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## Editor's note

'How could church bless the underprivileged groups in the community?' This is a question that elders and deacons in the church must have in mind, and so does every Christian. Living in an ever-changing generation, we need to show even more creativity to respond to the needs of beneficiaries.

In the section 'Focus', CEDAR introduces our partner in Rwanda. We will learn how they mobilise local churches to serve and hence, empower churches to become the driving force for community development.

In 'Back to the Bible', Dr Mok Chan Wing Yan reminds us by the Book of Matthew - why churches need to help the poor.

For 'Blessings by Offering' and 'Taking Action', there are two thought-provoking stories about practice which we hope you will be inspired.

A single Christian is enough to impact a country in need, changing the lives of the poor; if more Christians with the same vision are gathered, churches can surely spread the blessings of God to the communities.

## Focus

### Transformational Mindset for the Change and Growth in the Community

*Written by Ness Ma (Communications Officer)*

Two cows are eating grass in the cowshed.

Mixed feelings arise when Pastor Francois sees such a scene; nevertheless, a few years ago, owning two cows was impossible for him and his family, no matter how hard they tried.

To him, this is a miracle of God.

Looking back upon his life, Pastor Francois finds himself a 48 years old man coming from a poor farming village.

With six children and a wife to raise, his meagre income could barely support his family expenditure. When the family's financial stress had been tremendous already, there would not be any extra savings for livestock that help sustainable agriculture.

In Karongi District, located in western Rwanda, many live in

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poverty, just like Pastor Francois.

Rwanda, where the tragic Rwandan genocide caused shock worldwide once. It has been over 25 years since the 1994 Genocide. The country is on its road to recovery, but post-genocide prosperity mainly happens in Kigali, the capital city.

The rest of Rwanda, especially the remote areas, is still facing a lot of challenges.

For instance, wealth in the capital city does not spread to Karongi. The western district has been suffering from the long-term consequences brought by the genocide until now (significant losses of life, genocide widows that are poverty-stricken, etc.). According to CEDAR's partner, World Relief Rwanda (WRR as below), the district poverty rate is 45.3%, whereas the malnutrition rate in children under five was found to be 44.8%. In May 2018, Karongi was battered by natural disasters. 25,000 people were affected by disastrous floods, turning 950 families homeless.

WRR began its programme in Karongi in 2018, marking the watershed moment of life for Pastor Francois and the impoverished neighbourhood.

Since 1994, CEDAR's partner, WRR, has been serving Rwandan citizens who went through the horrific tragedy. WRR's mission is to empower the local churches to serve the most vulnerable in the communities. As the country has undergone rapid development, the needs of citizens change day by day. Our partner thus focuses on community development.

To achieve local church empowerment and community development, WRR brings churches together in 'Church Empowerment Zones'. Take Karongi as an example; WRR's project fosters unity and collaboration of the churches, providing a platform for church leaders to exchange the needs of the villagers.

Besides, these leaders are brought together and equipped. As a result, WRR builds the capacity of the local church body so that it has the organisational ability and foundational skills to respond to the needs of people with resources within the neighbourhood.

Poverty and estranged relationships are key problems for citizens in the district. Financially, we can all tell the situation from the above data provided by our partner. For estranged relationships, we could more or less understand them if we put ourselves in Pastor Francois' shoes.

Before WRR's programme began, deep down in Pastor Francois' mind, he had always known that Rwanda Christians were merely keen on worshipping at church. The majority were not willing to help others and build relationships. In addition, church leaders from different denominations did not often meet, not to mention support each other.

Through WRR's guidance, local churches began to transform. Invitations for religious gatherings are increasing among churches; there are even collaborative ministries. Pastor Francois described the relationship between churches is as close as brothers and sisters. All kinds of ministries, whether involving church collaborations or not, aim to respond to the needs of the community and address poverty. Most of the ministries are in the form of small groups, targeting various aspects:

#### Farmer Training Groups:

Many from remote areas in Rwanda still make a living by farming. The training goals include teaching local farmers modern farming methods (better quality seeds, the use of organic fertiliser), and distributing seeds, fertiliser, and fruit trees.

#### Savings Groups:

The locals lack an effective saving culture. Despite their effort, they fail to save money. The usual weekly savings is around 200 to 300 Rwandan francs (around HK\$1.5 to HK\$2.3). For this reason, group members are delivered basic saving method through this programme, where they work together for a common financial goal. This makes loans possible for those facing economic burdens in their families. This also allows the members to invest in a business.

For some savings groups, their goal is to buy livestock instead. Taking the price of a pig as a reference, it costs 15,000 Rwandan francs (around HK\$115), which is a huge amount far beyond what the locals can even afford. Through the savings group with 25 members, each member only needs to contribute 200 Rwandan francs (around HK\$1.5) for monthly savings. It will take a few months to accumulate enough money for a pig.



**With his wife as a member of the savings group, Pastor Francois and his family can finally be able to own their livestock. .**

Pastor Francois and his family are beneficiaries of the savings group, as his wife is one of the members. They see tangible improvements financially. More importantly, the relationships between community members have become closer than ever. The credit goes to the groups where people learn together and help each other when some of the participants are even non-Christian.

'We are beyond grateful for WRR's work. They help us in a mindset-changing way, facilitating the development of the family, church, and the whole community,' said Pastor Francois.

Being part of WRR's programme since the beginning, Pastor Francois has witnessed transformations of different groups in the district. Counting from 2018, with less than four years, changes are seen in the community. According to WRR's half-year project report (editor's notes: this article was written before the project end), in the whole Karongi District, churches established 82 projects altogether that helped 139 vulnerable residents. Apart from savings groups and farmer training, the projects also covered food providing, healthcare support, and manpower (such as house renovation and toilets construction).

Local churches have been present all the time. Nonetheless, like what the pastor thought, without guidance on a growth mindset, their power and impact were limited. This is why WRR is needed. WRR acts as a bridge to connect churches

and people, building a close network with the spirit of mutual help. We believe that they will keep striving on the path to healing and searching for the betterment and a wonderful future.



Aside from Pastor Francois, other villagers also have the opportunity to rear their own livestock because of the church's ministry.

## Back to the Bible

### The Poor and The Church

Written by Dr Mok Chan Wing Yan

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

This is a familiar story about the Last Judgment. The criteria Lord Jesus based on to separate the righteous from the wicked are whether they cared for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the strangers and the imprisoned. Those who serve the disadvantaged are deemed righteous; those who sit back and ignore the poor are condemned as the wicked. This story is an important lesson for churches today.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should never stand idly by when surrounded by the poor and the oppressed. We must try to alleviate the suffering around us. The poor can be kept from extreme poverty with the help of brothers and sisters within the church. Indeed, the church cannot make people rich; at least, it is a safety net that prevents extreme poverty. Outside the church, we should also try our best to serve the disadvantaged in our society. Following this biblical teaching, the church has been involved in ministries such as medical services, prison visits, etc. The church should act to spread the gospel.

The Bible also teaches us that serving the weak is serving Christ. People who lend the weak a helping hand probably do not expect any return because the disadvantaged are generally helpless and are unable to return the favour. But when the righteous have no desire for reward, they unwittingly serve Christ. Therefore, serving the poor is not a one-sided giving but a gift we receive; it is a glory to serve Christ.

Poverty and injustice have been persistent. In this online world, we constantly witness disasters and hardships from around the globe on a couch at home. As an individual, we

do not have the power to solve global poverty and injustice, but the church can always be a blessing to a small group of people on a small scale.

Let's Think

Does your church care about poverty and injustice in society? If not, where should we start?



Our partners and community residents prayed together.

Editor: You can download more devotional articles on the poor and the church in our app (Chinese only)  
Download the app now: <https://link.cedarfund.org/app-246>

## Taking Action

### Creative Mindset in the Combat Against Poverty

Interviewee: Professor Chau Ying

Editor: Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

SIGHT (Student Innovation for Global Health Technology) is a platform in the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) where students try to conceive of and implement solutions for a variety of medical issues in resource-deprived areas.

Professor Chau Ying is the project director who also teaches in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering of the HKUST. She could have stayed in school to teach and do research like the others, but she would rather take her students to the field, into the slums and mountains of poor countries, and serve the locals with science, skills, and creativity. Why did she take this path?

Professor Chau has always been concerned about global health issues. In her interview with CEDAR, she mentioned that the only reason the locals of the poor areas have to go through all the hardships is that they were born there. It is an injustice. For her, prayer alone is not enough; there should be action.

In 2014, the opportunity presented itself. The universities in Hong Kong had just switched to a four-year curriculum. She saw that there was room for change and action, and with the support of the vice-president at that time, she was even more certain that the Lord had opened the way for her. Then, she set up the platform SIGHT to lead students to serve the poor.

The way she and her students help the poor is by understanding

their needs through dialogue and using different technologies and designs to address their difficulties. For instance, she once led students to Cambodia to aid a medical team of a local NGO. The medical team needs to collect and record information about their beneficiaries during their service in the slum. However, it is hard for them to access the Wi-Fi. Therefore, the students came up with a mobile app to aid information collection. They also developed a mobile Wi-Fi device and assembled a mobile medicine chest to make it more convenient for the medical team to carry around.

Inevitably, there were hard times. In the interview, she shared with us: that once, she took students to Guizhou for site visit, during which she fell ill, and the students took care of her. When she saw that the students had understood the needs of the poor locals and applied what they had learned to help them with design and technology, she felt God's will in it. She is pleased to witness the growth of her students.

After knowing the SIGHT platform and the effort of Professor Chau in leading students to care for and solve problems for the disadvantaged, are you inspired by their new ways to help the poor? It does not always have to be distributing food or donating. Try to discover what gifts the Lord has given us, and then apply them with creativity. We are also able to come up with an inspiring ministry against poverty.

## Blessings by Offering

### Hope of Being Generous

Sharing: Belinda

Editor: Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

Parents always hope that children can be generous and know how to share with others, but how? If you have this question, you can look for how Belinda and her husband do so.

In March this year, Belinda and her husband planned to hold a '100-day party' for their daughter Hailey, but the pandemic was severe that they had to cancel their plan.

At the same time, Ukraine was invaded by Russia; she noticed the situation of the refugees on the news every day. She also has a Ukrainian friend who had worked in Hong Kong before and is now retired in Ukraine. Therefore, when the war broke out there, Belinda and her husband were worried about the situation. While praying for their friend, they wanted to offer practical assistance to help the refugees and thought of making a monetary donation.

Belinda and her husband collected donations from their family and friends, and donated in the name of their daughter's 100th day of birth – 'Hailey 100'. It was easy to do so, and they contacted the CEDAR staff. Once they have obtained the QR code for online donation, they could allow their family and friends to donate electronically through the code.

These actions were inspired by Belinda and her husband's belief that there is love around us, but it has to wait for the opportunity to be expressed. As a result, 11 families and friends responded to this invitation to show their care for the refugees by taking action.

At first, Belinda and her husband had not thought about sharing this story. They allowed CEDAR to publish because she 'hopes to encourage more people to practise the truth of "it is more blessed to give than to receive!"'

Belinda and her husband made the chance for their family and friends to help others. They also shared their story to encourage others to give. They hoped to teach their daughter to be generous, not looking to our own interests but the interests of others.

We believe Belinda and her husband will be role models for their daughter Hailey. Their generosity will be passed on to their daughter, who will be a generous person in the future.

Parents, would you like to share with your children the stories of the suffering of another country in the world and show your care by giving together?

Teaching by words and example, it allows children to be generous.



## 2022/2023 Operating Statements

In the period of Jul 2022 - Aug 2022

<b>Income</b>	<b>HK\$</b>	<b>2,620,554</b>
Donations		2,174,159
Grants		-
Appeal for Relief		435,048
Other Income		11,347

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>HK\$</b>	<b>3,903,536</b>
Development Projects - Asia		2,126,569
- China & HK		639,067
- Africa		91,822
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects		290,820
Partnership Development		458,406
Administration		296,852

**Account profit and loss / (Deficit) HK\$ (1,282,982)**

The budget for 22-23 is HK\$26,156,000. Please support our ministry with prayers and actions.

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