



End Poverty Now

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2009

EPN Grassroots Projects 2008-2009

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

EPN Grass-roots Projects 1-3

Five Days for the Homeless 1

Philippines Project Updates 3

Greg Mortenson's Educational Initiatives 4

Biofuel vs. Food: A Catch - 22? 5

*If you are interested in donating to End Poverty Now, please contact sponsorship @endpoverty now.ca!

For the 2008, 2009 year, End Poverty Now has focused its resources on three joint venture projects:

The Warm Fireside Project with the Projet Autochtone du Quebec (PAQ)

PAQ is a non-profit shelter in the Montreal area that caters to the urban Aboriginal community including Inuit, First Nations and Metis people.

PAQ Website: www.paqc.org

The shelter provides a bed, shower, laundry facilities as well as food when available to between 15 and 20 homeless and impoverished each night. PAQ also holds counselling and rehabilitation

sessions for the community. In this venture, EPN has worked to sponsor hot water for the shelter's kitchen.



A family in the Philippines with their backyard gardening project

This has allowed the residents to wash their clothing, dishes, and even the shelter can be properly cleaned due

to this donation. This was particularly helpful with the bed-bug outbreak PAQ faced over the summer months. In addition to this, food storage bins were provided. This has allowed PAQ to provide meals as a regular addition to the shelter.

This project aims, first mostly, to address the question of long-term sustainability in fund recruitment. To address this, there have been three interns throughout the year working with PAQ. Many thanks to our interns that have filled Fundraising Coordinator and Administrative Assistant positions.

Continued on page 2

Five Days for the Homeless: A National Youth Campaign



End Poverty Now participated in the national Five Days for the Homeless Campaign (<http://www.5days.ca>) from March 15th-19th 2009. During the five day campaign, students from across the country made personal sacrifices to promote social responsibility and make their community a better place. Our volunteers gave up their comforts, and lived outside, effectively homeless, on the McGill campus for five full days and nights. They had no food or drinks other than those directly donated to them, could carry only a pillow and a sleeping bag, with no access to showers or facilities to which their student status would usually grant them access. They had no income, and 100% of the funds donated to participants went towards End Poverty Now's efforts to fight homelessness in Montreal

Steps Towards Sustainability in Canada and Abroad



End Poverty Now is a non-partisan, non-political, non-religious, non-profit Canadian charitable organization (based in Montreal) that is dedicated to long-term alleviation of abject poverty. End Poverty Now represents a group of dedicated individuals, mainly students, who strive to make a difference in the world by working to end abject poverty. End Poverty Now operates on a tri-pillar base: Grassroots Projects, Education, and InReach.

This sustainable project has encouraged immediate development while also enabling the shelter to take in more people over time. These areas of basic funding will improve the capacity of the home to not only aid those in need through providing a safe and comforting place to stay, but will also engage many more in their rehabilitation programs making for long-term poverty alleviation within Montreal. Finally, EPN assisted PAQ with a two-day volunteer endeavour to clean the shelter, and held a clothing drive to benefit the shelter's residents.

Bee-Keeping with the Rwanda Village Concept Project

This grassroots project was initiated in the Huye community of Southern Rwanda in February 2008 and has been End Poverty Now's prime example for grassroots development since. This venture, which includes the construction of thirty beehives and the specialized training of fifty members of the Rwandan Widows' Association, will act as a model microeconomic enterprise to be replicated in other parts of the region.

The first round of profits was collected in late Fall of 2008 and proceeds from the sale of all processed honey

have gone directly to widows of both the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition to its economic benefits, this venture aims to promote self-reliance and responsibility in the community through leadership training, supported project management, and exercises in proposal writing.

There have been troubles faced, however. EPN has supported theft prevention and recovery after the roofing was stolen from one of the three bee-shelters.

The three instalments were used successfully towards the initiation of three bee-shelters in this community. Also, the women have learned integral bee-keeping skills. The profits made thus far have already benefited the widow's cooperative and are, in majority, enough to cover the running costs for the following year. End Poverty Now has decided to sign on with this project and the Rwanda Village Concept Project for another year to continually monitor the Widow's Association's capacity to continue with sustainability.

EPN is thankful for the wonderful contributions of Alyx MacAdams who has participated as the intern

for this project during the summer of 2008. Also, in advance, for Sarah Woolf's contribution in a similar role this upcoming summer 2009. We will all be focusing on the implementation of a business plan for honey sale in addition to the gradual phase-out of RVCP and EPN alike; we are excited to witness as the Widow's Association takes the project on completely.

The third project has been a backyard gardening project to improve the self-sufficiency of families in the Philippines and to alleviate malnutrition. The details of this project can be found on the adjacent page.

Approximately \$9800.00 has been invested on the above projects during the 2008-2009 year.

The grassroots projects committee has also been working diligently on a series of projects for the 2009-2010 year that focus on education and youth skill training. These projects include the Las Marias School in Nicaragua with Dianova, an after-school music program for impoverished youth in Bosnia, children's homes throughout Nepal with Volunteer Services Nepal, income generation for youth in Burmese refugee camps, a school in Zambia, and numerous other potential initiatives.

Backyard Gardening in the Philippines

The start of the Backyard Gardening project sponsored by End Poverty Now in the Philippines has been spearheaded by fresh efforts from partner families in the tribal villages of New Balbalan, Burayakan, Basao-Dilag, Hilltop, and Nambaran in establishing their communal and individual kitchen gardens.

Objectives of the Project:

- To develop small gardens among a few families in three or four villages which serve to demonstrate to other villagers the wisdom in fencing a plot and planting several varieties of green veggies adjacent to their own huts.
- To improve the health and nutrition of village children as a result of yields from their vegetable gardens.
- To increase the household income of families tending their own vegetable garden by urging them to sell their surplus production.
- To increase awareness in organic gardening principles, practices, health and environmental benefits.
- To urge other families in the village to undertake the establishment of their own household vegetable gardens,
- To inculcate the value of habitual savings among the participating families.
- To train the participating families in managing their financial affairs specially in relation to the disposal and use of proceeds from sales of surplus production of vegetables.

As you enter the partner communities, you can easily observe remarkable changes. Because what were once idle and barren lots covered with overgrown grasses and weeds have been converted into productive vegetable gardens.

It was of interest to note that some of the partner families' gardens are located along the community road which means that they do not own the land where presently their cogan dwellings sit on. And which further means that they are not allowed to use their backyards. This gave them no other option other than plant along the narrow strips of land the community road as it is the only available lot.

Some partner families started working their communal and individual backyard gardens as early as the first week of November 2008. To this, one cannot but notice that they had exerted efforts in fencing their garden using bamboo, rattan and vines as materials. This also shows the initiative of the partner families that, in the temporary absence of interlink wire meshes for fences, they can come up with alternative ways from indigenous resources.

The newfound diligence and industriousness of the partner families equates to newfound confidence in facing to the challenges of life and living it. They now can grasp the tangible meaning of hope for the future of their children. As they have proven the oft-spoken development adage that "even the poor have the capacity to save if given the opportunity." The project has opened such opportunity for them. They now have a confident outlook in facing the formidable challenges of the future.



A mother and daughter work on cultivating their family garden in the Philippines.

Three Cups of Tea: A Humanitarian Mountain-Climber's Real Summit

By: Brittany Young

On an evening in January, The Temple Beth Am in Miami began to slowly flood with an audience so diverse an outsider couldn't possibly guess the name of the speaker. Young children gripped the hands of anxious adults, and elderly women chatted feverously about the speaker. Some read the book, others brought along friends. Regardless, all were present to see one of the most active humanitarians of our time speak about how to use education to end ignorance and conflict.

Greg Mortenson rose to the stage delicately. Standing well over six-feet-tall, the gentle, grinning giant spoke passionately into the microphone. He told his audience that when he heard of his sister's death to epilepsy on July 24th, 1992, he decided to surmount the infamous K2 Mountain in Pakistan and leave her amber necklace at its peak.

Although only recently an experienced climber at the time, Mortenson had been familiar with mountainous regions, having grown up on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, what Mortenson calls "a paradise to grow up in." His parents dedicated their lives to humanitarian work; his father Irvin Mortenson was the founder of the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center, Tanzania's first teaching hospital. Though Mortenson hadn't discovered his humanitarian calling until his trek up K2. After more than 70 days enduring the inhospitable temperatures and terrain, Mortenson never reached the mountain's peak. He and three other climbers spent several days just in search of a missing fifth climber. After the rescue, they began to descend the mountain, disillusioned and exhausted.

A local Balti porter, intending to lead kole, accidentally led him to the rural and impoverished village of Korphe. Before the village, Mortenson says, stood a "stout, squat man with a silver beard." He extended his hand and welcomed him

There, Mortenson recuperated with the tradition of drinking three cups of tea. When the acquaintance. The second symbolizes the stranger friend into the family. Soon, Mortenson experienced

One day, he discovered the village's where about eighty children sat on the dirt, scrib-

He inquired where their teacher was and not afford the teacher's daily one-dollar salary, the was inspired by the young students' fervor for learn-regardless if the teacher arrives.

"Can you imagine going to school with no children giggled in their seats. He explained to the at-To repay the people of Korphe for their hospitality and the love they had shown him, Mortenson promised to build them a school, returning to the United States with only raising \$12,000 on his mind. He composed 500 letters to "celebrities and movie stars," only to receive a \$100 check from NBC's Tom Brokaw months later.

Mortenson shared with his audience a conversation he recently had with his twelve-year-old daughter. "My daughter Amira and I were doing homework the other day when I noticed she was distracted. She looked up at me and said 'Daddy, I figured out that in 1993 you spent \$128 on postage, but only raised \$100.'" Unable to raise the funds he needed, Mortenson sold his car, climbing gear, and almost all that he owned. He cashed in his retirement policy at 36 and lived "essentially homeless" for two years.

Yet his big break did not come from the kindness of celebrities, but from the hands of a group of fourth graders at a Wisconsin school where his mother was principal. After telling the young class of what he had seen in Korphe, the students vowed to raise the funds for Korphe's new school. 62,340 pennies from the fourth graders inspired adults to donate to Korphe's school fund. This began Mortenson's initiative entitled "Pennies for Peace," which he described as "going bananas lately," operating in only 270 schools in 2007 and burgeoning to 3,200 schools by January, 2009.

The construction of Korphe's school in 1996 revealed to Mortenson a deeper issue that pervades much of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Educated women are a rarity in this part of the world. Only 36% of Pakistan's women are literate and the Taliban make obvious attempts to ebb the growth. Girl's schools are becoming more frequently bombed by the Taliban, who understand well the truth of the African proverb Mortenson champions: "if you educate a boy, you educate an individual, if you educate a girl, you educate a community."

"The Taliban are not afraid of the sword, but of the pen," Mortenson explained. Educated women can decrease the number of men going on jihad as the Islamic campaign requires the consent of mothers. "Educating women can decrease infant mortality, reduce the population explosion, and improve the quality of life among individuals." Though it is not only Mortenson's dream to educate the disadvantaged children of Pakistan and Afghanistan, it was also a wish of the man who had become Mortenson's mentor and father, Haji Ali.

When Mortenson discovered one day in Korphe that tears seeped from Haji Ali's eyes while he read his book of poetry, he confessed to him his life's greatest tragedy, never learning how to read. "He told me 'these words make the stories that make wise the fools' or the ignorant," Mortenson explained. When Mortenson visited his grave in October 2001, he followed his mentor's advice a final time and listened to the wind and heard the sounds of the children at the school. "I realized his vision had come true through the education of his children."

The mission of education has turned into Mortenson's life work. "Education should be seen in a more holistic concept, incorporating the basics and also sustaining indigenous knowledge and oral traditions." Mortenson and the Central Asia Institute are attempting to reverse the negative effects the Taliban have had on the relationships between elders and children. "By destroying the relationships, they are trying to control society. This is why story telling, or passing down traditions is very vital."

Mortenson's schools all follow a very structured curriculum that includes the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and incorporates the elders who visit the schools for traditional story-telling. Mortenson's Central Asia Institute has constructed 78 schools in rural Pakistan and Afghanistan, which have educated 18,000 girls. Each of the charity's projects is working toward the goals of decreasing infant mortality, decreasing population growth, and improving quality of life. Though the charity is also disseminating a message of peace. Education decreases ignorance and increases tolerance, decreases violence, and increases diplomacy. "I am just like any of you," Mortenson told the several hundred attendees in Miami, "I just think education is the key to peace and prosperity."

To help with the Central Asia Institute's mission of peace for the war-torn area, visit their website at www.ikat.org

Brittany Young is the founder and president of the non-profit charity, A Spring of Hope. (www.aspringofhope.org)



Greg Mortenson with some of his students
Credit: 3 Cups of Tea website

Mortenson to the climbers' meeting town of Ashished village of Korphe. Before the village, Mortenson named Haji Ali, the *nurmadhar*, or chief of to the community, simplistic but beautiful.

help of the villager's hospitality. He learned the first is shared with a stranger, they are only an becoming a friend. The last cup welcomes the such a connection with the people of Korphe.

makeshift school, an area in the back of the village bling with sticks in the sand or on slate boards.

the eager students explained that since they could teacher only visited three times a week. Mortenson ing, present each day at their outdoor school area

teacher there?" Mortenson asked his audience. The tendees in Miami that he had to embark on a mission. To repay the people of Korphe for their hospitality and the love they had shown him, Mortenson promised to build them a school, returning to the United States with only raising \$12,000 on his mind. He composed 500 letters to "celebrities and movie stars," only to receive a \$100 check from NBC's Tom Brokaw months later.

Biofuel vs. Food?

By Hannah Getachew

As traditional energy sources are depleting, governments have turned to biofuel production as the 'technological bullet' that can replace fossil fuels. However, this new direction is misguided. Biofuel research, and production, ultimately has less net benefits than consequences. By investing in biofuel production, i.e. growing the necessary crops with the intention of processing them for energy, the price of food has increased worldwide. This effect has been particularly devastating in poor countries, where a disproportionate amount of household income is spent on food.

Biofuels are defined as fuels that have been obtained from relatively recently dead biological material (as opposed to fossil fuels). Although they can be derived from any biological source, the most common sources are corn, palm oil, wheat, switch grass and sugar cane. Substituting fossil fuels for biofuels have many benefits, namely: a reduction in greenhouse gases because of its carbon neutrality and long term sustainable energy. However, due to unequal global trade flows, our high level of energy consumption, the high food prices experienced thus far and the negative impact of certain crops being grown for this purpose, outweigh any benefits of biofuel production.

The basis of the biofuel versus food relationship can be explained with the economic theory of supply and demand. Global energy reliance, especially in developed countries, in tandem with rising oil prices due to depleting global supply, and the political instability of certain major oil producers, has created a large incentive for governments to invest in alternative energy sources, namely biofuels. Governments are often easily attracted by technological solutions proposed by well-organized industry lobbyists.

As supply and demand theory dictates, when supply is restricted and demand is both high and inelastic in the short term (i.e. demand is not very responsive to changes in price), the price will increase. In this case, the limited supply of non-renewable oil resources and increasing demand for energy (as countries develop and industrialize) has allowed oil producers to higher the cost of oil without adversely affecting their profits.

The biofuel market competes with the agricultural market for several inputs such as water and land. If biofuels were produced on agriculturally marginal land, it would minimize its impact on the food industry.

However, the most most net energy efficient biofuel, corn based ethanol, requires land with the same properties as many other food produce. Available arable land is a scarce resource that is best served in catering to the immediate needs of the hungry to provide food. "In both the developing and developed world competition for water (and land) between domestic, industrial, and agricultural sectors is already intense. Large-scale biofuel production will exacerbate this competition."¹ As a result of high demand for land, the price of land increases, thus increasing the cost of producing food, a cost that is often transferred to the consumers. Assuming that every plan to expand the biofuel industry in the world were realized, without substantial improvements in technological efficiency, certain crops, such as maize could cost up to 40% more by 2020.

In terms of biofuel production, not all crops are created equal. Certain crops are less damaging in terms of their impact on food prices. *Jatropha*, for example, is a crop that is becoming increasingly more popular, especially in developing countries. It is a multi-functional crop whose biggest strength is that it is able to survive on agriculturally marginal lands; therefore, it is able "to alleviate soil degradation, desertification and deforestation." This is particularly beneficial in developing countries that often times do not have the necessary resources to invest in improving the quality of their soil nor would they have to divert land that is in use for food production to produce biofuels. The conditions necessary to cultivate *Jatropha* are such that its production would have minimal impact on food prices.

The effects of biofuel production are painfully evident in developing countries. Today, there are over 800 million people living off less than \$1 a day that are food insecure. There are an additional 2-2.5 billion people living on \$1-\$2 a day that are very vulnerable to any increase in food prices. Therefore, until there are significant improvements in technology that make the biofuel industry feasible without causing drastic increases in food prices, or unless production of ethanol is replaced with crops such as *Jatropha* this industry is becoming increasingly devastating to the world's poor.

¹ Boosting biofuel crops could threaten food security **David Boddiger**

**End Poverty Now
would like to
thank all of our
volunteers for a
successful year!**

*Don't hesitate to
contact us with any
inquiries:
communications
@endpovertynow.ca*