised by their shocking experiences. Like Rhena, who fled to Bangladesh with her mother Badu and her four children, to escape the violence in her home village. They travelled for several days on foot without food or drinking water, often having to hide in the mountains.

Rhena describes gruesome attacks on the villagers. She had to watch while young girls were systematically raped. Many did not survive the torture. Houses were set on fire, and men were arrested arbitrarily. She tells me that her husband was also arrested when he tried to protect his family. Rhena still does not know where he is, or if he is even still alive.

Traumatic memories are not the only problem for the refugees: many are sick, have fever, or suffer from respiratory problems. There is also severe under-nutrition. Everything is in short supply, and the people need urgent help. Welthungerhilfe has been working with its local partner, Anando, to distribute

food parcels with lentils, oil, salt and sugar to a total of 2,500 families. They have also been handing out parcels with soap, nappies, buckets, water containers and other hygiene products. 840 people have received one so far.

Most of the refugees have only been here for a few days or weeks, but some have been here for 25 years. They came to Cox's Bazar with the first large wave of refugees in 1991. At that time the violent attacks on Rohingya Muslims had already begun in Myanmar. It is simply shocking to hear these stories, and it shows me the enormous scope and duration of this conflict.

What strikes me about this humanitarian crisis is the uncertain future facing the refugees. They are stateless, nobody wants to take them, and they have no rights or prospects. No solution has been found so far, and the people will continue to rely on our humanitarian assistance. We must ensure that they do not slip off the public's radar, so their situation does not become another "forgotten crisis."

*Photo below: The families had to leave everything behind in their home country to make their way to an uncertain future.*

**As a member of the emergency assistance team, Arjan Ottens accompanied the distribution of aid supplies in the refugee camp:**

"The appalling sanitary conditions in the overcrowded camps are particularly worrying. There is a high risk of epidemics, and there have already been cases of diphtheria. We are continuing to distribute soap, washing powder and other supplies to improve hygiene. We have also started raising awareness about hygiene, as this extreme situation requires special measures. Over the coming months we are planning peacebuilding activities, because the incredibly cramped conditions are a breeding ground for conflicts. Our partner, Anando, has a lot of expertise in this area. The people here also urgently need an income. These huge camps are the size of a large city. We are planning to help families to set up small companies, for example."





## A victory over land grabs!

*A hard-fought battle lies behind Alphonso B. Henries and the working group for land rights reform.*

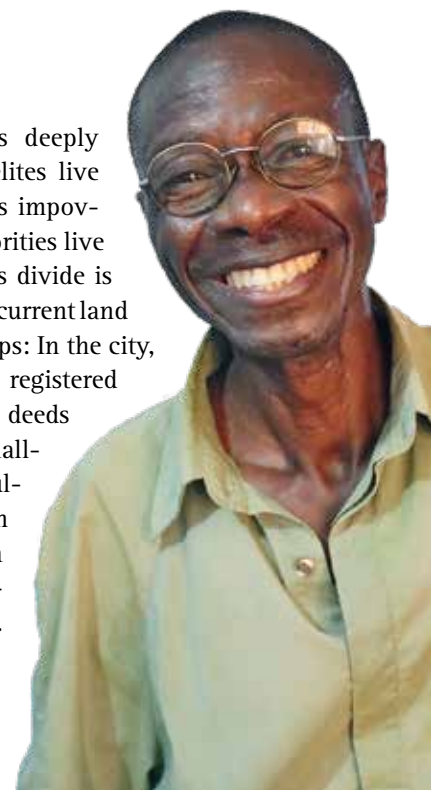
*Photo (middle): They won a ground-breaking victory together.*

Liberia is one of the world's poorest countries, and its nutrition situation is alarming. This is due, in large part, to weak land rights. 85 percent of people subsist on small-scale farming, which is based on traditional customary law. However, this practice is not covered by any official land titles. Land is owned either privately or by the state, which is awarding more and more concessions to foreign investors. Now, people have organised and successfully fought for fair land rights.

*By Celia Ruiz*

If anyone had told Alphonso B. Henries ten years ago that he would give up his career as a civil engineer in order to fight for land rights as a consultant and lobbyist in his home country of Liberia, he would have laughed out loud – but that is exactly what ended up happening. “I have no regrets,” says the chairman of the Civil Society Organisation’s (CSO) working group for land reform. This is no wonder, since, in conjunction with his fellow campaigners from more than 20 civil society organisations and with both national and international support, Alphonso B. Henries finally pushed a land reform through the senate to secure the future of the rural small-scale farmers and thereby that of the entire society.

Liberian society is deeply divided: Wealthy elites live in the city, whereas impoverished ethnic minorities live in the country. This divide is also reflected in the current land tenancy relationships: In the city, written laws with registered land registers and deeds apply, but the small-scale farmers are cultivating their land in accordance with traditional, unwritten customary law.





Hardly anyone possesses an official land title. The government acknowledges only their right to use the soil. Even now, 15 years after the end of the destructive civil war, this has not changed. Quite to the contrary: More and more farmers and their families are afraid for their livelihoods, and the pro-business government is awarding concessions for palm oil, rubber, and other large-scale plantations to foreign investors left and right. This is what the new law is counteracting.

### No future without land

“The investors have been negotiating exclusively with the government,” complains Alphonso B. Henries. “Nobody talks with the communities that actually own the land. The communities are not even informed. It’s no wonder that they have begun to complain.” This was the impetus for the CSO’s working group for land rights, which formed when the first land reform draft came before parliament in 2014. “This proposal took customary law into consideration, which made it the perfect answer to Liberia’s land problems,” said Henries. By contrast, the old law facilitated corruption, nepotism, and land grabs. Of course, the political decision makers did not want to lose those privileges, so they changed the proposed law to such an extent that barely anything of the original proposal remained. In 2017, parliament passed this pro-business law, leaving the future of the reform in the hands of the senate.

Alphonso B. Henries and his fellow campaigners organised even more intensive campaigns, workshops, and educational events, and they collected 80,000 signatures for a land reform for the common good. Welthungerhilfe supported them in this. “Land rights play a decisive role in securing people’s nutrition,” explains Sahr Nouwah, an on-site project manager. For this reason, CSO’s working groups are receiving support via training on project management, information procurement, campaign planning, evaluation and moni-



*They all learned a lot about resisting injustice when it came to land allocation.*

*Welthungerhilfe training sessions bolstered the working group’s most engaged members.*

toring, and legal aid – everything required for developing an active civil society, so that the people can better represent their interests.

“What did I know about project planning or management when I started?” asks Alphonso B. Henries. “We’re all amateurs.” Now, he and the other dedicated women and men are learning conversation techniques, argumentation, rhetoric, and simply to keep their temper. “The hardest part of my new job is dealing with leadership personalities who can be extremely stubborn. But even when they are sometimes infuriating, we need to be very careful how we choose our words, how we address them, and how we act,” says Alphonso B. Henries. He has done a good job. After four and a half years of hard work, on 23 August 2018, the senate passed a land rights law that takes customary law into consideration, giving the majority of Liberians a chance at a better life. The former civil engineer can take a short break, but the struggle for justice continues, and the difficult implementation process of the law is still ahead. Alphonso is ready to meet this challenge.

*Celia Ruiz is a Junior Expert for Welthungerhilfe in Liberia and is following the progress of Alphonso and his companions.*





# Using nature as a model: A concept to fight hunger

Mangochi and Dedza are among the least developed districts of Malawi. Maize is what grows in most of the fields, but even this sturdy cereal is drying up due to the repeated droughts of the past years. Families use wood to cook the little bit of food that they still have. The deforestation rate in this area is the highest one in southern Africa. Together with Welthungerhilfe and local partner organisations, the farming families are now acquiring the knowledge to engage in more diverse farming and to protect their forests.

*By Thees Jagels*



Jenifer Dokali's forehead is covered with sweat as she waters the plants in the vegetable garden behind her house with a 20-litre watering can. It is hot – 35 degrees Celsius. "It hasn't rained yet during this week, so watering the plants is very important," says the small-scale farmer from the village of Chiwalo, situated on Lake Malawi. What happens when you don't take care of the watering is something she experienced during the extreme droughts of the past years. The maize in her field, which is three kilometres away, dried up. "It was difficult during that time, to find something that I could prepare for my children to eat every day."

**„We teach the farmers how they can grow several crops at once.“**

The vegetable garden behind her house is the first step to help avoid such situations in the future. The garden is almost like an oasis – pumpkin leaves, tomatoes and maize thrive here in rich colours. "I didn't expect anything to grow here," she says, pointing to the sandy soil as she harvests pumpkin leaves for lunch. "That is why everyone has their fields three kilometres away – the soil is less sandy there."

She had planted the garden four months earlier, following the concept of permaculture. "I'm making use of nature and its laws and am introducing effective changes that way." For her vegetable cultivation, she copies synergies from various ecosystems. Plants that benefit from each other grow side by side: for example, marigolds as insect repellents next to the pumpkins. The household's wastewater is used for irrigation. Straw on the ground prevents the water from evaporating right away. Instead of industrial fertilizers, compost is produced from waste.

### Sharing the acquired knowledge

She gained her knowledge about permaculture in a training course at Welthungerhilfe's partner Kusamala. "In the test area, I saw how many different plants can grow on one field, and I wanted something like that," says Jenifer. In her village, Jenifer has also become a 'model farmer' so that she is not the only one benefiting from the training. With the help of Davie Phiri, who works for Kusamala, she has created a 'demonstration garden' behind her house. Welthungerhilfe provides the training, seeds and gardening tools. The project receives financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"It's important to us to show farmers that they can grow several crops at once," says Davie. "Most of them grow nothing but maize. The concept of permaculture is unknown to them." As a model farmer, Jenifer passes on what she has learned to 20 other

*A 'model farmer' shows the other village inhabitants what she has learned about preparing compost.*



*Before, the families grew only maize, now there is a variety of vegetables growing in their gardens.*

*Photo above right: Jenifer Dokali prepares freshly picked pumpkin leaves for lunch*

*Photo right: in the future, the villagers want to process and sell the fruit of the baobab tree.*

smallholders in the village. “Whenever I start on something new or prepare compost, I invite the others into my garden,” says Jenifer. Everyone is very interested. “Some have already begun to build a similar garden.”

Before boiling the freshly picked pumpkin leaves, Jenifer goes to Lake Malawi, which is 500 meters away, to fetch some water for cooking. “With the used water, I can later water the plants,” she says, returning with the 15-litre bucket of water balancing on her head.





She then proceeds to cook on an open fire, using firewood that she collected in the woods four kilometres away. “Unfortunately, that is the closest forest now, because everyone from the village needs firewood,” says Jenifer with a worried voice, while she cuts up the pumpkin leaves for lunch. She is particularly concerned about the lack of wood, because the forest is another source of income for her. For five years she had been collecting and selling the fruit of the Baobab tree. But last year, the company that processed the fruit into cosmetic powder went bankrupt.

#### A business plan for the future

In the future, the Zankhalango farmers’ association, of which Jenifer is a member, wants to process the fruits themselves and market and sell the cosmetic powder. With the assistance of Welthungerhilfe, they are currently working on developing a business plan. However, such a business can only thrive when the Baobab trees don’t get cut down. “We’ve already started to plant new tree seedlings,” says Jenifer. Fast-growing trees are supposed to supply the firewood in the future, protecting the existing forests.

## Interview

Thirty-year-old Davie Phiri works for the Malawian organisation Kusamala and supports the model farmers in the Mangochi District in creating permaculture areas. He studied environmental sciences and is enthusiastic about the joint project with Welthungerhilfe.



**What is permaculture?** Permaculture is a concept that follows the ‘laws’ of nature and makes an ideal use of resources possible. If you just let nature be, all sorts of plants start to grow. We observe which plants thrive where in a natural surrounding and what that surrounding looks like. Then we follow that pattern when we plant our gardens: we put plants together that also seek each other’s ‘company’ when they grow in the wild.

**How does this method differ from monoculture?** Here in Malawi, almost all farmers grow maize and nothing else. But maize isn’t even a native plant and needs a lot of fertilizer. When there is a drought, the farmers have no alternative sources of income or nutrition. Permaculture works with diversity and native species and relies on effective and continuous sustainable cycles. And we make the fertilizer ourselves – from compost.

**Have the farmers accepted the concept?** The model farmers are very happy with the results and what their gardens are yielding. Many of them weren’t aware that it was possible to grow so many different plants together in such a small space.

**What are the plans for the future?** We are lucky that this Welthungerhilfe project is planned to run for five years. That way, we can work with the farmers on a long-term basis. We now want to start supporting additional farmers in creating their gardens. With some of them, we’ll also integrate livestock. Since the middle of 2018, Welthungerhilfe has also started to introduce health-clubs where the villagers are training each other regarding hygiene issues.

*In addition to new cultivation methods, hygiene will soon become an issue for the villagers as well*



*Soon, it will become evident whether the permaculture concept can show results on the test field*

*The results of her vegetable garden are visible on Jenifer's family's plates every day*



At lunchtime, Jenifer's children arrive home from school. Together, they have lunch sitting on a bamboo mat. They eat the Malawian national dish Nsima, a porridge made from maize flour, along with the cooked pumpkin leaves and tomatoes from the garden. "I used to have to buy vegetables on the market," says Jenifer. Often, she did not have enough money for that. Since she has her own garden, she can easily supply her family with fresh vegetables.

## Country Information

### Background Malawi

Malawi ranks at 173 out of 188 countries listed in the United Nations Human Development Index and seems to stagnate there. As a landlocked country with a population growth of over three percent, and an inflation rate of 25 percent, Malawi is caught in a poverty trap. One tenth of the population lives with HIV/AIDS, only 40 percent of the children attend primary school, where up to 130 pupils make up the average class size. Around 21 percent of the population is malnourished and over 42 percent of children under the age of five are stunted. For the development of the country, it will be an immense challenge to change the poor food and nutrition situation of its population.



After lunch, Jenifer makes her way to her field. The walk through the blazing midday sun takes one hour. "Today, I have to weed in the experimental field," she says and gets to work. A week ago, together with Kusamala employee Davie Phiri, she laid out the 25 square metre test field according to the principle of permaculture. However, the field will not thrive in the same way as her garden, because only rainwater is available for irrigation. Other water sources are too far away.

### Setting out on new paths

"I do want to try out whether I can increase my yields with these new methods," says Jenifer. In the future she wants to sell parts of her harvest on the market. "But I won't grow maize anymore," says Jenifer confidently as she walks back to the village, along the maize fields of the other farmers.

*Thees Jagels is a freelance journalist based in Cologne. He visited the project at the end of 2017.*

# Innovation reduces hunger

Digitisation is changing the economy, politics and society – and development cooperation can also harness its enormous potential. Welthungerhilfe organised an international innovation prize to find out how we can use new ideas to work more effectively. The three winning ideas have something in common: They can be applied for various projects and countries, and they make a decisive contribution to the goal of “Zero hunger by 2030.”

By Anna Kröger



One of the winners of the innovation prize was the „**Child Growth Monitor**“ app, which uses computers to detect child malnutrition. A mobile phone is used to carry out a 3D scan on a child, recording its size and weight; it immediately shows if the child is malnourished. This saves money and above all data collection time, as it is no longer necessary to measure size and weight with a tape and a set of scales. The app lets staff at aid organisations know earlier on if they need to take action, and in many cases this can save lives. Digital data gathering makes it easier to monitor entire regions and to react more quickly and effectively.

The second winner, the “**AgriShare**” app, also uses smartphones. It links African small-scale farmers with other farmers, organisations or companies, to enable cooperation. It allows them to share resources and offer services. For example, a farmer can use the app to advertise and rent out a specially equipped tractor in their area. People can use the app to find a mechanic and make a direct booking. The idea has also received recognition outside Welthungerhilfe: AgriShare won the Jury Award at the WFP Innovation Pitch Night.

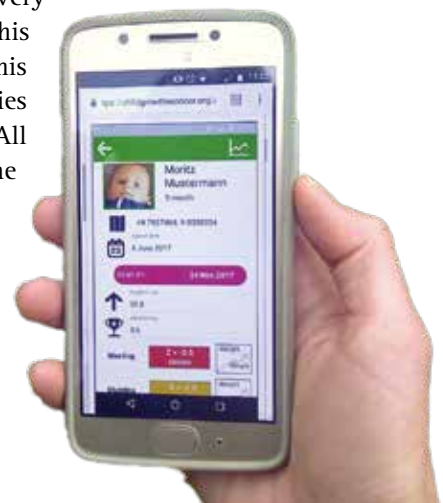
The third idea is “**Qur’an for Nutrition**”. It offers religious opinion leaders in communities an active involvement in developing information material on health and nutrition. The idea is to interact with local customs, so as not to be perceived as external

competition. Welthungerhilfe staff in Afghanistan, for example, have described the barriers to providing advice on nutrition. People in rural parts of the country in particular seek advice from their mullahs on all areas of life, including breastfeeding and family planning. However, the advice that these give varies widely, depending on how they interpret the Qur’an. “Qur’an for Nutrition” aims to improve nutrition practice among pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and children through uniformly high-quality nutrition advice. Local staff will work together closely with mullahs to develop content for advising parents. This might involve videos explaining what the Qur’an says about nutrition, for example. The Qur’an states that every child should be breastfed, so long as this does not harm the mother’s health. This concept could be used in other countries and with different religious groups. All three winning ideas are already in the pilot phase. To find out more about innovation at Welthungerhilfe, please contact:

Antje.Blohm@welthungerhilfe.de,  
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*Welthungerhilfe IT specialist Tawanda Hove from Zimbabwe presents the “AgriShare” app at the WFP Innovation Pitch Night.*

*Photo, bottom: In a matter of seconds the “Child Growth Monitor” lets you know if a child is undernourished.*



*Anna Kröger works as a freelancer for the Welthungerhilfe online editorial department.*





A young girl, Naomi, is looking out from a doorway in a makeshift settlement. She is wearing a yellow top and a pink and white patterned skirt. The settlement is built with corrugated metal and wood, and the ground is dirt. The background shows more of the settlement and some trees under a clear sky.

## How football creates peace

14-year-old Naomi has a dream: she wants to play in the national football team of the Central African Republic and earn money for her family. She doesn't have many chances in a country that has been sinking into violence and humanitarian disasters for years. Again and again, conflicts escalate between Muslim and Christian groups. Now a football school, founded by Welthungerhilfe, starts with the youngest – and in addition to sports, teaches the idea of tolerant coexistence. Project initiator Georg Dörken: “The school is a way to create peace. And that is what the country needs most urgently. Only then will the battle against poverty and the serious hunger situation succeed.” Naomi was lucky – she was chosen to be a student. Later she wants to spread the values of the school to others. And that means: goal!

*Read more about this project on our website: [www.welthungerhilfe.org/football-school-bangui](http://www.welthungerhilfe.org/football-school-bangui)*

## No news from the coast

On the evening of 19 May, Cyclone Sagar reached the coast of Somaliland, killing people and animals and destroying fields and water supply systems. The Welthungerhilfe team, government employees, and the UN stayed in communication via smartphones, sharing urgent information and photos. Decisions had to be made on the spot, and plans had to be adjusted. The news items selected by Welthungerhilfe Programme Manager Thomas Hoerz reveal the high degree of pressure – and professionalism – that characterised this emergency aid action.

**Saturday, 19 May, 20:23, Thomas Hoerz:** The coast seems completely cut off from telephone communications. Please post immediately if you hear something from there.

**Sunday, 20 May, 15:17, Mohamed Muse** (Agricultural Consultant): The rain is not letting up, with unbelievable water levels in the wadis. Some farmers have lost almost all of their fields. Nearly all of the crops have been destroyed. No news from the coast.



**Sunday, 20 May, 20:33, Abdisalam Abdi** (Welthungerhilfe On-Site Representative): Our scouting team could not cross the Agabar river today; water level still far too high. The rain has abated. We are camping and hoping to cross tomorrow morning.

**Sunday, 20 May, 21:30, Hussien Ibrahim** (Local Emergency Coordinator): The mayor of Gargaara just called; the rain has stopped after nearly 30 hours. He heard of 25 deaths, but the coast is still completely out of contact. The towers are probably all down.

**Monday, 21 May, 15:24, Thomas Hoerz:** Here are the first photos of sheep and goats dead en masse. Probably from the cold: 20-30 hours of ice-cold rain with strong wind and no barns. No-one knows how many people died. Between 50 and 200 dead.



*Cyclone Sagar destroyed even the last reserves of the already suffering population. The families are in urgent need of help.*

**Wednesday, 23 May, 5:56, Hussien Mohamed** (Head of Project – Water): Almost all wells have been destroyed. We need to start a campaign to warn people about the dangers of contaminated water right away! All hygiene committees in the area need to be mobilised! There are dead animals everywhere. We will be receiving bids for tankers for drinking water at 10:00.

**Thursday, 24 May, 20:43, Mahdi Abdurahman** (Head of Project – Distribution): We are evaluating bids from local merchants. Can we provide an 88 USD package to each of 2,000 families? Thomas, please send an urgent request to Bonn; we need to place the order tomorrow morning. Abdiasis: Please get bids for lorries to transport the food, tarpaulins, and blankets ASAP. If possible, insist on all-wheel drive, because many wadis are still barely negotiable.

**Friday, 25 May, 22:48, Hamse Guled** (Water & Hygiene Expert): Just finished Day 1 of the “Safe Water” campaign, 2,500 people reached, almost all of them youth or women. Why are the tankers not coming??



**Saturday, 26 May, 12:43, Hussien Ibrahim:** Tankers picked up water here in Garbo Dadar. It took nearly 38 hours instead of 6. Distance from water containers to deep well: 14 km of very poor road. We sent two teams with pickaxes, shovels, and wheelbarrows to repair the worst of the road. The tanker for Gargaara had to turn back; it can't get through. We will send 80 workers to fix that part of the road tomorrow. Must reach Gargaara.

**Saturday, 26 May, 12:56, Thomas Hoerz:** Hussein, the lorry with shovels, wheelbarrows, and pickaxes has been on the road for 20 hours. It should be arriving soon. We need to ask the farmers to bring all of their tools along to clear the road for the tanker tomorrow.

**Saturday, 26 May, 22:05, Mathias Mogge** (Welthungerhilfe Executive Director Programmes in Bonn): A big thank you to all of our colleagues in Somaliland who are working so hard to let us supply the affected people quickly and well!

**Saturday, 26 May, 22:44, Abdikadir Ali-Balde** (Hydraulic Engineer): Lorries for 1,000 families loaded; drivers want to leave tonight; distribution tomorrow in Kaxda and Baki.



**Tuesday, 29 May, 20:11, Matthias Spaeth** (Welthungerhilfe Regional Director): You're doing a fantastic job! Keep it up, and let us know what we can do for you from Addis.

**Tuesday, 29 May, 2:13, Abdisalam Abdi:** Tomorrow – in 5 hours – we will complete distribution in Simoodi; we will have reached the first 1,000 families. Everything took a lot longer because the roads are so bad.



**Saturday, 2 June, 10:53, Thomas Hoerz:** I'm at the Ministry of Water Supply. I urgently need an update on our well repairs in Gargaara and Garbo Dadar.

**Saturday, 2 June, 10:55, Hussien Mohamed:** The well in Gargaara is almost excavated; we can now fill the water tankers from there. Water is flowing well; we ordered materials (yesterday, via email) for the wellhead. We are still waiting for the mayor of Garbo Dadar to sign off.

**Thursday, 7 June, 23:43, Abdisalam Abdi:** Here are some photos from our last distribution in Osoli and Lughaya. We have now reached 2,000 families. Many will share with other families. And we were on TV again! <https://youtu.be/K16e2ATJ7GU>



**Friday, 8 June, 20:34, Hamse Guled:** We are currently distributing 4,000 water canisters and 60,000 chlorine tablets. In two days, we will have completed the campaign and reached some 15,000 people. And good news: In the villages covered by the campaign, not a single child died from diarrhoea!

## From male superiority to a helping hand

“This is much more far-reaching than our other work,” says Welthungerhilfe staff member Selamawit Tsegaye. A project that she visited in northern Ethiopia has indeed brought about a dramatic change. As well as improving cultivation methods, achieving balanced nutrition, and providing opportunities for irrigation, storage and income generation, it has also helped the residents of Estie Woreda district to apply equal rights to ease the burden on women in their everyday life.

*By Selamawit Tsegaye*

*Photos, left, centre: What was previously taboo is now an everyday occurrence. The men of the village help their wives with the cooking and baking.*



Women here were previously viewed as work machines that never got tired and lived to take care of the home. It was women who fetched water, worked on the land, took care of their children, cooked and cleaned. However, a Welthungerhilfe project fundamentally changed this situation, focusing on providing families with healthier and more secure nutrition. Gender advisers worked to promote dialogue about equal rights for men and women, they encouraged people to take an interest in other people's problems, and they opened the villagers' eyes to the cultural barriers that were harming their wives and daughters.

### Breaking down prejudice

Holding open discussions about gender roles even inspired the villagers to organise a seminar on this

subject. They began to understand and accept gender equality. But how difficult was it for Welthungerhilfe staff and local advisers to overcome prejudice and resistance to deep-seated changes? Both men and women resisted initially, as this sensitive issue is ultimately linked to pride, dignity, culture and tradition.

During my visit, I asked women and men about the changes. Terfe Tetku explains: “Our mothers, our sisters and our grandmothers suffered, because they were alone in their marriages – pregnant, with a baby on one arm and working at the same time. It's a miracle the way that the men are helping their wives now. I would never have expected it. They even do some of the cooking and bake some of the bread. It used to be dishonourable for a man even to get a glass of water for himself. Husbands' supe-

riority has completely changed. Now women have the same rights and they get help from their husbands.” Terfe Tetku believes that the effects of what is currently happening go way beyond the here and now. “My children and grandchildren will have a better future. It feels like a breath of fresh air. It is a happy moment for me and it is a fantastic change for all of us. Thank you so much for this project!”

Mertenesh Meteke shares her experiences: “When my children and my work were too much, my husband wanted to help me with the cooking. I didn’t allow him to do it, because it is against the culture. A ‘real

our marriage and that brings happiness, respect and love to our family. I am grateful to be a pioneer in this type of movement. And I am sure that my children will be proud of me when they grow up.”

### Culture can be changed

Getnet Dagne, a gender adviser for Welthungerhilfe, explains how the situation was a challenge for her personally. “Even my own husband asked me why the families should abruptly switch over to a ‘western perspective’. It unnerved me, but I was so convinced that our culture is not god-given, and that it can be changed. I wanted to prove it, so I worked even harder



*The traditional injera flatbread is made of teff flour.*

man’ shouldn’t stand at the stove – this would shame him and make him lose my respect, I thought. The Welthungerhilfe project helped me understand that I was wrong. I used to prevent my son from going into the kitchen. Now he is allowed to learn to cook and do housework. I am proud to be part of a change that enables us to treat girls and boys equally. Together we can make changes. I am grateful for this opportunity for us to develop.”

Ato Tsena Bekalu describes how things have changed for him as a man: “For a long time it was normal to send your wife away to her parents before she gave birth. I felt bad about it, but I thought that I could not take care of my wife well enough. Thanks to this project, I am more confident about taking care of my family. My wife and I make equal contributions to

to bring women and men together for exchanges, to create a framework that would enable them to discuss their problems together and clarify their roles. The results amazed my husband. He is finally starting to respect my job.”

### Going in new directions

When I hear these people’s stories, I can see that we help on many levels to improve families’ living conditions. We open up opportunities and show alternatives for people to steer their own lives in new directions. That makes me happy, and I hope that projects like this one can have an effect in many more regions.

# Improving education and hoping for peace



*Mathias Mogge (2nd from right) visiting the Welthungerhilfe team in Kabul.*

When Welthungerhilfe Secretary General Mathias Mogge travelled to Kabul late last year, questions of security had a far greater bearing on his discussions than had been the case on previous visits. Armed conflicts have caused thousands of people to flee to Afghanistan's capital, which is growing faster and faster while offering fewer and fewer opportunities, especially to refugee families. Welthungerhilfe is using a variety of approaches to help these families. Mathias Mogge was especially impressed by a literacy project.

*By Mathias Mogge*

One or more attacks take place on a nearly daily basis in Kabul and in the provinces, causing many injuries and fatalities. All organisations, including Welthungerhilfe, have expanded their security precautions. Movement outside of the offices has been reduced to a minimum, and the security services have expanded their presence. Both our national and international colleagues are integrated into a tight-knit information network that minimises risks as much as possible. However, the greatest suffering is borne by the people living in the areas wracked by armed conflict – between the Taliban and the National Army, the Taliban and IS, or the Army and IS. The economy is barely running, and life everywhere is unstable, with internally-displaced and returning refugees forming a prominent presence in many cities. The current Global Hunger Index

assesses hunger in Afghanistan as “serious,” with the country occupying 107th place out of the 119 countries evaluated. In some provinces, up to 70 percent of children are chronically malnourished.

## **Displaced and robbed of all opportunities**

Under these challenging conditions, we are focussing our efforts on highly-vulnerable families in the rural provinces and on families in the capital city. In Kabul, I visited one of the literacy classes that we organise. The participants included young women and men who were displaced by violence in their home provinces as well as Afghans who fled to Pakistan or Iran and returned after the fall of the Taliban. Vanishingly few have official educational or professional credentials, and due to the years spent on the run, many can neither read nor write. On an already weak labour



*Women who flee the provinces for the city have very few prospects.*



of chickens. So far, experiences with this approach have been very good, improving education and creating income. We believe that this approach will prevail and become prevalent in other parts of Kabul as well.

### Unlocking professional prospects

The demand is immense, because Kabul's growth continues without an end in sight. During the rule of the Taliban, the city had approximately 500,000 residents; now, Kabul's population is estimated at between four and five million. Because violence in the provinces makes living there nearly impossible, people are seeking refuge in the cities despite not having any source of income. That is why we are starting our project with them. An additional consideration is that people with professional prospects are far less susceptible to radicalisation. In the long term, things in Afghanistan will only improve once the violence has finally ended and peace has been negotiated. Unfortunately, this is currently not looking likely.

Welthungerhilfe has been active in Afghanistan for 25 years. This is no small feat, considering the circumstances, and it raises my esteem for our employees, who, day after day, put everything on the line in order to improve the situation of the local population. They help the Afghan families, who, in the face of such great adversity, seize these opportunities with courage and determination.

market, they do not stand a chance. Several of the women participating in the literacy course reported that they had never had enough money to attend a school or that there had simply been no schools where they came from.

I was impressed by the young women's ambition. They asked about other educational opportunities; they had realised that the only way out of poverty is through education, and that they had now made a good start. This start is significant for the development of the entire family: Scientific studies have established a clear link between a lack of women's education and the chronic undernutrition of children in Afghanistan. In addition to the courses, the women also receive support with raising fowl in order to increase their income. They get three weeks of training, the necessary materials, and a number

*Photo (top): Learning to read and write is the first step on the way out of poverty.*

*Women from particularly poor families are offered the opportunity to raise chickens.*



## No more shame

It is a figure that makes the sustained drought in western Kenya's Turkana region tangible: Over 23 percent of the people here are malnourished. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are particularly affected, because they often have to perform hard labour in their weakened condition. In April, Welthungerhilfe employee Francesca Schraffl visited a project that offers women and children in this situation a good start toward a healthy and independent life.

*By Francesca Schraffl*

It is five in the morning. The sky is still dark, and the air is cool. The baby is breathing calmly on Aita's back. It spent all night crying from hunger and fell asleep from exhaustion only a few hours ago. Aita checks to see if the scarf holding her son is tied tightly enough. She squats down carefully, trying not to wake the baby, and lifts the bundle of charcoal onto her head.

It is a heavy load, and Aita Ngatotin has not eaten properly in weeks, but now she still needs to cover 48 kilometres on foot. Her goal is the Kakuma refugee camp, where she will try to sell the charcoal. Aita has already heard many rumours about the road she needs to take: Men are beaten and robbed, and women are accosted and raped. But what choice does she have? Her husband is dead, her children are hungry, and this is her last opportunity to earn

some money. Aita glances back towards her sleeping children, sighs, and heads out into the darkness.

These are the pictures that appear in my mind when Aita tells me about her daily life, and how it was until just a few months ago. This is how it must have been: I meet the 36-year-old in the small village of Namon. She is one of the many "drought widows." Her husband, she explains, was killed by the drought. The implicit subtext is that he likely committed suicide, because he could not continue to live with the shame of having lost all of his livestock and of not being able to provide for his family.

### Painful memories

As a result, Aita became the sole provider. She needed four days to collect firewood and another three days to process it into charcoal. The sack that she then



*Since they began being able to make the nutritious porridge, both mothers and children are significantly healthier.*



balanced on her head for nearly fifty kilometres weighed 25 kilogrammes. All this earned her the equivalent of four euros. “I did not have any time to haggle about the price; I had to sell low so that I could get home as soon as possible. When we parents were not home, our children would go to the river to play. Many drowned,” recounts Aita.

The memories of how hard life was before Welthungerhilfe and its local partner Lokado began their work in the community are still fresh – and painful: “When my youngest child was born, I was completely undernourished and lost so much blood that I did not think I would survive,” Aita confides. “I had no breast milk when my baby was born,” relates Kula Napasi. The 44-year-old gave birth last September. “I could only give him water with some oats. It was not until I got supplementary food from Lokado that I had enough milk.” Kula, too, took the long, dangerous way to Kakuma to sell charcoal. “It was my only chance. We simply had nothing left to eat, and we were so hungry that we ate fallen animals. My children fell ill, they got severe diarrhoea, but the health clinic was too far away. I felt so helpless and hopeless,” she recalls. Hearing these stories full of pain and suffering is not easy for me, but I know that the women’s fortunes have changed.

“Lokado and Welthungerhilfe saved my family. I do not know how many people here would have lost their lives without this help,” Aita says with relief. The change was sparked by clean drinking water, food packages, additional food for children as well as for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and financial grants. Since then, the women of the village also have stories of hope and pride to tell. Thanks to the new water supply points nearby, they no longer need to draw water from the lake in which animal cadavers are floating. They are no longer ashamed to ask for credit in the village shop, because they know that they will be able to repay the money at the end of the month. They used the first grant to buy food for the children and the second to buy uniforms, books, and shoes for school.

### No longer a victim

“Thanks to your help, none of us died. However, we still need a reliable way to stay alive,” Kula says with resolve. The project is addressing this issue too. Kula and Aita are joining 1,200 other women to participate in measures to secure their livelihoods and improve their diets, including: vegetable gardens, poultry farms, village savings and credit pro-



grammes, and nutritional and culinary courses. Kula and Aita can hardly wait to learn new skills and to take charge of their own lives rather than simply being the victims of drought for year after year.

### Maintaining solidarity

Aita has one more request: “In our community, everyone helps the one who is worst off. If I have two goats and my neighbour has none, I will give him one of mine. Please accept many more women into the project to strengthen our community, so that we never need to experience such desperation again. You have brought us this far, and we thank God for that every day. Don’t abandon us now!”

*Thanks to the new water supply point, drinking water is no longer drawn from the polluted lake.*

*Photo (bottom): Aita and her children have also survived thanks to the additional food.*



## Enough to drink at last

For Ameer Khalaf\*, the nightmare began when intense fighting destroyed the water supply system in his village in the Syrian province of Idlib. For five years, the farmer had to buy expensive water from privately-operated tankers for his family, his sheep, and his farm. He was almost forced to give up everything – until Welthungerhilfe repaired the local water station.

*\*Name changed by the editors*



*Ameer Khalaf is thrilled to finally have enough water for his sheep.*

*The villagers are overjoyed that the water station has been repaired.*



“What worried me most was not being able to give my sheep enough to drink,” recounts Ameer Khalaf. “Each month, we had to buy 10 to 15 water canisters from the tankers. Each of them cost almost five euros – money that we desperately needed for other things. The prices of diesel, fertiliser, and other necessary agricultural goods had risen so rapidly that my farm’s productivity fell by 95 percent,” recalls the father of five.

“I used to have 200 sheep, but now there are only 20. Because I could not irrigate the field properly, and moving around was much too dangerous, the animals had too little to eat and to drink. Fortunately, I did not lose a single one of my sheep, but the animals produced less milk due to the water shortage, and I had to sell them, one by one, for next to nothing.”

### Water supply permits investment

Since Welthungerhilfe and its partner, Hand in Hand for Syria, repaired the local water stations, Ameer

Khalaf has a lot less to worry about. Now, water is virtually free for him and the residents of three villages, including many families that fled here from the violence in other parts of the country. It only takes a small financial contribution to maintain the water station; this is the responsibility of a newly-elected water council.

“Finding the money for clothing or medicine for our children was a constant struggle in these hard times. Because I no longer need to buy expensive water, that money can be spent on my family, and I can invest in our farm. We are producing more again, and that is improving our lives immensely,” Ameer Khalaf says happily. “At least that gives us hope. I’m so afraid that the security situation will get worse for us.”

*After the visit in September, our Welthungerhilfe personnel on the ground was unable to drive out to the project to talk with Ameer again for two months. This was due to the Russian and Syrian regime airstrikes – despite the fact that Idlib is in one of the agreed-upon so-called de-escalation zones.*

# Even the birds are coming back

When rain comes to north-eastern Haiti, it is of no great help to the farmers, since it washes the soil down the deforested slopes and floods the fields in the valley. A Welthungerhilfe project is working on reforestation to increase the local population's income.

By Leon Jander

We meet Jodel Joseph crossing the steep hills near Mont Organisé on our way to one of our project locations. With the sun beating down and the steep path angling up, a short break is just what we need. A friendly smile on his face, the father of five shares his reasons for participating in the project. Together with his wife and their extended family, he owns a tract of land on which sweet potatoes, manioc, and other crops are planted.

Mont Organisé is near the border with the Dominican Republic. The region is beset by extended droughts, and even when it rains, the few remaining trees cannot retain or store the water. Jodel's harvests were regularly destroyed by mountain torrents and flooding. Many farmers in Haiti regularly find themselves in similar situations, especially during the annual hurricane season between June and November. When the crops fail, Jodel has to hire himself out as a day labourer elsewhere.

## The new trees bring rain

As a result, the small-scale farmer has offered up part of his land for use by the project: "I trust that the measures we are implementing together will increase our income." These measures include reforestation. In the mountainous upper portion of his property, Jodel plants trees to protect the lower parts from torrential water flow; a similar function is served by the stone dams that he and other project participants have constructed. Jodel can already cultivate more rice and other irrigation-intensive crops.

Jodel accompanies us for a while and uses his machete to clear a narrow path between the shoulder-high grasses, bushes, and branches. When we reach the peak of the mountain, he shows us the difference between his reforested property and the neighbouring one, which has no trees to hold back the valuable water and to protect the fields at the bottom of the slope. The difference in fertility is huge. The project has also had another effect: "The hills have become much cooler, and we get rain clouds more frequently than before," Jodel tells us. "The new trees and the increased biodiversity have even resulted in birds

and other animals returning to the region."

Jodel is also a member of the committee that enforces the agreed-upon rules, which include not setting fires for clearing land through slash-and-burn methods. He once accidentally set part of his field on fire. In accordance with the project contract, he then paid a fine equivalent to EUR 200 to the municipal administration. Jodel Josef told us that he was proud to pay this fine and lead by example.

In two years, the trees will have matured and Jodel will be able to harvest some of them for sale. This will provide an important source of additional income. Until then, he and his family will harvest the crops growing in the lower portions of his property.

*Leon Jander is Junior Expert Monitoring & Evaluation for Welthungerhilfe in Haiti.*



*Local residents are working tirelessly to reforest the clear-cut slopes.*

*Now that water is no longer cascading down the mountain unchecked, the fields in the valley are surviving unscathed.*





## “Objectivity does not always work”

How do people who are leading a ‘normal’ life feel when one day war breaks out in their country and changes every aspect of their lives? What does it mean to experience displacement and existential hardship? For the past two and a half years, Stephanie Binder has been covering Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq for Welthungerhilfe as a Communications Expert. She shares the stories of people who were forced to flee and shows how Welthungerhilfe is supporting them in improving their living conditions. Her personal impressions reveal the challenges that come with her task.

*By Stephanie Binder*

Even after seven years of war in Syria, many people in Europe still do not know why women, children and men in Syria are displaced within their own country or forced to flee abroad. Imagining leaving your home and everything you own behind is difficult for most people. In Europe, stereotypical images of refugees prevail – pictures of barefooted children and people fleeing with nothing more than a plastic bag of their belongings. But war affects everyone: People from different backgrounds and with all levels of education. My job is to find, collect and share their stories so that we can better understand the challenges refugees and displaced people face. That is why I report about the work of Welthungerhilfe and the people we support.

I regularly talk to people who are directly affected by war and poverty. They are often traumatised and lost everything including their belongings and livelihoods. I meet old and young, rich and poor, religious and non-religious, political and apolitical Syrian and

Iraqi women and men who were forced to leave their homes. Many of my Syrian colleagues and friends experienced unimaginable loss and suffering. They lost family members and became refugees themselves. Most of them were teenagers or young adults when they were forced to flee their country. They have the same dreams as myself and many of my friends in Europe. But unlike us, they witnessed a revolution that turned into a brutal war: hope and euphoria were followed by disillusionment, by worries about family members, by fear for their own lives, by anxiety about the future. They had to start a new life in a foreign country, learn a new language, experience discrimination and adapt to a new culture. Unfortunately, many children and young people in the Middle East grow up as refugees. I feel a responsibility to share their stories, their challenges and their inspiring resilience with people in Europe.

### The golden rule of detachment

Before I joined Welthungerhilfe, I worked for an American news agency. I reported on the political unrests in Egypt, the bombing of the Iranian embassy in Lebanon and the war in Gaza in 2014. Within one year, I lost three of my colleagues who died while reporting on the Gaza war and the election in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, or precisely because of this, the message always was: neutrality and objectivity are the highest values of journalism. You keep your distance when reporting about war, conflicts and natural disasters. You go to the bathroom when you feel like crying. And you pull yourself together before you get back to the job. After all, the children with gunshot wounds and the doctor who is performing surgery on them while bombs are falling on the hospital are the victims, not us communications and media professionals who are reporting on what is happening.

During my first year at Welthungerhilfe, I interviewed many Syrian and Iraqi families. And I realised that

*In interviews, Stephanie Binder learns a lot about the stories of refugees.*



it was often impossible to keep up my role as an objective reporter. For example, when a Syrian woman in South-Eastern Turkey asked me to translate her husband's German medical documents for her. He had cancer and had escaped to Germany a few months earlier in the hope of accessing medical care. According to the medical report he only had six months left to live. Another Syrian mother told me that she and her two sons collect and sell plastic in the streets to survive. Her eleven-year-old son had the face of a forty-year-old man. In Iraq, I visited a family with a son who had epilepsy. He had a seizure while we were speaking. The family could not afford to buy medication for him.

I visited Mariam at her home for an interview. We sat on the floor in a bare room, and I asked her about life as a woman and single mother in a very conservative society. We talked about women's rights, and I asked her at what age young girls in her community usually get married. "At about seventeen," she said. I was sceptical, knowing that many are much younger. So I asked her: "Are you sure?" Mariam's face darkened and she started to cry. She told me that her two daughters from her first marriage were married off by her then husband at the age of eleven and twelve. Her husband divorced her and refused her any contact with her daughters. While I listened to her story, I forgot my training as a jour-



*Together with their mother, Ibrahim and Juan collect plastic on the streets in order to survive*

### Inspiring strength and resilience

Despite witnessing suffering and hardship, I am also deeply impressed with the attitude of the people I meet and their courage to face life despite all challenges. In particular women are showing great strength as their roles are changing as a result of war. They often take responsibility for entire families as many men have been injured or killed in the fighting or are occupied with looking for work. For example, Mariam, a 47-year-old single mother of eight children who lives in the Iraqi city of Rabia. Her husband was shot by the so called Islamic State (IS) and later died of cancer. Mariam also suffered from breast cancer and can no longer move her left arm.

nalist and my emotions overwhelmed me for a moment. My Iraqi colleague sitting next to me was visibly moved as well. Stories such as Mariam's have become a part of me. They move and inspire me. Despite the suffering I witnessed, I also learnt that even amidst war there is always hope. Babies are born and graduations are celebrated. Teenagers hope for a better future: They want to finish their education, find a job and live in peace. I have never met people who face war, loss and fears about the future with such courage and resilience as in the Middle East. It motivated and encouraged me in my job – just like the stories about the difference our work here makes. Luckily, those exist as well.

## “As though I had never left”

In 2015, actor Gesine Cukrowski visited Karamoja in Uganda for the first time. It is one of the world’s poorest regions, and the difficult living conditions of the local families stayed with her after the visit ended. Once at home, she tirelessly campaigned for support, raising and delivering more than EUR 230,000 in donations to date. In 2018, Gesine Cukrowski visited the Welthungerhilfe project a second time. She left deeply affected – and full of new plans.

By Gesine Cukrowski



*Gesine Cukrowski and project participant Lucy discussing menstrual cups and how they change the lives of women and girls.*

In July 2015, I visited Karamoja in Uganda with Welthungerhilfe for the first time. Until then, I had never even heard of the region. My goal was to raise awareness for people who do not have a powerful lobby and whose suffering goes unnoticed. Karamoja is one of the poorest regions in the world and has an illiteracy rate of approximately 90 percent. Due to climate change, people are now faced with three droughts per year rather than one as before.

Welthungerhilfe’s assistance here is based on a three-pronged approach that focusses on nutrition, hygiene, and education. All projects are conducted on equal footing with the local population, and I am fascinated by the precision and sophistication with which Dirk Ullerich, the ingenious programme leader on

the ground, is implementing the projects. In addition to wells, school dormitories and washrooms, school gardens for cultivating vegetables, nutritional counselling for mothers of undernourished children, training sessions for women to build latrines on their own, and Tippy Taps for handwashing, I am especially enthused by the goat project.

### **Solutions that change everything**

One goat costs 26 euros, and five goats make a herd – and that changes the life of a family completely. There are very many widows and single mothers and very few opportunities to earn money. In the Goat for Work project, women do charitable work and receive a goat as compensation. The villages in which the goat project has been running for longer, and in

which latrines have been built, differ drastically from the others. Child mortality rates have fallen, because diarrhoea was the leading cause of death for children under five. I do not see any stomachs bloated by hunger, and the general atmosphere is much more positive.

**Empowering women and children in the long term**

I encounter a topic that I had never really thought about before in this context: menstruation! Girls cannot go to school for one week per month, because they cannot afford sanitary pads. That amounts to three months each year! Back in Germany, I ask my sister Julia, a doctor, for advice. She suggests a menstrual cup: a silicone container that just needs to be emptied every eight to twelve hours and that lasts for up to ten years. We run a series of tests with 800 women and girls, and feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

In the meantime, another problem arises. Dirk Ullerich tells me that mothers whose children are admitted to the hospital in Moroto due to severe under-nutrition usually discontinue treatment after a few days. The mothers do not have enough food for themselves and need to care for the children who stayed behind in the village. They do not have a rooming-in programme like we do. We are addressing this issue with the “Sunday” project, which permits women to stay with their children in the hospital. The mothers receive a rooming-in kit with food for the duration of treatment, a pot, a sleeping pad and blankets, and warm clothing for the sick child. Since the programme began, not one mothers has discontinued treatment again.



*Menstrual cups allow the girls to attend school even during their periods.*



*Photo (left): Since the advent of project “Sunday,” mothers can stay with their children in the hospital.*

*Photo (bottom): The women can use the goats to independently improve their families’ diet.*

In order to further promote the now numerous projects, we decide in March 2018 that I would travel to Karamoja again. This journey is like coming home. Since Dirk Ullerich and I are in constant contact, I feel like I was never gone. One thing is clear: The work that Welthungerhilfe is doing is not just a drop in the bucket! It saves lives – with long-term effect – and empowers women and thereby children. The women who started with the first goats in July 2015 now have herds numbering around 15 animals. In addition to carrying the family through the drought, this also enables the children to go to school! My discussions with the women and girls from our menstrual cup test groups show me how essential this issue is for the women. We decide to call the project EVA. It is important! Very important!



# Madagascar: Success spiced with fair prices



*How much is my ginger worth? How can I increase the quality? The farmers get answers to these questions in trainings. Processed into essential oil in the distillery, ginger comes to Europe.*



**In Malagasy Farafangana, the conditions are ideal for growing spices such as ginger, turmeric or cinnamon. Products that are in demand worldwide and achieve high prices. So far, traders and entrepreneurs have been the main beneficiaries, but farming families have not. Welthungerhilfe therefore represents their interests, trains them from cultivation to marketing and works with them and local companies to develop prospects for escaping extreme poverty.**

This is done according to the concept of value chains: All stages of production are optimized and linked in such a way that the highest possible added value is achieved. For the farming families, this means producing higher quality. Improved seeds and agricultural training enable them to do this. They also learn about the value of their spices, which many people are unaware of.

Welthungerhilfe then establishes contacts with purchasers and works to ensure that farmers receive fair prices. For example, the ginger harvest goes to the local distillery and from there is exported as essential oil. This means that not only jobs are created at fair conditions for the smallholders. The added value is also an opportunity for the entire region.

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