

HARVEST *together*

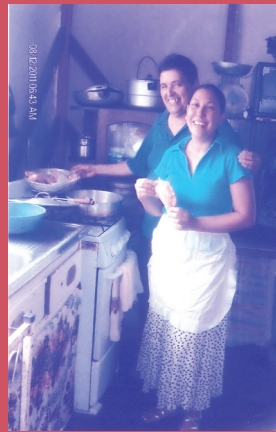
Be encouraged in heart and united in love.
Colossians 2:2

Progress Update

One requirement for all recipients of the Sowers Fund is to submit a progress report every 4 months. This report is a way for the Sowers Fund staff to gauge whether the program is helping to establish a steady income source. Here are some updates that we have received so far.



Recipient: Chancelvie Ngoma
Country: Dolisie, Congo
Item Purchased: Sewing machine
Update: Chancelvie started our program in 2011 and has been successfully working on her tailoring business 5 days a week over the past two years. She is now hoping to sell cakes and other items in her workshop to customers. She said the following on her last report about the help given by Sowers Fund: "Yes, it helped me to have the sewing machine and get freedom to work. My basic needs are provided."



Recipient: Armando Villafranca
Country: Puerto Cortes, Honduras
Item Purchased: Oven
Update: We highlighted Armando and his wife on our last newsletter. They started their home restaurant last year, baking bread and pizza for sale. His biggest expense with the business is buying meats for his baked goods. Though his home is small, they are hoping to enlarge their business little by little. He comments on the help from Sowers Fund donors: "Yes, it has been a great blessing. It has allowed me to [have an] improved quality of life and [for] my family as well. It motivates me to work and honor God."

continued
from page 1

The Sowers Fund was established in response to this – to give a helping hand to the working poor, burdened under the weight of poverty. How do we accomplish this? Funds we collect go towards purchasing income-generating items or vocational training that enables individuals to start a small business to earn a daily wage. Instead of giving a "hand-out", we offer a "hand-up" in the form of an opportunity to work and provide for one's own long-term needs.

As of July 2013, the Sowers Fund has funded over 103 small businesses in 14 countries: Congo, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda. Some of the businesses that we have helped to start include tailoring, chicken rearing, farming, soap-making, fishing, and various retail ventures. This program is more than just financial assistance; it also establishes in the lives of the recipients key Christian principles, such as stewardship, tithing, and support of the local community, which go a long way toward true long-term sustainable economic development and stability.

As the old proverb says: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." When it comes to lifting people out of poverty, a hand-up can last a lifetime.

¹ World Bank Development Indicators 2008

Hand Up, Not A Hand Out

Did you know that over three billion people - almost half the world population - live on less than \$2.50 a day?¹ That barely pays for a cup of coffee here in North America. Poverty is a global crisis. No matter where you go, individuals living in abject poverty will never be far away. With the exception of highly industrialized countries such as the U.S. and Canada, extreme poverty exists in practically every country on the planet. However not every region of the world is affected equally. Some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, are completely devastated by poverty, while others, such as Latin America, are not affected to the same degree.

How do we even attempt to change this or should we even bother trying? The Bible says in Deuteronomy 15:11, "For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'" God commands us to help the poor and needy, whenever and wherever we can.

continued on page 4

Field Visit: Welcome to Jamaica!

In May 2013, one of the Sowers Fund board members conducted a field visit to meet some of our recipients in Westmoreland and Kingston, Jamaica. The objective of this trip was to provide program training to and receive feedback from field representatives, to solicit client stories and suggestions, and to seek potential opportunities for growth and expansion.

The sign read "Welcome to Jamaica!" I mused upon this as I exited the aircraft filled with excitement and anticipation. Jamaica is a beautiful West Indies island situated 90 miles south of Cuba in the Caribbean Sea. The palm trees along the shore and the bright sun reflecting off the water add to the ambiance, a true earthly paradise. The island depends heavily on its tourism industry, especially now that its largest exports of bauxite/alumina and sugarcane are slowly dwindling. The country has been deeply affected by the global economic downturn; as a result, the unemployment rate has jumped to 14.2%, with 16.5% of Jamaicans living below the poverty line.

The main purpose of my visit was to follow up on the progress of some Sowers Fund recipients. My first stop was in Kingston. I was delighted to see our believers actively involved in their businesses and very enthusiastic about maintaining and enhancing their ventures. I visited Yvonne Brown at the local market, where she has a small but thriving business selling fruits. She is a determined and focused vendor whose gentle smile is able to attract customers. Not having to beg anymore, Yvonne is very thankful that she can now provide for her family.



Yvonne selling her fruit to customers at her stall

My second stop took me to Rosemarie Ball whose financial struggles had been taking a toll on her family. They found it increasingly difficult to meet even their basic needs. During those desperate

continued on page 2

Request Prayer for

- **Grace and wisdom for the mission field ministers to choose the correct recipients for the program.**
- **Improvements to the program that allow more individuals to be assisted.**
- **Recipients be good stewards of the funds that are given to them.**
- **Blessings for the donors for their generosity.**

For more information, please email us at:

info@sowersfund.org





Photographs (from left to right): Rosemarie (right) with her chickens; Adassa (left) selling her famous chicken-back and dumplings to customers in her "cook shop"; Deborah's retail shop continued from page 1

times, Rosemarie received help from the Sowers Fund. Today she is running a lucrative chicken farming business. Rosemarie is self-sufficient and her financial situation is no longer tenuous. She can now feed her children, buy them clothes, and arrange for them to attend school on a regular basis. Words were not enough to express Rosemarie's gratitude for the help she received from the Sowers Fund. Tears filled her eyes as she praised God for giving them this lifeline for survival.

In Kingston, I also met Adassa Shaw whose restaurant business was featured in our last newsletter. She was struggling to put food on the table for her family and to pay for rent and living expenses. However, that is all in the past now that her dream of a "cook shop" is a reality. With the money Adassa received from the Sowers Fund, she immediately started her cook shop outside her home alongside a busy street. You can find her there bustling with excitement as she stays true to the delicious menu of chicken-back and dumplings.

My next stop was Westmoreland, a parish located on the south side of the island approximately 4 hours from Kingston. Life in Westmoreland is slow paced, laid back, and lacking in employment opportunities. Residents must travel far to seek employment. I met Sophia Whyte who had an existing chicken farm business but was unable to sustain her business due to the slow turnaround time of 6 weeks. With the aid received from the Sowers Fund, she was able to purchase another stock of chickens to reduce her turnaround time to 3 weeks. This venture has improved her business and financial situation.

In Westmoreland, I also met Deborah Richie Plummer who started her business selling food and snacks at a local school. She also sells clothing to cane farm workers. Her business improved her lifestyle; however, the seasonal nature of this business forces her to discover creative ways to support herself and four dependents. Deborah expressed how the help she received from the Sowers Fund has made her desperate situation into a hopeful one. She knows that with her hard work, the love and support of the brethren, and God's wisdom and guidance, she will make it.

My visit to Jamaica was very rewarding. My heart was joined to the people as I witnessed their poverty, daily struggles, and desperation. Despite the situation, there's hope, and they found their saving grace when they fixed their eyes upon the Master. We are channels of God's work and love; therefore, our prosperity is not ours, but it is God's mercy. We are blessed to bless. The Lord's heart melts at the cries of His children; He is just and faithful to attend unto their cry. From a point of utter poverty, God was able to bring them to a point of income sustainability through the generosity of His people.



Sophia (2nd from left) and her daughter (right) showing Sowers Fund their chickens



Progress Update (continued from page 4)
Recipient: Afiwa Attisso
Country: Lome, Togo
Item Purchased: Bulk sewing supplies and miscellaneous school items for sale
Update: Afiwa started our program in 2011 and has been diligently working 4 days a week on her business. One of the issues she's encountered is customers buying things from her on credit and not repaying her quickly enough. Regardless she has been managing well, and she is hoping to expand her business by hemming cloths for her customers. She wrote to us: "I am able to live without being under credit and my business is more steady."

Meet Our Recipients



Recipient: Laura Saucedo Maldonado
 Location: Monterrey, Mexico
 Item Purchased: Teacher training course

Laura's Story

Plagued by shootouts, armed robberies and extortion by cartels, Monterrey, Mexico's third largest city, is said to be in danger of "falling" to organized crime. For 42-year old Laura Saucedo Maldonado, the uncertainty of everyday living hasn't been easy. Working as a nanny for many years, she recently became unemployed as the children grew older and she was no longer needed as a nanny. Despite her years of experience with children, she has struggled to find work. She would like to work as a pre-school teacher's assistant; however in Mexico, one needs official credentials in order to apply. Sowers Fund not only helps to purchase income-generating goods but also assists in providing funds for vocational training. This year, Sowers Fund donors were able to help Laura enroll in a teacher's assistant training course to get her back on her feet to do what she loves - working with children. Her first semester grades have already come in and she has been a star pupil!

LAURA SAUCEDA MALDONADO FIRST SEMESTER GRADES	
SUBJECT	GRADE
Biology	95
English	100
History	88
Psychology	100
Nutrition	97
Computers	94
Teaching (Methods)	99
Literature	70



Recipient: Eriberto Dishmey Shephard
 Location: La Romana, Dominican Republic
 Item Purchased: Lawnmower

The Grass is Always Greener...

For 50-year old Eriberto Dishmey Shephard, this means managing his own business to earn a higher daily income. With a wife and three children to support, it hasn't always been easy to meet all the needs of the family. Eriberto has been in the landscaping business for over 20 years in La Romana, Dominican Republic, so owning his own landscaping business has always been a dream of his. With the generous help from Sowers Fund donors, Eriberto was able to purchase a lawnmower, which will be the first step in getting his landscaping business off to a greener start!



Recipient: Esther Thomas
 Location: Lagos, Nigeria
 Item Purchased: Inventory of goods for resale

Poverty in the Midst of Plenty

Recently, a British Minister of Parliament stated that Nigeria was "too rich to be poor" and has the potential to be one of the richest nations in the world. Yet, despite Nigeria's ample resources, acute poverty exists due to "corruption and exploitation". For Esther Thomas, this is felt every day as she struggles to put food on the table for her three children. Almost 61% of Nigerians live in absolute poverty. Esther and her husband, who rent a single room to live in, are unfortunately part of this statistic. Esther currently rents a small storefront to sell things, but due to a lack of funds she is struggling to buy goods to sell. With generous help from Sowers Fund donors, she was able to purchase an inventory of goods such plastic bowls, shoes, etc. to resell to individual customers. She is now able to earn enough to better support herself and her family and improve her quality of life.

"If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." Romans 12:8