

# HARVEST *Together*

*"If it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully" - Romans 12:8 (NIV)*

## Hope Rising from the Rubble

When you think of Haiti, everyone remembers the big earthquake of 2010, where over 3 million people were left homeless by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake. However, few realize that even before the earthquake had hit, over 70% of its citizens lived below the poverty line. Why is this? Political mismanagement and underinvestment in human capital, have made Haiti the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Scarred by decades of poverty and turbulence, individuals struggle daily to earn a living. This is the case for 46-year-old Pierre Ricot, and his family of three children. Despite being an apprentice mason by trade, he was finding it difficult to get employment. Desperate for income, he sold cell phone minutes and food items to support his family.

In 2015, Sowers Fund was able to expand to Haiti and invest in Pierre's existing business. By providing him with some much needed capital to purchase more inventory of goods, he has been able to turn over products quickly and make a profit. He now has running shoes in his inventory, which his wife is selling in the market. A recent progress report update was so encouraging: he told us he was able to save money and build an outdoor bathroom for his home.

As Haiti continues to re-build, there are glimmers of hope as reconstruction is creating better housing and access to education for its citizens.



Pierre's stall and running shoes sold by his wife in the market

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These are just some examples of items that Sowers Fund donors have helped to provide. As you will have read in this newsletter, we also participated in our first ever fishing cooperative and had one of our applicants graduate from her vocational training course with highest honors – class valedictorian!

We, the Sowers Fund board, would like to thank all who have contributed and prayed for this program. "The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed" - Proverbs 11:25 (NLT).



Recent recipients who have received support:

Nicolas Andiva and his barber shop (Kenya)



Nehemiah and his shop (Tanzania)

## Sowers Fund - Five Years & Counting ...

How quickly five years have gone by! In 2011, the Sowers Fund was launched to help families in mission-field churches who were struggling to earn a daily wage. We provided much-needed capital to purchase income-generating equipment, tools, and vocational training to aid in starting small business ventures. From funding our first applicant from Togo in February of 2011, Sowers Fund has now funded over 187 businesses in over 16 countries. The overwhelming support of this program by our donors has been such a blessing to witness.

In 2015 we funded over 39 businesses and expanded our footprint into two new countries, Tanzania and Haiti. Funded purchases ranging from equipment to start a barber shop, farming tools to grow cassava & plantains, sewing machines, electrician's certificates, fishing nets and petty trading items such as clothing, grocery items and household generators.

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## Field Visit: ¡ Bienvenido a México!

*Known for their beautiful sandy beaches and lush resorts, Mexico attracts millions of tourists every year. The country shares a northern border with the United States, a southeast border with Guatemala, Belize and the Caribbean Sea, and to the south and west by the Pacific Ocean. Although tourism is a big revenue generator, Mexico is dependent on its auto industry: they are the biggest producers of automobiles in North America for GM, Ford, Chrysler, Volkswagen and Nissan. However, the economic disparity between the extremely rich and the extremely poor continues to widen.*

### Economics and Extreme Poverty in Mexico

The current population of Mexico is estimated at about 120 million, of which nearly 25 million Mexicans make less than \$14 per day. About 40% of the population is living below the poverty line, of which 10% live in extreme poverty, earning only \$1.25 per day. Along with poor infrastructure and institutions, education and labour market efficiencies, the thriving drug wars and corruption account for why many Mexicans have limits on their welfare. A simple example is if a local has a qualified skill and wants to start up their own business, it takes weeks and weeks of waiting to set-up the business because of the administrative and financial complexities that are involved. Many just give up because they simply can't afford it.

### How Sowers Fund Intervened

In 2013, Francisca and Yecenia were funded by Sowers Fund to start their own taco stand. Francisca is a single mom with two boys to raise and she was cleaning houses for a living at that time. Cleaning houses took a toll on her physically and she was unable to do it regularly to produce enough income to sustain her family. Yecenia has 6 children and with her husband's seasonal construction work, they struggled to provide for their basic necessities. During my recent visit to Ensenada, it was good to see both of them doing well in their business with regular customers who frequent the stand. I was able to have breakfast at the taco stand and now I know why customers are asking them to expand their menu. They make delicious food! Expanding their menu is not simple; there is an application

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## Prayer requests for

- **Qualified applicants who have a desire to make better lives for themselves.**
- **New ways to improve the program that will allow more individuals to be assisted.**
- **Recipients to be good stewards of the funds that are given to them.**
- **Abundance of blessings for the generosity of our donors.**

For more information, please email us at:  
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Francisca and Yecenia at their taco stand



Adrianna and her children

process with the government that needs to happen. This year they are hoping to add more items to the menu when they renew their business license. This will enable them to increase their revenue. Francisca and Yecenia are overjoyed and forever grateful to their donors who have made their hopes come alive.

### Expansion to San Quintin

During my visit, one of my goals was to seek out potential opportunities on how we can expand in the Baja California state of Mexico. I had the privilege of visiting San Quintin, which is a town on the west coast of the Baja California Peninsula. The town is in the middle of a very important agricultural area, growing strawberries and tomatoes. Western companies like Driscoll work with BerryMex of San Quintin to import strawberries to the United States and Canada. Finding work in San Quintin is not easy. It's a town of less than 30,000 people and since most jobs are agricultural in nature, it's on a first-come first-serve basis. If they want to find work that day as a strawberry picker, they will wake up early as 4am and wait at the bus stop hoping the strawberry farm bus will come by and pick them up. If the quota is filled for that day's work, then they will return home with no work for that day. Since there is no stability of finding work on a daily basis, many live in poor conditions and are not able to even find food for that day. I was able to see this first-hand as I

had the opportunity to hand out boxes of pantry items for some families.

Sowers fund was recently able to expand to San Quintin. Adriana has 3 children and she helps her husband deliver water and also works in the farms seasonally. Their combined average income is about \$7.50 per day, which is not enough to provide for their family. Sowers Fund has helped them start their own water purification business. This will allow them to earn a steady wage where they can be local and sell to people in their neighbourhood.

### You Gave and They Are Blessed

My visit to Ensenada and San Quintin was very rewarding. My heart was full to experience the lifestyle of the people there and to witness poverty first-hand. Their daily struggles and desperation for a better life made me realize how grateful we ought to be for the simple things in life, such as our daily meals we take for granted. Even though poverty is a sizable issue in Mexico, there are steps the country can take to decrease the wealth-gap to ensure economic growth. This may be easier said than done. However we, through Sowers Fund, can help applicants such as Francisca, Yecenia and Adrianna in small ways to alleviate some of the financial struggles the families are facing. Thank you for your generosity in making this possible!

*A su mantenimiento daré bendición:  
Sus pobres saciaré de pan.  
Salmos 132:15*

## Fishing for a Brighter Future – Fishing Cooperative

Shenge is a town on the western edge of Sierra Leone, Africa. Being a coastal area, it is predominantly known for its fish production, and most of this production is from small-scale fisheries. Given the high demand for fish—the primary source of protein in the native diet—many local residents endeavor to catch fish for themselves. Too often, their success is limited by their small dug-out canoes, handmade nets, and the competition from industrial trawlers. They then turn to small-scale farming, which too has proven challenging given the rough terrain and unreliable water distribution system for irrigation. It is no wonder that Sierra Leone ranks among the poorest countries in the world.

In 2015, field representatives in Sierra Leone reached out to Sowers Fund to see if there was a way for the organization to assist in breaking through this ceiling of un- and under-employment. To Sowers Fund, the answer was clear: provide funds to purchase material and equipment to start a profitable small-scale fishing organization.

By the end of January 2016, a group of 5 families in Mobailmokoh (a village just outside of Shenge) formed a fishing cooperative led by an individual with experience in the fishing trade. The cooperative used the funds to build a large fishing boat and to purchase a motor for the boat and fishing nets. Since February 2016, the men take turns fishing while the women assist in processing and selling fish in local markets as well as inland areas of the country. There is an old proverb that 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." We hope that this project will provide an economical uplift for the families in the cooperative, and a brighter future for all the people in the village of Mobailmokoh.



Items purchased



The fishing boat, before and after



A prize catch!

## Head of the Class

We highlighted 45-year old Laura Maldonado's story in our 2013 Newsletter. She was recommended to Sowers Fund by the field representative in Monterrey, Mexico. Without finishing high school, Laura decided to work as a nanny for many years. When she became unemployed she struggled to find a job. Her dream had been to work as a pre-school teacher's assistant; however, in Mexico, one needs a high school education and official teaching credentials in order to apply. Sowers Fund not only helps to purchase income-generating goods but also assists in providing funds for vocational training. Sowers Fund donors were able to help



*"I personally wanted to express my deepest gratitude."*

Laura enroll in a teacher's assistant training course while completing her high school diploma. With her final semester ending in February of 2016, Laura's hard work paid off and she was named valedictorian of her class! In a letter to her donors, Laura says "I personally wanted to express my deepest gratitude because through the help that you gave me I was able to achieve my goals and objectives of successfully completing the high school diploma with certification in educational assistant." Now she can start applying for work and get back to what she loves: working with children.