

Classis Niagara Report – winter, 2022

Submitted by Peter Bulthuis, Canadian Director of Church and Community Engagement

A. General Updates:

Another year of God's favour. The communities with which World Renew works are grateful for the partnership of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. This partnership is delightfully reciprocal: we learn from and about our friends elsewhere, and they learn from and about us here in Canada. The partnership manifests itself CRCs support of disaster responses (both in North America around the world), in enabling development opportunities (both among us as constituents and around the world), justice-seeking and supporting, working through many effective programs. We thank God for you.

As I write this (early January), Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo has just informed the staff of World Renew that she is resigning as Director from World Renew effective Feb. 28. She will be starting a new position as President of a Christian organization in New York City (NYC) USA that supports survivors of trafficking. She feels pulled to this organization, to share her gifts and experience to make a difference for these survivors, through this Christian organization. More information will come or has come, but let me say that, WOW! Ida, you are an amazing leader, and have been a phenomenal inspiration to literally 1000s of people globally!

Thank you, churches of Classis Niagara, for your donations of \$96,241.00 during 2021! You are a blessing!

B. Upcoming Synodically-Designated Church Offerings:

Part of the learning both Canadian CRCs and participants around the world are involved with, happens through the several church offerings that Synod requests the CRCs to join. These are:

March 13: CFGB Sunday. The Federal Government supports much of the work of World Renew through matching grants, often 4:1. Your church's donations on this day (or should your church choose another Sunday) support many victims of disasters globally.

April 3: Refugee Sunday. World Renew's Refugee Program has supported literally 100s of congregations' Refugee Sponsorship Teams through its being a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), allowing churches to assist newcomers to settle into Canada well. Donations on this day support the ongoing work of this program.

May 8: Moms of Hope Sunday (Mothers' Day). The first 1000 days of a child's life are so incredibly important in his/her long-term development. Donations on this day support mothers and children in those critical years.

July 17: Clean Water Sunday. The need for access to clean water is imperative for health and life. Donations on this day support World Renew's partnership with global communities in achieving that access.

C. Community Development:

Petronia Rafael, 35, and her husband are farmers; Petronia also does tailoring to bring in extra income to meet her



family's needs. The mother of four admits she was not a very good steward of her money. She explains, "I used to get money and misspend it, till it ran out...I was not investing."

In Tanzania, one of the ways communities are learning to mobilize their own resources to meet their needs is through Truth-Centered Transformation (TCT) training. TCT offers churches who partner with World Renew a holistic discipleship program that glorifies God and helps to strengthen and grow communities. An active member of the Bukala local church in the Diocese of Geita, Petronia had the opportunity to participate in TCT learning, evangelism and outreach to the needy within the community. She says, "Traditionally, [I went] to church just to pray...but when we received these teachings at the church, I, among many others, benefitted greatly."

One of the lessons that Petronia says changed her life was learning about money management. She shares, "After I was taught how to invest and save, that's what got me budgeting. I was that kind of person who would go to town with the intention of buying vegetables, but...ended up buying other items...[now] I restrict myself to following my budget. If I had learned these lessons before, I would have been further ahead."

D. International Disaster Response (IDR)



On Saturday, August 14 at 8:29 AM local time, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit southern Haiti. The epicenter was located in the Nippes department, 150 km southwest of Port-au-Prince. This earthquake comes on the heels of many months of civil unrest, violence at the hands of gangs, and President Moïse's assassination. This is an update on World Renew's continuing response. **To date (late December), in Canada alone, \$1.4 million has been raised for this work.**

Since early August, **Phase 1** of the emergency response has been completed and all items have been delivered to communities.

- this includes emergency food rations, (22.5 kg rice and 4L oil) to 2600 households.
- emergency seeds that were required for fall/winter planting season for October 2021 to farmers.

Phase 2A (Food Security project funded by CFGB) is underway.

- recruitment and orientation of 10 field staff.
- our field office in Nippes is being set up and our relocated staff moved on October 11th.
- satellite phones have been sent for use at the field office and have a solar backup.

- purchased contingency fuel for the field sites.

- the situation remains highly fragile with recent kidnappings of international staff/missionaries.

- we are coordinating with other agencies working in the same geographic area.

Phase 2B (Emergency/Early Recovery Project) is being planned. This is to repair/rehabilitate 1000 Shelters in Grand'Anse. The Terms of Reference (TOR) has been created for an engineer, who has visited with the CD the communities. The engineer will provide a detailed site survey and other technical deliverables.

Donations can be made to support the work of our partners in the region for this critical response using the fund code 210232: IDR-Haiti Earthquake 2021. Donations can be mailed in or made online.



World Renew's International Disaster Response program is currently active in over 20 countries, involved in over 30 projects, with almost \$10 million CDN committed. See the [website](#) for more information.

E. Disaster Response Services (DRS)



On Nov. 14-15, more than 25 cm of rain fell on the southwestern portion of BC, causing massive flooding. The water covered farms, homes, agricultural land and buildings, and destroyed livelihoods, roads and so much more. On November 23rd, a local bank in Abbotsford estimated that the economic cost of the flood will be in excess of \$7.5 Billion dollars, which would be the most expensive catastrophe in Canadian history. The rebuild will likely be measured in years. Even before the flood there was a rising concern for vulnerable populations in the Fraser Valley which includes, but is not limited to, migrant workers, indigenous communities, low income families, and [now] asset rich, money poor families and farmers who have been affected by the flood and may not be

eligible for disaster relief services or other forms of federal aid.

Gateway Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford immediately organized a disaster response coalition to provide both HELP and HOPE in the name of Jesus, through the stability of a coalition of local churches.

World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) is partnering with this coalition by providing funding and various forms of support going forward. Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) is also a part of this coalition (and has a staff person on the team). (PHOTO BY JEREMY VAANDRAGER)

Donations for this work can be made to World Renew, with *Abbotsford Disaster Response Coalition* in the memo line of a cheque (fund code: 310125), or directly to the Gateway CRC [here](#).

As of December, DRS has this [opportunity link](#) with information about current “managed construction sites”; this document detailing its [December Activity Report](#), and this [interactive map](#) illustrating locations of activity.

F. Refugee Settlement Activities:

Between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021, 53 refugee sponsorship applications were submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for a total of 115 refugees. Between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021, 97 refugees arrived to Canada through World Renew sponsorships with the top three countries of origin being Syria, Eritrea, and Iraq.

As of December 23, 2021, 96 churches are currently engaged in refugee sponsorship and resettlement (refers to churches waiting for an arrival, currently settling a family or submitting a sponsorship application for 2022) of which 66 are CRCs and 30 are churches beyond the CRC.

The government confirmed that the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program – a cost-sharing program between the government and private sponsors – will re-open in early 2022, after it was closed in March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. We are excited that the program will begin again as it is a good program especially for churches new to sponsorship to get engaged with the program. Through the BVOR Program, refugees to be sponsored are referred by the government to the churches, the application process is simpler and arrival times are typically within one year of application submission.

The Canadian Government is committed to resettle 40,000 Afghan refugees. Although Canada has not confirmed plans as to how all 40,000 Afghans will be resettled to Canada, the government has confirmed that 7,000 of the 40,000 will be resettled through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP). World Renew and sponsoring churches are now actively engaged in the support and resettlement of Afghan refugees.

G. What else can the people and the churches of Classis Niagara do?

- Donate for the ongoing disaster response work in the Abbotsford area.
- Connect with us about the possibility of an online “Helping without Harming” workshop, in conjunction with Diaconal Ministries Canada.
- Be open to the Spirit’s leading, and connect with us to learn about a possible partnership with a program of project in an area outside of North America.
- Include World Renew in your church’s offering schedule for 2022.

Please continue to pray for the world. May the God of peace grant wisdom and healing to the nations.

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada
pbulthuis@worldrenew.ca; c. 289-983-9293