Reducing Hunger, Improving Lives Worldwide

Growing ECHO’s impact... equipping farming families around the world
This Annual Report reflects a new chapter in the 38-year history of ECHO, Inc. The ECHO Board of Directors and global staff have launched a new Strategic Plan – a plan that sets bold goals, establishes clear metrics for measuring impact, and rearticulates the foundations upon which this work is built.

Great progress has already been made to:

- **Increase** ECHO’s capacity to directly train more farmers, development workers, and missionaries all around the world;
- **Expand** ECHO’s global resourcing with more video content and improved search capabilities for thousands of additional users of ECHOcommunity.org in over 168 countries;
- **Launch** research initiatives that leverage the commitment of ECHO’s unique global community of practice in Central Africa, Central America, and South/Southeast Asia; and,
- **Embark** on a vital 1st – by engaging independent assessments of the actual multiplication rates of ECHO’s core training and resourcing work. For the first time, we have externally-derived answers to key questions about the broader impact of ECHO’s work. The results were humbling, deeply affirming, and motivating!

Groundwork was also laid for future developments:

- A knowledge base is being created to support ECHO’s future training initiatives — built on sound science and practical experience, this ‘curriculum’ spans the subject matter that is core to small-scale agriculture; and,
- A new seed bank, demonstration, and research hub is being developed outside Chiang Mai, Thailand — a site from which ECHO will be able to expand its future engagement in both Southeast Asia AND South Asia.

We believe that God is glorified by, and pleased with, ECHO’s stewardship and growth. Opportunities for even greater impact continue to open to ECHO. **With you, by God’s grace, we can leverage all of this progress to expand impact, benefit, and blessing in the lives of hard-pressed families across the vast continent of Africa, among the massive populations of South and Southeast Asia, and amid the turmoil of the Caribbean and Latin American Region.**

Gratefully,

David Erickson
ECHO President/CEO
HOW WE SERVE

“In its very beginnings, ECHO has retained a clear focus on equipping small-scale farmers with training, knowledge, and seeds that reduce hunger.”

2016
Among the organization’s greatest assets is a global “Community of Practice” that ECHO actively learns from and equips with resources. In 2016, 9,770 members of ECHO community accessed sustainable agriculture resources.

2017
ECHO launched a five-year strategic plan that identified two major goals: By 2021:
• Over 500,000 people will benefit annually from ECHO’s direct trainings; and,
• Over 17,500 development workers will benefit from ECHO’s global resources.

2018
Initiated the development of a curriculum that will allow trainers to bring agricultural techniques into farmer contexts more efficiently. This resource will ultimately make agricultural knowledge easier to adapt and share in varied cultural and environmental situations.

In the first year of ECHO’s Strategic Plan, 246,051 lives were impacted by direct training, reaching more farming families than ever before. Since 2016, the ECHO community membership has grown 41%, representing 13,790 people who are finding the practical tools they need for those they serve.
This year, additional training staff has given the team the critical people-power to increase the number of trainees in Burkina Faso and the entire Region.

ECHO West Africa is going deeper into training and resourcing. Additional training staff has given the team the critical people-power to increase the number of trainees in Burkina Faso and the entire Region. Three new team members train and follow up with small-scale farming families, answering questions and offering practical solutions.

Twice the Harvest
A farmer, trained by ECHO, decided to plant one field of traditional millet next to a field done with the new method to compare them. The results were so astounding that he had to take a picture. He held up two millet stalks from his traditional field in one hand and two millet stalks from the field that used ECHO techniques in the other hand. The millet stalks were literally twice the size of the traditional ones.

“My Millet Has Never Grown So Well”
One woman eagerly applied the training that she learned in April of 2017 and couldn’t wait to show us her field. The stark comparison of her field and the field of her neighbor was exciting. Another man said, “you can see the results. My millet has never grown so well.” The West Africa team admits that some days they are moved to tears by the hope and excitement that is renewed in trainees after they implement what they’ve learned. “It is radically changing their lives, and we are so thankful to the Lord,” remarks West Africa Director Robert Sanou.

Individuals Training Hundreds of Others
Joseph participated in an ECHO training in January in the village of Kombissiri. After the training, Joseph started sharing what he had learned with his community. Today more than 100 people have received one-on-one training from Joseph!

New French Publication for West Africa
A first in West Africa: the team published the first and second editions of West Africa Notes, a regional supplement to ECHO Development Notes, highlighting top-priority techniques and farming practices. These editions were sent to 2,139 people and are hosted on ECHOcommunity.org for download in French and English.
Increasing Training Capacity

By adding to the training staff this year, ECHO West Africa has drastically increased the ability to offer country and regional training events. In just one year the staff increased the number of trainees by over four times.

4x More Trainees
Increasing Training Capacity

In many cultures, women do the majority of the agricultural work, yet men still have more access to agricultural support resources like credit and training. ECHO trainees encourage all community members to participate in hands-on trainings to make knowledge available to everyone.

7x More Women Trained
Equalizing Resources

In many cultures, women do the majority of the agricultural work, yet men still have more access to agricultural support resources like credit and training. ECHO trainees encourage all community members to participate in hands-on trainings to make knowledge available to everyone.
SOUTHEAST ASIA IMPACT

ECH0 Asia Seed Banking Initiatives Grow in Scope
Multiplying opportunities are arising to equip partner organizations and the communities they serve with ideas, training, and best practices in seed saving and banking. Plans to help with establishing two seedbanks within the Ayerawaddy Delta expanded. The excitement about the concept and the expressed needs of the pastors and development workers serving in these communities has given rise to a network of four seed banks in Myanmar. One of ECH0 Asia’s key roles in this collaborative project with the Myanmar Baptist Convention was providing a 2-month internship for seed bank managers-in-training.

New Location Paves Way to Equip More People
Plans began to relocate ECH0’s seed bank and research work from Mai, in northern Thailand, to a larger and more accessible site near Chiang Mai, positioning ECH0 Asia to better serve the region. This new location improves accessibility to resources, increasing the Asia Impact Center’s capacity to host more training events and demonstrate additional agricultural practices.

WIDESPREAD IMPACT ACROSS ASIA
In October of 2017, the ECH0 Asia Agriculture and Community Development Conference in Thailand equipped participants from over 17 countries throughout Asia. Seven other countries were also represented.

FOSTERING SEED SUSTAINABILITY
People representing 256 organizations across Asia and 29 different countries received ECH0’s free trial packets this year. 4,660 total appropriate seed packets were distributed from ECH0 Asia’s Seed Bank.
Growing a Network of Community Seed Banks
For those on a lower budget and lacking access to the necessary technologies, and reliable electricity, ECHO Asia explores, tests, and experiments with appropriate seed bank options for local communities within the region. These include earthbag building techniques and buried clay cisterns for temperature stabilization, bicycle vacuum sealing technologies, and locally available desiccant materials for drying seeds.

Applying the training received from ECHO seed bank staff in Thailand, two trainees returned to Myanmar to establish their own community level seed banks. They constructed a modest seed bank ‘cold room’ and used earthbag building technology to lower and stabilize temperature. Raised beds have been planted for growing out seed varieties and supplying the seed bank.

It was at this site that ECHO Asia hosted a Seed Saving Workshop in January that brought in dozens of local farmers and national development workers, to train on-site and learn about seed cleaning techniques, storage technologies, and seed biology.

Hundreds Equipped through Direct Training Focused on Agricultural Techniques Specific to Asian Contexts

- **ASIA PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**
  Baguio City, Philippines

- **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP**
  Nepal

- **BACKYARD CHICKEN WORKSHOP**
  China

- **FARMER TRAINING ON SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION**
  Cambodia

- **SEED SAVING WORKSHOP**
  Myanmar

- **IMPROVING LIVES CONFERENCE IN THAILAND**
  Thailand
Over the last year, ECHO East Africa has mobilized communities to prevent the spread of a toxic weed and invasive worm that threaten farmers’ crops and livelihoods.

Demand for ECHO’s agricultural training events is expanding in East Africa. In the last 12 months, the East Africa team has held nine training events, directly training over 300 small-scale farmers, development workers, and extension agents in six countries. These partners overwhelmingly have communities with whom to share ECHO techniques. At the ECHO office in Arusha, they have welcomed 829 visitors to tour their grounds and learn from the different demonstrations.

**Training Trainers to Impact Others**

We celebrate that ECHO trainings are inspiring other NGOs to seek additional ways to use agriculture to address the needs of those they are serving. For example, a fruitful partnership with SHARE, a non-profit organization in the region, was formed after a staff member attended an ECHO East Africa Pastoralist Symposium in Nanyuki, Kenya. The SHARE staff was so impressed with the gospel proclamation along with the sustainable agriculture methods being promoted that they asked ECHO to lead a training in the Turkana region of Kenya and decided to hire someone to lead an agricultural aspect of their organization. To ensure he was well prepared for the job, they sent him to the ECHO East Africa Impact Center for an internship.

**In Their Own Words**

“Erwin [ECHO East Africa Director] came to Rwanda thoroughly prepared and led an outstanding Christ-centered training program. His leadership led to the establishment of a follow-up plan that will result not only in ensuring the trainees’ implementation of what they learned, but also in the dissemination of this throughout their community and beyond”. ~Rob, whose Virginia church sponsored a training

**Multiplier Effect of ECHO’s Direct Training**

- **Florida**: x54
- **West Africa**: x21
- **East Africa**: x472
- **SE Asia**: x64

In East Africa, the average ECHO trainee trains 472 others!
Last year, ECHO began to establish a relationship with Theological Book Network (TBN). TBN is a non-profit organization with connections to more than 1,000 seminaries around the world.

Once the students become pastors, they are often sent to remote areas of their countries to work in churches and farm to provide for the needs of their families. Training these students not only benefits the families of future pastors, but can also impact entire congregations.

Because there was a felt need among the students for training in sustainable agricultural practices, TBN invited ECHO to train on Sustainable Integrated Agricultural at Africa Renewal University in Uganda. Twenty-eight students attended the training, learning simple agricultural methods proven to advance food security, nutrition, and livelihoods.

This event also sparked other universities to recognize the need for ECHO trainings. Two additional universities have requested for ECHO to hold training events for their students, and ECHO continues to be in discussion with TBN about how to continue to work with seminaries to provide training in sustainable agriculture.

This same multiplication is happening over and over across villages, church networks, and partner organizations throughout the region.

The East Africa team has cultivated a diverse collection of thousands of indigenous tree saplings that they are propagating to disseminate throughout Tanzania. These trees have helped entire communities to fight erosion and build healthy soils. The staff has also been educating about these indigenous trees on radio programs broadcast throughout the Arusha area.

One Training Leads to Many More

Indigenous Trees Meet Indigenous Needs
LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN IMPACT

Just a few months after joining ECHO as the leader of the Latin America and Caribbean Team, Cecilia Gonzalez traveled to Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Cuba, seeking ways to deepen current partnerships and expand new opportunities to serve the region.

“Our goal is to connect to people where they are serving and help them help others,” explains Cecilia.

In Nicaragua, ECHO staff and a partner organization planned future trainings in seed saving and seed banking to resource rural communities.

During a visit to the agricultural ministries of The United Methodist Church of Cuba, pastors and church leaders shared how they are using their land and food production to bless the lives of widows and orphans. They asked for ECHO’s help in providing workshops about livestock management, citing pig production and biogas as helpful training topics for their region.

A conference in Honduras profoundly impacted Cecilia: “The words of Central American small-scale farmers sharing about their hard work and innovations, and their hopes and desires for their families and communities, will remain in my mind and guide me in my work.”

FACILITATING TRAININGS
Grafting exchanges in Guatemala this year have instilled specific knowledge in local communities where small-scale farmers can share it with their friends and neighbors.

CONNECTING PARTNERS
ECHO is actively convening partners through the integration of cooking, agriculture, and nutrition, especially as it pertains to the health and livelihoods of small-scale farmers. Working with these partners simultaneously expands ECHO’s reach and increases our capacity to help more farming families.
Home Gardens Improve Nutrition for Rural Families

"Indigenous ladies wearing their breathtaking traditional attire accompanied by young children started to trickle in, greeting us in Kaqchikel with an amiable Xseqër (good morning).

Once everyone was seated, Magda, our facilitator, welcomed the group and began to explain the oversized poster on the wall: it was a calendar and we came to learn from the local women about the seasons relating to climate and agriculture. After the initial reluctance wore off, the group warmed up to the activity, approaching the calendar with symbols of rain, sun, hail, and images of local fruits and vegetables to indicate their season by sticking each one within its corresponding month.

This seasonal calendar and the insights learned from the women who took the time to teach us informed the design of a pilot home gardens program." — Kelly Wilson, 2017 ECHO Intern

During Kelly’s ECHO field experience in Guatemala she helped a partner organization design a training program that will equip Mayan families with the skills needed to plant home gardens and improve their children’s nutrition. Through this program, rural families will have lasting solutions to reduce malnutrition and improve their lives!

Hands-on Sharing and Context Deepens Learning

The Latin America/Caribbean Impact Team (LAC Team), in partnership with Frutas del Mundo, organized a grafting exchange in Izabal, Guatemala. Grafting can improve a plant’s resistance to disease and increase yields.

“With grafting in particular, hands-on and in-person sharing and exchange was invaluable,” says Lydia Hofland, the Propagation Manager at ECHO-FL. She traveled with the LAC Team to share her experience in grafting fruit trees. She shared that participants were eager to learn from each other, and then adapt techniques to fit the environmental and resource contexts of where they live.

Lydia observed, “The networking among those who hold the knowledge of a place and whose hands are skilled from experience is deep and impactful.” And it is exactly this knowledge and skill that is at the heart of ECHO’s work to equip missionaries and development workers serving throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Capitalizing on regional strengths... to meet local needs

“The words of Central American small-scale farmers sharing about their hard work and innovations, and their hopes and desires for their families and communities, will remain in my mind and guide me in my work.”

– Cecilia Gonzalez, ECHO’s Latin America and Caribbean Impact Team Leader
People look to ECHO for knowledge about agricultural practices and technologies that can make a difference in alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

**Critical Knowledge Resources**

Whether we are writing a publication, planning a training workshop, recommending seeds, or responding to a question, our agricultural staff need to know which crops and techniques are most likely to succeed under the challenging conditions that most small-scale farmers face. That knowledge requires scientifically accurate information based on many forms of research.

**Bringing Research Where it is Most Needed**

Much of our knowledge base is gleaned from our international network of people serving and working alongside farmers and gardeners. Their firsthand observations in the field, combined with a wealth of farmer knowledge they absorb, add tremendous value to the training resources we develop. Our Regional Impact Centers have enabled us to expand our research activities beyond Florida and to engage more closely with development practitioners and lead farmers. We also advise or supply trial quantities of seeds to support university students and faculty involved in research consistent with ECHO’s mission. As research institutions report findings in journals, we distill that knowledge, using our ECHOcommunity network and Regional Impact Centers to distribute it to those who need it most.

**Research Comes to Life**

The partnering aspect of our research was exemplified in a 2017-18 effort by ECHO and Plant With Purpose to evaluate a maize/legume intercropping strategy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The research was done using a Farmer Field School (FFS) approach in which farmers are the experimenters. The 2:4:2 intercropping method was compared to traditionally-grown maize in six FFS sites. Of the 165 participating farmers, 145 said they were satisfied with the system and would like to use it in the future. To further the impact of this research, findings were captured in *ECHO Development Notes*, made available in three languages (English, French, and Spanish) and sent to 9,858 subscribers.
**Testing Hypotheses in Real-World Contexts**

ECHO carries out practical research that is directly applicable to small-scale farmers. Our specific goal is to reach farmers with ideas they can easily evaluate and modify within the context of their own fields and gardens. Our key motivation is to reduce the risks that farmers might face testing techniques on their own, enabling them to quickly improve their livelihoods.

Promising techniques or crop varieties are shared with ECHO’s network of partner farmers and practitioners, who are eager to test them in the field. Researchers gain powerful feedback from diverse groups of agriculturalists around the world, and ECHO network members benefit from the conclusions and lessons-learned that are then distributed to farmers.

Sometimes our role is to facilitate the application of an already-proven concept. Researchers from Pennsylvania State University spent a week at ECHO to test the results of years of laboratory research on using Moringa-treated sand to filter and purify water. Filters were constructed from bamboo and PVC plastic to test their results outside of a laboratory environment. The first in a series of experiments was successful in reducing the amount of contamination in the water to U.S. drinking water levels.

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**Green Manure Cover Crop Selection Tool**

A new online tool was developed to better assist practitioners in the selection of legumes appropriate to their specific growing conditions, intended uses, and needs. This tool is the first example of this kind of resource on ECHOcommunity.org and can be viewed at https://www.echocommunity.org/tools/gmccselector/.

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**ECHO Research Findings Shared in Journals & Conferences**

ECHO findings not only benefit small-scale farming families internationally, but they also enrich the scientific community. Interacting with the scientific community connects our staff with researchers interested in contributing their expertise. Multiple articles have been published in peer-review journals and presented at symposia and conferences. Some examples include:

A manuscript, *Local Treatments and Vacuum Sealing as Novel Control Strategies for Stored Seed Pests in the Tropics*, was recently published in *Agronomy for Sustainable Development* detailing practical options for controlling bruchids/weevils in stored cowpea seeds.

Productivity of *Moringa oleifera* Augmented with Intercropped Tropical Legumes was published in *Acta Horticulturae*, No. 1158, the Proceedings of the 1st International Symposium on Moringa (in Manilla, Philippines).

An abstract and poster, *Maize and Legume Interactions in a Multi-Species Relay Cropping System in Southern Africa*, were presented as part of the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Agronomy, Crop Science, and Soil Science Societies of America.
FLORIDA HIGHLIGHTS

Training and demonstration are part of the DNA of ECHO Florida. Our education programs train committed, passionate people who are serving or preparing to serve in agricultural development around the world.

Recovery and Resilience after Hurricane Irma

On September 10, 2017, ECHO sustained a direct hit from Hurricane Irma resulting in over $125,000 in damages, plus a significant loss of trees and research plots that are impossible to monetize. ECHO supporters responded to our urgent need, providing funds and more than 2,000 volunteer hours to help us quickly recover and resume our mission. In fact, just nine weeks after the devastation of Hurricane Irma, ECHO welcomed 185 development workers and missionaries from around the world for a week-long training conference.

A grant from the Cape Coral Community Foundation in partnership with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation made it possible for ECHO to build its hurricane resiliency. Shutters have been installed to make key buildings secure. Generators and additional propane tanks will ensure that operations can resume without electricity. A PTO unit provides assurance that in the aftermath of another major storm crops and trees can be irrigated.

“In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, we heard from hundreds of people from all around the world, wonderful affirmations of the role and importance of the work of ECHO.”
Seeds Carry Hope from ECHO Florida

This year, the ECHO-Florida Seed Bank alone produced 50 different accessions of seed, sent out 44 pounds of bulk seed, and distributed 4,146 trial packets of appropriate seeds to people working in 76 countries. When asked about her personal role in ECHO’s mission, Holly Sobetski responded, “As the seed bank manager I help support those in ECHO’s worldwide network who are on the front lines. I believe we are sharing hope with many through seeds and training about seed saving”.

Participating in Regional seed swaps in Florida and Latin America, ECHO Florida’s Seed Bank shared seeds and gained knowledge about indigenous seed varieties that will help our entire network. Pictured right, seeds are cleaned and sorted before being packed and shipped around the world.

The Dick Dugger Living Library Dedication

Honoring his vision as the Founder of ECHO, the library on ECHO’s Florida campus was redesigned and renamed to become the Dick Dugger Living Library. Dedicated in October 2017, this facility houses one of the largest collections of tropical plant resources in the United States and is a welcoming research space to thousands of visitors each year.
While the numbers in this report are moving and impressive, reflecting the magnitude of ECHO’s impact around the world, what we have not and will not forget is that each of these numbers also represents a child of God.

As a parent and grandparent, I cannot imagine the pain of watching a child suffer from hunger. Knowing hunger can cause severe, even fatal consequences, poor physical and mental development, and limit the ability of each of these children to develop and use the giftedness God has granted them is unacceptable to us at ECHO. That is why ECHO, with your help, will not rest until there is no more hunger.

Thank you for your role in this work! With our eyes set on children and families who deserve to know the blessing of God’s provision in their lives, will you join me in believing “...God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” This is my prayer for ECHO and its mission!

Doug Carlson M.D., Board Chairman
We should be highly encouraged with how champion farmers are putting into practice ECHO training on terrace construction, cover crops, biogas technology, etc., then passing that knowledge on to their neighbors through word and example.

However, the issues facing Tanzanian farmers are daunting. I observed soil erosion on a scale that is far beyond anything I’ve seen in all my years of tramping around U.S. farm fields. The soils in Tanzania are deep and rich with great productive potential but are washing away. Plus, there are new challenges from infestations of invasive worms destroying crops and toxic weeds degrading grazing land.

The team is working hard on these and other issues, directly and through ECHO partners, educating and assisting smallholder farmers to overcome these challenges. It’s a daunting task the team is humbly giving to God for His overcoming wisdom and power. It was a tremendous privilege to hear and observe what the team is accomplishing as God’s servants.

―Rod Sebastian, Board Member (pictured at right, second from right)
### BY THE NUMBERS

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<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year 2017-18</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 2016-17</th>
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Growing support... even greater opportunities for impact

### HOW YOUR DOLLAR IS SPENT

- Program Services: 83%
- Fundraising: 7%
- Management/General: 10%

### PUBLIC SUPPORT BY SOURCE

- Individuals: 77%
- Churches: 7%
- Legacy Gifts: 7%
- Businesses/Civic Clubs: 8%
- Foundations: 1%

### SUPPORT AND REVENUE:

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Based on ECHO's independent audit for fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.