

UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
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THE POWER OF CHOICE

**"It's our choices that matter in the end
Not wishes, not words, not promises."**

How many choices do you think you might make each day? Researchers suggest it's about 35,000 choices – 227 relating to food alone.

Little wonder so many of us have choice paralysis! So what guides our decisions? Some are impulsive, some are emotional, some come from rationally weighing up the facts. Too many are just unconscious, routine. We do things because it's the way we've always done them. But as so many people have pointed out, it's our daily choices that become habit, habit that becomes character and character that becomes our destiny. That means our choices are powerful – even the ones we might not think matter all that much.

Recently we went to a small community in Papua New Guinea to film an interactive video that allows you to make choices revealing what life is like as a young person living with limited options in a developing

country. If you haven't already tried it out, you can find our interactive video at www.unitingworld.org.au/choice

It highlights that "35,000 choices a day" don't include most of the world's poor. In Papua New Guinea, the third most difficult place in the world to access clean water, most people have only one water source – and it's often dirty enough to kill them. One person dies every minute around the world from complications relating to dirty water. Most of them are children. But faced with little awareness about clean water and sanitation, what real choices are there? Lack of options for handwashing and clean water force people to choose unsafe water, a lifestyle that can kill.

We're training health workers who are changing all that, and your choice to get involved makes a huge difference. When you donate to our water and sanitation work, as many of you already have, you're supporting communities to gain access to clean water and learn new habits that save lives. It's such a simple act that makes such a huge difference.

Thank you to everyone who has already made the decision to get involved in this work. Your gifts, combined with funding

from the Australian Government, mean that our partners are excited about the ways we can expand the work to many more communities in Papua New Guinea, West Timor, Bali and Zimbabwe. Together, through our determined daily choices to be people of generosity and compassion, we're building a world where people can thrive no matter what their circumstances. **Thank you!**

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UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Because every person matters.

FIRST FEMALE LECTURER A WIN FOR EQUALITY

"90% of people in the Solomon Islands believe in God. When a message about women comes from the Bible, their eyes are open, they feel it has more weight. And that's why we will see a reduction in gender-based violence and increased respect for women in our society."

If anyone has the insight to comment on what might make a difference to violence against women in the Pacific, it's Pastor Lima Tura. The sole female lecturer at Seghe Theological College in the Solomon Islands, Lima has a Bachelor of Theology from Pilgrim Theological College in Melbourne, she is a single parent and now teaches theology and biblical studies in her home country. It's not been an easy journey.

Feeling the call to pastor several years ago, Lima was offered a scholarship in partnership with UnitingWorld and the United Church of the Solomon Islands to study at Seghe. A trailblazer, she literally burnt the midnight oil or read under lamps powered by generators, studying third-hand textbooks from Australia as she worked her way through her Certificate. She completed a Bachelor of Theology in Melbourne and has now returned to her college determined to overcome its many challenges.

"We are lucky right now – we have power connected and two light bulbs in most of the homes," says Lima. "Our library is small, and we have no Wi-Fi for internet research – we can sometimes use data on our phones but it is very expensive."

In spite of scarce resources, Lima describes her lecturing position as wonderfully inspiring.

"There are fourteen gentlemen and one woman in my classes," she laughs. "The men are really great, very open to equality. I mean, sometimes it is probably hard for them. I'm not sure if they have been taught by a woman before except in school when they were younger."

The first woman to lecture at the college, Lima is bringing new perspectives to students and existing clergy both by example and through her teaching, which draws on gender equality theology work developed by UnitingWorld as part of the Partnering Women for Change program.



Pastor Lima Tura at a gender equality theology conference in Fiji in 2018

"For both the men and the women here, this message of equality and dignity is so liberating," Lima says. "We held a workshop to teach from the Bible about respect for women and to share what the scriptures have to say about women and men's roles. People are very excited. When they hear messages from secular women's rights organisations they can be suspicious and confused. But when it comes from the pulpit, from the church who they trust, it has much more power and influence."

In July, a group will meet in Fiji to discuss how Bible study material can be brought alive for students in colleges and within church circles. Lima will be among the attendees.

After years of groundwork, our theological workshops with church partners in the Pacific have attracted funding from the Australian Government.

"The Australian Government recognises that overcoming poverty and ending violence against women in the Pacific is about working to see women's rights and gifts recognised," says UnitingWorld Associate Director Bronwyn Spencer. "They've also realised that in cultures where Christianity is central, churches hold the most influence and authority to create change. As a result, they've been funding our work with partners to explore biblical gender equality,

so that local leaders are equipped to preach and teach it and help to open opportunities for women in church leadership. That's actually pretty radical."

For Lima, the support of people here in Australia through UnitingWorld is incredibly precious.

"I can't thank you enough for the scholarship to study and for the prayers you have offered for me," she says. "Without you, I could not have answered this call. My dream for the students is that they go back to their communities with the wisdom to address through a theological lens all the challenges they face – social, economic and spiritual. We experience so much good here, but so many difficulties as well."

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR CHURCH PARTNERS

to lead this transformative dialogue among their communities. Lima's story is one thread in a fabric we see being woven from country to country, where God's powerful message of freedom and dignity for all is shaking and sheltering lives.

LENT EVENT: THAT'S A WRAP!

Thank you for stepping up and being part of Lent Event in 2019. We've almost hit our target of \$328,000 in record time this year and have had such encouraging feedback about your love of the people and projects in Timor Leste!

Margot writes: "Our group of about ten meeting regularly through these weeks want me to express to you how very much we are being strengthened, enlightened and enriched as we make this 'journey' where you – and the people of Timor Leste – oh, and of course the Lord – are leading us.

We have come to know and meet past and present Moderators of the UCA in ways we have never done before. They have opened themselves and come alongside us at a personal level – and in doing so have been allowing and encouraging us to open ourselves, to reach out – among ourselves and beyond. The people of Timor Leste leave us silent and breathless. We see them



Thank you for supporting our partners as they work to improve the lives of people in Timor Leste

and hear them speaking to us each Sunday as part of our worship... they reach powerfully into our lives beyond what any of them would ever imagine. They change us."

Last month we gathered church leaders and Sunday School teachers in Dili, Timor Leste to talk about the best ways to protect and nurture children, workshoping child protection policies that will call out and prevent abuse. Leaders were excited to work together on these strategies for the next generation.

At Glebe Road Uniting Church in Queensland, a visit from members of our partner the Protestant Church of Timor Leste is also lighting up the congregation and attracted Moderator David Baker and other local ministers to hear about the partnership at a recent lunch.

You can still provide healthcare, care for children and training for leaders in Timor Leste and beyond by making a donation at www.lentevent.com Thank you to all who showed their love for our partners this year!



Members of the Protestant Church of Timor Leste visit Glebe Road Uniting Church in Queensland

ENOUGH TO SHARE AT HOME AND ABROAD

Teetering on the edge of drought, one of our Victorian sheep farmers knows the importance of planning and preparing for disasters.

His decision to give more than \$5,000 to our Disaster Risk Reduction project came the day before his property received heavy rainfall that steered his family away from the brink of a calamitous season.



A woman working on a communal garden plot that aims to improve food security in her remote village in Papua New Guinea

"This farmer told me he knows first-hand how vital it is to prepare for and prevent weather related disasters," recalls UnitingWorld Australian Partnerships Team member Alexandra Bingham. "I'm so encouraged by his willingness to faithfully invest in helping our global neighbours prepare for their challenges even while knowing he faces those same risks personally."

Alexandra also visited Richmond Uniting Church this month, another community with an emphasis on both local and global mission. "They have a weekly focus on local and global outreach, providing grocery parcels for local people as well as giving very generously to our water and sanitation projects in

A BIG THANKS TO ALL OUR COMMITTED DONORS AND CHURCH CONGREGATIONS

who've caught the vision of 'enough to share.' If you'd like to share a regular gift and become a Global Neighbour, get in touch with us at 1800 998 122 or info@unitingworld.org.au

Papua New Guinea," Alexandra says. "It was really wonderful to be able to share with the church, which includes a number of generous donors, how their gifts are being used to save lives among our partners."

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

WEST PAPUA

Severe flooding in West Papua killed 200 people last month and drove 4,000 people from their homes.

We're always encouraged by the response of our partners who are often first on the scene of a

disaster even though their own resources are stretched. Dr Debora Murthy, who coordinates our Southeast Asia projects, reported that our partner GKI-TP was immediately on hand to provide 23 fresh water units to shelters housing people impacted by the disaster.



ZIMBABWE

In response to a serious cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe late last year, UnitingWorld sent funds to assist our partner the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe to protect families at risk in the region.

Some key results:

- 1,323 households reached in 18 different villages
- Approximately 6,615 people (3,969 women and 2,646 men) were reached
- Each household received four bottles of WaterGuard and four bars of washing soap for improved health and hygiene practices to prevent cholera and other diarrheal diseases.

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

When Australia was asked to choose a new federal government last month, my husband Chris and I found ourselves investing time and energy into helping our children think about the decision we were facing as a nation, even though they're not yet old enough to vote.

We talked about what it means to be part of a democracy and the responsibility it places on us. We explored their hopes for the future, using the 2019 Vision Statement of the Uniting Church, which dreams of a nation with a heart for our First Peoples; a thriving and equitable economy for all; a loving and hospitable attitude toward all races, genders and sexualities; stewardship for all of God's creation and commitment to our global neighbours. We also used the ABC's Vote Compass to discuss our voting options.

Most of all, we wanted our children to value the privilege and power it is to have choice in a world where so many are voiceless and shackled by their gender, poverty or the corruption of their leaders. In my work each day, I'm encouraged by the many ways your

love and determination are putting power back into the hands of men, women and children who are created, like you and I, with the capacity to achieve so much if given half the chance. Thank you for choosing to use this power for such great good!

Recently, the team and I at UnitingWorld have been reviewing our programs, working out our focus areas for strengthening our work in the next financial year and beyond. There is always more great work we could do than we have resources, but we're always guided by our partners within our five priority areas of Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equality, Strong Leadership, Climate Change/Disaster Preparation and Emergency Response. What we're hearing from the women and men who lead this work, is that they want trained staff and robust organisations that can support themselves long-term. They don't want handouts or short-term fixes, they want the lasting skills to create the changes they know they can bring about on their own. This allows them, too, to share in the power of choice, making choices about how and where they invest without the need to rely on external partners. This means we'll be investing more in our partners to transfer knowledge,



training them in good governance and risk management. It may not sound exciting, but it's what makes the difference long term! It means you can rely on their accounting skills, their child protection policies and their long-term impact. In short, when you choose us as your partner, you're choosing an investment of skills and knowledge for lasting change. Thank you! I'll be writing more about this in future editions of Update, so stay posted.

With gratitude for the power of choice,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Goringe'.

Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld

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the Uniting Church in Australia.

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