

Sharing Bread: Working with Global Partners

In 2009, the United Church responded to vulnerable communities particularly devastated by the global economic crisis with the one-year Sharing Bread initiative. For many communities outside Canada, the economic crisis has only exacerbated other underlying, systemic problems: political instability, climatic disasters, discrimination, and lack of access to health and education services. For these communities the line between coping and crisis is very fine.

Sharing Bread has responded to the specific situations and needs of vulnerable communities supported by the following global partners of the United Church with funding totalling \$135,000.

KOINONIA and the Quilombola Women's Network, Brazil

The Quilombola Women's Network is a member of KOINONIA, a United Church partner in Brazil. KOINONIA has been working with Quilombolo communities, settlements originally founded by escaped Afro-Brazilian slaves. Quilombolos represent some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in Brazil.

Sharing Bread funds are sustaining education and training for communities, focusing on strengthening the role of women and defending land rights.

Uniting Hands for Life (UMAVIDA)—Strengthening Production Groups for Food Security and Fair Trade, Bolivia

Uniting Hands for Life (UMAVIDA) is a network of 12 Bolivian churches and non-governmental organizations, partnering with the United Church since 2008. UMAVIDA works in three broad areas: issues related to resource extraction and water; citizenship and democracy; and fair trade/economic justice. Within Bolivia, one of the most severe effects of the current economic crisis has been the undermining of food security.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting improved food security by supporting education activities and regional gatherings to create economic alternatives.

The Justice and Life Project (Proyecto Justicia Y Vida), Colombia

For about five years, Justice and Life has been working for peace and human rights in Colombia. For Colombian communities living in poverty, the impact of the global financial crisis increases the challenges they already face. Within Colombia the gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting work toward humanitarian agreements to help address poverty.

Evangelical Theological Seminary, Cuba

The seminary in Matanzas, which has 392 students, has been a United Church partner for over 20 years. The seminary offers theological training for students from 13 Christian faith traditions. As part of the course of study the seminary supports a variety of social and ecological projects, including children's programs and sustainable food production in which students participate.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting the full range of student programming and their work with vulnerable communities.

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)

A partner of the United Church for many decades, PROCMURA focuses on resolving issues of prejudice between Christians and Muslims in the African continent, enhancing mutual respect, good relations, and peaceful coexistence.

Deteriorating economic conditions and the resulting societal stress have led to increased tensions between communities competing for scarce resources. Religion is often misused as a tool to spark conflict in order to displace the “other” and take over or control resources.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting contextual, timely, and popular education and information to maintain a peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims.

Organization of African Instituted Churches, Kenya

A partner of the United Church for about 15 years, the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) works with churches and communities on the margins.

For vulnerable communities, particularly women and young girls in remote and rural villages, the economic crisis has pushed families into coping strategies that mean women and young girls are exploited sexually and economically.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting communities at risk to identify issues and solutions, and to peacefully advocate for their rights with local, national, and international governments.

United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the Southern Partners and Fair Trade Corporation:

Alleviating Poverty of Small Hold Farmers—Building Fair Trade Alternatives

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines has been a partner of The United Church of Canada for over 30 years. One of their diverse projects is working with a fair trade corporation to support small-scale mango producers.

The global economic crisis has had a disproportionately negative effect on small-hold farmers in the Philippines. Input costs have risen substantially with no corresponding increase in crop prices. The challenges of the crisis have made it increasingly difficult for small farmers to access markets.

Sharing Bread funds are supporting organic farming and fair trade for mango farmers in the Philippines.

Partners in Justice Concerns, India—The Impact of Global Economic Crisis on Handloom Weavers

Partners in Justice Concerns—India is a collective established in the 1970s. Their recent focus has been on the issues facing aboriginal peoples and other marginalized communities, sustainable agriculture, and livelihood concerns.

The global economy and the recent crisis have had a disproportionate impact on marginalized and vulnerable populations. A majority of the Indian population has been drawn into a vortex of severe hunger and utter poverty. The most devastating impact has been on Adivasis (aboriginals), women, and Dalits (people named as “untouchable” in the traditional Indian caste system).

Sharing Bread funds are supporting communities of handloom weavers as they build networks advocating for favourable political policies and an improved market share for their products.