

# AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS, INC.

2009  
PROGRAM REPORT

RESPONDING TO THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS



ACCOMPANIMENT  
FOR FOOD JUSTICE



## CONTEXT

Although the global food crisis has been building for several decades, it became headline news in 2008 when it was estimated that over 750 million persons were suffering from a chronic shortage of food. The heightened awareness resulted in an increased global concern and several conferences complete with and pledges for renewed attention to provide a lasting solution to this vexing problem from governments, multilateral institutions and non-governmental organizations. As the news cycle moved on and the food crisis receded from the headlines, so did the unfulfilled promises and ***currently the United Nations estimates that over a billion people lack adequate food.*** Undoubtedly, the global economic crisis has exacerbated the problem by pushing hundreds of thousands of the world's population in poverty, making food unaffordable.

This crisis is very complex, with many contributing factors among them poverty, political instability and wars, unfavorable weather and unfair trade practices. The blame for the current crisis was laid at the feet of the rapid and unexpected increases in the price of basic foods, driven by market forces. ***AMI believes that the most salient factor contributing to this crisis is that many communities and countries have surrendered control over their food production and distribution systems – their food sovereignty – to food imports that are often subsidized by exporting countries.*** It has been well documented that global food production is enough to feed the world's population, but access to adequate food is not based on justice, but on the ability to purchase. Those who have money to afford food will have enough and those who do not have the money will not. Food, an essential element of human survival and well being, is relegated to the status of a commodity much like metals or petroleum, to be traded for corporate profits and not to meet the needs of humanity.

One result of the food crisis that is actually making the problem worse is the acquisition of vast tracks of land in Africa and other developing countries, by foreign entities, for food and bio fuel production, not for local consumption but for export. These “land grabs” result in the displacement of small farmers and may actually cause less food being produced for local consumption.



Agricultural Missions views this situation as one of gross injustice. *We strongly believe that in order to solve this crisis in the long term, communities must re-assert control over and take responsibility for their own food production and distribution.* This is the reason we have focused our programs on addressing the issues of food justice and food sovereignty. By accompanying and supporting our community based and organizational partners as they seek to regain control over their local food systems to meet their own needs, *we are indeed promoting justice, food sovereignty and access to food as the right of every human being.* At the same time we are engaged in education and advocacy which seek to promote policies that support food justice, rebuilding of local food systems and return the responsibility for food access to local communities.

*Training is a central focus* of the programs that AMI supports, as we view the development of leadership, management and technical skills as critical requirements needed by communities in order to control their food systems in the larger context of sustainable community development. During the 2009 program year, we continued to be actively engaged in supporting our community based and ecumenical partners in the planning and delivery of programs in several countries, including the United States, which seek to achieve food justice and rebuild local food systems.



## FROM DISASTER TO RIGHTS BASED FOOD PRODUCTION

*In India*, the tsunami recovery and rehabilitation efforts supported by AMI have evolved into a rights based program and approach to long-term development. Here our partner organization, the Chethana Network, has assisted its member organizations in supporting the efforts of local communities in gaining access, as a human right, to the resources that are needed to achieve local food production and sustainable livelihoods. As a result, increased access to resources such as land, water and capital has allowed over 10,000 families, most from the Dalit or low caste, not only to improve their food supply but also gain access to health care and education that were previously unavailable to them. Included in this program is an aggressive “rights based” educational and advocacy program that provides training to participating communities on their legal rights. This success has been achieved through effective advocacy and education at the community level accompanied by public activisms, legal challenges and confronting corporate interests and wealthy individuals, and even local governments.

Protesting Land Takeover for Commercial Use — Andhra Pradesh, INDIA

Photo — Chethana





In the African countries of Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique, AMI continues to provide accompaniment through technical and training services to the Sustainable Agriculture and Development (SA&D) Program of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). *The SA&D program is a community-centered approach to long-term food security* by improving farming practices through training of local farmers and farmer extension workers.

AMI has provided accompaniment to the SA&D program since its inception eight years ago that includes:

- The program's conceptual framework and design.
- Development and implementation of training programs for farmer extensionists.
- Ongoing assessment and guidance.

Liberia and Sierra Leone are still recovering from brutal civil wars that destroyed local food systems in both countries. DRC suffers from chronic political instability and an ongoing low level conflict in the eastern sector of the country that severely limit food production. One feature these five countries, as well as others in Africa, is that they are all suffering the impacts of the food crisis as a direct result of their dependence on imported staple foods.

Tilling Land With Oxen Team – Military Base, near Kamina, DRC.

Photo – Winston Carroo



With AMI's technical support, the SA&D program directly addresses the food crisis by:

- Providing training to over 1500 farmers and community based agricultural extension workers, who are themselves farmers, in bee keeping, Moringa production and use, Integrated Crop and Pest Management (ICPM), small animal production and other appropriate technologies.
- Using the Farmer Field School methodology in the training events, thus strengthening the community centered approach.
- Introducing Moringa, as a nutritional component into the local diet.
- Significantly improving the quality and quantity of foods available in local communities.

The training programs continue to spread through the efforts of the trained farmers and extension workers who extend their knowledge to other farmers and communities, even in places where SA&D no longer provides training.

**Processing of Moringa Leaf Powder**

Photo – Winston Carroo



For the past three years, AMI has been at the cutting edge of developing an alternative model of community development that not only addresses the issue of food production, but also the larger problem of community under-development. This program, the West Africa Initiative (WAI), is a partnership between AMI and the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), and the Councils of Churches in Sierra Leone and local communities in Liberia. The WAI program, developed and implemented by AMI, provides a *“total package” of human and material resources needed in the development process:*

- Training of community based facilitators in all aspects of project management.
- Training of farmers in appropriate methods of production with emphasis on low cost technologies.
- Small grants for tools and production inputs.

The philosophy that guides the program is demonstrated in an *exit strategy that places community control at its center* and includes:

- Building strong local community organizations as the entities that will maintain and operate the program when external assistance ends.
- Providing business management training and financial resources to manage and operate community based agro-business to generate income to support and the continuation of the program.

Women Cultivating Vegetables – Military Base near Kamina, DRC.

Photo – Winston Carroo





In the context of recovery and rehabilitation following civil wars that depopulated and devastated the production capacity of rural communities, this program achieving a significant impact, not only on increasing food production, but also on *peace building through the participation of former enemies, working together thus replacing hostility, competition and distrust with mutual respect, cooperation and trust.*

In the first two years of a planned four-year program, the WAI has:

- Trained twenty-two community based facilitators;
- Trained over 550 farmers in various aspects of agricultural production and micro credit operations;
- Supported 18 community based farming groups with resources for tools and seeds over two cropping cycles;
- Facilitated the formation and continuing organizational development of 17 groups and community organizations;
- Increased the area under cultivation and yield of staple foods by 50% in participating communities;
- Provided micro-credit loans to 120 women;

This program is expected to continue to the end of 2011.

**Recently Trained Bee Keeper With Kenya Top Bar Hive  
Makai Village, Sierra Leone.**

Photo – Winston Carroo





In response to the dozens requests from churches and urban organizations interested in establishing gardens, AMI provided guidance and encouragement to many as well as assistance in networking with successful urban gardening efforts. We anticipate that the demand for our assistance in this area will grow in the future.

In Kentucky, AMI was instrumental in gaining access to church owned land for immigrant refugee families to establish gardens for growing their own food. In the first year (2009) of this effort, 12 Somali Bantu families grew enough food to save approximately \$2,400 in grocery expenses. This effort is set to expand in 2010 as information spreads to more families.

AMI continued its Consciousness Raising, Education and Advocacy work with a focus on Food Justice, both in the United States and overseas. We were able to support and accompany our partners in the following activities:

### **International Solidarity to Combat Hunger**

Organized a Study Session on Food and Ecological Crises with a focus on Haiti and the Dominican Republic — A three day conference and study session attended by representatives from the U.S., El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Haiti that:

- Explored the depths of the agrarian crises and learning from our rural Caribbean partners the strategies being employed in their struggles.
- Eye-opening and inspiring field visits to sustainable agro-ecological projects of the Peasant Movement of Papay (MPP), which helped bring to life the concept of Food Sovereignty.
- Strengthened the solidarity between rural people's movements in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.
- Follow up work with the coalition of Haitian rural organizations known as FONDAMA, positioned AMI to be a key advocate for Haitian and Dominican campaigns and actions for food justice.

Photo – Stephen Bartlett



## **Honduran Education and Solidarity Work to Counter Disinformation/Human Rights Abuses Resulting from the Military Coup:**

- AMI, working closely with Honduran and other Latin American partners that are members of the Convergence of Movements of the Peoples of the Americas (COMPA), monitored the developments emanating from the June 28, 2009 coup and the resulting popular opposition.
- AMI became part of a national network supporting educational and advocacy work of rural and indigenous partners struggling for a restoration of democracy.
- AMI staff spoke at various public events clarifying the context of this coup and its aftermath, and encouraging people to take action in favor of transparency and democracy.

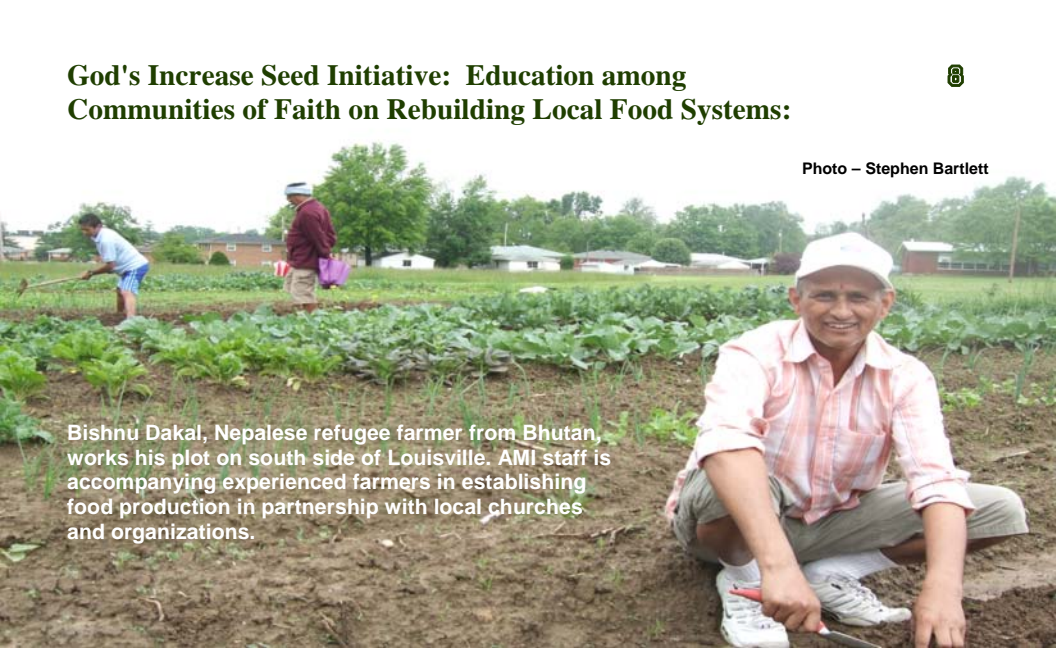
**Honduran People Power Confronts Military Repression to Restore Democracy**

**Photo – Stephen Bartlett**



## God's Increase Seed Initiative: Education among Communities of Faith on Rebuilding Local Food Systems:


Photo – Stephen Bartlett



Bishnu Dakal, Nepalese refugee farmer from Bhutan, works his plot on south side of Louisville. AMI staff is accompanying experienced farmers in establishing food production in partnership with local churches and organizations.

- AMI staff worked with 20 seminarians at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary to compose a liturgy for worship on World Food Day, and delivered a sermon on Sacred Seeds, Jubilee and the Sabbath.
- Bethany United Church of Christ and New Heights Baptist Church became more deeply committed to providing land and water for gardening for 20 families of farmers from Africa.
- AMI provided accompaniment in the form of training, technical support and resource acquisition for these farmers to produce food for their families and communities while preserving their cultural traditions.
- Several other community consultations were held, with sharing of initial curriculum resources developed by AMI.

Photo – Stephen Bartlett



God's Increase Seed Initiative leads to partnership and this first crop of abundance for Somali Bantu farmers in Louisville, KY.



## **Food Justice Movement Building in the United States:**

- AMI was one of the founders of the Food Crisis Working Group – a network of over 40 organizations working on the issue of food justice.
- New relationships are emerging from this network between rural partners of AMI including farmers, farm workers and their allies, with the myriad urban agricultural organizations sprouting up around the U.S.

## **Other Educational and Advocacy Activities:**

- Presented the Via Campesina platform, on local food economy during events surrounding The G20 meetings in Pittsburgh.
- Participated on a panel “Name and Nationality: A Dominican Republic Without Exclusion” – A conference held in Santo Domingo by the Dominican Haitian Women’s Movement (MUDHA).

AMI helped facilitate Kentucky Social Forum Peoples Movement assembly in Berea, KY in May 2009, which provided a model in planning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Social Forum in Detroit (June 2010).

Photo – Stephen Bartlett



### OFFICERS

Lionel Derenoncourt, President  
Marta Benavides, Vice-President  
June Kim, Treasurer  
Junius Williams, Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS (*\*Executive Committee*)

Bazelaïs Jean Baptiste — The Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP)  
Marta Benavides\* — International Institute for the Cooperation  
Amongst People— (IICP)  
Esmeralda Brown — United Methodist Church, Women's Division  
Elizabeth Calvin — World Day of Prayer  
Lionel Derenoncourt\* — Presbyterian Hunger Program (PCUSA)  
Cheryl Green — Spirit of Glory Ministries  
June Kim\* — United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMC)  
Sandra LaBlanc\* — Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Virginia Nesmith — National Farm Worker Ministry  
Edward Pennick\* — Federation of Southern Cooperatives  
Cynthia Perez — Indigenous Women's Network  
Lorette Picciano\* — Rural Coalition  
Mikhiela Sherrod — Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative  
Samuel Smith — Caretaker Farm (retired)  
David Wildman\* — United Methodist Church  
Judy Williams — Grenada Community Development Agency  
Junius Williams\* — Abbott Leadership Institute

### STAFF

Joseph Keesecker, Executive Director  
Winston Carroo, Director of Programs  
Stephen Bartlett, Constituency Education Coordinator

Blind Farmer Weeding

Photo – Winston Carroo



African Center for Human Development (ACHD), Ghana  
Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART), USA  
Alternatives Agricultural Cooperative, USA  
Alternative Community Marketing Network (Red COMAL), Honduras  
Articulación Nacional Campesina (ANC)/The National Peasant Articulation,  
Dominican Republic  
Bharati Integrated Rural Development Society (BIRDS), India  
Catholic Charities, Refugee Agriculture Partnership  
Chethana Network, India  
Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), USA  
Comercializadoras de Productores del Campo (ANEC), Mexico  
Community Farm Alliance (CFA), USA  
Community Research on Environmental and Development Initiatives  
(CREADIS), Kenya  
Confederación de Organizaciones Populares Indigenas  
(COPINH), Honduras  
Convergencia de Movimientos de los Pueblos de las Americas,  
(COMPA), Latin America and the Caribbean  
Family Farm Defenders (FFD), USA  
Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), USA  
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF), USA  
Food Project of Boston, USA  
Forum on Women's Rights and Development Organization  
(FORWARD), India  
Friends of the MST, USA  
Gender Development Institute (GDI), Ghana  
Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA), Grenada  
Indian Social Development Center (ISDC), India  
Indigenous Women's Network (IWN), USA  
Institute of Social Ecology, USA  
International Institute for the Cooperation Amongst People (IICP), El Salvador  
Kamusinde Christian-Based Community Organization (KCCBO), Kenya  
Kentucky Jobs with Justice, USA  
Kentucky May Day Coalition, USA  
Kenya Institute of Organic Farming (KIOF), Kenya  
Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), Brazil  
Mouvman Peyizan Papay, Petionville, Haiti  
Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitianas, Dominican Republic  
National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), USA  
National Farm Worker Ministry, USA  
National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO), Sri Lanka  
Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH), Honduras  
Projects for People (PPF), Jamaica  
Rural Church Network, USA  
Rural Coalition (RC), USA  
Sligoville Basic School, Jamaica  
Southwest Alabama Association of Rural Minority Women (SAARMW), USA  
Uganda Resource and Development Foundation (URDF), Uganda  
Uniendo Manos Por La Vida (UMAVIDA), Bolivia  
United Social Development Organization (USDO), Sri Lanka  
U.S. National Committee for World Food Day, USA  
U.S. Working Group on the Food Crisis, USA  
Via Campesina International  
Virginia Organizing Project (VOP), USA  
Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN), USA  
World Hunger Year, USA





Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Week of Compassion

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Division for Global Mission  
Rural Ministries  
Poverty Ministries Networking

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance  
Presbyterian Hunger Program  
Presbyterian Women  
Self Development of People

United Church of Canada

United Church of Christ  
Wider Church Ministries

United Methodist Church  
Commission on Religion and Race  
Mission Contexts and Relationships  
United Methodist Committee on Relief  
Women's Division

## CONGREGATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Heifer Project International (HPI)

## OTHER SUPPORT

Robert Moody Foundation

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*Agricultural Missions, Inc. is a non-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to facilitate sustainable models of development by supporting the efforts of grassroots and non-governmental organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States.*

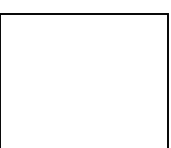
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Haiti waterfall  
Petionville, Haiti



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Women with Bitter Ball (vegetable).

**Cover Photos** – Winston Carroo  
Community Meal – Village of Rochen, Sierra Leone  
Photo – Joseph Keeseecker  
2009 Study Session – Movement of Papaye, Haiti