

2003 Annual Report

EPIC Highlights

EPIC seeks out program partners who have effective and creative solutions for significant global problems. Since EPIC is a small organization, it is through working with committed and talented local individuals and organizations that impressive results are obtained with small amounts of money.

This Annual Report will be organized around the concerns addressed by EPIC in 2003:

Vocational Education and Job Creation

Laureano Jacobo, director of **La Semilla Agricultural Training Center**, worked with 64 teens from rural Honduran communities. With unemployment in Honduras the highest in all of Central America, there are not city jobs for these kids. Feeling there are no options, many go “North”. Some get captured and return worse off. Some die. Some succeed to endure illegal migrant working conditions never imagined.

In 2003, La Semilla Training Center provided three groups of teens with a year of vocational agricultural training. Teaching the teenagers the same successful agricultural practices he has taught older farmers, Laureano



Laureano Jacobo, project director, with the enthusiastic group of youth from Las Aradas, Honduras



Young coop member is polishing silver jewelry

gives Honduran youth a vision of “farmer” as an economically viable vocation. The teens have responded with great enthusiasm, embracing the idea of having their own agricultural projects. The hours of labor they put in brought forth great harvests. Parents, and often siblings, were involved from start to finish. For example, families usually provided their sons and daughters with parcels of land to put into practice their newly learned farming knowledge.

The **Taxco Viejo Silver Artisans Cooperative** in Mexico is creating jobs and enabling members to express their own creativity and artistic skills. Coop members handle everything from design and production, to sales, shipping, and bookkeeping. The coop also gives 5% of their profits to community projects in Taxco Viejo.



Pineapple project planted by a youth group member in a *zanja productiva* (crop producing contour)

In Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico small hillside farms provide employment for much of the population. In these regions, new sustainable agricultural practices specifically adapted for hillside farming are being taught by 4 programs receiving EPIC support: **La Semilla** and **Loma Linda** in Honduras, **Vicente Guerrero** in Mexico, and **Río Motagua Sustainable Agriculture** in Guatemala. Farming can be a job that provides a livable income when crops respond to practices that increase the soil's fertility and moisture holding capacity. In only 2 to 3 years incomes can triple, enabling families to afford basic health care, schooling, clothing, and other essentials. The chart below shows the revolutionary changes that can take place for farm families when more profitable farming liberates farmers from the need to migrate to earn money for agricultural supplies or family necessities.



Fishing: A silver bath for fish bottle openers

Bernardo's family with 2 mz.* of land, 2001 harvest

- Bernardo Camaja went to the coast as an agricultural laborer for 6 months, leaving wife and children.
- With money earned on the coast, he bought 18 qq of fertilizer @ 11.39/qq = \$205, plus 10 liters of Gramoxson (herbicide) @ \$7.60/liter = \$76. Total cost of agricultural inputs for corn = \$281
- Bernardo planted 2 mz of corn using his purchases.
- Harvested 29.2 qq of corn for his family of 7 (2 mz. X 14.8 qq/mz—average harvest traditional farming)
- Just to produce family's corn (about 30 qq/yr.) used all of his land and most of money earned on the coast. There is almost no income for schooling, clothing, health care, etc.
- Bernardo had to be away from the family for 1/2 of the following year to again earn money for fertilizer and urgent family needs.

* 2 manzanas = 3 1/2 acres

Bernardo's family with 2 mz.* of land, 2003 harvest

- Bernardo does not migrate to the coast to work.
 - Bernardo is at home with his family and spends time improving his soil with organic materials and making contour ditches, rock walls, and terraces.
 - He buys no chemical fertilizer or herbicide.
 - Bernardo plants 2/3 mz of corn using new practices.
 - He harvests 30.4 qq of corn for his family of 7, (2/3 mz x 45.7 qq/mz—average yield with improved practices).
 - Has produced all his family's corn (about 30 qq/yr.), and is growing income producing crops on his other 1 1/3 mz.
 - Bernardo can now be home all year with his family and he will each year improve his own farm and increase his income.
- qq = quintal (100 lbs.)

Peacemaking and Weapons of Mass Destruction in the United States

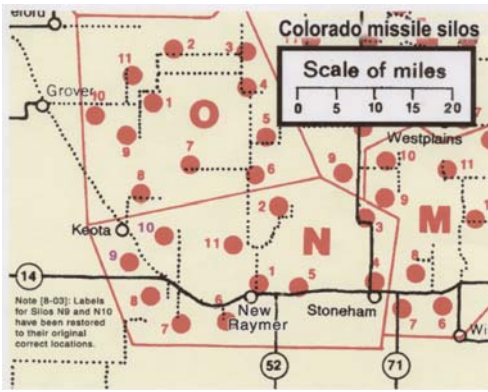
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Christians are called to love their enemies, pray for those who persecute them, and to seek agreement with their adversaries. - Matthew 5

Paid for by The Ecumenical Project for International Co-operation, Inc.

Peace Education in Watauga County, NC

Nine paid peacemaking announcements were published in the Watauga Democrat newspaper, Spring 2003. The objective was to call readers to think about making peace.



Adopt-Missile-Silo Protests In Colorado

Nuclear weapons pose an almost incomprehensible threat to life on earth. EPIC's support of groups who non-violently resist the development and deployment of such weapons is an important part of our witness. To help resist the evil of nuclear weaponry and the mindset of "deterrence" through the threat of annihilation, EPIC is supporting the Boulder-based Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center (RMPJC) in their work of educating the public and empowering people to confront our nation's obsession with weapons of mass destruction.

49 nuclear active armed Minuteman III missiles are located in unmanned underground silos on the plains of northeastern Colorado with a total of 150 armed nuclear missiles commanded from F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Each of these missiles in Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming has a destructive power 10 to 20 times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Since the Cold War they remain on very high alert and can be launched within minutes on orders from the President.

In late July of 2003, the RMPJC helped organize the "Adopt-a-Missile Silo" protests in Colorado. Several hundred people dispersed themselves to stand vigil at the 49 missile silos located in northeastern Colorado. The small groups demonstrating at each silo then converged in Stoneham, Colorado, to debrief and hold a symbolic laying down of 49 cardboard missiles.

The United States is the undisputed world leader in weapons of mass destruction; we have one-half of all the nuclear weapons in the world--enough firepower to kill everyone and destroy life on the planet many times over. The United States now spends more each year on nuclear weapons programs than it did during the Cold War.

Human Rights — 27 million human beings were held as slaves in 2003



Tied to the owners of the coconut industry

EPIC is a supporting Patron of **Free the Slaves**, a non-profit organization working to end slavery worldwide. EPIC believes Free the Slaves and its sister organization Anti-Slavery International in the UK to be the most effective organizations fighting contemporary slavery. They do research on modern slavery and work to raise public awareness and educate policymakers. They promote slave-free supply chains and build consumer demand for slave-free products. They also work directly with local organizations that are actually breaking down doors to liberate illegally held slaves and then provide services for rehabilitation.



A young boy spins cotton

APRODENI-The Association for the Promotion of Human Rights for the Children of El Salvador

It takes poor countries and poor families many, many years to recover from a disastrous earthquake. On January 13 and February 13, 2001, earthquakes measuring 7.6 and 6.1 on the Richter scale struck El Salvador. One-sixth of all Salvadorians were left homeless or without their place of work.

Working through **APRODEHNI**, EPIC has continued in 2003 to help with reconstruction of homes in Camotepeque, Department of San Salvador, and La Segoria in the Department of Sonsonate. These are being built according to earthquake resistant principles that had not been used in the past in rural housing construction.



The Cultural Survival of Indigenous People

EPIC and a group of Maya leaders have been working to create **La Casa de la Cultura Maya**, a Maya cultural center in Antigua, Guatemala. The center will have a two part mission:

- 1) to detail the priceless contributions of Mayas to Guatemalan culture and identity
- 2) to encourage an important discussion of the cultural and environmental choices confronting Mayas today. These are the choices that will be made either consciously or by default in the coming years.

Chuck Regier, Curator of Exhibits at the Kauffman Museum, Kansas, came to Guatemala for a 2-week consultation in December, 2002. During January and February of 2003, EPIC helped with the construction of a new storage area and a handicapped accessible bathroom at the house in Antigua, Guatemala, where the cultural center will be located. The new accessible bathroom for the cultural center will help facilitate hosting diverse age groups.



Mary and Paul McKay lay out bathroom with master builder, Moisés Hernández



Pouring foundation footings



Plumbing the new bathroom

Millions of Marginally Productive Small Farms in Environmentally Fragile Areas

This is a major economic, environmental, and human problem worldwide. Previously in this report, the human problem of impoverished families was discussed. There are national economic implications because most of the food in many poor countries come from these farms. Environmentally, these regions are often disasters waiting to happen. Hillside farms are very susceptible to erosion and many have soils that are already depleted. With population growth, deforestation to acquire more farm land is exacerbating the erosion of steep terrains. If soil and water are not very carefully managed, topsoils will be lost permanently. Also, soil erosion causes rivers to fill with sediment, fish to die, and floods to be more dangerous.

In the last 5 years, two EPIC projects have motivated approximately 2000 farmers to use effective methods of soil and water conservation on their hillside farms. The staff of **La Semilla** and the **Río Motagua Sustainable Agricultural Projects** are dedicated to motivating farmers and teaching them new practices that retain and replenish the soil. Additionally, the program leaders are innovators, constantly experimenting and testing even more effective methods of soil and water management on small hillside farms.



At Loma Linda Training Center terraces built before Hurricane Mitch hit in late 1998 are still holding the soil and producing abundant crops.



The creative use of resources is integral to Loma Linda's work in sustainable agriculture. Discarded tires are used to make steps up to the dorms.

Achieving Educational Success for Really Poor Children

In Cuernavaca, Mexico, Elizabeth Marroquín has developed a preschool for children from squatter housing along an old railroad track. In the past the children from these homes had consistently failed in school, but now they are excelling when they enter first grade. Older children come to the **Good Earth Educational Center** for after school tutoring, and mothers gather here once a week for classes in the evening.

The 2003 EPIC Tour group visits **The Good Earth Educational Center** in Cuernavaca, Mexico.



Paul McKay's puppet greets school director Elizabeth Marroquín. The children gather at noon to listen to a story before going home.



EPIC Also Supported The Following Projects in 2003

Guatemala

FUNDAMARCOS Administration (Maya Foundation)

MEXICO

Mennonite Central Committee Evaluation
Mennonite Central Committee Program Support

PERU

Leadership Training

USA

The Land Institute—Salina, KS

The EPIC Mexico Tour

In 2003 a group of seven participants joined Paul and Mary McKay on a study/travel tour of Mexico's cultural heartland. The tour visited EPIC's project partners at The Good Earth Educational Center, the Vicente Guerrero Rural Development Program, and the Taxco Viejo Silver Artisans Cooperative. Participants said they came away with an increased sense of hope for sustainability in our world because of the talent and dedication of all the people they met.



"The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more." Jonas Salk, MD