



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 strengthening family relationships and fostering healthy communities where everyone can thrive.

Changing food, changing habits: Labaladezy and Frankline's Story

In Miary Ankoronga in southern Madagascar, Labaladezy Rasoanandrasana chats with a puppet while a small crowd gathers.

The puppet, perched on the hand of a CRS staff member, playfully quizzes Labaladezy. "What would you do if your son was sick?" the puppet asks. "Take the child to the doctor or community health workers," says Labaladezy, whose wife recently gave birth to their eighth child. "Correct," the puppet confirms, while the crowd nods.

While a puppet show may seem an unusual way to communicate healthy decisions about infant and child care, this innovative, CRS-designed approach, funded by the U.S. Agency

for International Development's Food for Peace program, has shown positive results in rural communities in Madagascar where there are high rates of malnourished children.

Because good nutrition is more than how much you eat, the project also emphasizes that children must have the right kind of food to help them grow and develop.

"We have a Malagasy proverb that says that education is the community's most beautiful heritage," says Labaladezy's wife, Frankline, who has adopted several changes to strengthen the health of her family. While pregnant with her eighth child, Frankline made her first visits to the community health center, where nutrition counselors recommended breastfeeding her child exclusively for the first six months. When their baby still failed to thrive, she and Labaladezy took him to the hospital and learned that he should also be introduced to a variety of vegetables and be weighed regularly to

assess his growth. Now Frankline grows a rainbow of foods in the garden and shows other mothers how to do the same.

When their baby fell ill, the couple also recognized the importance of sharing childcare responsibilities, which improved the well-being of the entire family. With encouragement, Labaladezy learned to prepare the baby's meals and take him for his weigh-ins at the health center, enabling him to help if Frankline was busy at the market.

CRS recognizes that healthy children need nutritious food as well as supportive families and safe communities to thrive. Over 50 years ago, Pope John XXIII recognized the complexity of caring for hungry people, reminding us that every person "has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services."

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