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OPEN HANDS

Christ-Centered Economic Opportunities for the Poor



If there be among you a poor man... thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need. DEUTERONOMY 15:7-8

DEVELOPING CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Darin Hershberger¹

Definition of Conflict: Disagreement, contradiction, variance, opposition

Part of the leadership training we do with savings group leaders is how to deal with conflicts in savings groups. It can be difficult for groups to work together because they have not developed conflict resolution skills. When there is a problem between group members they may want to disband the group. Part of what happens in a savings group is the development of conflict resolution skills.

I was in some recent trainings for groups leaders and one of the lessons is on conflict management. Conflicts will come but how will you deal with it? Can conflicts be dealt with in a constructive

manner? How can a group grow through conflict? How are relationships affected by conflict? Is it worth ruining relationships to "win" a conflict?

Example Conflict

Miriam is the treasurer of an ASCA saving group. One day, another member Mary comes to her house and leaves money for the group with Miriam's daughter. At her next meeting, Mary asks for the money that she left at her house. Miriam does not know about the money, so Mary argues with her and accuses Miriam of stealing the money.

Taken from Chalmers Savings Handbook

Often, a conflict presents opportunities for improvement. Therefore, it is important to understand (and apply) various conflict resolution techniques.² What are some Biblical solutions to conflict you can think of?

Ephesians 4:29 – Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Romans 12:17-18 – Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Proverbs 13:3 – Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Other verses: (Prov. 14:17, Eph. 4:25, Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 1:10, Matt. 18:21-22)³

Conflict management sometimes include identifying the underlying concerns of the opponents and finding an alternative which meets each party's concerns.

An interesting observation is that most groups that go through a conflict, and work through the conflict become stronger groups. The conflict resolution skills they learn can also be useful in relationships in the church or in their family. ●●●

¹ Darin serves with Open Hands in Haiti, and he is the program supervisor for the Open Hands savings group programs in Guatemala and Mexico.

² <http://www.personalityexplorer.com>

³ All scriptural references are taken from Chalmers Savings Handbook



HELPING HAITIANS
HELP THEMSELVES

Merle Burkholder

Often in mission newsletters and the media Haitians are portrayed as hungry, hurting, and helpless. This perception of the people of a nation has led to multi-generational dependence on outside aid. This has led to despair and a feeling that without outside aid things cannot change.

However, nothing could be further from the truth! Haiti has a wealth of people who have a natural optimism about life and the future. Because of corruption and lack to training people have often not been able to successfully work together to accomplish goals. When one person has been successful the others often tend to pull them back down.

Open Hands brings a refreshing message of hope to Haiti. Our message to the Haitian people is that they can do it themselves. They are not dependent on outside funds or foreign people. Our curriculum teaches the Haitian people how to work together effectively with transparency, leadership, discipline, and relational support.

Many people in savings groups have commented about how they didn't know how much they had until they started



National Staff in Kenya
Left to right: Peterson, Sam
Wanjala, Samuel Ochiewo,
Ken, Thomas Amata.
Front: Robert and James.

a disciplined, regular habit of saving every week. By being faithful in a small way on a weekly basis they were able to accomplish their goals.

Many of the savings groups in Haiti also have an assistance fund out of which they give gifts to group members with special needs. Last year I visited a group and the treasurer of the group told me, "No one in our group needs to ask someone outside of the group for help. We help each other. We take care of the needs we have within our group. We are all advancing together". This is a powerful concept and change in thinking from being dependent on outside aid.

I was in several savings group earlier this year and heard a number of women share a testimony of how they had saved enough funds to send all their children to school. I could sense the satisfaction they felt at having been able to

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DOES GOD HAVE
A ROLE FOR OPEN
HANDS IN ETHIOPIA?

Merle Burkholder

Open Hands is considering a savings group program in the African country of Ethiopia. We have had some conversations with a possible partner organization in Ethiopia. Help Self Help Samaritan Development Association is an organization that works with the Mennonite churches in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a country with great needs and a lack of organizations working in the country. The program we are considering would especially work with people in the Limu Woreda East Wollega area.

If this new endeavor is approved by the *Open Hands* board, we anticipate this new program beginning in the late summer of this year. ●●●

STORIES FROM SAVINGS GROUP MEMBERS



The Nakhabi Savings Group from the Kitale region is a group of elderly people. When Sam first started teaching this savings group, the "expectation was very high of receiving external [resources]." Now as time goes by he has noticed "a big change in this group [in] transparency and expectation of getting funds." He reports that this has now turned into an "expectation of receiving teaching." In the photo, this group is in Kitale town visiting a hospital where they are giving fruit to sick people. Sam praises God for the change he sees in the group as they change from receivers to givers.

Gazelus Magy is a member of the group Hand in Hand for Christ (Men nan Men pou Kris). The savings group has helped to change her life economically and also in the way she interacts with other people. The savings group helped her save money to send of one her children to take computer classes. Her son now has a job and was able earn enough money to repair a laptop he has and buy a pig. Gazelus also saved enough to be able to buy a pig as well. The savings group not only gave her a place to save money, but through a training that the facilitator gave at one of the savings group meetings, she learned that it was important to stop and think before acting. When she was upset, she would do things that would hurt other but now she does not let her anger control her actions.



Sellah Awino is the secretary of the Min Alego women's group. She saved money in the group, then borrowed 5,000 shillings (\$50 USD) and started an Omena business (selling small fish). She is now able to meet her basic needs including paying school fees for two of her sons. Her husband exclaims, "She is a big supplement to our livelihood!"

OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THE WORK...

Open Hands supports conservative Anabaptist mission work by providing a Christ-based curriculum, financial teaching, and savings groups. While *Open Hands* does not provide money for loans, there are expenses for curriculum, paying the facilitators, and overseeing the program. If you endorse the work and vision of *Open Hands*, we invite you to partner with us. Your gift will help us expand the program and reach more people. Contributions are tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to *Open Hands*.

For more information, please contact:



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OPEN HANDS PREPARES TO BEGIN A SAVINGS GROUP PROGRAM IN EL SALVADOR

Merle Burkholder

Earlier this year Lyndon Swarey and Darin Hershberger conducted a feasibility study for a savings group program in El Salvador. There was a good response from the church leaders and church members in El Salvador for a savings group program there.

We have received board approval and will be moving ahead with hiring a national staff person and training them to start the program. We anticipate that the program will begin forming groups in September of this year.

The goal is to establish five savings groups with 50 participants in the first year of operation. In the second year we would like to assist with the formation of an additional 10 groups and see the number of participants rise to about 300. This program will be operated in partnership with Asociación Servicio Voluntario Menonita de El Salvador. We are eagerly looking forward to what God will do through *Open Hands* in El Salvador. ●●●

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do that without asking a foreigner to help pay their school fees for the year.

One young boy was part of a savings group. He was about 12 years old. I asked him what he was saving for and he told me, "I am saving for a motorcycle, because I want to be a motorcycle taxi driver some day. With my savings I bought a goat. That goat has had a kid which I can sell. I want to keep saving and buying goats or chickens until someday I have enough for a motorcycle". That young man is going to be successful. He has goals. He has people around him to encourage him.

Your interest in *Open Hands* and your support for our project in Haiti helps us to help Haitians to help themselves. ●●●