

Bornman News

Serving the Tarahumara

I pray that this letter finds you at peace. Around us all whirls a storm of challenges and worries. But take joy from the unshakeable fact that our God is an unmovable fortress, our refuge in time of trouble. We have been at peace, in spite of the disturbing events around us, and troubling news. It is our honor and privilege to invite others to repentance that they too might know His forgiveness and peace.

I have been wrestling with the challenge of how to explain the current situation for people here in the Sierra. In the best of times most of our neighbors live in extremely difficult circumstances. Most don't have running water in their homes. They cook over wood fires with wood they cut and haul on their own backs or in a wheelbarrow or, if they are well off, using a donkey or horse. Most of our neighbors grow a large portion of their food, using labor-intensive methods that produce small harvests. Every day is a struggle simply to survive, and their minds are trapped in a cycle of poverty that leaves no mental space to think about tomorrow and perhaps escaping from the crushing poverty in which they live.

This year the situation got far more difficult. We went into the planting season with favorable soil moisture levels and the rains began at a good time. Everyone was hopeful of good harvests. Those hopes expired when the rains quit in July. The corn leaves curled. The beans wilted. Everyone began to worry. The rains didn't resume. We waited and prayed for rain. The grass quit growing. Beginning in the poorest fields first, plant by plant the corn and beans died. Only in the best fields, where the soil held more moisture and nutrients did the crops survive, but even there the yields were stunted. Many Tarahumara believe that this drought was caused by their failure to make the traditional animal sacrifices and drink offerings this year. The sacrifices didn't happen because the authorities had prohibited gatherings this spring.

Already livestock are getting thin. It won't be long before animals begin to starve to death. Cattle prices have plummeted 50% even as food prices are rising. A cow that was worth \$300 only six months ago, is now only \$150, if you can find anyone willing to buy it. In the grocery store package sizes have shrunk, and prices have increased.

People are getting desperate and theft has begun to be a greater problem than usual. Someone even stole our apples. One neighbor lost the batteries for his solar power system. Another neighbor put his cattle in to graze his neighbor's cornstalks... But the biggest theft is the taking of the best fields for growing illegal crops. In many villages nearby people are being informed that they will either grow what is demand or leave. Most simply abandon their fields because they know that the odds of getting paid for an illegal crop are extremely low. They have no way to protect themselves or defend their property. The local authorities are either complicit, or powerless to provide justice. One

neighbor told me that he has food for his family until January or maybe February. Then he plans to go to the city looking for work. The problem is that there is little work to be found in the city. Even some local people who had been in the city have returned because they don't have opportunities there. The government's response to the current health concerns has crushed economic activity. Businesses are going bankrupt, new investment and construction isn't happening, and a number of government welfare programs have ended.

I do not see any way to avoid a serious crisis. This community has had a long term problem with chronic malnutrition and that problem is now well on the way to becoming acute. I still believe that the solution to chronic poverty is helping a community develop the ability to be more productive so that they meet their own needs. I have spent the last 15 years doing that work. However due to the convergence of multiple problems we are no longer dealing with a problem of chronic poverty, we are now faced with an acute emergency. Sometime early next year many local people simply will not have enough to eat. It is my intention to begin distributing food in the small villages nearby where we already have relationships with the people. We will also be supplying beans to Pastor Jacob Sotelo and the Community Health Evangelism team for distribution in other villages where their crops have failed.

Toward that end I have contracted to purchase 10 tons of beans from a Christian farmer in the community of Cuauhtemoc. Because the beans are for feeding people in real need, the farmer gave us a very good price. In addition to purchasing the beans, I will have expenses for the storage, transportation and distribution of the beans. I expect that we will need to purchase more food later, but at this point I don't know how much will be needed.

I need \$10,000 by December 20th to pay for the beans. Making your gift with a check will reduce our credit card fees, but if you prefer to make a gift online just use the the ["Donate Now"](#) link. Please put "Bornman Ag Project - Beans" on the memo line.

If you are able to make an extra gift to assist with this project it will be greatly appreciated.

-Andrew



Iris visiting Eugenia and her mother.



The cement dam we are building is nearly complete!



*The strawberries
did well this year!*



*Andrew and "King"
after a long day...*



*Construction started on a
new 30-ton granary.*