



## Lights for Learning and much

Sebert and his group arrived on Monday, the 30<sup>th</sup> August and started work on the solar lighting project. It was rather ironic that once the first two units were installed, Bombita had electricity each evening! However it was not a permanent condition and the new lighting is really appreciated. The systems had been purchased from Lights for Learning thanks to a donation of £3,000 from St John's Methodist Church, Conway. Roy and Chris from the church were able to accompany Doreen and Sebert Lane and Geoff Haslam from the UK committee to install these lights. This means that there is now a reliable source of light even when the mains electricity goes down.

Connie writes: "It was wonderful having Doreen and Sebert with us along with Roy, Chris and Geoff. We are always very proud to show off the work of COPA and it was especially nice showing Doreen and Sebert all the changes and improvements since their last visit. The new lighting system is a huge help in the housing and I am sure will be a great help in the two classrooms allowing new activities to be done in the evenings.

Sebert also brought the message to the new church in La Hoya and his message of God's provisions were very inspiring. Even many of the younger COPA volunteers said they had never heard those stories and hadn't realized how clearly God was directing the beginnings of COPA. I can certainly testify to the continuance of God's guidance since I have been here."

The COPA La Hoya School was paid a visit by Sebert and Doreen Lane and Geoff Haslam. They spent some time in each classroom, meeting and talking with the teachers and seeing the children at their daily tasks. Connie spoke with the children, asking them if they knew who Sebert was. Quite a few of them said they did. Connie went on to tell them about how the school was founded and the work that Sebert and Doreen had done early on so that the students could have the school they have today. Connie said that Sebert and Doreen were happy to see the fruits of their labour and that the students were this fruit.

Sebert, Doreen, and Geoff also visited the Partnership schools for a ceremony that had been arranged to deliver the six murals and three bookcases made for Hato Viejo and one standing mural and four bookcases made for Habanero.

'Made in Bombita'. Geoff was able to support the local economy and buy over 100 hand made necklaces which have since been sold to friends and supporters of COPA. These are made by local youth (shown right) from polished coconut shell and Geoff was able to buy their complete stock, much to their delight.

After a very successful trip, Sebert reports that both the schools and clinics looked well maintained and decorated and our thanks go to the US workgroups who have undertaken painting and various maintenance issues.



*Project Trust volunteer Alice, second grade teacher David, and Rachel, COPA Administrator in the DR, help students make their hand-printed Christmas cards for their sponsors.*

## Recruitment

COPA currently has vacancies for a Project Director (3 years), a Health Advisor (2 years), and an Educational Advisor (2 years). A local wage is paid and 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](http://www.copa.org.uk)

If you, or anyone you know, would like to be considered for any of these positions or would like to receive more details please contact John Youe (COPA Staffing and Recruitment Officer) at [j.youe@btinternet.com](mailto:j.youe@btinternet.com)

*We are always interested in hearing from anyone who would like to work or volunteer for COPA.*

# Guernsey News

Gill (left) and Jenny, the retiring Chairman, at the Guernsey AGM



The AGM of the Guernsey Branch of COPA was held in September and saw the retirement of Jenny Benjamin as Chairman. Jenny has been involved since the early days of COPA and has taken a particular interest in health related matters, liaising with and supporting our Health Advisors in the DR. She has been a hardworking and inspirational Chairman for many years, always promoting COPA to the wider Guernsey community. Our thanks go to Jenny, and also her husband Rodney, for everything they have done in the support of COPA.

We are pleased to welcome Gill Syvret-Berboda as the new Chairman of the Guernsey Branch. Gill has served on the committee for a number of years and has first hand knowledge of the Dominican Republic.

## Report of the 2010 COPA UK AGM

Our 2010 annual general meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> October at Cricklade United Church, this followed the now established practice of taking the meeting, in alternate years, to areas where we know that we have a large number of sponsors. Our aim will be to hold next year's meeting in the Gloucester area, where COPA originated.

The meeting was well supported with approximately 60 people attending; a further 30 recorded their apologies for absence.

Our President and founder, Seburt Lane, welcomed everyone and led devotions. There followed the formal business which included the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts which had already been circulated to all sponsors with the September newsletter.

With regard to the appointment of officers and committee members the following had indicated that they were not standing for re-election: Christoph Courth, Ann Gratton, Jenny Benjamin and Jemma Pym, also, Verity Thelfell was unable to continue as Secretary but wished to remain a committee member. The chairman recorded his thanks to all of them for their past service.

Geoff Haslam accepted nomination as Vice-Chairman and Gill Syvret-Berboda will represent our Guernsey Branch on the committee. Paul Samways was nominated for election to the committee. The elected committee now comprises:

<b>Chairman</b>	Roger Tovey
<b>Vice-chairman</b>	Geoff Haslam
<b>Secretary</b>	Stephen Guy (appointed since the AGM)
<b>Treasurer</b>	David Rush
<b>Committee:</b>	Paul Arthurs, Peter Gardner, Rachel Palmer, Paul Samways, Sandra Samways, Gill Syvret-Berboda, Verity Threfell, Pam Tovey and John Youe.
<b>Co-opted</b>	Seburt Lane

Kingscott Dix Limited, Chartered Accountants were re-appointed as Independent Examiners

There followed a presentation by Geoff Haslam and Seburt Lane in connection with their recent work group

visit to the Dominican Republic where they helped to install solar powered lighting to COPA buildings in La Hoya and Bombita. COPA supporters from St. John's Methodist Church, Conway in Wales, had provided the funds for this project and members of the church were part of the work group.

Seburt then referred to experiences that had disturbed him during this visit to the DR, it concerned two chance meetings with former pupils from La Hoya who Seburt new well from when he and Doreen lived there. These he remembered as exceptional students who would have benefitted greatly from a university education had their families been able to afford to send them. However, all too often the money for fees and transport etc. is not available and it is necessary for the children to work to support their family after leaving high school. Seburt cited the example of Rosalba who's parents had been able to send her to university. She has now graduated and returned to La Hoya where she is now a valued member of our COPA teaching team.

Seburt proposed the idea of providing a scholarship fund to be used to support up to say 5 COPA pupils each year to go onto university for a three year course. There would need to be a criteria/recommendation process to identify suitable students. It is considered that 10,000 pesos a year (approx £200) would be needed to provide meaningful support for each student. By year three this would require a total of £3,000 per year to sustain. The committee will be looking for ways to raise this funding, any suggestions will be welcome.

The meeting closed and was followed by refreshments prepared and served by our Cricklade supporters.



The 'TEN IN A BAR' Concert for COPA which took place in the evening was a great success and our thanks go to 'Ten in a Bar' for providing such excellent entertainment. A huge amount of hard work had been done to organise this concert and we are grateful to Geoff Haslam and his team from Cricklade for arranging this most enjoyable evening.



The majority of the photos used in this edition of the Newsletter were taken by Geoff Haslam on his recent visit to the DR. Thank you Geoff.

**Verona** (pictured below) will have spent over four years working as an Educational Advisor for COPA in the DR when she leaves in December. We really appreciate all her help and hard work and wish her the best for the future. She will spend six months near San Juan in the Dominican Republic teaching English in a small school there before heading back to England.

Verona says, "It has been a pleasure working with COPA and both communities and this experience has given me a great opportunity to learn and grow so much as a person in all areas of my life. I have seen significant changes for the better during my time here and I hope that they will become even more significant for the future. The Dominican Republic is definitely my home away from home."



#### TRAINING HEALTH PROMOTERS IN BOMBITA — 'ESCOJO'

Amy, our Health Advisor, writes: " This is the project Rachel and I have been working on. We have about ten youth who are willing to get trained to be leaders and health promoters in their community. Rachel got some of the youth that misbehaved in school or have a lot of energy which we hope will be channeled in the right direction with this commitment. We had our first meeting and agreed that the trainings will be every Monday at 6 pm. Rachel and I are giving the training which was created by the Peacecorps. There are about 20 sessions that give them education about values, sexual anatomy, sexual health, STD's, pregnancy, abortion, etc. Hopefully we can get correct information to the community about these topics since there are so many myths out there.

The first Monday, we had 6 youth and talked about the goals and objectives of ESCOJO, and values and writing a mission statement. The second week, we had 5 youth and went over values and mission statement and then talked about self-esteem. I give the information and Rachel does the games and the dynamic part. We are trying to make them only 1 hr long as to keep their interest and wanting to come back for more and not bore them. It amazes me how they don't understand values and self esteem and haven't really thought about values and the future. This is harder than I thought, seeing how much education is missing in the home."

**Christmas collection undertaken at New Covenant Church, Florida for the children in La Hoya and Bombita.**

**Gifts were donated and over 800 boxes were packed ready for distribution.**



## Welcome to Bombita— Reports from Josie and Alice

The first glimpse I have of Bombita is from the car as it drives along the dirt track by the lake. I can see families sitting outside their brightly coloured houses on plastic chairs and relaxing, and gangs of children running around the streets and sugar cane fields. It makes quite an impression.

After Alice and I had settled in, we take a first stroll through the village with Rachel, and are met by countless children hugging and dragging to meet their families. The children all know one phrase and shout it as we pass in the street, "Whatisyourname! Whatisyourname!" Many don't understand the phrase, so when I answer they just look confused.

On the second day, Verona and Rachel have a welcome meal for Alice and I, and though all the rapid Spanish is slightly overwhelming, the warmth of the greeting needs no translation. Later that night, we attend the youth night at one of the Bombita churches, and though the night is cool we are hit by a wall of heat as we enter the room. The energy in the room seems to make the air vibrate, as an amazing band accompanies the congregation, who are passionately clapping and singing along, utterly uninhibited.

As we walk home from the church, adults and children alike approach us and wish us well. Bombita is nothing like the world I have known for the last 18 years. Yet, though the streets and houses of the village are so different, the humanity and affection of the people is familiar in a way I cannot put my finger on. Even in the overwhelming midday heat Bombita is alive with people socialising, and sharing each others lives. I go to bed on Sunday night exhausted, but so excited about the year ahead and getting to know such vivacious community.

**Josie** ❖ ❖ ❖

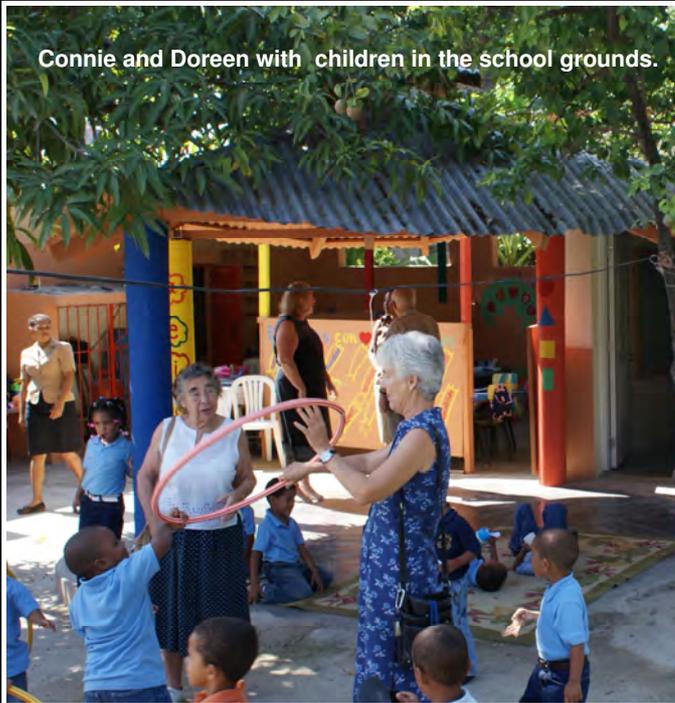
My time in Bombita so far has been full of new sounds, sights and flavours. When Rachel first took me and Josie around the village, it was really welcoming to be greeted by smiling faces whilst they sat outside their bright homes braiding hair, cooking and playing dominoes. The children rushed up to hold our hands. That night I got the chance to appreciate the acoustics of Bombita as I walked from the energetic church service to the buzzing main street. Accompanied with the bass of Dominican music was the chorus of neighs, baas, woofs, clucks and oinks of the animals.

When school began, Verona led Josie and me around. The children were all very excited for the first day of school and the teachers were friendly. We explored the school and sat in on some classes. Starting my own art classes were a scary prospect but the thought of chocolate milk afterwards got me through that first lesson!

I think my first taste of spaghetti juice sums up my time spent in Bombita so far: interesting, filling, sweet and just a bit crazy!

**Alice** ❖ ❖ ❖

Wishing all our sponsors and supporters a very Happy Christmas



Connie and Doreen with children in the school grounds.

## A new Partnership School

A new Partnership School has been added to the list that COPA helps to support in the DR. The Escuela Betesda in Barahona, run by former COPA head-teacher Germania in a classroom built in her back garden, started several years ago in response to a need for a pre-school in the area. After the earthquake of January 2010 in Haiti, many Haitians found their way to this area. With local schools being full to bursting point and unable to take the influx of children Germania decided to increase the size of her school and has started a combined class for 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades which caters for 16 Haitian children. In total, 25 Haitian children attend this school who would otherwise have no access to education. After a request from Germania the COPA committees have decided to help support this school which will allow materials and supplies to be purchased for daily educational purposes.

We are extremely grateful for a very generous donation of £1,000 specifically for Germania's school which was received following our AGM.



## Contact names and addresses for COPA UK:

### Treasurer:

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### Sponsorship Secretary

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### Treasurer: COPA Guernsey

Mr Peter Keeling,  
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### Guernsey Sponsorship contact

Mrs Margaret Keeling  
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## The COPA Christmas Fund



Sadly it is still quite unreliable to send presents to the children in La Hoya and Bombita although Christmas cards do seem to arrive safely. As a result, we would like to suggest that sending a donation to our Christmas Fund is still the easiest and safest way to send the children something this Christmas. As gifts are being supplied for all the children and young people this year (see article on page 3) any money donated will be used towards the Christmas party and any left over will be used to purchase books and equipment for the library or will be put to the School Trips Fund which helps to give all the children the chance to join the school trips which are organised by the teachers.

If you would like to make a contribution, please could you send your gift to the treasurer of COPA UK, David Rush or the treasurer of the Guernsey Branch, Peter Keeling. Both their addresses appear on the left of this page.

The pictures on the right show pupils working in the library at Bombita which is resourced so well thanks to the kind donations of sponsors.

### Sponsorship Letters

The address for your letters and cards is:

*Child's name and sponsorship number*  
Escuela de COPA (La Hoya or Bombita)

Apartado 42  
BARAHONA  
Dominican Republic

Please could you write your name and address on the reverse of the envelope. This will help the volunteers when they are delivering the letters and cards to the children. The volunteers have asked that messages to the children be kept short as each one needs translating into Spanish. As you can imagine, translating up to 800 cards from UK sponsors and 800 cards from USA sponsors is a huge task! Thank you for your understanding

