One Year On: Joy-Faith’s New Future

Last year even Covid did not stop your love and solidarity for families like Joy Faith’s. See how her future is changing thanks to you, page 2.

Joy-Faith Nginya (7), in Kenya. Photo: Denis Kioko/Trocaire

Behind the Gaza Wall: Your Caring, page 2
Bridging the Covid Vaccine Chasm, page 4
PLUS: The Sacred Ground You Saved, page 5
And more ➤
When the Covid pandemic reached Kenya last year, the Kenyan Government initiated shutdowns and restrictions to try and contain the spread of the virus. And while the country’s economy is one of the most developed in east central Africa, the distinction remains relative: recent World Bank figures show nearly four in ten Kenyans live below the poverty line. Madris Nginya and her family are among them.

More and more, her heroic efforts were not enough to keep her family fed. Drought left Madris walking three backbreaking hours daily to haul water. Even though the rains were a bit better, when Covid hit, the family’s situation worsened.

The statistics are sobering. Two million people are packed into Gaza, a sliver of land smaller than County Louth that is cut off from the world by a concrete and barbed-wire wall nearly ten meters high. A staggering eighty percent of these children, women, and men are now forced to depend on humanitarian aid to survive. Virtually every drop of water – 95% – is not fit for human consumption. And while it is no surprise that Covid has taken hold here, thanks to your kind support, local partners continue to help.

“It’s hard to imagine what it’s like living in the very poorest parts of Gaza,” begins County Sligo native Sister Bridget Tighe, who is director for local Trócaire partner Caritas Jerusalem. “Unfortunately Covid-19 has got into the community and of course, it has really spread like...
The hardest choice
She told us, “I was struggling to choose whether to buy masks to prevent my children from getting the Covid-19 virus, or to buy food to prevent them from hunger.” It’s a choice no family should ever have to make. But for people who are poor, it is reality.

So it was a massive blessing to Madris and her family that you chose to help last Lent. Through local Trócaire partner, Caritas Ishiara, you provided emergency aid so Madris could purchase food and other key items. You supplied masks to help protect her family from Covid, and trained them in how to create a hand-washing tap at their home using recycled materials.

“If it wasn’t for your support,” Madris says of your generosity, “we would not be here. You really saved me and my children’s lives, God bless you.”

Your promise, honoured
And, true to your commitment, you’re still there: Madris has transformed your initial investment of five chickens and two goats into 70 chickens and 11 goats! Using these resources to grow a small business, she’s already sold 50 chickens, additional money that meant she could afford school fees for Joy-Faith and her siblings when schools reopened this past January. It’s a bright new future for the family, for which Madris is forever grateful.

HELP ANOTHER FAMILY THIS LENT: HOW TO RETURN YOUR TRÓCAIRE BOX

Through Madris and Joy-Faith’s story, you’ve seen how your love changes lives. This Lent, in South Sudan, two brave mothers are working without rest to keep their families from being lost completely to war, Covid, and poverty. Awut and Ajak need your help.

When Covid restrictions begin to ease here at home, and if you feel safe doing so, please return your Trócaire Box to your local parish. Or if you are unsure, you can donate the amount you’ve generously set aside in your Trócaire Box on trocaire.org/lent, by phone in Belfast 0800 912 1200, or Maynooth 1850 408 408.

Thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with humanity, thank you for helping save the good that your Trócaire Box does this year, and thank you for helping families like Awut and Ajak’s.

Every Life Counts: Your compassion is being felt in Gaza

21,000 babies, children, women and men were helped with humanitarian aid in Gaza last year, through local partners, supported through human rights projects, and transformed through women’s empowerment programmes as a result of your generosity. Visit www.trocaire.org/countries/israel-palestine to learn more, 24/7. Thank you.
BRIDGING THE COVID VACCINE CHASM

As the world continues to distribute Covid vaccines and some of the wealthiest countries claim enough doses to vaccinate their populations as much as ten times over, places like Somalia are being left behind. In this feature, Trócaire CEO Caoimhe de Barra speaks out about the desperate struggle for vaccines in poorer countries...

As a well-informed Trócaire supporter, you have probably heard of Gedo, Somalia. It’s a remote, dusty region the size of Ireland, battered by decades of conflict and grinding poverty. It is here that courageous frontline workers like Habiba Maalim now face the deadly threat of Covid.

In the Trócaire hospitals in Gedo where your kind donations have kept our doors open all through Covid-19, Habiba works as a nurse midwife coordinator. And in this country where women are still over 150 times more likely to die in childbirth than in Ireland, Habiba and her co-workers urgently need Covid vaccines.

Suffering and stockpiling
It is a mark of our deeply unequal world that we don’t anticipate being able to receive any vaccines at all in Somalia – not even for our doctors, nurses, and midwives – until next year at best. This is a dedicated, hardworking team that with your kind support provides critical healthcare services to 19,000 children, women, and men every month in one of the world’s poorest countries.

Should even one of them be unable to work due to Covid, it could be life-threatening to expectant mothers.

Only governments are allowed to purchase and distribute vaccines at the moment; Trócaire are not. As it now stands, the EU has secured agreements to vaccinate its population twice over. Canada, with a population of 38 million, has reserved 414 million doses – a stockpile over ten times more than it needs. Meanwhile, our frontline team and the vulnerable people they serve in places like Somalia could be waiting years.

More than a waiver: a lifeline
This is a shocking injustice, and I hope by the time this newsletter goes to print, the EU will no longer stand in the way of blocking an intellectual property rights waiver that allows South Africa, Brazil, and India to ramp up production of cheaper vaccines. The safety of dedicated professionals like Habiba Maalim in Somalia, and the lives of those she helps every day thanks to your unflinching support, depend on it.

Heartfelt congratulations to this year’s Trócaire Romero Award recipients, for their tireless efforts to protect vulnerable communities from Covid-19:

Dr. Mike Ryan, Executive Director, World Health Organization’s Health Emergencies Programme

“Covid-19 does not discriminate. We too cannot, must not, discriminate in our fight against this pandemic. Communities are and always will be the frontline.”

Dr. Lilian Otiso, LVCT Health, Kenya

“As Covid-19 continues to threaten the world, let us ensure our response does not further marginalize those most vulnerable in our communities...that we leave no one behind just because they are poor.”
The abuse of people who live in poverty often takes subtle and terrible forms, especially when the profits of big business are on the line. As a direct result of your steadfast commitment to defend human rights, in western Honduras, one such abuse has been stopped in its tracks. Thank you...

When a neighbour told Floresmira Lopez that her late father was being taken from his grave so that a Canadian mining company could access the gold deposits beneath, she didn’t hesitate. Floresmira grabbed a stick, raced to the cemetery, and stood her ground. “They told me they were taking away my dad,” she describes, her expression a storm of grief and fierce determination. “So I stood there and asked them to put him back. One of my children came, and stepped in front of their car so that they wouldn’t leave.”

A shared and personal pain
Luis Rodriguez (55), understands Floresmira’s pain on a personal level. A coffee farmer in Azacualpa, he was offered the equivalent of about two ounces of gold in exchange for permission to exhume and relocate family members who were buried in the cemetery.

Like Floresmira, Luis opposed the mining company’s actions. Even after he received threats and had to send his son to the US for safety, he held firm. “We were fighting to defend our rights and the environment, to stop the company from exhuming our loved ones’ bodies,” Luis explains, his gaze turning towards the cemetery that has stood guard over this community’s ancestors for two hundred years.

The true price of gold
It seems hard to fathom how two ounces of gold could ever be fair compensation for the resting place of a loved one. But in places like Azacualpa, it’s an agonising choice.

Although Honduras is rich in natural resources, six in ten of her children, women, and men live in poverty, and many companies see them as easy targets for manipulation.

This time, though, justice prevailed. You stood strong with human rights defenders like Floresmira and Luis, and with local partner MADJ (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y las Justicia), so that legal action could put a stop to the exhumations. And after a lengthy legal battle, the Supreme Court in Honduras has ruled in the community’s favour. Azacualpa’s dead can truly rest in peace, and we thank you for defending what is right.

LEARN MORE: Communities worldwide like Floresmira and Luis’s are at risk of having their land taken due to logging, mining, and other schemes. One of the best actions you can take, in addition to your continued, caring support, is to get the facts. This primer gives you a solid start: www.trocaire.org/campaigns/business-human-rights/
For Angelina Mhlanga (66) in Zimbabwe, your love is conquering her fear of being unable to feed her three young granddaughters, including Lethukuhle (pictured here). A severe drought had already been devastating. Then Covid-19 restrictions kept Angelina from her trek for water to feed her crops. Soon she could no longer afford school fees for her grandchildren. Today you are helping Angelina with food, seeds, and supplies that are letting her find a way forward for her family.

**COMING IN MAY:**
**URGENT ALERT ON ETHIOPIA**

As armed conflict continues in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, terrified families have been left homeless. Meanwhile the water infrastructure is in grave danger. Watch for an urgent alert in your letterbox in May, on the emerging situation in Ethiopia...

Most communications are cut in northern Ethiopia’s Tigray region, and travel remains unsafe. Please know it is difficult to confirm what is happening: the situation seems to shift by the day. What we do know is that large numbers of children, women, and men have fled for their lives from the violent fighting. However through local Trócaire partners there, in multiple locations around Tigray, your support is helping rush early aid. This includes temporary shelters, and cooking and hygiene items for families made homeless by the conflict. Said one local aid worker, “People cannot get hold of the basics to survive – food and water. The internet is suspended.” Meanwhile amid the Covid-19 pandemic, health concerns grow. It now appears much of the water infrastructure, including fresh water boreholes, is being damaged or destroyed, leaving people without access to safe water. Please know for the time being that you are helping us to mobilise what support we can in northern Ethiopia, and we’ll update you on the situation on the ground – and the urgent and long-term help that will be needed – in just a few weeks. Thank you for your heart for humanity, please stay tuned.

**HOW YOUR LOVE CONQUERS FEAR IN ZIMBABWE**

For Angelina Mhlanga (66) in Zimbabwe, your love is conquering her fear of being unable to feed her three young grand-daughters, including Lethukuhle (pictured here). A severe drought had already been devastating. Then Covid-19 restrictions kept Angelina from her trek for water to feed her crops. Soon she could no longer afford school fees for her grandchildren. Today you are helping Angelina with food, seeds, and supplies that are letting her find a way forward for her family.

Thank you for helping. Thank you for caring. Thank you for staying.

**JOIN US ON**

- Website: trocaire.org
- Twitter: twitter.com/trocaire
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Thank you for helping Lethukuhle and her family in Zimbabwe

Photo: Ben Mahaka/Trócaire

Trócaire is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. We work with partners in over 20 countries in the developing world to empower communities to improve their lives, meet their basic needs and ensure their human dignity. In Ireland, we raise awareness about the root causes of poverty and injustice, and advocate for change. ROI Charity Regulatory Authority No. 2004842, CHY25666, Company Number 661147, NI Charity Commission No: NIC 103321, Revenue Number (HMRC) XR10431, Company Number NI021482

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