

EPIC - 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

EPIC seeks effective and creative solutions for significant global problems. In 2004 our focus was on **Marginally Productive Small Farms in Environmentally Fragile Areas.**

For a stable society, families must have:

- Food
- Employment
- Hope for the future

In poor countries millions of families work marginally productive small farms on environmentally fragile hillsides. These are very tough places to farm and farm families are poor.



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EPIC's program areas in Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico are full of this kind of hillside farm:

- Small—5 acres (3 manzanas) is considered good sized
- Steep and often rocky
- Topsoil rapidly eroding
- Depleted soil causing very low yields for most food crops
- Agricultural inputs continually increasing in price

EPIC considers this to be a significant global problem because in many developing countries these small farms produce most of the local food and provide employment for much of the country's population. Yet environmentally these regions are disasters waiting to happen. Erosion of hillside fields and leaching of nutrients is causing the land to become unproductive. Then deforestation to acquire more farmland in order to produce enough food exacerbates the erosion of the steep terrain. This causes streams and rivers to silt up.

With our program partners, EPIC has developed successful sustainable agricultural practices specifically for the problems confronted by hillside farmers. Cost effective farmer-to-farmer teaching techniques encourages the spread of these practices. Program leaders are also innovators, experimenting and testing to develop ever more effective soil and water management practices.



A farmer compares ears of corn from fields with and without the new sustainable practices.

Participants in EPIC's sustainable agriculture programs usually double their corn and bean yields in the first year of implementing new practices. This dramatic increase is largely the result of water retention practices that also increase the water holding capacity of the soil. By employing organic methods to build soil fertility, harvests of basic food crops triple by the second or third year, while money spent buying chemical fertilizer and pesticides is reduced.

Seen in a larger world context, EPIC's success in doubling and tripling yields, while reducing the costs of production, could provide hope for millions of farmers worldwide who also work marginally productive small farms in environmentally fragile areas.



The rocky field seen on the previous page is now in process of restoration.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EPIC'S RURAL PROJECTS IN 2004

(See complete list of projects on the last page)

FUNDAMARCOS Sustainable Agriculture in Guatemala worked with 277 farmers (about 1,939 family members) in 10 communities. They plan to include 4 more villages in 2005 and also start a complimentary nutrition and community health care program serving the same area.

La Semilla del Progreso in Honduras taught vocational agriculture to 63 teens in 3 youth groups in 2004 and will be adding another group in 2005. The training center also continued its ongoing program of providing courses on new agricultural practices for community leaders and farmers.

Loma Linda is in the process of establishing itself as an independent Honduran NGO. It is Central America's oldest training center for the promotion of hillside sustainable agriculture.

Vicente Guerrero in Mexico is working with EPIC to undertake a new project restoring *maguay* in its place of origin. In 2005 they plan to terrace 10 kilometers and plant 8,000 new seedlings.



Q'anil is a Maya educational institution working in a remote rural area of Guatemala. EPIC's contribution of \$1015 is enabling 63 children from rural villages to attend a new Maya middle school.

Mothers of the Q'anil scholarship students meet to give their input and support for their children's education.

THE PEOPLE POWER OF MEMBERS

Dana DeLoca, an EPIC member who is employed in the Media Department of the University of Texas, Austin, spent two weeks doing video documentation of the work of **La Semilla del Progreso** in Honduras. She interviewed and filmed many persons, including members of the **Tres de Septiembre Farmers Association**. This group of 21 farm families have been receiving courses and follow-up supervision from La Semilla del Progreso Training Center since 2002. The response of these formerly landless farmers has been remarkable with 100% of association members employing measures of soil and water conservation on their newly acquired farmland.



Dana photographs Concepción Calles as she agilely uses a long machete to weed her bean field.



Charis Smith enjoys a new friend at *Tres de septiembre*.

EPIC members, David and Charis Smith visited EPIC projects in Guatemala and Honduras.



David helps carry improved fodder grass to the cow of Leonardo Calo, **FUNDAMARCOS** program participant in Guatemala. Leonardo milks 4 liters/day from his cow after its calf has nursed. His wife makes cheese and sells 2 cheeses per day, providing the family with \$1.56 new income. Before learning to improve his fodder, this was not possible. Whey left over from cheese making is fed to piglets for additional income.



Felipe and Albertina Tomás of **FUNDAMARCOS** receive a handcrafted replica locomotive bell in acknowledgement of 30+ years of dedicated service teaching soil and water conservation and sustainable agriculture.



An iMac with undersized memory and outdated software made difficult administrative operations in the EPIC office. EPIC member Richard McKay spent many days updating the system, installing new software, and creating desktop shortcuts to facilitate use. Following the iMac refurbishing, Richard gave hands-on instruction to Mary and Paul.

Becky McKay-Epp, director of a preschool in Colorado, selected and purchased educational materials for **The Good Earth Preschool** in Cuernavaca, Mexico. This is a preschool for children from squatter housing along an old railroad track. Previously these children entered first grade totally unprepared. The teachers were thrilled with these new educational materials that are extremely expensive and hard to find in Mexico.



This year Reggie and Emily Norton visited the work of the **FUNDAMARCOS Sustainable Agricultural Program** in Guatemala. Very impressed by the enthusiasm of the farmers and the remarkable increases in yields they obtained with the new agricultural techniques, Reggie raised \$10,000 for the program after returning home to England. \$5,000 will expand the agricultural work and \$5,000 will initiate primary health care service.

As a small organization, EPIC is dependent on the people power of members, donors and dedicated program staff. In 2004 it received donated professional assistance from 23 EPIC supporters. It also received help with operational services from 10 persons.