



COPA news

building caring Christian communities

December 2009



.....with a little help and encouragement.....

Sometimes, with a little help and encouragement, things can move quickly in the DR.

Towards the end of October COPA was contacted by a charity named World Water Relief www.worldwaterrelief.org to discuss their aim to provide pure drinking water for the Haitian Village of Bombita. They had the necessary equipment and know-how but needed help with the infrastructure and the sourcing of "dirty" water to be purified. They also needed assistance in communicating with the village. Connie and our Health Adviser Amy were only too pleased to help. From the UK Sebort Lane was able to use his knowledge of the Bombita site to advise on many of the technical and practical issues that would arise. In the DR our Facilities Manager, Antonio, dedicated himself to seeing the job completed.

Until now drinking and cooking water has had to be purchased commercially from tankers or in bottles. The provision of pure drinking water to Bombita is therefore long overdue and has now become possible because there is a fairly regular supply of piped water to the village although this is not considered suitable for drinking (and those that do drink it are regular visitors to our clinic). It is this piped water that is now being purified, however with some additional plumbing the system could also purify the water from an irrigation ditch (when it is available) and also the rainwater collected from the School roofs. We had hoped the pumps that are

necessary to operate the equipment would be solar powered but there appear to be some technical problems with this and so for the time being the mains supply of electric backed up by generator is being used.

World Water Relief have provided and installed the equipment, filters and the tanks necessary to supply the village. We have provided the infrastructure for this equipment and the tanks and other equipment that will service the School and COPA Housing. COPA has facilitated this work and has encouraged the formation of a village water committee to manage the ongoing supply. As well as the manpower commitment, COPA's contribution to the project is likely to be about £4,000 (not really a lot of money for such an important resource). Our

COPA partners in the USA will provide half of this and our share will be funded from generous donations and from the fund raising activities of COPA in Guernsey.

It is important to stress that this is a village facility and will be managed and run by a village appointed committee on which COPA will have a representative. The committee has already decided that to avoid abuse of the provision it must be manned and a small charge made to cover maintenance and manpower costs. This charge is fixed at half the commercial rate the

villagers have been paying to the tanker company.

The first water was sold on 30th November and the reports we have received talk of the buzz of excitement throughout the village. So in just over a month the whole project has developed from nothing to completion. The provision of regular pure water will save the villagers (and COPA) money and help to improve their living standards and, more importantly, do much to improve the health of the villagers, including of course the school children.

This picture shows some of the first water being drawn from the system and more photographs of the project appear on the back page.

Roger Tovey - COPA UK Chairman ❖❖❖



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Recruitment

COPA is currently recruiting for an Assistant Project Director (starting as soon as possible) and a Health Adviser (from February 2010). These positions are for two years and a local wage is paid. Accommodation, a return flight and health insurance is covered by COPA.

A job description, person specification and application form can be found on the COPA website www.copa.org.uk

If you, or anyone you know, would like to be considered for either of these positions or would like to receive more details please contact Christoph Courth (COPA Staffing and Recruitment Officer) at copahr@gmail.com

Guernsey News

It has been a relatively quiet time for the Guernsey Branch though at the time of writing, we are planning our flag day on December 12th at Marks & Spencer Simply Foods at L'islet and St. Martins.

This is always a great fund raising event and although it is nearly always cold and wet, the volunteers usually

enjoy chatting to everyone about COPA.

I would very much like to welcome a new member to our Committee, Halina Gleeson. It is always great news to have new people join us, so if any of you out there would like to consider coming on the Committee next year, we would love to hear from you!

COPA needs a new Health Advisor in the Dominican Republic very soon so if you know of any Nurses/Midwives/Health Visitors who speak Spanish or could learn rapidly, and would like to find out more, please put them in touch with me asap.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors and supporters for

their generosity with time and money. Also a big thank you to our Committee Members, and Ron de Putron who very kindly audits our accounts.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Jenny Benjamin,
Chairman Guernsey Branch
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Report of the 2009 COPA UK AGM

Attendance: Some 43 people attended this years AGM at Lonsdale Church, Gloucester, 42 sponsors had recorded their apologies.

Welcome: Roger welcomed everyone, particularly the Cricklade Explorer Scouts. He mentioned that the experiment in moving the AGM to Alsager in 2008 had gone well and had been a good opportunity for sponsors from that area to attend but that we were pleased to be back in Gloucester this year. He also announced that next year's AGM is planned to be held at Cricklade.

Devotions: Sebert led devotions on the theme of "foundations".

Scouts Presentation: John Youé and Paul Arthurs, together with some of the young people, led a presentation about the construction project that the Cricklade Explorer Scouts undertook. They raised £18,000 by running events, getting sponsorship and corporate backing to fund 14 volunteers to travel to the DR and to pay for the materials for the tiered seating which they built around the village basketball pitch in Bombita.

Treasurer's Report: David outlined the financial activities for the previous financial year as detailed in the Annual Report and Accounts. Total income was £77,421, the majority of which came from sponsorship and donations, with extra contributions from the Hayley Westenna concert and interest on investments. That represented around £3,000 less in income than the previous year. Total expenditure was £97,716, leaving a shortfall of around £20,000, however this included £18,000 that was used to build the new library in Bombita. David explained that the shortfall was adequately met from accumulated reserves.

The accounts were approved and adopted by the meeting.

Chairman's Report: Roger explained that he had been appointed Chairman at the first committee meeting following the 2008 AGM as there had been no candidates at the AGM and then referred to his Chairman's Report contained in the booklet already distributed highlighting the key achievements of the year.

He expressed COPA's gratitude for the work done by Lynne as Education Advisor and Cathy as Assistant Project Director and announced Olivia Hill's recent appointment as an Education Advisor. He pointed out that COPA would soon be recruiting for an Assistant Project Director and Health Advisor but explained that our long-term aim is to staff these volunteer roles by Dominicans. This has already started to some degree with Germania (former La Hoya Head teacher) maintaining the accounting records and Antonio being appointed as Facilities Manager. Also, our Project Director, Connie, will be leaving in early 2011 after nine years service with us. Shortly we will be beginning the search for her successor so that we can provide some level of overlap.

Roger explained that there had been changes to the way the UK committee operates, describing how it now meets just four times a year with sub-committees undertaking particular tasks including fundraising, publicity, recruitment and sponsorship.

Finally he expressed thanks to all the long-term volunteers, recognising how they often put their own careers on hold, to the gap year girls, work groups, volunteers in the UK, both those on the committee and those that help behind the scenes and finally but certainly not least to the sponsors.

Appointment of COPA UK Officers for 2009/10: Both Jeanne Bergin and

Louise Ambler were stepping down from the committee. Roger thanked them for their valuable contributions to both the committee and to the projects in the Dominican Republic during their times as volunteers. Most recently Jeanne had been responsible for promoting COPA in the UK and Louise has had responsibility for staffing and the recruitment volunteers to serve in the DR. They were each presented with a bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation.

The following elections were approved by the meeting:

Chairman: Roger Tovey
Vice Chair: VACANT
General Secretary: Verity Threlfell
Treasurer: David Rush
Committee: Jenny Benjamin*, Christoph Courth, Peter Gardner, Ann Gratton, Stephen Guy, Geoff Haslam, Rachel Palmer, Jemma Pym, Sandra Samways, Pam Tovey and John Youé*

** these are new appointments to the committee*

Sebent and Doreen Lane continue as Honorary Presidents with Sebent co-opted to the committee with specific responsibility for building and facilities.

Thanks were expressed to Kingscott Dix, the Independent Examiners of our accounts, for the work they have carried out free of charge over the last 17 years. It was approved that they continue in office for the coming year.

The meeting closed and was followed by a light lunch.

Since the AGM, Geoff Haslam has taken on responsibility for Promotion and Publicity and Chris Courth for Staffing and Recruitment.

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First the bad news and then.....

Recently, 12 yr old Principe, who goes to our Bombita school, almost drowned in the "rigola", the little water ditch used to water the sugar cane fields.

A group of boys doing a contest of who could hold their breath under water the longest. The boys jumped in from the edge and the count started. After a short time, one by one, the heads came up except Principe's. What nobody realized was that when he jumped into the "rigola", Principe's head hit the concrete side of the water ditch, knocking him unconscious. When the boys decided to look for him and get him out the current had taken the boy down.

Further down the ditch a man was bathing and felt something in the water. He

took the boy out but when he felt the rigidity of his body, the man got scared and threw him back in! Finally someone got him out, totally rigid, bloated and unconscious and bleeding. He was rushed to our little clinic and the doctor tried to resuscitate him since he was hardly breathing and a very weak pulse. Everyone thought he was pretty much dead.

Arky, his brother, insisted on taking him to the hospital on a motor bike. The doctor thought it was a good idea since the bouncing might stimulate him. Arky was scared to death but set off for the hospital speeding along on the motorbike with his father on the back and his brother laying across the father. Connie and Maribel followed

later in COPA's van to the hospital everyone thinking he would be dead.

They arrived at the hospital and couldn't believe their eyes when they saw Principe, the boy, walking out of the hospital, conscious and breathing. Then he leaned over and threw up tons of water 3 different times.

He couldn't remember what happened. In the hospital he had stitches by his lip and cheek and was then sent home!

He seems to be doing fine now except he is having a lot of nightmares and terror. Everyone thinks it's a miracle he is alive and everyone says "God saved him".

Amy Edelstein—COPA Health Advisor



COPA people profile - 10 questions we ask everyone

Name: Connie Di Leo

Role in COPA: Project Director

1. How and when did you become involved with COPA?

I began as Project Director in January 2002 when I was accepted as a missionary with the United Methodist Church and was assigned with permission of the COPA boards as the Dominican Project Director.

2. What is the best part of your involvement with COPA?

For me the greatest part of my involvement here is seeing the change that is taking place not only in the villages themselves but in the lives of the people, especially the youth.

3. Where is your favourite place in the Dominican Republic?

My favourite place in the Dominican Republic is Bombita because of the warmth of the people and the depth of their faith.

4. What did you want to be when you were at school?

When I was in school, I wanted to be a teacher.

5. If you could go back to college or university, what would you study and why?

At my age, I really don't have any desire to go back to the university, but if I could learn something new, it might be photography as I love to see pictures that capture feelings.

6. What is your favourite TV programme?

We don't really have TV here but I would say with what we have it would be the DVD's of the old ER series.

7. What is your favourite music?

I love the spanish Christian music of Adrian Jesus Romera and others.

8. Who would your three ideal dinner companions be? (alive or dead!)

To be able to dine with Jim Elliott and Keith Green both young men on fire for the Lord who died in the prime of their lives would be an inspiration and we could add Corrie Ten Boom if

we could get any more inspired!

9. Tell us an interesting fact about you we don't already know...

Snow skiing is (was) my favourite sport.

10. What do you wish for COPA over the next few years?

COPA has done an amazing work here and has a wonderful base of supporters. My wish is that they would continue to believe in the work of COPA and that COPA would continue following God's lead as he opens up new avenues of opportunities.



Over the past few months Connie has been involved with a new church building in La Hoya. In October she wrote, "Saturday was a very special day. We had a work day to 'throw the floor' for the new church in La Hoya. Youth from Bombita and from two churches in Barahona came to help the youth from La Hoya. We are so used to groups coming from the US and UK to work in teams with us, but this was great to see youth from neighbouring churches come to work together. The entire 'rough' floor was done in one day! The women of the church provided a great lunch of rice, beans and chicken! It is exciting to watch God provide for this new family of believers!"

News from the Schools....

4th grade have been studying environmental contamination in Science. They made posters and placards using litter normally found in school as a way to encourage its correct disposal. They highlighted the problems caused to the environment by throwing rubbish everywhere and passed around every class to give a brief presentation of what they did and to highlight the issue



Bombita: The new little preschool class is working out well. It has also given Gaudy more time to work with individual students since her numbers are down for her two reception classes. Emiliana is doing a great job and it is a nice group of 4 year olds who are very happy to be in school. I was able to get a beautiful bilingual rug for their room and they were very excited. *Connie.*



HEALTH TEACHING IN BOMBITA SCHOOL

I taught 2 sessions of 3rd grade in Bombita (61 students) about general hygiene, how to brush teeth and care for teeth and how to prevent diarrhea and other illnesses. I started out with a story written from the perspective of germs, accompanied by lots of pictures, which captures their attention immediately and they listen and behave!

I went through a booklet I created just with pictures of good hygiene practices and bad hygiene practices and had them participate. Then with a huge teeth model and huge toothbrush I showed them how to brush their teeth to clean all surfaces and prevent caries. I gave them each their own toothbrush and tiny toothpaste which was a huge gift for them and they cherished. Most kids don't have a toothbrush or there is one toothbrush for the whole family!

The following week I had 2 sessions to teach for 64 preschool and kinder garden children.



I decided to start a dental fund for future use by selling some of the toothbrushes and toothpaste at a very low price and saving that money for dental treatment. We have had so many donations of toothpaste and toothbrushes and it's a way of helping people out so they can afford it and use it for a good cause in the future.

Amy—COPA Health Advisor

Snippets from the latest Education Report received from Verona and Olivia, our Education Advisors in the Dominican Republic.

25th November which was "No Violence Against Women" Day was celebrated with a procession in the morning and afternoon within the school grounds. Special posters were made and each class had their own special chant expressing positive feelings such as love and caring for each other as opposed to hate and violence.

Licateba - November has been a quiet month with the students preparing for their end of semester exams at the end of next month. The 4th year Tourism students are doing a special project in the subject of food processing where they are making different types of wine. They have chosen interesting flavours such as rice and raisins, banana and corn. They are expected to be ready in early January and the tasting session is well anticipated on our part!

University Students - As the Christmas holidays approach they are deep in study for their end of semester exams. Two former Licateba students Erinson and Luis Alberto have been employed to sell the purified water in order to give them funds to attend university, another positive spin-off from this project. (see photo on back page)