

Crucial Curriculum: The Teaching of Compassion

*Involving Your Students in the
Ministry of ADRA*

BY MICHELLE L. OETMAN

There's a quote by Mary Leonard that says: "To ensure the continuity of philanthropy, we must instill in kids the values and attitudes that will enable them to see charity as a vital part of their lives." At the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International, we wholeheartedly agree. As Christians, we've been commissioned to care for our global neighbors and those suffering through crises. Age should be no deterrent. Individuals of all ages can do something. And by partnering with ADRA, doing something changes the world—one life at a time.

"Cow Loans"

Cung and his wife, Xuan, live in Vietnam with two young sons. Although they both worked, they didn't earn enough money to buy

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ample food or medicine, nor could they afford an education for their children. Then they qualified for a "cow loan" from ADRA Vietnam's cow bank project. They both quit their jobs and began farming full-time. The cow has provided milk to drink and sell, as well as fertilizer for improved crop production. The cow has been bred to repay the loan, and additional calves sold for income. As a result, the family is healthier and can afford education fees and ample food. Cung patiently teaches his children the English he learns on TV or in a dictionary so they can excel in the world. With assistance from ADRA, Cung and Xuan are determined to lift their family out of poverty.

Thanks to its presence in more than 120 countries, ADRA's ministry benefitted nearly 15 million people in 2000. But millions more still await our help. We've got a million things to do. Will your students lend a hand?

Why should your students become involved in ADRA's ministry? Because about 24,000 people

die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under 5 years of age (The Hunger Project, United Nations). In fact, 10 percent of children in developing countries die before the age of 5 (CARE). Some 800 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations). Just to name a few reasons.

Often, it takes only a few simple resources for impoverished people to be able to grow enough food to become self-sufficient—resources like quality seeds, appropriate tools, and access to water. In addition, the best way to ultimately reduce hunger is through education. Educated people are best able to break out of the cycle of poverty that causes hunger. ADRA's mission is to meet these needs, but we need help.

That's where your students come in.

There are millions of young people, like those in your school, who are unaware of the desperate conditions in which many children and teens live around the world. And even if they do know about it, chances are they don't know what they can do to help solve the problem.

The good news is that your students can actually do something to aid disadvantaged and suffering young people around the world. By participating in any of ADRA's many activities for young people, your students can take hunger personally and learn how their own lifestyles can affect the lives of other youth around the world. Here are just a few ways to get your students involved:

1. Kick the Cycle (take HUNGER personally): A one-day event to change their world

It started as just another junior academy Bible conference sponsored by the Oklahoma Conference Youth Department. However,

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Adraena, the ADRA bunny mascot, visited families on Khadir Island in India, the area assigned to ADRA to provide relief aid and rehabilitation after the devastating earthquake in January 2001. Adraena went along with ADRA staff as they delivered tents to more than 2,000 families whose homes were earthquake-destroyed. Follow more of Adraena's travels with ADRA at <http://www.adra.org/>.

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just as everyone drifted off to sleep on Friday night, a siren and flashing lights pierced the darkness.

"This is the county sheriff. There's been a chemical spill. Evacuate the cabins, and move into the auditorium. Quickly!"

Groggily, the teens grabbed a few items and rushed into the night, wondering skeptically, "Is this really happening to ME?"

Once inside the auditorium, they were greeted with "Welcome to the Wewoka Refugee Center" by Youth Director Jack Francisco. Each "refugee" was required to register and then given a bottle of water. Exhausted and searching for a place to sleep, the teens were shown the housing material available to them—collapsed cardboard boxes. Wearily, they taped together suitable housing and dropped into a fitful sleep.

As the sun rose, an announcement was made, "ADRA volunteers are in the lobby to distribute hygiene kits and breakfast—one refugee biscuit."

Throughout the day, the teens engaged in activities that simulated the life of youth in a developing country. For example, one activity exposed the perils of life in countries riddled with land mines dropped during war. Another simulation required students to carry a bucket of water on their heads, teaching the importance of having close, potable water and how contaminated water—and the difficulty of transporting any kind of water—affects women's health.

OK, by now you're asking, "What's this all about? A chemical spill? Kids starving and sleeping in boxes?" Simple. It's all part of ADRA's Kick the Cycle program. The youth leaders had created a scenario to teach about life after a disaster and what it's like to be a refugee or to live in a developing country.

Kick the Cycle is about understanding our world and the people who share it with us. During these simulations, for 24 hours

By joining Kick the Cycle, you can invest your time and money in empowering people to become self-sufficient.

your students' experiences will resemble the way some people in ADRA's world live every hour of their lives. The awareness and funds that you raise during your Kick the Cycle event will fund ADRA's development programs, which help empower people one by one, village by village, to realize their dream of self-sufficiency, education, and improved health. As a result, you will help ADRA provide solutions to some of poverty's greatest problems.

Nicholas Johnson, a participant in the Oklahoma Kick the Cycle simulation, said: "It's a reality check. It's fun, and you'll learn something from it." The goal is to teach youth not to be isolationists. It's not enough to be aware of the needs of their global neighbors—they must do something. Operating under the adage of "Give someone a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach someone to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime," Kick the Cycle focuses on ADRA's development programs, which partner with people to help them kick the cycle of poverty. By joining Kick the Cycle, you can invest your time and money in empowering people to become self-sufficient.

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What Does Participating in Kick the Cycle Entail?

- *Fasting.* Participants agree to fast for 24 hours, with the exception of refugee biscuits (provided free by ADRA) and water.
- *Sponsorships.* Students get their friends and family to sponsor their fast. This is their chance to teach others about world needs and ways that sponsorships help fund ADRA's long-term solutions.
- *Activities.* Participants are encouraged to do the activities that teach development from the group leader's guide and to become involved in community service.
- *Free stuff.* ADRA provides all the materials needed for a successful event—biscuits, a video, posters, receipt books, a group leader's guide, activity books, and more.

I'm sure the young people in your group love to hang out with each other! Why not hang out for 24 hours with the purpose of changing lives?

"There really is no more worthwhile project than getting involved in a Kick the Cycle event," comments Youth Director Francisco. "You're doing something that is going to have an effect on youth for eternity."

"It's a great opportunity to take young lives and shape them toward caring for others as Jesus did while on Earth," says Elmhurst Church Pastor Frank Kean after 35 Illinois youth gathered for a Kick the Cycle event.

Get your students involved in Kick the Cycle. Just 24 hours can change their entire lives!

2. do something Kit

Looking for great ADRA projects for students of all ages?

We've got what you're looking for: *do something*, a kit to help you get involved, details ways for individuals and groups of all ages to partner with the ministry of ADRA and make an impact.

The *do something* kit's activities

include creating ADRA Back-to-School kits and Family Comfort Packs, an ADRA Yard Sale Kit, and more!

3. Making a Difference Video

In short eight- to-10-minute segments, this video highlights 12 ADRA stories from around the world taken from the weekly television program, *ADRA's World*. Made by young people for young people, this tape introduces simple topics relating to development and reveals how ADRA's ministry is changing lives around the globe. Copies are available for just U.S. \$7.50 each and are great to use with youth groups and school classrooms.

4. www.adra.org

ADRA loves it when children visit <http://www.adra.org/>. There's a special section "For Kids Only" featuring the adventures of Adraena, the ADRA bunny mascot. Kids are invited to follow Adraena's adventures as she hops from country to country on her journey around the world. They'll thus learn about different countries and cultures, their recipes, and more. Devotionals, youth activities, and news releases are also available online for individuals of all ages to enjoy.

5. The Original Really Useful Gift Catalog

Next time your classroom or school does a fundraiser, buy a gift that lasts a lifetime from *The Original Really Useful Gift Catalog*. Choose from dozens of gifts like an iron arsenic-removal system to provide safe drinking water for families in Bangladesh, blankets, or food items.

Young people love seeing how far their money can go in meeting needs in the developing world. Gifts are available in all price ranges—from just a few cents to several thousand dollars—but each gift lasts a lifetime. Complimentary copies of the catalog can be ordered for your classroom.

6. Currency Collectors

These colorful cards are especially appealing to young children. Children can keep personal cards and collect donations for ADRA while learning about children less fortunate than themselves. These

free cards can be ordered for each student in your class to add fun and color to their fundraising.

7. Adraena Activity Book

This coloring and activity book is recommended for children in the lower grades. It teaches about ADRA's ministry through fun activities that follow the activities of Adraena, the ADRA bunny mascot. Free books can be ordered for each student.

Teaching compassion is a critical component of a Christian school's curriculum. Students of all ages need—and want—to be part of something that

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makes the world a better place. ADRA's resources provide incredible opportunities for them to get involved in meaningful ways.

To get involved in any of ADRA's activities or to order any resources mentioned above, please call (800) 424-ADRA (2372) or (301) 680-6350, write to ADRA International, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 U.S.A., or visit <http://www.adra.org/>.

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