

PROJECT HARVEST



Guatemala

RESILIENCE

A newsletter of

PROJECT HARVEST

- Guatemala

Winter 2014 - 2015

SIGNS OF HOPE IN A DIFFICULT YEAR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

"Before you go hungry, you have already lost control."* These few words capture why global hunger continues to exist in the world. In this edition of **Resilience** we will explore the significance of these words in Guatemala and in the broader global context.

The journey that **Project Harvest** continues to walk with the people in the communities where we work, deepens our understanding of people's every day realities. Hunger stares at them, especially in their kitchen, where little food reserves are left. The food crisis of last year, brought on by drought and a pestilence in the coffee farms, has been exacerbated this year by an even worse drought. This ex-



panded and deeper crisis obliged Project Harvest to reflect more deeply, expand our focus and widen our vision. This vision is a world free from hunger, where every woman, man and child can fully enjoy their human rights, particularly **the right to adequate food**.

The people of Guatemala, and many other parts of the world, live without this basic right to food being respected and upheld. **Project Harvest** will continue with its efforts to support small scale farmers to grow the food they need to

feed their families. This support encourages and enables them to become organized so that they can have a voice in the decisions that impact their right to food.

The hungry have too little control over the amount of food that enters their kitchens. Only their participation in the decisions that impact the quality and quantity of the food they have to eat will stop their hunger. Recognizing the **human right to food** is a first step. It has many implications and they all lead to eliminating hunger.

This edition of **Resilience** focusses on the abolition of hunger. We want to make three points. **First:** hunger in the world today is serious, causes death and is unnecessary.

Second: governments need to be held to account, which means fulfilling their obligations to ensure that the "Human Right to Food" applies to everyone.

Third: **Project Harvest** has created a model, an alternative program that addresses hunger and malnutrition.

Your support of **Project Harvest** has allowed us to continue and expand our programs, which provide innovative, basic, technical assistance, helping people grow more nutritious food.

We invite you to support us in our work of innovation, assistance, formation and accompaniment in the long struggle to help right the wrongs and improve people's lives. Those of us in Canada, and the people in the communities where we work, are grateful for your support. Please continue to **be part of Project Harvest**.

Thank you!

Paul Lemieux
General Coordinator

*Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2012

The STORY of an EXTENDED DROUGHT - PITAHYA

THE MEANING of RESILIENCE

How does a community respond to serious climate change and hunger? In the case of Pitahaya, a community of 158 families, it is with resilience - the ability to become strong again or recover from a tough and complex situation.

Project Harvest's role has been to support and accompany the leaders of Pitahaya. What we have witnessed over the course of the last few years is this:

Project Harvest initially worked with a group of families out of which grew a committee of women leaders. In some areas they were inexperienced but with lots of enthusiasm and natural abilities. After some years of formation they organized themselves into a formal structure and called their group "Forjadores de Desarrollo" – "Shapers of Development". The group set up an Executive Committee with a president, secretary, treasure, etc.



New gardens were started by 122 families as a result of the tenacity of the women's leadership.



Monthly food rations included 2 bottles of oil.

When a drought in 2013 seriously diminished their staples of corn and beans they were in a position, with some logistical and moral support, to "knock on doors" and secure some food for short term relief. MCC* committed to provide food rations for seven of the hardest months to come from early to mid-2014 (100 lbs of corn, 30 lbs of beans, ½ liter of cooking oil and 5 lbs. of sugar per month per family). What these leaders have been able to accomplish with this support and their own energy, determination and ingenuity is revealing!

They opened a bank account to manage cash advances; purchased food and paid for transportation; organized the distribution of the donated food; did the book work and record keeping and kept the minutes of the community meetings.

Through their leadership the community agreed to do work for the food donated to each family. They proposed and the community agreed that each family, as a condition of receiving the donated food, would start a small garden. They then supervised the construction of these 122 new plots. They distributed seeds to those families and they motivated them to start a compost pile.

Then they also proposed and the community agreed, that each family, as another condition of receiving the donated food, would volunteer 4 days of work over the



The women's leadership led to the whole community of 158 families agreeing to work four days to improve kilometers of roads and pathways in the area. An equal number of both men and women collaborated.

course of a month repairing the roads and many pathways that crisscross the community.

Although often eating only twice a day, families have eaten better during some of the most difficult months of 2014, than they did in 2013, as a result of the women's leadership in obtaining food from various sources. During the drought and food crisis of 2013, 6 children suffered from acute malnutrition and 40 children, less than 5 years of age, were below weight. Despite the drought conditions becoming worse in 2014, the numbers improved during 2014. According to data collected for the Ministry of Health, the number of children with acute malnutrition fell in 2014 to 2 and "only" 25 children were below weight in the community. These numbers certainly would have been higher without the women's initiatives.

As the next growing season approached in May of 2014, the community was still without seeds for planting, having lost them in the previous year's drought. Nor did they have the means to purchase seeds because of a blight in the coffee plantations that had reduced the need for workers. This year even the pay was way below minimum for those few who could find work.

Again, the women's organization, "Shapers of Development", working together with **Project Harvest** obtained corn and bean seeds in early June. The community rushed to plant their corn.

Then they waited for the next harvest in September.

We now know there was no harvest.

(cont'd on page 6 - see A Turn For The Worse)

* Mennonite Central Committee



Project Harvest invests in rain water collection & simple irrigation techniques.

HUNGER and the HUM

Hunger in the world today is serious, causes death and is unnecessary. Governments are responsible for addressing the crisis of global hunger. The "Human Right to Food" holds governments to account for addressing this crisis.

Global hunger

Global hunger is not a problem of scarce resources. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 842 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. This is the combined population of Canada, the USA and Europe!

It is clear that international food and nutrition related policies need to be restructured in order to effectively alleviate hunger. Ironically, enough food is already produced to feed the world. Small scale farmers feed 70% of the global population, yet it is their families that make up the majority of those people who are hungry in the world.

Root Causes

The crisis/problem of global hunger is complex with many interconnected and controversial causes. Some of the critical reasons for small-scale farmers and hungry people are the following:

- They are marginalized economically and powerless politically.
- They are shut out of decision making thus self-determination is nullified when decisions are made which impact their access to food.
- They have lost or have had their traditional lands confiscated by large corporations, thus limiting their ability to grow their own culturally appropriate food.
- They fail to benefit from the expansion of market-led globalization and the promotion of intensive monoculture-based agriculture (which are detrimental to their wellbeing).
- They endure the greatest impacts of changing weather patterns such as frequent periods of drought and flooding.
- They seldom receive a living wage when they try to augment their incomes by working in large, export orientated, agricultural production.

Global hunger is a clear consequence of systematic violations of the right to food, as enshrined in international human rights law.

Human Right

The right to food is first of all a human right. It is the right to feed oneself in dignity. It is the right to have continuous access to the resources which will enable one to produce or purchase enough food to not only prevent hunger, but also to ensure health and well-being.

Role of Government

The role of governments is important in creating and securing access to productive resources like land, seeds and water, and to social transfers like minimum income programs.

Governments have binding obligations to protect, respect and fulfil the right to food in their territories and worldwide. Many, however, lack the political will to meet these obligations. The role of social movements and non-government organizations is to hold their governments accountable to their obligations and for any violations of the right to food.

HUMAN RIGHT to FOOD

The Right to Adequate Food in International Law

The right to food is a human right and is a binding obligation, well established under international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 first recognized the right to food as a human right. It was then incorporated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 11) adopted in 1966. It has been ratified by 160 states which today are legally bound by its provisions.

"The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement".
(General Comment No. 12)

For the 160 countries that have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the right to food is a legally binding right, on equal footing with the human rights prohibiting torture and protecting freedom of speech and the press.

Government Accountability

The right to food requires that governments adopt national strategies to progressively realize the components of the right to food that cannot be immediately guaranteed. These might include: access to arable land and clean water; the right to harvest and reuse seeds; and market access. Progressive realization requires immediate steps. They must be deliberate, concrete and targeted.

The Right to Food is Key to Overcoming Hunger and Malnutrition

The **Right to Food** movement makes a strong call to hold governments and international actors to account, under international human rights law, by monitoring the effects of national and international policies and investments. When politicians or corporations are found to be responsible for generating hunger, their actions need to be investigated and adequate measures taken.

The importance and usefulness of the right to food's legal framework reflects a growing understanding that **hunger is not simply a problem of supply and demand**. It is primarily a problem of a lack of access to productive resources such as land and water, of an increased monopoly over access to items such as seed and fertilizer, and of insufficient safety nets to support the poor.

The **Right to Food** constitutes for governments, civil society and social movements, a tool to improve the effectiveness of policies that seek to combat hunger and malnutrition. They understand the importance of more equity in the food chains, of empowerment and accountability, and the need to pay greater attention both to the imbalances of power in the food systems and to the failure to support the ability of small-scale farmers to feed themselves, their families, and their communities.

Our right to food is not just the right to be fed during or after an emergency. It is the right for all, to have legal frameworks and strategies in place, that further the realization of the right to adequate food, as a human right recognized under international law. By directing the adoption of these policies, the right to food is a compass to ensure that policies are geared towards alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

The **Right to Food** can help to address not only the immediate effects of hunger but also the causes of malnutrition and hunger. Hunger and malnutrition are primarily expressions of social exclusion and discrimination.

It becomes clear that the human rights approach is the key to tackling and overcoming hunger and malnutrition on this planet.



Project Harvest teaches growing techniques for long term sustainability.

"My crops are at risk after ten days. After fifteen days I endure major losses. Here in Pitahaya we were without rain for 40 days. My crops are devastated." These are the words of countless farmers this year in Guatemala.



The community of Pitahaya endured forty days of drought this year. Our survey collected data which showed that families lost almost their total crop of corn. Their main staple for tortillas was destroyed.

In August 2014, Oxfam alerted the international community of the economic, social and environmental impacts of a severe drought across what is called the "Dry Corridor" of Central America. **Drought always brings with it deteriorating health, malnutrition and famine.**

On average, a family in Pitahaya needs 300 lbs. of corn per month to survive. In a normal year they can grow 1,500 lbs. of corn on 1.4 acres (.6 hectares) of mostly rented land. This year the total harvest was only 45 lbs. of corn per family. That is, the average family lost 97% of its corn harvest.

What to do?

Project Harvest is designed to provide formation in areas such as organization and training. This includes resources for families to grow some of their own food in a long term sustainable way. It is not an organization intended to provide food aid in emergencies. However, supporting the groups with whom we work to better understand the root cause of food emergencies and accompanying them in their struggles to improve their

lives is part of our mission. (See article on Right to Food for deeper analysis of crisis/problem.)

Project Harvest has developed a model with its agro-ecological method that includes a rainwater catchment system so that nutritious food can be grown year round. A goal is to move from family "starter gardens" to larger scale production for sale at local market. **This takes time and resources.**

Vegetables from family gardens play an important role in improving nutrition; however they only complement families' staple of corn tortillas.

In 2014, three "high level" delegations asked to visit Pitahaya to see first-hand the alternative model that Project Harvest is helping to create. **This model is an important first step in addressing the deep rooted causes of hunger and malnutrition.**

In late August the Vice President of Guatemala visited and listened to Pitahaya's women describe the serious food crisis and its devastating effect on their community. Within a week, the Government announced it

would provide food rations for six months, starting in September to families in Pitahaya and surrounding area.



Vice President of Guatemala listens to community concerns and how PH has improved their lives.

That is, each family is receiving 100 lbs of corn, 30 lbs of beans and 18 lbs of powder (for preparing a fortified drink) per month.

By the beginning of September the rains were showing signs of returning for what is usually the last two months of the rainy season. Cautiously and with much trepidation the community replanted their rented land with beans they had saved in reserve for emergency purposes. If there is a good harvest of beans by the end of November they will have something more to eat and to sell in order to buy more corn.

Everyone is aware that by the end of February their backs will be up against the wall again but one cannot discount their deep sense of resilience.

TRANSFORMATION HAS BEGUN

Like other communities Pitahaya has had its share of internal conflicts. What has been transformational is the spirit of the people in the community. There is a spirit of solidarity. A change has taken place. Where there was once jealousy, animosity and rancour towards each other, today there is cooperation, solidarity and true community. Most of this is the result of the work of the selfless group of women, the leaders of Shapers of Development. Their capabilities and contributions are recognized by the whole community. They continue to supervise and organize the tasks that began the process of change.

What is also significant is for the moment, no community members have taken the desperate decision to set off on the dangerous path of traveling north, crossing two borders and trying to slip into the United States.

Pitahaya's challenge in the difficult days and years ahead will be to continue to create positive changes that will truly improve the life of the community for the long term.

Project Harvest is fully aware that climate change, droughts, and food emergencies cannot be solved by short term government or humanitarian food aid, although there is an obligation to respond to a crisis. As we continue to accompany the communities where we work, Project Harvest is aware that more profound long term changes are needed.

We hope you can support our work.



The community has been transformed by a small group of women (some seen in this photo). They are not shy to say about Project Harvest —“Our community never has had a project like this.....”

You ask: "Why should I donate to Project Harvest?"



Ailsa Litchfield [pictured] used her birthday to raise money and awareness for Project Harvest.

All people have the **right to food**. We are working with peasant farmers in a particularly harsh geographic area of Guatemala where climate change has had a devastating impact on

Project Harvest - Guatemala		
REVENUE, EXPENSES & ASSETS for 2012 and 2013		
REVENUES	Totals 2012	Totals 2013
Donations from Individuals	29,529.50	27,190.99
Grants from Institutions	25,284.00	36,667.00
Total Revenues	54,813.50	63,857.99
EXPENSES		
Program expenses in Guatemala	51,304.77	63,343.71
Administration in Guatemala	2,075.20	2,440.00
Administration in Canada	1,048.98	828.72
Total Expenses	54,428.90	66,611.43
Excess of revenues over expenses	384.60	(2,753.44)
Assets at beginning of the year	33,263.14	32,878.54
NET ASSETS*— END of YEAR	32,878.54	30,125.10
* Represents start up funds for next calendar year.		

staple crops of corn and beans.

Kitchen gardens provide fresh vegetables, watered by essential catchment systems, funded by your donation.

Our on-site PH teams are all local men and women, teaching those with whom they work to organize themselves, to learn best growing practices and empowering women to be leaders in their communities.

Your donation makes possible, all of this and more!

"Where does funding come from?"

Over the years, Project Harvest has received donations from groups and organizations as diverse as unions, religious orders, service groups, retired teachers [RTO], the Catholic Women's League and special events.

AND then, many of you have offered help and encouragement to our neighbours in Guatemala, with your personal donations. **There is so much for which we are thankful!**

Gratitude is extended to the **Niagara Warehouse of Hope** who has supported us over the years by handling our funds and issuing receipts.

However, the Canadian government has issued us our own Charitable Number so that we can now operate independently. This is **good news!**

Information about **where to send your donation** :

From now on please make cheques payable to:

PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA

Send your donation to:

17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, L0S 1E2

Donate online at: www.projectharvest.org

Project Harvest: Report of Work Completed in 2013										
The 2013 Work Plan COMPONENTS – for 5 community groups with a total of 181 families										
1. Establishment and maintenance of Family and Communal Gardens	2. Soil Conservation / Fertilizers: • Manure: cow, chicken, rabbit • Worm composters • Worm compost	3. Seeds / Nurseries	4. Barriers: • Retaining grasses • Fences • Shading material • Mulch	5. Trees • fruit • forest	6. Small Animals: • Rabbit cages • Rabbits • Chicken coops • Laying hens	7. Rain Water catchment systems	8. Irrigation	9. Educational workshops and meetings		
# of family size gardens	# of community size gardens	# of bags of manure (worm or cow) integrated into soil	# of worm composting systems initiated or repaired	# of above ground nurseries constructed	# of protective fences constructed	Pruning and educational maintenance workshops this year	Maintenance of health and production of rabbits	# of rain water catchment systems built	# of systems installed	Themes: Agricultural: 14 Organization: 65 Leadership: 21
130	2	530	5	5	29	ongoing	ongoing	10	15	100

Please make contributions payable to: **Project Harvest - Guatemala, 17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, L0S 1E2**

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