Beyond a year | Healing after a flood in Indonesia
Sharing love and food in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Where God leads us

J RON BYLER
MCC U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“In God’s economy, every goose has a place. ’I do not know where I will be 20 years from now but wherever God puts me, I believe I can do something in that place by helping people.’...” says Yunarso Rusandono, as he shares about his experiences in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Program (YAMEN), a joint program of MCC and Mennonite World Conference.

I met Dono, as he is known in his hometown of Sukodono, in Java, Indonesia, several years ago. He was a year abroad with MCC’s Volunteer Exchange Program. Dono worked with churches in Egypt and Zimbabwe.

Today, he is working through a church organization to respond to disasters, locally, with church partners and neighbors after a flood, and internationally, to help rebuild a church after a typhoon in the Philippines. Dono is currently studying at a Christian university.

Mennonite leaders consistently share with me how important MCC’s young adult exchange programs are for helping to equip future church leaders.

YAMEN and its sister yearlong young adult exchange programs in MCC, International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP), and Serving and Learning Together (SALT), are changing the lives of youth all over the world, and they, in turn, are changing the lives of the people they meet.

Wherever God leads us, young adults like Dono are showing us that we can be part of God’s mission in the world. Through MCC, you are helping young adults prepare for a lifetime of service through the church. Thank you for your ongoing support of this ministry.

A Common Place

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Beyond a year

MCC’s one-year exchange programs can spark lasting results for young Indonesians and their churches and ministries

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Find more news at: mcc.org/stories

Nepal Growing goats

A revolving loan fund from a farmer’s group in her village of Marku, Nepal, gave Muga Bhuil, above, a chance to expand her goat herd. Since 2010, MCC, with funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, has partnered with Nepali organizations Sanathak Bikas Sanjal and YES-Nepal to improve food security through support for savings and credit groups and training in agriculture, raising livestock and nutrition. With profits from goat sales, Bhuil will repay the fund and the group will select another beneficiary for a loan.

Give a gift—Food

MCC’s work helps to people such as Bhuil succeed in raising livestock, caring for crops and land and sustaining themselves and their families. Donate through the envelope in the Christmas Giving supplement, mailed with this issue of A Common Place. You also may give online at mcc.org/christmas or by contacting your nearest MCC office (see page 2).

South Sudan Crisis response

Since December 2013, an estimated 1.1 million people have been internally displaced by conflict in South Sudan and over 400,000 people have fled to neighboring countries. MCC responded with food assistance for displaced people in South Sudan. In Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan, MCC is providing essential food packages and soap to displaced families in Nineveh Province. Go to mcc.org/iraqis—displaced for updates.

Honduras Achieving education

For the past four years, a scholarship from an MCC partner, supported through MCC’s Global Family education program, has helped Wendy Wyleska Guity of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, continue her education. Without that assistance, “I would not have had the chance to graduate from high school at this age or ever in my life,” says Guity, who finished high school earlier this year with the help of MCC partner Proyecto Mama and plans to look for a job that will help her afford college. Go to globalfamily.mcc.org to learn more about MCC’s work in education.
Beyond a year

One person serving one year through MCC’s International Volunteer Exchange Program can result in thousands of people’s lives touched by God’s love and compassion.

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
PHOTOS BY SILAS CREWS

As 8-year-old Melan Pangkurei hikes up her calf-length blue pants and circles her arms around the palm tree she’s about to climb, she has no idea that her life has already been impacted by MCC’s International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP). She’s got other things on her mind.

Melan reaches high on the trunk. With the soles of her bare feet on opposite sides of the tree, she propels herself upward, climbing 8 feet in 17 seconds, then, her friends cheering her on with gleeful giggles, she slides down.

The children in Melan’s neighborhood have a God-given lush playground at the base of the mountainous jungles that surround Sentani, a town in Papua, Indonesia.

And thanks to the work of a former participant in MCC’s IVEP program, they also have a library.

It’s a small endeavor to be sure, one lime green room in a neighborhood home with several boxes of books, divided into reading levels, and a bookshelf of novels and research books for teens and adults. But this is the only place children in this neighborhood can go to get some academic support without taking a motorcycle taxi to their school in town.

After conquering the tree, Melan and her friends settle on the library floor with crayons and paper and a stack of picture books. Each Saturday, as many as 15 children come in, check out books and get extra tutoring in math.

“IT’S BRIDGING SO MANY LEVELS OF RELATIONSHIPS.”

Albertino Imbiri, who volunteered at Greencroft Retirement Community in Goshen, Ind., and at MCC offices in Akron, Pa., through MCC’s IVEP program in 1997–98, created Prosperity of Health and Education Institution to help meet needs in his community.
Behind this—and other educational and social services that minister to families struggling to make a living on the periphery of Sentani—is the work of Albertino Imbiri, a man with kind eyes and a gentle spirit who traces his vision for this ministry back to his experience with IVEP.

Imbiri is one of 3,355 Christian young people from 79 countries (199 from Indonesia) who have volunteered in Canada and the U.S. since the IVEP program was established in 1950. Like many, he returned to his home country with a stronger desire to serve, work for peace, connect globally and live out his faith.

IVEP participants come from countries beyond the U.S. and Canada. They live with host families and volunteer at places such as schools, MCC thrift shops, retirement homes, day care centers and farms. They also become friends with other IVEP participants, building a global network of practical and spiritual support that can last for years.

For Imbiri, who volunteered at Greencroft Retirement Community in Goshen, Ind., in fall 1997, and at MCC offices in Akron, Pa., in spring 1998, IVEP caused him to think about possibilities he hadn’t considered before.

“MCC is in a small town in Akron, with a simple office, but they can organize a big service around the world,” he remembers thinking at the time. “Maybe I can serve people. Maybe I don’t have money, but I will try to connect with people who would like to join me to serve people.”

After additional training in Indonesia, Imbiri started his own nonprofit organization in 2002, Prosperity of Health and Education Institution. Having seen the benefit of volunteers through his IVEP experience, he recruited volunteers from local churches to work one-on-one with parents, teaching them how to better support their children emotionally and academically. His organization now partners with MCC to distribute MCC Global Family education program funds in Papua and also provides other educational opportunities, including the Sentani library.

The power of IVEP, says Lilik Setiyanto, an MCC Indonesia staff person in Salatiga who served through the program in 1994–1995, reaches far beyond participants. Their experiences change their families, churches and schools. The exchange changes the lives of host families and others the IVEP participant meets in Canada or the U.S.

“It’s bridging so many levels of relationships.”

Building relationships across cultures and religious lines is a key ability that all Indonesian church leaders need, says Paulus Widjaja, an IVEP participant in 1985–86. As general secretary of Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI), one of three Mennonite synods in Indonesia, he sees IVEP as important training for future leaders in the church.

“Indonesia is a very plural society, and I think church leaders should have the ability to cross the border and to have the sensitivity to work with other cultures,” he says. He also thinks they need to see how Mennonite life is lived in the U.S. and Canada, especially how Mennonites incorporate simplicity and peace theology into their lives.

Before Widjaja was in IVEP, he had already learned about nonresistance from his pastor in Indonesia, but he understood it through the stories of the Anabaptist reformation in 16th century Europe. “I did not know how it was implemented and lived out in a modern world,” he says.

Through his placements in the library at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School and the bookstore at Eastern Mennonite University, Widjaja learned about how Mennonites incorporate simplicity and peace theology into their lives. Before he was in IVEP, he had already learned about nonresistance from his pastor in Indonesia, but he understood it through the stories of the Anabaptist reformation in 16th century Europe. “I did not know how it was implemented and lived out in a modern world,” he says.

Florentina Galuh, who works at an after-school program at Maranatha Church, credits serving in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, through the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network with helping her become more open minded and welcoming.
University in Harrisonburg, Va., conversations, theological classes and observations of his host families and other Mennonites, he understood more about how to live out a belief in nonresistance.

His experience inspired him to study peace. Eventually he became director of graduate studies in theology, which includes peace studies for Christians and Muslims, at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and he helped to found the university’s Center for the Study and Promotion of Peace.

“I was turned around and really shaped by the example that Mennonites practice in real life. Definitely it really changed my life, my thinking, my theology and my character,” says Widjaja.

In addition to IVEP, Indonesian Mennonites are gaining the opportunity for exchanges with countries other than Canada and the U.S. through the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN), a partnership of MCC and Mennonite World Conference. (Read about a YAMEN participant from Mennonite synod Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa on p. 10.)

Both IVEP and YAMEN build bridges among Anabaptist young people in the world, preparing participants to be leaders in their churches, not just pastors, says Mark Sider, MCC Indonesia representative with his wife, Jane. The Siders are from Ottawa, Ont. He hopes participants return home and create foundations, become ethical business leaders or work in disaster relief and other ministries.

Lita Sidharta, an IVEP participant in 2000–2001, has become one of those leaders, serving as principal of a church-run preschool of a congregation of Mennonite synod Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI). The preschool offers quality, low-cost education for Christian and Muslim families in Ungaran, Indonesia.

When she was in Saskatoon, Sask., volunteering through IVEP at the Global Gathering Place, a drop-in center for refugees and immigrants, everyone had a different culture, she says, and they appreciated her Indonesian culture.

Now, more than a decade later, she’s devoted herself to trying to instill the confidence and excitement for global connections she found there in her young students. Canadian and U.S. visitors and volunteers from MCC’s Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program for young adults visit or work at the school. Sidharta introduces students to new countries each week and prays with them for other parts of the world. She connects them to the children of people she met in Canada through photos and messages on Facebook.

After the tsunami hit Japan in 2011, she sent a picture of her students to the Japanese friends she met through IVEP, telling them that she and her students were praying for them.

“I want my village to have an open mind,” she said. “We are one of the children of the world…. We have to bless the world. We have to bless the nations, even if we are in a village.”

Linda Espenshade is news coordinator for MCC U.S. Silas Creas is photographer and multimedia producer for MCC U.S.

**Give a gift—Hope**

Your gift of hope supports MCC’s work to share God’s love and compassion for all and to provide opportunities for people of faith to serve at home and around the world. Give through the envelope in the Christmas Giving supplement, mailed with this issue of A Common Place. You also may give online at mcc.org/christmas or by contacting your nearest MCC office (see page 2).
Yunarso Rusandono
An Indonesian Mennonite shares how an MCC exchange program gave him new ideas for ministry within his church and led him to build ties with other Mennonite synods.

As Told to Linda Espenshade

I was studying in Mennonite Theological Seminary in Patti, Indonesia, when an elder from my synod, Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GITJ), asked me to be the first person from my church in Indonesia to take part in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN). (A joint program of MCC and Mennonite World Conference, YAMEN connects young adults around the globe to service opportunities in countries other than Canada and the U.S.)

He told me the purpose of the program was to change my image of other countries and other cultures and to make a connection between the synod and the church wherever I would go. I was thinking that this is a good program for me, but this is hard for me also. I didn’t know exactly what I could do because I felt like my experience, my knowledge and my skill was not enough, but I wanted to try.

First I went to Egypt, but there were issues with my visa, and MCC asked me to go to Zimbabwe instead.

In the city of Bulawayo, I lived with Milson Ndlovu, one of the seven pastors at Lobengula Brethren in Christ Church, and his wife Thokozani, who was principal of the church’s kindergarten. I visited church members with my host father and helped at the kindergarten. The children could only speak Ndebele, but we played together and became close.

That was in 2008, when Zimbabwe had an inflation crisis so intense that the country’s money became worthless. Because of this, some women came together at the church to pray every night for one week. After that some of them were fasting. I also fasted.

Every Wednesday I attended an HIV and AIDS support group at church for 50 people. My host father said there could be more than 100 (people living with HIV) in the church. This was my first time to learn about HIV.

When I left, I cried in front of the church and I said to them that I would miss them when I went home.

I learned a lot that I could use back in Indonesia. The experience also changed me.

Before I went to YAMEN, I did not have enough confidence to talk to people who were different than me. Now my mindset is open when I see someone else.

Also, before YAMEN, my connection with other people was only small. Now, not only through YAMEN, not only through MCC, my connections are growing.

After I returned from Zimbabwe, I met Paulus Hartono, the director of the Indonesian Mennonite Diakonial Service (IMDS), the relief and peacebuilding arm of the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) synod, another Mennonite synod, during a training about disaster response. We became close.

Because of our connection, the relief arm of my synod, GITJ, met with Hartono, connecting the two synods. Before that, it was unusual for the different synods to work together on disaster response. Now we have many programs together, including a youth program. It’s not just with our synods, but also with Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI) too, the third Mennonite synod.

Last year, after flooding here on the island of Java, we joined together to help people from a church and its community, Christian and Muslim. When the typhoon hit the Philippines last November, we collected money from the churches, and IMDS built a new church there to replace one that was destroyed.

In YAMEN, I also learned new ways to develop the congregation I work with in Sukodono.

The youth used to meet every two weeks for Bible study and discipleship. Now we meet every week. We have social time and time for sharing personal problems. I prepare mentors to help the teenagers. Each meeting we divide into small groups led by a mentor. I tell them, “Please, if you have some problem, tell us. I am your brother. I will not tell your problems to others.”

I also encourage the youth to join YAMEN or IVEP, and I am on the committee that chooses Indonesian participants. Your world is not only Sukodono, I tell them. If you prepare yourself, you can go to an international program like I did. This program is good. This program can open your image about other countries. Sometimes when you see movies on TV about another country, it’s different than the reality when you stay there. So please prepare yourselves.

Now I am studying peace training at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta. I have learned the theory of conflict and reconciliation and practical ways to prevent conflict in disaster situations.

I do not know where I will be 20 years from now, but where God puts me, I believe I can do something in that place by helping people to open their minds to each other.

In 2008-2009, Yunarso Rusandono was in the first group of Indonesian participants in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN), a joint program of MCC and Mennonite World Conference.
Healing after a flood in Indonesia

MCC supports the efforts of Indonesian Mennonites to provide trauma healing to communities facing the aftermath of disasters or crises.

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE

Darkness had already fallen and the villagers of Jekulo, Indonesia, were getting ready for bed when the rain that had been falling for days broke open a river bank, releasing gushing water onto rice paddies and then into the village itself.

Flooding in this region is not uncommon, in part because of deforestation and erosion on nearby Muria mountain. But residents were accustomed to floodwaters that rose gradually—very different from the water suddenly rushing into their homes and rising so quickly they feared it wouldn’t stop.

Most evacuated. Crying children and elderly people were loaded onto the backs of police trucks. In other parts of the region, fields were almost ready for harvest were ruined. More than four feet of water had been falling for days broke open a river bank, releasing gushing water onto rice paddies and then into the village itself.

“The current was so strong,” says Sumarni Sajad, a mid-aged woman who fled carrying clothing on her head. “My feet were hurting. I was afraid because the water was rising so quickly they feared it wouldn’t stop. Neighbors shared what they had with each other, and other Indonesians who learned of the crisis sent food and medical supplies, Legowo remembers. Yet she and other church leaders knew that the people of Jekulo needed something more——care for their spiritual and emotional needs. “The flood not only took their fields and their belongings, but their hope,” Legowo says.

With the support of MCC and the coordination of the Indonesian Mennonite Diakonial Service (IMDS), the relief and peacebuilding arm of GKMI, a trauma healing team was assembled to come to Jekulo.

Responding to trauma is part of a long-term partnership between MCC and IMDS, beginning with MCC sending trauma healing practitioners after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. As part of the tsunami response and for years afterward, MCC has supported the work of IMDS and other partners to develop programs to train Indonesians, including pastors and disaster response volunteers, to provide trauma healing.

Yuria Ekalitani, a psychologist who developed the current trauma healing training for IMDS, says that people’s traumatic stress is often triggered by “something that happens suddenly that they cannot control.” People feel physically threatened, their confidence in themselves is shaken, and their economic life becomes uncertain.

If people don’t deal with the emotions related to trauma, they tend not to be productive even when they work, she says. They are likely to take out their anger and helplessness on people they love or they try to cover those emotions with alcohol.

In Indonesia, Ekalitani says, people are much more likely to give and to receive help from each other than to consult a doctor or psychologist, so people who have dealt with their own trauma and received training in trauma healing are uniquely poised to help others.

The trauma team that came to Jekulo was composed predominantly of pastors, current and retired, who had taken part in MCC-supported trauma healing training seminars that included looking at their own experiences with trauma.

MCC and IMDS intentionally assembled a group that included pastors from the islands of Java and Papua—a part of a larger effort of MCC and IMDS’s Indonesian partners to break down stereotypes, build relationships and encourage Indonesians from different islands and cultures to work together, says Mark Sider of Ottawa, Ont., an MCC Indonesia representative with his wife Jane.

When the team came a few weeks after the flooding, the water had receded far enough for people to clean out their houses and move back in, but fields were still inundated. An integral part of this trauma healing effort—and a common and respected trauma healing technique in Indonesia—is acupressure, massaging pressure points of people’s feet and hands. Ekalitani says in Indonesia acupressure is believed to increase blood flow to the body promoting physical healing. And it helped people to relax as pastors invited them to talk about their experiences and prayed with them or offered words of encouragement.

As word spread that the team was offering acupressure and trauma healing, those whose lives had been impacted by the flood, both Christian and Muslim, came to the church. Pastors, who are held in high regard in Indonesian society, sat on the floor and worked with each person for 15 to 20 minutes.

“They were able to express their emotion and their story,” Legowo says. “Even some of them, they shared about their family problems, not just about the flood.”

Afterward, most people stayed around to talk to each other, encouraged to do so by people from the church. Some villagers took the opportunity to meet with a pharmacist and a doctor the church provided. In two days the team of pastors worked with 250 people in Jekulo and a neighboring town—building friendships and connections.

“The whole process helped me to feel better, especially because so many brothers and sisters came to visit us, pray for us and do some programs for us,” Purnomo says. “All this relationship that happened helped us to feel better.”

Linda Espenshade is news coordinator for MCC U.S.
Sharing love and food
MCC partners help to meet basic needs of families and seniors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BY JULIE BELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

In a small beige building near high-rise apartments that dot the city of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bernada Hinović lifts her ladle from a pot of soup and carefully fills a container. Adding a loaf of fresh bread, she reaches through a small door in the wall and passes food to Sulejmen Mahmić, who will take the package back home to nourish himself, his wife, two sons and an elderly neighbor.

Hinović is one of dozens of cooks and servers helping to prepare the 8,000 hot meals that Merhamet, a long-term MCC partner, provides daily. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, MCC supports the soup kitchens and food banks of partners like Merhamet with funding and shipments of canned meat and dried soup mix. MCC relief, school and hygiene kits and comforters and blankets also help to meet basic needs that are out of reach for many.

“These are the poorest ones, the marginalized ones,” Merhamet’s Sakib Osmanbegović says of those who come to the soup kitchens or receive food packages. “They come to us because they have no other option.”

For Mahmić, that’s certainly the case. Sometimes, as he walks to the soup kitchen in Zenica each weekday, people ask him where he’s going and he’s too ashamed to say. Other times he tells them the truth. Mahmić’s voice breaks and his eyes fill with tears as he talks about the food he will take home to his family and neighbor.

“I would do anything to feed them, but this is very difficult,” he says.

Mahmić worked in a mine for 33 years, but was injured there and also during wars in the 1990s. He is unable to work and barely survives on a...
monthly pension of less than $100. In an economy still reeling from war, many families cannot make ends meet on meager pensions or small salaries. Others can’t find work at all. Unemployment runs 40 percent, among the highest in Europe. Government assistance is not nearly large enough to meet the needs of the people, and those who are injured, ill or too old to work often have few options.

“Within East Europe most people have been making hard choices about how to prioritize their basic needs for decades,” says Krystan Pawlikowski. He and his wife Ruth Plett of Kitchener, Ont., are representatives for MCC’s work in East Europe. “Our longstanding partners’ work has been to build up local relationships and support volunteering to help the most impoverished in holistic ways. MCC food assistance helps to support these local initiatives, such as soup kitchens, so that people will have to make fewer difficult choices for their families.”

In Sarajevo, Jela Medić stirs a huge pot of simmering sauce. She works with Bread of Saint Anthony (BSA), which feeds 1,200 people daily from its three soup kitchens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Medić has been a volunteer with BSA, an MCC partner, for 12 years.

“It’s not easy work, but I do it with love and compassion,” she says. “I prepare the food as if it was in my own home. These people are really suffering.”

Both BSA and Merhamet stress that the people who come to them for help need more than food.

“In Sarajevo, Jela Medić, volunteer at a Bread of Saint Anthony soup kitchen, stirs a huge pot of simmering sauce, part of 1,200 meals provided each day.

Sarajevo, along with the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, continues to deal with the economic and social consequences of brutal conflicts in the 1990s.

In response, BSA and Merhamet, in partnership with MCC, provide in-home care, especially for the elderly. In the village of Kakanj, 70-year-old Ćatiba Alić, who has diabetes, sits on a couch in her home as a health care worker, Adisa Skopljak, from Merhamet tests her blood sugar. Alić, her husband and son receive food packages from Merhamet, but she says the home visits are especially valuable.

“I am grateful because they’ve been doing this for four years,” Alić says, explaining that health care workers not only bring medicine but also help with housekeeping tasks.

Merhamet sends teams—which can include a doctor or other medical worker, a social worker and a volunteer—to about 80 homes a month. The teams deliver medication and other health care supplies and offer advice on medical and hygiene issues. BSA provides ongoing medical care to about 45 people. In some cases, a doctor visits weekly. A nurse may bathe or dress a person’s wounds. A social worker keeps track of the patient’s general health and lobbies for additional support from other institutions when needed. Volunteers do everything from cleaning a home to accompanying people to a grocery store or pharmacy.

Davor Majstorović is a coordinator with BSA. He says many of the people who come to the soup kitchens or receive home care are still struggling with the trauma of the 1990s wars. They have physical challenges and disabilities. Some live with drug and alcohol additions, domestic violence and family breakdown.

“This is the struggle of our country, the painful situation,” he says. “But as a humanitarian organization, we know that God won’t let us down and we are trying to share that love. It is our mission.”

Julie Bell is senior writer and editor for MCC Canada. Matthew Sawatzky is a photographer in Winnipeg, Man. 
Psychosocial support worker

Name: Nathan Toews

Hometown: North Newton, Kan.

(Bethel College Mennonite Church)

Assignment: With MCC partner Coordinación Eclesial para la Acción Psicosocial or Church Coordination for Psychosocial Action, I research trauma healing in the Mennonite church in Colombia and design and facilitate workshops on topics like trauma awareness and active listening skills to help church communities care for those affected by violence or the armed conflict. Through Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, I meet with displaced families and facilitate a weekly gathering that brings people together to reflect on peace, the Bible and the armed conflict.

Typical day: In workshops for church communities, I listen and work with participants as they engage each other and share personal stories. I also meet with families who live in continued danger. Some have been threatened and must decide whether to move within the city, leave it or even leave the country. Families are in tough situations that require both recognizing the emotional heaviness and thinking clearly about the best course of action. Another part of my work involves planning with church leaders, which is an opportunity to share ideas and think creatively.

Joys: Seeing participants in workshops begin to trust these spaces and open up. In a context of economic hardship, violence and a general lack of community solidarity, church communities provide spaces of fellowship and worship that encourage personal faith journeys as well as making God manifest in relationships and in acts of love.

Challenge: To always listen to a community, think critically about my role and not to mistake my answers for the right answers.

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.

My name is Cessy Maria Karoba.

Age: 9

Lives in: Sentani, Indonesia

I live on the second biggest island in the world. New Guinea, in Papua, in the country of Indonesia. My people are Wamena. My 5-year-old brother, Beto, and I live with our parents near Sentani Lake (a beautiful lake with some kinds of fish that are not found anywhere else in the world).

Every morning I ride on a motorcycle taxi to get to a bus that takes me to school, where I am in first grade. (MCC’s Global Family education program helps pay for motorcycle and bus rides and school uniforms for students such as Yeli.) One of my favorite places at school is the library, where I can read.

At home I help my mother by washing dishes or making fried rice. Every day, I take food to our pig. Our pig and our neighbors’ pigs live in pens down the road.

I like to play badminton, which is popular in Indonesia. Every year I look forward to Christmas and Chinese New Year because I like to see the fireworks.

My favorite food: fried chicken and fish

My favorite subject: English and math

What I want to be: doctor

At home, Cessy Maria uses this desk for studying and homework.

Hopscotch or gici-gici

In Indonesia, many children play gici-gici, a kind of hopscotch.

1. Draw a grid of squares on the ground.
2. Toss a stone or other object on first square.
3. Hop with only one foot in each square, avoiding the square that your stone is in.
4. At the end, turn around and hop back, picking up your stone as you pass.
5. If your stone misses your square or you put your foot down where it shouldn’t be, you lose your turn.
6. The first person to complete all the squares wins.
Unfrustrate your gift giving this Christmas.
Explore MCC Christmas Giving projects.

“For the past several years, our extended family in Canada have enthusiastically embraced the Christmas Giving projects in lieu of frustration shopping! Thank you for the opportunity to share in addressing real needs.”
Susan Sawatsky, Warrington, Pa.