An urgent search: Water in Mozambique | Addressing hunger in Nepal | New crops, new income in Bolivia
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God (Psalm 46:4). Jesus is the living water (John 4).

As Christians, we understand the metaphorical concept of water. Our souls thirst for God (Psalm 4:1). Jesus is the living water (John 4). We give a cup of cold water to people in need (Matthew 10).

But even as we recognize water as a powerful symbol, it is easy to forget how water can literally be the difference between life and death.

“No water, no life,” says coordinator Betanico Fernando Dique of MCC’s partner, the Christian Council of Mozambique, in the lead article in this issue. The challenge in the central district of Caia where Dique works is finding potable water free from contaminants, salt or other hazards. Every new well with clean water is a victory, Dique says.

Other stories in this issue illustrate our efforts to help people whose lives are changing because of clean water. Many communities have enough clean water to change things in places such as Bolivia and Nepal. There, MCC’s work with farmers—whether growing new crops or learning more about nutritional needs—is helping families better support themselves and improve the health of their children.

This is the work that MCC does on your behalf in 60 countries around the world in the name of Christ. Together, we are a part of that life-and-death difference in peoples’ lives.

Thank you for your partnership that is helping to make a tangible, life-and-death difference in peoples’ lives.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God...

(John 4:10)

P.S. Don’t miss the back page about My Coins Count—each year, spare change collected by churches, children and families adds up to more than $600,000 for MCC’s work.

Relief kits

Provide valuable supplies to families whose lives have been disrupted by war or disaster.

4 large bars bath soap

1 plastic bottle shampoo (13-24 oz.; place in resellable plastic bag)

4 large bars laundry soap (Some stores carry Fels Naphtha), Sunlight or Zote/hh brands)

1 fingernail clipper (good quality)

2 wide-tooth combs (6-8 in.)

1 box adhesive bandages (minimum 40 count, assorted)

1 package sanitary pads (18-24 count, assorted)

Place contents in a box or bag and deliver to an MCC drop-off location. The kit will be re-packaged in a new 3-gallon plastic pail with lid.

For drop-off locations, contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2) or go to mcc.org/kits.

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MCC-supported projects are bringing wells and sand dams to parched areas of Mozambique.

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In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), where seasonal food shortages have often sparked hunger and malnutrition, MCC, through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is helping farmers grow more food.

Features

Conservation agriculture—such as increasing the use of cover crops, reducing tilling and leaving crop residues in fields—are taking root through onsite trials on three cooperative farms and study tours such as this one that encourage farmers to learn from each other.

Lebanon

Health care for refugees

In the Beirut, Lebanon, neighborhood of Sad El Bouchrieh, Our Lady Dispensary, a small clinic, was a valuable source for low-cost medical care for refugees and Lebanese families. Along with meeting urgent needs, the outreach seeks to reduce tensions between long-time residents and newcomers.

Cambodia

Sewing for success

In Prey Veng Province, families without enough land for their children to farm often end up sending youth to work in the capital city of Phnom Penh or in a neighboring country. MCC’s Global Family education program supports sewing and tailoring programs at three rural high schools so students such as Zote/hh brands)

For more photos from the demonstration and MCC’s partnership with PDL, visit mcc.org/acommonplace. Inspired to get your own canning jars? You’ll also find a Simply in Season recipe for canning rhubarb strawberry jam.

Haiti

Jams and jellies

In isolated Haitian villages, far from any quick transportation to cities, it matters little if harvests of mango, pineapple and other fruits are plentiful if there’s no way to get them to market before they spoil. An MCC partner, Partenariat pour le Développement Local (PDL), is helping communities explore how they can preserve their harvests. During a workshop on making fruit preserves, Emilienne Antenor Donice scoops jams into jars. Find more photos from the demonstration and MCC’s partnership with PDL at mcc.org/acommonplace.
An urgent search: Water in Mozambique

From drilling and maintaining wells to harvesting water from sand, MCC is helping parched, rural communities find and maintain reliable sources of water.

STORY BY JULIE BELL
PHOTOS BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

Six men grasp the long metal handle of the drill and walk slowly in a circle. They lean into the task, using body weight to drive the shaft of the drill into the dry soil of Mozambique’s Caia District.

They have hand-drilled some 16 feet down and have farther to go—possibly a dozen feet or more. Even then, there’s no guarantee the water will be potable. An attempt at a nearby location was abandoned after three days of drilling when workers found water too saline to be used.

Across Mozambique, the search for clean and reliable water is urgent and constant.

In some locations, people risk illness by drinking from contaminated sources. In other areas, months of drought leave communities unable to sustain gardens and livestock.

“We’re trying to move away from just responding to these emergencies,” says Jana Meyer of Falls Church, Va., MCC representative in Mozambique.

“We are finding ways to prevent them, or make the situation more tolerable.”

Through its partnership with the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), an organization representing up to 24 Christian churches across Mozambique, MCC is investing in water projects in dozens of communities—from drilling and maintaining wells to harvesting water from sand.

Henriques Cubonera Mbondo admits that when he first heard about the plan for a sand dam in his village of Maule Maule in Tete Province, he was perplexed.
“I thought water from sand, how can that be?” he says. “But now I know it’s possible, and we have lots of water. You can see my garden. We have kale, lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage.”

A sand dam is essentially a way to store water. A concrete wall is built across a dry riverbed. During the rainy season, the wall slows the flow of the river and water infuses the coarse sand that builds up behind the wall. Over time the sand accumulates, and water can be extracted by digging into the sand during the dry season.

MCC and CCM, with support from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, have supported the building of sand dams in Mozambique’s Changara District since 2008. Community members dig the foundation, collect rocks and do other physical tasks. When water is available, community members are given seeds and trained in conservation agriculture methods. MCC provides construction materials and seeds and supports the salaries of some CCM staff. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank provides a grant.

“This district has a great challenge with food security,” says Tiago Vilanculo, who oversees CCM’s work in Changara. “The rain falls maybe three months a year. Temperatures can reach 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) and there’s a large livestock population. These communities need water.”

The sand dam in Maule Maule was built in 2013. Tino Gento was born in the village 45 years ago, but this is her first garden. She will use a large tomato she’s just picked to make a sauce for chima—porridge of ground maize, sorghum or millet—for her husband and eight children.

She laughs as she points to her stomach. “We are eating a lot more vegetables now, you can see that our bellies are full,” she says. “We had kids who were not healthy, but now they are.”

For Mbondo, who has more vegetables than his family of seven can eat, the garden is also income.

“Now I don’t have to go into the bush and find firewood to sell,” he says. “I can sell vegetables to buy oil and have my maize ground into flour, maybe buy some goats. I feel secure.”

In Caia District in central Mozambique the challenge is finding potable water—free from contaminants, salt or other hazards.
The building of sand dams, such as this one in Wiriamo in Tete Province, may be coordinated and funded through MCC and its partners. But sand dams are truly the work of many hands. For each dam, dozens of community members join together to dig the foundation, collect rocks and provide the labor needed to construct the dam.

Nfumo Arvelino Bonjesse Ntanda is 60 years old and a community leader in the village of Ndoro. Until a few years ago, his village got water from the Zangue River. “At the river we got attacked by crocodiles,” he says. “As many as 16 people lost their lives.”

Ntanda says some people also went to an open well—a well with no protection from the surrounding environment. The water was dirty and people suffered from diarrhea, skin rashes and other illnesses.

Open wells often are contaminated by livestock feces, insects and impurities on containers dipped into the water, says Betanico Fernando Duque, CCM coordinator in Caia District. In some cases, the salt content is high. When challenges arise in the projects, MCC and CCM partner with communities to address them. Eight wells, for instance, aren’t currently working, and over the next three years, the wells project will include a focus on rehabilitation and maintenance while continuing to build new wells. Likewise, MCC and CCM are working with sand dam communities to encourage gardening to continue even after agricultural support programs are phased out.

Sand dams result in not only water, but also food. Lydia Pensar waters her garden near a sand dam in Matambo. Built in 2013, the dam supplies 54 families with fresh water for irrigation and other uses.
I have wanted to do this type of work all of my life, although my father had different ideas about my future when I was a child.

I grew up in a rural area in the Moatize District in Mozambique. When I was a boy my father had a lot of goats and every morning we would fill a 10-liter pail with goat’s milk, boil the milk and drink it. I remember how enjoyable that was.

My parents valued education, and they wanted me to go to school in the city of Tete, about 12 miles from our home. I moved to the city when I was 11 years old, and my sister eventually joined me. An aunt in Tete watched out for us, but I missed my family very much. I wanted to be with my father, milking goats and drinking warm milk with my brothers every morning.

Throughout my childhood, my father always said he wanted me to become a nurse. He said working with people’s health is good because if you can help them they will never forget you.

I liked it when my father would tell me these things. God knows what’s best for me and it was his plan for me to do this job.”

But I knew this was not my dream. I wanted to work in agriculture. Even as a child, I thought agriculture is money, it’s food, it’s life. So, when I finished high school, I took the agriculture exam and I came out in first place.

Once again I would have to leave my family. The agriculture school was in Maputo, more than two days of travel from my parent’s home. During my four years in agricultural school I never saw my family once. A brother from my church was in Maputo, and I considered him to be like my family. But I was very lonely for my people back home.

When I finished my agricultural education, I was offered a job as an inspector at a poultry factory in Maputo. I wanted to work, that was the objective of going to school. But my parents told me, “If you take this job you are never coming home. We want you to come home.”

And so I did. In January of 2014 I arrived home from Maputo. I applied for a job as an agricultural extension worker with Christian Council of Mozambique, and I began working there in March.

We work with communities to build sand dams, so they can have a reliable source of water to grow food and care for their animals.

Then I help people plant gardens and harvest vegetables and teach them how to save seeds for next year’s crop. Many of the people I work with in the villages have never had gardens before. They didn’t have enough water, or the water source was too far away.

After we build a sand dam and there’s water available, I show people how to plant cabbage, tomatoes, kale, onions and lettuce. I talk to them about caring for their plants and using conservation agriculture practices such as putting mulch between plants. People are seeing things they have never seen before. There’s a man in the village of Maule Maule who is a favorite of mine. I show him how to do things in his garden. When I come back a few days later, he has shown other people in the village how to do this. Then he says to me, “Look what we have done!”

I think that God knows what’s best for me and it was his plan for me to do this job. This is what I believe. I live near the communities where I work during the week. At the end of the week, I go to my parents’ house. It was their dream that I be close to them, and I am.

But I have also made my dream come true. I am a specialist in agriculture. I say to my parents, I am not a nurse. But I am a doctor for plants. If a plant is ill, I can make it better. And my parents agree with me now.

Chadreque Finiasse, 25, is an agricultural extension worker in Tete Province with the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), an MCC partner. In Tete, MCC supports CCM’s work to build sand dams and establish gardens.
Addressing hunger in Nepal

The best food security projects are broader than teaching any one agricultural technique.

In Nepal and elsewhere, MCC and its partners work alongside farmers to address deeper challenges to growing and having enough food—whether that's a lack of land or resources to put new techniques into place. They help communities see what more they can do together than alone and meet the challenges of malnutrition with local, affordable solutions.

In Bhatigachha in southeastern Nepal, many farmers work for daily wages or under sharecropping systems, buying seeds and providing labor, then paying landowners as much as half the proceeds from the harvest. They often end up in debt to landowners, and men in the area regularly leave their families and migrate for months at a time to work low-wage jobs in Indian cities. MCC is partnering with the service arm of Nepal's Brethren in Christ Church in a pilot project to lease land and train farmers to grow vegetables, which bring in more income than grain crops. Producing vegetables to sell to the nearby city of Biratnagar at a fair price for farmers means families can stay together, and earn enough for daily needs. By the end of the project, ideally farmers will have earned enough to lease or buy a small portion of their own land.

Malnutrition is common in rural Nepal, and the period after children begin eating solid food is especially precarious. In communities where nearly all children are underweight and small, weighing campaigns are a valuable tool to help parents know if their children are getting the nutrients they need. Nutrition volunteers Angala Chepang and Mini Maya Chepang calculate data from a monthly weighing campaign in Dhading District, as Babalal Chepang waits to learn if his 2-year-old daughter Supana is within the normal weight range for her age. This food security and nutrition program of Shanti Nepal, a partner that MCC supports through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, also encourages mothers to choose nutrient-dense weaning foods, such as a porridge of legumes and grains, instead of the traditional watery rice.

Tomatoes from this "plastic house," a simple greenhouse, can earn far more at market than the grain that could be grown on this plot of land. MCC and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, through partner YES-Nepal, are helping farmers such as Ghore Phare in Achham District extend the growing season for vegetables with greenhouses built from materials that can be carried over miles of trail from the nearest road. As Phare earns from his tomato crop, more neighbors become interested in growing vegetables.

In Nepal and elsewhere, MCC and its partners work alongside farmers to address deeper challenges to growing and having enough food—whether that's a lack of land or resources to put new techniques into place. They help communities see what more they can do together than alone and meet the challenges of malnutrition with local, affordable solutions.
In many projects, local farmers are chosen to test new techniques and share them with friends and neighbors. Sumina Chepang, shown with her mother Khisna Maya Chepang, was selected by the mother’s group in her village of Benighat in Dhading District to be a model farmer. She attends vegetable cultivation training sessions and brings her new knowledge back to share with the group.

Photo/Mohan Bhujel

Encouraging farmers to work together is a cornerstone of MCC’s agriculture work in Nepal, notes Leah Reesor-Keller of Kitchener, Ont. She and her husband Luke, shown meeting with a farmers’ group in Achham, are MCC’s representatives for Nepal. “All of our food security and sustainable livelihood projects include work with cooperatives, community-based farmers’ organizations or, at the very least, self-help groups,” she says. “Though it is not agriculture, it’s an important part of building sustainability and capacity for local action to improve agriculture and livelihoods.”

MCC Photo/Leah Reesor-Keller

Having adequate nutrition is especially important for those living with HIV. Loans, such as the one that allowed Padam Tondon in Argakanchi District to buy day-old chicks, are a critical part of helping people with compromised immune systems earn enough to eat well and care for their health. In addition to small loans for people living with HIV, MCC partner Sakriya Sewa Samaj also provides advocacy, community-based care and peer support groups.

MCC Photo/Leah Reesor-Keller

Available year-round, stinging nettle grown near homes or gathered in the jungle is a good source of calcium and other nutrients. MCC partners such as Shanti Nepal community health worker Bishnu Maya Chepang encourage people to eat nutrient-dense, locally available sources of nutritious food such as nettle, which is served as a sauce with cornmeal or millet.

MCC Photo/Leah Reesor-Keller

Go to mcc.org/acommonplace to read a reflection from Leah Reesor-Keller on the importance of valuing local food — including stinging nettle.

Nettles and millet

Give a gift—Food

Give a gift—Food

Give a gift—Food

Around the world, MCC provides agricultural training and partners with farmers to help them better support their families.

$50 provides loans for people to purchase animals such as goats and receive agricultural training in Nepal.

Send contributions in the enclosed envelope, give online at donate.mcc.org or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2).
New crops, new income

High in the Andes mountains of Bolivia, new crops such as *maca* are bringing opportunity and more financial stability to farmers.

**BY EMILY LOEWEN
PHOTOS BY NINA LINTON**

From Cochabamba, Bolivia, the gravel roads leading up into the Andes are a maze of sharp switchbacks, steep uphill stretches and drop-offs punctuated by cattle, llamas and herds of sheep.

On mountain slopes, below the snow-capped peaks, lie farmers’ fields—plots on an incline so steep it’s difficult to imagine planting, weeding and harvesting, especially when an altitude of more than 13,000 feet can make walking a challenge for the unacclimated.

For generations, though, farmers have relied on what they can dig out of these fields to sustain their families. Traditionally, that’s meant potatoes—in a variety of colors and sizes unseen in Canada and the U.S., some white with pink and purple splotches, others long and thin like carrots.

Large trucks bring the crop down from the mountains, driving slowly and clinging to the tight corners. Farmers pile in with their crops, perched in the open backs atop heaps of potatoes. Unfortunately, farmers say, when those potatoes get to market, they aren’t worth enough for producers to support their families.

“With only potatoes we don’t have enough.”

To get some money in your pocket, that you can have access to education, health...that’s food security for us.”

But a new crop could mean more money for his family. With support from MCC, the social development organization of the Bolivian Baptist church (Organización Bautista de Desarrollo Social or OBADES) is training farmers to grow maca, a crop which can currently sell for four times more than potatoes.

Maca is a root crop that is native to the region and, unlike potatoes, can withstand frosts at the high altitudes in the Andes. Once harvested, the maca root is dried and often ground into powder or flour. It may be used locally but is often exported to Canada and the U.S., where maca is sold as a nutritional supplement.

In Totorani, where Perez lives, OBADES supports 30 families in growing maca. It provides training and startup seeds there and also to farmers in 14 other communities in the Tunari mountain range.

But convincing farmers to begin growing maca hasn’t always been easy. While potatoes don’t make large profits, they are a familiar crop in the area and popular across the country.

So, in addition to seeds and training, OBADES works to make it easier for farmers to sell maca, helping to set up producers associations and facilitate contracts with buyers who will process the maca to sell or export.

Before, individual farmers would travel down the mountains to market with their potatoes, paying for transportation and losing a day of work at home. Through the associations, each farmer’s maca is weighed ahead of time, then one person takes the product from the whole group to market. Profits are shared based on how much each farmer contributed.

Eventually, OBADES agronomist Edgar Chuquimia hopes the project will lead to creating a maca processing facility in the mountains.

All these pieces work together, helping farmers earn more than just enough to get by.

“Our concept of food security is not only to produce something to eat,” Chuquimia says, “but also that they can be profitable. To get some money in your pocket, that you can have access to education, health and access to the market, that’s food security for us.”

Emily Loewen is a writer for MCC Canada. Nina Linton is a photographer in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.
Rebecca Standen visits with colleague Chadreque Finiasse (featured on page 10) in a garden plot in Maule Maule and, below, cooks an evening meal.

“I feel so welcomed when community members remember me by name and greet me in their local dialect.”

REBECCA STANDEN
Agricultural worker

Name: Rebecca Standen
Hometown: Riverview, New Brunswick (River of Life Mennonite Brethren Church)

Assignment: In 2014, I worked with Mozambican colleagues from the Christian Council of Mozambique teaching vegetable gardening and introducing conservation agriculture techniques in rural communities in Tete Province. This year, I am teaching a six-month conservation agriculture course in a different province, with more of a focus on high school students.

Joys: Getting to know people and having people get to know you. Applying my interest in science in a way that is meaningful to people’s daily lives. Always learning new things: languages, life skills, songs, foods... (See this story at mcc.org/acommonplace to find Standen’s host mother’s recipe for shrimp coconut curry and read more reflections about Standen’s spiritual journey and life in Mozambique.)

Challenges: For someone who has never liked being the center of attention, I can never avoid it now. Also, I’ve been here over a year and can speak pretty well in Portuguese, but I’m still learning the subtleties of communicating what I mean to say and understanding what people are really trying to tell me.

Learning from farmers: I’ve never before experienced so closely the cycle of planting, growing, harvesting, storing, eating, as a means of living. Sure, we grew vegetables in our backyard, but it was a hobby and we could always buy seeds the next year. It’s another thing when the food you grow is not just food. It’s also the seed for next year’s crop so you will have something to eat then too.

Find your place
MCC has workers in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as in Canada and the U.S.

Go to serve.mcc.org, contact your nearest MCC office or follow @servemcc on Twitter to learn about current service opportunities.

MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and biblical peacemaking.

Play a game—cheia
What you need: Empty plastic bottle, soft inflatable ball, dirt or sand.

1. Mark off lines about 20 or 30 feet apart, with the bottle in the middle, surrounded by sand.
2. Form two teams. Each team should have three players.
3. One player from Team A begins in the middle by the bottle standing in the sand. That person’s goal is to fill the bottle with sand, then empty it, then refill it six times without being hit by the ball.
4. Team B players stand outside the lines and throw the ball back and forth across the middle trying to hit the player in the middle.
5. The player in the middle can catch the ball and throw it as far away as possible. If the player is touched by the ball but does not catch it, he or she is out, and the next player from Team A goes to the middle.
6. When all team members are out, the teams switch sides.
7. The team whose player is in the middle earns a point whenever the bottle is refilled six times.
You can make a difference in the world!

Coins add up. Each year, churches, children and families collect spare change totaling more than $600,000 for MCC’s work around the world.

Go to mcc.org/my-coins-count or call your regional MCC office for ways to make your coins count.

mcc.org/my-coins-count