



## Vulnerable populations and communal capacity-building

Welcome to the second issue of the Christian Journal for Global Health for 2022. It might be described as a “mini issue” with one original article, three short reports, and three poems. The journal has experienced somewhat of a reduction in acceptable submissions and has declined publication more often this year than in previous years. Perhaps this is a post-COVID phenomenon where we are now seeing the longer-term consequences of nearly two years of reduced work capacity. It is very much hoped that the restrictions due to COVID-19 will not lead to persisting productivity loss, including in the area of research. Or that habits of inactivity justified by infection risks do not become habits of torpor.

Nevertheless, there is distinct value in what we do have. The pandemic has exacerbated disparities and increased vulnerability of certain groups, and the church retains a key role in addressing these. [Arun Sharma, Nicole Bishop, and Nathan Grills](#) set out to evaluate the impact of self-help groups on women’s empowerment. They used qualitative measures to develop themes arising out of interviews with widows in Uttarakhand, India. Interventions had produced increased agricultural productivity, more financial security, increased social recognition, and better solidarity among widows as a group. [Fotarisman Zaluchu](#) examined gender imbalance in the Indonesian island of Nias where Christianity predominates. Using interview techniques, he found that naïve Biblical interpretations served to reinforce pre-existing cultural stereotypes that were to the disadvantage of women’s health. Somewhat in contrast, [Zaluchu](#) also studied the role of churches in disseminating information on preventing childhood stunting, a condition affecting 25 to 48 percent of the population. The churches were effective in facilitating the outreach of the teams and building capacity through culturally appropriate teaching methods that incorporated native clothing and dance.

A short report by [Jim Harries](#) provocatively asks whether Western approaches to public health, dominated

as they are by thinking that emphasizes the individual in a material universe, are really effective in societies where world views are communal, relational, and spiritual. Dr. Harries presents a “middle road” approach, writing from an experience of many years’ residence among the people groups about whom he writes and with intimate familiarity with their languages. It is certainly true that Western aid programs in LMICs reflect the cultural priorities of people paying for the aid, a situation that is rather difficult to distinguish from old-fashioned imperialism even if military force is not the tool of influence.

Three poems are a special feature of this issue. The journal welcomes poetry, and we are particularly indebted to our poetry editor, Sarah Larkin, to help us evaluate them. Oyebode Dosunmu presents a prayer for us to [know, have, hope, and see](#) and a second poem, [Present Sufferings, Future Glory](#) about endurance and hope in spiritual formation. Finally, a poem by Brian Quaranta warns us about the ethical problems of physician assisted suicide with reminders from Orpheus (we might add, Lot’s wife) about the allurements of Death’s longed-for [Backward Glance](#).

A book review by William Cayley on Mekdes Haddis’s work [A Just Mission](#) highlights the importance of setting aside power and cultural hegemony toward mutual respect and collaboration for the building of a better world. This is the world into which Jesus of Nazareth was born in vulnerability to Mary to redeem all nations. The editors of the Christian Journal for Global Health extend to all our readers, reviewers, and authors the very best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a flourishing New Year.

