

WORLD FOOD DAY: “Bullets to Seeds, Guns into Plows”

Under the strong Congo sun, a hand-lettered sign read: “UMCOR Sustainable Agriculture and Development, Foods Resource Bank— Christian Response to World Hunger.” The sign, and the garden it points to, are located on the grounds of Commune Kinshasa, an army base near Kamina, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. On this July day, at the edge of the garden, soldiers milled around at ease with the agronomists and trainers who teach them how to use land-friendly technology to grow cash crops.

Medicinal Harvest Brings Cure to War

Gardeners are learning practices of pest management using organic methods and cultivating moringa, a fast-growing tree that supplements the local diet as well as effective treatment for a variety of ailments. The cash crops in the garden provide fresh greens during the dry season where the main staple, cassava, does not flourish.

Why an army base? It’s all about peace and reconciliation. Soldiers will eventually become civilians, said United Methodist Bishop Ntambo of the North Katanga Episcopal area. “If they are well fed, they won’t have to use guns to get their food.” The général de brigade, Félix Budja Mabe, concurred. “I hope we can turn bullets into seeds,” he said, “and guns into plows.”

Foods Resource Bank

Foods Resource Bank is an ecumenical organization where US farmers designate acreage for growing projects. Communities pool their resources to cover the cost of production and then the proceeds from the crop are used to help eliminate hunger overseas through UMCOR and other denominational agencies.

FRB helps vulnerable people regain the dignity of being able feed themselves and their families. Unlike historic feeding programs, FRB is neither emergency aid nor disaster relief but a humanitarian food security program for the most vulnerable. Sixteen denominations, including the United Methodist Church, participate. The program in the Congo is a collaboration using UMCOR trainers and FRB grants.

How to Give

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UMCOR
475 Riverside Drive Room 330
New York, NY 10115
<http://www.umcor.org>

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