



PHP POST

Summer 2009 | Presbyterian Hunger Program | www.pcusa.org/hunger

A Hunger Justice Journal

New Women's Initiatives at the Tierra Nueva Co-op in Nicaragua

By Susan Sklar, Interfaith Program Manager, Equal Exchange

At the Tierra Nueva coffee and honey co-operative in the Boaco region of Nicaragua some new initiatives are helping women improve their economic standing, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program is helping. For each pound of fairly traded products purchased through the Presbyterian Coffee Project, Equal Exchange donates 15 cents to PHP's Small Farmer Fund. The fund serves as a dedicated source for PHP grants, like the two awarded to Tierra Nueva in 2007 and 2008, so that small farmers can develop their cooperatives and communities.

In January delegates from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Equal Exchange travelled to Tierra Nueva, where co-op members explained how they are trying to help women become active participants and leaders in the cooperative. Gender roles

in Latin America, as in most parts of the world, are inequitable. In Nicaragua, for example, there's a common understanding that the ownership of land belongs to men; when a woman marries and inherits land from her father, her husband automatically assumes control over it.

It's remarkable that Tierra Nueva, a union of 600 small farms, is making an effort to change that paradigm. In 2006 the union (a cooperative of cooperatives) conducted a gender survey among its farmers. The focus groups and interviews documented what was already widely known: that the participation of women in Tierra Nueva farming cooperatives was extremely limited.

As a direct result of these findings, Tierra Nueva created a gender policy program that was officially approved by the membership this past October. It formally authorized the actions of the Women's Commission, which is composed of five female representatives from the various primary coffee co-ops.

Last year the Women's Commission founded the Female Leadership School, which offers classes on topics such as legal tools for protecting the rights of women and children, techniques for creating healthy relationships within the co-op, and training in building self-esteem and developing confidence. The commission is addressing all aspects of the gender issue and has even established a course for men on the "building of a new sensitive mascu-



Jaqueline Torrez Flores (left) and Amanda Jarquin Majia (right), trainees in the coffee cupping training for youth at Tierra Nueva

linity." It is also currently creating a new curriculum for women who wish to start their own small businesses.

Given these initiatives, Tierra Nueva women are getting more involved in the economic life of the co-op, particularly its growing honey business. An increasing

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Agueda Ordenaña, a member of the Tierra Nueva Women's Commission

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Letter From the Coordinator

By Ruth Farrell, Coordinator Presbyterian Hunger Program

When I lived on a seminary campus in the Congo, one of my friends who I will call Kapinga was a seminary student's wife with no children. She had given birth twice to very premature babies, but in the Congo a baby born at six months cannot survive. When she became pregnant a third time, her husband and her friends carried water for her and did other strenuous daily tasks in hopes that she might go to full term. In the middle of the night in the sixth month, she went into labor and was rushed to the Presbyterian mission hospital an hour away. The next day we received word that she had given birth to a little girl who was still alive but would most likely die within days. Forty women from the campus and I walked five miles and then took an hour-long bus-ride to sit with her at the hospital. We sat together with Kapinga for two long days until her daughter died.

What surprised me was that some of the women didn't know Kapinga well at all because it was the beginning of the school year. I asked a woman who had moved to the seminary a week before the incident why she went to the hospital. The conversation in the room stopped, and she and all the women looked at me, baffled. For them it was obvious: you don't decide whether you know someone well enough before visiting them at the hospital or during a tragic time. Tragedy happens, and we as sisters in Christ are called to support one another. Why would it matter how close we are? We live life together. I don't need to know you to share your pain.

I learned a lot during those two days. I realized I was alone when I asked God, "Why?" What I heard from the other women including Kapinga was praise for a God who noticed; a God who cared. Eventually I began to let go of my "why" lament and tried to focus on the God who notices, the God who cares. In a country where the ruling dictator didn't seem to notice, in a world in which other countries didn't seem to notice, these women knew without a doubt that God noticed and God cared for Kapinga by drawing together a group of women to stand in solidarity with her. As Presbyterians we, together with women and men and children around the world, believe in the God who cares, and we stand together with them as we create a web of global solidarity in praise of the God who cares.

This issue focuses on women: from Nicaragua to Israel, from the United States to Cameroon. Read their stories and join us in walking alongside as we work together for God's kingdom.

Calendar of Events

Find PHP Near You!

Visit www.pcusa.org/hunger/events to learn how to register for any of these events.

June 11–13: Atlanta, GA
Big Tent

June 23–27: Greensboro, NC
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders Forum

June 30, Long Island Presbytery, NY
Presbytery Meeting Keynote

July 7–11: Montreat, NC
Presbyterians for Restoring Creation Conference

July 11–15: Louisville, KY
Presbyterian Women Gathering

July 14, 4:00 pm: Louisville, KY
PHP 40th Anniversary Celebration

July 19–20: New Wilmington, PA
New Wilmington Mission Conference

July 27–Aug. 2: Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, NM
Faith in Action & Stone Building seminar

Aug. 24: Transylvania Presbytery, KY
Presbytery Meeting Keynote and workshop

Sept. 3–6: Presbytery of Charlotte, NC
Human Trafficking Training

Sept. 12–15: Los Ranchos Presbytery, CA
National Farm Worker Ministry Dinner

Available Online!

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PHP Staff

Ruth Farrell, Coordinator
Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org

Georgetta Poyntz, Senior Admin. Asst.
Georgetta.Poyntz@pcusa.org

Lionel Deroncourt, International Hunger
Lionel.Deroncourt@pcusa.org

Alexa Smith, Joining Hands
Alexa.Smith@pcusa.org

Eileen Schuhmann, International Admin. Asst.
Eileen.Schuhmann@pcusa.org

Andrew Kang Bartlett, Domestic Hunger
Andrew.KangBartlett@pcusa.org

Melanie Hardison, Enough for Everyone
Melanie.Hardison@pcusa.org

Ben Randell, EFE Young Adult Intern
Ben.Randell@pcusa.org

Noelle Damico, Campaign for Fair Food
Noelle.Damico@pcusa.org

Leah Bomar Thompson, Resource Admin. Asst.
Leah.BomarThompson@pcusa.org

Kelly Wilkinson, National Admin. Asst.
Kelly.Wilkinson@pcusa.org

Micro-Loans Make Big Impacts in Central Africa

By Christi Boyd, PC(USA) Mission Co-Worker, Cameroon

Christine does not hold back when invited to share her dreams. She is a bright young teenager from Cameroon in West Africa, and she wants to earn her high school diploma, go to a teacher training college, and become an educator herself. Today her future is brighter than that of most girls in northern Cameroon, where secondary school enrollment rates are low and failure rates are high.

Thanks to the village granary project offered by the Presbyterian Hunger Program's Joining Hands partner RELUFA (the French acronym for Network for the Fight Against Hunger), Christine's community has secured food stocks to bridge the next lean season. Christine and her parents benefit from RELUFA's loan program called Credit Against Poverty (CAP). A loan from CAP allows her to continue studying at the secondary school of Zidim.

Lives are being transformed in this part of Cameroon with funds from the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. In this predominantly Muslim area, daughters are given in marriage at a young age, and investments in their development and education are often considered a loss for the family. With parents reserving their limited resources to ensure the schooling of their sons, girls' enrollment remains low.

Soon after RELUFA instituted a micro-credit program to help jump start small income-generating projects, the staff saw a need for short-term educational loans at the beginning of the school year. Fathers used to struggle to get money for tuition in September, when classes started. This type of loan would allow parents to pay it back from the yield of cotton or peanuts harvested later in the year. CAP for Scholars offers them relief during this



Christine is able to attend school thanks to a micro-loan program called Credit Against Poverty. Only one in five of the students at her school are girls.

month, which is the leanest of the year when parents are concerned foremost about securing food for their families. A revolving loan fund seemed a solid, sustainable means to respond to a recurring social need.

CAP for Scholars is now in its second year, and the results have exceeded expectations. Not only was there 100 percent repayment in the first cycle; the loans helped parents send more of their daughters to school! When the high school opened two and a half years ago, only one in every seven students was a girl. Now about 18 percent of the 439 students are supported through CAP, and one in five is a girl.

The pride these parents take in educating their daughters can't be missed. One of the fathers looked ahead to the prospects for his daughter after she finishes high school. Would CAP for Scholars consider helping support her studies at higher education levels? In a word: yes. RELUFA is already doing that for five university students.

The CAP and Grain Bank projects together with RELUFA's Fair Fruit initiative are the more tangible arms of the programs that tackle hunger and poverty in Cameroon. Equally important, but not as visible, is RELUFA's transparency campaign to fight corruption in the management of revenues from Cameroon's wealth in natural resources. Transparent transactions will allow for huge sums to actually enter the national budget for poverty reduction and civil society to hold its government accountable for its spending.

RELUFA has been consistently supported by OGHS. The bulk of RELUFA's activities, including the transparency campaign and the trade justice initiative, are sustained by the Presbyterian Hunger Program. In 2007 CAP received a start-up grant from the Self-Development of People Program; the Grain Bank program was started in 2006 and 2007 with grants from the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.



A group of women and children – members of a village granary association in Northern Cameroon – meet to discuss RELUFA's Food Sovereignty program.

Wahiba Hajirat – Weaving Her Own Future

By Hadas Lahav, Sindyanna of Galilee

A varied group of women of all ages are sitting on small wooden stools while weaving baskets. Among them wanders tirelessly the slender figure of Wahiba Hajirat, dressed in a long dress and scarf. An energetic woman, Wahiba moves from one student to another, reviewing and correcting the students' work with endless patience.

Wahiba is a member of the basket-weaving project operating at the Workers Advice Center (WAC) in Kufri Manda, Israel, established at the initiative of Sindyanna of Galilee. Its aim is to enable Arab women to specialize in the art of basket-weaving and sell their products for profit. This activity conveys an essential message to the Arab society: every woman has a right to make a living.

Wahiba, the youngest daughter of 10 siblings, graduated from high school with a full matriculation. She loved studying, sciences in particular, but the financial situation at home did not allow her to continue her studies and acquire a higher education. At 19 she married Ibrahim Hajirat, and by the time she was 23 she already had three children. Now that they have grown a bit older she has time for herself as well. Wahiba participated in the first basket-weaving course launched two and a half years ago by WAC. With encouragement from her husband she became one of the pillars of the basket project.

"From the very beginning Wahiba stood out for her remarkable motivation and artistic skills," notes Ronit Pan, basket-weaving teacher and coordinator of Sindyanna's project. "The baskets she weaves have a special beauty and an artistic touch, driving her students to try to emulate her. The baskets she makes match ones made by veteran weavers. This is why when it became possible to open a new course for beginners, Wahiba was naturally chosen to

be the teacher, and to immerse her students in the tricks of the craft."

Since November 2008 Wahiba has been teaching a group of women at the weaving project at WAC. Together with her students, she has created and implemented a gradual, detailed learning process, elevating performance levels and instilling a serious approach to basket-weaving. "I am proud of my capability to contribute and to teach others. Thanks to this project I learned to take responsibility, and it also helped me and other women enter the labor market. I would like to continue teaching and expand this project by enabling other women to enter this market as well," she says.

"Weaving is not just a way of making a living but also of expressing myself. Through weaving I became acquainted with an entire world of art I did not know before," says Wahiba.

Gradually weaving became intertwined with Wahiba's life. The changeover to

teaching was a stage in her development as an artist: "weaving for myself is easy, but teaching and ensuring that students know how to weave is not simple at all. I am attracted to teaching and consider it a challenge. The bond established between my students and me is very positive and amicable. I had prior acquaintance with some of them, and the rest I met in the course. All of my students were exposed for the very first time to the craft of basket-weaving. Most of them were successful at learning the techniques. Soon I will be finishing the second course of weaving with a small but qualified group of seven women, who I hope will continue their activities with the project and will use their skills to contribute to society."

Sindyanna of Galilee is a fair trade organization led by women striving for social change in the Arab region of northern Israel. The Presbyterian Hunger Program has supported the organization for well over a decade.



Wahiba teaching a basket-weaving class to new students

Fair Trade Changes Lives and Communities

By Carrie Hawthorne, Partners for Just Trade

Evangelina Pizarro and Aydé Riveros left Peru – and their families – for the first time this spring to travel across the United States on a three-week tour called Resonating Changes sponsored by Green America and Partners for Just Trade. The women shared their stories of how Fair Trade has changed their lives and their communities, which not long ago were caught in a cycle of economic injustice. Their lives tell the story of how a small initiative by a group of Presbyterians and the Hunger Program has gone a long way to improve the living conditions for those in need.

Evangelina Pizarro

Upon leaving her village in the Andes at age 17 in search of a better life, Evangelina Pizarro found a job in a jewelry factory in Lima and worked nearly 80 hours a week (earning only \$115 a month). She was raising two children alone and was locked in the factory each day until the managers decided it was okay for the workers to go home. Evangelina had no choice about when she could go home to care for her children or when she would get paid, often not for six months at a time.



Evangelina Pizarro now supports her daughter by selling jewelry with Partners for Just Trade.

After seven difficult years in the factory Evangelina decided that she deserved better. She convinced several other workers to join together and form their own business. Their first attempt failed, and most of them ended up back in factory jobs, but Evangelina heard about PHP's Fair Trade work in Peru and inquired about getting involved. Evangelina and her colleagues formed Munay Rumi Cooperative, and after working on improving design concepts, they produced their first jewelry items for export.

Aydé Riveros

Aydé Riveros grew up in a rural village in Peru's Andes Mountains. The war between a terrorist group called the Shining Path and government troops became so violent that Aydé and her family fled to the closest city, Huancavelica. Their life proved to be more peaceful, but making ends meet was a constant struggle for her and her husband, a construction day worker. To help provide for her three children, Aydé knitted, a skill passed down to her through the generations, but she was never paid more than \$5 for a sweater that took weeks to make.

In 2004 Aydé joined together with several other women in Huancavelica facing similar challenges and formed the group El Mercurio. They learned of Fair Trade through a local organization and soon began selling their hand-knit finger puppets for more than five times what they were previously making. Many of the knitters' husbands were disgruntled about women working together, but when they realized what a steady and improved income this provided, they were convinced.

The stories of Evangelina and Aydé are typical of so many women around the world. Both were forced to relocate – to escape violence, to earn a just wage, or sim-



Aydé Riveros, a member of the El Mercurio group, which makes hand-knit items for sale through PJT

ply to seek a better life for their children – but despite their move, they still found life difficult. Yet since they have become involved in Fair Trade, opportunities have opened and horizons have expanded.

Partners for Just Trade works with Evangelina, Aydé and over 15 other artisan groups through PHP's Joining Hands Partner. They have trained more than 200 artisans in bookkeeping, computer literacy, design, quality control and much more.

Partners for Just Trade is an initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy. It began informally when a handful of Presbyteri-

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How to Buy Fair Trade

Visit www.partnersforjusttrade.org to shop for fair trade goods from artisans like Evangelina and Aydé and learn how your fair trade purchase is just and sustainable.

You can find thousands of fair trade products including baskets made by the women in Wahiba's class at your local fair trade retailer. Go to www.fairtradefederation.org and select "find members" to locate a store near you.

PHP Supports Women-Led Organizations

By Andrew Kang Bartlett, Associate for National Concerns, PHP

These are just some of the U.S.-based women-led organizations the PHP is supporting in 2009 through gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing and Presbyterian Hunger Fund.

Appalachian Women’s Alliance, Clinchco, VA
www.appalachianwomen.org

An isolated community of black Appalachians steeped in generational poverty and illiteracy works with their low-income white neighbors to end extreme racism, poverty, and hunger in their community. The Alliance is a network of women and girls who are raising consciousness and self-esteem, sharing leadership and power, creating a common vision, and taking collective action.



Martha Ojeda is the Director of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras

Boston Faith & Justice Network
Boston, MA, www.bostonfaithjustice.org

Committed to transforming Greater Boston into a fair trade community – a place where fair trade goods are widely available at retail stores, restaurants, places of worship, and schools. The Network is led by women in Boston and benefits a large number of female artisans and farmers in the Global South.

Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Missouri City, TX
www.coalitionforjustice.info/CJM_Website

A broad coalition of organizations that support workers and communities struggling for social, economic and environmental justice in the maquiladoras – factories along the US-Mexico border that employ mostly women and pay exploitive wages. The coalition places special emphasis on defending the rights of women who suffer discrimination, humiliation, and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Pittsboro, NC
www.rafiusa.org

RAFI-USA serves as a voice for rural communities that promotes conservation and sustainable agriculture; educates farmers, consumers and policy-makers about the importance of sustainable agriculture for rural and urban communities; works to safeguard soil, water and air; and advises farmers and their communities of rights and opportunities. It is led mostly by women.

STITCH – Women Organizing for Worker Justice, Washington, DC and Mexico
www.stitchonline.org

A network of women in the United States and Central America united to exchange strategies on how to fight for economic justice in the workplace. STITCH equips women with essential job skills and in the process builds lasting relationships with women across the two regions, further empowering women in the labor movement.

Other Women-Led Programs Supported by PHP

Faith in Place, Chicago, IL
www.faithinplace.org

Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida
Immokalee, FL
www.interfaithact.org

Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Columbia, MO
www.patchworkfamilyfarms.org

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Washington, DC
www.sustainableagriculture.net

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland, OR
www.oregonhunger.org

Rural Development Leadership Network
New York, NY
www.ruraldevelopment.org

Seattle Youth Garden Works
Seattle, WA, www.sygw.org

Student Action With Farmworkers
Durham, NC, www.saf-unite.org

WHEAT – World Hunger Education, Advocacy & Training
Phoenix, AZ, www.hungerhurts.org



Miriam Cardona, Director of Programs for STITCH (right); STITCH worker Jacky McVicker (middle); and Flor Alvarez, a consultant who specializes in counseling victims of violence (left).

Human Trafficking & Slavery in the Fields

By Noelle Damico, Associate, Campaign for Fair food

It is estimated that 14,500 to 17,500 people, primarily women and children, are trafficked to the U.S. annually. These people are sold as slaves into forced labor or for sexual exploitation. People are not only trafficked across borders, they can be sold within their own country including the U.S.

The United Nations estimates at *minimum* 2.45 million people worldwide are currently in forced labor as a result of trafficking; other estimates range from 4 to 27 million according to the US Department of State. The modern commerce in humans rivals illegal drug trafficking in its global reach – and in the destruction of lives.

Photo courtesy of CIW.



Florida Governor Charlie Crist recently met with the CIW about modern-day slavery in the fields and pledged his support to the Campaign for Fair Food. (From left to right) Julia Perkins, CIW; Gerardo Reyes-Chavez, CIW; Lucas Benitez, CIW; Florida Governor Charlie Crist; Florida Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp; Greg Asbed, CIW; and Laura Germino, CIW.

PHP has long supported the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida, a farmworker organization. The CIW recently assisted the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI in investigating and successfully prosecuting seven cases of modern-day slavery in the Florida fields, freeing more than 1,000 slaves.

The CIW's agreements with food buyers include a zero tolerance policy for slavery that is bringing market pressure on Flor-

ida growers to end these abuses for the first time. On April 30, 2009, the CIW forged an agreement with Bon Appétit, a foodservice corporation operating on 400 campuses across the country.

To address slavery and human trafficking across the country and around the globe, PC(USA) will be launching a website this summer to educate and mobilize Presbyterians about modern-day slavery. Right now Presbyteries can take advantage of free full-day trainings on human trafficking offered by the Freedom Network, an organization co-founded by the CIW that works directly with slavery survivors and has trained the FBI and other federal agencies. For more information about the trainings, please contact Noelle Damico at noelle.damico@pcusa.org and visit www.pcusa.org/fairfood to learn about modern-day slavery and how to take action against it.

Fair Trade Changes Lives, *continued from page 5*

ans visiting Peru through PHP's Joining Hands network began bringing handcrafts made by their new colleagues back to the United States for sale in churches and among friends. Very quickly that tiny partnership blossomed into a growing nonprofit organization with a national outreach that sells a wide variety of Fair Trade products and creates educational materials about the importance of Fair Trade. Both Green America and Partners for Just Trade received PHP grants in 2008 for connecting the daily choices that consumers make with the well-being of producers.

Thanks to Fair Trade, artisans like Evangelina and Aydé have improved their lives and empowered themselves through work with dignity.

New Women's Initiatives, *continued from page 1*

number of women are purchasing hives, which they install on other farmers' land for a small fee or a portion of the harvest.

Agueda Ordenana, a member of the five-member Women's Commission, says, "Honey production is a good situation for the women; the costs are low and they can help one another to succeed." The most challenging part of the work is the transportation of the hive boxes to the next farm. "That's when teamwork comes into play," says Ordenana. "The beekeepers pool their resources to rent a truck and to physically help one another move the hive boxes to new locations." There are presently about 100 female beekeepers who own about 500 hives.

There's also a new youth skills program designed for the next generation of co-op members, which is appealing to new female members. This year the leadership of the cooperative encouraged three younger women to enroll in training for the four coffee "cupping"—or quality control—spots, positions which are traditionally held by men.

The women of Tierra Nueva are learning skills for careers in what have been male-dominated fields. The trends are promising. By this past December women's participation in the gender program had increased to 52 participants. The Female Leadership School graduated its first class of 24 women last April, and a second class graduated in March on National Women's Day.

Presbyterians in the U.S. can support cooperatives such as Tierra Nueva by ordering fairly traded coffee, tea, chocolate and other products through the Presbyterian Coffee Project. Get started at www.pcusa.org/coffee. Another way to support small farmer co-ops is by making a donation to the Small Farmer Fund. Contributions are payable to PC(USA) with "Small Farmer Fund, H000111" in the memo line.



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Global Food Crisis

Fast, Discern, Reflect, Share:

We might be surprised when God leads us to bring an end to 963 million people going to bed hungry. It is possible. There is enough food!

Participate in:

Monthly Fasts in the midst of the Global Food Crisis

What would happen if groups in all 11,000 PC(USA) churches commit to fasting the first weekend of each month?

Join the Global Food Crisis Fast and find out!

Register at:

www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis

*"...enslaving
poverty
in a world of
abundance is
an intolerable
violation of
God's good
creation."*

Book of Confessions 9.46

How to Give:

Your financial support enables the Presbyterian Hunger Program to witness to the healing love of Christ and to bring hope to communities and individuals struggling with hunger. Give online at www.pcusa.org/hunger/give.

Or you can write "H999999 Hunger" on your check and send to:

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