

# PLENTY BULLETIN

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SPRING AND SUMMER 2016

## Nepal Earthquake, Chupar Village By John Vavruska

Our plan involves rebuilding in the village of Chupar in Nuwakot district due north of Kathmandu. This district was severely damaged in the earthquakes of 2015. A new school is the first priority. The school will have its own composting latrine and gravity flow water system where children can wash their hands and have access to clean drinking water. We hope to build composting latrines throughout the village and a couple of houses. A small house will be built for the teachers, who come from other villages. The houses will serve as models of earthquake resistance for the rest of the community.

The Chupar project is the first we know of that will use polypropylene geogrid to form the "gabion bands" in traditional stone and mud masonry. We believe this technology is the most appropriate and affordable approach to rebuilding for earthquake resistance in the remote Himalayan foothills. The project has received considerable interest from groups in other regions of Nepal.

Our team arrived in the village on February 18 after gathering food and some building supplies in Kathmandu. Several days of earth moving and grading with a backhoe prepared the site for layout of the school on February 24. On February 26, the first stone was laid. As of March 15 well over 200 tons of rock (about the weight of a Boeing 747!) have been carried, broken, transported, and hand-chiseled to dress them for laying in the walls. 12,000 hours of volunteer labor have been expended by villagers. More than 1,200 lunch meals have been served to the workers by the project.



**Local volunteers are building a new earthquake resistant school for the village.**

*(photo by John Vavruska)*

**Plenty International** is a nongovernmental relief and development organization.

Donations to **Plenty** are tax-deductible.

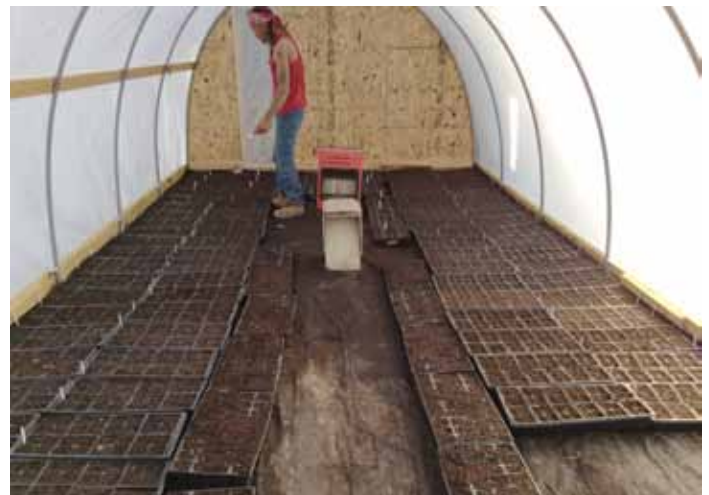
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## Pine Ridge Gardens



With Plenty funding, Lester "Bo" Davis constructed a greenhouse inside the large hoop house so that temperatures could be controlled more efficiently for growing the seedlings. *(photos by Misty Davis)*



As of late April more than 10,000 seedlings are sprouting in the new greenhouse. Seedlings and seeds will be distributed to more than 200 gardens on the Reservation. Thanks to the Philip R. Jonsson Foundation, Running Strong for American Indian Youth, Wellmark Foundation, Seed Savers Exchange, Dr. David Winek, Lester "Bo" Davis, and Program Manager, Milo Yellow Hair.



## Plenty Belize

### “The woman who brought light to her whole village”

Posted by [The Reporter, a Belize newspaper](#) on February 5, 2016 By Ingrid Fernandez, Staff Reporter

“The village of Santa Teresa in Toledo is a remote village in Southern Belize. It is 35 miles away from Punta Gorda town and an hour drive from the Jalacte Highway cutoff through a rocky road.

The village, that consists of about 70 families living in thatch and wooden houses, has persisted without light for 83 years since it was established. One woman from the village has set out to change that.

Florentina Choco is a 44-year-old Mayan mother of three and a widow. Her husband was killed in Belize City 20 years ago in a robbery attempt when they travelled to sell produce as that was their livelihood. She has lived in Santa Teresa village all her life and does not know how to read and write.

All of these challenges, however, were no impediment for the miracle she was about to perform. Last year, Choco was offered a six-month scholarship to go to India to study solar engineering and come back to install lights in the homes of her village.

Against all the fears she felt, she took the scholarship, and made the three-day trip to India, mostly on her own. She lived at the institution, learning to weld and assembling solar panels and converters. In March, she returned to her village and installed lights in 68 homes in Santa Teresa village.

The project started when ITEC Solar Engineer Grandmother’s College known worldwide as Barefoot College, contacted the United Nations Developmental Program (UNDP) to start a solar project in Belize. UNDP chose Plenty International Belize Ltd (Plenty Belize) to manage the project and select the people who would represent the country. Plenty Belize had been prolifically working with Belizean Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the area of solar energy.

They had worked with five villages recommended by the Ministry of Rural Development, testing the installation of solar mini-grids. They recommended the village of Santa Teresa as it showed great potential during the project.

Plenty Belize got in contact with their partners in the village to decide on the candidates. The alcalde of the village approached two people, including Choco and another woman in the village.

Barefoot College asked that the community put forward two women candidates whose youngest child was not younger than 18-years-old, so that the women would be able to travel and study worry-free.

The institution sought to give the women an opportunity to learn solar engineering to provide light to the village and also to give the women a significant role in the community. ‘When they came and asked me, I was

shocked. I don’t know where is that country,’ Choco said about her selection to go to India.

Initially the two women were being prepared to take the course, however, the other candidate backed out at the last minute because her husband was worried that he could not be alone for six months if his wife were to go to India.

So Choco was left to make the journey on her own. She did not hesitate, and decided to go. Across the globe in three days.”



**Florentina Choco**

*(photo by Rick Katzenberg)*



Mark Miller, Executive Director of Plenty Belize, addresses attendees at the annual Toledo Food Fair on April 27 in Punta Gorda, Belize. Fifteen of the Toledo District’s primary schools attended with several hundred students and teachers. Fair booths and exhibits and speakers provide snacks and information about good nutrition practices and the importance of eating well for mental and physical health. *(photos by Tasha Petillo)*





## Kids To The Country

(photo by Anita Whipple)



**Senior KTC Staff member, Sizwe Herring, conducts a Kwanzaa Ceremony at the annual KTC Kwanzaa/Gift-making event held in Nashville every December.**

In the summer and winter programs of 2015 KTC served over 200 children. Since the beginning of the Youth Leadership Counselor Training for young people who had attended KTC as kids, we have observed an exciting impact on these counselors in training from the city.

"It is beautiful to see the look of achievement on the faces of the older kids as they step into the role of caring for the younger ones and providing leadership."— Biko Casini, Senior Staff.

From Counselor Evaluations 2015: "Coming from the city, KTC has really had an impact on me. I can truly say it was and will continue to be a life changing experience for me!" "The most important aspect for me is the fact that I get to help give these underprivileged kids a week away

(photo by Anita Whipple)



from difficult situations; to feel safe and just be a child out in nature, exploring the world. It helps me grow as a person and gives me a challenge that I can work with to gain confidence as an individual and build skills that will last a lifetime."

The 2016 season is from June 6th through June 16th and from July 11th through the 21st which is the day for "Mothers and Others" to bring kids for a big day trip!

## Books To Kids



**A Books To Kids book processing event at Tennessee State University held on April 22.. The students are members of the TSU Honda Campus All Star Challenge.**

*Books To Kids has generously donated thousands of books to the students of W.L. Abney Elementary School over the past 5 years. Abney Elementary has over 1,000 students in which 80% of this population is "in need." They have allowed our students to have access to many great quality books in their homes. We have two Great Book Giveaways every year in which every student in our school (preschool through fifth grade) gets to pick a book of their choice to add to their home library. Throughout the year, students are able to choose additional books as incentives such as meeting their "Accelerated Reader" goals. Also, parents can choose books for their children during parent meetings, literacy nights, and various school events to stress the importance of reading to their child at home. During our summer reading camp, every child who attends picks a book to take home every day! This would not be able to happen if it wasn't for the joint partnership with Books To Kids. They are impacting students' lives. Please support them in their endeavor.*

—Stephanie Jackson, Principal, W.L. Abney Elementary School Slidell, Louisiana

Books To Kids has now distributed more than 200,000 books and expects to distribute 25,000 over the course of 2016. Special thanks to the Philip R. Jonsson Foundation, Frances Posel, Kevin Curley, Shannon DiGenova, Laurence Copel and Project Director, Jim Selin.

(photo by Anita Whipple)



**KTC Junior Counselor Obie Orlinsky helps out at the Books To Kids table during last December's KTC Kwanzaa and Gift-making event in Nashville.**

## Bayou Christmas, December 2015



Above (left) Elaine Langley and Jeff Becker ready to leave the Farm in Tennessee with a truck load of presents for the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw families living precariously on the fast receding Gulf Coast of Louisiana. They were able to give gifts to some 150 children and their families.

## Halchok, Nepal Village update by Lois and Ian Alsop

From the New Year, we have moved into the phase of reconstruction of the houses of the village. Ian visited Nepal during November and December with daily visits to Halchok, and we worked with a young engineer, Dipendra Gautam, and the builders of the village to draw up a plan for a model house on an empty plot that would give the villagers experience in earthquake-resistant building. At first we planned to use stone masonry with interlaced timber construction, but later decided to work with reinforced concrete (RC) banding, as the timber sources were very expensive and the villagers were experienced in working with RC. We followed the guidelines of the DUDBC (Department of Urban Development and Building Construction). This model house will form a guideline for further reconstruction in Halchok. The model house is now done except for finishing windows and doors, and we look forward to moving ahead with reconstruction of other houses in the village. Our effort in Nepal has been directed by Manika Rai, who has visited Halchok every week, and arranged several more health camps with the help of our ally and friend Kiran Tewari. Sukri Putwar and Budha Bahadur Shahi, experienced construction workers of Halchok, have led teams of enthusiastic village workers.

We've come to realize that reconstruction may take many more months, perhaps years, to complete, but we are very happy with the help that project has provided to the villagers in their efforts to come back from the April 2015 earthquake. We left for Nepal on April 6 and will be there for the first anniversary of the disaster. We look forward to continual steady progress in our efforts to help the villagers rebuild their homes, and stay strong and healthy.

## Karen's Child Nutrition Project By Tomas Heikkala



Two days each week more than 300 children and elderly adults are able to get enriched cookies and soymilk at Iglesia Santa Maria church in Guatemala City.

*(photo by Tomoko Clarenbould)*

Kathleen Rosemary, Maria Eberle and I visited the dump and the project site at the Iglesia Santa Maria church, across from the dump entrance. Other than Hilsia Payes, who manages the project, there is a whole new crew of women making cookies and milk. Some live in Asentamiento Sandra (one of the two huge shantytowns adjacent to the dump) and some live in the more permanent neighborhood nearby. We all felt the great heart there. The kids coming for cookies and soymilk were lovely, if a bit scruffy. A three year old gave me a hug. We visited El Local, their soy dairy and nutrition education center, and it looked clean and well-organized.

After work, one of the women who lived in Asentamiento Sandra took us for a walk through part of it. All the paths were paved with concrete, and there are large concrete drain holes every so often in the wider paths. Things are still very rough, but improved. The place is becoming permanent. The recycling kiosks along the street between the church and the dump are still dusty, messy, and there are a lot more of them. But this is how most people there make their living, selling recyclables from the trash.

Seeing how the project is thriving, being so well managed by the women who are making the foods and teaching the nutrition classes, and seeing how very much it is appreciated, inspired me to do everything I can to keep it happening. That's my cue to ask for your help! It only costs about \$1,000 each month and for that we are totally dependent on donations.



*(photo by Tomas Heikkala)*