



Steve Bell reflects on hunger and hope

Steve Bell is a singer/songwriter based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has produced twelve albums and has received two Juno awards. Together with his wife Nanci, he has become an active partner of Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Steve and Nanci recently traveled to Ethiopia to witness the work there.

"There is reason for hope." That's what struck singer/songwriter Steve Bell most in his recent trip to Ethiopia. "I didn't know what to expect," he said after he'd returned. "I've been to developing countries before, but never one with as much poverty as Ethiopia. I thought it might depress me, but I was pleasantly surprised at how hopeful it left me feeling."

"There are incredible things happening there," he continued. "We visited a place where a whole village has been transformed by a water diversion project. Access to water means that they now have enough food to eat, but the impact goes much beyond that. Their children are now attending school. There are new businesses appearing in the village. Their young people are learning new trades - building dams, digging ditches, and planting and harvesting gardens."

Steve and his wife Nanci were in Ethiopia this past January, visiting two projects funded by the Foodgrains Bank. The first project is in the Afar region, a lowlands area where traditionally nomadic people are being forced to settle down because of a reduction of accessible grazing land for their livestock. In that region, an organization called Support for Sustainable Development (which receives support through Foodgrains Bank member agency, Canadian Lutheran World Relief) works with the Afar people to build water diversion projects to irrigate the farmland so that crops can be grown.

At the second project, in the more mountainous region of South Gondar, people are paid by food-for-work to rehabilitate previously eroded farmland through terracing, check-dams (to prevent further erosion in gullies), and reforestation. This project receives Foodgrains Bank funding through a partnership with Christian Reformed World Relief Committee of Canada.

"Before I went, I didn't really understand how the Foodgrains Bank partnership worked," says Steve Bell. "But when you're on the ground, you realize what a beautiful system it is. The Canadians provide support and some guidance, but then they step aside and let the local people figure out the best solutions for their problems. Ethiopians don't want us to solve the problem of hunger for them - they just want us to help."

When Steve and Nanci returned from their trip, the question they were asked most frequently was "how has it changed you?" As Steve knew from past trips, it doesn't necessarily change you unless you decide to change. "I've seen poverty before, but each time I did I always found myself returning to the life I was accustomed to fairly quickly afterwards. This time it was different though. This time it feels like something finally clicked."

One of the most important messages he picked up from his travels in Ethiopia, Bell says, is that we as Canadians are intricately connected with people in Ethiopia. "The Bible talks a lot about how we treat our neighbours, but I don't know if I'd ever really internalized the fact that Ethiopians are my neighbours and the choices I make can impact them."

"Where it hit home the most was in the Afar Region," he continues. "Historically, this region was hit by drought every ten to twelve years. Now, because of global warming, the droughts have increased to every five to seven years. The pastoral lifestyles - following their cattle from one watering hole or grazing field to another - can no longer be sustained. The Afar people are being forced to change the source of their livelihoods. While their livestock was once their primary source of food and income, they now have to learn to plant and till and harvest."

Agronomist Bellachew Keyelew shows Steve the pepper crop on newly irrigated land



Canadian Foodgrains Bank

is a partnership of Canadian church-based agencies working to end hunger in developing countries by increasing and deepening the involvement of Canadians in efforts to end hunger; supporting partnerships and activities to reduce hunger on both an immediate and sustainable basis; and influencing changes in public policies necessary to end hunger.

Member Agencies

Adventist Development and Relief Agency
www.adra.ca

Canadian Baptist Ministries
www.cbmin.org

Canadian Lutheran World Relief
www.clwr.org

Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
www.cmacan.org

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee of Canada
www.crwrc.org

Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
www.emcc.ca

Mennonite Central Committee Canada
www.mcc.org

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries
www.ncmc.ca

Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
www.paoc.org

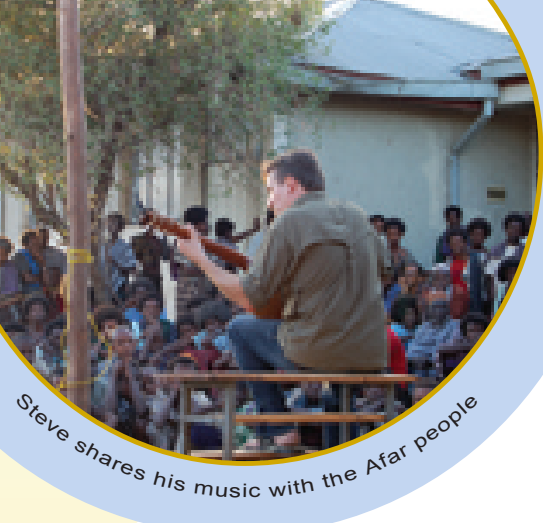
Presbyterian World Service & Development
www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/

The Salvation Army
www.salvationarmy.ca

United Church of Canada
www.united-church.ca

World Relief Canada
www.wrcanada.org

Note: Breaking Bread replaces Update as the biannual newsletter of Canadian Foodgrains Bank.



Steve shares his music with the Afar people

Kids along the way

Nanci Bell (Steve's wife) brought her mother and schoolteacher heart on her journey to Ethiopia. She could most commonly be seen surrounded by a crowd of children. These are some of her reflections.

"If there's one thing I've done differently," Bell said a few months after the trip, "it's to leave my car at home more often. I can live without it, if it means that I can help reduce the greenhouse gases that are destroying the livelihoods of my new friends in Ethiopia. If the Afar people have to learn to adapt to a new reality, the least I can do is learn to adapt too."

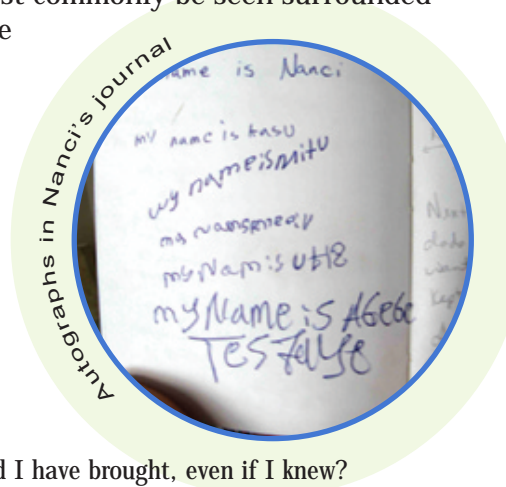
There are other things that he's considering as well. "Nanci and I have been taking a look at our lifestyles and wondering what we can change. Perhaps we can find ways to spend less and give more. Perhaps we can make more ethical purchasing choices."

"For awhile now," he continues, "I've been thinking about how I can incorporate greater spiritual discipline into my life. I think a regular fast of some kind might be a good way of committing myself to further contemplation on how I can be a part of ending hunger. I'll be working with the Foodgrains Bank on a new program where we'll be asking Canadians to join us in some deeper reflection on these issues. There will be more information coming out on this soon. It's going to be an exciting opportunity to strengthen our commitment."

A camera crew accompanied the Bells on their journey, and in the summer a dvd will be distributed to all churches affiliated with the Foodgrains Bank's member agencies. Interested individuals will have an opportunity to pick up a free copy at a Steve Bell concert or online at www.foodgrainsbank.ca or www.signpostmusic.com.

"After this journey," concludes Bell, "I feel pretty passionate about the work of the Foodgrains Bank. They're doing incredible work and I'm excited about partnering with them."

In the Fall, Steve Bell will begin a unique nationwide tour, playing with symphonies in major centres across Canada. While on tour, he will share stories of his Ethiopian journey, and promote the Foodgrains Bank whenever he can. "It is possible to end hunger in our lifetime," he says. "I'm committed to doing my part."



Autograph in Nanci's journal

"You, you, you!"
 they yell and run and wave
 all open hearts and faces
 not pleading but gently asking
 "Please, do you have a pen for me?"
 shy, in stilted English
 "I go to school. Pen, please? Pen?"
 and I am just bewildered
 the desire of the poor - a pen?
 coins are easier to carry - how many pens could I have brought, even if I knew?
 but I want to know more
 "Show me your school work. May I look in your scribbles?"
 pages of penciled work - Amharic, English, math, chemistry(!) and geography
 "I am from Canada - see it on your map? Yes! Good work! Stay in school!"
 I try to make eye contact with the girls in the group
 "My name is Nanci. What is your name?"
 Slowly and carefully, giggling, they try their English:
 "My name is Hailye Bele."
 "My name is Tew. Pen, please, miss?"
 "OK! This is my last pen. But you must write in my book. See? My name is Nanci.
 Now you."
 "My name is Kasu."
 "My name is Mitu."
 "My name is Abebe."
 Nice to meet you. Nice to see your beautiful country, your beautiful faces.
 "Pen? Please, miss, pen?"
 You, you, you!
 "Yes," I say emphatically.
 "YOU!"



School children gather around Nanci Bell

Green Revolution Revisited – Africa 2007

Forty years ago, the Rockefeller Foundation funded a project to develop new wheat and rice seeds that would, with the help of irrigation and chemical fertilizers, increase the production of food in places like northern India. This part of India was ripe for such a new approach - the broad plains of the Punjab were already irrigated and this area was large and uniform. The result was a rapid increase in food production in India that paved the way for ending food aid imports.

While it was a huge success nationally, it benefited mainly the northern Indian farmers who had access to irrigation. For the millions of small farmers elsewhere in India, although more food was available in the market, they were still poor and couldn't access it. That Green Revolution left them behind and today, increasingly rich India still holds the record for the largest number of hungry people - many of them these same small farmers.

This year the Rockefeller Foundation, together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, announced a new Green Revolution project, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). The rapid gains in food production in India in the 60s and 70s didn't escape the notice of African farmers and researchers forty years ago. The earlier approach didn't work in the highly variable and largely non-irrigated fields of Africa. Now it is to be tried again.

Farmers in Africa have been trying themselves to wrest enough food from the soils of Africa to support their growing population. With limited financial resources, however, and not enough relevant research on how to enrich their soils without needing to buy fertilizer from the market, their yields have stagnated or dropped. They need to produce more food. The Rockefeller and Gates Foundation, encouraged by the global fertilizer manufacturers, have one solution, primarily based on distributing hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers.

In Africa, however, many researchers and farm organizations are less sure about this "golden bullet" solution. They point to the places where local farmers, working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or agricultural researchers, have made dramatic increases in food production using very simple methods to improve the health of their soils. They worry that tying African agriculture to oil-based fertilizers may be a quick way to a long term problem.

What is certain is that there is a 'fork in the road' for African agriculture. The Foodgrains Bank is committed to listening to African farmers to see what kind of support will help them increase their own food production. We have compiled research and reports from many of our local partners in Africa and from researchers worldwide. Our first report on the subject is now available on our website. (See the link on the front page at www.foodgrainsbank.ca) We will continue to work with small-scale farmers in Africa to ensure that whatever 'green revolution' they choose, it will be one that brings them a more food secure future.

By Stu Clark, Senior Policy Advisor

Building strength in Africa

Fidelis Wainana wishes that people from rich and powerful nations would stop trying to fix Africa. "What we're asking for," she says, "is for people to listen to us, not try to fix us."

Wainana, a native-born Kenyan, was recently awarded the African Green Revolution Yara Prize for her work with Maseno Inter-Christian Child Self Help Group. She visited Canada as a guest of Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Micah Challenge.

"North Americans shouldn't assume that their solutions will work for African farmers," she said while in Winnipeg, attending a deliberative dialogue where people had gathered to talk about the Green Revolution for Africa. "People are talking about the need to increase soil fertility, but in many parts of Africa, fertility is not the issue."

Wainana works with families led by widows or orphans to help enable them to grow their own food in a sustainable way. She insists that development work must be rooted in relationships and community. Without relying on high-cost inputs such as chemical fertilizers, her organization has helped families harvest 10 bags of maize from the same land that previously produced only one bag. Sometimes, she says, it's just a matter of teaching them how to use the resources they already have, like manure from their livestock.

By building relationships with people, helping them to recognize their own abilities, and encouraging the sharing of knowledge among the community, Wainana's organization has been instrumental in eradicating malnutrition and increasing the average income in over 20 villages in Kenya's Kisumu-Maseno region. "It's important to see the link between spirituality, community, and farming practices," says Wainana. "My faith has a significant impact on my work and in the work of our organization. We encourage people to see their own strengths and recognize the gifts God has given them and their community. Many times, they already have all the resources they need."

At the end of her visit to Canada, Wainana had the opportunity to address the Federal Government's Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. In her address, she urged the Canadian government to ensure that any increase to aid for agriculture should get into the hands of the grassroots communities. "Too much money has been wasted in activities that don't reach the grassroots," she said. "We appreciate the support of Canadians, but we want you to walk alongside us and not try to do it for us. Please remember to listen to the voices at the grassroots."



Fidelis Wainana visits Canada

Fight Hunger: Walk the World May 13, 2007

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is asking for your support for an initiative called Fight Hunger: Walk the World. This annual event was launched by WFP last year as a way to help achieve the first United Nations Millennium Development goal: Reducing by half the number of hungry people in the world by 2015.

Last May, 773,000 people walked in 118 countries and 420 locations world wide in support of ending child hunger. With hundreds of hours of televised news coverage and thousands of stories in the print media world wide, the unnecessary suffering of children was made real for a world audience too often uninformed about the desperate plight of too many people around the globe.

What can I do?

WFP is encouraging those wishing to step in and Fight Hunger to: Walk the World by organizing your own walk in your city or town, pledging money to a participant such as the Foodgrains Bank, or by donating money through www.fighthunger.org.

Go to <http://www.fighthunger.org/en/wtw07/ca> for information about Walk the World events in Canada or to get all the help you need to start your own Walk.

With your help the World Food Programme believes that Fight Hunger: Walk the World will be the biggest humanitarian event on earth.

Of goats and sewing machines

Recollections of a Food Study Tour, by Betty-Anne Hildebrand

Wow, what an experience!!

My husband and I joined eight others on a Foodgrains Bank tour to Bangladesh and India just a few short weeks ago. The gratitude of the recipients of the grain and monetary gifts was overwhelming. To see how these people's lives have been changed is encouraging to say the least.

Just one short story.

Beauty, through her women's group, learned how to save money and took out a loan from the group's savings to buy a goat. The goat had 4 kids. She kept one and sold the rest. With the money she was able to repay the loan and have some to spare. She recently took out a second loan to buy a sewing machine so she can sew for others and thus help support her family. Had she taken out the first loan from the local landlord/money lender, her interest rate would have made it impossible for her to repay it so quickly, if ever.

The undeserved honour given to us, the graciousness, the hospitality of those who have so little, I pray I remember the rest of my life.

I think all of us would say it was a trip well worth taking.



END HUNGER 



Building soil fertility in Malawi

Stocker Nyirenda is defying the odds in Northern Malawi. On four acres of land he and his family grow enough peanuts, soybeans, corn, sorghum and sweet potatoes to earn a pretty good livelihood. They're not rich by Canadian standards, but this family of six eats well from the farm's bounty and there is enough food left over to sell for other household needs like school fees and medicine. The family even has a bank account in the form of eight pigs that can be sold at the market when cash is needed. Not bad when you consider that most of Stocker's neighbors struggle with periodic hunger because they can't make ends meet on their farms. This is because soils in the area are depleted to the point where synthetic fertilizer has become an absolute must for crop production. Tragically, fertilizer prices have risen to the point where farmers can no longer afford it. Without fertilizer, yields are poor and people go hungry.

So what's Stocker's secret? Well, it's actually no secret at all. Four years ago Stocker took the agricultural advice of a Foodgrains Bank funded local development organization called the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). CCAP was encouraging farmers to try various agricultural techniques that would rebuild the depleted soil and reduce dependencies on synthetic fertilizer. These techniques include crop rotations with nitrogen fixing plants like peanuts and soybeans and the use of animal manure in place of synthetic fertilizer. The results on Stocker's farm are stunning. He still uses some synthetic fertilizer on his corn, but otherwise he is free of that input cost and his crops are thriving. For its part, CCAP continues to spread the good news of crop rotation. Together with participating farmers like Stocker, they have formed "Farmer Research Teams". These teams meet monthly to promote crop rotation and to talk about other bright ideas on their farms. Stocker is proud of his accomplishments, as well he should be.



ENDING HUNGER and a Federal Election

Election time is a great time to raise questions about Canada's role in ending hunger. If you are interested in our special 'election-time'

Ending Hunger information sheet, send your email address to foodjustice@foodgrainsbank.ca.

Shortly after the next election is announced we will send you some helpful information.

Traveling the Food Justice Highway

A Youth Discovery Tour Reflection
by Mya Wheeler

Recently, I traveled to the delightful country of Honduras with a group of nine young women from across Canada on the Youth Food Discovery Tour. It was a whirlwind, two week adventure as we travelled the "food justice highway" to see first hand how we as Canadians are connected to food justice issues in Honduras and how our faith plays a role in our response.

The learning was wonderful but it was also difficult and often times an overload of information that will take me the next couple of months to sort out. Since I cannot summarize all my learning as I begin to process everything, I am going to share a couple of the incredible voices we discovered at every turn of our trip.

Denis Mata, of the Lopez neighborhood in San Pedro Sula, has worked with gang violence since he was a young man and now his family lives there continuing to be a support and encouragement for "at risk" youth in the neighbourhood. He is a gentle thoughtful man who genuinely loves those he works with, having sacrificed much because he believes in the people no one else trusts.

Don Ramon of Santa Barbara and Doña Maria of Buena Vista are two other inspirations. They live in the coffee growing mountains near the border of Guatemala working to promote diversified organic options and eco-tourism that profits local people instead of tourist companies and the government.

Marina, working as the community leader through Christian Reform World Relief Committee in the island of La Tigre (also called Amapala) in the south of Honduras, welcomed us into her agriculturally self-sustaining retreat center and local clinic. Her work has been to elevate living standards in this impoverished island with a special emphasis on the children.

Honduras, just like any country, has its challenges and deep sorrows but there are strong brilliant beacons of light and I am both hopeful and blown away by the love and perseverance found there.



Don Ramon in Honduras

From the desk of the
Executive Director

Jim Cornelius



Over 25 years ago farmers began organizing grain drives as a hands-on and tangible way in which they could support those who are hungry around the world. In later years, growing projects emerged to collectively grow crops for donation to the Foodgrains Bank. These projects again provided an opportunity for farmers to work together. They also provided an opportunity for many others to participate in these hands-on efforts, including urban churches. Other community projects have been developed over the years (such as the Osler auction or the Fiddlers on the Trent festival) which also provide opportunity for widespread participation.

At the same time, there have been thousands of faithful people who have supported the work of the Foodgrains Bank through their direct personal contributions. We very much appreciate and want to find ways to better support, encourage and involve these donors. In the next number of months, we will be launching a new program designed to increase and deepen the participation of a great variety of people in efforts to end hunger. The program will provide an opportunity to make a financial contribution, to take other practical steps to help end hunger, and to deepen one's commitment to this task.

We deeply appreciate that singer/songwriter Steve Bell and his wife Nanci are working with us in the development of this program. Keep your eyes open for its launch later in the year.

One country, different needs

A number of our member agencies are often at work in the same country, but that doesn't mean they're responding to the same disaster or food need. Often, food emergencies are localized, so it is not uncommon that one country struggles with a variety of food needs. Let me share an example:

Sudan

In the much publicised war-torn Darfur region, in western Sudan, the resources of communities have been overwhelmed by the enormous influx of refugees who have been forced to leave their homes in areas where there has been fighting. The increase in population in these communities stretches water sources to beyond their limits and makes for a dangerous lack of latrines and sanitation facilities. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is part of a coalition of organizations who assist these communities by providing supplemental food, as well as upgrading water and sanitation systems in order to accommodate this population increase and prevent the outbreak of deadly epidemics.

At the same time in southern Darfur, World Relief Canada through Tearfund, is involved in a variety of activities including feeding programs, latrine construction and rehabilitation of water points. These are combined with the promotion of water and sanitation practices and AIDS education.

The Aweil region in Southern Sudan is struggling to recover from the years of drought and war that it experienced. World Relief Canada is working through Tearfund to treat and prevent child malnutrition that has resulted in the region. They are training health workers and community leaders to better identify malnourished children and refer them more quickly to central treatment centres where trained medical workers can treat them and their mothers. Meanwhile, community workers provide seeds and training to about 1,500 model farmers who will be developing demonstration gardens to encourage local people to grow a wider variety of vegetables.

Simultaneously, in the Nuba mountain region in the center of Sudan, the effects of war and several years of severe drought has severely eroded people's ability to produce enough food for themselves. Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada, through the Fellowship for African Relief, works in 37 villages supporting school feeding programs to encourage children to return to school. They also assist families to improve their agricultural production by providing seed, tools, and agricultural training. In addition, communities receive help to rebuild roads, water catchments and other community infrastructure to gain more reliable access to food.

In addition to these programs, we shipped 4,000 metric tonnes of Canadian wheat to support school feeding programs and provide emergency rations to people in Sudan who are hungry.

by Ary Vreeken, International Program Director

Food and Seed Supplied from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007

<i>Country</i>	<i>Tonnes</i>	<i>Commodities</i>
Bangladesh	1,373	Rice, food baskets
Burundi	1,098	Maize, oil, lentils, seed
Ethiopia	1,636	Wheat, sorghum, oil
India	154	Rice, wheat flour, oil, lentils, vegetables
Kenya	4,834	Maize, beans, peas, oil, biscuits, unimix, corn/soy blend
Liberia	175	Oil, lentils
Malawi	364	Maize, oil, unimix, seed
Mongolia	48	Rice, oil, wheat flour, seed
Nicaragua	305	Rice, maize, wheat flour, oil, seed
Pakistan	2,226	Rice, peas, seed
Somalia	97	Maize, oil, beans, seed
Sudan	4,279	Wheat, oil, seed, beans, sorghum
Tanzania	999	Maize, beans, seed
Zambia	1,458	Maize, beans, oil, corn/soy blend
Zimbabwe	1,892	Maize, beans, oil, corn/soy blend
<i>Total</i>	<i>20,938</i>	

Food Security and Nutrition Projects

<i>Country</i>	<i>\$Total</i>	<i>Program</i>
Bangladesh	311,580	Food security & nutrition
Ethiopia	771,974	Food security
India	12,267	Food security
Kenya	1,365,422	Food security & nutrition
Liberia	1,093,707	Food security & nutrition
Malawi	221,030	Food security & nutrition
Mongolia	95,000	Food security
Nicaragua	77,160	Food security & nutrition
Palestine	46,844	Food security
Sudan	3,032,536	Food security
Zimbabwe	312,160	Food security
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$7,339,680</i>	

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Donations to the Foodgrains Bank can be made online at www.foodgrainsbank.ca, or by calling 1-800-665-0377. Resources such as brochures, bulletin covers or inserts, posters and videos are available through head office or your regional coordinator.

*Breaking Bread is going electronic

If you would like to receive future copies of Breaking Bread in your email instead of in your mailbox, visit the "What's New" section of our website and fill in the newsletter registration form.