

# Grains of Hope

By Shelley Abdulla

As many of you know, WFS launched the *Grains of Hope* program last year partnering with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and MCC Ontario. Our first year was a huge success, with 42 customer participants raising a little over \$500,000.

The purpose of *Grains of Hope* is to involve our customers in the fight against world hunger, in particular the hungry farmers around the world. The money raised through *Grains of Hope* goes to CFGB food projects, such as Sand Dams, offering third world farmers a sustainable way of providing food for their families and community.

## What is a Sand Dam?

Sand Dams are an innovative and inexpensive way of bringing fresh water to ordinarily dry areas. In some areas of Africa it only rains twice a year; flooding the riverbeds during the rainy season and leaving them dry for the rest of the year. This lack of rain makes it difficult to grow crops or keep livestock. Women and children in these communities spend hours every week walking to collect water for their families to survive. This is where we can help!

When CFGB and MCC Ontario come to a community to build a Sand Dam the whole community pitches in. First they dig terracing in the hills near the riverbed so that they can grow crops. Once the terracing is done, they build concrete dams one kilometre apart along the riverbed. All of the concrete is mixed and poured by hand using rocks from the riverbed that the men in the community have broken up.

Once these dams are in place it is just a matter of waiting. Over the next few rainy seasons the water, carrying sand and other sediment, flows over the dams depositing the sand and sediment in the riverbeds. This sand acts as a sponge and captures the water flowing through. When the rainy season ends, the sand holds enough water for the community to survive until the next rain. Pumps are installed in the sand to pump water up to the terraced gardens. Areas of the sand are fenced off for livestock, providing easy access to forage and water. Instead of spending hours walking to get water, women are able to dig down a foot or two into the sand and have fresh water for their family. Over time these Sand Dams even act to raise the water table in the area. A few simple concrete dams provide a community with a sustainable supply of water and food for the entire year.

If you are interested in participating in the program or have any questions about WFS' involvement in *Grains of Hope*, please do not hesitate to contact Shelley Abdulla.

