

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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World Relief Overcame the Challenges of COVID-19 to Assist at-Risk Communities

BALTIMORE – Despite the many hardships and challenges presented by the pandemic, World Relief found new and innovative ways to serve the most vulnerable to meet their evolving needs. World Relief's teams proactively addressed the COVID-19 crisis in some of the world's most volatile places both internationally and in the United States. Nearly 1 million people worldwide were reached with COVID-19 preventative messaging and over 1 million dollars of food was donated to those in need.

From Haiti to Cambodia, nearly 700,000 people were reached with messaging by staff and volunteers on health education and medical assistance to help combat the pandemic. In Rwanda, for example, churches from across the six Church Empowerment Zones creatively mobilized to serve over 4,000 families in need through programs in areas like savings, gender equality and agriculture. Furthermore, in Burundi, displaced families were able to wash their hands thanks to the 500 hygiene kits World Relief distributed to families in an internally displaced person camp. And last year, World Relief continued to bring hope and healing to South Sudan. In August alone, clinics supported by World Relief delivered 112 healthy babies, treated 276 children for malnutrition and treated 3,268 men, women and children for malaria.

World Relief Cambodia empowered new churches to serve the most vulnerable in their communities through a new partnership with Khmer Evangelical Church. [In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), for instance, volunteers reached tens-of-thousands of people with prevention messages like hand washing, covering a cough and wearing masks. In addition, we celebrate the success World Relief Cambodia saw as our 34-person field staff shared COVID-19 prevention information with the communities in which they work, reaching nearly everyone in their church networks (4,000 households in 200 villages).

“The positive impact our international teams were able to make throughout a year of COVID-19 is a testament to the power of prayer and the dedicated support World Relief received from our staff, volunteers, and supporters around the world who remain committed to standing alongside the vulnerable even in the hardest of times,” **said Myal Greene, SVP of International Programs at World Relief.**

On a national scale, World Relief's U.S. offices also found innovative ways to serve the most vulnerable during this past year of the COVID-19 pandemic. World Relief offices around the U.S. adapted to the shutdowns by offering vital programming such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and Immigration Legal Services (ILS) virtually, and increasing outreach to ensure our clients received accurate health information. Many U.S. offices also began offering virtual services to help families work through unemployment claims and understand stimulus check qualifications. To aid in remote services, our offices secured laptops and similar technology for newcomers.

Some of the main challenges for our clients during the stay-at-home period was, and continues to be, finding immediate housing in isolation and building community as newcomers during the pandemic. World Relief's local offices have various partners assisting with the cost of housing and caseworkers have helped foster community through regular phone calls and delivering (at a safe distance) necessities to newcomers



who are settling in. As usual, refugees are still picked up from the airport and are provided with face masks, hand sanitizer and a thermometer by our staff as needed.

In further cause for celebration and gratitude, from January through December of last year World Relief had outstanding levels of volunteer engagement in ESL, Youth & Family Services, and food distribution with over 5,374 active volunteers and 157 community teams. As of September 2020, over \$1,554,722 worth of food had been generously donated, which in turn allowed offices to serve over 42,800 families. Volunteers committed over 12,860 hours to making a difference in their communities by assisting with food outreach initiatives. By December of last year, World Relief had gained 1,450 new volunteers.

“The World Relief family is thrilled by the outpouring of support we saw from those who were able to sacrifice their time and resources to support their vulnerable brothers and sisters,” said **Scott Arbeiter, president of World Relief**. “Our work simply would not be possible without changemakers like these.”

Throughout the pandemic, our national offices have continued to enroll clients and serve refugees and other vulnerable immigrants during the pandemic. Between March 16, 2020 and the end of the calendar year, World Relief welcomed 515 newly arrived refugees and 372 immigrants granted special visas as a tie to their service to the U.S. military and other parts of our government. We also helped immigrant families respond to the challenges of a contracting job market and provided cash assistance for families struggling with pandemic-related economic hardship.

Despite the limitations caused by COVID-19, last year World Relief adapted to change and adopted creative strategies for serving the most vulnerable people around the world. “While the challenges of fighting against the pandemic will remain into this year, our work would not have been possible without a community of local churches who steadfastly offered prayer and donated offerings throughout these challenging times,” **says Tim Breene, CEO of World Relief**. “It is with immense gratitude that we reflect on the way our supporters, volunteers and staff worked together to restore hope and rebuild lives in communities around the world.”

Together, we will continue to empower churches to stand with the vulnerable through this pandemic and beyond.

About World Relief

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world’s greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we’ve partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.

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