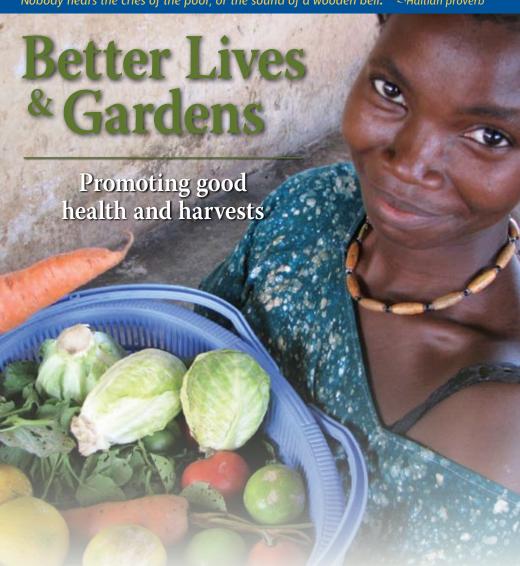


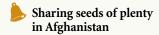
The Wooden Bell Wooden Volume 21, No. 1 OCTOBER 2009

Nobody hears the cries of the poor, or the sound of a wooden bell. . Haitian proverb



A magazine for CRS donors, who not only hear the cries of the poor, but answer with compassion.

IN THIS ISSUE -





Precious food from container gardens in Zimbabwe



Beating the odds against HIV in Uganda The Wooden Bell is published five times a year to keep our donors informed about the lifesaving work of Catholic Relief Services.

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A cook prepares meals at a CRS-supported house for pregnant women in Guinea-Bissau. Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

Promoting Good Health and Harvests



Habibou Abarishi weeds his lettuce plot.
Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

Clear evidence of Catholic Relief Services' lifesaving and sustaining work can be found in the fields of Niger, in West Africa, where lettuce is like green gold. Lane Hartill, CRS regional information officer for West Africa, shares his story.

Extreme poverty takes a terrible toll on the physical well-being of millions of people all around the globe. CRS eases the suffering of people who are desperate for basic medical care and healthful harvests. Our agriculture and health projects provide our poorest brothers and sisters overseas with the sustenance and treatment they need to live and grow to their full human potential.

When CRS came to the village of Takouidawa in Niger, one of the poorest corners of one of the poorest countries in West Africa, and proposed the idea of growing lettuce, along with other vegetables, Habibou and Issa were willing to try. It didn't matter that Habibou had never even tasted lettuce before.

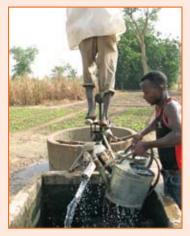
Now, Issa and Habibou are busy bucking the world's financial meltdown. At their feet, the solution is sprouting. It's lowly lettuce, but they might as well be growing greenbacks. When they began, nobody else was growing it. And with

restaurants in the capital, Niamey, needing to meet the demands of their Western clientele, there was a niche to exploit.

The lettuce will help them buy animals—sheep and cattle—which they will fatten up and sell at a later time. Something as humble as lettuce is providing them a major financial cushion.

"The soil here is very poor," says Habibou.
"If you don't have a cart and organic fertilizer, you can't harvest anything. And if you don't have the means to buy [chemical] fertilizer, you will harvest nothing."

CRS sunk several wells in the swale below Takouidawa. They gave Habibou a plot of land and taught him how to spread organic waste from the cattle and sheep over the ground. They taught him how to plant the seeds. And in 45 days, he had some of the greenest lettuce you've ever seen.



Issa Babari pulls water from the holding tank as Habibou uses a treadle to pump water from the well. Photo by Lane Hartil/CRS

But the best part: the buyers. They're coming to him in droves. They drive from Niamey. They even come from across the border in Nigeria.

"With the market gardens," says Habibou, "everyone can get something out of it."

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But that's exactly what a CRS charitable gift annuity does. Charitable gift annuities are not offered by banks, brokerage firms, investment companies or any other type of financial enterprise. They are only available from charitable organizations like CRS.

Sharing Seeds of Plenty

By Laura Sheahen



I've driven this road for years, and I've never seen anything growing on it," marveled a man from the remote Afghan town of Chaghcharan. He was looking out over fields of golden-brown wheat ripening near dusty mountains.

After seven years of drought, the tiny villages in this impoverished region of Afghanistan had finally received enough winter snow and spring rain to grow crops. The problem was getting the snowmelt down from the mountains and channeling the rain to do the most good.

So in spring 2009, Catholic Relief Services supplied residents with tools and paid them to reconstruct a 13-mile canal that had gone unused during the drought years. As water streamed down from the 10,000-foot mountains, the previously barren fields grew green.

It was a blessing for Muhammad, of the village of Tagha-e-Timor. With 10 children—one disabled—Muhammad

had trouble keeping his family fed. Facing starvation during the drought years, he and others moved hundreds of miles away to camps for displaced people. "All the time we talked about returning to our village," says another farmer who lived in a camp. "If there was no CRS project here, we'd have to sell our animals or leave the village again. The reason the crops are growing is because of the canal."

With hard work and a little help from CRS' irrigation and agriculture programs, poor Afghan farmers now have more food and money for their families. "Last year, the land around our village wasn't green," says 5-yearold Shafiq. "This year it is. I like this vear better."

Laura Sheahen is CRS' regional information officer for Asia. She is based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.



Above and top left: Lettuce and sunflowers grow in a garden at the CRS office in Chaghcharan. In addition to providing food for CRS employees, the garden demonstrates what farmers can do.

Photo by Laura Sheahen/CRS

Elderly Sisters Grow Food in Container Garden

By Debbie DeVoe

Shuffling slowly over to me, Agnes Moyo proudly shows off her garden. I ask her age, and she says she was born in 1920. I do the math and can't help a headshake. Then she says her sister Hleziphi, who is sitting next to their mud-and-thatch house, was born in 1913—96 years old in Zimbabwe, a country where the average life expectancy for women is now just 44 years, down from 63 years back in 1990. Unbelievable.

Agnes also cares for her 7-year-old great-granddaughter Sibonile, who became an orphan when her mother died a few years ago. When I ask why Sibonile doesn't stay with her grandmother instead, Agnes simply says it's better for her great-granddaughter to stay with her.

Unfortunately though, the three don't have anything to eat. Their last meal was a day ago—water and *sadza*, the traditional porridge made out of cornmeal and eaten across Zimbabwe.

Agnes is hoping to soon have "relish" on the side—the Zimbabwean term for any meat or vegetables that accompany the main dish of sadza. In late May, with



Agnes Moyo grows vegetables in a container garden with help from CRS and our local partner in Zimbabwe. Photo by Debbie DeVoe/CRS

help from CRS and a local partner, she planted spinach, rape and tomatoes in an array of cans and a few grain bags. She waters her container garden with the liquid left over from washing plates. If the plants needed more water, they would die. Agnes simply doesn't have the strength to carry more water from the borehole nearby.

Until the vegetables are ready for harvest, the family will continue to rely on handouts from kind neighbors. But in just a few weeks, Agnes, Hleziphi and Sibonile should have plenty of relish to eat for many months to come.

Debbie DeVoe, CRS' regional information officer for eastern and southern Africa, recently visited projects in Zimbabwe.

Globa



Catholic Relief Services has been supporting distributions of food in parts of Sudan where aid agencies were forced to leave.

Photo by Debbie DeVoe/CRS

Sudan

Darfur's Urgent Needs Continue

During the spring of 2009, Catholic Relief Services expanded our operations in West Darfur southward to support 240,000 additional people in need due to the forced departure of two key aid agencies from the area.

These efforts are paying off immensely by ensuring continuous delivery of services—including food distributions, agricultural support, hygiene and sanitation initiatives, and the distribution of essential household items.

Seed and tool fairs hosted by CRS and funded by the U.S. government are helping families in West Darfur to farm wherever security allows. Each eligible family receives \$15 of vouchers that they trade for around 44 pounds of seed and three tools of their choice. These materials should enable each recipient to grow enough food for a family of six for half a year.



✓ Niger

Helping Fight a Killer

For many African countries, malaria is the leading cause of death among young children and mothers. Each year approximately 200,000 infants suffer growth and development problems as a result of their mothers having malaria during pregnancy.



Destined for Niger, these bed nets will be a part of a large program which aims to have most pregnant women and young children sleeping under treated mosquito nets by 2012. Photo courtesy of Sumitomo Chemical

The disease is very preventable with low-cost, effective solutions. Increasingly, households with young children and pregnant women are receiving long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets. These nets cost only a few dollars, and if used each night, can protect children and their families from mosquito bites. They are being distributed in many areas along with improved treatment. CRS, with funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is overseeing the distribution of 3 million treated bed nets in Niger.



Nicaragua

Women Own Fruits of Their Coffee Labors

Nine years ago in Nicaragua, Rosa and four other women set out to improve their lives and their children's lives. Leaving behind jobs as hired coffee cultivators and harvesters, they started their own collective with some help from *Fundacion Entre Mujeres* (Foundation Among Women or La FEM), an organization that empowers women in agriculture.



The members of Rosa's cooperative share their knowledge, resources and land to produce crops in quantities that give them more leverage in the marketplace.

Photo by Rick D'Elia for CRS

The foundation gave the women the land and the tools they needed for success.

"The FEM has been giving us training, especially how to control for consistent quality and how to produce organic fertilizer," says Rosa.

Now they not only are able to better provide for their families, but they also have more control over their own lives

"In the past we only knew how to cultivate, how to cut the coffee, but we worked for others," Rosa says. "Now we are owners."

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Beating the Odds

My Success Story on Antiretroviral Therapy Treatment

Y name is Susan M. When I was 24, I got a job as a secretary at a high school in Kasese, Uganda, and I fell in love with a teacher whom I later married. We were deeply in love. I got pregnant and in 2002 gave birth to a bouncing, beautiful baby girl.

One evening in October 2006, my husband complained of an abrupt severe headache. After two days he died! I was shocked and stressed. I was tested and told that I was HIV-positive. I was so discouraged, I lost hope and wished for death.

After some months on [antiretroviral medicines (ARVs)], I have greatly improved. It has done wonders to my health. Thanks to all who help us get these drugs especially AIDSRelief, Catholic Relief Services, Kasanga Primary Health Care and the doctors who have been instrumental in regaining my hope.

You can't imagine what hit me when I was told that my beautiful daughter had also tested positive for HIV. In Kasanga, she was started on ARVs on which she has done well. Both my daughter and I are now members of the



Catholic Relief Services supports HIV treatment programs throughout many countries in Africa and around the world.

Photo by David Snyder for CRS

Kasanga Post-Test Club, which sensitizes the community on HIV through music, dance, drama and personal testimonies.

Thanks to God for ARVs and again to all who have enabled us access to treatment free of charge. Now that I am stable and healthy, I pray that I get a stable job and make money to help me look after my daughter, feed her well and pay her school fees since she is currently in grade one and still has a long way to go.

I pray to God that more [ways] still be found to help the many vulnerable Africans especially in Uganda, my home country. Thank you and God bless you all.

Susan M. is just one of thousands of adults and children with HIV who are being helped by CRS programs in Uganda.

