



IMPRESSIONS FROM ORGANIC GROWERS' CONFERENCE IN BRAZIL



BY STEVE ANDERSON

SHARE was the major sponsor for the 2008 annual Organic Growers' Conference held at the Dom Fragosa agricultural high school in Independência, Ceará, only 5° south the equator. Over 130 participants focused on the permaculture theme of education for agricultural coexistence within Brazil's semi-arid Northeast. The Brazilian "polygon of drought" region is centred here. This area encompasses nine states and produces very unpredictable rainfall.

The first day included lectures and tours around the conference site, which is also a working farm. Organic practices with livestock, crop, and honey production were observed. Several mandala or circular gardens around the school property were examples of permaculture. The planting

spaces were prepared in concentric semi-circles with paths throughout. Companion planting enhanced the growth and quality of nearby crops and the mandala used nature's methods of pest control.

Eliminating water waste is crucial in Brazil, so often there was drip or pumped irrigation going out to all the plants from a circular tank in the middle of the mandala. Water, in the driest region in all Brazil, is so precious because of the constant risk of droughts. Most of the yearly supply of water comes from damming runoff during the rainy season. These dams called "açudes" (ah-soo-gees) are everywhere. As the rainy season had yet to begin, the açude water level at the school was dangerously low.

As part of the conference arrangements, groups visited different nearby settlements. Local successful cooperative sausage and

ABOVE Murray Brownridge, SHARE director and other attendees at the SHARE funded Organic Conference toured a unique agri-freature called a mandala, a concept derived from India whereby a central pond supports ducks and tilapia and serves as an irrigation source for concentric rows of various vegetables and fruit trees. This tropical bio-symbiotic concept is gaining in popularity among small farmers in Brazil.

honey producing businesses were visited. After every conference stage, a discussion meeting was held with all the attendees. There was a very good spirit of sharing and cooperation during the entire conference and it was clear that participants were grateful for this learning opportunity that SHARE offers.

SHARE BITES

"A HAND UP" IN HONDURAS

The women of the Simiente Foundation for Human and Community Development in Honduras are receiving support from SHARE to manage micro enterprises to improve family income. Through this project, women receive technical training to manage and market household garden produce, small enterprises such as bakeries and cheese processing. This project is supervised by Horizons of Friendship and receives three to one matched funding from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency.)

PARTNERING IN GUATEMALA

SHARE is again partnering with other organizations to support teacher training and lessons for 1,800 Mayan youth in 20 rural public schools in Guatemala to strengthen cultural identity and contribute to pride in diversity. Inclusion into a democratic society with respect and equity, while maintaining cultural identity is a goal of this project. SHARE seeks to expand our efforts by forming valuable partnerships with like-minded organizations and benefits from their expertise in development work.

A COMPLEX PROBLEM – SHARE'S SOLUTION

SHARE's work is a simple and effective answer to the current complex problem of rising food costs, food shortages and rapid inflation. A "hand up" to a small southern farmer with some seeds, technical advice or a small loan will provide the rural poor with a self sustaining way to increase and diversify their food supplies for their families and communities. SHARE's solution to alleviate poverty is low cost, compassionate, and empowering.

Each year SHARE's project manager visits a new herd created from "pass on" and given to a community with suitable land. SHARE's "pass on principle" has been enthusiastically used by our southern partners in Brazil and El Salvador to expand their effectiveness.



SHARE'S 'PASS ON PRINCIPLE' MEANS EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

SHARE's beneficiaries are required to pass on something concrete to others in need. This 'pass on principle' is working well in El Salvador. Some years ago, SHARE funded 80 cattle to campesinos newly settled on land in the agrarian reform process in 8 communities. The cattle provided milk, cheese and occasionally meat for each community chosen to participate in this project. Without additional funding, to date, the total number of cattle in 15 supported communities is 324 head. Each year on monitoring trips SHARE's project manager visits a new herd of 20 or more cattle given to a community from 'pass on'. No new cattle need to be funded by SHARE in El Salvador and the 'pass on' will continue exponentially.



Working Over their Heads in Micro Enterprise

Three women just outside a small rural village in El Salvador have successfully grown 2 large gardens five and a half feet in the air. On SHARE's recent visit they proudly showed off their garden enterprise funded by SHARE's micro enterprise fund. The bland tasting vegetables, somewhat like a cucumber or zucchini, were grown on vines that stretched back and forth for over a quarter acre held up by wire and sticks. Grey water from nearby homes was directed to the base of the vines in simple shallow ditches. As one garden finished production the other garden was just coming on. The "pass on" stayed in the community so another enterprise could be started. Because it is impossible for many people to get reasonable loans from institutions SHARE continues to support revolving funds in El Salvador and Brazil for would-be rural entrepreneurs



ABOVE SHARE visitors join the producer and friends under one of two unique gardens each covering one-quarter acre.

BELOW This Salvadoran producer proudly shows off the small garden enterprise that she cultivates with 2 other women. The vegetables grow on vines supported just above her head. The "pass on" will stay in this community to support another start up enterprise.

SHARE SUPPORTS THE BUILDING OF A NEW COMMUNITY IN EL SALVADOR



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Literally starting from the ground up, a new community is being built on a treed parcel of land in El Salvador with SHARE's help. 165 families were displaced by a hurricane in October 2005, which was followed by a volcanic eruption that covered their homes with rubble. Having little financial resources, they were unable to purchase suitable land. Some supporters assisted the group to get a parcel of land and now SHARE has funded enterprises to help make the mortgage payments- a sewing centre where women will sew bed sheets and a bakery where bread will

be produced for sale to the surrounding communities.

On our recent monitoring trip SHARE visitors were warmly greeted with applause by the two SHARE funded adult literacy groups meeting under the tall trees. The site was buzzing with activity. Temporary houses were being constructed from wooden poles, black plastic and cardboard. A few SHARE funded stoves were being built and a crew was hard at work on the new day care centre. To compliment our efforts SHARE was able to source funding for this building which

will be very important to the community, acting as an hurricane shelter, a site for literacy lessons, a small library and a community centre.

There is a tremendous amount of work to be done in the next few years to make the community successful but the determination and optimism of the people were evident and the plans for the community well thought out. After his visit project manager Les Frayne commented that after working with SHARE in rural development for 13 years, "It doesn't get any better than this!"

1. This little fellow and his family now have high hopes for their future as they rebuild their lives in a new community assisted by SHARE.

2. Two single moms attach cardboard onto sticks and poles to fashion a temporary home for their families. The community will live in these shelters until they can get subsidized housing.

3. Two small existing buildings are being renovated with SHARE funds to enable the community to begin productive enterprises, a bakery in one and a sewing centre in the other building.

4 & 5. SHARE was able to source funding for a day care centre which will also be used as a hurricane shelter, a site for adult literacy, a

library and a community centre.

6. Several new smoke free stoves funded by SHARE donors are being built in the new community. The stove pipes carry the smoke away and help protect the eye and lung health of the women cooking and the children in her care. These stoves use half the wood that the traditional open fires use.

WE GET MAIL TWO SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS EXPRESS GRATITUDE

FROM DAISY IN BELIZE: "I write to you this letter with love, happiness, gladness and many things that you cannot imagine. I am the happiest girl that exists in this wonderful and beautiful world. I am so glad and happy that I am going to high school so I can become special in

the future. Also I want to help my family and other people. Thank you once more. May God bless you all."

FROM ANTONIO IN BRAZIL: The financial help from SHARE has transformed my life, and allowed me to complete elementary and high school and make

plans for college. I want to continue to learn and help my community, especially the small farmers and young people. I am sure that my future is promising. I will never forget the support I received from SHARE. Health and happiness to all. I feel a little bit Canadian in my heart.



SHARE SURPASSES MARK'S CHALLENGE

◀ SHARE's Honorary Patron, Mark Cullen (on the left) stands with Marg and Les Frayne under a sign for a new community where SHARE has assisted in El Salvador. SHARE was able to support many new projects in Brazil, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and El Salvador due to the success of Mark's challenge to raise additional funds and his offer to match any new funds raised.

SHARE thanks Mark for his efforts and support to get the word out about our volunteer organization. Mark continues to donate a portion of profits from his book "A Sandbox of a Different Kind" to SHARE.

GIVE A "HAND UP" FOR BASIC FOOD PRODUCTION

Prices for food are escalating in countries where SHARE works. With your donation SHARE can provide the tools, inputs and training to enable rural people to feed their families in a sustainable way:

Your donation of \$150 can provide:

- inputs for a small garden enterprise
- a goat or a sheep
- feed and cages for chickens, hens, rabbits & ducks

Consider SHARE's list for alternate gift giving. Our ongoing stove building project has a waiting list. You can fund a smoke free stove for \$100.

100% of your donation will go to help a rural family feed themselves because SHARE is a 100% volunteer organization.

▶ SHARE directors, Trish Murphy (on the left) and Trudy Blackburn, were thanked by scholarship student Ernesto Ack in the Mayan village, San Miguel, Belize. SHARE visitors heard about the village scholarship board's intentions to foster a strong work ethic and change lives through education in a scholarship program that promotes gender equality and self improvement.

With strong continued donations to our scholarship program, SHARE plans to expand support to more students in the Mayan area of Belize.

After visiting with several groups of students, Trish commented, "It was gratifying to speak with many students who realize that SHARE's support



is enabling them to have goals and aspirations that would otherwise have been out of their reach".

SHARE is supporting 58 rural students in Belize by paying high school tuition fees.

SHARE News is produced in cooperation with the agricultural communication program at the University of Guelph.

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Donors are invited to join Project Managers on awareness trips.

**Call Les Frayne-519-843-3274
or Bob Thomas 519-633-2390**

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S.H.A.R.E. AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION COMING EVENTS

MAY 8 • 6:45PM Copetown Dinner Community Centre. \$25 Call John 1-905-529-1971 or 1-905-838-0897

MAY 18 • 7PM Victoria Day BBQ, Fireworks & Laser Lights Display 27 Cliffside Drive, Huttonville. Call John Webster 647-999-5929 or rsvp to webster@queensbury.com

MAY 31 • 9 – 1PM Annual Plant Sale by SHARE Helping Hands Ladies Group 14409 Creditview Road, Cheltenham. Contact Barb Rank 905-838-2441

JULY 21 • NOON 9th SHARE Annual Golf Tournament Guelph Lakes Golf & Country Club. For details call Craig at 1-905-702-8543 or Hume at 1-519-824-0799 or info@shareagfoundation.org

SEPT. 14 • 3-7PM Corn Roast for SHARE Scholarship Fund Harmer Farm, 2395 #1 Sideroad Burlington. Contact 905-335-3730

SEPT. 27 • 7:30PM Concert: Canadian Orpheus Male Choir Melville United Church, Fergus. Call 519-843-3274

For information email info@shareagfoundation.org or phone 1-905-838-0897 or check the website www.shareagfoundation.org