ECHO NEWS

volume 38 | issue 2

honoring God through sustainable hunger solutions

in this issue:
regrounding the church in Africa • training trainers in West Africa
agriculture in the midst of conflict • intern spotlight: Audrey Powell • mulberry
“Wow, ECHO has really grown!” That is one of the most common statements I hear from visitors who have been away from ECHO for any length of time. We see this growth continuing and that is why we are being very strategic in our long range planning. We have great success stories from the impact of ECHO on small-scale farmers and with each regional and country conference we learn about the direct impact those who attend have on those people they in turn train. Yet, we also know that there remain so many who continue to seek out ECHO resources. We have an obligation and calling from the Lord to respond to this need and feel that this is our duty as caretakers of the amazing intellectual resources with which we have been entrusted.

Growth at ECHO comes as a result of our past successes, our extended influence with those working with small-scale farmers, and our ever-increasing awareness of God’s desire for us to respond to the needs of small-scale farmers around the world.

We must not forget, however, about our history and our foundational services. A longtime friend and donor reminded me of this, asking why he never hears us talk about our Seedbank anymore.

I first heard about ECHO in 1992 from an ECHO intern whom I hired to develop an agriculture program in Malawi. You may know that this amazing former intern’s name is Beth, and many years later she became my wife. I remember Beth telling me about how back in the 80s, the ECHO “seedbank” was a refrigerator in the intern kitchen. A staple of ECHO has always been collecting seeds of little-known edible tropical plants and making those seeds available, to both increase production as well as diversify crops for both higher nutrition value and greater income generation. The seeds from ECHO are non-hybrid so that once the seeds grow into healthy fruits, you can save the seeds from your crop. We have technical documents that tell farmers how to save and store the seeds they produce. This allows them to share seeds with neighbors and as well as plant some of their seeds again next year. This is just one of the many ways we define true sustainability.

With the global growth of ECHO, each of our Regional Impact Centers are also developing Seedbanks, all of which are linked which allows us to track our seed sources, whether in Florida, Thailand, Tanzania, or soon in Burkina Faso as well.

We recently had a delegation from Peace Corps come to ECHO, and one of the Washington, D.C., staff for Peace Corps remembered her first experience with ECHO came from some seeds she received while she was serving in Africa.

Our Seedbank has grown to offer 350 varieties of seeds, and on an average year, we send 2500 packets around the world. We continue to get reports of the incredible impact that just one packet of seeds has made in a community. I was once challenged by an ECHO insider suggesting that this was an exaggeration. I was able to share with them from my personal experience of working in Africa how just one packet of 10 Moringa seeds from ECHO produced eight Moringa trees, which in turn produced over 2,000 Moringa seeds in the first nine months. These seeds were distributed to local communities and became the foundation for one of the most amazing and impactful Moringa programs for families and children I have ever seen. It is still producing results! Over 18 different Peace Corps projects using Moringa can be traced back to that original packet of ECHO seeds!

Many of you first got excited about ECHO because you heard about our extensive Seedbank and the impact of ECHO seeds around the world. Your support of ECHO continues to provide amazing results through this ever-expanding Seedbank program. A group of ECHO consultants will be headed to Cuba this month, and one of the major requests from the church leaders they will be training is for ECHO seeds.

Your support of ECHO produces an ever-growing impact on small-scale farmers around the world.

Stan Doerr, CEO/President
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edited by Danielle Flood

Please share your comments about ECHO News. Write: 17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, Florida, 33917, e-mail: info@echonet.org, or call 239-543-3246.

ECHO’s Global Food and Farm Festival

Almost two thousand people attended ECHO’s annual Global Food and Farm Festival held on March 21st.

They learned how to make their own peanut butter, squeezed their own orange juice and even tasted taro chips.

The Festival had more than 15 educational workshops, cooking shows, demonstrations, tours, and fun activities, including a puppet show. There were things to discover and an opportunity to learn something for people of all ages.

Among the educational workshops were how to make soap out of goat’s milk, how to make better choices at the supermarket, and cooking shows on how to make Bok Choy, Pad Thai, candy “sushi”, Haitian foods and simple meals for a busy family. There was also a Farmer’s Market and a silent auction.

We are extremely grateful to the 225 volunteers, staff, and presenters who made this event so successful!

If you missed it, we encourage you to make plans to attend March 19, 2016. See you then! 🌿
In ECHO News volume 37 issue 3, Stan Doerr defines pride as taking credit for what God has done. In contrast, we here at ECHO realize that all of our actions and outcomes are opportunities to give God the glory for what only He could have done through ECHO.

This is never quite as evident as when God weaves people together through the ministry of ECHO in unexpected ways.

In February, the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program at Wheaton College hosted their annual Symposium that aims to help faculty and students better understand the challenges and opportunities in global economic and social development. This year’s theme was the connection between reconciliation and food security, focusing on efforts in east Africa, especially Rwanda and Uganda.

The keynote speaker was one of the most innovative leading theologians of our day, Father Dr. Emmanuel Katongole, whose work is widely used in both Catholic and Protestant circles. Dr. Katongole is the co-founder and former co-director of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke University. Presently he serves as Associate Professor of Theology and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

Dr. Katongole was born in Uganda to Rwandan parents and grew up amid poverty, dictatorship and civil war. He knows from experience how those factors can impact lives. He studied theology in Uganda and was ordained by the Archdiocese in Kampala. He earned his Masters in Religious Studies and his PhD in philosophy in Belgium.

His speech at the Symposium presented a theological framework for the type of work ECHO does, fosters, and encourages. He talked about his own growing awareness of the importance of church involvement in agriculture and land care. For the HNGR Director who was an ECHO intern and staff member, and is now on ECHO’s Board of Directors, his perspective was wonderfully encouraging and complementary to the ECHO strategy of serving the poor around the world through small-scale agriculture.

The surprise came almost an hour into his presentation. He talked about how his current and future vision for Christian agricultural work in Uganda was inspired and framed by his 2004 visit to ECHO’s Florida farm, in addition to learning the story and seeing the outcomes of a dedicated Ugandan woman farmer.

Dr. Katongole shared, “And then I remembered a visit that I made in 2004, to ECHO. Many of you might know ECHO in Fort Myers. This is Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization. This is an impressive integrated agricultural educational center that brings in interns from around the world. … ECHO made me feel delight, walking through the gardens and then the educational component, that people from around the world come to learn how nature and creation ought to look like. So then I decided to form something like that. That’s what we’re working on right now”.

Dr. Katongole and his team are developing the Bethany Land Institute, inspired by ECHO’s work. It is an educational institute for practical theology of land, peace and creation care, about 70 acres of land 40 miles out of Kampala, Uganda. His vision for this educational center is that it can be also a demonstration of the beauty and abundance referenced in Genesis 2:15.

Bethany was known as the “house of the poor,” located on the outskirts of Jerusalem, The Holy City. Historically, Bethany was a village centered around an “almshouse” where the poor were received and assisted as nothing unclean could come into the Holy City. It is also documented as being home to Simon
the Leper, and could have been a community of the lowly and the final stop for pilgrims on the trek from Galilee. Jesus visited Bethany five times throughout the Gospels. He went out of his way to spend time with people that society considered “on the margins”—which is exactly what ECHO does, deliberately working with people in remote areas doing work that is not socially prominent or held in high esteem.

Dr. Katongole did not know did not know that the first Director of the HNGR program in the 1970s made connections that greatly impacted the founding of ECHO. This relationship, that God has brought full circle, is now expanding to provide Bethany Land Institute connection to ECHO’s East Africa Regional Impact Center and other relationships in the region… and the inspiration lives on.

So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.
I Cor 3:7

ECHO aims to give dignity and honor to their God-given work of caring for the land as they feed their families and earn a living through agriculture.

The main goals of the Bethany Land Institute inspired by ECHO are to address deforestation by planting and stewarding trees, to provide year-long fellowships and internships in organic and sustainable farming, and to serve as a model rest-stop and attraction along the Kampala Highway, demonstrating replicable methods for gardens in Uganda and all across Africa.

According to Dr. Katongole, “The Bethany Land Institute is an attempt to reconnect sociology, economics and politics to the story of God…and attempts to cultivate love and care of the land and to reground the mission of the church to our primary calling.”

He adds, “My hope is that this effort will invest ordinary African lives….and at the same time create beauty and abundance in Africa…. It is little by little that we change the world.”

We invite you to watch his entire 90-minute talk, Regrounding the Church in Africa. Available online at ECHO’s website here: www.echonet.org/echoes.

We hope you will find it both inspiring and encouraging for the work we do through your partnership with ECHO.
“Hungry to learn” and “excited to share” are only some of the phrases used to describe attendees of ECHO’s third biennial West African Networking Forum. But you would have to say “Soif d’apprendre”, and “heureux de partager” because this forum was held entirely in French to better meet the needs of practitioners across Francophone West Africa. A complimentary English Forum was held in March in Accra, Ghana. (For more on that Forum, see page ?)

Held this January in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, the Forum offered large-group presentations, hands-on workshops, and smaller breakout sessions for in-depth coverage of various topics.

128 participants came from the following countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Togo, Chad, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the USA.

Every attendee went home with their own special memories, but if you weren’t able to attend, here are a few of our favorite highlights of the event.

- Jean Apedoh, who first learned about System of Rice Intensification through an ECHO Forum in 2010, was this year’s SRI specialist presenting at the 2015 Forum. Through ECHO’s introduction of the topic and support, collaboration with other organizations in the region, and his own personal initiative, Jean says, “ECHO made me a champion and regional specialist in SRI.”

- Emile Sanou and Josué Baya are also learners turned trainers who shared their experiences implementing Foundations for Farming (FFF) in a large group presentation as well as a hands-on afternoon workshop.

- The workshop on Biogas production presented by ECHO’s Alain Gouba was the most popular afternoon workshop with over 40 attendees. Alain was able to share the biogas system that was made completely with locally available materials.

“ECHO made me a champion and regional specialist in SRI.”
—Jean Apedoh
• One attendee who came to the 2010 and 2012 Forums (and learned about Moringa), paid for a display table and sold at least 10 distinct Moringa products that he and his wife are now producing. These ranged from Moringa powder capsules and shampoo to dehydrated food packets that can be added to sauces.

• Before the mid-morning break on the first day of the Forum, the French version of Agricultural Options for Small-Scale Farmers book from ECHO was introduced and it literally took two minutes to sell out. Others desiring the book have signed up on the waiting list so that when a new stock is available they will be able to receive one.

We are excited that these individuals are taking the education and training available through ECHO and multiplying it far beyond ECHO’s reach. Together, we are truly training trainers.
what’s happening

The first uniquely English-speaking Forum for West Africa was held in Accra, Ghana from March 23 – 27. The 53 registered participants came from 11 countries and were eager to see the Anglophone Forum grow.

South Africa Research Legumes

ECHO staff in South Africa had fun displaying a few of the legume seed varieties harvested so far this season: L-R: jack bean, solwezi dry bean, bush mucuna, cowpea, seven-year Lima Bean (white and red seed), Scarlet Runner Bean (black seed).

Follow us on Instagram for pictures of ECHO’s work all around the world. #echofightshunger

Participants at the seed swap at ECHO’s first Indonesian training, a Sustainable Agricultural Workshop, held in Medan, with 45 attendees.
Tropical Agriculture Trainee
Meet Paul Donn, Haiti, who has been working with the development organization, Starfysh, in the country’s poorest community of LaGonave. As a teacher and humanitarian worker, Paul appreciates ECHO’s training in community development, appropriate technologies, and agriculture issues.

Bush Mucuna

Generous scholarships from the Meredith Murnyak Memorial Fund made it possible for an additional 20 women to participate in February’s East Africa Symposium.

Using Resources Wisely
Every winter, volunteers come to give their time and skills at ECHO. Some volunteers have professional skills which allow ECHO to get the most out of its facilities’ budget. L-R Harold Flood (Michigan), Jacques Cote (Canada), and Alan Riendeau (Indiana).
Timothy Chapman, a 2012 ECHO Intern graduate, described his recent work in the war-torn Central Africa Republic (CAR) as “very challenging and hard, but not negative.” In fact, he credits the work of agriculture missionaries as bringing hope and stability in a country wracked by violence, poverty, and hunger. “I worked with a couple who had a long relationship with ECHO and were using their knowledge of trees, plants, soil, and land stewardship to better the lives of people in great need.”

Within weeks of his arrival, Timothy found himself in Cameroon with other missionaries escaping the violence. He was staying at the new campus of a boarding school whose grounds were in desperate need of landscaping. So Timothy put his skills in slope management—learned closely related to a tribal language he had learned as a missionary child in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, which borders the CAR on the south). “Sangho,” he explained, “is a simple language with no words for the past or future, only the present.” Timothy knew that his degree in international agricultural development from the University of California, Davis, and his 12-month internship at ECHO would be more useful if he spoke and understood Sangho.

Timothy arrived in the CAR one month before the country was overthrown by a coalition of rebels from the neighboring country of Chad. During those early weeks he set about learning Sangho, the local language he found closely related to a tribal language he had learned as a missionary child in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, which borders the CAR on the south). “Sangho,” he explained, “is a simple language with no words for the past or future, only the present.” Timothy knew that his degree in international agricultural development from the University of California, Davis, and his 12-month internship at ECHO would be more useful if he spoke and understood Sangho.

Agriculture in the Midst of Conflict
by Gina Riandeau
at ECHO—to work, and left the school with grounds landscaped in a sustainable and appropriate manner.

After a few weeks, missionaries were able to return to Gamboula, a small city on the border with Cameroon, and continue their work. Occupying Seleka troops left missionaries and locals alone, unlike the violent conditions imposed in most of the country. Goals for the emerging agricultural center included providing seed for those whose crops and homes had been destroyed by marauding militias. The center also introduced the cowpea, a nutritious legume with high yields and good disease resistance. The following months were fruitful for Timothy as he worked with the missionary couple whose agriculture ministry had brought him to CAR.

Always observing and learning, Timothy found himself happiest when put to work—“being useful and helpful” as he described his goals. He helped plant fields, lead seminars, and teach agricultural skills in local villages. A highlight of his time was the one-week seminar he directed for a local tribe on beekeeping. These Baka are known for their love of honey and the extreme measures they take to get it.

Soon, however, Timothy found himself joining the local missionary in a supervisory role. The research and training center was growing, requiring that locals be hired and trained for the clearing and planting of fields, as well as the building of the center’s infrastructure. “I gained a lot of managerial skills at ECHO supervising volunteers in my work area. It prepared me well,” he said.

War and genocide filled the CAR in the following months as Seleka troops disintegrated and Anti-balaka militias emerged intent on purging the country of its Fulani people. Fighting led to ethnic and religious cleansing and massive numbers of refugees fleeing their villages. The Africa Union intervened with troops, and work at the Gamboula mission station remained extremely stressful. “Every day I had to think about what I was doing and focus on where I was putting my energy. We couldn’t make long-term plans, but had to concentrate on activities that could be most effective and have the biggest impact.” The mental exhaustion of doing agricultural ministry in a conflict zone became a daily reality for Timothy.

In October missionaries again fled the CAR, and Timothy, whose commitment to his mission agency was nearly complete, decided to return to the United States. His return journey brought him back to ECHO for renewal and a reunion with his friends and sister (a former ECHO intern and present staff member). Reflecting on his time in the CAR, Timothy appreciated the missional emphasis of his training at ECHO. “I know that it is impossible to be effective in an animist culture without understanding the connection of people to their land and ancestral spirits. ECHO helped me share my faith through agricultural ministry,” he said.

Timothy continues to reflect on his time in Africa as he prepares to continue his education and looks forward to returning to the continent—perhaps next time to Congo. “I understand so much better the complexity of agricultural ministry in the midst of conflict in Africa. Many issues such as tribalism, politics, religion, drugs, and culture drive conflict. A person can’t change just one thing to be effective in our work. There will always be conflict wherever you go and agricultural development will always involve complexity.” Wherever he goes, the roots of learning and community embedded at ECHO will go with him.
The Easiest Way to Give

If you don’t keep your checkbook quite as handy as you used to, or you don’t want to spend money buying stamps, you might want to enroll in ECHO’s online recurring gift program. It’s the easiest way to support ECHO’s mission.

You can schedule your donation to debit from your credit card, checking, or savings account monthly and know that even without licking a stamp, you can keep ECHO’s mission strong year-round.

Visit www.echonet.org/donate to set up your monthly gift today!

Bequests: Today’s Footprints are Tomorrow’s Legacy

Bequest. It seems like such a formal word.

Actually, a bequest can be a simple planned gift that anyone can make through their will or trust. A charitable bequest is a distribution from your estate to any charity that you choose. There are different kinds of bequests. For each, you must use specific language to indicate the precise direction of your assets, and to successfully carry out your final wishes.

Here’s some general bequest language to get you thinking, but we always recommend consulting a legal advisor before making any planned gift.

“I give, devise, and bequeath to ECHO, Inc., North Fort Myers, Florida, the sum of $_____ or _____% of my estate, for the benefit of ECHO and its general purposes.”

Do you have an estate?

Your estate is the sum of your assets, including property you own, insurance policies, retirement accounts, cash on hand, etc. Some people may have very large estates, but even people who aren’t very wealthy often have the resources to make a charitable bequest. If every adult in America made a will and included a bequest of just $100, billions of dollars would flow to charitable causes every year.
The Habari Maalum Tree Nursery, outside of Arusha, Tanzania, provides over 200,000 tree seedlings per year to the surrounding villages. Until recently, HMTN has relied upon forest soil collected from the Olmotonyi Forest on the lower slopes of Mt Meru to replenish their nursery.

Increasingly, there is opposition and expense to travel the 10km up into the forest to obtain this soil. While the nursery has permission to harvest this soil, the Forest Department frowns upon this activity, and it interferes with other farmers who are interplanting their farm crops under the early canopy of the plantation forest, a method called “Taungya.”

Since 2013, HMTN has decided against returning to the Olmotonyi Forest, and is now able to rely on compost heaps to provide the necessary nutrients for its trees.

“Habari Maalum is one of the beneficiaries of ECHO East Africa Impact Center’s mission.... After the establishment of the Impact Center within our area, we learned the value of compost and that instead of collecting forest soil from Olmotonyi forest we can prepare our own compost heaps using leaves that fall within our compound which we used to burn before. This knowledge we are transferring to other community members so as to conserve the environment and add fertility to their soils.” - Japhet Tuwati

Intern Alumni Update

Donnell Ewert ‘85 was the fourth intern at ECHO. Scott Sherman, who later became the deputy director of ECHO, was an intern during the same time, the first time there was more than one intern at ECHO at once.

He went on to graduate school in public health and held various positions before going to Kazakhstan from 1996 to 1998. While there, Martin Price visited farms in the region before giving advice about how to approach agricultural development in the region.

“My family and I went back to Shasta County, California in 1998 where I am now the director of the county Health and Human Services Agency. One of our accomplishments was promotion of local farmers’ markets to food stamp and WIC recipients by providing them with vouchers to purchase produce, and installing devices to read electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards at all of the local farmers’ markets. I still have the love of gardening I learned at ECHO.”

Kimberly Duncan ‘09 is currently raising funds to go to North Africa as an associate of IDEAS. She will be working with rural families in home gardens and house-hold enterprises.

Laura-Catherine (Conville) Cuellar ‘10 and her husband Johann welcomed baby boy Samuel Andres, born on March 10, 2015.

James Lee ‘13 is currently the Environmental Learning Coordinator at Greater Atlanta Christian School managing a Greenhouse, Edible Food Forest, Trout Hatchery, Chickens, Vermibeds, Aquaponics, and a Tropical Rainforest and inspiring students to admire God’s Creation.

ECHO congratulates Cody Burnett ‘13 and Alison Campbell ‘13 on their recent engagement!

Let us know what you’ve been up to. Send submissions to dflood@echonet.org, and if possible, please include a photo.
My name is Audrey Powell and I grew up surrounded by farms in the countryside of Marion, Ohio. From a very young age I was interested in animals and plants and always wished I could live on a farm. In high school I began to feel God calling me into overseas ministry. I wasn’t sure what that would look like, but decided to go to Toccoa Falls College and get a Cross-cultural degree. About that time, the school announced that they would be starting a new minor in sustainable development and I knew that this was the work for me! When I heard about ECHO, it was just the opportunity I had been looking for to get some real hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture.

Since my arrival here, I have learned so many useful things! Working in the rainforest area of the farm has taught me so much about plant identification and care. I have learned to recognize many pests, diseases and signs of nutrient deficiency in plants. I have enjoyed working with the goats and learning how they operate. One of my favorite things that I have learned is how to milk a goat (it makes me feel like a real country girl!). In seminars, I have been exposed to an amazingly wide variety of lessons from how to use a sewing machine to how to graft trees. I have also learned so much from interacting with many other people who have agricultural and international experience.

When I finish with my time at ECHO, I hope to work long-term in Central Asia. I hope that I will be able to share what I’ve learned about underutilized crops and sustainable agriculture to make a difference in the lives of small scale farmers. I am excited to see what else I will learn in my last five months here at ECHO. I am also so thankful for the wealth of information and contacts I will have available to me after I leave to help me in my future endeavors.
ECHO News
Nomads in Florida
By Gina Riandeau

ECHO is blessed by many volunteers, and none more so than when NOMADS arrive each year to the Florida campus. NOMADS, which stands for Nomads On Mission Active in Divine Service, is a United Methodist organization made up of retirees who travel in RVs. With 1,100 members they help to build or repair homes, churches, camps, and other Methodist-related ministry sites.

ECHO has a long Methodist connection, from its original five acres which were donated by a local Methodist Church, to the connections of its co-founder, Dick Dugger.

This year’s team included seven couples who served for three-weeks. They hailed from six states: Indiana, Illinois, New York, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota. The group built new office space for the finance department, textured walls, painted, power-washed buildings, washed windows, and built cabinet doors.

The team included one couple, Jack and Arlene Fenn, who have lived in their RV for 14 years and have completed 82 projects—ECHO being a favorite. Sandi Barclay, NOMADS Board Member and newcomer to ECHO, also found ECHO a favorite. “I am so impressed by ECHO and the work it does,” she said. “The work here is not a fleeting thing, it has a long-term impact on world hunger, which is enormous. It simply amazes me,” she continued.

ECHO welcomes partnerships with many churches. Many of those who come to volunteer also take the message of ECHO back to their congregations. Members of this year’s team are already thinking ahead to next year and to their part in alleviating world hunger through hands-on ministry at ECHO.

In Memoriam
The ECHO Family asks for your prayers for the family of Sharon Conrad, who passed away this year while serving the Lord as a NOMAD.
Save the Dates

**ECHO Asia Philippines Sustainable Food Production Workshop**
May 12-14, 2015

**Tropical Agricultural Development I: The Basics**
June 1-5, 2015

**Tropical Agricultural Development II: Gardening in the Tropics**
June 22-26, 2015

**Tropical Agricultural Development I: The Basics**
July 27-31, 2015

**Tropical Agricultural Development II: Appropriate Technology**
August 17-21, 2015

**ECHO Asia Agriculture and Community Development Conference**
October 6-9, 2015

**Best Practices in Areas of Conflict**
November 3-6, 2015

**ECHO International Agriculture Conference 2015**
November 17-19, 2015

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