

Let Your Heart Rejoice

Donate-a-Meal Movement

Visit the Donate-a-Meal Movement Website

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On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary
of the Donate-a-Meal Movement



01 What Is the Donate-a-Meal Movement?

What Is the Donate-a-Meal Movement?

This movement invites people to reflect on those suffering from conflicts, disasters, and poverty in the world. By donating a portion of the money you might spend on meals or personal indulgences, you contribute, in the spirit of sharing, to the movement's activities.

If you are fortunate enough to have food on your plate, a family to talk to, and a safe place to live, we encourage you to share that happiness with those who lack these necessities. We hope you'll experience the joy that comes from the act of sharing.

A Movement That Rejoices the Heart Through Donating a Meal

This initiative highlights the joy and fulfillment that come from acting thoughtfully toward others. Through this practice, we cherish the feeling of kindness and compassion growing within ourselves.

While the basic practice involves skipping a meal several times a month and donating the money you saved, we hope you will also find other ways of your own to practice donation. For instance, you could donate money by cutting back on your hobbies or luxury items. Or, on days when you are particularly happy, you could donate money to share some of your good fortune.

We suggest you participate in the movement in a way that brings joy to your own heart.

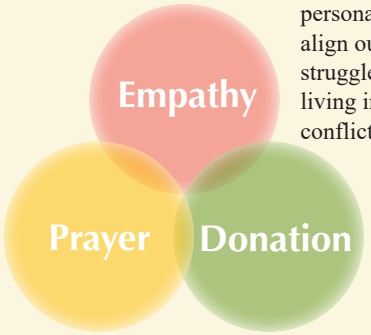


Children in Malawi, Africa, eat lunch supplied through the School Meal Program.

"I eat delicious porridge made of corn and soybeans every day! Before the school meal program began, I often felt hungry and couldn't concentrate in class. But thanks to these meals, I can study hard and even look forward to going to school. I'll keep attending school every day and do my best in my studies."

—Benson, thirteen years old

The Three Pillars of the Donate-a-Meal Movement



By forgoing a meal or personal indulgence, we align ourselves with the struggles of people living in poverty or conflict.

We pray for peace for those in difficult situations. We also reflect on the preciousness of life and deepen our wish to create a peaceful society.

We donate money saved from skipping meals to support people in need. This act allows us to reflect on our mind and foster a spirit of having little desire and knowing satisfaction.

When we practice donation, we recite the Words of Prayer and observe a moment of silence.

Words of Prayer

I pray:
Let there be peace on earth
Let more people be considerate of others
Let it begin with me
(Moment of silence)



Children in Myanmar enjoy fortified biscuits received through the WFP's School Meal Program.

02 How to Practice the Donate-a-Meal Movement

1. The Style of Practice

Anyone Can Participate Anytime, Anywhere, in Any Way, and for an Unlimited Length of Time

The Donate-a-Meal Movement does not aim to offer our surplus food but to share something valuable and necessary for us all.

The core principles of the movement are Empathy, Prayer, and Donation. Based on these three principles, the movement is shaped by the practice of skipping a meal, praying for the happiness of people around the world, and making a donation while sparing a thought for people who do not have enough to eat.

However, "a meal" does not necessarily mean the meal on our tables. With today's diverse lifestyles, people's values and things they cherish are also varied. Just as the things that enrich our lives differ from person to person, the ways we show our thought and care should also be unique to each of us.

Why don't we put these three principles into practice in a way that suits us? Let's expand the circle of kindness through a My Personal Donate-a-Meal Practice that aligns with our hearts.

2. The Four Steps of Practice

STEP 1: Choose Your Personal Donate-a-Meal Practice

Decide what you will practice: When will you practice it? What will you share?

Consider a practice that fits your lifestyle, such as skipping one meal out of three, refraining from indulging in something you enjoy, or sharing something that is important to you.

Examples:

■Skipping a meal or snack

- Skipping lunch once a week
- Refraining from snacks or coffee shop visits at least once or a few times a month
- On Sundays, sharing a single piece of bread with family members to experience the importance of sharing

■Choosing something other than meals to share, based on your lifestyle

- Avoiding in-game purchases twice a month
- Giving up a monthly nail salon visit
- Going to bed early on weekends, instead of staying up late, and donating the saved electricity costs (caring for yourself while also supporting those in need)
- Walking one stop instead of taking the bus or train and donating the saved fare (sharing the joy of looking after your health)

■Setting special days to practice

- On a day when a happy event occurs (as an act of sharing joy)
- On special personal days, like family or friends' birthdays or anniversaries
- On days when your favorite TV show airs



STEP 2: Make the Personal Sacrifice You Chose

Sacrifice something that is essential to your life. By experiencing a brief moment of hunger or deprivation, reflect on the struggles of those facing poverty and conflict daily.

STEP 3: Pray for the Happiness of People Around the World

Pray for the happiness of those in distress, and pray for world peace.

In Rissho Kosei-kai, we reflect on what we can do to help, and we offer the following prayer with the wish to be of service:

Words of Prayer
I pray:
Let there be peace on earth
Let more people be considerate of others
Let it begin with me
(Moment of silence)

The style of prayer is not limited to offering the above Words of Prayer. Feel free to express your thoughts and wishes in the way that is most meaningful and appropriate for you.

STEP 4: Make a Donation

Donate the amount you saved to organizations that support people suffering from poverty and conflict.

If you wish to make a donation through Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace, please contribute to the following account:

Bank: Mizuho Bank, Nakano Branch
Account Type: Savings Account（USD）
Account Number: 9115262
Name of the Account Holder: RISSHO KOSEI-KAI ICHIJIKI HEIWAKIKIN
(We are currently considering online payment transfer methods.)

Alternatively, you may donate to an organization in your local community or a group that promotes activities you personally support. By making donations, we can not only provide assistance to others but also cultivate a heart that appreciates and finds contentment in what we have.

3. The Movement That Rejoices the Heart Through Donating a Meal: What Matters Most in the Movement Today

When we take action to help someone and receive a heartfelt "thank you," we feel a sense of joy. Equally, or even more so, we may feel a great sense of happiness and pride in ourselves. This is when our compassion is expressed and nurtured within us.

When you practice donating, take a moment to reflect on your own feelings—the pain of giving up something you want, the warmth that gently spreads through your heart, and the sense of accomplishment from fulfilling your commitment. What kind of emotions do you have in your heart?

The Donate-a-Meal Movement is an initiative that benefits others in the world, but it is also a voluntary and independent practice that makes your own heart happy. We hope to share this experience of donating a meal and rejoicing our hearts with as many people as possible.



Children at a refugee camp in Uganda

03 An Interview on the Spirit of the Donate-a-Meal Movement

Ms. Kumiko Hideshima, general secretary of the Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace, interviews Rev. Shoko Mizutani, minister of the International Buddhist Congregation (IBC) of Rissho Kosei-kai, about the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Rev. Mizutani has been a long-time advocate of this movement and is currently leading an initiative called Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal held on the first and fifteenth day of each month at the Great Sacred Hall in which participants gently embrace the sensation of hunger experienced by skipping a meal and use it as an opportunity to reflect on their own lives.

Ms. Kumiko Hideshima: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. Thanks to everyone's support, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary since Rissho Kosei-kai launched the Donate-a-Meal Movement. From the beginning, this initiative has embraced these three principles: Empathy, Prayer, and Donation. Today, under the theme of "A Movement That Rejoices the Heart Through Donating a Meal," we also highlight the sense of joy that comes from acting thoughtfully toward others. Through this practice, we cherish the feeling of kindness and compassion growing within ourselves.

You have been involved with the Donate-a-Meal Movement for a long time. How did you first encounter it?

Rev. Mizutani: I don't remember exactly when I first learned about this movement, but in 1979, our Founder made an appeal in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper's rondan, "opinion forum," titled "Toward a National Movement for the Donate-a-Meal Movement," calling on the broader public to participate. At the time, the movement was being actively promoted, so I had certainly heard about it. After graduating from Gakurin Seminary, I went to study in the United States. Upon returning to Japan, I was assigned to the International Affairs Department, where I was sent to support medical relief activities in Africa. I think it was around this time, when I was placed in the very department responsible for managing this movement's donation-based aid projects, that I became fully aware of the movement's significance.

Ms. Hideshima: What were your thoughts and feelings as you practiced the movement back then?



About Rev. Shoko Mizutani

Rev. Mizutani majored in agricultural studies at university. Driven by a desire to contribute to the international community through agriculture, he pursued further studies in biology in the United Kingdom. While studying abroad, he became aware of an inner conflict—his mind was far from peaceful, even though he aspired to help build a peaceful world. During this time, he came across the idea that "the true self is one with the universe" in the Founder's writings. This insight led him to realize that inner peace could be attained through the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai. He joined the organization in 1978. Convinced that sharing Buddhism was the path to world peace, he became a staff member of Rissho Kosei-kai in 1980. Since then, he has served as a minister at overseas Dharma centers and as director of Rissho Kosei-kai International. He has held his current position since December 2023.

Rev. Mizutani: I saw this movement not just as a humanitarian aid initiative, but as a profound spiritual movement aimed at creating a world where people can live together beyond national borders. Personally, I skipped a meal on days designated to practicing donating a meal, but I often found myself preoccupied with feelings of hunger and dissatisfaction, which made it difficult to truly experience the joy of the practice.

At the time, I had many opportunities to visit overseas organizations that were recipients of the Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace. When I explained to them that "We, members of Rissho Kosei-kai, skip meals, pray for your peace, and donate the money we

would have spent on food, wishing for your peace," the people we supported were deeply moved and embraced the true significance of the movement. Time and again, I witnessed such genuine and heartfelt responses. And each time, I reflected on our attitude and how we may not have been practicing the spirit of this movement, for which they seemed so moved and deeply grateful, as sincerely as we could.

Ms. Hideshima: While a sense of mission and responsibility for doing what needs to be done are very important, I feel that if that is the only thing you focus on, the Donate-a-Meal Movement can feel like a painful and difficult thing to do. And you can easily lose sight of the original significance of the movement, such as the development of a compassionate and prayerful heart through practice.

Rev. Mizutani: If we think only about doing it "for someone else" or "for the realization of an ideal society," we may sometimes feel burdened or find it difficult to continue. That is why I believe it is essential to experience joy and personal growth through practice. When these elements are present, the spirit of this movement can be felt more deeply, making it something we can sustain over the long term.

Ms. Hideshima: I believe that the Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal initiative that you are working on contains important hints for experiencing joy through the practice of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Could you share the background of how this initiative came about?

Rev. Mizutani: In the 1990s, I had the opportunity to meet Ven. Phra Yuki Naradevo, a Japanese monk in the Thai Theravada Buddhist tradition. After graduating from Sophia University, he went to Thailand to study rural development and the role of monks. Later, he was ordained under Ven. Luang Por Kamkean, a renowned meditation teacher. Currently, he serves as the deputy abbot of a temple in Thailand and is also active in conveying Theravada Buddhism to Japan. Through Ven. Naradevo, I was introduced to Vipassana meditation, which serves as the foundation for mindfulness meditation. In this practice, even when distractions arise during meditation, we simply recognize them and with each instance, gently return our awareness to the present moment, the "here and now." This practice trains us to objectively observe unpleasant emotions and past experiences that arise in our minds and stick to us. This prevents us from amplifying our own suffering. I continued to practice this meditation even while I was serving as a minister in the United States.



After returning to Japan, I experienced a profound change in the way I perceived hunger while practicing both donating a meal and meditation. One day, I encountered what I now call Little Hunger. Until then, I had always thought of hunger as something unpleasant—just an uncomfortable feeling that required endurance. But at that moment, I realized that hunger is actually an important signal for survival. For example, sometimes, people carelessly forget to take their daily medication for three days in a row, don't they? But hunger serves as a natural reminder: "You're hungry! You should eat!" If we didn't feel hunger, we might simply forget to eat. When I thought about it this way, I started seeing hunger as a precious companion that was trying to keep me alive. The moment I embraced this perspective, the hunger that I once resented became something I found endearing. I even felt like calling it Little Hunger with a sense of affection and familiarity.

Ms. Hideshima: Did this change in the way you perceive hunger lead to the Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal initiative?

Rev. Mizutani: Through meditation, the hunger I had previously found unpleasant began to feel like a dear companion, Little Hunger. Strangely, I felt a sense of calm. I started to think that by connecting the feelings of insufficiency and hunger that come with fasting to mindfulness meditation, we might be able to overcome the negative image of self-restraint, which is often the biggest challenge in skipping or sparing a meal. With this idea in mind, I worked with Ms. Masayo Urasaki to shape what later became the

Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal initiative. Ms. Urasaki has worked as a lecturer at Mahidol University in Thailand and still resides there, translating sermons of Thai monks and books on Theravada Buddhism to transmit their teachings to Japan. She is also a member of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Ms. Hideshima: That is a very interesting story. It seems like there is a profound transformation in the process of not just accepting hunger but coming to see it as something dear. Could you describe more specifically what this sense of "dearness" felt like?

Rev. Mizutani: At first, I thought that if I could transcend the discomfort of hunger through meditation, I would be able to find more joy in practicing the Donate-a-Meal Movement. However, as I continued to observe my hunger closely, I realized that beneath the sensation of "I'm hungry," there was a force working to keep me alive. And this life-sustaining force is not unique to me, but it exists equally in everyone. In our teachings, this is what we refer to as one immense Life, which connects to the life of the Buddha. Thinking about it in this way, the feeling of "dearness" may be similar to a feeling of thankfulness or gratitude toward something that is striving to sustain me. Our hearts and organs continue to function tirelessly without our conscious effort, keeping us alive. When I became aware of this, I found myself thinking "This is amazing, thank you." And when I expressed gratitude to these parts of myself, I felt a shift in my relationship with them. It was as if acknowledging them changed the way I perceived them.

Ms. Hideshima: What kinds of changes have you experienced by incorporating mindfulness meditation into your donating-a-meal practice?

Rev. Mizutani: In the past, the days of practicing donating a meal were for me days of enduring hunger. But now, I actually look forward to them. I still feel hunger, but I no longer suffer from it. Also, on donating-a-meal days, I can definitely take the time for meditation, even if only briefly. Through meditation, I shift from being a person who is swayed by emotions to a person who observes them. This transformation has been helpful in my daily life as well. I have become more aware of the negative emotions and thoughts that arise in difficult situations or interactions with others. As a result, feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction fade away. I feel that I am developing the ability to calmly observe myself without being controlled by attachments or desires.

Ms. Hideshima: I have learned that the state of hunger and the desire to eat something are not necessarily one and the same thing. Through meditation, we can think about them separately, and as a result, I felt we can examine each more deeply.

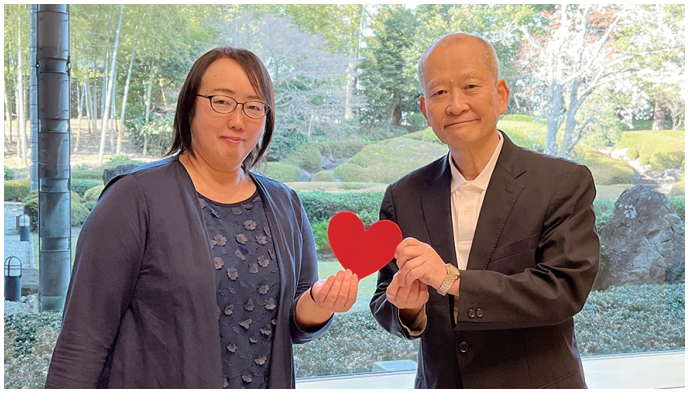
Rev. Mizutani: As we continue meditating, we gradually become able to observe our feelings and emotions more deeply.

Ms. Hideshima: Thank you. Finally, could you give a message to those who are practicing with the Donate-a-Meal Movement?

Rev. Mizutani: The Donate-a-Meal Movement is not just a fundraising initiative but a spiritual practice that nurtures the heart. Through this practice, our hearts become gentler, kindness spreads to those around us, and ultimately, it contributes to creating a more compassionate world. The expansion of this movement has the power to change the world. The key is to fully experience the depth of the Donate-a-Meal practice. When we do, awareness and joy naturally arise. I believe that this awareness and joy can have a positive impact on others, creating a cycle of goodness. If Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal can support this process in any way, I will be truly delighted.

For those interested in experiencing Mindfulness Meditation Through Donating a Meal firsthand, please watch this video.

YouTube video
Mindfulness Meditation
https://youtu.be/awnta_b4jFk



04 Key Areas of Support

Eradicating Poverty and Hunger

Poverty not only threatens people's daily lives but also causes conflict and division due to the unequal distribution of wealth and resources. Eradicating poverty is a vital step toward building a peaceful society. Therefore, we support activities in this area that contribute to improving people's livelihoods.

Education and Human Capacity Development

To address poverty at its root, it is essential to bring out each individual's strengths and potential and enable them to exert their effort in society. To achieve this, we support initiatives that provide access to education and nurture people, helping them thrive in their communities based on mutual support and hope.

Healthcare, Medical Services, and Welfare

Even today, many children lose their lives to preventable diseases, and many people are unable to receive medical treatment for financial reasons. We support activities that promote health and well-being for all.

Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Support

Global warming and environmental degradation have increased the scale and frequency of natural disasters. Additionally, countless people are forced to flee their homes due to conflicts. Our support continues to protect the lives and dignity of those affected through emergency aid and long-term recovery efforts.

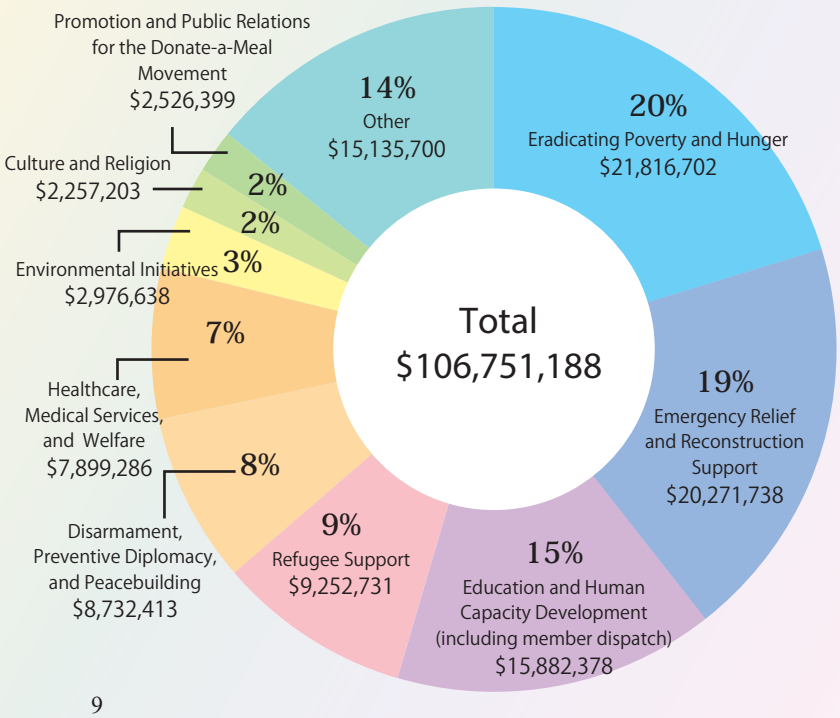
Refugee Support

The number of people displaced by conflict and persecution is increasing every year. We support activities that protect their lives and dignity and help them take a new step toward rebuilding their livelihoods.

Other Initiatives

We also support various projects, including environmental protection efforts, and make contributions to the local communities where Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma centers are located.

Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace:
Contributions by Sector (1975–2024)



05 Support Projects over the Past Five Years (2020–2024 by Region)

Middle East Region

(1) Iraq
- Enhancing Leukemia Diagnosis in Pediatric Cancer Wards

(2) Lebanon
- Little Bags of Dreams Campaign
- Nursing Courses for Palestinian Refugee Students
- COVID-19 Emergency Support
- Learning Support Classes in the Beddawi Refugee Camp
- Support for Internally Displaced Persons in the Northern Region
- Support for Airstrike Evacuees

(3) Palestinian Autonomous Territories–Gaza Strip
- Little Bags of Dreams Campaign
- Emergency Support for Airstrike Victims
- COVID-19 Emergency Support and Child Malnutrition Prevention/Improvement Program
- Gaza Humanitarian Crisis Emergency Support

(4) Syria
- Support for Food Crises Due to Political Instability

Africa Region

(5) Ethiopia
- Support for People Displaced by Armed Conflict
- COVID-19 Emergency Support
- Environmental Restoration Efforts in Conflict-Affected Areas
- Emergency Support for Women and Children Affected by Civil War and Drought

(6) Sierra Leone
- Support Project to Reduce Maternal and Perinatal Mortality

(7) Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Support for Enhancing the Resilience of Women Affected by Conflict and Infection Prevention for Vulnerable Groups During the COVID-19 Crisis
- Resilience-Enhancing Project for Vulnerable Women Affected by Conflict

(8) Malawi
- Sending Blankets to Africa Campaign
- Health and Civil Rights Promotion for Malawi (HIV/AIDS Initiatives and Birth Registration Promotion Project)
- School Meals Project
- COVID-19 Emergency Support

(9) Mozambique
- Sending Blankets to Africa Campaign
- COVID-19 Emergency Support
- Installation of Desks in Primary Schools
- Emergency Support for Cyclone Victims
- Emergency Support for Drought Victims

(10) South Africa
- South Africa Youth Support Program
- COVID-19 Emergency Support

(11) Madagascar
- Medical Support for Communities Suffering from Drought-Induced Famine

(12) South Sudan
- Emergency Support for Displaced Persons Fleeing Floods and Armed Conflict

Europe Region

(13) Ukraine
- Humanitarian Crisis Emergency Support
- Support Programs for Displaced Persons
- Dream Gift Project

Asia Region

(14) Afghanistan
- Little Bags of Dreams Campaign
- Humanitarian Emergency and Reconstruction Support
- Emergency Support for Flood Victims
- Emergency Support for Children Orphaned by Conflict
- Emergency Support for Earthquake Victims in Eastern Afghanistan

(15) Pakistan
- Emergency Support for Flood Victims
- Local Youth Peacebuilding Activities
- COVID-19 Emergency Support

(16) India
- Employment Support for Internal Migrant Workers
- Support for Myanmar Refugees in Mizoram State

(17) Bangladesh
- Medical Service Project
- Bangladesh Education Project (School supply support for impoverished areas)
- Support for Victims of Fire at the Rohingya Refugee Camp

(18) Sri Lanka
- Primary Education Support Project

(19) Mongolia
- Free Health Checkups and Other Services for Socially Vulnerable People

(20) Myanmar
- Reading Promotion Project
- School Feeding/Nutrition Program
- Prosthetic Limb Support for Landmine Victims
- Emergency Support for Myanmar Facing Poverty and Hunger
- Emergency Support for Rohingya Refugees

(21) Laos
- Agriculture, Environment, and Regional Development Project

(22) Cambodia
- Support for the Revival of Buddhist Studies
- Agriculture, Environment, and Regional Development Project
- COVID-19 Emergency Support
- Public Primary School Support Project in Prey Veng Province

(23) Philippines
- Little Bags of Dreams Campaign
- BCYFI Scholarship Program in Bataan
- Youth Empowerment and Self-Reliance Support Project
- Emergency Support for Mangyan Tribes Affected by Typhoons
- Emergency Support for Typhoon Victims
- Restoration of Japanese Nationality for Second-Generation Japanese Filipinos Remaining in the Philippines After WWII

(24) Turkey
- Emergency Support for Victims of the Turkey-Syria Earthquake

(25) South Korea
- Support for Japanese Women Remaining in South Korea After WWII

(26) Taiwan
- Emergency Support for Victims of the Eastern Offshore Earthquake

(27) Japan
- Donate-a-Meal Local Community Contribution Project
- Humanitarian Emergency and Reconstruction Support Programs
- Capacity Building Support for NGOs in Japan
- Refugee Support Projects Within Japan
- Emergency Relief in Response to Large-Scale Disasters
- Donate-a-Meal Fukushima Recovery and Disaster Survivor Support Project
- Improving Access to Health and Medical Services for Foreign Mothers and Children
- COVID-19 Emergency Support

South America Region

(28) Honduras
- Nutrition Improvement Program Through Home Gardening

Project Area: Eradicating Poverty and Hunger
Project Name: Promotion of Primary Education (School Feeding/Nutrition Program)
Project Location: Myanmar
Implementing Organization: United Nations World Food Programme Association (UN WFP Association)
Project Overview:
In Myanmar, approximately 37.5 percent of the population lives in poverty. Malnutrition among children and regional disparities in education are serious issues. While the primary school enrollment rate is 83 percent, fewer than half those students proceed to secondary education with a particularly high dropout rate among girls. To address these challenges, WFP provides nutritious school meals to preschool and primary school children. The aim is to improve their nutritional status and increase school enrollment rates. This initiative also promotes interaction among parents and community members and raises awareness about food and hygiene.

Voices from Beneficiaries and Those Engaged in the Project
Mr. U. David [pseudonym] (Program Support Staff, Chair of the Early Child Development [ECD] Committee):
"Before the school feeding/nutrition program, parents who were IDPs [internally displaced persons], including me, had difficulty preparing nutritious meals due to lack of income and limited access to food. Some children could not attend school regularly.

After the program started, children became happier and developed better hygiene and handwashing habits. Parents also gained knowledge about cleanliness and nutrition.

Thank you very much to all donors for giving this important support to our children, especially during such a challenging time."

Since the military regime took power in February 2021, conflicts have erupted across Myanmar, putting the lives of citizens at risk. Due to the danger to children's lives, it is difficult to share photos of the beneficiaries.

Project Area: Eradicating Poverty and Hunger
Project Name: Nutrition Improvement through Home Gardening
Project Location: Honduras
Implementing Organization: AMDA Multisectoral & Integrated Development Services, (AMDA-MINDS)
Project Overview:
In Honduras, 15 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line, leading to severe malnutrition. Conversely, obesity is also on the rise due to the excessive intake of sugar and fats and a lack of fruits and vegetables. About 23 percent of the population suffers from high blood pressure, and around 7 percent has diabetes. To address these challenges, this project supported home and school gardening initiatives in highly impoverished areas to promote balanced diets through the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

Voices from Beneficiaries and Those Engaged in the Project
Mr. Alejandro Briceño (a second-year junior high school student):
"I'm very happy to have taken part in this project. It was my first experience creating ridges for planting and eating vegetables we grew ourselves using natural farming methods. I really enjoyed working together with my teacher and classmates. Thank you so much!"


Mr. Alejandro Briceño

Project Area: Education and Human Capacity Development
Project Name: Community Resilience Enhancement Project for Vulnerable Groups Affected by Conflict in the Dimbelenge Region
Implementing Organization: Terra Renaissance
Project Location: Democratic Republic of the Congo
Project Overview: This project in Dimbelenge, a region in Kasaï-Central province heavily impacted by conflict since 2016, aimed to protect the lives and livelihoods of women and children while enhancing community resilience. Support was provided through improvements to clinics, the revival of commercial activities such as local markets, and the renewal of livelihoods through technical training programs in palm oil and soap production.

Voices of Beneficiaries and Those Engaged in the Project

Ms. Kamba Tuakazika:

"Due to the conflict, I was forced to flee my village with my two young children, a two-year-old and a newborn, becoming an internally displaced person, forced to live under extremely harsh conditions. After that, I managed to find shelter in a village where my brother lived, and we supported each other to survive. However, without stable work or sufficient food, I lost my beloved child to malnutrition. With subsequent support, I learned soap-making skills and now support my family through this work. Even today, conflict persists in neighboring villages, affecting my close friends and acquaintances. I sincerely hope the conflict will end soon and we can live peacefully together again. I deeply appreciate the warm support from Japan and pray for God's blessings upon all of you."



Ms. Kamba, working diligently on soap making

Project Area: Healthcare, Medical Services, and Welfare
Project Name: HIV/AIDS Initiatives and Birth Registration Promotion Project
Implementing Organization: Community of Sant'Egidio
Project Location: Malawi
Project Overview:
At the DREAM Center, a health and medical facility established by the Community of Sant'Egidio, comprehensive free medical care is provided, including blood testing, nutritional improvement, and counseling. This project particularly focuses on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and thanks to its efforts, 99 percent of children are now born HIV-free. Additionally, in cooperation with government authorities, the project also carries out birth registration for children.



Voices of Beneficiaries and Those Engaged in the Project

Ms. Purser (DREAM Health Center Expert Client):

"My encounter with the DREAM program began in 2006, when the new center was opened. I visited the center with my child and, during the support process, discovered that I was HIV positive. It was a painful moment, but I was able to begin treatment immediately, and my daughter is now growing up healthy. Her health is my greatest joy, and I am sincerely grateful to everyone involved.

This project gave me not only medical treatment but also hope and a new purpose. After receiving training, I began working as an Expert Client. My role is to share with other women that it is possible to live a full and dignified life while being HIV positive, and to convey the importance of continuous treatment for both mother and child.

This program has given me a new life. My current goal as an Expert Client is to help other women believe that they, too, have a future."



Ms. Purser

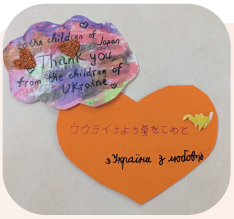
Project Area: Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Support
Implementation Year: 2024
Support Recipient 1: Emergency support focusing on children's nutrition in the Gaza Strip, Palestine.
Support Organization: Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
Amount of Support: 5 million yen（approx. $33,300）
Overview of Activities:
• Conducting health check-ups
• Distributing milk and high-calorie biscuits to prevent malnutrition
• Providing cash assistance

Support Recipient 2: Support project for Ukrainian refugees in Krakow, Poland
Support Organization: Japan Chernobyl Foundation (JCF)
Amount of Support: 3 million yen（approx. $20,000）
Overview of Activities:
• Distributing basic food, daily necessities, and school supplies to mothers and children who have fled to neighboring countries
• Providing support for emergency health check-up expenses

Support Recipient 3: Support for internally displaced persons and landmine victims in Myanmar
Support Organization: Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines (JCBL)
Amount of Support: 1 million yen（approx. $6,660）
Overview of Activities:
• Providing medical services and support for social reintegration of war and landmine victims
• Providing assistance for restoring safe living environments in evacuation sites
• Providing mobile medical services to remote areas, supplying medicines, and distributing supplementary nutritional food for children
• Supporting the creation of educational materials to raise awareness about the dangers of landmines, in response to the increasing number of child victims



A mother giving a nutritional supplement to her child (© Japan International Volunteer Center)





Letters from Ukraine

Project Area: Education and Human Capacity Development
Project Name: Dream Gift
Support Recipients: Ukraine (2024)
Project Overview:
This project enables children in Japan to take part in a Donate-a-Meal initiative through which they send heartfelt letters and essential items as gifts to children living under harsh conditions due to conflict. In return, the children who receive these gifts write thank-you letters back to Japan. The project fosters emotional interactions between children and creates opportunities for them to feel a sense of connectedness.

In 2024, children in Ukraine received 1,353 letters from children in Japan, along with 100 tablets purchased through donations as gifts. Many children in Ukraine are currently displaced and living in shelters, unable to attend school regularly due to repeated air raids and power outages. In response to the children's requests, this year's gift was a tablet, enabling access to remote learning. In appreciation, 402 thank-you letters were sent from Ukrainian children to Japan.

Voices from the Beneficiaries and Those Engaged in the Projects

Children in Ukraine:
"Thank you so much for giving us these tablets. Please don't forget about us."
"We used to study on old computers, but thanks to these new tablets, doing homework has become easier, and now we can attend online classes."

Children in Japan:
"I was wondering what I could do to help children suffering around the world, and I'm so glad there's a Dream Gift project."
"Since joining Dream Gift, when I see news about Ukraine on TV, I feel like my donation is being sent there, and even though it was a distant country before, it now feels closer to me."



A letter from Japan



Children receiving their gifts

07 Voices from Global Sangha

The movement began in Japan in 1975 with people skipping one meal several times a month and donating the equivalent amount of money. Today, this is practiced in various ways worldwide and adapted to suit individual lifestyles. In this chapter, we will introduce the voices of sangha members around the world who are practicing this movement.



Kayoko with her granddaughter

Kayoko, Orlando

"Every Sunday, I skip breakfast and put $2 in the Donate-a-Meal box. Once a year, I offer the total amount as a donation to the New York Dharma Center. I chose $2 because a ticket for the weekly Florida State Lottery costs the same price. Instead of buying a ticket, I add that same amount to the Donate-a-Meal box once a week.

In November 2016, Ms. Yuri Sugino, general affairs director of the New York Dharma Center, gave a lecture on the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Until then, I had only participated in the movement occasionally, whenever I happened to remember. After listening to her lecture, I felt encouraged to try doing it consistently. At that time, I was going through a financially difficult period, so when I had no cash, I would write down '$2' and the date on a piece of paper and put it in the box as a placeholder. Then, when I had cash later, I would put the money in the box. My family also began contributing—whenever they found coins or had spare change, they would put it in the box. I am very grateful that my family started supporting the movement with me.

Through this practice, I have reflected on my lifestyle and learned to value money and material things more carefully."



Mary, Fort Myers

Why the Donate-a-Meal Movement Is Important to Me

"Like many of you, I was given a small cardboard box by one of my Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma leaders and asked to get into the habit of placing the cost of a meal in that box. Ideally, I would also not eat that meal, so I could feel in a small way the hunger pains of a person truly without food to eat.

Sometimes I did that, but often I found that I would just donate some money at the end of the month towards the Donate-a-Meal campaign. I knew that Rissho Kosei-kai did great humanitarian work during crises around the world, and I wanted to support that.

In 2022 our home was nearly destroyed by Hurricane Ian in Florida. It took many days to get power restored, and even when it was restored the only cooking appliance that survived was our microwave. We ended up eating things like cold beans, canned tuna, and peanut butter for weeks. My husband and I lost weight but were still so grateful to be alive and have a place to rebuild and live. For the first time, I felt the pangs of hunger just a little bit and felt the suffering of those who are marginalized. While I

always realized in my head that we are all interconnected and interdependent, I was feeling that now in my heart. Our dear neighbors helped us a great deal during those early days of recovery, and I will never forget the evening they had us over for dinner. It tasted so delicious! It was our first home-cooked meal in weeks, and it was wonderful. I vowed to never forget this feeling of connection with food.

So now when I make my monthly donation to the Donate-a-Meal Movement, I do it from my heart. I may forget to skip a meal that month, but I always remember that I had meals that month, and I want to help those who don't have anything to eat. I am so fortunate and grateful that Rissho Kosei-kai gives me the opportunity every month to be mindful of my connection with all my fellow living beings who are struggling to survive."



Kevin, San Antonio

"We are honored to share with you our ongoing commitment and heartfelt efforts in support of Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Movement, a campaign that continues to inspire compassion and action within our community.

Living in South Texas, we are keenly aware of the challenges many families face—extreme weather, economic hardship, immigration insecurity, and limited access to fresh, nutritious food. Participating in donations to the San Antonio Food Bank is a powerful way to support our neighbors and strengthen the fabric of our community. A single act of giving—whether it's a can of food, a few hours of volunteer time, or a heartfelt meal offering—can help ensure that no family goes hungry. It's a reminder that even in times of struggle, compassion can grow and flourish right here at home.

Each year, the San Antonio Dharma Center hosts a food collection drive to benefit the San Antonio Food Bank, guided by the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Through the generous support of our members, we fill large barrels with non-perishable food items, contributing to a growing store of nourishment that is distributed to individuals and families facing food insecurity in our area.

Our commitment to this cause deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In those challenging years, our sangha members joined a volunteer initiative at a local farm, sponsored by the San Antonio Food Bank. There, we helped plant, fertilize, and tend to garden produce—with our hands in the soil and our hearts in service. This work not only provided fresh fruits and vegetables to those in need but also strengthened our connection to the earth and to each other.

Each month, our membership donates $100 to the San Antonio Food Bank to support the work Rissho Kosei-kai is doing to provide nutritional resources to members of our community.

In addition, after every sangha-wide meal or event, we donate any leftover food to members who are experiencing food insecurity.

These efforts reflect the core teachings of our faith: to embody compassion through action and to alleviate suffering wherever we can. We are deeply grateful to be part of a global sangha inspired by the vision and practices of Rissho Kosei-kai, and we look forward to continuing this work hand in hand with our brothers and sisters around the world.

With gratitude and humility."



Graeme and Yuna, London

"We first became aware of the Donate-a-Meal Movement when we joined the London *hoza.* Soon after, Yuna took on the role of reminding members about the practice, which she continued to do for a while. Since then, we have carried on with the Donate-a-Meal practice and integrated it into our regular Dharma routine as one of the very important Six Paramitas, Generosity. Of course, along with making a charitable donation, the practice involves forgoing at least one meal on two days of each month, which we do try and manage as much as possible. However, we always remember to make a donation in our Donate-a-Meal box, which we keep in a prominent place in our home.

Certainly, a short fast does superficially focus the mind (albeit only very briefly!) on what it feels like to be hungry, but plainly, this is nothing like the feeling that someone in real, desperate need has day in and day out. It does, perhaps, at least make us appreciate how fortunate we are, and it helps keep the ideas of donation, empathy, and thankfulness regularly in our minds as we try to keep to the routine.

Another positive fact to mention is that all our donations reach people in need very quickly and efficiently through the Donate-a-Meal channels, which are very skilled at getting immediate assistance to places where there are famines, earthquakes, war zones, and other disasters across the world. We lived in Nepal for some years and always felt close to people who needed a lot of practical help to thrive, so the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal campaign does sit quite comfortably with us.

This is one of the very important practices of the Six Paramitas, and through the Donate-a-Meal program, we feel we can carry out, and hopefully spread, the spirit of donation and pray together for world peace."



Dalit joins activities to support an elementary school in Cambodia as part of the Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace project.

Boudarith (a.k.a. Dalit), Phnom Penh

"Nice to meet you! My name is Dalit, and I'm a member of Rissho Kosei-kai in Cambodia. I would like to take this opportunity to share my thoughts. I'm truly happy and always grateful to be a part of Rissho Kosei-kai. Through the membership at Rissho Kosei-kai, I've gained knowledge and wisdom not only in Buddhism but also many other areas. Through our monthly study sessions and community service activities, I've shared and experienced many things with fellow members.

I was introduced to the Donate-a-Meal Movement when I participated in our monthly study group. It was the first time I had heard of such an activity in Cambodia. At first, I wondered whether we could really practice it—but thanks to everyone's cooperation, we actually did!

Thanks to Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal

Movement, our sangha became a bridge between Cambodia and Japan, which allowed us to carry out social contribution activities in Cambodia. Together, we visited a rural elementary school in Cambodia and provided donations and support to children in need. I was very happy and grateful to be able to take part. Seeing the children's joyful faces and sincere smiles, and the teachers' earnest efforts, I was deeply moved. I truly hope that activities like this will continue.

I believe it is very important for Buddhists to connect with society. By helping one another and growing together, I hope we can all live healthy, harmonious lives—both physically and mentally.

Thank you very much for allowing me to take part in the Donate-a-Meal Movement. On behalf of the Cambodian people, I sincerely express my heartfelt gratitude. Thank you always, and I look forward to working with you."



Dalit (far left) *participates in support activities with fellow sangha members.*



Rahul, Delhi

"I came to know about the Donate-a-Meal Movement through the Delhi branch of Rissho Kosei-kai. I encountered Rissho Kosei-kai eight years ago, and I learned that the members of Rissho Kosei-kai of Delhi were engaged in activities to benefit humanity. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Two weeks ago, on the day celebrating the Anniversary of Shakyamuni Buddha's Birth, we held a donate-a-meal event.

The concept of a one-meal donation—skipping one meal and donating its value or equivalent food to someone in need—may seem small, but in practice, it can have a significant impact. Last year, I also had a chance to participate in a donate-a-meal activity, and the experience was both humbling and enlightening. When I define hunger in one sentence, I say, "hunger is not just the absence of food—it is a daily struggle faced by millions."

Once, when the pandemic was going on and life was just stuck, I found many people were struggling for food. I saw that many families could not supply basic food for themselves. At that time, I understood the actual value of food. I would like to salute Founder Niwano for this worldwide initiative. However, I am a foodie! But when I heard Rev. Shimamura, former director of Rissho Kosei-kai International of South Asia, speak during a seminar, I also committed to skipping one meal each month for such a noble cause. I calculate the cost of that meal and donate the amount to our organization.

I am really blessed because I am part of Rissho Kosei-kai of Delhi. We have a good sangha, and our

sangha leaders are very supportive. I am really fascinated by the donation activities of Rissho Kosei-kai because we collect member donations, make a plan, receive guidance from our leader, and then receive guidance for implementation from Rissho Kosei-kai. This is the beauty of Rissho Kosei-kai. This is the power of unity.

The process taught me several valuable lessons. First, I became acutely aware of the value of food, and I never leave food on my plate. Skipping one meal does not affect me much, but for someone else, that one meal could mean not going hungry. It shifted my perspective on waste, consumption, and the true value of food.

Second, I witnessed the power of team Rissho Kosei-kai. What started as a personal act of charity grew into a collective initiative. Friends began helping us by donating too, and even our vendor started offering discounts on food. Most importantly, we brought a smile to many faces.

Lastly, the activity deepened my empathy. Interacting directly with the children we helped—sharing happiness, feeling inner peace, and watching their gratitude—made the experience personal and emotionally impactful. I no longer see this as just a donation. It is a shared act of dignity, respect, and solidarity.

Thank you so much!”



Ludwig serves as a subleader in sutra recitation at the Dharma center.

Ludwig, Mogi das Cruzes

“I first heard about the Donate-a-Meal Movement while studying at Rissho Kosei-kai’s Gakurin Seminary. Although I didn’t fully understand the practice’s meaning at first, I made an effort to follow it.

Seeing other students engage in the practice sincerely and with respect for the Donate-a-Meal Movement inspired me to learn about the movement more deeply and challenge myself to continue practicing consistently.

To be honest, I couldn’t always skip a meal on my donate-a-meal days, but I never failed to make a monetary donation. Wanting to feel the significance of the practice as deeply as possible, I chose to skip lunch on my donate-a-meal days. I feel the hungriest at lunchtime, since I usually eat very little in the morning and tend to have a light dinner. So, I thought skipping lunch would be the most effective way to understand, even slightly, the suffering of those who live in hunger.

I continued this form of practice until I graduated from Gakurin Seminary. Even after returning to Brazil, I gave this practice much attention in my heart. Whenever I heard news or activities related to the movement in our Dharma center, I paid close attention.

Although I no longer regularly skip meals, I continue to donate, and my awareness of the movement has deepened significantly. Moreover, I’ve become more actively involved in other social initiatives and developed a deeper sense of empathy toward people facing hardship. Whether inside or outside the Dharma center, I now take part in campaigns aimed at promoting solidarity. The sangha of the Brazil Dharma Center has also frequently supported the outreach efforts proposed by my fellow members and me.

I hope to continue practicing donating meals and to further cultivate a heart of compassion. In this world, where loneliness and self-centered behavior are on the rise, I want to do whatever I can to help improve the lives of others. The Donate-a-Meal Movement continues to remind me that there is still hope and that there are many people who care for others and act with compassion.

Thank you very much.”





Viviane applies face paint to a child at an event supporting children in an underprivileged area.

Viviane, São Paulo

"I learned about the Donate-a-Meal Movement when I started attending Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil more regularly in 2010. Although I thought the initiative was very important, I could not find the discipline to do it myself the way we were taught: skipping a meal to donate the corresponding amount to someone who was starving. Skipping a meal has always been physically challenging for me due to low blood pressure and past episodes of fainting in public places due to not eating properly.

But I put my intention to donate into practice in another way by helping to hold the Children's Day party, held every October 12th, at an NGO called Maria e Sininha, an important cultural center that promotes social inclusion in a needy community in Sao Paulo. This event is eagerly awaited by local families, as it offers free breakfast, fruit, and a well-organized lunch for hundreds of people who attend the party not only to have some leisure time with their children but also to eat complete meals prepared with lots of love by the NGO's volunteers. Even ice cream is distributed, and the children love it!

The main goal of the party is to bring fun and joy to the children, but due to the food insecurity that many families still face in the city of Sao Paulo, the biggest attraction ends up being the free meals offered to everyone. At the end of the party, each child also takes home a new, high-quality toy, along with a bag of goodies, which are not to be missed!

Everything is done with extreme care and attention, and the preparations that precede the event months in advance are very intensive: seeking sponsors, donors, and volunteers who dedicate themselves earnestly so that the party always takes place with lots of joy and tranquility.

I've been participating in this event for over fifteen years (even before I joined Rissho Kosei-kai), helping to serve lunch to the guests, but now my main role is organizing the face painting group. It is an activity that brings a lot of joy to the little ones, who feel happy and fulfilled with a face painting of a superhero, their favorite character, or just a colorful butterfly on their cheek.

Although managing the event is tiring and physically demanding, it is deeply rewarding to see so many smiles and full bellies at an event that serves around two thousand people annually. I always take my husband Stefano and our son Samuel, who is now nine years old, to help out. I believe it's crucial to teach my son the value of giving back and bringing happiness to those in need.

Rissho Kosei-kai has also supported this cause by donating funds from the Donate-a-Meal initiative directly to Maria e Sininha on several occasions, including during the pandemic. This support has enabled the NGO to continue assisting vulnerable families. I am profoundly grateful to Rissho Kosei-kai for their donations and for inspiring me with a sense of what it is like to bring happiness to others."





Children participating in the Children's Day party held by Maria e Sininha.

The Donate-a-Meal Movement on the Occasion of Its Fiftieth Anniversary

Nichiko Niwano
President, Rissho Kosei-kai

This year, the Donate-a-Meal Movement marks its fiftieth anniversary. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you across the world who have supported this movement over the past half century.

The total contributions received so far have exceeded $106.7 million and have been utilized in a wide range of areas both in Japan and abroad, including poverty reduction, refugee support, and environmental protection. In recent years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Emergency Local Community Support Project, implemented in Japan by the Donate-a-Meal Movement, provided assistance to alternative schools, free community-based tutoring programs, and children's cafeterias. The fact that timely support has been extended to those most in need is the fruit of your continuous commitment and practice.

Through this movement, we have offered donations with hearts of empathy toward those facing various hardships, learned about the realities and challenges of the world, and been guided to what we ourselves should do at this moment. It can also be said that we have been led to awaken to the compassion and kindness that dwell within our own hearts. Ultimately, this awakening embodies the principle of *Jiri Rita Enman* (the perfect harmony of benefiting oneself and benefiting others).

Jiri means one's own benefit or liberation, while *Rita* means the benefit or liberation of others. *Enman* signifies perfection or completeness. Together, *Jiri Rita Enman* refers to the oneness of both self-benefit and benefit for others. In other words, by leading others toward liberation through compassion, one simultaneously finds joy and liberation for oneself—and this is the true happiness of human life. This principle represents the spirit of the bodhisattva way of the Great Vehicle.

The Buddha himself originally entered the path of practice in an effort to resolve his own suffering. However, upon attaining enlightenment, he realized that true peace cannot be found in enlightenment for oneself alone. Unless all people are liberated, the liberation of the individual is incomplete.

A modern expression of this spirit can be found in the words of Kenji Miyazawa, a writer of children's stories and a devoted believer in the Lotus Sutra: "Unless the whole world becomes happy, individual happiness cannot exist." This means that creating a world in which all people can truly feel happiness is, in the end, the very path to one's own happiness.

Zen master Dogen used the words "self" and "other-self." He taught that "self" and "other" cannot be thought of as separate, but rather that the "self" of oneself and the "self" of others are connected at their root as one and the same "self." Together they form the Great Self (*Daiko*), which is nothing less than the universe itself. Whatever happens in the great universe is our very own concern; the joys and sorrows of others are to be felt just as our own. This, he taught, is the heart of the Buddha.

As we once again reflect on the profound spirit that underlies the Donate-a-Meal Movement, let us treasure each moment of joy we have experienced in being of service to others, in touching the smiles of those we have supported. May these joys become nourishment for our hearts. On this fiftieth anniversary, let us continue with renewed spirits to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to the practice of this movement.

Message from the General Secretary

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. The contributions you have offered through this movement are being used to support people facing hardship in regions affected by conflict, natural disasters, poverty, and climate change around the world. Your heartfelt donations are helping to sustain lives and bring hope to those in need. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for your continued dedication to this movement.

In today's global context, where divisions and conflicts are intensifying, the spirit of the One Vehicle (*Ichijo*) that underlies this movement is more vital than ever. We firmly believe that the Donate-a-Meal Movement, as a concrete expression of this spirit, plays an important role in building world peace.

I sincerely hope that we will continue practicing this movement together with all of you, contributing to the realization of a peaceful world where all life is cherished.

Kumiko Hideshima
General Secretary
Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace
Rissho Kosei-kai



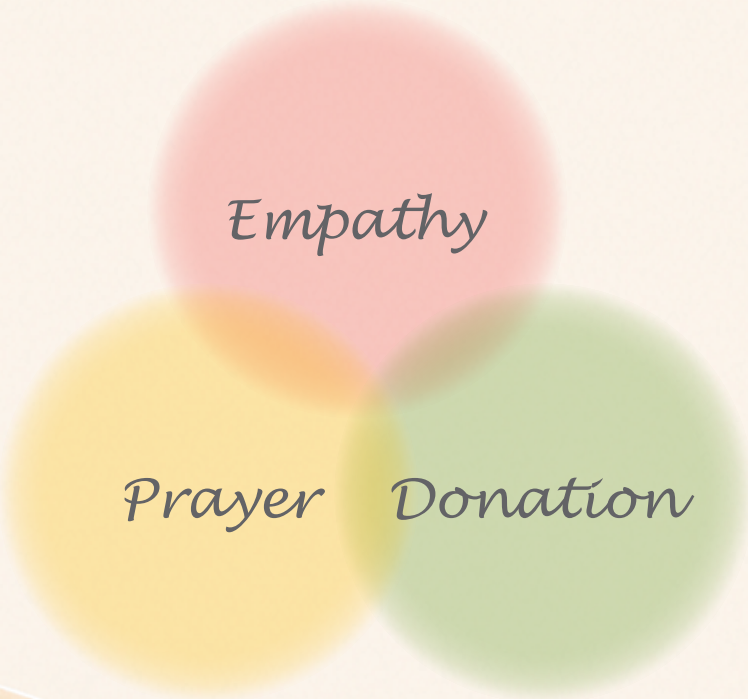


My Personal Donate-a-Meal Practice

How would you like to share your happiness with others?

- ☐ Skipping a meal or snack
- ☐ Choosing something other than meals to share, based on your lifestyle
- ☐ Setting special days to practice

My Practice



Words of Prayer

I pray:
Let there be peace on earth
Let more people be considerate of others
Let it begin with me

ichijiki@kosei-kai.or.jp

https://donate-a-meal-rk.org/

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