



# Thank you for building a better world

Prayers, poems  
and reflections  
from your  
**HANDS ON**  
projects



Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development

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Kitui



Doutchi



Altiplano



Magdalena Medio



Battambang



Madhupur



# Welcome

**You've been part of something extraordinary.**

Through *Hands On* you've stood side by side – and hand in hand – with communities around the world. You've taken action against poverty, conflict and the climate crisis, building resilience, hope and lasting change – a better world – for all of us.

Together, we've done so much. In Kitui, Kenya, you helped transform dry, depleted land into a thriving ecosystem, making sure families can drink safe water. In Doutchi, Niger, you helped farmers adapt to unpredictable weather, making sure they could feed their families even in the harshest conditions. You supported farmers in the highlands of Altiplano, Bolivia, where families built greenhouses to protect their crops. You helped young people across Magdalena Medio, Colombia, to come together to heal the wounds of conflict through a celebration of culture.

In Cambodia, during the worst years of the COVID-19 pandemic, you empowered rice farmers to

secure their harvests. And recently, in Madhupur, Bangladesh, you helped local experts secure land rights for indigenous communities facing discrimination.

Whether you were with us from the very beginning, joined halfway through or for our final project in Bangladesh, every moment has been a step toward a better world, the world God intended, where no life is limited by injustice or poverty – a better world for all of us.

This book is a reflection of the better world you've helped to build. It's a testament to what's possible when we come together, when we put our hands and hearts to work, and when we refuse to accept that hardship must define anyone's future.

Please enjoy this collection of prayers, poems and reflections from our *Hands On* partners around the world – and **thank you** for all you've done!



**In Kitui, Kenya,** a rapidly changing climate was drying out the soil and filling the dam with sand. You helped families who were forced to walk for miles to reach safe water for drinking and washing. You supported local experts to provide members of the community with tools and training and, together, built a reliable water system.



**Prayer from Kitui, by Stella**

*Oh God our Father, we are thankful for the opportunity you have given us to be part of this project.*

*We have enjoyed a lot of benefits from the project.*

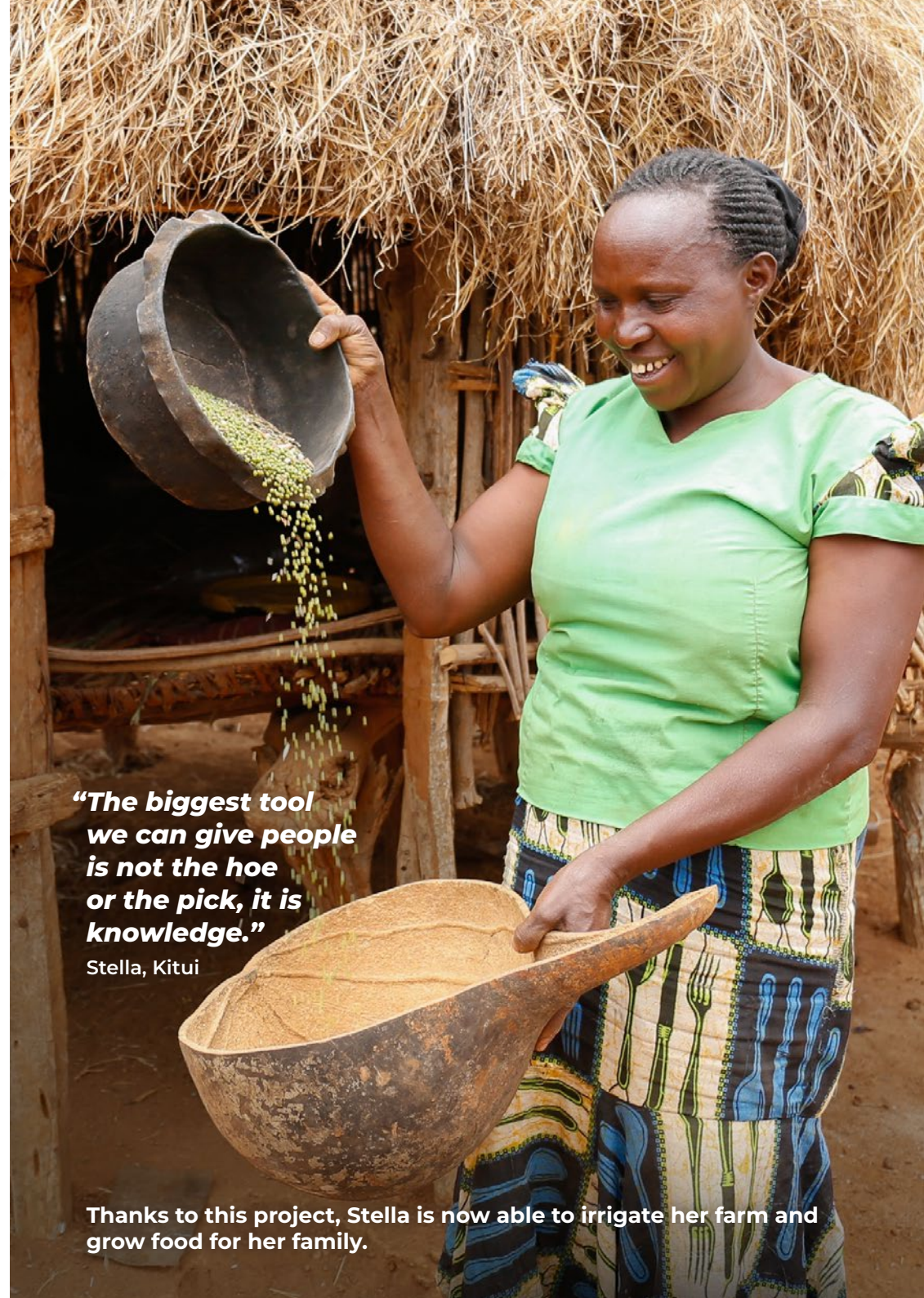
*God, you have been with us all through the Hands On project in Kitui and we pray that as similar projects in other areas of the world are implemented, that they are successful like Kitui.*

*Give us the gift of life and support our government and the governments of the nations we will be working with in future projects.*

*God, as you help us achieve our goals, we will always be grateful.*

*Amen*

**KITUI**  
Over 46,000  
metres of  
terracing dug  
around  
the dam



***“The biggest tool we can give people is not the hoe or the pick, it is knowledge.”***

Stella, Kitui

Thanks to this project, Stella is now able to irrigate her farm and grow food for her family.



## In Doutchi, Niger,

frequent droughts and devastating floods destroyed harvests and hard-working families had to survive on just one meal a day. We worked with local leaders and farmers to merge traditional knowledge with new, innovative farming techniques so families could build up their resilience for future extreme weather events.



"When people visit us in Niger, we have a long tradition of hospitality - giving our visitors food and drink."

**Nana, Doutchi**



**Michel Mondengele**, worked with CAFOD in Niger for over five years before moving to Sudan

"So much has been done. I'm proud of projects such as Hands On that really are helping people in one of the poorest countries in the world to make a living. I know I'm leaving Niger and Doutchi in a better condition than when I came here. This is down to the incredible work of partners such as Caritas Niger who are so close to each community and understand what they need to achieve economic independence."

**DOUTCHI**  
20 farmers  
trained in  
composting and  
bio-fertilisers

*Generous God, we thank you:  
For the gifts you have given us,  
the abundance of your Creation,  
and the beauty that surrounds us.*

*For the people whose lives  
have touched ours,  
for the love they show,  
the burdens they lift,  
the hopes we share.*

*Compassionate God, we ask you:  
to fill us with your love,  
to place in our hearts a spirit of courage,  
to move us to reach out to others in need.*

*And lead us to play our part,  
so that now and in generations to come  
all your children may share  
in our hope for a better world.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord,  
Amen.*

### The gift of life

by Moise Liboto Makuta,  
CAFOD's country  
representative for Niger



## In Altiplano, Bolivia,

the climate crisis meant farming families in the highlands faced unimaginable challenges growing enough food to keep their families healthy. Thanks to your support we worked with local experts and farming communities to install piping and taps for irrigation, build a wormery for compost and construct a greenhouse to protect growing vegetables from the harsh weather.



*We give thanks to God  
to Mother Earth  
and to the mountains  
that protect us,  
for the food that they  
give us.*

*Amen*

**Grace from Bolivia,**  
by Eduardo Acevedo,  
director of CAFOD  
partner, CIPCA (an  
organisation working  
with indigenous farmers)

***“When we have  
the vegetable  
garden, life will  
be good. If I’m  
able to sell some  
of the vegetables,  
I’m hoping to  
save some of  
the income so  
my children  
can study.”***

Rosa, Altiplano, Bolivia



**ALTIPLANO**  
7 greenhouses  
built and over  
1 kg of lettuce,  
tomato and  
cucumber seeds  
planted



**Maria and her baby  
son, Joel, were part  
of the Hands On  
Altiplano project**

Mauro is an agricultural expert for one of CAFOD's local partners. He told us:

“Today I’m helping Rosa to plant in her vegetable garden. Rosa already had a little plot of land for sowing vegetables, but we decided to build a larger one with walls, so that animals and the cold can’t get in. Rosa can now sow vegetables for her family to eat.”





**In Magdalena Medio, Colombia,** a tenuous peace process between the government and guerilla groups risked descending into open conflict. Young people were at particular risk of falling prey to violence. We worked with local experts to build peace through education, arts and a celebration of culture.



**Poem for peace**, by Rosana (far left), a student from the town of San Pablo.

*Tu historia es de enseñanza de lo que se puede lograr,*

*con gran valor y pujanza para poder avanzar.*

*Hablar de mi pedacito de tierra que aunque ha sufrido bastante, utiliza su trágico pasado para seguir Adelante.*

*Bañado por las aguas del Magdalena, su belleza no tiene comparación, su gente humilde de guerrera, día a día es ejemplo de superación.*

*Sus paisajes multi-colores como un papagayo en el Cielo, San Pablo de mis amores eres mi dulce Consuelo.*

*Qué decir de sus montañas donde yace el sol radiante, hace parte de sus entrañas todo aquel habitante.*

**Your story is a lesson in what can be achieved;**

**with great courage and strength we can proceed.**

**I speak from my little piece of land which, despite much suffering, uses its tragic past to emerge recovering.**

**Bathed in the waters of the Magdalena river, your beauty is beyond compare.**

**Your humble, courageous people show resilience not seen elsewhere.**

**With your multi-coloured landscapes like a parrot in the sky, beloved San Pablo, sweet solace you supply.**

**What can I say about your mountains and your radiant sun?**

**We are part of your being, each and every one.**

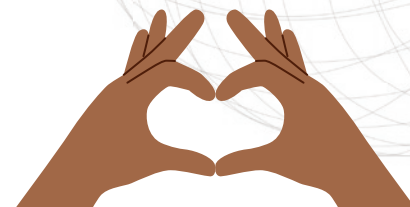


“Peace is hope. We must never stop having hope. When you lose hope, you are as good as dead. Since the peace agreement was drawn up with the biggest guerrilla group, there’s a light of hope. There’s still a lot to do – a long journey. But my hope is that the peace agreements are consolidated and then there is a peace process with the guerilla group. I want us to build a country where everyone can live. That’s my vision.”

**Eligio**, Headteacher at Simiti Secondary School



**MAGDALENA MEDIO**  
5,748 students  
in 28 schools  
promote a  
culture of  
peace





**In Battambang, Cambodia**, increasingly unpredictable weather caused by the climate crisis was making it almost impossible for rice farmers to successfully grow their crops. We worked with local farming experts to train farmers in new ways of sustainable rice farming, and we planted thousands of trees to protect growing crops from cyclones.

Strict COVID-19 lockdown rules across Cambodia made our *Hands On* work in Battambang and neighbouring regions extra challenging.

Thankfully, as the coronavirus pandemic swept around the world, CAFOD worked quickly with Church partners to coordinate our response. Your donations to Hands On, and to our Coronavirus Appeal at the time, helped communities around the world survive lockdowns and prevent the spread of coronavirus.

A better world needs all of us and this work depended on our strong network of local experts, funded by people like you.

### **We cry out to you**

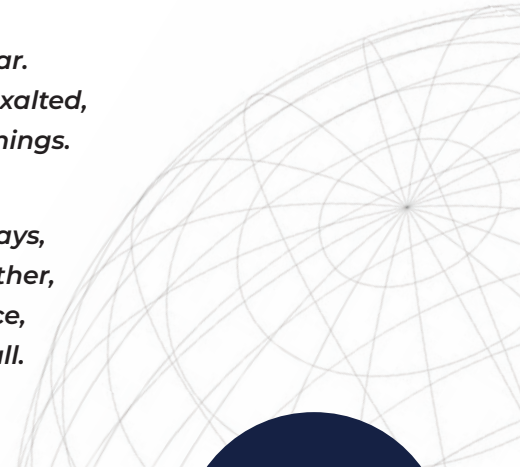
*God of all,  
we cry out to you for help.*

*In your mercy, hear our prayer.  
Protect us, Lord, and be with us  
especially those of us most vulnerable  
during this coronavirus crisis.*

*Move us to reach out in love  
to our neighbours near and far.  
So that the humble may be exalted,  
the hungry filled with good things.*

*Grant us the courage  
not to rush back to our old ways,  
but to rebuild our world together,  
creating foundations of justice,  
with equality and peace for all.*

*Amen.*



**BATTAMANG**  
The women's  
café served 975  
customers in the  
final year of  
the project.

***“What I find really  
satisfying is that we  
are growing rice,  
crops and rearing  
some chickens.”***

Long Sreyneang, Cambodia





***“If we are evicted from our land, there is no way to survive. Where will we live? This is a question of our survival, our existence, so we don’t give our land without protest.”***

Polanto Chiran, Madhupur

**In Madhupur, Bangladesh,** the indigenous Garo community – whose ancestors have lived on the land, in communion with the forest, for thousands of years – faced discrimination, false accusations of illegal logging and serious threats of violent eviction. With your support, we worked with lawyers and our local partners to support the Garo people in their fight for legal ownership of their land.



**Lovely**

*What a lovely world, how beautiful these flowers!*

*Oh mother, your village is covered with shady trees.*

*Your village is full of shady trees.*

*Your village is full of shady trees in your homeland, oh my mother.*

*The sun by day, the moon by night, the fountain river is your glory.*

*It is near you.*

*I will not forget my homeland.*

*The sweet chirping bird.*

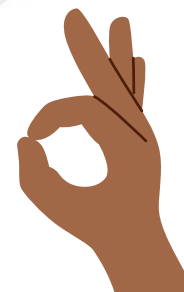
*Mother, in this motherland of yours.*

*What a beautiful world, how beautiful these flowers.*

*The sun by day, the moon by night, the fountain river is your glory.*

*It is near you.*

**MADHUPUR**  
Ecological  
survey on over  
9,000 acres of  
rainforest





# Thank you!



**Thank you so much** for being *Hands On* with us and with your sisters and brothers around the world.

You've offered more than generosity – you've offered hope, love, solidarity.

Together, alongside local experts and the women and men leading their communities to a better world, we've worked to bring about real and lasting change.

We've transformed barren land into fertile fields. We've helped families secure a future free from hunger and fear.

Because of our ability to work together, people who once struggled to survive can now look forward to a future of possibility

– a future where they have the opportunity to flourish.

This ebook has been more than a collection of stories; it is proof that hope is tangible, that we can all help build a better world, the world God intended, where no one has their life limited by poverty.

Together, we can keep building a world rooted in justice, dignity and hope.

Thanks again for everything you've done – for believing in a better world and helping to make it a reality.

