



Photo by Sara A. Fajardo/CRS



Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

MATERIALS • A copy of *Story from the Field* for each participant

PROCESS Invite participants into the prayer space and have them sit in a circle. Ask them to take off their shoes and put them in the center of circle. When all participants have settled into the circle and are silent, have each person take two shoes that do not belong to them and place the shoes in front of them (pairs do not have to match). Pass out the *Stories from the Field* and ask participants to meditate on the story while they consider the following questions:

- What does it mean to walk in another person's shoes? Will I understand their life a little bit better if I "walk in their shoes"?
- How can I be in solidarity with the person in the story?
- How will my fasting help me understand solidarity in a deeper way? Will I learn a little more about the lives of those who go hungry?
- What does God want my relationship to look like with my brothers and sisters around the world? Will God ask me to walk in their shoes?

Option: Write questions on a flipchart and post them in the prayer space.

Encourage participants to move about the room and meditate however they are most comfortable as long as they are quiet. Provide pen and paper if participants did not bring their own journals and encourage them to spend some time writing if that helps them with their meditation.

After about 15 minutes, ask participants to return to the circle.

Leader: As we continue to meditate on walking in another's shoes, let us ask God to guide us on our solidarity journey. Our response is "Lord, make me holy."

Leader: God, because of your love for us you sent your son, Jesus, into the world to show us the ultimate example of solidarity. Help us receive fully that love so we may share it with others.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: Jesus, by your very life, death and resurrection, you showed us the way of solidarity. Help us to live for the common good.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: Holy Spirit, through our baptism you dwell within us. Help us live out our baptismal call to love and care for others.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: Lord, help us to understand through our relationship with you, we are connected with all people.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: Lord, in your friendship with us, help us to understand that solidarity is a conviction that leads me to personal commitment to you.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: Lord, help me to understand that solidarity is global and a Christian virtue.

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all parts share its joy. (1 Corinthians 12: 26)

❖ **Lord, make me holy**

Leader: During Angelus on November 11, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the life of St. Martin of Tours.

“While many miracles are attributed to him, St. Martin is known most of all for an act of fraternal charity. While still a young soldier, he met a poor man on the street numb and trembling from the cold. He then took his own cloak and, cutting it in two with his sword, gave half to that man. Jesus appeared to him that night in a dream smiling, dressed in the same cloak.

Dear brothers and sisters, St. Martin’s charitable gesture flows from the same logic that drove Jesus to multiply the loaves for the hungry crowd, but most of all to leave himself to humanity as food in the Eucharist, supreme Sign of God’s love. It is the logic of sharing which he used to authentically explain love of neighbour. May St. Martin help us to understand that only by means of a common commitment to sharing is it possible to respond to the great challenge of our times: to build a world of peace and justice where each person can live with dignity. This can be achieved if a world model of authentic solidarity prevails which assures to all inhabitants of the planet food, water, necessary medical treatment, and also work and energy resources as well as cultural benefits, scientific and technological knowledge.

Let us turn now to the Virgin Mary so that all Christians may be like St. Martin, generous witnesses of the Gospel of love and tireless builders of jointly responsible sharing.”

Together let us pray the “Hail Mary” three times.

STORY FROM THE FIELD: AFGHANISTAN

Food Crisis Squeezes Afghan Families

By Caroline Brennan

With less means to afford the basics, more Afghan families are selling their valuable livestock just to pay for bread. Over the past several months, Gulpasha and Munir were forced to sell much of their livestock to pay for food. Employment options are scarce in the Afghan town of Farah. A drought wiped out this season's crops, leaving Gulpasha and Munir's wheat farm—and their pockets—empty. One by one, Munir began selling his animals at a fraction of their normal value.



Prices have increased by 300 percent for the most important staples: bread, wheat, rice. A few months ago, wheat for bread was sold for 20 cents; now it is sold for 60 to 70 cents. In a country that takes pride in its bread as the centerpiece of each meal, the tripling in price has dealt an enormous blow to family spending. The impact is especially bad among the majority of the country's population who are rural farmers.

Afghanistan is the world's fifth-least-developed country, according to a 2007 U.N. Development Program report. While Afghanistan may be recognized more for issues of political insecurity, the primary security concern for people here is food. They are going hungry. The past severe winter affected people so dramatically that they are ill-prepared for the hardships coming next winter.

"We are not growing enough food and we cannot afford food; the result is our sick children. Many other families—hundreds of children like this—are in our villages but cannot afford to come here," says Munir.

With no wheat or livestock left to earn money, Munir tells me that he is considering going to Iran to find work, most likely as a construction worker. It would be a risk: it's illegal; the transportation, though only two hours by car from Herat, is expensive (hundreds of dollars); and you never know what's waiting for you. He could be exploited by people taking advantage of the desperate migrants, or deported by the police.

But Munir is not alone in his thinking: Hundreds of thousands of Afghans migrate to Iran for work each year, and the number is on the rise.

Catholic Relief Services is planning emergency relief for thousands of the most rural, impoverished families and farmers in response to the massive food shortages in Herat and Ghor provinces.

With three field offices and over 300 staff, CRS Afghanistan directly supports women in farming communities with agro-enterprise projects that help them diversify crops, strengthen their resilience to natural disasters, and boost their long-term self-sufficiency.

Read more about Afghanistan at <http://crs.org/Afghanistan/>. Caroline Brennan is South Asia regional information officer for Catholic Relief Services.

STORY FROM THE FIELD: BRAZIL

Cooking Up Opportunity

Nine years ago, when she was 14 and in the eighth grade, Rosenilda Santos dropped out of school, moved away from her family's squalid home and went to live in a shack in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Recife, a port city on the northeast coast of Brazil. She worked selling kabobs on the beach, earning about \$60 a month. Her boyfriend earned about the same amount selling sugarcane from a cart. It was hardly enough to support them, let alone the daughter Rosenilda bore when she was 19.



Poverty, squalor, violence and illiteracy are not exceptional in Recife, or in many other cities in Brazil, a country which has undergone rapid urbanization. About 80 percent of Brazil's population is city dwellers, up significantly from 15 percent in 1940.

With that growth, opportunities to earn a living wage have diminished dramatically. But Rosenilda Santos' life changed about a year ago when she entered a culinary school program called Mãos de Moleque run by a local nongovernmental organization, the Center for Prevention of Dependencies. She studied to be a kitchen worker, graduated from the program and now works at the Quina do Futuro, a top Japanese restaurant in Recife.

Rosenilda is earning twice as much as before and hopes to earn three times as much in time. That would bring her to about \$180 a month, enough to improve her dwelling with real wood, to provide for her daughter and to go back to school herself.

"My life has changed now. I can go back to school. I can make my home better, and I can buy things that my daughter needs. I have opportunities!"

All this is thanks to Mãos de Moleque, a culinary training school for at-risk youth. Clarissa Maria Dubeaux Lopes Barros and several others started the school about a year ago.

"The typical student here may not have more than a fourth-grade education," Barros explains. "There is an average of five people in the family, living on less than \$150 a month in a dwelling that has no sanitation. We take young people from the ages of 16 to 24, and 60 percent of the applicants have children."

The school opened officially last October with assistance from Catholic Relief Services as part of a USAID-funded food-security project.

In addition to the instruction it provides, the school has developed its own catering business, supplying 160 box lunches a day for workers, mostly in the construction trades.

"And in this building we are preparing a place where local people can come and have lunch," Barros reports.

The idea, she says, is that eventually the young people who graduate from the Mãos de Moleque program will have both the skills and confidence to remain productive employees in the food-service industry. Some graduates already dream of training for work in restaurants and running their own catering businesses.

Read more about Brazil at <http://crs.org/brazil> .

STORY FROM THE FIELD: ETHIOPIA

Family Farms Its Way Out of Food Aid

By Debbie DeVoe

Three years ago, Hasan Adere and Zeyineba Amed were barely supporting their five children. They struggled to put enough food on the table. Some nights, all went to bed hungry.

Today, Hasan and Zeyineba have no problem feeding their family well — not to mention buying clothes, paying school fees and affording everyday household items. Previously owning almost nothing at all, the family now has four cows, two oxen, three donkeys, three goats, ten chickens, fields of vegetables, fruit trees, a coffee farm and a small corner store that sells essentials to other community members. In fact, they and 130 families in the surrounding area are doing so well that they voluntarily requested to no longer receive government assistance.



Hasan and Zeyineba are two of the millions that have participated in the Ethiopian government's Productive Safety Net program. Launched in January 2005, this program provides monthly cash or food rations to families most in need, in hopes of helping poor Ethiopians to protect their assets. In return, the program requires able-bodied recipients to help build community assets through public works activities such as rural road construction and hillside terracing.

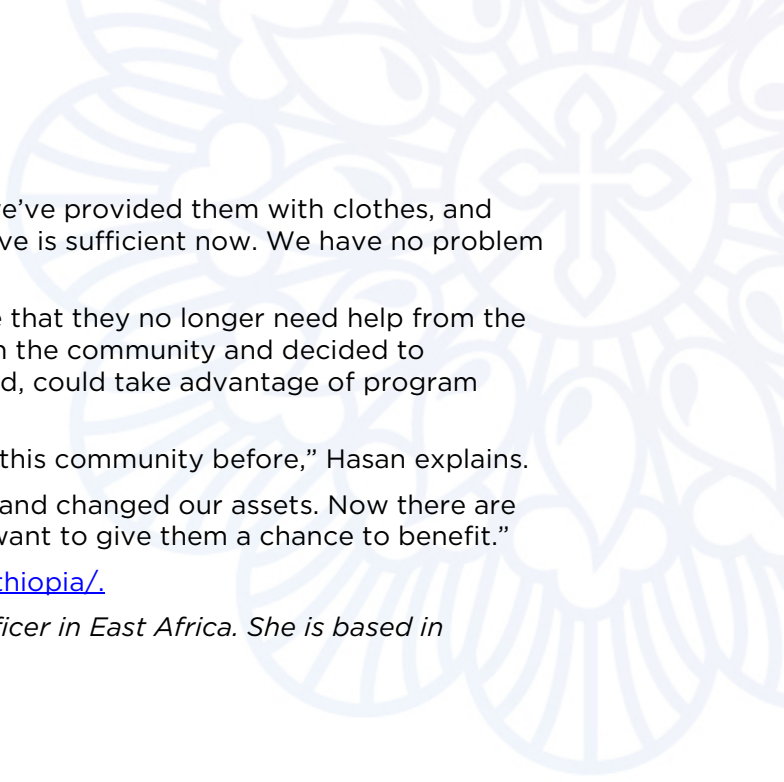
Catholic Relief Services, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, is assisting the Ethiopian government in distributing food rations to more than 200,000 program participants in six districts. With the help of two Church partners— Hararghe Catholic Secretariat and Wonji Catholic Church — CRS also provides support services to more than 87,000 of these people. This added support helps families to build their household assets by increasing their crop production, livestock holdings and savings, enabling participants to graduate from the program more quickly.

“Earlier, what we produced wasn't sufficient, so we had to go out and seek daily labor,” Hasan explains, noting that this time away from their fields further reduced crop yields.

Once enrolled in the program, though, Hasan's family used the food rations to complete their daily food needs and set aside crops from the farm to sell.

When Hasan and Zeyineba realized the power a little extra money gave them, their entrepreneurial spirit went into overdrive. Hasan sold some of his harvest to buy crops, including coffee, that he knew he could grow and sell for a profit. Their crops now earn the family \$300 or so each year. Meanwhile, Zeyineba took advantage of a small World Bank loan of around \$90 to buy their first cow. She then used the profits she earned from selling the cow's first calf to open a small store, which brings in an additional \$155 in annual income. She adds to this sum by selling milk from her original cow and now a second calf as well.

The couple also took advantage of improved seeds provided by CRS to grow higher-quality grains and vegetables for increased yields and profits. Agricultural training from the project enhances the farm's productivity, as does Hasan's ability to work the farm full-time. “Thank you God, for I have everything now,” Hasan says. “I have wheat, sorghum, maize and beans. And I have also grown fruits and vegetables and coffee. So I have a surplus.”



“The nutrition of our children has improved, we’ve provided them with clothes, and they’re in school,” he adds. “Everything we have is sufficient now. We have no problem providing food for them.”

This surplus made Hasan and Zeyineba realize that they no longer need help from the government. They talked with other families in the community and decided to “selfgraduate” so other families in greater need, could take advantage of program benefits.

“We were considered the lowest in income in this community before,” Hasan explains.

“We worked with the program. We benefited and changed our assets. Now there are people poorer than us,” Zeyineba adds. “We want to give them a chance to benefit.”

Read more about Ethiopia at <http://crs.org/ethiopia/>.

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