



ECUMENICAL PROJECT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

# 2007 Annual Report

2007 was a year of significant innovation and expansion in programs that EPIC has been working with for several years. When program participants have had success in their first efforts, they have the confidence and skills to strike out and build on that success in new areas.

## Highlights of 2007

### FUNDAMARCOS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM — GUATEMALA

Once families have a secure food supply and a bit of cash to invest, they can make choices that will further enhance family income and quality of life. Thus, Epic's work with farm families begins by increasing harvests of basic food crops, which in Guatemala are corn and beans. Introducing extremely effective new practices of water management, soil conservation and sustainable agriculture doubles corn and beans harvests in the first year, and by the third year harvests regularly triple. At the same time, the use of expensive purchased agricultural inputs is greatly reduced with switching to organic farming. These new farming practices demand rigorous labor, but if the family farm is only 5 acres, very intensive farming is essential.

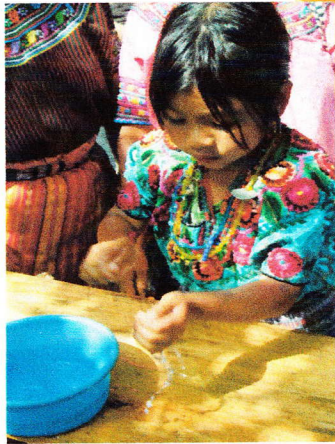
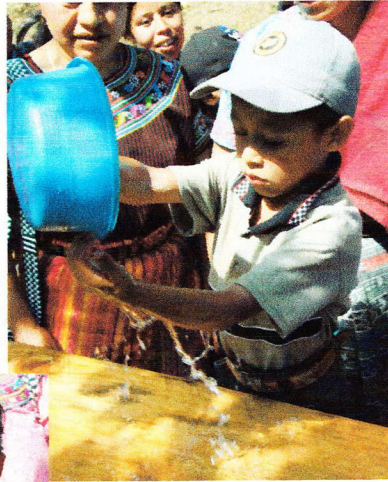


Many participants of the FUNDAMARCOS program are now able to produce their family's food and grow a small cash crop. This success has encouraged an outburst of diverse new activities by program participants. These are some of the projects undertaken in 2007:

- ◆ 22 women in the village of Xibalba have chicken projects, and in neighboring Llano Santa Rosa an equal number of chicken projects are planned for early 2008.
- ◆ A group of 20 men are working on a community irrigation project to grow vegetables in the dry season.
- ◆ Farmers throughout the program area are planting cash crops—vegetables, fruit trees, and coffee.
- ◆ 4 villages have large school vegetable gardens.

- ◆ Women in 9 villages are attending classes stressing good hygiene, improved nutrition, vaccinations for children and pregnant women and preparation of herbal medicines.
- ◆ Nurseries of coffee plants and trees for firewood and lumber are being planted.

Teaching children to wash hands before eating effectively reduces illness.



This nursery of small coffee trees can soon be transplanted. When planted in contour rows, coffee is a good cash crop for hillside farms and also prevents erosion.



Farmers build a distribution tank for the mini-irrigation project that will allow 20 families to produce vegetables during the dry season.

## COUNTRY WIDE MULTIPLICATION OF FARMER TRAINING CENTERS — HONDURAS

*La Semilla del Progreso*, with its farmer-to-farmer training strategy, is providing a model for teaching environmentally sustainable agriculture for the country of Honduras. For several years Laureano Jacobo, founder of *La Semilla*, has been helping other rural leaders throughout Honduras start their own CEA's or *Centros de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje* (Centers for Teaching and Learning). These are farmer owned and operated centers dedicated to increasing the skills of local farmers and promoting the very successful sustainable agricultural practices that Laureano has been refining and teaching at *La Semilla*.



Jorge Bonilla and his wife Andriana stand in front of their new classroom. With help from Christian (13) and Araceli (9) they run the CEA "*El Naranjo*".

One example of a CEA is the center developed by Jorge Bonilla and his family on their farm. In 2007, their CEA, "*El Naranjo*", gave instruction to 26 families from their village of Santa Maria and 4 neighboring villages. Part of the instruction includes visiting and learning about all of the activities on Bonilla's very diversified farm. This family farm includes goats, pigs, a fish pond, ducks, geese, bees, many varieties of vegetables, fruit trees, and 8,000 young coffee seedlings.

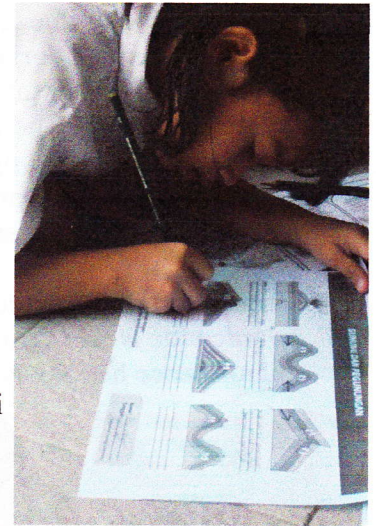


The rural leaders who had each developed their own training center felt they could gain more influence with the Honduran government if their informal network became a legalized organization. Laureano provided leadership to this effort, and in 2006 the network of CEA's received recognition as a national non-profit by the Honduran government. This has also increased the network's credibility with international funding organizations. Presently, leadership from the national network of CEA's frequently meets with Honduran government officials, and discussions include the CEA's becoming a part of the national agricultural extension service. In 2007 the network grew to 18 functioning CEA's, with others in various stages of formation.

A group of local farmers tour Jorge Bonilla's CEA, "El Naranjo", to see the way he manages his farm.

### **TAKING POST-TRAUMA HEALING TO RURAL SCHOOLS INDONESIA**

When the Indonesian island of Java experienced a 6.3 earthquake on May 27, 2006, Nia Fliam-Ismoyo, an international batik artist, was living in the stricken city of Yogyakarta. She said, "In the days following the quake it seemed impossible to return to business as usual without extending a hand to those in desperate need." Many children were afraid and showing signs of post traumatic stress. These children knew of the gigantic Asian tsunami and had just survived this earthquake. Additionally, Mount Merapi, a nearby volcano, threatened a major eruption before and after the earthquake! (Active Mount Merapi was featured in National Geographic, Jan. 2008).



With help from a child psychologist with experience in trauma healing, a special elementary school curriculum called "When the Earth Speaks" was developed to help children deal with their fears and trauma. "When the Earth Speaks" encourages students to view the earth as a living, breathing, moving entity that daily "speaks" to us through wind, waves and rains—and also through the rumblings of earth tremors. Hands-on science experiments introduce a basic understanding of earthquakes, volcanoes, and plate tectonics, while art and creative writing opportunities provide an outlet for children to express their fears and anxieties.

"When the Earth Speaks" was first implemented as a summer program for 75 children in the village of Sudimoro, and in the fall, the curriculum was taken to 4 elementary schools in Yogyakarta. Key to its success was the fact that Nia Ismoyo, who conceived of the program, was able to recruit faculty and students from universities in Yogyakarta to serve as volunteer consultants and facilitators. Over 2,400 children benefited at a cost of just over \$3 per student.

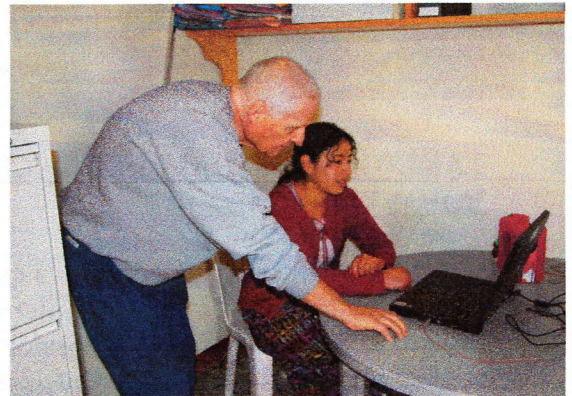


Nia's dream from the beginning was to have a bus to take the program to the badly damaged villages of rural Bantul. Based on the success in Yogyakarta and with financial support provided by EPIC, "When the Earth Speaks" was refined and adapted to the needs of rural schools. From Nov. 2006 to June 2007, the Cakawala School Bus traveled throughout the region reaching 14 elementary schools and another 1,754 students. Students were especially enthusiastic about conducting the science experiments. The facilitators were 38 volunteers from 4 universities and represented a wide variety of disciplines. The majority were enjoying their first formal role as teachers. Daily discussions after classes allowed them to constantly adapt the curriculum since each school presented its own unique challenges.

### MICROCREDIT FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN — GUATEMALA

Felipa Xico wanted to help the many widows left without a means of support due to civil war and government repression in Guatemala during the 1980's. Starting by organizing weaving groups of Maya woman to produce and sell their traditional textiles, she went on to found *Mujeres en Acción* that has become a strong micro-credit organization. It now has 75 groups with approximately 1,500 women members receiving small business loans.

Since Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank were awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 2006, the importance of microfinance has gained international prominence. This has enabled *Mujeres en Acción* to get funds



Dick Williams checks the computer of a member of the *Mujeres en Acción* staff.

for giving more loans, but reporting to donor agencies became a problem. They needed to report using computer accounting program, QuickBooks Pro. Their accountant who could do this was hired away by another organization. Dick Williams, enthusiastic professor and EPIC's treasurer, went to Guatemala and gave 6 days of classes on accounting using Quick Books Pro. His course was attended by six *Mujeres* staff and five persons from other NGO's. Dick said he has seldom had such attentive, hard working students.



Twice a month these women in Patzicia, Guatemala, gather to make small payments on their loans.

### HOMES FOR EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS — PERU

When a devastating earthquake struck Pisco, Peru, on August 15, 2007, the congregation of a small new church on the outskirts of Lima felt compelled by their faith to help. Although poor themselves, they were so moved with the plight of survivors living under plastic sheeting in a park, that they pledged to provide houses for 20 families. The congregation researched the options, and found that reasonable, simple prefab houses were available in Lima. They committed for transportation costs, and put out a call for \$320 per prefab house (walls and roof). EPIC responded with financing for 10 houses.





Joaquin Piñas and his wife Antonia cutting the ribbon at the inauguration of their new house.

All of the 20 families who received houses had, in addition to losing their homes, also lost immediate family members. On successive weekends, church members worked together with the families assembling the 20 houses. Probably equally significant to receiving a house was the solidarity and friendship provided by the congregation. In addition to working together, the church brought in a counselor for psychological evaluations, and they provided ongoing pastoral care and grief counseling.

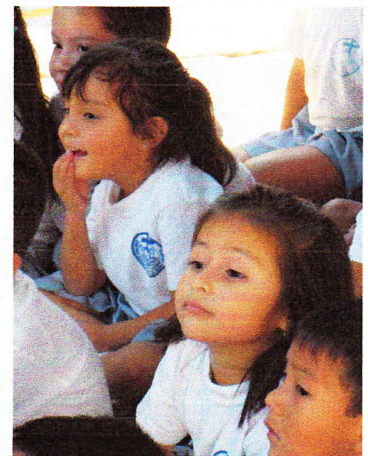
In total EPIC provided houses for 44 earthquake survivors, including 31 children. Of the 10 families helped, 7 had lost one parent.

### PROPERTY FOR A CHILD CARE CENTER — MEXICO

Elizabeth Marroquin has developed a great preschool for low-income families living on an abandoned train track right-of-way in Cuernavaca. This year *La Buena Tierra* (The Good Earth Preschool) served 40 children, ages 3, 4 and 5 years. In the past the children from this poor barrio had consistently failed in school, but now they are excelling when they enter first grade. Older children come for after school tutoring, and mothers gather here once a week for a parenting education program in the evening.



Elizabeth and staff told EPIC of their desire to purchase property adjoining the preschool to create a child care center for working mothers. Once again this year, three mothers had come to plead that *La Buena Tierra* open a child care center. These women work on the city streets selling a variety of items, including food from mobile grills. Their babies and toddlers must accompany them all day, sleeping in cardboard boxes or, when they begin to walk, playing on the city sidewalks.



Directly across the narrow dirt street, a good sized property became available for \$8,000. A Christmas appeal by *La Buena Tierra* brought in \$1,900 and EPIC was able to contribute the rest. This is just the beginning of a long series of steps before there is a functioning child care center, but everyone is very excited.



The property where the new child care center will be built will require a lot of work!



## **FOOD FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS — EL SALVADOR**

EPIC first worked with APRODENI (Association for the Promotion of Human Rights for the Children of El Salvador) in 2000 with a grant related to rebuilding civil society in a post-civil war country. APRODENI's mandate is working with the poorest children, and the poor usually live in the areas most vulnerable for disasters. EPIC teamed up with APRODENI after 2 major



earthquakes working in housing reconstruction and new wells. After

Hurricane Stan in 2005, and again this year after Hurricane Felix, EPIC responded through APRODENI with relief supplies.



Until the water subsided after Hurricane Felix, EPIC provided 2 weeks worth of food and soap for 90 families in the communities of Rio Viejo and Los Angeles. According to APRODENI's exact records, this included 206 adults, 155 girls and 125 boys, for a total of 485 persons.

## **PEACEMAKERS GATHER FOR A WEEKEND WORKSHOP — MEXICO**

In partnership with Casa de los Amigos, a Quaker organization, EPIC sponsored a weekend workshop, December 1 and 2, 2007, that brought together 28 representatives from 20 Mexican organizations, all of which are promoting peace, nonviolence, and the positive transformation of conflicts. Participants were enthusiastic and have asked that there be other workshops in 2008. During the evaluation session, participants said that the importance of this event was the opportunity to share experiences, tools, and strategies among groups working for similar goals within Mexican society.



**“That there is an immense variety in global problems almost defying generalization cannot be denied, although all are capable of being resolved if only the talent available in the international community... were to be harnessed for the task.”**

Fr. Thomas Cowley, EPIC's Founder

EPIC works with individuals and grassroots organizations who are implementing creative solutions to serious problems. This enables a small organization like EPIC to have a significant impact. Founder **Fr. Thomas Cowley** felt that a key to solving the world's problems was encouraging and enabling these talented and committed individuals and local organizations.