



GLOBAL FOOD INITIATIVE

E-news of the Global Food Initiative

www.brethren.org/gfi

Spring 2022

Year-end Totals

In 2021, GFI awarded grants to international partners dealing with supply chain issues, public health restrictions, increased fuel prices, natural disasters, and violence. Total income was \$214,958. The sum of funds given to both international and domestic partners was \$121,855—\$97,032 for international grants, \$10,500 for domestic partners, and \$14,143 for advocacy work through Bread for the World, Growing Hope Globally, and the National Farm Worker Ministry.

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Christian Elliot



Rwanda: Field Notes by Christian Elliot

Retired Brethren pastor and dairy farmer Christian Elliot is currently serving as a Global Mission volunteer in Rwanda. Recently Chris shared a story in his weekly newsletter about meeting a Rwandan pastor and businessman who owns four landfills and a business producing organic fertilizer. He writes, "I was able to visit one of these facilities, about 7 or 8 kilometers from here. Both the landfill and fertilizer plant are operated with manual labor. There are no bulldozers or tractors. Workers make the equivalent of \$2.00/day. Behind the

landfill they grow trees and bushes whose leaves will be mixed with composted landfill waste, cow, chicken, and pig manure at precise amounts to produce a consistent blend of fertilizer. Along the road we met a woman with a bundle of sticks and a sack full of plastic bottles and jugs that she uses as fuel to cook her meals. Her husband told her she was old, so he 'threw her out.' We continued with a tour of the facilities. As we were preparing to leave, the business owner told me that he needed to speak with the landfill manager. When he finally returned to the car, he said that he just hired the woman we spoke to earlier in the day."

Christian Elliot



Nigeria: Conversations Beyond Soybeans

Dr. Dennis Thompson is a consultant and retired agricultural researcher with tremendous knowledge in seed systems. Dennis traveled to Nigeria on numerous occasions to work with the staff and volunteer steering committee of the Agriculture Department of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Although the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed visits in 2020 and 2021, communication continued with several volunteer extension agents (VEAs) working with EYN’s soybean value-chain program undergirded by Global Food Initiative (GFI) grants since 2017.

According to Thompson, “One unintended, but highly treasured, consequence of assisting the GFI in the training of EYN’s inaugural class of VEAs in 2018 and 2019 has been development of on-going social interaction with a number of VEAs who reached out to establish personal connections. They ask not for material support but prayers and moral support for themselves and their people.” These exchanges deepen the relationship, reports Thompson, as VEAs share joyful news such as “baby pictures, birthday wishes, and even a wedding invitation, as well as sad tidings of threats, and ongoing violence, and of course, the occasional photo of a VEA soybean or maize demonstration field or of a farmer’s field pops up.

“There is a special place in my heart for these new friends, nay, family members,” writes Thompson. “I cherish the thought that this singular and unintended outcome of the Soybean Value Chain Project might have helped me to become a better person. My hope is that they might say this about themselves too!”



Dennis Thompson

New Orleans: Community Orchards and Gardens

After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Brethren member David Young founded Capstone 118 in New Orleans. Since then, he has worked tirelessly with community members to rehabilitate abandoned lots by planting and maintaining gardens and orchards. Recently David shared some thoughts on progress he has seen.

“Through the years Capstone has rehabbed about 40 previously blighted or vacant building lots in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans. One of the things I learned quickly was that the community was looking for an organization that would ‘become’ part of the community rather than come and go. Through a process of trial and error we learned many lots that previously had homes before Katrina were unsuited for gardening. On those lots, we would find open places between the debris and foundation and plant fruit trees—still meeting the mission of growing food in the community.”

“Not long ago I decided to check up on some lots I had not seen since stepping away a few years ago. I wasn’t certain what to expect. Much to my surprise and delight I found two lots that had a handful of fruit

trees that have been kept mowed and one even had a small box garden with some healthy greens growing. In another lot that Capstone still manages, it appeared that the neighbors were preparing to start their Spring in-ground garden. This is not always the case, as other lots have become overgrown. In this instance, however, it appears that with a lot of hard work, time, and patience, Capstone’s efforts are blossoming and bearing fruit.”



David Young



David Young

