

Share Your Blessings—Grow Hope in Nicaragua

Harvest Worship Resource 2012

Many churches celebrate the harvest season by bringing gifts of produce to share. It is a worship service of colour when we can give thanks for all that we have grown and God has given. It is a celebration in many cultural traditions. This season Christian World Service is inviting you to share the joy that comes with a good harvest in story and prayer. Your donation to the Harvest Appeal will keep hope growing in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is a small country that is seldom in our news. It has a high level of poverty, and suffered through civil war and frequent national disasters, but the people are resilient. CEPAD (Consejo de Iglesias Evangelicas Pro-Alianza Denominacional/Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua) was established in 1972 to provide relief to survivors of the devastating Managua earthquake. It has expanded into peacemaking, helping people out of poverty and advocacy on economic policies. CVS has been sending support for CEPAD's vital work for 30 years. Their vibrant and effective contribution to Nicaragua is a blessing we can share.



Giving thanks in Tamil Nadu with traditional harvest symbols at Pongal Celebration
Photo: EKTA



“It has been a blessing for everybody”

Martha Mendoza lives along an unpaved road in the community of La Cañada, a rural zone in the municipality of San José de los Remates. She is a modest woman with a ready smile, but it only takes a little effort to bring out her intense pride over the work she has accomplished in her garden. In three years she has transformed the small area surrounding her house into a lush green garden producing fruits and vegetables, plus a fenced area with shelters for chickens and pigs.

“There was nothing when we came here. There were no trees. Now we have so much variety and it has been a blessing for everyone.”

WOMEN’S PATIO PROJECT

Martha bred the two pigs that were provided by CEPAD with a neighbour’s male pig. She sold one sow and six offspring for enough money to start a modest *pulpería*, a small convenience store in her home, as a microbusiness. With CEPAD’s seeds and technical assistance, Martha planted over 20 species of fruit plants, improving the environment of her home and producing an abundance of food.

“I had nothing when I started working with my brother [José Duran, Director of CEPAD’s Zonal Office in San José de los Remates]. I had nothing and my

children were little and it was so hard for me. And my husband drank a lot. Now I am moving forward with the help of CEPAD. And I am moving forward with the help of God as well.”

Martha Mendoza raised 12 children in her small home in La Cañada. Two adult children have moved out, but two grandchildren were born, so the family numbers 14 in her home.

As part of its programme for Integral Family Development, CEPAD began the Women’s Patio Project as “an efficient and foundational way to provide food security in the home.” Women in each of CEPAD’s partner communities receive ten hens, one rooster, and a wide variety of seed stock for food production. When conditions are favourable, they are also given two sows, and one woman in the group receives a male pig for stud service. Participants learn advanced sustainable farming techniques and receive individual technical support. The programme empowers women to provide for themselves and their family.

“Yes, the programme has been a blessing to my family, and to my husband because he would drink a lot, but now he has given his life to God after so much prayer.”

FOOD SECURITY

CEPAD has long recognized that gender equality is a prerequisite for food security (“when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”), because women play such a vital role in providing nutrition for their families. The Women’s Patio Project puts seeds and knowledge in the hands of women to help them care for their land and produce food year round.

CREATIVE SUPPORT

Would you like to help CEPAD plant more seeds of hope? It costs approximately \$240 to set up each Patio Project. It includes seed stock for fruits and vegetables, fertilizers, chickens and sometimes pigs, plus materials for building protection for the animals. Donations can be made to the Harvest Appeal.



All Age Talk

You will need:

- ◆ Fruit and vegetables
 - ◆ Picture or model pig
 - ◆ Eggs or picture of chicken
 - ◆ Fertiliser or compost
 - ◆ Some wood, nails and tools
 - ◆ A CWS Christmas Appeal envelope if available.
 - ◆ A bag
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- ◆ Produce the above items in a bag, saying that you want to give thanks to God for all these things, pulling them out one by one.
 - ◆ By way of conversation say something like, harvest is the time we give thanks to God for all things and the earth which grows our food. As you go you might like to share some of the fruit or vegetables.
 - ◆ Leave the wood, nails and tools to next to last. Ask if they think they fit with the harvest theme. See if they can work out why you brought them (to build homes for the animals).
 - ◆ Finally get to the Christmas Appeal envelope and then tell them the story of Martha. Martha lives out in the country on an unsealed road in Nicaragua. Three years ago she had very little—a large family to feed and a husband who drank too much. They often did not have enough to eat. Things changed. CWS partner CEPAD gave her two pigs and she planted 20 varieties of fruit. Now her family eats well and her home is surrounded by lush greenery. Finish with her words, “There was nothing when we came here. There were no trees. Now we have so much variety and it has been a blessing for everyone.”

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

God, the Creator of All that is in the world
We give you thanks.

We thank you for the richness of the earth
that grows the food we share.

We thank you for the warmth of the sun
that gives us the strength we need for each
other.

We give thanks for the vitality of water that
quenches all that thirsts.

You bring forth new life and the opportunity
to grow what is good.

Make us good gardeners, willing to share
what we have so that all may have what they
need.

Make us mindful of others who are eager to
tend the earth but have not seeds or tools.

Make us aware of the need to protect the
planet, our home.

Let us share the blessings that you have given
to us with each and every person.

We pray in the name of the one who is the
source of all life.

Amen.

Support CEPAD

If you would like to find out more about
CEPAD please contact CWS.

Donations for the Harvest Appeal can be
sent to Christian World Service or at: <http://www.cws.org.nz/donate>

Special thanks to CEPAD for sharing their story with us.

