

Breaking Bread

Spring 2012 Newsletter

Canadian
Foodgrains
Bank
A Christian Response
to Hunger

END HUNGER

Photo: Carl Neustaedter



Spring Appeal: Find your envelope inside.

Food Distributions Save Lives and Livelihoods

At the Foodgrains Bank our goal is to end hunger. While working towards this, we often end up saving lives—and livelihoods.

That was the case for Medina, who lives in Shashemene, Ethiopia. The widow and mother of two owns a quarter acre of land, which she uses to support herself and her children. But when the rains failed last year, she had no crop to harvest.

She survived for a while with food from the government and her parents. Then someone in her village offered to give her food in exchange for her land. It was tempting—the food would solve her immediate problems. But if she let go of her land, how would she provide for her family in the future?

Fortunately, she didn't have to make that tough choice. Right about that time she was offered food assistance by a project supported by the Foodgrains Bank through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. Not only did the food ensure Medina and her family could eat now—it also helps her keep her land so she can provide for herself in the future.

Helping farmers like Medina stay on their land is one way the Foodgrains Bank is responding to needs arising from the drought in East Africa. Since April 2011 we have approved \$15.6 million for projects in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia; another \$3.1 million of assistance is in the works.

Although East Africa is no longer in the news, people in that region continue to need assistance. "Drought continues to put people at risk in those countries," says Grant Hillier, who directs International Programs at the Foodgrains Bank.

Continued on next page...



“In East Africa, the situation is predicted to be challenging again this year.”

It is estimated that about 9.5 million people will need assistance in East Africa this year.

“Those countries aren’t getting media attention anymore, but we are still working with our members to help people who continue to experience the effects of drought,” says Hillier.

At the same time, drought is also gripping the Sahel, a sub-Saharan region that stretches across Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. As many as 14 million people face severe food shortages due to late and erratic rains that have crippled harvests. High food prices make it even more challenging.

“We are working with our members to also respond to the needs there,” Hillier says, noting that the Foodgrains Bank has already approved \$4.5 million of aid, with additional assistance in the planning stages.

One thing that is very much on Hillier’s mind is making sure the Foodgrains Bank and its members respond quickly to the needs in the Sahel.

“The world waited too long to respond to East Africa last year,” he says, drawing attention to a report by Oxfam and Save Children which was critical of the length of time it took western nations, and many aid groups, to send aid to people in that region.

“We want to make sure we give people the help they need to deal with the drought, not just respond when it’s a full-blown emergency,” he adds.

The Foodgrains Bank has launched a Sahel and East Africa Appeal to provide assistance to people in those regions facing the threat of hunger. You can use the enclosed envelope to make a donation, or visit www.foodgrainsbank.ca.

—**John Longhurst**, *Director, Resources and Public Engagement*



Photo: Les Dumbord — Ethiopia

Photo: Les Dumbord — Ethiopia

Photo: Don Cayo

Photo: Carl Neustaedter

Church Closes Doors, But Legacy Lives On

South Gower Baptist Church donates \$100,000 to Canadian Foodgrains Bank

For Murray Bennett, who grew up attending South Gower Baptist Church in Kemptonville, Ontario, seeing his church close last year was extremely difficult.

“I have been involved at the church since I was a little boy,” he says. “I was baptized there. But it fell upon hard times and eventually closed.”

For Bennett, there’s a silver lining in the church’s closing; money raised through the sale of the building will be used to help people in the developing world.

In January the church’s trustees sent a cheque for \$100,000—the vast majority of the proceeds from the sale—to Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Bennett, who has been donating grain from his own farm to the Foodgrains Bank since 1994, sees the donation as a way to help “people who are really in need.”

He saw those needs first-hand several years ago, while on a Foodgrains Bank Food Study Tour to Ethiopia. Since then he says he has been encouraging other Canadians to get involved in efforts to end global hunger.

As for the church, his sadness at its closing is tinged with gratitude for how its legacy will continue.

“My dad and mother worked so hard there,” he says of the church, which traces its history back to 1841. “I have fond memories of the place. But through the donation, the good works of the church will live on.”



South Gower Baptist Church, circa 1940.

Neil Hunter, a Baptist Minister and accountant, worked with Bennett to sell the church and distribute the proceeds from the sale.

“Selling the church was a last resort, but it will go on to do some good,” he says. “The money will be used to feed a lot of people.”

While sorry that the church has closed, the Foodgrains Bank is grateful for the donation says John

Longhurst, who directs communications and fundraising for the organization.

“The gift is a wonderful tribute to the over 180 years of history of the church,” he says. “The church will live on in the lives of people who receive food and other assistance in the developing world.”

According to *The Centennial History of the South Gower Baptist Church, 1841-1941*, the South Gower Baptist Church is one of the oldest churches in the Grenville County area, located south of Ottawa. Congregants built the first church, a wood frame building, in 1843. The present brick structure was constructed in 1886.

—Emily Cain, *Communications Coordinator*





Jim Cornelius stands with Oych Yaya, a farmer who is now growing two crops a year thanks to a water diversion project run by the Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia.

From the desk of the Executive Director

Making Progress in Reducing Hunger and Extreme Poverty

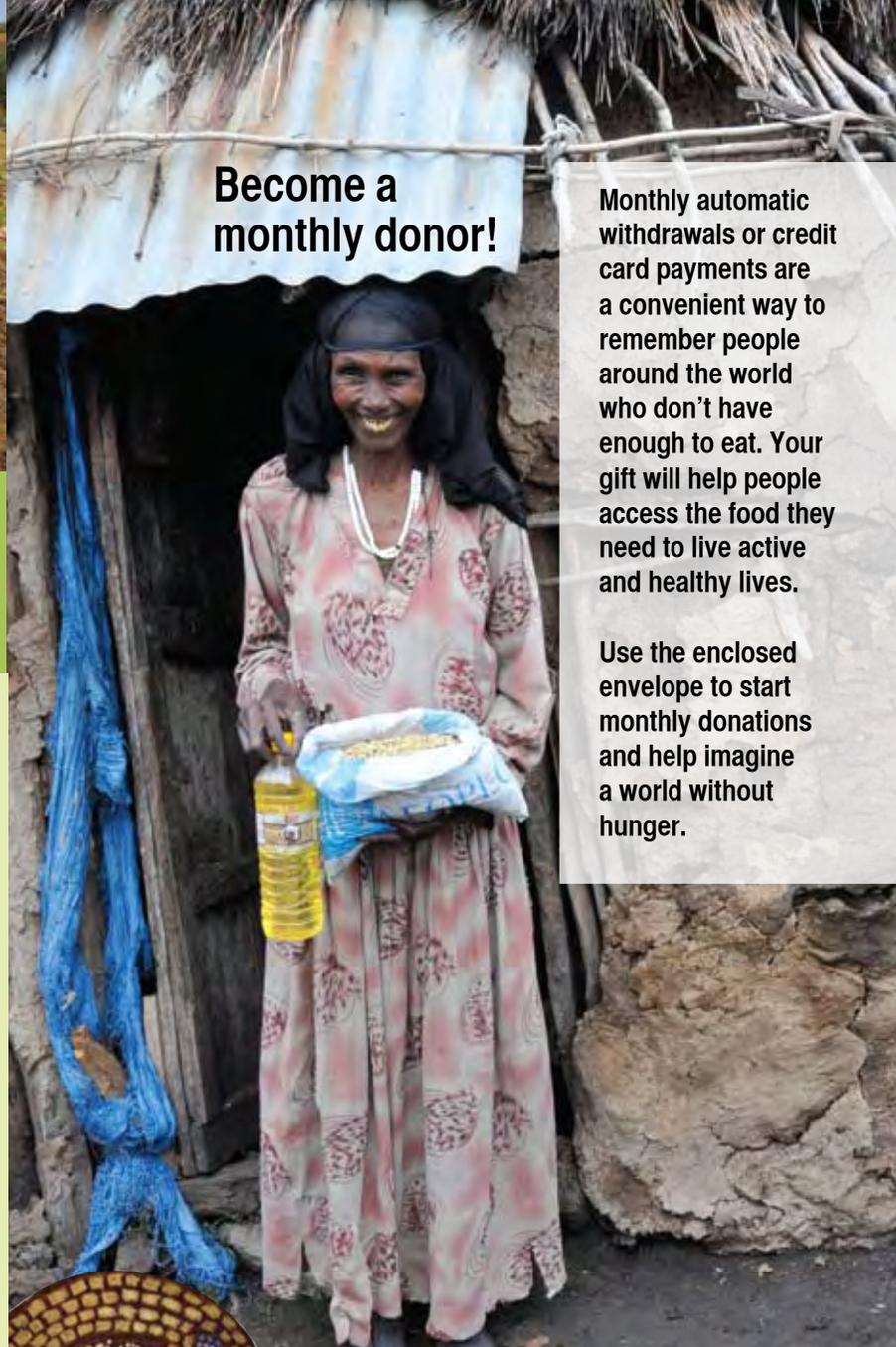
As drought conditions and hunger worsen in the Sahel region of Africa, and as we continue to respond to the food crisis in East Africa that is not yet over, people are asking the question: Are we losing the fight against hunger and extreme poverty? After all, these crises seem to be happening more frequently, the numbers of people affected are in the millions, and the increase in natural disasters and greater frequency of drought in some regions is troubling. These disturbing trends occupy a lot of our thinking and program responses.

At the same time, we are seeing progress in reducing hunger and extreme poverty. Globally, we are not losing the fight. The World Bank recently released a report estimating that while 1.3 billion people are still living in extreme poverty (22% of people in developing countries), this number has fallen from 1.9 billion in 1981 (52% of people in developing countries at that time). While most progress has been made in East Asia, a region that only a few decades ago had the highest rates of extreme poverty in the world, there is significant progress in other regions as well.

With over one billion people still suffering from extreme poverty, our work is not done. This level of poverty is intolerable. Yet, we are encouraged by the progress that has been made. I have recently been sharing the story of Maria Djohane, a farmer in Mozambique. As a result of support from the Foodgrains Bank, her past harvest was the best she's ever had, and she is able to say "I do not have hunger."

With your help, many more people like her can say the same thing.

—Jim Cornelius, Executive Director



Become a monthly donor!

Monthly automatic withdrawals or credit card payments are a convenient way to remember people around the world who don't have enough to eat. Your gift will help people access the food they need to live active and healthy lives.

Use the enclosed envelope to start monthly donations and help imagine a world without hunger.



Worship Resources

At the Foodgrains Bank, we believe that people are created in the image of God and that no person should go hungry. Unfortunately, 925 million people do not have enough food to live healthy and active lives. As Christians, one way we can respond to hunger is with prayer.

Visit our website for prayers, litanies, songs, and other worship materials to help you and your faith community remember those who are hungry. Check back often as a new scripture-based prayer is posted every week.

Visit www.foodgrainsbank.ca and click on 'Resources'.

A Heart for Sustainable Farming in Haiti

In November 2011, a group of Canadians travelled to Haiti to learn about food issues and visit Foodgrains Bank-supported projects in that country. Brenda Leenders, a Public Health Nutritionist from Truro, Nova Scotia, shares about her experience.

A week after the earthquake struck Haiti, my husband was called to transport emergency aid into Port au Prince. Haiti grabbed a hold of his heart.

Then Haiti called out to me.

While helping the Canadian Foodgrains Bank Maritime Regional Coordinators with a local Food Justice Camp, I realized that I needed to learn more about how the organization works. I figured that if 15 churches can agree, and the Canadian government can agree with them, then God must be in it. And I wanted to be a part of it too. I joined the Haiti Food Study Tour.

I was afraid though. The Haiti that I heard about was filtered through North American eyes and surrounded in words like disaster, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, tent cities, and deforestation.

This is not the Haiti that I met. What a privilege to learn about Haiti from Haitians! The Haiti I experienced was full of strong voices calling for a return to self-sufficiency.

Harry Nicolas, who founded a local food movement (with support from Mennonite Central Committee) that has hit mainstream culture in Haiti, was one of these voices. He told us, “We do not need food aid. Food aid has undermined our peasant farmers.”

According to Nicolas, Haiti was mostly self-sufficient in food production until the mid-1980s.



“We must stop holding out our hand to foreigners, and turn back to our own land,” he said.

This message was echoed by the Haitian agricultural experts, engineers, and peasant farmers we met. These groups believe that with the necessary investment, Haiti could again produce 80 percent of its own food.

Some of that investment is what we saw when we visited a food security project lead by ADRA Haiti. It was inspiring to travel to the green countryside, where we stayed with families participating in the project and ate food with our hosts that was harvested from their labours and shared a vision for sustainable farming. I learned a lesson in hospitality and humility by accepting the one bed in their home.

The project is helping communities grow more of their own food through improved agricultural techniques. The aim is to improve soil and seed quality so that these farmers can provide a sustainable source of food in the future.

I pray for Haiti regularly—for the incredibly resilient people of that country. My prayer is that their voices speaking up for their own future will be heard by God. And that the rest of the world will also hear, and respect, their call.

—Brenda Leenders, *Food Study Tour Participant*

Millien Tenais, a project participant and facilitator in ADRA's food security project in Anous, near Petit Goave, Haiti, tends to his pepper plants in a nursery he established on his land. Peppers are one of the new vegetables he is learning to grow through his involvement in the project.





Photo: Les Dunford



Turning Water into Food

Irrigation systems open up new land in Ethiopia's Afar Region

Ethiopia's Afar region, located in the north-eastern part of the country, is dry and dusty most of the year.

During the short rainy season there's lots of water, but most of it rushes down from the nearby mountains and quickly passes through the area.

When Ethiopian water engineer Ato Gebreyes saw this phenomenon, he also saw an opportunity. He knew that if he could capture and divert the water that ran through the area, he could help agro-pastoralists access the water needed to irrigate crops.

And that is exactly what he has been doing for the last eight years.

Ato Gebreyes went on to found Support for Sustainable Development (SSD), an organization supported by Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the Foodgrains Bank. To date, he has helped create three fully functioning irrigation systems that have opened up hundred of hectares of land for agriculture.

In addition, two other irrigation systems are currently being built, and another system is in the initial planning stages.

Building the System

Making the irrigation systems a reality is a multi-step process, says Vera Isaak, a Program Officer at Canadian Foodgrains Bank who has been providing support for the project.

"When a suitable location is found, it starts with an environmental assessment," she says. "Then the river is blocked and water is diverted into a canal system using control gates."

Side canals are next, she adds, noting that a special grass is planted on their banks to prevent erosion—as a bonus, it can also be used for animal feed. When completed, each system opens up to 400 hectares of new agricultural land.

After completion, those with the greatest needs are identified by the community. "They receive small plots of land that are fed with water from the irrigation system," says Isaak.

Building an irrigation system is a huge community undertaking, with people providing the labour to build the canals. Workers—who are identified as needing access to food—are paid for their labour with food, earning six kilograms of wheat for every day of work.

"People report that the food they receive is really helping them through tough times," says Isaak, noting that it has been particularly helpful for female-headed households who might not be able to feed their families otherwise.

"The benefits of the projects are twofold—both helping people with immediate food needs and addressing longer-term needs," she adds.

From Pastoralists to Agro-Pastoralists

Traditionally, the people who are benefiting from the irrigation projects are pastoralists who rely on herding animals for their livelihood. But they have been finding it harder to provide enough food for their families in recent years—as families and herds get bigger, and as drought and disease affect the area, fodder for animals has become scarce, making it difficult for people to make a living.



Photo: Les Durnford



Photo: Les Durnford



Photo: Carl Neustaedler

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church-based agencies working to end global hunger by supporting international programs to meet immediate food needs, reduce malnutrition, and achieve sustainable food security; influencing improvements in national and international policies that contribute to ending global hunger; and increasing and deepening the engagement of Canadians to end global hunger.

While food-for-work provides for immediate needs, the aim of the project is really to provide a sustainable source of food for the future, says Isaak.

“With a reliable water source from the irrigation systems they are building, these communities can make the transition to agro-pastoralism and diversify their sources of food,” she says.

While livestock remains an important part of their livelihoods, the communities are now also able to grow cereal crops and vegetables.

According to Isaak, the benefits of the project go beyond building the irrigation structures. “SSD sees the community as a whole and is working to address health concerns, and the need for education,” she says.

The most recently completed systems are in Amuli and Abakebara, where hundreds of people recently gathered to celebrate the completion of a new irrigation system.

“SSD will continue to encourage the participants, but now the community holds the responsibility to run with it,” says Isaak.

—**Emily Cain**, *Communications Coordinator*

Member Agencies

ADRA Canada (Adventist Development and Relief Agency Canada) • www.adra.ca

Canadian Baptist Ministries • www.cbmin.org

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace • www.dev.org

Canadian Lutheran World Relief • www.clwr.org

Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
www.cmacan.org

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
www.cwrc.org

Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
www.erdo.ca

Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
www.emcc.ca

Mennonite Central Committee Canada
www.mcc.org

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Canada
www.ncmc.ca

Presbyterian World Service & Development
www.presbyterian.ca

Primate's World Relief & Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada)
www.pwrdf.org

The Salvation Army • www.salvationarmy.ca

The United Church of Canada
www.united-church.ca

World Relief Canada • www.wrcanada.org

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Photo: Don Cayo



Photo: Les Durnford

Two girls from Ethiopia's Afar region celebrate the completion of an irrigation system in their community that has opened up 400 hectares of land that is now growing cereal crops and vegetables.



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We welcome your donations in the enclosed envelope, online at www.foodgrainsbank.ca, or by calling 1.800.665.0377.

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