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MISSION MOMENT: PARAGUAY

Indigenous communities have lived in the Gran Chaco region of Paraguay for centuries. And for most of that time, families had many ways to earn a living. They hunted, fished, ate local fruits, consumed local honey and made crafts. This lifestyle was largely possible because they could move freely across the vast region. It wasn't an easy way of life, but families quickly learned to be flexible, adapting when they needed to meet the changing realities of their environment and its character. If there was a drought or disaster, these highly resilient families could move to another area and find other opportunities for livelihood and family provision.

Then the borders and fences started going up.

Much of the land in the region fell into the hands of corporate and private landowners, who created massive commercial farms, taking over the best land, and exporting the productive crops. As this happened, the community's freedom of movement went away, as well as their ability to provide for themselves as they have for generations. The indigenous families were forced to adapt again. While they still do some fishing, hunting and gathering of local fruits where they can, they are also cultivating vegetable gardens and raising livestock. Some community members work in nearby towns, when there is one close by.

With support from Growing Hope Globally, a Week of Compassion partner through CWS/Church World Service, local cooperatives are supporting families as they pursue these new activities.

One part of this project's success includes beekeeping. Honey has been in family diets for generations, but raising bees is a relatively new practice that these partners are helping families pursue, teaching bee-raising, honey production and marketing.

The communities in Gran Chaco faced prolonged drought a few years ago, which took its toll on crops and pastures. Then a dengue outbreak and the coronavirus pandemic added extra challenges, as they did for so many around the world. The good news is that even as challenges persisted, beekeeping was a lifeline - new life and possibility really did **RISE UP ANEW** each day. Families sold honey to non-indigenous neighbors and earned vital income that they could use to meet their basic needs. Honey helps families add to their income and ultimately build resilience.

Giving to Week of Compassion is an extension of this partnership, and that generosity means program resources can be replenished and shared. What a remarkable and life-changing difference the hard work of a few bees - and their keepers - can make.