



Let Your Heart Rejoice

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.

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. Following last month's issue, we introduce more voices of sangha members around the world who are practicing this movement.



Boudarith Un (a.k.a. Dalit)
Rissho Kosei-kai of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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

“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.”



Mr. Un (far left) participates in support activities with fellow sangha members.



Rahul Kumar Jha
Rissho Kosei-kai of 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 fasci-

nated 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 Burger Cavenaghi
Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil

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

“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.”



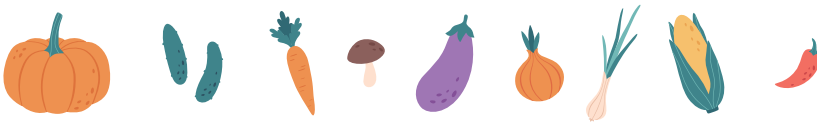
Viviane Maíra Conrado
Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil



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

“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.