

Praying for the hard places

Do you ever wonder if prayer makes a difference? This month's prayer requests deal with some of the hardest places on earth – countries and situations that defy comprehension because of the challenges they face.

Zimbabwe, the Middle East, Haiti and Somalia: there are hard times happening in these hard places.

But we have prayed for hard places before—places like Angola and Mozambique whose people faced long, difficult struggles. These countries have turned away from a violent and troubled past and are on the threshold of a much more positive future. They are hard places turned into hope places.

In Angola, the church and people of prayer have played a remarkable role in the changes. Political parties that were bitterly opposed have reconciled. Peace is holding. Church communities have been key players in accepting ex-military members into their midst and demonstrating forgiveness. A colleague of mine writes, "The peace agreement itself ... is seen by the Angolan people as a demonstration of the power of God through prayer."

Prayer does make inroads in hard places. I have hope for the hard places we will be reading and praying about this month. Thank you for joining me in prayer for these places and situations.



Dave Toycen,
President, World Vision Canada

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1: 3-6

Zimbabwe

A cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe has killed more than 3,300 people since August. The situation is worsening as the rainy season, coupled with inadequate sanitation, accelerates the spread of the disease. There is a critical shortage of medical supplies and clean water.

- ▶ **Pray that** World Vision's response, which includes drilling wells for clean water and distributing items like emergency food supplies soap and medicine, will help prevent further outbreaks.
- ▶ **Pray that** the local church in Zimbabwe will continue to be a prophetic voice calling for justice and much-needed political change.
- ▶ **Pray that** the 5.5 million Zimbabweans in urgent need of food will receive aid.



Zimbabwe: fast facts

- Zimbabwe used to be known as the breadbasket of Africa
- Number of years World Vision has worked in Zimbabwe: 36
- Number of children sponsored by Canadians: 10,500

WORLD VISION

Medical care is provided to people with cholera at a quarantine camp.

Haiti

Haiti is the poorest country in our hemisphere. Life has become even more desperate as tropical storms, hurricanes and floods washed over the small country recently, killing at least 700 people and putting 800,000 at risk. Nearly half are children. Families have lost homes, crops and livestock. Recent storms destroyed roads and bridges, hampering the work of aid agencies.

- ▶ **Pray that** Haitians will have strength to rebuild.
- ▶ **Pray** specifically for World Vision Haiti as they work on the frontlines of recovery with families and communities.
- ▶ **Pray for** World Vision workers in Haiti that they would be strengthened and empowered to build true partnerships with the communities in which they work.



STEPHEN MATTHEWS

The Middle East

The world watched in dismay as the new year ushered in a resurgence of violence in the Middle East centered around Gaza and Southern Israel. More than 400 children have died and more than 1,800 have been injured this year alone. Children on both sides have been severely traumatized. Aid workers are limited in their ability to reach many who need help.

- ▶ **Pray for** a lasting ceasefire and that the humanitarian community will be able to reach those who need them the most.
- ▶ **Pray that** those harmed by the conflict, especially children, will have an opportunity to recover physically and emotionally from the trauma.
- ▶ **Pray for** the safety of World Vision staff as they serve and minister in this troubled area. Pray also for Palestinian Christians as they work to be a Christ-like presence in the midst of trouble.



FADY ADWANI/PROPA IMAGES

Children and families have been impacted by increased violence.

“I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.” Psalm 119: 58

The Middle East: fast facts

- World Vision Canada is distributing family emergency kits in Gaza, although access by the humanitarian community remains severely constrained despite the ceasefire.
- Family emergency kits contain basic food items, blankets, candles and other essentials.
- Canadians sponsor 6,000 children in the West Bank
- World Vision began working in the region in 1975.



World Vision assists flood survivors by providing food parcels.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”

Psalm 40: 1-2

Haiti: fast facts

- Tropical storm Hanna smashed into Haiti in September, killing 500, only days after tropical storm Gustav killed 75 people. Days later, hurricane Ike killed at least 65 people. Another storm, Fay, killed 50 people in mid-August.
- World Vision has worked in Haiti for more than 25 years.
- More than 40,000 children and their families are supported through child sponsorship in Haiti.

Somalia

A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Somalia. Political instability and violence between government and insurgents have forced 1 in 10 Somalis from their homes.

Drought, flooding and an escalating inflation rate make life unbearable for many. An estimated 3.2 million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid in a country with a decimated infrastructure and little law and order.



PAUL BETTINGS

- ▶ **Pray that** a fragile peace will translate into a new beginning for Somalia.
- ▶ **Pray for** Christian leaders in Somalia, to be a light to their neighbours and that the Church will lead efforts of reconciliation and restoration between enemies.
- ▶ **Pray that** groups like World Vision will be able to respond effectively, immediately and without interference during this time when needs are increasing.

Somalia: fast facts

- A 15-kilometre stretch of road between Somalia's capital and a neighbouring town has an estimated 300,000 displaced people camping alongside it, the largest concentration of homeless in the world.
- World Vision has worked in Somalia since 1992, providing things like food aid, vocational training, water and sanitation, health, education and advocacy for the most vulnerable.

Nearly one million internally displaced people have sought shelter in overcrowded camps in south-central Somalia.

Keep praying



MICHAEL ARUNGA

Children and their families flee from violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

- **Keep praying** for the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where fighting has intensified. More than 680,000 children have been orphaned by HIV and AIDS, thousands recruited to fight, and malnutrition levels are high. Pray for a lasting peace.
- **Pray** that the global economic crisis will not make life even more difficult for the poor of the world, including those within Canada. Pray for a spirit of generosity among the wealthy.
- **Please pray** for Sri Lanka, where some 250,000 civilians remain trapped in the ongoing civil conflict. Pray for peace.

"G is for gratitude. When I'm in gratitude, if I even stop and make a list of the things I'm grateful for, that's a form of prayer. It breaks my trance of misery or self-absorption."

Anne Lamott

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The President's Prayer Team is a bimonthly prayer update from Dave Toycey, President of World Vision Canada.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.