

Volume 7, Issue 2
CHRISTMAS 2003



RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN

NEXUS



**ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN MAKE AN
EXTRAORDINARY DIFFERENCE**

As we enjoy our Christmas dinner, millions of people of the world will have little food, families will be sharing dinner with cattle in garbage dumps, children abandoned on streets will be stealing to survive or stoned cold on glue or drugs given them by profiteers, women and children will be abused, and whole societies will be held hostage by powerful oligarchies... There is a temptation to turn the real world off, shut our doors, and enjoy our Christmas pudding in comfort. In this Christmas NEXUS, Rainbow OHFC is pleased to share with you the many ways you are making a difference in the lives of these oppressed. It is our way of saying thanks to all our supporters - individuals, CIDA, Wild Rose Foundation, the Call of the Poor, partner schools, churches, and community groups for keeping the doors of your hearts open to those less fortunate.

- George Bunz, President

We know of child abandonment, but abandonment of the aged and infirm exists too. "Slum people in Brazil hate to grow old... Of course, not many of them do."

- Feature Story by Al Gerwing Inside

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Present year a 'drought' year for fundraising - by Al Gerwing

This year, 2003, has been a "drought year" for fundraising. So was 1997. I panicked then as I panic now. Requests for help are coming faster than ever. A St. Vincent de Paul group asked us to help rebuild an old folks' shelter that collapsed. We know of child abandonment, but abandonment of the aged and infirm exists too.

"Slum people in Brazil hate to grow old," says Rev. Don McGillivray in Alagoas. "Of course, not many do, but there are always a few tough ones who survive beyond their capacity to be mobile, and they fear it." It's understandable. The shacks of the poor are miserable places, wet in rainy season. An old person lying on a mat in the dark corner often has little air and almost no company. His family uses the house mainly to sleep. It's much more pleasant outside in the sun. A problem for the bedridden is the foam rubber mat. It's soft and cheep, but a terrible irritant on the skin. When Good Samaritans come to rescue a neglected person, that person is often a mess with sores.

I promised the St. Vincent de Paul group that we would at least visit them and assess the need. Visit them? Yes, in January to Brazil once more, with George Bunz, president of Rainbow of Hope and a group of some dozen interested Canadians. Rebuilding this old folks' shelter is one of six urgent requests for help in the Northeast.



***To the child, we cannot answer tomorrow.
The child's name is 'Today'.***

A young man has formed a group to address problems in Grota da Alegria (Grotto of Joy) a slum in the dormitory town of Benedito Bentes 15 miles outside the capital Maceio. Beneditio Bentes was Maceio's "solution" to heaping up the dispossessed on its peripheral. The solution is like Nova Iguassu became the slum dormitory (2.5 million) for Rio de Janeiro.

Groto da Alegria, a name redolent of the City of Joy novel and film fame, is a community of 10,000 totally without infrastructure - No water or homes, no schools - nothing. The group choosing Groto da Alegria as a "worst case scenario" plans to institute health education in nutrition, hygiene, AIDS prevention, nature's remedies, and set up literacy courses and some income generation activities. Such intervention is needed, earlier than later. Gabriela Mistral wrote, "To the child, we cannot answer tomorrow. The child's name is 'Today'".

Now this is the dilemma. We have 6 urgent requests for help and we would like to say yes to several of them, As I did in 1997, a slow fundraising year, I appeal to compassionate folks for help. Do not sacrifice your necessities, to favor theirs, but examine them to see if some are not necessities after all. "When you die, it is only what you give to the poor that you take with you."

New Pastoral da Criança Centre for Malnourished

For our new supporters we explain again this fascinating project in Marechal Deodora

Multimistura is an amazing supplement, extremely rich in nutrients, made mostly from the waste products of commercially prepared foods. The ingredients are: 70% wheat/rice bran, 10% eggshells, 10% seeds (watermelon, pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame seeds and 10% macaxeira and pumpkin leaves. Macaxeira (mandioca) is a tuberous plant related to the potato. The ingredients are dried, blended and roasted to purify in a unique process. The “flour” mixture is distributed by kombi to families in Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas who sprinkle it on foods or mix it in bread or cakes. It truly is a life-giving supplement to the malnourished.

Marechal Deodoro is recognized by a UN study as one of the poorest municipalities in Brazil. The centre is a 418 sq. m. facility where volunteers produce the high nutrient supplement and provide health services to malnourished mothers and/or their children. The strength of the program is its holistic approach to health and wellness. Professional pediatricians, counselors, dentist, and teachers volunteer time at the centre on a regular basis. Children can attend the early childhood education centre while mothers or siblings receive treatment. The centre is the flagship for the Pastoral da Criança program in Alagoas.



This centre is now in operation. Those wishing to continue supporting this program can do so to purchase flax and sesame seeds, as well as program needs such as fuel and maintenance. You have to see this program in operation to appreciate how much your support means to these poorest of the poor in Brazil.

CEAPA Women's Organization in Brazil

To Our Dear Canadian Friends,
Over the last several months, we found a need to organize several courses in agro ecology because it is necessary to seek some meager sustainability for the women farmers to rescue their dignity and seek ways of preserve the land, the water, the fauna and the flora. At present the State of Alagoas is going through the biggest dry period recorded in the last 90 years. The Sertão and the Agreste regions are in the state of calamity. This year it rained barely 79 mm, significantly lower than even in drier year averages between 390 to 450 mm. The death of animals and infants already was recorded in US newspapers. Therefore much of our time of mobilizing women was preoccupied with surviving emergencies we daily face. The women's project is making a big difference in the lives of rural women in Alagoas with these harsh conditions. The CEAPA women hope that you will understand our challenges and successes. A big embrace of everybody from CEAPA wives.
-Zilma, Coordinator



Workshops in use of banana fibers, natural medicines, arts and crafts, and agriculture will enable women some income for their families.



CEAPA women leaders engage families role-playing how to deal with problems in a non-violent manner. Here a woman and man learn about seeking family counseling and support.

Though domestic violence is still rampant especially in cities in Alagoas, both men and women touched by the women's project state that it is significantly reduced in their communities.



"I must walk, I must scream, woe is me if I don't. ... I must fight, I must risk, woe is me if I don't. ..." - Zeze

The women's project started in 1999 and extends to 1995. ROHFC thanks CIDA, Wild Rose Foundation and our supporters for helping them improve their lives and those of their families.

Mayan Teachers from Guatemala visit Western Canada

They teach young children in the morning for \$8 a day salary, a real luxury in their government funded elementary grades. But the older students in Guatemala must pay for their education. So if parents are poor, and almost all are, formal education stops after grade six. But not so in Cunen where 22 dedicate teachers struggle in shanties and shacks to put an end to the indignity and neglect the indigenous people have faced for centuries since conquest.

In a tour of Western Canada in November 2003 sponsored by ROHFC and its co-sponsors Change for Children, Sombrilla, the U of A International Centre, and the Suntep First Nations people, Miguel, Maria, Raphael, and Jon shared how the social, educational, and the financial situation in their country severely hurts the people, keeping them out of the local economy and global community. These teachers volunteer teaching junior high children in the afternoon and spend their evenings training senior high students to become teachers.



The Cunen teachers treated students and adults with a delightful taste of Mayan culture, music and dance. Helping the teachers build a Teacher Training College has been a long time dream of Fr. Gerardo le Strat and Hank Zyp, who embrace our Mayan friends by the social justice mural that Hank drew at St. Joe's, ROHFC founding school in Edmonton.



Cunen Teachers' College graduated 121 teachers in its 5-year operation. But to continue its work, it needs a school facility. Suntep, a First Nations NGO in Saskatchewan, will seek CIDA funds and ROHFC will help with the local share of costs.

Safe Drinking Water for Communities in El Salvador

ROHFC is no stranger with water scarcity in Brazil. The situation in many rural communities in El Salvador is no less pandemic. After struggling to drill 2 dry well holes some 150 sq. meters each in mountainous terrain, we received word that our southern friends reached good water in the municipality of La Libertad. This project is part of the community environment project in El Salvador and Brazil, supported by CIDA, the Wild Rose Foundation. A solar pump unit supported by Blessed Sacrament School and Parish, is being shipped to our southern friends, as we write.

Since there is no power at well site, the solar unit is practical, economical and environmentally friendly. ROHFC also received a request from Sr. Ursula Herminandez at Sonsonate orphanage to drill a well to enable them to take in more children and provide needed irrigation for their new mini-farming operation. Thanks to anticipated support from St. Joe's School in Edmonton and supporters in Fort McMurray, a well will be drilled before Christmas and a solar pump installed by mid January. Soil scientists Len Leskiw, Donald Sheeran and Clare Qualizza are helping with the project setting up the mini-farm program.

Mini-farm Business Development Program, El Salvador

So often we find international funding in the developing world goes to macro projects. So when it comes to agriculture there is little interest in small farming operations. Yet the people we meet on the dusty trails cry for help, a small plot, some tools, and agro education.

In the experimental stage for two years, Len, Don, and Clare (above) have teamed with colleagues in El Salvador and ROHFC to educate small farmers in the wise use of land through strategic and organic practices. ROHFC approved to submit an application to CIDA for Funding.

This is a major project involving up to 50 communities. If CIDA approves, small farmers will grow three to four crops a year using a third of the water of conventional techniques. It means more food for families, sustainable income and relief from a world of disparity and neglect, and a flicker of hope.

Housing in Arcoiris-España, El Salvador

Last Christmas ROHFC shared the touching story of how you helped 23 families of Los Violetes start a new life in a new community following the loss of their homes in the earthquake of 2001. They named their community *Arcoiris-España* meaning Rainbow Spain in appreciation for the land and temporary tin houses. Our southern partner, CIS, requested we continue restoration.



ROHFC is submitting an application to CIDA for building 35 homes and agro support for Arcoiris and their close neighbors.

Story of Neglect and Hope in Nicaragua - by George Bunz



The Caravan of Hope introduced ROHFC to a sad world of disparity in Nicaragua. We witnessed hundreds of families in the Managua dump digging with cattle for scraps to eat or sell, while up the hill government officials lived in lavish palaces imprisoned inside security fences. Wonder why? Counselors at a rudimentary rehab centre, Quinche Barrilete, picked up boys and girls stoned on glue and offered them shelter, cot springs to sleep on, and food. A big hug from ROHFC's Moe Rajotte of Wainwright, Alberta helped curb this boy's beckon back to the street. After 3 months off the street, these girls were almost ready to move to the next level of rehabilitation - formal schooling. They baked cakes for us - delicioso! We left our van donated by Edmonton Catholic Schools through the efforts of Henry Spenrath, and Sr. Miriam Spenrath left funds for mattresses to cover all the cot springs. Now children have beds to recoup and a van for school and sports trips.



Dear Friends,

In the short time, about 5 years that I have been associated with ROHFC, I have witnessed what ROHFC's steadfast directors, Al Gerwing, Hank Zyp, Phil Baril, and Leo Page shared with me when I first saw the extent of poverty in Brazil on my first visit 1999. "George, the ocean is made up of little drops," insisted Al. "Together, we can and are making a difference." Since then, the wonder of their optimism and hope shines through daily in my communication with our southern partners and friends in impoverished communities on our planet. I now understand why my seasoned colleagues hang in there, year after year. Imagine Al, 80 years of age, all pepped up after a whirl wind tour of 5 schools and communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta to raise awareness of the social justice issues, and Hank, struggling after his stroke, dancing with the Mayan teachers of Guatemala in support of their quest for education to help them improve their conditions. At the close of a busy and exciting year with ROHFC, I again want to thank you all, and I encourage our new volunteers and all supporters, to continue to stretch beyond yourselves to help the poor, the shut-ins, the malnourished, the beaten, the downtrodden, and the women and children abused by profiteers. You are their hope of today and tomorrow. - George

SPECIAL THANKS

to all those who donated to the cost of this Nexus and to the Blessed Sacrament School students who helped with the mail-out. Through your kind work more funds go to the people in need. Your energy is contagious!



Rainbow of Hope acknowledges the support of CIDA and the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta for many projects which otherwise could not be achieved. Where they approve a project, WRF provides a 1 to 1 matching of funds up to \$25,000 and CIDA matches funds 2 to one. Lourdes and Cicero at Fundanor expressed thanks all Canadians for your kind support, the most recent being a safe home for girls abandoned on the city streets of Palmeira dos Indios, Alagoas, Brazil and a new minibus. In the past two years support from the Brazilian government has been extremely lean, so ROHFC has had to provide emergency assistance to supplement the children's diet of mainly beans.

You have many commitments this time of year. But if you can spare a few dollars this Christmas, please consider a gift to the poor and marginalized through ROHFC. Thank you for sending a check to:

Rainbow of Hope for Children
6907 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6B 1C8

Registered Charitable No. 889160172 - RR0001
Donations are acknowledged with an income tax deductible receipt.

