

# CULTIVATING HOPE

A bi-annual review of CRWRC–CFGB programs

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## Model Farms Lead To More Food In Nicaragua

By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg



Jose Lino Elik has always struggled to provide food for his family. Residing in the community of Yahbra Tangi in the North Atlantic region of Nicaragua, Jose and his family live off of the corn, rice, and yucca that they cultivate on their small plot of land located an hour's walk from their home. Yet, as with most in his community, these food supplies are not always reliable, nor are they enough to support Jose, his wife, and their nine children for the whole year.

Jose is not alone. When CRWRC evaluated its work in Nicaragua in June 2009, it found that 30% of the population in this region of Nicaragua had four or more months during which they experienced food shortages in 2008. Flooding and erratic weather patterns further exacerbated the already worrisome level of food insecurity in these communities.

In an effort to respond to this need, CRWRC began a three-year food security project in October 2009

*Through a CFGB funded CRWRC program, farmers are learning new techniques and trying out new crops to increase their harvests and have a reliable source of food for their families.*

together with its local partner, Acción Médica Cristiana. This \$1.2 million Canadian Foodgrains Bank project was supported in large part by matching funds of the Canadian government, which will provide \$956,115, with CRWRC funds, CFGB general funds, and other CFGB member contributions covering the remaining expenses.

A key aspect of this initiative was the establishment of a network of six community-based agriculture technology transfer centres. Each centre is intended to be a catalyst for introducing improved and non-traditional agricultural crops and practices to farmers in the region. To make it work, each centre identified local farmers and recruited them to be "model farmers". These farmers commit to learn the new techniques, replicate them on their own land,



*The mountainous terrain of Nicaragua, combined with erratic weather patterns, makes farming difficult.*

and share their knowledge with 40 associate farmers in their communities.

Jose was invited as one of 176 farmers to participate during the first year of the program and, in a short time, his work paid off.

“Jose has attended all the trainings provided by the centre and enthusiastically learned how to implement new techniques,” said CRWRC’s Mark VanderWees. “His work habits have changed radically, and he has even built a new house in his field so that he can be closer to his work. This year he has diversified his crops to include sugar cane, plantain, avocado, pigibae, cacao, coffee, pear, pilipita, and malanga. Along with this, he is also raising chickens and sheep.”

This past year, Jose’s crop was only minimally affected by poor weather conditions and he was able to feed his family throughout the whole year. Not only has this benefitted the Elik family but, as part of the program, Jose has also been sharing

what he has learned with others in his community. Many of them have been especially interested in Jose’s use of fertilizer beans as a means of improving the quality of the soil.

“Jose and his family are very happy to be part of this program and continue to work to improve their

farm management,” concluded VanderWees. “He has plans to keep expanding his farm, as he has time, to implement more of the new techniques that he has learned from the centre.”

In this seemingly small way, CRWRC and CFGB are not just helping farmers grow enough food to feed their families, they are also cultivating hope for the future.

## *Caring for Children in Ethiopia*

*By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg*

Bereket looks like a typical nine-year-old Ethiopian boy, his eyes laughing with a touch of mischief. Looking at him now, one might never have guessed the suffering he has already endured in his short life. When Bereket was four his mother died, and soon after he became gravely ill. Despite receiving some medical treatment at a local health clinic, his health did not improve. The staff there urged Bereket’s father to take him to the regional hospital, but the family could not afford it. Soon Bereket became bedridden and was unable to go to school. Hope for his future was lost.

Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa and home to the largest population of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in the world. According to estimates from the Ethiopian government, there are about 15 million Ethiopian

orphans and vulnerable children who desperately need support. 855,000 of these children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Through a project supported by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, CRWRC is working with Food for the Hungry/Ethiopia (FHE) to provide

*Canadian Foodgrains Bank support for food rations is a vital component of this project.*





*For the past three years, CRWRC and Food for the Hungry/Ethiopia have been providing food and other support to 3,000 children and their care-givers in Ethiopia.*

support to 3,000 of these children. For the past three years, the children and their caregivers have received food, medical care, psychosocial services, and basic education through this project. For a child like Bereket, this has made the difference between life and death, between despair and hope.

When Bereket joined the program the project and health centre staff discussed his case and, with his father's consent, quickly tested him for HIV. When Bereket's test came back positive, he became eligible for anti-retro-viral therapy through the project and his health began to improve quickly. Within weeks he was feeling so much better that he was able to go back to school.

"Before last year, I kept getting sick and I could not pursue my education very well," said Bereket. "But after I got treatment with the support of the project staff, my health improved and as a result I started to go to school regularly. This year my school performance has dramatically improved and I stood first in my

class. This is because of all the support I am getting from the project. I am getting food on time. I don't have to worry about my education and health care costs. The project also assigned someone to tutor me at home. I am in good hands. My health is restored and I have a dream which I can attain. I want to be a doctor."

Like adequate medical attention, food is often not sufficient in the homes of Ethiopia's urban poor. Children often have to stay home from school and find work in order to earn money to buy food. Worse still, children are forced to beg, which puts them at the risk of being exploited. This is especially true for children who have lost one or both parents.

"I was in constant worry about my next meal," confided one young girl who now benefits from the program. I also felt guilty for being a burden to my mother and aggravating her suffering, and the worry caused me to fall asleep during class hours, only to end up with poor school performance which forced me to drop out of school. Now, thanks to the project, I am getting my monthly ration and share it with my mother."

As a result of a monthly ration of 15kg wheat or corn, 0.5kg of oil and 1.5kg of peas or beans, this little girl — along with the 2,999 other children benefiting from the project — has enough to eat every day. This is

especially important given the high rates of HIV among this population, since good nutrition is a crucial component to maintaining good health while living with the disease.

She is also able to attend school regularly. That's because the CRWRC/FHE program also provides the children with school supplies and uniforms, tuition fees and volunteer tutors.

With the completion of the three-year project, a second phase has been approved by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to build on the success of this project in the lives of young children and their families in Ethiopia.

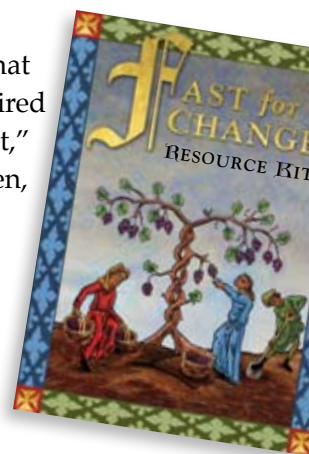
A slideshow presentation about CRWRC's CFGB-supported project in Ethiopia is available online. Visit [www.crwrc.org/idr](http://www.crwrc.org/idr) and click on "Resources."

## *Fast for Change*

*By Stephanie Tombari*

In North America, we often celebrate with food. But in a hungry world, maybe it's time to give our food some thought.

"We don't believe that humans are hard-wired to destroy the planet," says James Kornelsen, Public Engagement Coordinator with Canadian Foodgrains Bank. "With Fast for



Change we are inviting people in Canada to rethink some of our interactions with food and make small but significant changes.”

Fast for Change is CFGB’s annual campaign to raise awareness and financial support for people living with hunger around the world. The campaign reaches nearly 20,000 churches through its 15 church-based member organizations, including CRWRC.

Fast for Change invites Christians to look deeper at their relationship with food, the earth, their communities, and God. Christians in countries like Canada and the United States, says Kornelsen, need to recognize how our choices can impact people living in less affluent countries of the Global South. “The short version is that some of these root causes are linked with the lives we live in the developed world, where we take things for granted, like cheap food that comes from far away, or perhaps the consumption of goods that have an environmental impact somewhere on the planet. So, we’ve tried to challenge Christians to fast, pray, and act.”

“This campaign goes beyond the CRC or any other denomination to tie the various churches of Canada together,” says CRWRC Director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo. “As a Christian community, we can respond to hunger in a greater way than if we were to do it alone.”

The Fast for Change campaign features a variety of support materials, including teaching

activities, videos, music, posters, and other resources. A new 2011 reflection booklet, *7 Days to Tend the Earth*, features a daily prayer and small action steps to help fight

hunger. To join others in this effort, register at [www.fastforchange.ca](http://www.fastforchange.ca) and request free materials for yourself, your family, or your church.

## *Canadian Foodgrains Bank At A Glance*

- Established in 1983, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a Canadian-based Christian organization that helps provide food and development assistance to people in need on behalf of its members.
- CRWRC is one of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies that own CFGB, pooling their resources—both human and financial—and working collaboratively to develop a Christian response to hunger. These member organizations are:
  - ADRA Canada (Adventist Development & Relief Agency)
  - Canadian Baptist Ministries
  - Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace
  - Canadian Lutheran World Relief
  - Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada
  - Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
  - Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
  - Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
  - Mennonite Central Committee
  - Nazarene Compassionate Ministries
  - Presbyterian World Service & Development
  - Primate’s World Relief & Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada)
  - The Salvation Army
  - United Church of Canada
  - World Relief Canada
- Today, CFGB ranks among the largest private food aid providers in the world. Donations made by Canadians have helped CFGB and its members provide over 1,000,000 metric tonnes of food to people who are hungry throughout the world.
- Last fiscal year, CFGB-supported projects were carried out in 32 countries, reaching over 2 million people through 96 projects.
- To date this fiscal year, CRWRC has received approval for 20 new projects, which total \$7 million, or 31% of CFGB program funding. This includes projects in Uganda, Pakistan, Malawi, and Mozambique.
- Food aid currently represents 66% of CFGB-supported programming, food security represents 28%, and nutrition programs accounts for 6%.
- For more information about CRWRC’s membership in and programming through CFGB visit [www.crwrc.org/cfgb](http://www.crwrc.org/cfgb).