

Microfinance program offers hope in Mexico City



Photo credit: Aaron Cooper, ELCA World Hunger

ESPERANZA USED TO SELL THINGS door-to-door from catalogs—shoes, make-up, and other small goods—to make her living. On the outskirts of Mexico City, where millions of people live in extreme poverty in households with less than \$300 monthly income, she struggled to provide for herself and two teenage children. When the price of tortillas and other staple foods suddenly skyrocketed, she feared that her children would go hungry.

Then Esperanza (pictured above) received a small loan from a microfinance association in her neighborhood that was organized by Amextra, an organization supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger. Banks rarely lend money to people experiencing poverty, but microfinance

programs like Amextra's give people like Esperanza the opportunity to become entrepreneurs. Esperanza used her loan to start a small store in her home. Now this store generates enough income for Esperanza to support her family. Each week she holds meetings on her patio with other members of the microfinance program.

Members of the microfinance program are involved in all aspects of its operation and work closely with Amextra to ensure the program's continued success. Members themselves administer the loans and support each other in achieving goals and paying back the loans. The repayment rate is over 90 percent! Now Esperanza sees real change in her community, particularly in her own life in the ways she is able to sustain her family.

Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support people like Esperanza by funding sustainable development work that addresses the root causes of hunger and poverty. Amextra is a grassroots organization in Mexico that facilitates community development in rural and urban communities and accompanies individuals and families to help them improve their own quality of life.

—Aaron Cooper is writer-editor for ELCA World Hunger

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Hunger crisis facts

IN THE WORLD

- The cost of staple foods such as rice, corn, and beans has doubled since 2004 (Bread for the World).
- 963 million people are hungry (Bread for the World).

IN THE UNITED STATES

- Since December 2007, when the current recession began, more than 5 million jobs have been lost (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- 1 in 8 Americans struggles with hunger each year (Feeding America).

Several key factors caused the recent spike in food costs: increased fuel prices, increased use of grain for biofuels, drought and floods in key food-producing regions, increased demand for livestock feed, government subsidies that distort crop prices, and government policies to limit grain exports (Bread for the World).



Zimbabwe: Food for today, seed for tomorrow

IN 2008, POLITICAL CRISIS CAUSED a complete economic collapse in Zimbabwe, destroying the country's health and agricultural infrastructures. In some areas, 90 percent of the population faces hunger. The ELCA pledged \$1 million in funds from the World Hunger and Disaster Appeal to provide emergency assistance to four hospitals of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and seeds and fertilizer to rural communities facing food shortages.

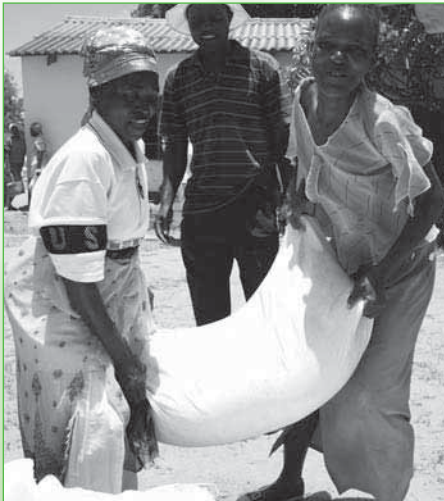


Photo credit: Eva Berglund/ACT

According to the Rev. Benyam A. Kassahun—program director for Southern Africa, ELCA Global Mission—the Lutheran hospitals in Zimbabwe “represent life and death.” The ELCA is working to equip these hospitals with medical supplies, drugs, and food.

The aid to hospitals is saving lives. Several trucks were purchased to serve as emergency vehicles, transporting patients to a hospital from remote villages. Food is being purchased for both patients and hospital staff, whose salaries are worthless as a result of the currency collapse. This food keeps

Zimbabwe at a glance

- 85% unemployment rate
- 15% HIV and AIDS infection rate
- 90% of people live on less than \$1 day
- Nearly 70,000 cases of cholera reported, including 3,400 deaths
- People must wait 4 or 5 hours at the bank every day to cash a check
- The bank withdrawal limit is only 500,000,000 Zimbabwean dollars a day, enough to buy \$1-\$2 worth of goods

patients alive and enables doctors, nurses, and orderlies to keep working—delivering babies, treating cholera, tending people who are injured in politically motivated attacks on poor neighborhoods.

The distribution of seeds and fertilizer is complete! “We’ve provided 90 metric tons [of seed and fertilizer], and when you put together all other agencies and organizations that got involved, over 200 metric tons of seeds have been distributed and planted,” said Kassahun, an effort that is benefitting 20,000 families. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger will continue to provide support for additional agriculture, clean water, and health projects in Zimbabwe.

“We hope and pray that the rain will continue, and recent news indicates that it’s raining well,” said Kassahun. “By May or June they should have some harvest, and people will have something to eat.”



To view a video clip of this effort, including a song of rejoicing after the seeds were distributed, go to

www.elca.org/hunger/newsletter.

Finding ‘New Life’ in Chicago

JACKIE WONDERED HOW SHE and her five children, with one on the way, would survive on the combined \$1,400 a month she received from government programs and child support. More importantly, she wondered how long they could scrape by while being homeless, particularly as the United States economy endures its worst recession in 80 years.

Then Jackie learned about New Life Interim Housing, an affordable housing program in Chicago run by a faith-based community organization (Good News Partners) that provides housing for people who are homeless or living in poverty.

The ELCA supports this ministry through its Domestic Hunger Grants Program. For over 30 single mothers and their children, New Life provides housing, food, and other support services to help them transition from interim or emergency housing to independent living.

Jackie and her family reside at New Life in a space that will soon become overcrowded, particularly when her sixth child is born. She hopes her family can soon move to another, larger housing facility within New Life as part of their progression to independent housing.

Jackie is an experienced cook and elder-care worker. Once the baby is born, she plans to find permanent employment in elder care, where there is significant demand. In the meantime, New Life and other programs supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are there to lend a hand until Jackie and others in similar situations can get back on their feet.

For more information about the Domestic Hunger Grants Program, go to www.elca.org/domestichungergrants.



A note from Rodger...

NOT ALL THINGS DONE REPETITIVELY are bad habits. Sara, a retired teacher, taught me a few things over lunch one day. She has been giving to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal every month for years. I learned that she looks forward to receiving her monthly letter of thanks with another envelope for the next month's gift. When I asked if she wanted to set up an automatic deduction, she quickly replied, "No. Why would you want to stop the Holy Spirit from encouraging me to give more for a disaster cause or some other concern in the world?" She went on to tell me that she writes her checks to her congregation and to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal before she pays any of her bills.

Please consider establishing a good habit of making a monthly gift to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. You can find this automatic withdrawal form at www.elca.org/hunger/howtogive or contact me (800-638-3522, ext. 2865 or Rodger.Prois@elca.org) and I will mail one to you. Thank you for your faithful support of this shared ministry we do in Christ's name.

— *The Rev. Rodger Prois is associate director for mission advancement, ELCA World Hunger Appeal*



Total: \$10,106,032

ELCA Lutherans: \$855,571

*These totals include \$1 for every pound of food collected, in addition to cash donations. See www.souperbowl.org for more details as well as updated totals. This information was current at the time of printing, though totals are updated throughout the year as reports come in.

2009 Souper Bowl of Caring a success!

THE SOUPER BOWL OF CARING is a youth-led, ecumenical event that mirrors the annual NFL Super Bowl football game. On this Sunday, youth in ELCA congregations and other denominations raise money for people who are hungry.

Feb. 1 marked the third year that Bethany Lutheran Church of Cherry Hills Village, Colorado, participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring. Church members placed their donations in one of two collection pots—one for the Cardinals and one for the Steelers—and in their competition, the Cardinals won!

Bethany raised over \$2,500, which was split between a local food bank and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. When

shown this tally, Sam Miller (age nine) said, "Wow, we sure are going to feed a lot of people!" Sam was one of 31 youth who participated in the event along with 42 additional members. Church youth and other members also served a soup luncheon after each service, and they delivered soup to eight homebound members and friends.

For more information about the Souper Bowl of Caring or to sign up for the 2010 event, visit www.souperbowl.org.

Be a Hunger Contact

At www.elca.org/hunger/contact you can sign up to receive *LifeLines* and the World Hunger Resource Packet or just *LifeLines* (both resources are free).

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Change the World!

Join the 2009 Lutheran Youth Challenge

This year, ELCA youth will participate in the 2009 Lutheran Youth "Change the World" Challenge to raise \$1 million in the fight against hunger and poverty. It's a big goal, but it can happen if all ELCA youth—from Alaska to the Virgin Islands—work together!

In July, over 36,000 youth will gather in New Orleans for the ELCA Youth Gathering. To reach the goal of \$1 million, each participant is asked to bring \$30. All youth and their congregations can join the challenge, including youth and youth groups that are not able to attend the gathering. Through the end of the year, all gifts to ELCA World Hunger designated for the "Youth Challenge" will be counted toward the final goal. Thank you for your support!

RESOURCES YOU CAN USE

Global Development: Charting a New Course

In January, ELCA partner Bread for the World Institute released its 2009 hunger report. The report offers updated hunger statistics and outlines a strategy for improving U.S. development programs. It is available free online at www.hungerreport.org/2009. To order a hard copy of the report for \$25, click on the “Order the Report” link on the bottom of that page.



Just Released! Taking Root: Hunger Causes, Hunger Hopes

This new ELCA World Hunger resource is an exciting and comprehensive curriculum that explores the root causes and basic solutions to world hunger. Designed for three different age levels (grades 3–6, grades 7–9, and grades 10–12), each course offers five sessions of coordinated content, allowing you to custom-fit the



curriculum to your congregation. Free sample kits of the course material for each age level are available at www.augsburgfortress.org (search for “Taking Root”). For more information on the curriculum, visit www.elca.org/hunger/takingroot.

The World Hunger Toolkits are live!

ELCA World Hunger just launched two Web-based toolkits at www.elca.org/hunger/toolkits. One focuses on “ELCA World Hunger Basics,” and the other looks at “Hunger and Climate Change.” With these resources, you can easily plan a one-hour session (adult forum, Bible study, youth group activity, etc.) to introduce people to the realities of poverty and hunger and the work of ELCA World Hunger. Each toolkit contains four components: Opening, Learning, Closing, and Action. You choose what level of interaction is appropriate for your situation. Mix and match the activities to fit the needs of your audience.



ELCA World Hunger 2008 highlights

ELCA members gave \$21 million to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal and helped support vital hunger-fighting projects in over 50 countries.

ELCA World Hunger awarded 329 domestic hunger grants for anti-hunger ministries in the United States.

ELCA Advocacy efforts helped increase children’s access to health care, funding to create affordable housing, and funding for the Food Stamp Program. Advocacy efforts also helped secure \$48 billion to fight AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.

The ELCA pledged \$1 million in funds received from the World Hunger and Disaster Appeal to provide emergency assistance to four hospitals of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and seeds and fertilizer to rural communities facing food shortages.



A NEW Hunger Education Curriculum for Children and Youth

TAKING ROOT
HUNGER CAUSES
HUNGER HOPES

See the World in a New Way!

Envision a world without hunger:

- explore biblical texts
- share new ideas from children’s literature
- create amazing art
- encourage critical thinking with children

www.elca.org/hunger/takingroot

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God’s work. Our hands.

Taking Root (from ELCA World Hunger) spans three age levels and five sessions. Learn more and order materials for the curriculum at www.elca.org/hunger/takingroot

ELCA World Hunger supports microfinance programs in Bangladesh, Bolivia, and Malawi

What is microfinance?

Microfinance programs lend small amounts of money—often \$50 to \$500—to people who do not otherwise have access to credit.

Microfinance loans often provide the start-up costs for someone experiencing poverty to develop an income-generating small business like a food stand, a sewing shop, or a vegetable patch.

Most microfinance programs are structured around groups of borrowers who support each other and oversee the lending and paying back of future loans within the group. Many microfinance programs boast loan repayment rates of over 90 percent.

Bangladesh

Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) is a sustainable development program in Bangladesh supported by ELCA World Hunger through The Lutheran World Federation. RDRS offers training in income-generating

skills, innovative agricultural projects, microfinance programs, savings plans, and other vital services.

Dulali (pictured left) took out a small loan from RDRS to set up

her own tree nursery. She and her husband, Salimuddin, worked hard by planting tree saplings, weeding, and doing everything they could to ensure strong and healthy trees. Their first endeavor proved successful, so Dulali took out another loan to expand their nursery and then a third loan to lease more land and to employ workers. Last year, she developed 30,000 saplings, and already the nursery has yielded income exceeding the total amount of her loans.

Photo credit:
The Lutheran
World Federation



Bolivia

ELCA World Hunger funds support the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bolivia (Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Boliviana—IELB). One IELB program offers small loans—mostly to women—for capital investments in businesses and for home improvements. This program has helped hundreds of low-income women and men get access to credit to improve their lives and increase their incomes.

Lucy (pictured right with son, Julio) received a \$300 microloan from the IELB, which she will pay back with interest. She used these funds to purchase a freezer for her store. This investment boosted her sales and household income.



Photo credit:
Lutheran World Relief

Malawi

In Malawi, the Evangelical Lutheran Development Service (supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger) sponsors the Kasungu Community Savings and Credit Cooperative. This and other local cooperatives are village banks built to offer microloans, and they are managed and supervised by the local communities.

Albeta Chilombo (pictured above right) became a member in 2005, making a savings deposit of about \$3.50—the profits she earned from beekeeping, farming, and selling homemade breads. Later this year, the cooperative will start issuing loans. Albeta is planning to apply for a small loan to make a few repairs to her home and to increase the amount of honey, crops, and bread she can produce and sell.



Photo credit: Sue Edison-Swift,
ELCA Global Mission

“Before, I would work on other people’s land as a day laborer,” said Dulali, “but today I hire laborers to work for me on my land.”



Living faithfully on Saturday

HOLY SATURDAY IS A STRANGE DAY in Holy Week. The Gospels tell us a lot about the other days but not a thing about Saturday. What did the followers of Jesus do that day? How did they deal with the pain and tragedy of Good Friday? According to Mark's Gospel,

Jesus told the disciples to return to Galilee and wait for him there (14:28). But the disciples didn't believe in the Resurrection before they saw Jesus with their own eyes. They went into hiding, as if their reason for hope had died on the cross with Jesus.

And what about us? We know what happens on Easter morning, but are we still trembling in fear like it's Saturday?

A year ago, economic crisis began hitting hungry people hard. Riots broke out in 30 countries as staple foods doubled and tripled in price. In the United States, unemployment, foreclosures, and disappearing pension funds continue to cause hardship and pain in our communities. In tough times, how does the church respond? We hold on to hope in the Easter promise. We find the courage to take risks for the most vulnerable of God's children.

ELCA World Hunger is in it for the long haul. Thank you for being part of this ministry and walking with people who are the poorest of the poor, especially now. May we continue to be inspired by images of hope in our world, and may we find the strength to do God's work with our hands.

—David Creech is director for hunger education in the ELCA World Hunger Program

Images of hope

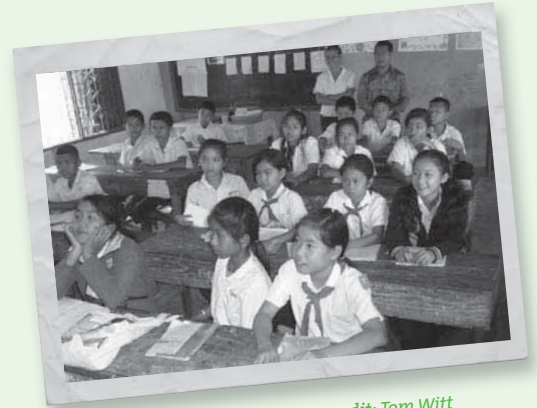


Photo credit: Tom Witt

In Laos, an after-school program encourages fifth graders to stay in school and reach for their dreams.



Photo credit: Sue Edison-Swift, ELCA Global Mission

In South Africa, an irrigation reservoir gives farmers in the community of Madzororo courage to hope for a good harvest. If the rains fail, they'll still be able to water their crops.

Life Lines

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

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