Farmers helping farmers in Cambodia | Sowing seeds for better livelihoods | Coping with climate change in Kenya
Helping communities for a lifetime

**J RON BYLER**  
**MCC U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

“In Prey Veng Province, Cambodia, MCC-supported agricultural cooperatives are benefiting farmers like Chim Thoeun.”

“Let down your nets for a catch.” (Luke 5:4 NRSV)

In rural Cambodia, farmer-led cooperatives help communities build fishponds, improve their chicken coops and enlarge their gardens. MCC, partner Organization to Develop Our Villages (OODV) is giving communities new opportunities to work together to earn more income from their land.

Tes Sophear remembers catching fish from the river as a young boy. Today, he is executive director of OODV and his goal is to help impoverished communities increase their food production. His message to community leaders is that they can help others.

In 2019, MCC supports two community organizations that teach farmers to cope with the impact of climate change. Learning conservation agriculture techniques helps farmers increase crop production in drier conditions.

This issue of *A Common Place* illustrates how your support of MCC helps communities like his put their nets in action and be part of a global body of Christ.

When you volunteer and contribute to MCC, you are putting your faith into action by helping communities for a lifetime. Thanks for your support!

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**MCC Christmas giving**

**Goats, fish and more**

Looking for unique gifts this Christmas season? Through MCC Christmas giving, honor your friends and loved ones while giving gifts that change lives around the world. Learn more by going to mcc.org/christmas, calling your nearest MCC office (see page 2) or perusing the printed Christmas giving booklet mailed with this issue of the magazine.

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**MCC is turning 100**

**Make plans to celebrate with us**

In 2020, MCC will be celebrating its centennial year with special opportunities to learn, pray, serve and give — starting with a comforter-making event in January.

Through The Great Winter Warm-up on Jan. 18, 2020, MCC is collecting thousands of handmade comforters to deliver to people affected by conflict and disaster around the world. Make plans now to create a comforter, host a comforter-making event or sponsor a comforter by making an online donation.

Learn more at greatwinterwarmup.org or by contacting your nearest MCC office (see page 2). This is only the first of many centennial events and opportunities. See what else is in store for 2020 by going to mcc.org/centennial.

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**Lend a hand - Sewing kits**

In many places where MCC works, sewing skills open doors to new possibilities, including additional income that can help a family make ends meet.

**Contents (NEW items only)**

- 3 spoons white thread (all-purpose; cotton/poly or 100% polyester; min. 250 yds.)
- 3 spoons black thread (all-purpose; cotton/poly or 100% polyester; min. 250 yds.)
- 1 sewing tape measure
- 3 spools white thread
- 3 spools polyester thread
- 1 thimble
- 1 pair of scissors
- 1 yard of 36-inch-wide cotton/poly or 100% polyester fabric
- 1 double drawstring cloth bag (11.75 in. x 37 in.; stifled, doubles as a sewing kit)
- 4 yards of 36-inch-wide cotton/poly or 100% polyester fabric
- 2 pair of dressmaker shears (10½ inch; for cutting patterns)
- 1 thimble
- 1 pair of safety pins
- 1 pair of scissors
- 1 dressmaker shears (good quality)
- 1 style-button kit (12; black or white; size ½–1 inch; place loose buttons in a reusable plastic bag)
- 1 package needles (min. 25; assorted sizes)
- 1 package straight pins (min. 80; round plastic heads preferred)
- Sew-on snaps (min. 20; assorted sizes)
- Safety pins (min. 10; assorted sizes)
- Sewing kits are distributed in a useful double drawstring cloth bag (11.75 in. x 16.75 in). Sew the bag yourself, request bags from a drop-off location or donate contents that we will place in a bag. For bag instructions or drop-off locations, contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2) or go to mcc.org/kits.

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Farmers helping farmers

In rural Cambodia, MCC-supported agricultural cooperatives are giving farmers new ways to work together to grow and earn more.

STORY BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
PHOTOS BY MATTHEW LESTER

With a practiced rhythm, Chun Sokun swings a net behind his shoulder, rocks forward and heaves the brown cords across his pond's green water. As soon as the net settles, he pulls it in, hand over hand. Silver carp and catfish flop against each other as his granddaughter and wife inspect his catch. He can sell five or six of the bigger fish, or eight or nine of the smaller ones, to his neighbors or at market for about 10,000 riel ($2.50).

Those few dollars are significant. Chun*, a rural Cambodian farmer, for years has struggled to provide for his family with rice and vegetable harvests, periodic construction jobs and music gigs.

In the dry season in the rural districts of Mesang and Kampong Trabaek in Prey Veng Province, Cambodia, work dries up, just like the wells and the rice fields.

Many people migrate to find work—including nearly 50 percent of the young adults in these two districts. Chun's two adult children have gone to Thailand, one leaving a granddaughter behind for Chun and his wife, Soa Samin, to raise.

Others stay at home, trying to make ends meet. Many go hungry, with the most impoverished eating a diet primarily of rice rationed to last until the next harvest.

But farmer-led agricultural cooperatives, formed through MCC partner Organization to Develop our Villages (ODOV), are giving Chun, Soa and their neighbors new ways to earn income from their land and to support each other.

ODOV, with funding from MCC’s account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is investing in seven farmer-led cooperatives, which include more than 3,000 families in Mesang and Kampong Trabaek.

*In Cambodia, family names like Chun are written before given names.
With these funds, cooperatives make no-interest loans available to farmers who want to build fishponds, improve and fill their chicken coops and enlarge and protect their gardens. Loans for other farming resources, such as animal food and vaccinations, construction materials and fuel, are paid back at a low interest rate. By buying in bulk, cooperatives make supplies like fencing available to farmers for below-market prices. Farmers invest soa samin pours fish from her family's pond into a cement cistern where they can be stored until they are sold.

Chun and Soa now grow green beans, cucumbers, amaranth, morning glory (a nutritious green vegetable), pumpkin and more, selling and eating vegetables even when the rice fields are brown.

Chun learned from ODOV's field staff how big and deep to make his pond, so it won't run out of water. Following their direction, he terraced the pond and put in lemon grass to limit erosion. He planted vegetation and trees that eventually will provide shade to slow evaporation and protect the fish.

“Having lots of fish helps me grow financially and have more money for my family,” Chun says. He uses the money to buy food and clothes, attend traditional ceremonies, send his granddaughter to school and pay off his loan. hour sreypov is now president of Prey Chhou agricultural cooperative, was first impressed by the knowledge of the ODOV field agent who taught her how to keep her chickens healthy and producing more often. She joined ODOV’s field visits to see other successful farmers, who inspired her to look for new ways to make money.

“For example, at my house I have a small grocery store,” she says. “There’s a middle-man who comes right to my place. I thought, now what if I become a chicken middleman while I am here? At least I could earn some income—$2.50 or $3 per day on top of my grocery salary. How about that?”

Her grocery customers soon began to sell their chickens to her, and she resold them for a profit to a man with connections to a buyer in Phnom Penh. Soon she began to pick up chickens at people’s houses and most recently from chicken producer groups.

**Having lots of fish helps me grow financially and have more money for my family.**

On a March morning, hour gets off her motorcycle in a dirt driveway, meeting a half dozen women, each with a group of chickens. As part of a chicken producer group established by their agricultural cooperative, women bar- gain and sell together to assure that they get fair prices and access to expanded markets. Hour examines and weighs the birds, paying each woman in cash. Chim Thoeun, who earned about $14 for her three chickens on this day, used to have to go to a main road and wait for a middleman to come to pay her a little less for her chickens. Now she can work at home until hour arrives. And working together with neighbors has improved their relationships, she says. “I get to sell chickens with them and, by spending time with them, it made me closer with them. Before, when we would go to sell the chickens, we would compete. Who goes first? Who goes later?”

Loans from his local cooperative gave Pol Thida and his...
Loans from the agricultural cooperative helped Sok Sovan and her husband Pol Thida raise and sell 100 chicks and use some of the profits to buy 120 more chicks. They also buy supplies at lower prices from the cooperative, which buys in bulk and passes those savings to farmers.

Pol Thida also was able to get seeds, fencing, a watering can and garden tools through a no-interest loan from the cooperative.

in the rice field for somebody or borrowing money from some people or doing whatever for other people to get money and to buy all of this," Reach says. "I bought everything at market before, the vegetable, fish and chicken. Now I grow everything."

Under a canopy of trees, her husband Chim sits beside the chicken coop that he upgraded to provide separate places for the hens to roost and brood and for chicks to be fed. The chickens clucking and pecking in an adjacent fenced yard are on target to reach maturity by Khmer New Year, when chickens sell for higher prices.

"If people want fish for today, I will catch fish for them," he says. "If people want vegetables, I will bring vegetables to sell to them. Sometimes people want chicken. So I will sell the chicken. These three relate very well together because they provide a daily income."

That's exactly what Chim Yean and his wife Reach Koeun do. Their farm has become a destination for ODOV’s learning tours so that others can learn from their success.

"Before I worked so hard, like working in the rice field for somebody or borrowing money from some people or doing whatever for other people to get money and to buy all of this," Reach says. "I bought everything at market before, the vegetable, fish and chicken. Now I grow everything."

Instead, the family has raised and sold 100 chicks and used some of the profit to buy 120 more chicks.

Getting a loan from a bank with a high interest rate would be too expensive, he says, and only the bank profits. When he pays interest to the cooperative, farmers also benefit because the cooperative gives a portion of its profit as dividends to its members at the end of the year.

"If I get a loan in the future, I plan to have a fishpond," Pol says. "The water from the fishpond will supply my vegetable garden. Then I can grow vegetables to feed the chickens as well. It can become a cycle."

That's exactly what Chim Yean and his wife Reach Koeun do. Their farm has become a destination for ODOV’s learning tours so that others can learn from their success.

"Before I worked so hard, like working

wife Sok Sovan in nearby Tbeng village a way to get into the chicken business.

"Without the agricultural cooperative, I probably would start buying chickens by myself, for example, by buying one or two chicks at a time—little by little," Pol says.

At the farm of Chim Yean and his wife Reach Koeun, a fishpond provides income. Water from the pond is used to grow vegetables, which can be sold or used to feed the chickens and fish.

Linda Espenshade is news coordinator for MCC. U.S. Matthew Lester is a photographer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
Tes Sopheat

An MCC partner reflects on his experiences serving rural communities in Cambodia like the one where he was raised.

AS TOLD TO LINDA ESPENSHADE

Sometimes the reason you do things is not only about money, but to serve. Sometimes you just help people.

I became executive director of Organization to Develop our Villages (ODOV) in 2005 after working with MCC since 1995. I’m coming from a poor family so I ask, “How can I use my resources and my capacity to help the poor?”

ODOV’s vision is to see Cambodian people live in a positive environment, which means dignified, good health and peace. We want to improve capacity and empower vulnerable groups and community organizations. We work with the most impoverished families in the community.

When I was young, my father had a job, but he got just a small salary. I worked very hard to help my mother do housework, work in a shop and raise pigs. In the town of Prey Veng we had a river. When I was around 12, I would catch fish there. We needed them to eat. In high school, I worked as a construction worker in addition to going to school.

My father was a very smart man. He taught me English and he speaks French well. Then when I was in high school, I taught people who came here from other countries how to speak and write Khmer. Even then, I thought someday I want to lead an organization. I imagined I could do this.

But in 1993, when I was finished with high school, my family could not afford to send me to the university. I continued teaching Khmer, including to an MCC agricultural technician. I also worked for the United Nations one year.

I became a program coordinator for MCC in 2000, and then a project officer, training farmers in business development in Prey Veng Province. During that time, I became interested in the community. With MCC staff, I visited farmers from house to house. I learned a lot from MCC staff on how to work with the community people. I learned facilitation skills and how you can communicate with other people.

When I became a program coordinator for MCC in 2000, I needed to learn about community development and by working with MCC staff, I learned a lot by reading English books about community development and research more, but during that time there were very few Khmer books.

ODOV became a registered Cambodian nongovernmental organization in 2004, and I became executive director a year later. I knew I needed to develop myself in order to have the capacity to connect with other organizations that can fund our work.

I am happy with the way that MCC and the Foodgrains Bank partner with ODOV to help farmers to help themselves, not just depend on outside support.

Right now ODOV’s main program is food security and vocational training for youth. We try to mobilize all the farmers to work together to solve their own problems through agricultural cooperatives.

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When I work with community leaders, I urge them to think about something that is not just money but helping others. Your time, your energy can help a lot of people.

I have a lot of opportunity to work in Phnom Penh, where I would make more money, but I don’t feel good about that. I don’t want to be famous or have a high lifestyle. It’s not my values. I still want to work with the poor and would like to help them improve their quality of life.

ODOV provides them with ideas, and if they are interested, we send our staff to help them start up. The resources—supplies for raising chickens and fish and growing gardens—we never give them free. We require them to pay back the money (to the agricultural cooperatives) so it can be used for others in the community. It’s long-term development.

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Sowing seeds for better livelihoods

Through an MCC partner in Chad, women are finding new opportunities in gardening and making products like soap.

STORY BY JASON DU Eck
PHOTOS BY COLIN VANDENBERG

In the dry winter season, members of Ngondong’s gardening team, many of them grandmothers, trek to their garden plots and spend hours watering and caring for their crops.

Odette Dakoumandje irrigates new crops she and other women are raising in a community garden in Ngondong, Chad.

“We have maize, beans, watermelon, carrots, lettuce…,” says Nekarbaye. “Our favorite is beans because beans grow faster—everything’s done in three weeks and then we can sell it.”

Each and every day of the dry winter season, Ngondong’s gardening team, many of them grandmothers, trek 20 minutes to their gardens and spend the daylight hours dutifully watering and caring for their crops.

Nekarbaye and her team were trained by MCC partner Baobab, a short-form name for Bureau d’Appui aux Organisations de Base that references the tree common in southern Chad. In spite of the relentless heat, small green garden plots pepper the soil, crawling over the low rolling hills just east of the brick and grass huts of the community.

Their lush appearance is the result of the dedicated work of Nekarbaye and around two dozen women who make up Ngondong’s gardening team.

Standing between rows of bright green bean sprouts, Berthe Nekarbaye dunked her watering can beneath the surface of a shallow well, filling it for what might be the hundredth time that day.

It’s 109 degrees in the sun in Ngondong, a small village, miles from the nearest paved road in the savannah of southern Chad. In spite of the relentless heat, small green garden plots pepper the soil, crawling over the low rolling hills just east of the brick and grass huts of the community.

Their lush appearance is the result of the dedicated work of Nekarbaye and around two dozen women who make up Ngondong’s gardening team.

“We used to be ‘old women’ but now we’re ladies, beautiful ladies, and we can work!”

On the other side of the village, another group of women has been trained in raising poultry and producing marketable items like soap or lotion from the byproducts of their crops.

Lucienne Panoudji is the leader of another all-female team and says the skills she’s learned have been valuable in more ways than one.

“The chickens are more valuable to sell than to eat,” says Panoudji. “One of our women has a daughter who was 3 months old and got very sick in her lungs. She could easily sell her chickens right away to make money to buy medicine and now her girl is healthy again.”

In addition to having an income source for health care or school fees, Panoudji says team members also learned to be more intentional about how they eat what they produce.

“We were always eating exactly the same thing every day for a whole year. Baobab came in and taught us to eat with more variation, to eat different things, and it’s improved our health,” she says.

Making soap is another way that women plan to work together to earn new income.

“We used to be ‘old women’ but now we’re ladies, beautiful ladies, and we can work!”

As the rainy summer season encroaches on southern Chad, gardening efforts halt, but the women of Ngondong continue to look ahead to how they can use their new skills to improve their lives.

Soapmaking training was introduced earlier this year and there hasn’t been enough made to bring to market. But once the peanut and shea crops that flourish in the rainy season are harvested, Panoudji says they’ll be able to make enough soaps and lotions to sell in nearby towns.

Nekarbaye’s next goal is to build a hedge fence around the garden area to prevent livestock from wandering in and devouring all their hard work—an unfortunate reoccurrence due to nomadic cattle in the region, she says.

That step becomes more important as the women’s gardening efforts expand.

Before Baobab’s training, there were only small home gardens. Women and their families would eat whatever they grew. They were not able to set aside anything to sell, store or use as seeds for the next growing season.

Now, with seeds and farming tools from Baobab and training in topics like how to better care for the soil and what plants grow well together, the scale of the women’s gardens has grown exponentially—with plants stretching across the hillside and bringing in new opportunities for Nekarbaye and the other gardeners.

“We can sell from these gardens, eat from them and get money from them and then help children to go to school or to the hospital,” Nekarbaye says. 

Jason Dueck is a writer for MCC Canada. Colin Vandenberg is a photographer in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
Coping with climate change

In Kenya, conservation agriculture and raising animals like chickens help families sustain themselves despite changing weather patterns.

STORY BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
PHOTOS BY MATTHEW LESTER

As devastating droughts become more common, raising chickens and storing beans and corn provide a needed safety net for Kenyan farmers like Joyce Ngumbao when rains don’t fall and crops fail.

The five sacks of beans and corn in the granary of Joyce Ngumbao’s and Pius Kisumu’s Kenyan farm are like money in the bank—a farmer’s safety net amid a changing climate. The chickens in the nearby coop also add to their financial security when the rains don’t come.

The beans and corn are what remain in January from a prosperous 2018 summer harvest on the family’s farm, located in the semi-arid region of Makueni County, southeast of the capital city of Nairobi.

By using conservation agriculture, a way of farming that MCC and partner Utooni Development Organization (UDO) are promoting to increase crop production in drier conditions, Ngumbao and Kisumu were able to produce and save more crops than most farmers in their area that year.

That bounty, combined with their chicken raising, has turned out to be essential for Ngumbao, Kisumu and their five children in 2019. The rains that were supposed to fall in November and December 2018 didn’t come until January and only lasted one month. The long rainy season, from March to May, became a June-only rainy season. Both harvests were sparse.

In a region where farmers and herders and their ancestors based their livelihoods on predictable rainy seasons, the pattern no longer holds.

Ever since 2010, rains have not been reliable, says Amos Meitiak Koitee, senior field officer for Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives (MIDI), an MCC partner that works with Maasai communities in Kajiado County in the Rift Valley.

“When it comes, it is sporadic. It rains one place, but the other is dry.”

Droughts, like one in 2017 that destroyed entire herds of cows owned by Maasai farmers, are becoming more common, Koitee says. “Before, every 10 years there was a drought. Now it’s every five, even three years. Before the community recovers, another drought comes.”

In contrast, rain also now comes in torrents instead of several hours of steady precipitation. In 2018, a flash flood washed away a concrete dam and livestock in Kajiado.
To help farmers find new ways to cope with the impact of climate change, MCC supports agriculture projects of MIDI and UDO. Funding for UDO's work comes from MCC's account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. MCC has supported MIDI's work over the years, including through projects in partnership with Growing Hope Globally (formerly Foods Resource Bank).

Staff from the two Kenyan organizations are teaching farmers to use conservation agriculture, which emphasizes soil cover, minimum soil disturbance and crop rotation. They highlight the importance of diversifying livestock and storage crops.

It's a message that especially resonates with women, who in both Maasai and other communities are most likely to grow food and be expected to provide food for their children.

In Maasai communities in the dry season or during droughts, men travel with herds of cattle to look for food and water. Women and children remain at home, often facing hunger or malnutrition.

Increasing numbers of Maasai families struggle to support their herds at home even during rainy seasons. Ever since the government subdivided communal Maasai land in 1982, families have continued to parcel their land among their children and grandchildren or to sell portions of their farm until it is no longer big enough to sustain large herds.

Increasing numbers of Maasai families struggle to support their herds at home even during rainy seasons. Ever since the government subdivided communal Maasai land in 1982, families have continued to parcel their land among their children and grandchildren or to sell portions of their farm until it is no longer big enough to sustain large herds.

To support the wellbeing of Maasai families, MIDI staff are encouraging families to reduce the number of cattle they own, to purchase dairy cows that produce more milk, to grow vegetables and cassava while neighbors using traditional methods harvested nothing.

“that means we are food secure at the family levels. The surplus we sell and use it to send our children to school or do some construction here, so we don’t need to go out begging or looking for something to eat.”

Ngumbao and Kisumu used their surplus mung beans, grown using conservation agriculture techniques, to pay most of their teenagers’ school fees, and they sold other produce to buy cement for their house floors. They bought 10 chickens to boost the flock that UDO convinced Ngumbao to start in 2016 to provide an income source other than crops.

Ngumbao, who does most of the field work, says conservation agriculture has made a big difference in her ability to farm in dry conditions.

In 2018, she harvested 800 pounds of dried corn (maize) from one acre of land that she has nurtured with conservation agriculture techniques over the past three years. On her other three acres, planted with the conventional method of plowing, scattering and covering seeds, she harvested only 200 pounds.

On a January day in 2019, rich green cornstalks that were planted using conservation agriculture rose higher than her head, with other crops growing in between. The field that was planted using traditional techniques is more red soil than corn, with stalks that barely reach her waist.

Without sufficient rain, even the corn that thrived in January never matured enough to become food—the stalks were used as soil cover instead. But, UDO staff note, Ngumbao was able to harvest legumes and cassava, where neighbors who didn’t use conservation agriculture harvested nothing.

She hopes to devote more land to conservation agriculture, but it takes much more time to plant the seeds one by one, deep into the ground with decomposed manure. Plowing is faster.

“It is our wish that on all the farm we could do conservation agriculture,” says Ngumbao. “With conservation agriculture you are assured of harvest even with little rain.”

Joyce Ngumbao used conservation agriculture to plant this corn, a stark contrast to smaller stalks grown with traditional methods. The crop failed for lack of rain, but she did save the stalks for soil cover and harvested legumes and cassava while neighbors using traditional methods harvested nothing.

The reason why my cow is alive during the drought is because I acquired the knowledge to preserve hay when it is in plenty,” says Damaris Nadupoi, a single mother who lives in the Oloshoibor region. She has been preserving dried elephant grass in her shed since MIDI first taught her how in 2016. “During the drought, my neighbors who had big herds had to move. Still after moving, their livestock have died. Mine, here, are still alive during the drought season up until today,” says Nadupoi. She has two dairy cows that have produced two calves and up to 5 liters, or 1.3 gallons, of milk a day that she can sell.

Following MIDI’s advice, she has planted fruit trees and a variety of crops from pumpkins to tomatoes. She rotates her crops to keep nutrients in the soil and limit pests. She’s currently experimenting with a moist garden—a garden lined with plastic to prevent water from dissipating into the ground.

“The big benefit is we produce food here,” Nadupoi says. “It is our wish that on all the farm we could do conservation agriculture reach higher than her head, with other crops growing in between. The field that was planted using traditional techniques is more red soil than corn, with stalks that barely reach her waist. Without sufficient rain, even the corn that thrived in January never matured enough to become food—the stalks were used as soil cover instead. But, UDO staff note, Ngumbao was able to harvest legumes and cassava, where neighbors who didn’t use conservation agriculture harvested nothing.

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Damaris Nadupoi, a single Maasai mother, is using techniques that she has learned from MIDI to improve her crop yields and diversify her farm. In addition to raising dairy cows and storing hay, she also is experimenting with a garden lined with plastic to prevent water from dissipating into the ground.

Clair Good, a former MCC representative for Kenya.

On a January day in 2019, rich green cornstalks that were planted using conservation agriculture rose higher than her head, with other crops growing in between. The field that was planted using traditional techniques is more red soil than corn, with stalks that barely reach her waist.

Without sufficient rain, even the corn that thrived in January never matured enough to become food—the stalks were used as soil cover instead. But, UDO staff note, Ngumbao was able to harvest legumes and cassava, where neighbors who didn’t use conservation agriculture harvested nothing.

She hopes to devote more land to conservation agriculture, but it takes much more time to plant the seeds one by one, deep into the ground with decomposed manure. Plowing is faster.

“It is our wish that on all the farm we could do conservation agriculture,” says Ngumbao. “With conservation agriculture you are assured of harvest even with little rain.”

Linda Espenbude is news photographer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
MCC representatives

**Names:** Anne Marie and Scott Stoner-Eby

**Hometown:** Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Blossom Hill Mennonite Church)

**Assignment:** As MCC representatives for Rwanda and Burundi, we live in Kigali, Rwanda, oversee MCC’s work with partner organizations and lead a team of eight local and international staff. We work with partners and MCC staff to build effective projects, including refining project proposals, giving feedback on progress reports and visiting project sites.

**Growing our faith:** Once a week we have devotions as a team, using lectionary readings, and it’s amazing how frequently the biblical passages we read are so concretely relevant to our work and to the contexts of Rwanda and Burundi. We have gained a new appreciation for Paul, especially his emphasis on reconciliation as central to the Gospel. We have been so inspired by the way peacebuilders in Rwanda and Burundi have contributed to healing and reconciliation in communities torn apart by violence.

**Joys:** Never a dull moment—something interesting is always happening that presents opportunities for learning and growth! Also, seeing partner organizations getting stronger and our staff building their skills. Realizing the impact that MCC’s contributions to peacebuilding efforts have made over the years here. I also help clean the house and wash clothes. I like to sing songs and memorize poems. I also like to read books and draw pictures.

**Challenge:** The wide variety on our to-do lists is stimulating, but it can be challenging to prioritize when there are so many important tasks to accomplish.

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

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

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**My favorite food:** morning glory sour soup with rice

**My favorite subject:** Khmer language and math

**What I want to be:** doctor

Did you know? In Cambodia, names are in a different order than here in the U.S. So for Phouen Sophat, Phouen is her family name – like last names in the U.S. – while Sophat is the name her friends and teachers call her.

**Design a garden**

In Cambodia, families often grow:
- lemon grass
- morning glory
- pumpkins
- green beans
- cucumbers

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**My name is Phouen Sophat.**

**Age:** 10

**Lives in:** Cha Village, Mesang District, Cambodia

When I wake up in the morning, I fold up my sleeping mat and my mosquito net. I bathe, comb my hair and go off to school. When I get home, I cook rice and prepare soup. Sometimes I just cut the vegetables or slice the meat for my mom.

My mother is sick, so she can’t do much work, and my dad doesn’t live with us. My two older sisters and I help her plant things in the garden. ODOV (MCC’s partner) helped my mom get a watering can, seeds, fences and tools so our garden could produce more food, even in the dry season. I also help clean the house and wash clothes. I like to sing songs and memorize poems. I also like to read books and draw pictures.

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**How do you say hello in Khmer?**

choum reap sor

(Say “joohm reap S0O-A”)
25 WAYS TO GIVE this Christmas

Choose gifts for friends and family that change lives around the world.

mcc.org/christmas