

CULTIVATING HOPE

A bi-annual review of CRWRC–CFGB programs

Fall 2011

Breaking A Record For Hunger

By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

One hundred and sixty acres of soybeans are growing near Listowel, Ontario and will soon have a huge impact on families around the world. Through the combined efforts of local farmers, agri-businesses, and rural and urban churches the soybean field has been planted with the goal of raising thousands of dollars for people in need through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). Dubbed “Harvest for Hunger”, the project’s organizers also hope to break a world record by harvesting the crop in less than five minutes.

It all began in January, when five Christian Reformed farmers saw a YouTube video and decided to do something similar.

“Other charities have done this type of event,” said Randy Drenth, one of the Harvest for Hunger organizers. “A couple of guys from church saw a video on YouTube of several combines harvesting a field at one time in order to break the world record. When we met in January to talk about what kind of growing project we could



Photo by David & Kathryn Mayberry

The organizers of Harvest for Hunger. Richard Van Donkersgoed, Randy Drenth, Mike Koetsier, and John Tollenaar. Peter Rastorfer not pictured.

do this year to support CFGB, we decided to give it a try. Through God’s wonderful works, the pieces have fallen into place. It has been an amazing journey.”

After the initial meeting, Drenth — along with co-organizers Richard Van Donkersgoed, Peter Rastorfer, Mike Koetsier and John Tollenaar — got working. The 160 acre field was

planted this spring despite frequent rains that made planting difficult. Local agri-businesses donated between \$15,000 and \$20,000 of seed, fertilizer, and other inputs towards the cause. Now, as the crop continues to grow and mature, the project’s organizers are getting excited about what it could mean for people in need. They estimate that, once the crop is harvested, it can be



Photo by Carol Ann Elissen

Preparing the field for planting.

sold off to raise in excess of \$200,000 for CFGB programs.

“We live in a very blessed part of the world and take a lot for granted,” said Drenth. “We are called to give all we have to the work of the Lord. Harvest for Hunger has given a lot of North Americans the opportunity to do that. As each person contributes in their own way, they are showing how using God’s gifts for His purposes can have amazing results.”

While the organizers of the project are Christian Reformed, Harvest for Hunger has received support from churches and individuals from a variety of denominational backgrounds. They are also recruiting farmers from any background to show up on harvest day (September 30) with their combines.

“We are encouraging combine owners and operators to be part of something really big,” said Kathryn Mayberry, Ontario Resource Coordinator for CFGB. “Currently, about 100 farmers have signed up to

be part of this world record attempt. This could be a once in a lifetime event.”

Families are encouraged to come cheer the harvesters on as well. A large wheat field immediately west of the Harvest for Hunger site will be used for parking and viewing the harvest. Bleachers, portable bathrooms, food, refreshments, and entertainment have all been offered from those in the local community and beyond.

Those unable to attend the event can still get involved by “sponsoring” a bushel. The organizers plan to sell the soybeans for \$20 a bushel to grain traders after the harvest. They also hope to double the impact by having churches and individuals “buy” a bushel for a donation of \$20, so that each bushel in effect raises \$40 for people in need.

“Everyone is invited to come to the table. Bring your family and your combine or just make a donation. Let’s show the rest of the world how incredible farmers and Christians really are,” said Mayberry.

Harvest for Hunger is just one of over 200 growing and community projects across Canada that raise money for CFGB and its member agencies. Altogether, about \$4.5 million is raised each year through these efforts. For more information about starting a CFGB growing project in your area, contact Vanessa Mathews-Hanna at 1-800-730-3490.

Canadian Christians Invited to Fast For Change

By John Longhurst, CFGB

On October 16, why not kick off your Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) World Hunger Campaign with a fast — for change?

“Fasting is a way to change yourself, change your relationship to God, and change the world,” says James Kornelsen, who coordinates the annual Fast for Change event for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. “It’s a way for people of faith to respond to the issue of hunger through fasting, praying, advocating and giving.”

Timed to coincide with the United Nations World Food Day, an international day to remember global food needs, the goal of Fast for Change is to invite Christians of all denominations “to take time to remember the almost one billion



Visit www.fastforchange.ca to order free resources.

people in the world who don't have enough to eat, and reflect on God's desire that no one go hungry," Kornelsen says.

While fasting is usually associated with not eating, that's not the only way people can participate in Fast for Change, Kornelsen notes.

"It can also mean taking time away from an activity, like not going to movies, sports events or anything else. The point is to pause and reflect on what it means to have enough," he says. "We're not trying to pretend, by fasting from a meal or two, that we can really feel the pain of those who are truly hungry. Fasting in whatever way reveals our need for God. As Christians, it points us back to Jesus' ministry that was directed to those who suffered the indignity of hunger."

Since World Food Day falls on the launch day for CRWRC's annual World Hunger campaign, Kornelsen says it is an excellent time for Christian Reformed Church members to personally reflect on the needs of hungry people around the world.

When it comes to ending global hunger, "there are lots of things people can do to help those who don't have enough to eat. Fasting is a good way, and a biblical way, to change our lives, our perspective and our relationship with God. It would be an ideal way to prepare yourself for three weeks of World Hunger focus."

People who want to participate in Fast for Change can visit www.fastforchange.ca.

Just add water!

By Jacqueline Koster

Nowhere is the power of water more visible than in the semi-arid areas of Kenya. Driving to the community of Narosura, near the border with Tanzania, you pass a landscape shaped by repeated flash floods. Water flowing off the escarpment into the Rift Valley carves deep chasms alongside the dusty road and top soil is washed away exposing a dusty landscape.

In this desolate environment you will find the Maasai people. For centuries the Maasai have survived by raising large herds of cattle which are sold when the family needs to earn income to pay for food, education or health care. While drought has always been a challenge for the Maasai, the increasing frequency and severity of droughts in this region, combined

with urbanization increasingly taking over their grazing land, has been catastrophic to the Maasai way of life.

This year, despite the severe drought, a small supply of water is still trickling through the Narosura River. The first clue of the existence of the water is a grove of large trees. It is here that the Maasai of Narosura are taking their first steps into a new way of life — farming. With smaller and smaller herds that are being depleted by frequent droughts, farming represents an opportunity for families in this region to find an alternative source of food.

Frederick Keleteng is learning about farming to better equip him to feed his family even during times of drought.



Photo by Jacqueline Koster

It also represents a total shift in culture and way of life. The Maasai are nomadic people, traditionally moving from place to place in search of pasture for their animals. Staying in one place to farm the land is so foreign to the Maasai culture that no word for farming even exists.

But in Narosura the Maasai are becoming farmers. Starting in 2009, CRWRC along with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) began a Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB)-funded project to train Maasai people on how to farm and how to use the nearby river to irrigate their fields.

The project started with just a small demonstration garden where people could try out techniques and see the results. This demonstration garden has grown dramatically in the past two years and now encompasses nearly six acres.

Each week, 100 community members volunteer at the garden by completing tasks such as weeding, watering, controlling pests, and maintaining the nurseries. Among them is Frederick Keleteng, a new farmer.

Participating in the communal garden has taught Frederick many things, such as how to space crops, which varieties of seeds to plant, and how to care for the plants as they mature. It is a two-hour walk to get to the community garden from Frederick's home, but he doesn't mind the journey. "I walk fast," he says with a laugh. Besides, he's grateful for the knowledge.

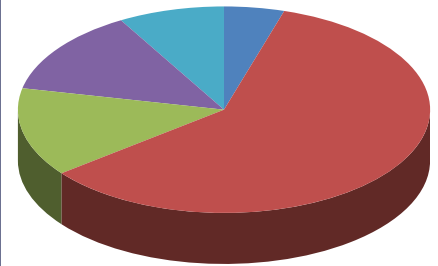
Last year, Frederick's own fields failed. They produced only two bags of grain – not nearly enough to feed his family of four. Still, he feels that his once-a-week time at the demonstration garden is teaching him valuable skills that he can use to improve his own farming and supplement the income he earns from his cattle.

"I now know how to space out the corn when I plant it. And I know how to build basins to irrigate my crops," he said. He is hopeful that next year will provide a better harvest on his farm, even if the rains do not come as expected.

In the meantime, through CFGB funding, CRWRC is providing Frederick and the other community members who work on the demonstration garden with rations of grain. These food supplies will help the families get through this current season until the next rains come and a new crop can be harvested from their own fields.

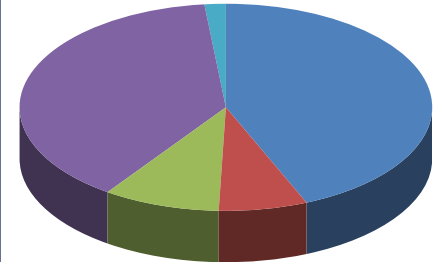
In addition, the grain harvested from the community garden will go into a grain bank that was built by other CFGB food-for-work recipients. Community members can buy back food from this grain bank at a subsidized price when their own stored harvests run out. These funds will then be used to buy inputs for the community garden in the next year. In this way, people who do not farm and do not have access to water can still benefit from this large plot of land by the river.

Sources of Funding July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011



- CRWRC Equity: \$1,414,800
- CFGB Member Contributions: \$465,000
- CFGB General Fund or Reserve Account: \$841,992
- CFGB Food Security Account: \$1,334,240
- CIDA Matching Funds: \$6,040,993
- Total: \$10,097,025**

Location of Programming July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011



- 1.6% Latin America: \$157,986
Nicaragua
- 6.9% West Africa: \$692,993
Liberia
Mali
Niger
- 43.8% East Africa: \$4,421,309
Ethiopia
Kenya
Sudan
Uganda
- 9.2% Southern Africa: \$930,728
Malawi
Mozambique
Zambia
- 38.6% South Asia: \$3,894,009
Pakistan
Sri Lanka
- Total: \$10,097,025**