



**One in nine people worldwide do not have enough to eat. Many do not have enough nutritious food. As missionary disciples, we are called to respond to the urgent needs of those who face hunger and malnutrition, and to address the root causes of this global crisis. Together, we can lead the way to prevent and end hunger by providing emergency support when people cannot access food due to drought and flooding, or war and conflict.**

## Emergency Food Saves Lives: Birhan's Story

**The current weather cycle in Ethiopia challenges the patience of even the most faithful hearts.** When there is drought, as there unfailingly is, the crops struggle to grow. But if there is rain, it is excessive and destroys the harvest.

Still, Birhan T/medhin\* perseveres in trying to feed her family. Like many rural Ethiopians, everything Birhan manages to grow in her small garden is for family consumption. There is no extra produce to sell at market. "Even in normal conditions it is not enough food to feed my children," she explains.

When Birhan lost her entire harvest in a flood that struck her home in the Tigray region of the country, she considered drastic measures.

"I thought about selling everything," she says. "And then we would have migrated to where we could find work."

\*Traditional Ethiopian spelling

In rural Ethiopia, the vicious cycle of droughts, unpredictable flooding and crop failures can leave families with little or nothing to eat—forcing them to sell their possessions, pull their children out of school or even migrate in search of work.

As of 2019, food distributed through the Joint Emergency Operation Program, or JEOP, and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Food for Peace has served as a valuable lifeline for more than 1.6 million people in times of need.

Led by Catholic Relief Services, a group of aid organizations works hand in hand with the government of Ethiopia and community leaders to distribute food supplies across drought- and emergency-affected areas of the country.

During each monthly distribution, families receive rations of wheat, split peas and vegetable oil. Between January and August 2019 alone, CRS and its partners distributed more than 100,000 tons of food.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable during times of food scarcity, and without adequate nutrition their health can deteriorate. Before Birhan began receiving support, her four children struggled to stay healthy and frequently missed school.

"God has brought the JEOP program to keep us alive," says Birhan. "There is a real difference from before. Now we are feeding our children three times a day. We are sending them to school."

Pope Francis reminds us that "there is always someone who is hungry or thirsty and who needs me. I cannot delegate this to another. This poor person needs me, my help, my word, my commitment. We are all involved in this."

Through programs like JEOP, CRS, in partnership with the U.S. government, lives out our commitment to support the most vulnerable around the world.

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