

DEVELOPMENTS @

World Neighbours Canada Society

FALL 2008

World Neighbours Canada opens its first African program

For decades, Sahelian Africa was the source of stories about the steady encroachment of the Sahara Desert, turning the Sahel into desert at the rate of x meters per year, and about food shortages, famine, drought, starvation and benefit concerts staged by rock stars.

According to the Encyclopedia of Earth however, "after several decades of declining rainfall and dwindling food production in the Sahel, reports telling a different story started to appear. Analyses made by several independent groups of time sequences of satellite data... since early 1980s, showed a remarkable increasing trend in vegetation greenness."

Once again, the value of hopelessness appears to be over-rated. Much can, in fact, be done.

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country of West Africa, north of Ghana. Called "Upper Volta" in colonial times, most of the country is in the Sahel, the wide band of semi-arid grasslands that separates the Sahara from the jungle.

This July, WNCANADA began its sponsorship of a new development program in eastern Burkina Faso, in the province of Fada N'Gourma. APDC is a local NGO that grew out of programs of World Neighbors in the late 80s and 90s. Thanks to its work in soil and water conservation, short cycle crops and green manure technologies, villages in the province of Gna Gna that used to have food for 5-6 months per year now have food security 12 months a year with enough food left over to sell.

APDC has also experienced great success by using the empowerment of women as a starting point for community development. This begins with motivation and training of women in maternal health and child nutri-



The search will begin in WNCANADA's new program in Burkina Faso for women such as Mano Pokiero who lives in a nearby Kiergo Village, Koalla. Empowered with knowledge and confidence such women can transform villages.

tion. It proceeds to training in literacy and numeracy. Thus armed with new skills and confidence, women are encouraged to form savings and credit groups, then to pool their resources to engage in income generation.

Peanuts are a traditional Sahelian crop grown by women. Many women's savings and credit groups have used peanut commercialization as the first step to income generation.

Gulmancema is the local language, and speakers of this language may be Muslim, Christian, Animist or a combination. Re-

gardless of religious belief, they are members of a strongly male dominated society. It is amazing to witness what happens when women in such a society begin to earn money for the very first time. Traditional relationships established thousands of years ago can change overnight.

This is the beginning of the story of WNCANADA in West Africa. You will learn the rest of the plot, with character development, as the years pass and the new program in Fada unfolds and takes hold. Stay tuned.

World Neighbours Board: who are we and what do we do

This edition of *Developments* welcomes a group of people new to our mailing list. They are Canadians who have expressed an interest in World Neighbors (WN), the Oklahoma-based NGO that inspired World Neighbours Canada Society (WNCANADA) to form as a Canadian NGO back in 1989. The inspiration arose out of the WNCANADA founders' search for effective development methodology. They found it in programs being run by WN in places like Nepal, Honduras and Indonesia. Since 1990, WNCANADA has been funding village development programs in partnership with organizations associated with WN such as Vecinos Mundiales Mesoamerica, Tamakoshi Service Society (TSS) in Nepal and now APDC in Burkina Faso.

WNCANADA has a volunteer structure that operates without assets, employees or equipment. The seven person board of directors undertakes the administration, monitoring and extension of our mission. Their personal donations cover the modest administrative costs of our organization, and with CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) matching grants for Nepal and Honduras we are able to undertake monitoring missions to overseas programs

and bring representatives from the programs as we did in October with staff from Guatemala and Honduras. Thus we can say to our donors that every dollar they give will be spent in the developing world. A brief description of WNCANADA board and officers follows:

Bruce Petch, President

Master of Professional Studies in International Agriculture and Rural Development (Cornell University). Professional Agrologist. Field work: 1984-1986 – Malaysia, 1987-1989 – Indonesia, 1992 – Cambodia, 1993 – Vietnam.

Area Supervisor with Ministry of Environment (Parks)

Michael Newman, Vice President

Has been involved with Honduran programs for 18 years.

Retired newspaper publisher.

Graem Nelson, Secretary

A founder of WNCANADA with over 18 years involvement with Nepal and Honduras.

Owner/operator of Graem Nelson Associates, a fruit broker and shipper.

Lynn Bremmer, Treasurer (Non board member)

Nine volunteer postings with CESO in Dominica, St. Lucia, Romania (twice), Slovakia, Moldova and Armenia (twice.)

Canada's first female winemaker. Grape and wine consultant.

Brita Park, Board member

A member of the Honduras committee. Focuses on working with local schools and the successful World Neighbours Club at the high school in Oliver.

High school French and Spanish teacher.

Mary Doyle, Board member

A member of the Honduras and Administration committees.

Retired speech-language pathologist.

Judy Gray, Board member

Most recent addition to the board and assisting Bruce Petch in the Kamloops community. Two years teaching in Brunei, extensive travel in Asia.

Elementary school teacher

Dale Dodge, Board member

Africa experience with CUSO in Ghana for two years. A member of the Nepal and Africa committees.

Retired pharmacist

Nepalese villagers enjoy clean water

World Neighbours Canada has been working in Nepal for the past 19 years. We have helped in areas of agriculture, health, women's issues, and presently, in the area of water supply and sanitation.

Our main focus now is in the district of Ramechhap, in the southeast part of Nepal. We are working with a Nepalese NGO called Tamakoshi Service Society (TSS), based in Manthali, the district capital. TSS

workers and trainers are motivating and teaching villagers how to plan, make, and manage improvements in their village's water supply, sanitation and public hygiene.

In the past year, we have funded the construction of three gravity-fed water systems in the hamlets of Baseri Tol, Dhande and Thingre. The impacts of these water systems are wide-ranging - imagine having running water available from a tap close to home, rather than having to walk long distances for every litre. Consider the benefits to women and children - enough water to wash, to cook, to clean. Perhaps even more life-changing for the people in these hamlets is that this tremendous step forward is their own achievement. They organized user committees, established a maintenance fund with their own contributions, and provided all the labour and local materials for construction. TSS with WNCS support provided the training, technical guidance, and non-local materials (pipe, taps, cement). Now the user committees have the funds set aside and the know-how to maintain the water systems and carry out minor repairs. TSS retains an advisory role, providing support if problems arise that cannot be resolved locally.

This year we have also funded the construction of 912 water sealed, septic tank-type latrines (like an outhouse with a squat toilet that is flushed manually). The importance of this program may not be obvious at first glance. These latrines are more than just a minor convenience. The traditional places to use as toilets were fields and scrubby areas in and around villages, creating an environment highly prone to the spread of disease. Now in hamlets like Doramba, Sanghutar and Tokarpur families have clean, hygienic toilets in their backyards. As with the water systems, villagers have to supply all local materials, labour and on-going maintenance. WNCS and TSS supplied the expertise and toilet pans only. And most importantly, these people are proud of what they have achieved for themselves and motivated to continue to strive for improvements in their communities.

The impact of village water systems and improved sanitation has had huge benefits for women, who no longer have to carry water from distant sources for 2-3 hours daily. With time saved from not having to pack water, they are able to spend more time on agriculture, child rearing, self education and even local politics. The role of women in their communities is also changing. TSS requires that all User Groups and Maintenance Committees include women, on equal footing with men. Women work alongside men to carry construction materials from the end of the road to their villages, dig ditches for water lines, and dig pits for latrines. Most importantly, they also participate in key decisions such as where in the village the water pipe stand will be located.

In Canada, we take running water, good sanitation and sewer systems for granted. Having this infrastructure in place helps keep us healthy and productive. People in small villages in Ramechhap, Nepal, are now discovering, with even basic systems, the major advantages of clean, accessible water and clean, non polluted environments, thanks to the work and funding of groups like TSS and WNCS.



Organizing a village around the problem of creating a water system remains an effective entry point in TSS's larger program introducing micro-lending, health training, agricultural opportunities and village empowerment.

Honduras update

The highlight of the year for La Esperanza coordinator Victorino Rivera and his wife Senia has been the ten days they spent in British Columbia this October. Accompanied by Mesoamerica coordinator Elmer Lopez they visited Vancouver, Oliver, Kamloops and Vernon on a speaking tour of schools, donor groups, a university and Rotary Clubs. Hosted in homes of World Neighbour supporters they enjoyed a real Canadian Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and the trimmings and a few days later stood on new fallen snow at Silver Star Mountain. Both Victorino and Senia were originally village participants in the 1980s when Vecinos Mundiales came to their village of El Rosario.

Victorino and his small staff continue to make remarkable strides in the La Esperanza project. The program has expanded from six to 10 villages so now includes over 600 families. Over 20 per cent of the families are involved in at least one aspect of World Neighbours training. This is an impressive number for so early in a program. Victorino has trained 52 village leaders who, through their newly formed association of leaders, have committed to extending their training to three more families in their village.

The improved stoves continue to be an effective entry point for healthy homes

concepts. Inter-planting food crops with their coffee to address food and income shortages has met with enthusiasm.

In August, Elmer Lopez and his Mesoamerican team met in Copan Ruinas, Honduras to survey three possible village areas for a project aimed at the Maya Chorti peoples who live in the mountains surrounding this popular tourist spot. After visits with villagers it was decided to focus on an area directly above the town. The Chorti live in extreme poverty with little access to land, education or health care. Maternal and infant death rates are high.

The first step in establishing a project is to conduct a thorough analysis of the villages and this has been funded by a grant from the Ken and Oli Johnstone Foundation. Assuming a positive report, it is the intention to follow the model established by Victorino at La Esperanza. A single employee will be used in the first year to build trust, convince the villagers that we are not in the business of giving things away and then start to build the core of village leaders who learn and then pass on the various ideas and techniques Vecinos Mundiales has developed. The Spring issue of Developments will have greater detail on this new project.



Mesoamerican coordinator Elmer Lopez (2nd from left) and team members Flori Lopez and Edwin Escoto (on right) visit Chortis near Copan Ruinas, Honduras.

**WORLD NEIGHBOURS
CANADA SOCIETY**

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