



BUILDING Bridges

A Change for Children Publication

DECEMBER 2003

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The seed for the farmer is not merely the source of future plants and food; it is the storage place of culture and history. Seed is the first link in the food chain. Seed is the ultimate symbol of food security.

Vandana Shiva
Indian scientist and activist



WHO GETS TO SIT AT THE TABLE?

Fifty years ago, James Watson and Francis Crick unravelled the structure of DNA, the genetic material in the nucleus of every cell of living organisms. **The Double Helix**, a bestseller written by Watson, popularized the discovery of the 'secret of life'. However, the illusion it created that a Nobel Prize was within the grasp of any brash, beer-guzzling postdoctoral student was quickly dispelled as DNA research forged ahead at an exponential rate. Within a few years, gene mapping and recombination in which a gene from one plant or animal species is spliced and inserted into the genome of a completely unrelated species of plant or animal became commonplace not only in university and government research labs but increasingly in the labs of multinational giants such as Monsanto, DuPont and Dow.

When Monsanto inserted a gene into canola seed to make the plant resistant to the company's own weed killer Round Up, it took out a patent on the genetically modified seed. Farmers must now buy the patented seed from Monsanto each year and pay \$15 per acre to plant it. Once you release transgenic canola into the environment, it's irreversible. Wind and insects easily carry pollen and seeds over considerable distances, so that even if you've never planted Monsanto Round-Up Ready (RR) canola, your neighbours' plants have contaminated your crop - as Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser found out. Such cross contamination is not a rare occurrence. The University of Manitoba found 32 of 33 samples of commercial canola seeds contaminated with the trait of herbicide resistance.

Percy Schmeiser has switched from canola to wheat while his case with Monsanto is on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. But even if he wins, Schmeiser's problems are far from over: Monsanto applied late last year for approval in both Canada and the United States for Round-Up Ready wheat with an eye to market its RR wheat in 2005.

Round-Up Ready wheat is a much more serious problem than RR canola. The edible oil extracted from canola seed contains neither DNA nor protein, which means that there is much less chance that genetically engineered (GE) canola will, in the long run, have health consequences on consumers. This is not the case with wheat. Wheat cereals or flour contain proteins and enzymes that could potentially damage immune systems of consumers.

***Cecily Mills** holds a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Alberta. She spent seven years in Central America with Witness for Peace and with the Volunteer Missionary Movement. Cecily is currently a Board member at Change for Children Association.*

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Change for Children Association (CFCFA) is an Edmonton-based non-profit, non-governmental organization with a 27-year history of working for sustainable, grassroots community development in Latin America and the Philippines.

Our development projects, their cost and priority, are determined by our Southern partners according to the current needs of their communities.

In Canada, our education program engages the public in a process of awareness raising, analysis and action on issues of global justice.

While CFCFA highly values its partnerships with communities of various religious and political persuasions, we are a non-sectarian, non-partisan society.



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BUILDING NEW BRIDGES

Several months ago, the Education Committee at Change for Children identified a need to revisit the purpose and objectives of our organizational newsletter – *Building Bridges*. *Building Bridges* is a unique publication, in that it serves many functions for the organization: it is a way for us to reach out to our community and keep people in touch with and involved in the organization; it is a way for us to engage the public at large in the issues that we are concerned with; it is a potential resource tool for educators; and it is, of course, one of the methods we use to promote financial support for the work that we do.

In the fall, a newsletter visioning committee was struck to collaborate on a format that would better meet these varied functions and make *Building Bridges* a more informative, useful publication for the people who receive and access it. Together we brainstormed some new ideas, recycled some old ones, and just plain left others alone. This issue is the culmination of our vision, and includes additions like this editorial page, a centre spread that provides at-a-glance information on the current issue's theme, articles from our project partners, and a section specifically geared toward educators.

We have attempted to create a newsletter that embodies the spirit of the *Bridge of Hope* and *Building Bridges* newsletters from previous years, while evolving the publication to meet current needs. We

have tried to strike a delicate balance between 'informative resource tool' and 'organizational newsletter' – a balance that is by no means complete. We would appreciate your feedback on this issue and suggestions on how we can continue to improve *Building Bridges* and produce a publication that appeals to the broad interests of its readership.

We would also like to encourage you to send us your letters and comments on the content of our issues and the work that we do. One of the most striking aspects about previous Change for Children publications was the input and letters from our supporters that helped to make this publication a place to share views and express solidarity – often from around the world. We have reprinted some of the letters that appeared in earlier publications (page 3) to give our readers a sense of how important these small communications can be to maintaining the essence of our organization.

December is always a time for reflection and review, a time for counting blessings and renewing faith in all of its manifestations. We have had an important and valuable look back while creating this latest version of *Building Bridges*, and have been reminded yet again how blessed we are as an organization to have been given such a strong foundation. It is this foundation that makes it possible for us to move forward with faith that we can make a difference and do extraordinary things.

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**ordinary people
can do
extraordinary
things**

- Hank Zyp
CFCFA Founder

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Editor: Nicole Smith **Newsletter Committee:** Pat Sears, Cecily Mills, Marguerite Watson, Myriam Zadnik, Paul Pucylo

Change for Children's newsletters have often been a space for people to share their experiences, their frustrations and their hope. This has been a place for our friends and supporters to extend their solidarity and express their sense of community with other members of the organization - even when they were physically distant from each other.

In October we were able to experience this same sense of solidarity and community in a very tangible way, when we celebrated the move to our new office space with a small gathering and ceremonial smudge. Founding members, long-time supporters and previous staff joined new volunteers and staff members to honour our past and celebrate our future. For those of you who couldn't join us, we offer you this small expression of that history and community - a look back at some of the letters Change for Children has received over the years.

From *Bridge of Hope*, March 1987:

Bishop Francisco Claver from the Philippines writes,

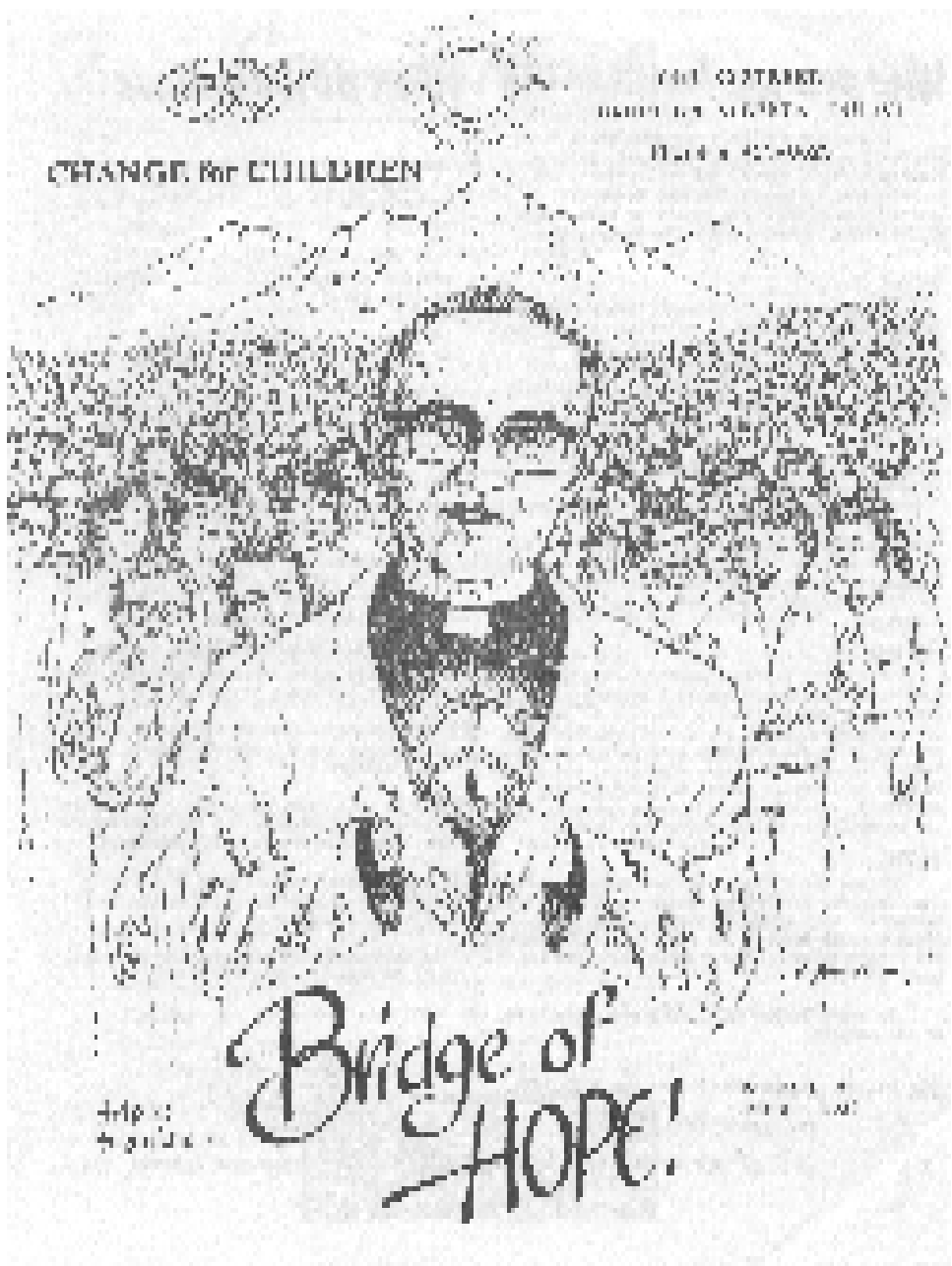
"Your Christmas card and letter arrived as we were building up to the events of February - and Freedom. It is only now I can write - sorry for the long delay. The harder part of our revolution in February has been going on this past half-year. We are not out of the woods yet, will not be for a long time, but at least there's great hope all around. I only wish they would leave our housewife of a president alone for a year. She'd do wonders merely cleaning up the mess. But everyone seems to be in the way."

Father Shay Cullen from the Philippines writes,

"Many thanks. I got your beautiful booklet *Bridge of Hope*. I am amazed and happy at the extent of your work in many countries. The development 'nuts and bolts' is so right and people oriented that it's great to see it in action.

From Nicaragua Father Joe Curcio, SFM writes,

"The war goes on its reckless course reaping harvests of broken lives. Regarding the co-op, things are healing and all are working together. I have plans to spend longer periods with them. I am also preparing another village for a project of drinking water...I love you all for your generosity and your efforts. Please don't allow human failings to weary you. Like a doctor we must understand disease and sickness. God be with you always."



A friend from Lethbridge writes,

"For a long time I felt alone in my concern for social justice. Your example has given me a deep sense of belonging to the human family, a family which cares for others...THANK YOU FOR SPREADING THE INFECTIOUSNESS OF HAPPINESS."

From *Building Bridges*, July 1993:

Dear Friends,

...I'm sad as I see poverty all around me. Innumerable men, women and children selling chiclets, towels, onions, live chickens, banana chips, soft drinks, etc. I see houses made entirely of cardboard and the brown, deforested parched land. I read in today's

newspaper that a nearby municipality has over 100 cases of leprosy - a disease aggravated by the starvation conditions in this land entering its third year of drought. Lake Managua has receded 1.5 km and the lagoons that provided tilapia have dried up. The unemployment and poverty of the people has accelerated the deforestation as people struggle to cut wood to sell. This in turn worsens the drought. A vicious cycle.

(But then) a luxuriously green tree, a brilliant yellow flowering bush, a bright smile, shining eyes dissipate my sadness and awaken hope.

Cecily Mills
Witness for Peace
Managua, Nicaragua

WHO GETS TO SIT AT THE TABLE?

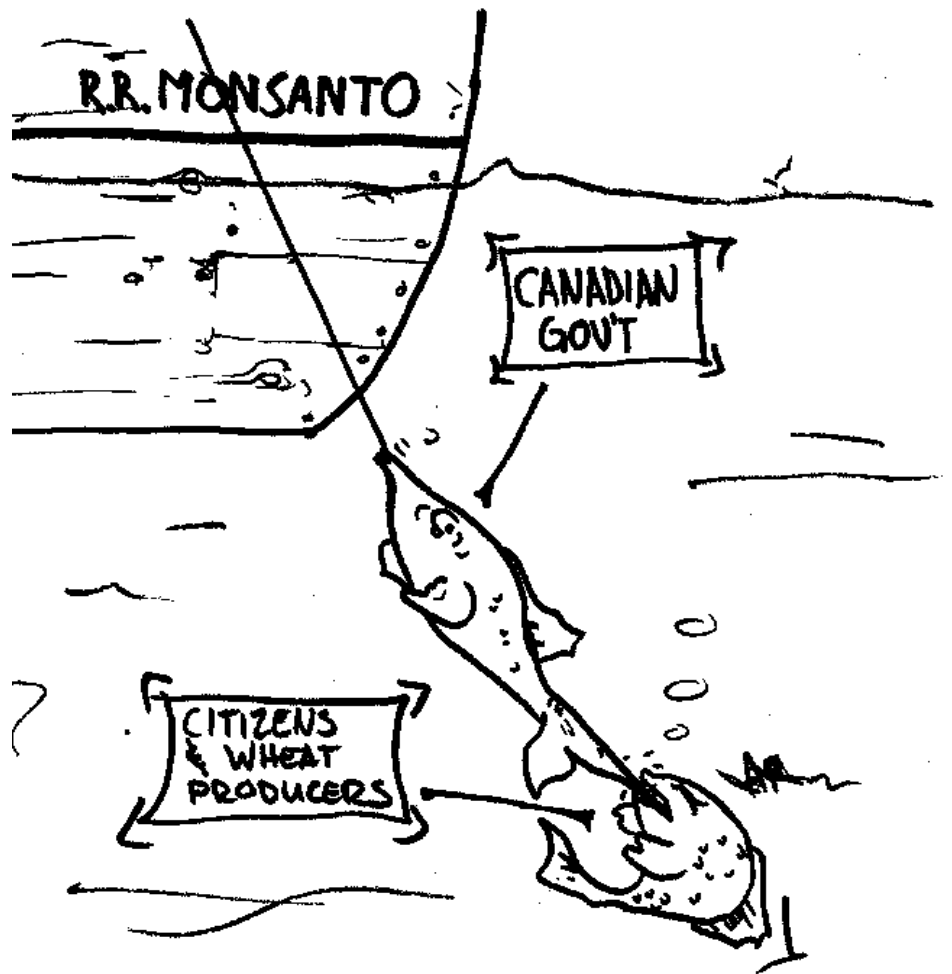
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Eighty-two per cent of Canada's wheat is sold to international customers - most of whom have already indicated that they will not buy GE wheat and will, most likely, boycott all Canadian wheat once GE wheat is introduced, because it will no longer be possible to guarantee the genetic purity of Canadian wheat. Even if Canada refuses to endorse RR wheat, its production in the United States would likewise jeopardize the status of Canadian wheat. Because again, once you release genes into the environment, it's irreversible.

Transnational biotechnology corporations are becoming the architects and 'owners' of life. Currently, more than four dozen GE foods and crops are being grown and sold in the U.S. and Canada. In addition to RR canola and RR wheat, Monsanto has developed RR corn and RR soybeans. Aside from genetic modifications to make plants immune to certain herbicides, GE crops have recombinant genes to make them resistant to insects and disease-causing viruses. Between 10-20% of potatoes, nearly 50% of corn and 25% of soy beans produced in Canada are transgenic. Although 80% of processed food products in Canada and the U.S. contain GE components, Canada and the U.S. have yet to develop even a voluntary labelling policy for GE foods.

The use of herbicide or pesticide resistant GE crops has led to an increased use of herbicides that contaminate water, harm aquatic life and breed herbicide resistant 'superweeds'. In 1999, Cornell University researchers discovered that the pollen from GE BT corn was poisonous to Monarch butterflies. A growing body of evidence points to adverse effects of GE crops on other beneficial insects, including ladybugs, lacewings and bees. After years of permitting GE crops on thousands of Canadian farms, the Canadian government has recently allocated a modest research grant to a University of Guelph professor to study the effect of GE crops on natural soil microbes. It is feared that genes inserted into GE plants may be picked up by beneficial soil microbes with unknown results.

In Western Canada, RR canola has already spread its modified genes into radishes and turnips. Genetic pollution of local and wild maize varieties with GE corn has occurred in Oaxaca, Mexico, the centre of origin of maize. It is feared that irreversible loss of biodiversity will occur as GE crops become



cartoon by Amber Rooke

more prevalent. The patenting of GE foods and widespread biotechnological food production threatens to eliminate farming as it has been practiced for 12,000 years in the Americas.

**Six million tons of cheap
US and Canadian corn - much
of it genetically modified -
pour into Mexico each year,
displacing small farmers from
the international market.**

Farmers around the world are being pressured to buy GE seeds. In Nicaragua, the Agriculture and Livestock Union (UNAG) fears that these 'cheaper' seeds could cost farmers in the long-term. But the Nicaraguan government, in its desperation to open borders to international investment and free trade, may not have much choice in the

matter. Already GE food (corn and soy) and seed corn donated by the US through the United Nations World Food Program have reached Nicaragua.

Four of the world's largest agricultural companies have agreed to share their technology free of charge with African scientists. Monsanto, DuPont, Dow, and Syngenta (Switzerland) will donate patent rights and seed varieties. Is this the kind of help needed? Likely, the ones to gain from this plan are the donor companies who will benefit from sales of fertilizers and herbicides while the original seed varieties and agricultural methods developed over millennia are lost. Vandana Shiva, a physicist and India's best known environmentalist, believes that biotechnology will be a disaster for the people of India and the developing world. It will mean increased corporate control over the food supply because a few multinational corporations will own the seeds and patents.

While GE seeds pose a problem to farmers both in the South and the North, *campesinos*, or peasant farmers, in the South are confronting greater and more immediate problems arising from an alphabet soup of free trade treaties.

It is well known that throughout Latin America, vast tracks of fertile land are owned by small elites. For 500 years, depriving the vast majority of rural workers of sufficient land for subsistence farming has been the means of colonization, making possible the growth of banana republics and the obtention of vast armies of cheap farm labour. Even today, in Guatemala, a mere two per cent of landowners own 3/4 of the country's arable land. In Brazil, 100 million hectares of land remain unfarmed, while more than four million families are landless. Big landowners are paid not to grow anything on their property. As a result, the peasants not only remain landless, but unemployed as well.

What is not well known and always overlooked by international policy makers, is the productivity of millions of small farmers. In Brazil, there are 4.3 million family farmers who control about 30% of the land but produce 80% of the cassava, about 70% of the beans and about 60% of the maize. Their responsibility in food security, as in the rest of Latin America, is critical. On steep, rocky, minuscule plots, Mayan *campesinos* in the Guatemalan highlands still plant corn, beans, squash and fruit trees in an integrated system that replenishes soil nitrogen and prevents soil erosion. In the Somotillo region of Nicaragua, farmers sponsored by Change for Children continue to learn and practice sustainable farming methods.

Since NAFTA abolished trade barriers between Mexico, the United States and Canada, cheaper imports from the U.S. have flooded the Mexican markets. Six million tons of cheap U.S. and Canadian corn - much of it genetically modified - pour into Mexico each year, displacing small farmers from the internal market. NAFTA devastated the one in five Mexicans working in agriculture. The overwhelming majority of these farmers are poor subsistence farmers who work plots as small as two acres.

When tariffs on pork and poultry disappeared in January 2003, mid-sized farmers were also devastated. Some 700,000 people are expected to lose jobs in the farming and other food industries during 2003. *Campesinos* are traditionally dependent on medium-size producers to obtain a monetary income beyond the meagre sales of their own crops. Now many may be forced

to join the estimated 300,000 Mexicans a year who make the illegal journey to find work in the U.S. - the Americans' real advantage comes from huge taxpayer-provided subsidies that allow them to sell overseas at 20% below the actual cost of production.

"Markets are flooded with cheap imports. Imported milk is dumped in Ecuador for half of what it costs to produce in Ecuador, but transnationals - mostly Nestle - sell it back to us at \$1.80 US per litre. We have no way to live, and the FTAA will only make it worse." This complaint from an Ecuadorian farmer

Earth provides enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed.

Mahatma Gandhi

echoes in each country of Central and South America.

GE crops, designed for the Latin American market, are grown in the U.S. for export to the South. *Rojito Chiquito*, a small red bean, engineered at Washington State University, is set to be produced primarily for export to

Central America. By current estimates, a flood of cheap, imported beans could wipe out 200,000 Nicaraguan family farms - affecting nearly 1.5 million people, a quarter of the population. In a country with the highest rate of malnutrition of Latin America, where the under- and unemployment rate is over 60%, financially burdened consumers will choose the cheapest beans on the market, regardless of whether they are GE, or grown in the mountains of Nicaragua, or in the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

While crops are grown in the U.S. specifically for export to Latin America, in Latin America, new monocultures for export are displacing subsistence farmers and pushing the agricultural frontier into valuable tropical forests.

It's a system that doesn't make any sense. In Brazil, soybean has displaced wheat in many fields in recent years. Now Brazil has to import 80% of its flour, paid for in US dollars - whose value, relative to the real, rose 50% in the last year. Latin American countries are forced to grow crops such as soybeans, not to feed their own people but to increase their export earnings in hard currency to pay their external (eternal) debt in an unjust economic system where poverty, impoverishment and social exclusion are being globalized.



A young boy works in a field in Northern Brazil.

In much of Latin America there is a sacred dimension to food production. When ears of corn are dry, for example, the family will gather to remove the kernels from the cobs after the father sorts the corn into three piles - with the best ears saved for seed, followed by those for human consumption and those reserved for the chickens and pigs. The ears for seed are hung on the rafters until the next planting season. In a Mayan village in Guatemala, the seed is waked at the altar for the entire night before communal planting.

With the advent of technology and industrialized farming, this sacred circle of reaping and sowing is threatened - along with the livelihood of those who practice it.



FOOD INSECURE

It is estimated that ONE BILLION people causes each year. About 24,000 people die every day from hunger

FOOD SECURITY exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food security means achieving four major factors or components: ensuring that sufficient food is available; maintaining relatively stable food supplies; allowing access to food for those in need of it; and ensuring the biological utilization of food.

EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS THE RIGHT to healthy and nutritious food. In addition, countries and people have the right to protect their food sovereignty - in other words, to decide which types of food they want, according to their cultural patterns, and to be in control of the production process.

FAMINE AND WARS CAUSE ABOUT 10% OF HUNGER DEATHS, although these tend to be the ones you hear about most often. The majority of hunger deaths are caused by chronic malnutrition. Families facing extreme poverty are simply unable to get enough food to eat.

THE CANADIAN HUNGER FOUNDATION reports that 1.2 billion people worldwide are living in extreme poverty. 226 million of these people are children under the age of five.

ABUNDANCE, NOT SCARCITY is the best description of the world's food supply. According to Food First/Institute for Food and Development policy, there is enough food available to provide more than 4lbs of food to every person every day: 2 ½ lbs of grain, beans and nuts, ½ lb of fruits and vegetables – and another lb of meat, milk and eggs.

Almost 78% of countries that report child malnutrition are food-exporting countries – growing crops specifically for export sale on the world market. Over a third of the grain grown in these countries is destined for the livestock that will later be consumed by people in the “First” world.

India – a country with 350 million hungry people living in crisis – is the third largest producer of food in the world. In 2000, the government of India was unable to secure enough export markets and the granaries of the Food Corporation of India overflowed with 80 mil-



le in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. That's roughly 100 times as many as those who actually die from these or hunger-related causes. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five.

lion tonnes of excess food grains. This year, India has 40 million tonnes of excess grain that it can't sell on the world market, while more than a quarter of its population is too poor to afford an adequate diet.

IT IS POVERTY THAT KEEPS PEOPLE HUNGRY, not a shortage of food. The vast majority of exports from developing countries are commodities – cash crops like sugar, coffee and cocoa. Often, the world market price for commodities falls below the cost of production. Coffee prices, for example, have recently fallen to an all-time low (currently around 50¢ per lb), translating into poverty and hunger for thousands of small producers in Latin America.

OVERPOPULATION IS NOT THE CAUSE OF HUNGER. It is, actually, usually the other way around – hunger is one of the real causes of overpopulation. The more children a poor family has, the more likely it is that some of them will survive and be able to contribute to the family's income, and – in countries with little or no social safety nets – be able to care for their parents in old age.

Every child born in the industrialized world will consume up to 40

times as much as a child in the developing world during his lifetime. Small population increases in the first world can put eight times as much pressure on world resources as large increases in the third world.

THE IMPACT of GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) on the environment are largely unknown, and the scientific community still does not agree about their safety and security. There are already many studies that demonstrate potential risks to the environment, human health, and socio-economic status.

What is known is that transnational corporations are using the state of hunger in the world as an argument in the debate over the benefits of genetically engineered food. In May of this year CropLife America commended the Bush administration's suit against Europe's moratorium on GMOs, claiming that "the EU's illegal moratorium had a negative ripple effect of creeping regulations which have resulted in denying food to starving people." The cry from the farmer, the community and the resistance efforts at the World Trade Organization summit, has been that seeds are the first link in the food chain – control of the seed is control of the food.



Undernourishment Poverty and Development

In countries with a high prevalence of undernourishment, a comparably high proportion of the population struggles to survive on less than US\$1 per day.

While poverty is undoubtedly a cause of hunger, hunger can also be a cause of poverty. In fact, hunger often deprives impoverished people of the one valuable resource that they can call their own – the strength and skill to carry out productive work.

Hunger in childhood impairs both mental and physical growth, crippling capacity to learn in school and earn at work. When they reach adulthood, evidence from household food surveys in developing countries shows that people with smaller and slighter body frames caused by undernourishment earn lower wages in jobs involving physical labour.

Widespread hunger impairs the economic performance not only of individuals but of entire nations. Studies conducted for the Asian Development Bank in India, Pakistan and Viet Nam estimated that the combined effect of stunting and iodine and iron deficiency reduced GDP by 2 to 4 percent per year.

Recent calculations by FAO (**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**) suggest that halving the number of undernourished by 2015 would yield a value of more than US\$120 billion per year by allowing people to live longer, healthier lives.

THIS BUSINESS OF FARMING

When Clarence and Jenny Visser first began farming in Alberta, they worked 100 acres of land. At the time, the average farm was three times that size and anyone with a full section (600 acres) was working a lot of land. Now it takes 3000 acres or more for a farm to be competitive on the world market. Small farmers compete with transnational corporations for market share and local producers fight imports for space on market shelves. In the 1950s in Alberta, families ran the farm operation, now, regardless of who's tilling the soil, the bottom line is running the show.

When a combine costs upwards of a quarter of a million dollars and cabbage from Manitoba is so cheap that it's less expensive to ship it to Edmonton than to purchase from local growers, farmers can't afford to think of their operation as anything other than industry. It renders the image of a man and his family on a farm to some romanticized ideal worthy of depiction by Norman Rockwell – something that belongs to a bygone era, better remembered fondly than practiced actively. But the new reality of food production does pose an interesting question: how much of it is actually about food, and how much of it is about production?

Clarence and Jenny farmed potatoes using only organic fertilizers, and were happy to yield 10 tonnes of potatoes per acre. Today, their son Gordon regularly harvests 30 tonnes per acre on the same farmland – using chemically based fertilizers. And therein lies the essential problem with this business of farming: what incentive is there to invest in the long-term sustainability of the earth, when technological 'advancements' can triple your return on investment? Especially when that return is your livelihood, and your livelihood hinges on your ability to survive in the global marketplace. Or, as Clarence so adequately puts it, "destroying the basic resource of food is wrong, but..."

Yes, but. David Suzuki has long argued that alienating ourselves from our food sources is a separation of humanity from the earth – and ultimately from each other. It is, in fact, a prerequisite for the very consumerism that feeds the need for industrialized agriculture,

a vicious cycle that manifests as a need for land to be consolidated into fewer and fewer hands, for developing countries to rely on cash crops, and for farmers everywhere to maximize output, regardless of the damage done. Somewhere along the line food stopped being something cultivated for nourishment and became a product that is manufactured and consumed.

If we are all stewards of the earth then surely the farmer is her champion. But the root of the problem lies beyond the control of the farmer himself – it lies in the consumption patterns that make it necessary for us to accept industry and agriculture as the same thing. Ultimately, it is a question about how we live our lives.

Clarence sees it as a struggle between our need as human beings to care for each other, and the reality of how we live our lives. "How am I going to care for others if I'm focused on the bottom line?" he asks. "And how am I going to do anything at all if I don't?"

Nicole Smith is the Education Coordinator at Change for Children. Clarence and Jenny Visser are local farmers and long-time members of the organization.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Source: FAO State of Food Security in the World (SOFI) Report 2002

FOOD, REFORM & POLITICS

Lula's Road to FOME ZERO

Brazil's new Workers' Party (PT) government, represented by Lula Inacio da Silva, is being attacked for not implementing a social agenda during his first nine months of office. Instead his government seems to be taking actions it previously would have led protests against. The Lula government has been strongly criticized by activists and PT members alike, and has left many Brazilians discontented, disappointed, and disillusioned with the prospects for positive change in their country. The disillusionment comes in large part from the most recent reforms and legislations of the new government, some of which threaten Brazilian access to affordable and healthy food to meet their consumption needs.

The recent measures taken by Lula are dangerous - and contradict the social agenda that he has advocated for more than 30 years.

Meanwhile, the big wigs in Washington, at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have applauded Lula's new reforms and legislation, as his new focus is very much in line with the neo-liberal, macro-economic policies these institutions advocate.

Last summer, Brazil passed two very controversial constitutional reforms: one to reform their Social Welfare System - introducing private pension funds for public workers, and significantly increasing the retirement age for Brazilian public workers; the other involving major changes to their current tax system. The reform has many different elements, but has been primarily criticized by public interest groups for its introduction of a general service and sales tax, set at the alarmingly high rate of 25%. This component of the reform was rendered the most controversial by many activists and consumer-awareness groups in Brazil, who contend that it contradicts Lula's famous promise of FOME ZERO - *no hunger* - arguing that the dramatic increase in cost will undermine the ability of many Brazilians to buy the food they need to meet their needs.

Aside from these constitutional reforms, new federal legislation has also been criticized, and thousands of Brazilians have taken to the streets in protest. For instance, in Sep-

tember the federal government lifted its ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), passing federal legislation to allow the planting and sale of Monsanto's genetically modified, herbicide-resistant variety of soybean. This decision was heavily influenced by Brazil's strong Agri-Business lobby, which has been trying to lift Brazil's GMO ban for some time. The decision however, was not supported by many Brazilian farmers and social activists who feel this legislation opens a floodgate to accepting other GMOs, further threatening Brazil's access to safe and healthy food products.

Brazil's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment were against the decision to allow GMO soybean sales, charging that the lack of appropriate testing renders it unconstitutional - the government is unable to effectively determine the environmental and health affects of introducing these products into Brazilian markets. Although the legislation passed, the Environment Minister was able to include a provision requiring companies to label products containing more than 1% transgenic products. And despite the federal government's acceptance of Monsanto's GMO seeds and products, legislation in three Brazilian states has outlawed GMOs completely.



The recent measures taken by Lula's government are dangerous, as many of their policies are highly neo-conservative in nature, adhering to strict fiscal policies. Policies that fundamentally contradict the social agenda that Lula has advocated more than 30 years, representing the labour movement and Workers' Party during various protests and campaigns among Brazil's working class citizens. Nevertheless, many PT officials are in favor of the reforms, citing these changes as necessary to the groundwork that must be completed before their government can embark on the highly ambitious social agenda that brought it to power in the last election.

Laura Roberts is a committed CFCA volunteer with a variety of experience in local activism and international development. She recently returned from Brazil where she was working on a research project through the University of Alberta.

A Matter of Time

Approximately 24,000 people a day are dying from hunger and hunger-related causes. 18,000 of those people are children under the age of five.



Ask your students to use these figures to calculate how many adults and children will have died from hunger-related causes before the bell rings at the end of class.

These figures indicate that approximately 17 people die every minute from hunger and hunger-related causes. Ask a student to watch the clock and walk up to the board and write down the number 17 every time a minute passes.

Famine and wars cause about 10% of hunger deaths, although these tend to be the ones you hear about most often.

The majority of hunger deaths are caused by chronic malnutrition.

Families facing extreme poverty are simply unable to get enough food to eat.

EDUCATOR'S CORNER

e-sources and plans

Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger

www.feedingminds.org

An international classroom for exploring the problems food insecurity. Includes sample lessons and interactive forum.

Canadian Hunger Foundation

www.partners.ca

Global education resources for elementary and junior high students, focusing on food, water and culture.

Know Hunger

www.knowhunger.org

Ready to use 6-unit lesson high school Social Studies plan. Focus on hunger in America.

Contact the CFCA office for a lesson plan based on the 12 Myths of Hunger.

HOW CHANGE FOR CHILDREN'S Diverse Projects Make a Difference



Mexico:

Our partner NGO Comunidad works with local agricultural producers to promote self sufficiency in agriculture and to encourage community members to buy locally produced food.



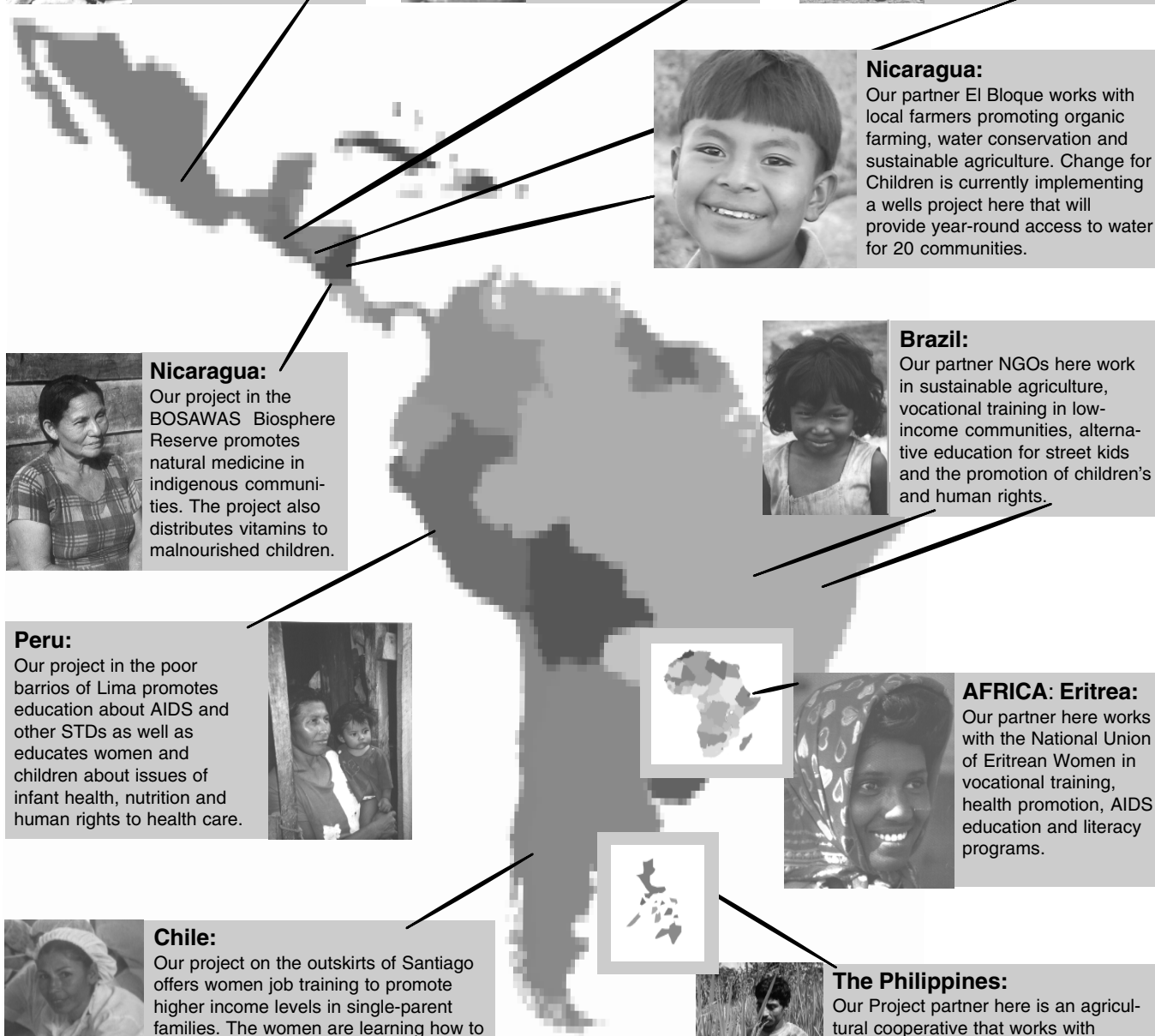
Guatemala:

Our women's weaving cooperative here provides sustainable employment that helps support families. The partner also works with the community to diversify and promote the local economy.



El Salvador:

The La Maroma co-operative promotes organic, sustainable agriculture and works with local producers to strengthen co-operative production, processing and commercialization.



Nicaragua:

Our partner El Bloque works with local farmers promoting organic farming, water conservation and sustainable agriculture. Change for Children is currently implementing a wells project here that will provide year-round access to water for 20 communities.



Nicaragua:

Our project in the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve promotes natural medicine in indigenous communities. The project also distributes vitamins to malnourished children.

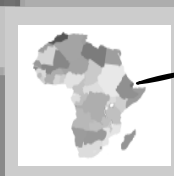


Brazil:

Our partner NGOs here work in sustainable agriculture, vocational training in low-income communities, alternative education for street kids and the promotion of children's and human rights.

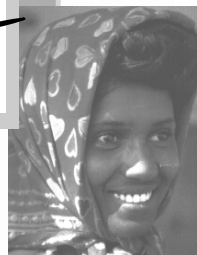
Peru:

Our project in the poor barrios of Lima promotes education about AIDS and other STDs as well as educates women and children about issues of infant health, nutrition and human rights to health care.



AFRICA: Eritrea:

Our partner here works with the National Union of Eritrean Women in vocational training, health promotion, AIDS education and literacy programs.



The Philippines:

Our Project partner here is an agricultural cooperative that works with farmers to promote self sufficiency and organic agriculture. They also work to stimulate and diversify the local economy and encourage community members to buy locally grown produce.



Chile:

Our project on the outskirts of Santiago offers women job training to promote higher income levels in single-parent families. The women are learning how to start their own businesses such as market gardens and bakeries which diversify the local economy and encourage the production and consumption of locally grown food.



Promoting Local Sustainable Self-Sufficiency

Change for Children's Projects around the world address the issue of hunger and food insecurity by promoting local, sustainable self-sufficiency. As you can see by the description of our various projects to the left, we work to support sustainable agriculture, strengthen and diversify the local economy and provide for basic needs and services. Many of our projects go further to educate and encourage viable micro-enterprise and vocational training initiatives that empower beneficiaries to take a leadership role in their communities.

One hundred thousand of the two million children born in Mexico each year die from nutritional deficiencies: a million others survive, but are crippled by the severe deficit of nutrients that chain them to a cycle of poverty for life.



TORTILLAS FOR SALE



It was 1987 - my first year in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, living in a middle class neighbourhood. Every morning from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. I could hear at least four kids on the street yelling "*Tortillas! Tortillas!*" It was the perfect time of day to sell them. Most of these kids came from single mothers, and their sales made up the only family income. They had to sell their tortillas before starting school (if they were able to attend school), and before everybody in the neighbourhood was gone for the day. Every morning we would have freshly cooked tortillas for our breakfast, made with the corn harvested in our rural areas. Now it is 2003 - and the situation is very different, because of the policies and big corporations that have changed our food and the way we eat.

When you go to the rural areas, you can see that there is hope and happiness when there are tortillas to eat, and only hopelessness when there are none. But when you are in the cities the tortillas you eat will be made with *maseca*, produced by a machine, and sold by a giant transnational corporation.

The capital has been reshaped for those who can afford to live in the midst of luxurious stores. In 1995, the first MacDonald's restaurant was built, and Enrique Bolanos, our current President, said "Nicaragua is now entering modernity." The Catholic Bishop came to bless the stones of this giant US food corporation. Now, Managua is a city with Subway stores and TGI Fridays. Now we have a New Catholic Cathedral that was funded by Dominos Pizza. We have businesses blessed not only by our church, but by our government. We have

transnational businesses that pay no taxes, because this is foreign investment that comes to alleviate poverty.

But government policies toward the campesinos are not as forgiving, and less and less is possible for the people of the rural communities. Land concentration has begun again, with financial support from the US Embassy. Governmental institutions have no technical assistance and no financial aid. The state bank that granted loans for food production closed in 1996, and subsidies are out of the question. For many desperate rural families, the only way to survive is to sell their remaining land and move to the cities, or go to Costa Rica to work in the plantations.

Food aid and food imports have been the solutions the government has relied on to deal with Nicaragua's lack of food.

In the mountains of Matagalpa and Jinotega, where the best coffee is grown, an international price crisis pushed rural workers onto the roads, to claim land to grow their own food. They were given a few bags of donated food and sent back home.

Many of the people in the rural areas, families that used to cultivate their own food, now wait each week to receive a plastic bag with some grains and cereal in it, distributed by WFP or by an American NGO. The supermarkets are full of manufactured food, genetically modified, and often with expired dates on it. Our President has told us that Nicaragua has entered modernity - but where is it taking us?

Magda Lanuza is a Policy Analyst at the Centre for International Studies in Nicaragua. She is an advisor with CFCA's Community Medicine Chest Project in the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve.

COMING UP @ CFCA

Education Programming BRAZIL

Jan 8, 2004
@ 7:00 pm

CFCA office



Laura Roberts spent 3 months in Brazil this past summer researching the effect of a social democratic government on social development. Laura will present her findings and discuss the prospects for Brazil's future.

Thank you for making
Change for Children
a vibrant and thriving
organization.

OPEN HOUSE!

December 19, 2003
5:00 - 9:00 pm

Sacred Heart School
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RESOURCES

The information provided in this issue of Building Bridges has been compiled with the help of the following resources. For more information on this, or other related topics, please access our **LINKS** page at www.changeforchildren.org, or the public resource centre at Change for Children's office.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
State of Food Security in The World (SOFI 2002) Report

Transgenicos en Nicaragua
(GMOs in Nicaragua) - June 02
Una Realidad Confirmada

Alternatives Magazine - Fall 03
"Pretending to Help the Poor"

Latin American Press Mar 26/03

NACLA
Report on the Americas
Mar/Apr 02

Sustainable Times
Summer 2000
"A Swim in the Gene Pool"

Change for Children Association
www.changeforchildren.org

Please find enclosed a tax-deductable donation to be used in the following areas:

- \$ _____ Undesignated - to be used as needed by Change for Children
- \$ _____ General project account (supporting a variety of projects as required)
- \$ _____ Supporting projects in the country of _____
- \$ _____ A specific project: _____
- \$ _____ Change for Children's Global Education program in Canada
- \$ _____ The Change for Children Endowment Fund
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Please make cheques payable to Change for Children Association

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Address: _____

City/Town: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ email: _____

I/We authorize Change for Children Association to begin automatic monthly withdrawals from my/our bank account as specified on the enclosed cheque marked "VOID." This authority is to remain in effect until further notification from myself/ourselves or Change for Children.

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Signature of account holder _____

Date Signed _____

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