



CWS Update

MARCH 2017

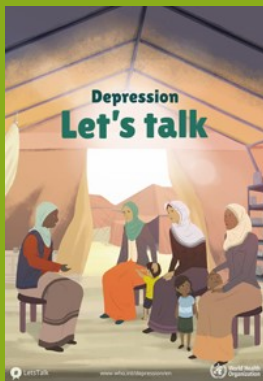
FOR YOUR DIARY



1 March—16 April **Seven Weeks for Water** - join Lenten pilgrimage for water justice in Africa with the Ecumenical Water Network.

4 April **International Day for Mine Awareness**

7 April **World Health Day—Depression: Let's talk**



17 April **Global Day of Action on Military Spending**

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Christian World Service is a member of the **ACT Alliance** (Action by Churches Together)

Wages for Waste Collectors



Pauline McKay met with Jennifer and Arvin from the SAND Trust, Sivagangai District, South India. Scavengers or rubbish collectors told her how SAND had helped them achieve the minimum wage and better working conditions.

In February Pauline visited our five Indian partners and some of the communities whose lives have been transformed thanks to your support. One group she met was SAND Trust which has been working to improve employment conditions for scavengers, the people who collect rubbish and clean sewerage systems. In 2010 when they started the scavengers were mostly unpaid and on call. They had no control over working conditions and no protection for dangerous work.

SAND helped them form an association and campaign for the minimum wage which they achieved in 2013. However, village administrators took advantage of their illiteracy to withdraw their back pay without their knowledge or consent. Thanks to Arvin who worked closely with the association, the association produced 3,040 bank account records to show what was going on in 560 villages. The courts forced them to repay the missing back pay. Thanks to SAND individual scavengers have some control over working conditions, but there is further work to be done. Pauline was impressed by SAND's vigilance and advocacy for some of the most vulnerable people, something common to all the Indian partnerships.

East Africa Food Crisis

Across Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan people are dying in one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. Uganda is appealing for help for a daily average of 2,800 new refugees a day. Famine has been declared in South Sudan's Unity State. The brutal combination of conflict, insecurity, poverty and drought is threatening 20 million people in the region with starvation. ACT Alliance is responding with food, water, sanitation, emergency healthcare and protection.



Photo: In Uganda, ACT Alliance records refugees with special needs. LWF/C. Kästner

South Sudan: Pleas for Peace

South Sudanese churches and members of civil society are appealing for international support in their efforts to halt the conflict that is ravaging the country. The Council of Churches is [asking](#) for prayers and immediate large-scale humanitarian assistance at the same time as they are appealing to the warring parties to stop fighting inside the country.

Wadalla Peter of our partner the Maridi Service Agency reported on a civil society consultation he attended earlier this month in Juba. Leaders from across the country supported participation in the national dialogue announced by the President last year. The process needed to include those opposed to the government, be based on a re-declaration of the ceasefire, include the release of political prisoners, and guarantee the safety and freedom of expression for participants. It called for stability to address famine, severe food insecurity and the economic hardship of the South Sudanese, and for international support. More than 1.9 million are displaced and 1.6 million have fled as refugees. Uganda where ACT Alliance is assisting many of them is at breaking point [according](#) to the UNHCR.

If you can, support the [South Sudan Crisis Appeal](#) to save people from starvation.

Water: Top Priority

Over 663 million people do not have access to safe water. This year [World Water Day](#) celebrations on 22 March focused attention on waste water. Over 80% of the waste water, returns to the ecosystem without being treated or reused. 1.8 billion people use drinking water contaminated with faeces putting them at risk of disease. Unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene cause around 842,000 deaths a year. In Uganda, your donations are helping families of HIV and AIDS orphans access improved water. Read [We have Plans](#) to see the difference your gift makes.

UN: Commission on Women

ACT Alliance [attended](#) the UN Commission on the Status of Women [meeting](#) 13-24 March to promote gender justice. In his presentation to the Committee, ACT's Anoop Sukumaram [said](#) gender equality was a basic right and essential for sustaining economic growth. He urged CSW to depoliticise women's health and provide equal access to health systems, better mechanisms to address gender-based violence and the participation of women. Bimla Chandrasekar from CWS partner EKTA also attended the gathering.

Syria: 6 years of War

The ceasefire is not working and many Syrians are trapped in besieged areas or living under fire as this brutal war enters its 7th year. The UN says 6.3 million are displaced within the country with many stuck in difficult to reach or besieged areas. The latest round of [IntraSyrian talks](#) began on 23 March. CWS encourages people to pray for the talks and a way out of this brutal conflict.

Speaking at a WCC co-sponsored side event at the Commission on the Status of Women, Mira Neaimeh [highlighted](#) the role of faith-based communities in providing assistance to refugees in Lebanon. "Churches are helping the refugees pay their rent, and find work for the young men and adults, given that they are skilled labourers", she said.

Please help refugees with emergency supplies, healthcare and education by donating to the CWS [Syria Appeal](#).

Join Operation Refugee

[Operation Refugee 2017](#) has begun. Challenge yourself to live on refugee rations from 16-20 June and raise funds to assist Syrian refugees with emergency food, education and healthcare. Read the [Kete](#) for more information and [sign up](#) to begin. Operation Refugee Lite is a two day challenge for students. Please tell others about it.



You Give Us Hope

Your donations to CWS help people who need food, water, healthcare and respect. Please consider making a donation by 31 March and get a tax-deductible receipt. **You can support our dedicated partners by making a [gift of hope](#).**

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