



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
HOTLINE**

Church World Service Hotline for the week of December 17, 2007 – available in Spanish (linea de noticias) and in [podcasts](#) in English and Spanish--at www.churchworldservice.org

- Families in **Afghanistan** gain new homes
- CWS advocates for assistance to displaced **Iraqis**
- **U.S. Midwest** hit by massive ice storm
- Families continue recovery from **U.S. Pacific Northwest** flooding
- A women's group in **Kenya** takes part in savings and credit project
- **Dominican Republic** and **Puerto Rico** hit by Tropical Storm Olga



Afghanistan—Anin and Bashir live with their family in a new house, built on Kabul's outskirts with the support of CWS. Photo: Chris Herlinger/CWS

Afghanistan--Dozens of families are now living in houses built in a CWS-supported shelter project with partner the Afghan Development Association. Among those benefiting from the work of CWS in Afghanistan is a family living on the outskirts of Kabul.

The family, Malik, Bassri, and their four children, ages 5 to 14, recalls a tortuous journey of displacement before coming to their new home.

The family was first uprooted from their home in the city of Jalalabad and headed east to a refugee camp in Pakistan. They then returned to Afghanistan, ending up in Kabul, where they have lived since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Malik, Bassri, and their children lived in a lightless, cramped hillside cave--an uncomfortable, dangerous, and threatening place. Bassri said the cave's possible collapse was a constant and draining concern for the family as they eked out a living.

"Now we don't have those worries," she says, noting the new home has four rooms in all, with an exterior water pump and latrine. "We are happy," Bassri says.

As Johnny Wray, director of the Christian Church (Disciples) Week of Compassion, a long-time supporter of CWS work in Afghanistan, put it: "The small-scale efforts by CWS and other humanitarian agencies are offering both North Americans and Afghans of goodwill alike a remarkable opportunity to bring help, hope, and ultimately peace to that battered, yet beautiful land."

For more stories on CWS work in Afghanistan, visit www.churchworldservice.org.

Iraq--Some 4.6 million Iraqis who have fled the continuing violence in their country are displaced and in desperate need of protection and durable solutions. About 2.2 million people have fled to neighboring countries, and 2.4 million are internally displaced.

This past year, the U.S. government admitted some 1,600 Iraqi refugees for resettlement. Church World Service is pressing the U.S. government to increase humanitarian aid to Iraq's displaced families, and to keep a commitment to resettle 12,000 Iraqis to the U.S. in the coming year.

CWS is also advocating for passage of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act. The Act would help Iraqi refugees and would prioritize vulnerable individuals, members of a religious or minority community, and Iraqi refugees who have close family members in the U.S. To Speak Out on behalf of Iraqi refugees, visit www.churchworldservice.org.

Midwest ice storm--This past week, states of emergency were in effect across Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, following a storm that dumped as much as an inch of ice across parts of the Midwest. CWS is ready to assist with any material requests from denominations or partners for storm-related needs in the Midwest.

Pacific Northwest Flooding--Many families continue to be affected by early December flooding. Shelters remain open, thousands are without power, coastal communities remain cut off by washed-out roads, and relief operations are still underway. CWS is coordinating two training events for new long-term recovery groups forming in the region. Contributions are needed to support the new recovery groups.

Kenya--A CWS-supported empowerment program is planting seeds of hope for 40 women, half of whom are single mothers, in Mlologo town, Nairobi, Kenya. The "Eagles Initiative," a women's savings and credit organization, is providing small business training and loans to help raise the standard of living of the women and their families.

The project is providing an alternative for women who might otherwise also be vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. "We incorporated an HIV ministry because we want these young women to live a quality lifestyle," says one member.

"We as women wanted our own group so we could contribute to the community and improve our lives. We cannot accomplish this unless we ourselves are first empowered," says the group leader.

The group is sponsored by long-time CWS partner Organization of African Instituted Churches. It is one of many Improved Livelihood programs that CWS supports in an effort to economically and socially empower women in East Africa.

Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico--This past week, Tropical Storm Olga brought high winds and rain to parts of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. CWS stands ready to respond to denominational or partner requests for material assistance.

Thank you for your prayers and support for the life-sustaining work of Church World Service. Contributions may be sent through your church or directly to Church World Service, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515. Credit card contributions may be made by calling 1-800-297-1516 or at www.churchworldservice.org. To SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE to the e-mail version of the Church World Service Hotline, reply to this message, or write to jcarlson@churchworldservice.org.