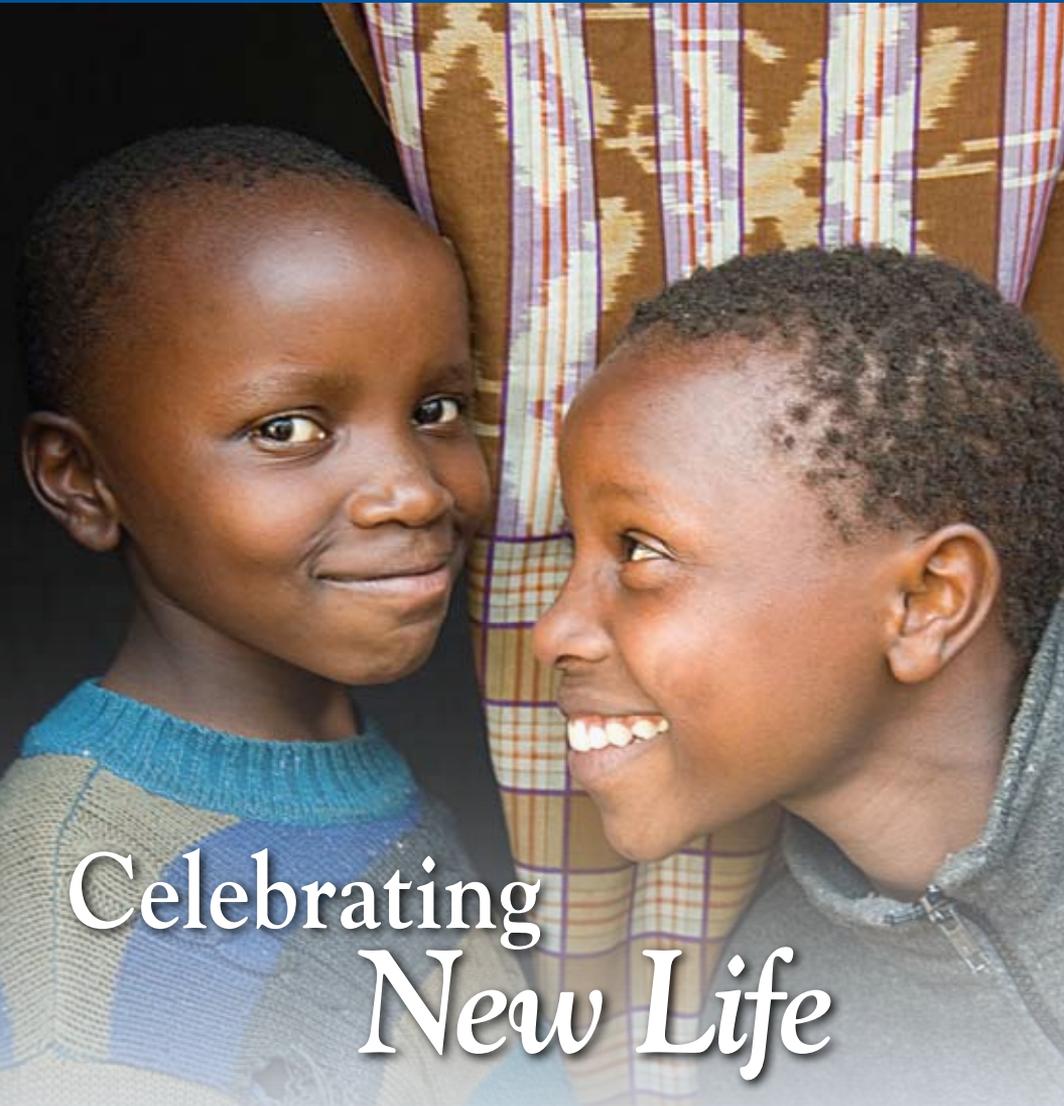




*Nobody hears the cries of the poor, or the sound of a wooden bell. ~Haitian proverb*



# Celebrating New Life

*A magazine for CRS donors, who not only hear the cries of the poor, but answer with compassion.*

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IN THIS ISSUE

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New technology helps  
fend off disaster in India



Sky is not the limit  
in Zimbabwe



Healthful crops  
thanks to laptops

*The Wooden Bell* is published five times a year to keep our donors informed about the lifesaving work of Catholic Relief Services.

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# Celebrating New Life

Catholic Relief Services is devoted to giving children overseas a second chance at a safe childhood. Our programs foster renewal of body and spirit. We are dedicated to finding innovative, efficient and effective new ways to promote the revitalization of farmland, prevent devastation from natural disasters, and return the sick to new, healthy lives. Meet just a few of the millions of people CRS helps in more than 100 countries.



*A child from the same neighborhood as those on the cover. Children in this impoverished area face many challenges.*

Photo by David Snyder for CRS

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*Children play near the CRS-supported Baraka Medical Center's HIV care center in Nairobi, Kenya.*

Photo by David Snyder for CRS

# Another Chance at Childhood

As a 15-year-old, Francois was a prime target for the armed groups that captured villages and forced young men to join their ranks. After a close escape to the jungle near his village and three months in hiding, Francois heard that the rebels had moved on. But when he returned, they were waiting for him. He didn't dare resist. Those who did were gunned down.

That's how Francois became one of thousands of child soldiers used by the armed forces in Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nobody knows for sure how many child soldiers are forced to work for the various factions. Since 2004, the United Nations estimates that 30,000 children are released or have escaped. Some children are reunited with family members. Others return to different armed groups, seeking protection from the ones they left.

CRS' partner, Caritas Goma, works with former child soldiers. A center run by Caritas welcomes the youths from the various armed factions in eastern Congo and counsels, feeds and educates



*Above and below: CRS' partner, Caritas Goma, works with child soldiers in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS



them. Caritas also helps them find their families, a difficult task when many teens have been separated for years from their parents.

Most boys stay at the Caritas center for two or three months. After they leave, some continue with school, others do not. But the schedule of classes at the center—math, French, Swahili, religious studies, traditional Congolese storytelling—gives them a shot, however brief, of education.

Teacher Joseph Bahati is there to care for boys who have been scolded and sneered at for the last several months. Boys who were forced to become men, forced to do things most men never do. He tells them what they were forced to do by the armed

groups is not their fault, that they shouldn't blame themselves.

Now, finally, they can be something they haven't been in a while: Teenagers. ■

# New Technology Helps Bihar Fend Off Disaster

By Annette Arceneaux

During India's annual monsoon season, heavy rains and flash floods wreak havoc upon millions of Indians. In 2008, families in the northeastern state of Bihar were struck the hardest—particularly in the district of Muzaffarpur. Floods washed out bridges and roads and marooned residents in some districts.

Bihar is home to millions of the poorest people on earth. More than half of its children are malnourished. Annual flooding can set communities back for months. Thousands of people were displaced.

But not Narendra Bhusan of the village of Budhnagar Radha. He was one of the lucky ones.



*Cell phones have become as invaluable in the coordination of relief efforts as they have become in day-to-day life for many around the world.*

Photo by David Snyder for CRS

When the Buhdi Gandak River overflowed its banks and threatened to flood his village, Narendra used his cell phone to notify fellow community leaders and local officials, who quickly arrived and secured the village embankment with bricks and sandbags. These simple steps kept Narendra's district dry and virtually free of damage.

As part of a disaster preparedness project developed by Catholic Relief Services with technical assistance from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, community leaders of the five most flood-prone areas in Bihar have used cell phone communication to prevent damage from monsoon floods and save the lives of thousands of people.

With the texting system, vulnerable villages in Bihar stand ready for monsoon season, which typically lasts from June to October. The system helps communities send early disaster warnings and shorten emergency response time.

"The technology has strengthened their preparedness and made them more confident," says CRS India staff Anurag Pratap Kumar. ■

*Annette Arceneaux was a summer intern at CRS headquarters in Baltimore.*

# More Healthful Crops Thanks to Laptops

By Debbie DeVoe



*Above and lower right: CRS' Great Lakes Cassava Initiative is using small, rugged laptop computers to help farmers in central and eastern Africa share information.*

Photos by Jim Stipe/CRS and Debbie DeVoe/CRS

When you're working with 1 million farmers across six countries to stem the spread of cassava diseases so families don't go hungry, you need all the help you can get.

Catholic Relief Services leads the Great Lakes Cassava Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to address diseases decimating cassava production in eastern and central Africa. But informing so many farmers on how they can replant healthy fields of this staple food source is no easy task. So when CRS heard that Cornell University was seeking learning opportunities for its graduate students, a partnership was born.

For the past two years, Cornell students have developed training modules for CRS partners to use to help rural villagers escape poverty. This summer, graduate students joined the Great Lakes Cassava Initiative in Kenya to field-test new computer-based modules running on miniature laptops.

"We gained a lot of practical experience about things we'd been theorizing about," explains Tom Archibald, a Cornell student pursuing a master's degree in adult extension and education. "We learned things that could have taken three to four semesters in a classroom."

Collaborating closely with CRS staff, partner staff, agriculture field agents and farmers, the students used the feedback they gained to fine-tune the training modules. CRS is now rolling out five modules to select field agents, who will then share the related knowledge and skills with farmer groups.

"The world is moving forward with new technologies," says Sylvain Hakizimana, CRS' program manager in Rwanda. "CRS' partnership with Cornell University is helping Africans make good use of this technology to improve their lives." ■

*Debbie DeVoe is CRS' regional information officer for eastern and southern Africa.*



# Global Update

## ✓ Haiti



*An attendant at the Maison Arc en Ciel (Rainbow House) orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, feeds an infant.*

Photo courtesy of the Heartland Center

### A Fresh Look at Poverty

An image of severely malnourished children is seared in Francine Hintz's mind.

“The most striking, heart-wrenching thing to see is children suffering from malnutrition. After seeing this, my next question was ‘What do we do to fix it?’” says Hintz, assistant director of the Heartland Center in the Diocese of Gary, Indiana.

Before her first trip to Haiti, Hintz says she needed to be convinced that the diocese

should help people overseas when members of its own community needed help. But Haiti's troubles offered a compelling argument. “You don't realize what it means to be poor until you experience Haiti,” says Hintz.

With guidance from CRS, members of the diocese set out to establish a long-term overseas mission in 1998. “CRS has a reputation within the diocese and the skill level. We knew nothing about working in an impoverished country,” Hintz explains.

One CRS staff says, “The needs are so great, there are so many things that need to be done. Even the smallest bit of help is very significant for a Haitian.”

## ✓ Sudan

### Sowing Seeds of Hope

Sudan is a country that many associate with despair. But it is there that CRS sows the seeds of hope.

Certainly much of CRS' work is in helping people stay alive. As one of the largest international aid



*In the southern part of West Darfur, a CRS tool fair allows farmers to select tools of their choice, brought in by local traders.*

Photo by Debbie DeVoe/CRS

agencies working in the Darfur region, we distribute food to some 400,000 people there who have been driven from their homes by years of conflict.

But CRS does much more than that. We get seeds, tools and other supplies to farmers so they can return to working their land—not just subsisting on handouts but participating in rebuilding their communities. We build schools from compressed-soil bricks—saving the region’s precious trees—and train teachers so that the next generation of Darfuris will be ready when peace returns. We conduct a variety of water and sanitation projects to ensure that people remain not just alive but healthy, even in these difficult conditions.

## Guatemala

### The Habit of Saving

In Guatemala, where people with HIV lack access to health care and treatments, and face widespread discrimination, a group called *Fortaleza*, or Strength, is helping its members not only live, but thrive.

Fortaleza is a prime example of CRS’ savings-led model of microfinance. Members contribute what they can. The contributions are then pooled into a community fund—kept in a lockbox—and saved until a member needs to take a loan, or an emergency arises, or the group decides it wants to buy something.

“Giving people a mechanism through which to save helps more than offering them credit, which is a debt they have to repay,” explains Melita Sawyer, program specialist in microfinance for CRS. “It doesn’t matter what the amount is that people save, it is the habit of saving—of accomplishing something—that gives people hope and allows them to plan for the future.”



*“I have two grandchildren to care for and need to save for their futures,” says Paula Huinac, who deposited 10 quetzales (about \$1.25) the day she was photographed.*

Photo by Robyn Fieser/CRS

# Beating the Odds

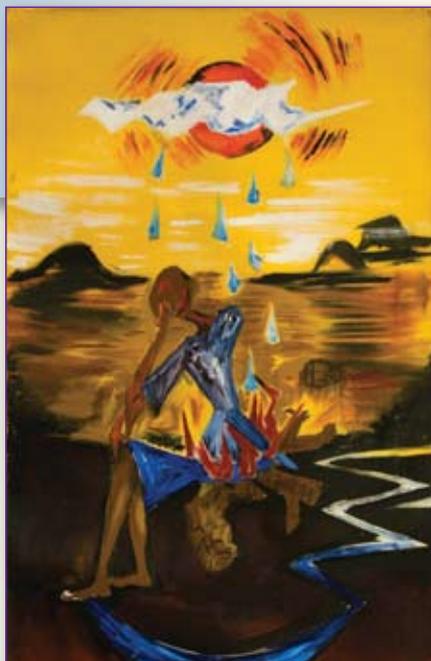
## 'The Sky is Not the Limit'

By Tich

When I learned that I was HIV-positive, I was confused and I had low self-esteem. There is an organization near my home called the Million Memory Project of Zimbabwe, which is supported by CRS. When I went to this new center, I began to accept that I am HIV-positive, and I should take my medicine.

Antiretroviral drugs have helped me a lot in my life, because now you can see I've got a healthy life. The center also helped me realize that I am not the only one with HIV. I saw I can plan ahead for my future. Now, I'm one of the young people who help other young people on how to live a positive life.

My vision is to develop young people out there and make them realize their potential. And make them realize their dreams. I want to teach people that God has given every person a purpose in this life. The sky is not the limit. I can do great stuff. I really speak with my art at my side. When you see my art, it speaks of the life we are living. Last year in Zimbabwe, we had a tough time because we had no food, but CRS has been helping us. The people of America,



A painting by Tich.

Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS

you have been like a mother to the motherless. You are helping people you don't even know. You only know that the people in that country need your support, and you open your arms and give. You really gave us strength and for doing that, I'd really love to say thank you. ■

*Tich is an inspiring young man, helped by a project devoted to the care of young people with HIV in Zimbabwe. Because of the stigma of having HIV in Tich's community, he has asked that his identity be protected.*