



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

HAITIAN PROVERB



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

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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Rosa Amelia Centano is a member of a five-family cooperative in Nicaragua who share the workload and profits from their farming efforts. Photo by Rick D'Elia for CRS; inset photo by Sara Fajardo/CRS



# HOPE amid a sea of poverty

By Father David Garcia

My recent trip to Nicaragua put me through a roller coaster of emotions. It is hard to not be depressed by the sea of poverty all around you as you travel Nicaragua. More than 80 percent of the people in this country live on less than \$2 a day.

But what we saw gave us hope. Hard-working people had received microfinance loans and other assistance through Catholic Relief Services. They had organized their farms, small businesses and cooperatives into viable income-producing projects.

We were perhaps most moved by one man, Don Juan Alberto, who was building a home for his five children, including two with disabilities and one he had adopted. The materials were donated by the local Caritas, with CRS help.

I saw that the work of CRS changes lives. I heard from the people their extreme gratitude for our help. I felt the solidarity of our common brotherhood and sisterhood with them. There was tremendous poverty and wonderful examples of hope. I chose to believe in the hope and the people who shared it with me. ■

*Father David Garcia is a senior advisor at CRS, working with members of the clergy. He is based at the agency's headquarters in Baltimore.*

## BREAKING THE CYCLE of poverty



Photo by Sara Fajardo/CRS

### The Challenges We Face

- The United Nations reports that more than 2.5 billion people live on *less than \$2 a day*.
- It is estimated that *1 billion children in the world* live in poverty.
- Extreme poverty is one of the root causes of armed conflict, disease, exploitation, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition, political unrest and pollution.

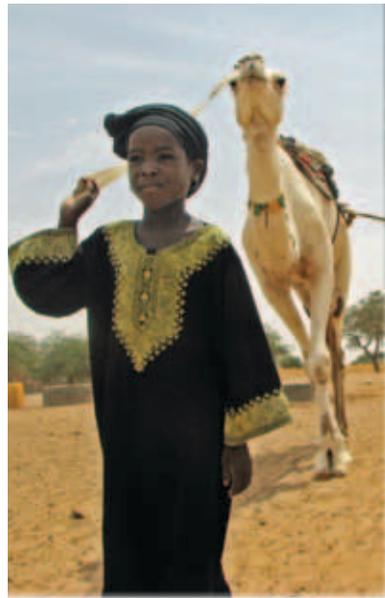


Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

### What CRS is Doing

In more than 100 nations, Catholic Relief Services helps poor people gain the means, rights and skills they need to live in dignity and care for themselves and their families. Hundreds of CRS projects devoted to agriculture and education are giving impoverished women, men and children the tools they need to break the relentless cycle of poverty.

With our dedicated partners around the globe, we are offering people the opportunity for the first time in their lives to get a very small loan and learn how to save a little money, if only pennies, so they may earn a living wage and bring hope to their families. At the same time, CRS encourages the poorest of the poor to become good stewards of soil, water and woodlands so that precious natural resources will be available—if not abundant—for their children's children and beyond. ■



# A WELLSPRING OF HOPE in Niger

By Lane Hartill

*In the village of Adam Kolé, a girl uses a camel to pull water from a well refurbished by CRS and its partner. The well serves the village as well as passing nomadic farmers and their livestock. Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS*

Hassan, like all true farmers, couldn't live without his cows. But Hassan is worried. They are losing weight. The pastures are balding. That's the problem now for Hassan and farmers across Africa: You can't count on the weather anymore. Nobody knows when to plant, or when the rain will come.

Pasture conditions have been poor for the second year in a row. When there is less grass, cows often have problems having calves, which leads to less milk. Hassan says that he is only able to milk a few quarts from his cows each day, which is not nearly enough for six children.

Cattle are the backbone of the Nigerian economy. The only thing more important than pasture is water. Hassan is lucky. The well in his village has never run dry. Over

the years, it has slaked the thirst of hundreds of thousands of animals.

But that doesn't mean it wasn't without problems. Originally, the well was an unprotected hole in the ground. Animal waste and sand quickly filled the well. Villagers had to haul the muck out with buckets. Hassan says that in order to get clean water, you had to be the first one at the well.

All that changed when Catholic Relief Services and a local partner refurbished the well. A simple elevated cement wall around the opening of the well, and a surrounding outer wall, have greatly improved the water quality—and the health of villagers. Elders say there are less sick children and the taste of the water has greatly improved. ■

*Lane Hartill is the western and central Africa regional information officer for Catholic Relief Services. He is based in Dakar, Senegal.*

# WATER PROJECT brings relief

By David Snyder and Christine Banga

Dressed in a flowing checkered robe, Amina Diney sits on the concrete lip of a water trough and chats easily with the women around her. Their talk is set to the backdrop of a gentle wind, the calls of nearby livestock and a welcome sound: the rhythmic squeaking of a newly built water pump.

"We used to walk under the scorching sun all day long in search of water," Amina says. "Now it takes just 15 minutes for women to get water."

For the women of Rhoka, a dusty Kenyan village of 2,100 residents, life has changed dramatically thanks to Catholic Relief Services. Working through partner agency the Catholic Diocese of Garissa, CRS built two wells in 2009 to complement an existing sand dam and hand pump built the previous year. The sand dam traps precious rainwater below ground. Villagers then draw it from the nearby pump. All of the improvements are part of ongoing Global Water Initiative efforts—funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation—conducted through a consortium of aid agencies in 14 countries around the world.

The additional water comes at a critical time. The residents of Rhoka have been suffering from a drought for more than three years. ■

*David Snyder is a photojournalist who has traveled to more than 30 countries with Catholic Relief Services.*

*Christine Banga is the project officer for CRS Kenya's water and sanitation program.*



*Amina's duties as treasurer of the Rhoka Water Management Committee help in keeping the well clean and maintained. Photo by David Snyder for CRS*

# Global Update

## MEET CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES' REGIONAL INFORMATION OFFICERS

*Laura and Lane are two of our field correspondents who travel the globe reporting on the progress of CRS' lifesaving projects.*

### LAURA SHEAHEN



*I started working for CRS* two and half years ago, first in the Middle East and now in Asia. When I was based in Egypt, I loved traveling to the desert; now that I live in Cambodia, I love the food! For someone who would rather be cold than hot and hates mosquitoes, the job is occasionally a challenge. But I love the work and feel honored to be able to meet the people CRS serves.

The courage and resilience of the people we serve continually amazes me. I've met women who have grown up hungry, who have no education, who've been beaten,

who have lost everything they owned in a natural disaster—often all four. But they are determined to change their lives. CRS arranges for a small loan for handcraft materials, or for them to have some chickens to raise or for a literacy class, and the women run with it. They build a home-based business, feed their kids and send them to school, through sheer willpower and hard work. They just keep going, facing huge obstacles and overcoming them. It's incredible. ■

*RIO Laura Sheahen in a flooded village several days after Typhoon Ketsana hit the Philippines. Photo by Terry Tuason/CRS*

*Wageeda benefits from a CRS microfinance program in Egypt. Here, she displays the handcrafts she makes in her home to sell. Photo by Laura Sheahen/CRS*



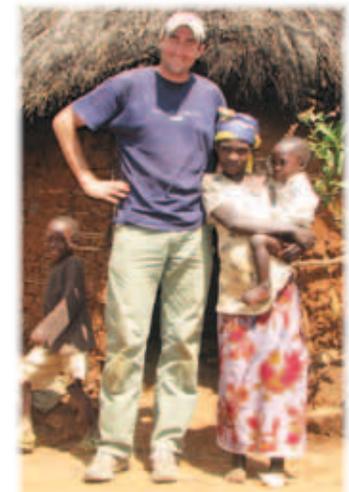
### LANE HARTILL

*I meet a lot of people working for CRS.* But the most inspiring are the HIV volunteers. Take Alice in Ghana. She cares for people nobody else wants to be near. She does things—bathes them, scrubs their floors, folds their laundry— their own relatives won't do. She's a mother, a wife, a businesswoman, taking time out of her own schedule to help others. And she does it all for free.

There are others, too: Anastasie, the mom that counsels young survivors of rape; Marie, a 19-year-old teen who, while coping with mental illness, is the sole breadwinner for her family; and Ernest, who, at great personal risk, smuggled priests out of Congo during the conflict there.

Despite these great people, many are still in need. I met Muderhwa, a mother of 10 children in Congo who has grabbed the kids and run from fighting 10 times. With the fighting continuing, Muderhwa may have to run again. In Burkina, I met Adama, who was living in a classroom; her house had been washed away by flooding. She didn't know that with climate change, this might not be the last time she shelters in a school. ■

*The names of some people have been changed to protect their identities.*



*Lane Hartill visits with Muderhwa Busikala in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo courtesy of Lane Hartill*

# BEATING THE ODDS

## CRS helps Haiti

*A powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti the evening of January 12, 2010. Catholic Relief Services launched a \$25-million initial response. As this Wooden Bell goes to press within weeks of the catastrophe, here is the latest news about CRS' lifesaving work there.*

Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS



Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Haiti staff members are performing to the best of their ability, despite many having lost immediate family members and seen all that they own transformed into debris. Additional CRS staff members from around the world are arriving daily in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to help support our growing response.

CRS President Ken Hackett visited Port-au-Prince and reported, “The destruction in Port-au-Prince is pervasive. The agony is overwhelming. I have not seen a worse aftermath of an earthquake during my entire, decades-long career in humanitarian relief.”



Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

St. Francois de Sales Hospital, one of Haiti’s oldest, was about 70 percent damaged by the quake and was rendered completely non-operational. CRS helped restore the hospital’s ability to serve patients, though it remains in serious need of rebuilding.

Hackett described the scene there: “Determined doctors and dedicated staff were busy mending and counseling those with pulverized bodies and fractured spirits. Operations were performed outdoors beneath an unforgiving sun. And I watched with great amazement as Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, moved among the patients and doctors. He blessed every person he met. He comforted every child, and encouraged every medical person with inspiring goodness of heart.”

The outpouring of generosity has been tremendous, but such is the unprecedented level of destruction in Haiti that we anticipate that many millions more will be needed. Through the compassionate spirit of so many supporters, we can continue to help tens of thousands of Haitians beat the odds. ■



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