

EPIC 2001 Annual Report

Guatemala

Creation of a Maya Cultural Center

During November and December, EPIC sponsored an on-site planning and design consultation by Kauffman Museum (Kansas) for the creation of a Maya Cultural Center to be located in Antigua, Guatemala. A team of three young Maya professionals plus local artisans and builders worked on planning and design with Paul and Mary McKay of EPIC and Chuck Regier, Curator of Exhibits of Kauffman Museum. The cultural center will include both indoor and outdoor interactive exhibits and will seek to preserve, esteem, and interpret Maya culture. It will provide a space and opportunity for Maya people to present their interpretation of Maya culture to some of the two hundred and fifty thousand international tourists who visit Antigua each year. The Cultural Center will also reach out to the non-indigenous population of Guatemala, especially to school age children, with age appropriate interpretive programs designed to improve racial understanding.



Model of La Casa de la Cultura Maya



Paul with 2 members of planning team, Eunice & Rosa

For indigenous people, the Cultural Center will work for Maya cultural survival in an age of globalization that threatens the maintenance of Maya identity, values, and cultural traditions. The 3-dimensional model seen at the left was built out cardboard used as a planning and teaching tool. Currently local artisans are building two more permanent models to aid in the planning process. Local builders are working on bids for the modifications that will be required on the existing building, plus costs for construction of two new additional rooms.



Isaías Pinzón proudly shows his broccoli production, Las Vegas, Pachalum

Protecting the Río Motagua Watershed

This project is part of a comprehensive long-term conservation effort to protect the dwindling water supply of the Río Motagua, the most important endangered watershed of Guatemala. This river runs through the mountainous highlands, which are subdivided into thousands of tiny farms. EPIC is working with poor subsistence farmers who have farms that are very small, steep and often rocky. Erosion of topsoil is a tremendous problem, as is retaining sufficient moisture in the soil. Farming must be intensified and made more productive to provide families with enough for the basics of food, health care, clothing, and schooling. At the same time, teaching management of soil and water to reduce erosion is essential to the long-term viability of individual farms and safeguarding the watershed.

In this grant year agricultural training was provided to groups of farmers in 9 villages of the *municipios* of Pachalum, El Quiché, and 2 villages of the *municipio* of Cubulco, Baja Verapaz. 239 farmers participated in program activities teaching highly productive, sustainable agriculture. In farmer managed demonstration plots, corn production averaged 48 *quintales* per *manzana* as compared with an average harvest of 20.4 *quintales* per *manzana* on similar plots under conventional cultivation. Demonstration plots of beans produced 32.7 *quintales* per *manzana* compared with an average harvest of 12 *quintales* per *manzana* on plots under conventional cultivation.



Felipe Tomas teaches contouring with a simple 'A' frame

Ernesto Cabrera Memorial for International Understanding

Ernesto Cabrera was a Christian dedicated to serving God and others. He lived out his faith by operating a Guatemalan tour bus company with the objective of building understanding between people from different countries. Hinshaw Tours had been served by Ernesto for over ten years when EPIC's treasurer, Robert Hinshaw, was notified that Ernesto had been killed when a drunken driver collided with his bus. To honor this great individual whose daily work promoted the international understanding that EPIC seeks, Robert established the Ernesto Cabrera Memorial for International Understanding within EPIC. Nineteen individuals whose lives had been touched by Ernesto Cabrera made donations totaling \$1,500 to assist the Cabrera family continue his work of building bridges between cultures.

El Salvador

Earthquake Relief & Reconstruction

Working through APRODEHNI, the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights for the Children of El Salvador, EPIC launched an emergency campaign in response to the disastrous earthquakes that struck El Salvador on January 13 and February 13, 2001. The quakes measuring 7.6 and 6.1 on the Richter scale left one-sixth of all Salvadorians homeless or without their place of work. Assisted by EPIC funds, APRODEHNI provided 1,200 families with emergency supplies, including food, water, plastic sheeting for shelter, and blankets. In the costal village of La Herradura, La Paz, shallow older wells became salty following the earthquakes. EPIC funds were also used for simple new community drinking water systems.



Hand pump supplying drinking water

In March Mary and Paul McKay presented a workshop in San Salvador at a gathering organized by OXFAM America for eight national NGO's working in post-earthquake reconstruction. APRODEHNI also participated in this workshop. Mary McKay had been asked by OXFAM to share lessons learned from the Guatemalan housing education and reconstruction program that she had directed. The McKays carried to El Salvador 14 Xeroxed sets of information on Antisismic House Construction developed by the program in Guatemala. Each instructional set was made up of 27 pamphlets. In addition to the workshop, the McKays had two working meetings on construction techniques with staff of the Mennonite Central Committee involved in the reconstruction effort.



Workshop organized by OXFAM for NGO's working in post-earthquake reconstruction



Gloria de Rivera, Director of APRODEHNI, shares instructional materials with local builders

Honduras

La Semilla del Progreso—Sustainable Organic Agriculture

In 2001 Honduras suffered a very severe drought during the summer months. Then in October, Hurricane Michelle hit. For Hondurans this brought back images of the tremendous devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998. Weather patterns in Honduras seem to be getting more extreme and unpredictable. Moreover, Hurricanes Mitch and Michelle have pointed out the impact that above normal amounts of rainfall can have in areas where hillsides are deforested, denuded slopes are farmed with no soil retaining practices, and riverbeds have been heavily silted. For poor hillside farmers, having the expertise in soil and water management to successfully confront these extremes of weather is essential to being able to feed their families and continue to farm.



Water catchment in times of drought

Since Hurricane Mitch, La Semilla del Progreso has selected and trained 235 farmer/leaders in the mountainous central region of Honduras. These persons have received extensive training in agricultural practices that emphasize conserving and managing soil and water resources. Fortunately, the same conservation practices that protect the land in time of excessive rainfall, also retain the little water that falls in times of drought. Drought is the most frequent weather related threat in Honduras. The staff of La Semilla del Progreso has reported that the Honduran hillside farmers using the new practices of soil and water conservation and sustainable agriculture still produced crops during this summer of drought. Although participants' summer yields were down 20 to 75%, depending upon location, many other Honduran farmers

experienced complete crop loss. When rains started again in early fall, La Semilla staff encouraged the planting of a late season bean crop. These beans, when planted according to program recommendations, have done very well, producing almost twice the yield of beans planted according to traditional farming methods.



Contour ditch with newly planted soil-retaining grass barrier



Soil retaining rock barrier through beans

Honduras

Loma Linda Agricultural Training Center

The Loma Linda Agricultural Training Center was to be the legacy of a lifetime of effort by Jose Elias Sanchez. Suddenly, with the rains of Hurricane Mitch, the training center where Elias had given courses to 40,000 persons since 1972 was washed away when water, mud, rocks, and trees roared down the canyon where it stood. A new cement block center now stands on higher ground. Canadian International Aid covered the cost of the walls, floors and roof. Honduran volunteers put in innumerable construction hours of labor. EPIC and Duna-mis Peace Institute together provided funds to purchase furniture, kitchen equipment, and educational supplies.



Two dormitories offer lodging for up to 40 guests.

The center also includes a large classroom/dining room and a commercial sized kitchen.

But to the great sadness of all who knew him, on the Saturday before the rebuilt Loma Linda Center was to have been inaugurated, Elias died very suddenly (18 March, 2000). His widow and co-worker, Candida Rosa Osario, is committed to continuing the important work initiated by Elias. On July 22, 2000, a group of friends and former colleagues of Elias signed documents legally forming "Amigos de Loma Linda". EPIC became one of the "amigos" with Paul McKay as chair. The purpose of the group is to support and advise Candida and the Loma Linda Training Center in the continuation of Elias' life long work of teaching sustainable agriculture, soil and water conservation, and harmonious living with the environment. In 2001 Paul and Mary McKay worked with the "Amigos of Loma Linda" during visits to the center in March and November.



Loma Linda's contoured fields



Meeting to draw up incorporation for Amigos de Loma Linda

Peru

Earthquake Reconstruction, Moquegua

On June 23, 2001, the strongest earthquake recorded worldwide that year, 8.2 on the Richter scale, occurred off the Pacific coast of southern Peru. Mary and Paul McKay were asked by OXFAM America to go to Peru to share information from Guatemala on how to build simple earthquake resistant houses using local materials. They participated in a workshop entitled "Criteria and Understandings for Reconstruction in Southern Peru". One point emphasized at the workshop was that 35 million people live in unreinforced adobe homes in the whole earthquake prone Andean region.



Destroyed house in Coplay, Moquegua



Mary McKay is assisted by workshop participants in putting up display of housing education materials from Guatemala



A destroyed middle class neighborhood in the foreground and remains of the barrio of San Francisco on the part of the hillside which didn't come down.

Zambia

Chipangali Agricultural Tool Making Project

Chipangali, Zambia, Africa - Farming tools commonly used by the rural people of eastern Zambia are often sharpened sticks. Manufactured tools are too expensive for purchase by most local people, although virtually all in this rural area obtain their food through farming and gardening. While serving with the Peace Corps in Chipangali, Kim Deni, formerly of Boone, North Carolina, learned that welders in the area have made metal farm tools from scrap metal (such as old car parts). She has supported and worked for a plan developed by the young people in the village for a self-help project for Chipangali and the surrounding area

The project has three aspects - one educational, one marketing, and the third agricultural. The educational component involves three local men with welding skills who, if they had welding equipment, would be willing to teach their neighbors how to make farming tools

using arc welding equipment powered by a generator. Fuel for the generator is available on a regular basis from a town 80 km away. Other men with blacksmithing skills will also assist. The marketing component of this project involves the sale of tools made by the locally trained new welders to farmers from other villages in the region. The project's agricultural component will happen when the new metal tools begin to be used in farming and gardening, helping farmers to increase their agricultural productivity.

The project is being coordinated with an anti-AIDS group working in the area to provide education and skills for orphans and at-risk youth. Thus, it will reach beyond the village of Chipangali. Potentially, the project of agricultural tools could impact 9000 people in this rural area.

Epic Also Supported the Following Projects in 2001

Guatemala

Sustainable Agriculture & Health Care, San Martin Jilotepeque
FUNDAMARCOS Administration (Maya Foundation)
Casa Ronaldo Educational Center, Chimaltenango

Ecuador

Micro-Enterprise Development with Women

Bolivia

Chris Chavez Legal Defense and Sabbatical Support

USA

Thomas Cowley Scholarship - Mark Smith, Guatemala
Gilbert White Biography Project
Living on Earth - PBS Environmental Program

This is a report on EPIC's 25th year of work. EPIC will be celebrating its 25th birthday during 2002!

Ecumenical Project for International Cooperation, Inc.
P. O. Box 433
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Allenspark, Colorado 80510

EPIC Project Grants 2001

Guatemala

Creation of a Maya Cultural Center	\$ 6,964.00
Protecting the Rio Motagua Watershed, Pachalum & Cabulco	\$ 5,945.00
Sustainable Ag. & Health Care, San Martin Jilotepeque	\$ 1,734.00
FUNDAMARCOS Administration (Maya Foundation)	\$ 500.00
Casa Ronaldo Educational Center, Chimaltenango	\$ 1,870.00
Ernesto Cabrera Memorial for International Understanding	\$ 1,500.87

El Salvador

Earthquake Relief & Reconstruction	
APRODEHNI	\$ 3,380.00
OXFAM & MCC	\$ 252.84

Honduras

La Semilla del Progreso Sustainable Organic Agriculture	\$13,500.00
Loma Linda Agricultural Training Center	\$ 720.83

Ecuador

Micro-Enterprise Development with Women	\$ 2,515.00
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Peru

Earthquake Reconstruction Conference, Moquegua	\$ 5,572.28
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Bolivia

Chris Chavez Legal Defense and Sabbatical Support	\$ 7,344.00
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Zambia

Production of Agricultural Tools	\$ 2,143.00
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USA

Thomas Cowley Scholarship – Mark Smith, Guatemala	\$ 100.00
Gilbert White Biography Project*	\$10,000.00
Living On Earth – PBS Program	\$ 816.80

Project Support and Consultations

Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador	\$ 2,786.42
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Total Grants & Project Support

\$67,645.04

Gilbert White is internationally recognized as the father of the interdisciplinary study of natural hazards and disasters.