

World Vision Insider

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WTO Reflections

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As our city sweeps up broken glass and scrubs away graffiti after last week's protests surrounding the World Trade Organization talks, a few images have remained with me and capture the essence of the week from World Vision's perspective.

The first is from a United Nations reception I attended Tuesday evening, around the same time clashes between protesters and police grew violent.

Over the din of muffled explosions on the streets outside the Washington Athletic Club, I chatted briefly with Secretary-General Kofi Annan about Ghana. I also enjoyed hearing

Mr. Annan's perspective on the WTO protests. He explained that a better place to resolve issues raised by the demonstrators is with national policy-makers and through other organizations. Although I don't approve of the WTO's methods and positions on some issues, I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Annan's statement.

I agree because I've seen the impact an organization like World Vision makes around the world. When it comes to human rights for the poor and making sure the hungry in developing countries have food to eat, World Vision is on the frontlines, helping those in need.

Another scene in downtown Seattle on 7th Avenue reinforced my feelings on

this. At street level was the smoke, broken glass, and chanting protesters. But looking up, high on the side of a building was a tall white banner hung by several World Vision staff. It showed a circle of children holding hands in colorful traditional dress and simply said, "World Vision. Discover the Power of Hope."

I thank God that in the midst of the chaos and divisiveness—much of it generated by well-meaning demonstrators concerned about the plight of the poor in developing countries—World Vision and other Christian organizations point to the answer: The life-transforming power of hope and unity in Jesus Christ.

Colombia Violence Displaces Thousands

Nearly 1 million people in Colombia have been displaced from their homes in the last four years as conflict continues to rage between the military, leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, and forces under the control of illicit drug traffickers.

Poor families are the worst affected. Direct threats, massacres, and acts of violence force these families to stay on the move or settle in urban slum areas. The process of cleansing, while not ethnic in motivation, is as brutal as the cleansing witnessed recently in the Balkans and elsewhere. The stories are frighteningly similar: families are

given 10 minutes to pack up and leave their houses.

The needs of families who have settled in the urban slums are critical. Nutrition and hygiene, like housing and sanitary conditions, are abysmal. "Schools" are makeshift shacks. There are no jobs. Access to education or health services is nearly non-existent.

Since August, World Vision has been working with internally displaced people in two slum areas of Bogotá, and in two other urban Area Development Programs (ADPs) in the cities of Bucaramanga and Montería.

This emergency program, benefiting approximately 3,200 people, includes monthly food support, distribution of hygiene packs and kitchen kits, and the organization of health awareness seminars.

World Vision has been working in Colombia since 1971, and we are committed to providing sustainable, long-term solutions to both rural and urban poor families.

Please remember these victims of violence in your prayers.

