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SARAH HUIZING  
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## Contact Us

ADMIN@CRWRF.CA  
P.O. Box 85225  
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4



# Who are the Poor?

**Who is poorer:** someone without food, or a glutton? As North Americans, we often limit our definition of poverty to “a lack of material wealth.” However, when the World Bank asked more than sixty thousand materially poor people from low-income countries how they would describe their own impoverished situation, they focused on spiritual poverty: feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, shame, fear, and rejection more than on the material possessions they lacked. Both material and spiritual poverty are the result of sin. Sin causes broken relationships with God, ourselves, each other, and the rest of creation. Since we all experience this brokenness in some way, we can all be described as “poor”, just in different ways.

The expressions of these broken relationships are diverse: economic collapse, natural disasters, disease, war, the breakdown of the family unit, or abuse. Many of these lead to material poverty. The type of help required for the materially poor depends on the situation. There are three types of responses: *RELIEF* (involves delivering emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or manmade crisis), *REHABILITATION* (begins as soon as relief stops, and seeks to restore people and their communities to their pre-crisis conditions) and *DEVELOPMENT* (long-term process of change that is not done *to* or *for* people, but *with* people). CRWRF has been involved in all of these types of responses. In this newsletter we will highlight some of the continued efforts being made to alleviate material poverty.

## South Africa

### Food Parcels

The goal of any relief project is to promote self-sustainability within a community. Thus the well-known analogy about the benefit of teaching a man to fish versus giving a man a fish is often used when speaking about relief work. Why then does CRWRF have a project such as *Parcels of Hope*? Wouldn't giving out food parcels increase dependency rather than create self-reliance? While self-sustainability remains the goal, we must keep in mind that relief efforts often take time — even years.

CRWRF provides food parcels (*Parcels of Hope*) in collaboration with our Home-Based Care program with Zisize Care Centre. Volunteers in this program distribute food parcels once a month to those with the greatest need. Often this includes those who are required to take medication such as antiretrovirals (used to combat HIV), because when taken without food, these medications can cause greater complications which defeats the purpose of the treatment.

Currently *Parcels of Hope* provides 3 parcels to each volunteer to be divided as they see fit. Each food parcel costs about CAD 3.10 and contains:

- 1- 3kg package of millimaize
- 1 soup packet
- 1 can of sardines
- 1 bag of salt
- 1 bag of sugar
- 1 box of tea

*\* When fresh vegetables are available, from the community gardens, those are added to the care packages as well*

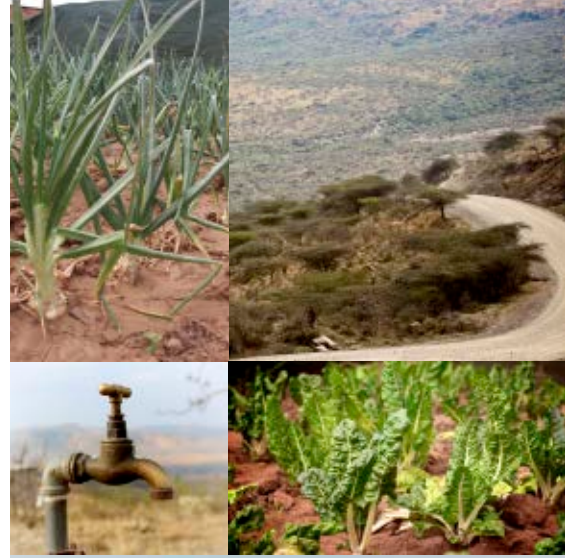
In the past 6 months 1,300 parcels were delivered to the communities serviced by this project. CRWRF is currently working to increase the number and size of food parcels being delivered.

## Senegal

### Long term approach

Food parcels are only part of the solution. In Senegal, local community workers have been able to move from providing mostly relief to encouraging longer-term community development. For the past two years, CRWRF has supported a program that has decreased the number of deaths of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) due to malnutrition and/or HIV/AIDS-related illnesses. The program provides nutritious food, support for medical care, and milk for newborn babies whose mothers have passed away in childbirth.

Recently the project, run by the local implementing partner Services Luthériens pour le Développement au Sénégal (SLDS), has changed its approach to long-term development by increasing its focus on community vegetable gardens. Through the 10 gardens (7 existing, and 3 new), 80 local farmers (most of whom are women living with HIV/AIDS), 340 OVC, and 8 newborn babies will receive access to nutritious food and other supplies. It remains essential that people living with HIV/AIDS have access to nutritious food to ensure antiretroviral drugs are effective. SLDS will continue with its food parcels, but will also provide increased training in sustainable agricultural methods for the farmers. This blend of relief, rehabilitation, and development work is what is required in order to make sure that the community can flourish, and to ensure that the most vulnerable community members do not fall through the cracks.



COMMUNITIES WITH GARDENS IN SOUTH AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICAN GOGO

### The Gogos

This gogo (grandmother) most likely receives a seniors' pension of approximately CAD175 per month, and potentially an orphans' allowance of CAD40 per month for one or more of the children for whom she needs to provide food, clothing, shelter and school fees. The allowance for the children depends on whether or not they have a birth certificate; many rural children do not.

## SO, WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

Although we have focused on material poverty here, Christian NGOs — such as CRWRF and its partners — seek to alleviate both types of poverty: spiritual and material. We do this work knowing that we are all broken because of sin, yet anchored in the hope of salvation in Christ. We echo the comments made by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert in their book *When Helping Hurts*, "Our perspective should be less about how we are going to fix the materially

poor and more about how we can walk together, asking God to fix both of us" (page 75). In this season of celebration we hope that you will also see reason to rejoice in the many blessings you have been given — not the least of which is the gift of our Saviour. Join us in praying for an end to spiritual and physical poverty for the helpless and hopeless.



FOOD PARCEL