



COPA news

Building caring Christian communities



Meet the team currently working for COPA in the Dominican Republic.

From left to right: Ronald Tipan (Administrator/Facility Manager), Riko Kimoto (Health Advisor), Grace Koester (Independent Volunteer, English Teacher, Bombita), Bethany Garry (Project Trust Volunteer, English Teacher, La Hoya), Becky Sault (Project Trust Volunteer, Art Teacher, La Hoya) and Connie DiLeo (Interim Project Director). Read more about the volunteer situation on the back page.

Many thanks go to all the volunteers for supplying articles and photographs for the Newsletter. You can read more about their work with COPA in the DR on their 'blogs' which can be accessed from the COPA website.

Visit the COPA website: www.copa.org.uk

June 2013

Beauty & Brokenness

As I am riding back to Bombita on this guagua, I am excited to be going home. I am thankful to be returning to running and smiling bambinos who know my name, to co-workers & teachers who are passionate, to be writing this update after my first three months in Bombita. When I arrived, adventure, curiosity, and aspiration carried me. Everything and everyone around me was different and new. There was beauty, there was brokenness.

- Beauty in the land itself.
- Beauty in the individuality of my students.
- Beauty in the culture: a culture of complete sharing.
- Brokenness in relationships: abuse and abandonment.
- Brokenness you could touch: the lack of resources.
- Brokenness in my spirit: I want better for my neighbours.

After the first month, normality and routine eventually set in, sickness showed its face, and small frustrations were magnified as communication and deep relationships still lacked. I found at times in want of an escape. I can escape the poverty when its gets to be too much. I can head to Barahona for an ice cream, the capital for a more comfortable weekend. But for many in Bombita, there is no escape. Life in the batey is...life. They do not have the freedom to go look for beauty outside the batey, let along the freedom to eat when they are hungry.

I found myself asking, "How do they cope?" and "How do I truly *live* here?" Part of what I was experiencing was culture shock. At first the constant stream of visitors at home, loud passionate 'debating', and the need to share everything overwhelmed me. What I am uncovering recently is the love in this place and culture, as my attitude becomes one of acceptance.

The people of Bombita love each other, they don't want to run away in search of something better, and they don't want to escape. They are determined to make their community better through this love of theirs:

- Yosi, my co-teacher, plans to stay and teach at COPA Bombita, where he went to school.
- Angel is at school everyday helping out with P.E. as a volunteer without pay.
- Kendry, one of my eighth graders, can almost always be found in the afternoon, after his morning tanda is over, helping a group of youngsters sound out words.
- Juan Candy is a 22-year-old Pastor helping run a nutritional program for the kids in Bombita.

I am also realizing the need for something greater than adventure and curiosity to carry me through this year. Faith, hope, and trust in God are sustaining. I don't want to escape anymore, I want to live and I want to live fully in Bombita.

God is teaching me if I turn to Him daily as trials come I am made whole and don't need to turn to anything or anyone else for my salvation. I can live. Already in three months God has shown me that He has made me a whole person. That He has made the people here whole, individually and together, despite the brokenness. **That is beautiful.**

An unexpected visit

Connie writes:

Bombita has seen a lot of changes this year thanks to an unexpected and unadvertised visit by the President Danilo Medina. One Sunday, the President came, walked through the village, sat on porches and spoke with different people in the village. He made notes of some of the things that needed to be changed. After this visit, things began to happen.



Pictured in the hat, the President of the Dominican Republic visits Bombita

Every road in Bombita is now paved from the main road and all through the village! They are also doing a new subdivision as you enter with concrete block homes. A new high school is to be built in this area.

As we were working with the engineer assigned to build the new classrooms in Bombita, we were

invited to participate in the giving of a new contract to improve the drainage in Bombita. We heard how they were going to redo the drainage which runs alongside the Bombita road and extend it past the school which will help tremendously as before the water stopped there and turned bad. Four million pesos has been assigned for this work. This will surely improve the heath situation in Bombita.

The government has also begun constructing more latrines which are very nice. Riko, COPA health advisor also asked the officials to come and clean out the latrines that had been constructed during Amy's time here and they have done so. Riko said they have built 10 but are planning on doing a total of 100.

Another very exciting improvement for Bombita is the changing from half day school to full day. There is still much work to do to make this transition, but we are very excited about the plans. The government has awarded a contract for 24,000,000 pesos to add nine classrooms and bathrooms, a new larger kitchen with dining shelter and two new preschool rooms.

We are in the process of getting all the paperwork in order to be able to begin this next phase in the educational progress in the Dominican Republic. Stay tuned for further information!!!!

A typical day in my life as a Project Trust English teacher in La Hoya.

7.00am – woken by my phone alarm. I'm curled up in the blanket I've thrown around myself while sleeping. My mosquito net has partially fallen down while I was sleeping but I'm too comfortable to move. The temperature in the morning is just right, one of the few times when it's not too hot. Becky, my volunteer partner, gets up to shower, which I take as my cue to fall back asleep.

7.30am – woken by children shouting and screaming as they walk past our house on their way to school. Realise I have to be at school in 15 minutes and drag myself out of bed. Throw my dirty laundry into our laundry basket, throw on something clean, pull my hair into a pony tail and slap on some bug spray. Becky and I try to take turns carrying the laundry to Mota, our laundry lady, so I take it today. Then I stuff my planning notebook, chalk, pens, keys and phone into my purse and get out of the door bare minutes before I need to be at school. (Thankfully, it is literally a ten second walk away.)

8.00am – 'fila' at school. Students line up by grade and gender in front of the school gates. We say a prayer, sing a song and hear any announcements before singing the national anthem (of which I now know all the words) while the flag is raised.

9.40-10.20am - It's a Monday, so I have my first class of the week: the dreaded 7th grade. 40 moody 7th graders shoved into a classroom barely big enough to contain them. I try in turn to subdue them or cajole them into learning some English, which they manage about two thirds of the time. I feel sorry for the few kids who are trying to learn while being entertained by the jokers in the back who seem to see me as something of a personal challenge.

11.20-12.00 - The morning shift of 5th graders. I call them a swing class. Some days are great and some days are terrible. They're smart but hyper-active and even the slightest game or activity can send them into paroxysms of excitement.

12.00am-2.00pm - Lunch break! Known variably as siesta or almuerzo, everyone goes home, eats a *large* lunch, usually of rice and something else (beans or veg) and then sleep. If there's electricity (and therefore hot water) I'll shower or try and get some work done and maybe manage to catch a 20 minute catnap before going back to school.

2.10pm - I teach 4th graders English in the nearby village of Hato Viejo on Monday afternoons. The school in Hato Viejo is a partnership school with COPA, meaning that while COPA is not involved in the running or administration of the school, COPA does help out with materials and certain types of tuition: namely Art and English. My colleague, a Dominican woman called Rosemary, teaches Art to all grades in Hato Viejo (pre-school through fourth) while I just teach English to fourth graders and help out with the art classes. The class is small and well-behaved (they're less used to foreigners and their teaching methods) but they are much further behind than my fourth graders in La Hoya and take much longer to learn the same material. We play a lot of games and repeat topics over and over again. I find them adorable.

3.20-4.00pm - Sixth grade B. While the nicest of the two sixth grade classes, they're also come from some of the poorest background. Whilst I've had some of my best classes with them, they're also difficult to plan activities for and adjust for their previ-

ous lacking education. Additionally, they are the only class to ever have attempted to steal school materials from my classes.

5.00-5.40pm - The afternoon shift of 5th graders! The most disadvantaged students, they feed into COPA La Hoya at fifth grade, from the partnership schools of Habenero and Hato Viejo, which both terminate at 4th grade. They're enthusiastic, desperate to learn and adorable. They struggle with complicated topics but I find their classes the most enjoyable.

5.40pm - School finishes with the ringing out the bell, singing of the national anthem and the lowering of the flag. Becky and I rush home and I start dinner, hoping to finish cooking before the sun sets and darkness sets in at 6.30pm (tonight it's stir fry). On Tuesdays and Thursdays we go to church but on Mondays we have the option of staying in or wandering down into the village, probably being force-fed a second dinner and sitting outside a house of a friend on plastic chairs. The verb for "hanging out" in Spanish is "compartir", which translates literally as "to share". Dominicans love to talk and hang out with their friends and I have to say, I've developed a taste for it myself. (although not for the mosquitos that bite at you throughout the night!)

10.15pm - our curfew is at 10.30 so time to go home! Someone with a motor (a run down motorbike that acts as the favored mode of transport here) will usually give us a lift back home, avoiding the dogs that hang around La Hoya during the night.

11.00pm - asleep by 11! If there's no power (there usually isn't), going to bed is a confusing mess of flashlights and oil lamps that we move around the house as we brush our teeth with clean drinking water (NOT TAP WATER) and set up our mosquito nets.

Tomorrow it starts all over again!

A day in the life..... continued

Bethany Garry
Project Trust Volunteer

Check out Clase Informatica (Computer Class) in La Hoya. Mauricio, a teacher in COPA La Hoya, is teaching the students different computer parts. The students are taught computer basic functions and as well as more advanced and fun activities. The students are eagerly listening to Mauricio. It is often the case that majority of the students here don't have computers in their own home and they are always excited to participate in this class. There are some bright students in the class that we hope will transfer into a career in Information Technology.



School Assembly at La Hoya by Bethany Garry

Yupi Yupi yupi! Whey whey whey! Yupi yupi yupi! Whey whey why!

So goes the sound of Yuraidi, master of ceremonies and sculptor of assemblies, leading the students in call and response games at the beginning of assemblies. Assembly is held twice on Fridays, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Yuraidi, a young university student from La Hoya, plans, organises and leads each assembly, usually based around some kind of theme.



Yuraidi is a truly gifted educator and loves to get the children involved through role play, dressing up and humour. On International Women's Day, she outdid herself by performing upwards of six costumes changes within the assembly's 45 minute programme, each costume change representing the multitude of different roles women fulfil, from doctor to politician, old grandmother to beauty queen.

Assemblies always begin with a prayer, led by a student, and continue with some songs, call and response games and announcements from the headmaster or other teachers. This is then followed by presentations by student groups, either from particular grades or extracurricular clubs. The drama club is particularly active, usually performing a small educational play on the theme for the week.

Assemblies are a special time for students, allowing them to participate in learning outside of the classroom. It gives children opportunities to practice public speaking, performing for an audience and provides a forum for public recognition. Once a week, the class that has presented the best or most improved behaviour in the school is publicly recognised and applauded by the school for their hard work. It's a fun release after a week of hard work and presents learning in a fun and interactive way that students don't regularly experience in the classroom.

Another important element of the assemblies is the seating program which encourages self management and leadership in our older 8th grade students. Students are seated in groups of mixed grades, with each table "supervised" by one or two 8th grade students. This encourages inter-grade interaction and collaboration and encourages leadership and responsibility in the older students. It's been a very successful initiative and really benefits everyone involved in the assemblies.



Informatica Clase en Bombita! A letter from a Teacher



These are the students from the Information Technology course given at the COPA school in Bombita. This course is instructed by Dawson de la Cruz and made possible by sponsor COPA, who together are giving support to the habitants of a poor and desolate community.

Enrolled in this course are several university graduates, university students, and home makers. These are all individuals who want to make a better life for themselves from the knowledge that can be acquired from this course. These are students who long for a better tomorrow.

This course, among others, exists because of COPA which has a generous heart and drive for development. COPA observed the great need of the people in this community and implemented this course to meet the present needs. Essentially, the students can go on and sustain themselves from the knowledge and skills gained from the course by creating their own home workshop or by working for a company.

Dawson de la Cruz would like to thank COPA because it is helping communities in poverty to develop the means of the most fundamental factors of development: education and health. These are also the critical needs of Bombita, whose habitants are unable to advance without help developing their education and health.

Thank you so much.

Fund Raising for COPA



Paul Arthurs, a member of the COPA UK Committee, recently ran the Neolithic Marathon to raise funds for COPA. The event is a tough multi terrain marathon which starts at Avebury, takes in the Pewsey Vale and Salisbury Plain and finishes at Stonehenge. The route is advertised as 'undulating crosscountry' but in reality it is more accurately described as 'very hilly and very hard'. Well done and thankyou Paul.



A Curry Evening was held recently at the Bombay Lounge Indian restaurant in Swindon. 38 people attended a very enjoyable evening and approx. £200 was made to help with COPA's work in the DR.

The Fund Raising Committee have many other plans in the pipeline — watch this space (and the website) for more details and, of course, if you would like to organise an event to raise funds for COPA it would be greatly appreciated.

Do you shop online? Then make sure you shop via easyfundraising.

By shopping via easyfundraising you will be raising free donations for COPA. Just go to <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/COPA> register, and then search for your desired vendors. You'll then use their websites as usual, but be raising money for COPA. It costs you only a few moments more, nothing else. Hundreds of retailers like Argos and Amazon donate money to supporters of good causes who shop on line through

this site and we could be one of them! As well as the donation itself you can Gift Aid it and donate even more money to COPA.

Second Instalment.....

Fundraising can be a tough challenge for any charity, and particularly in the present economic climate. For many years I have wanted to trek the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in aid of a charity, and I wish to raise money for COPA. It was only after signing up that I realised that the trek was graded as 'tough' and a lot of training would need to be put in before the departure on Friday 13th Sept 2013 – a lot of 13s!



Trek to Machu Picchu

With 8 months down and just 4 to go, fundraising has been high on the priority list! There have been a number of events going on including the COPA Big Breakfast at the Cricklade United Church Hall on Friday 17th May. This event was a great success. The breakdown of takings was as follows: Raffle & Cake Stall: £239; Breakfast: £523.05; Donations: £70; Cooking for my Cast and Crew in Swansea: £31. Minus the initial expenditure, a profit of £533.05 was made! This was an incredible amount, and the generosity of everyone who came has truly staggered me; I'm very grateful

In other news!! I am hosting a quiz night in Brighton in July. The venue has been



found, a compere booked and the quiz has almost been finished! It is a musical theatre quiz, playing to my jobs knowledge; hopefully I will know more than the people attending!! I hope that it can be as successful as the breakfast was and I will really be on my way. I also have face painting sessions in Hackney or Croydon being booked, for the little children who come out of my show. Who doesn't want their child to look like an Elf or a Fairy Princess?!

If anyone is interested in shaking a tin in August at Sainsbury's Bridgemead, Swindon please let either Geoff Haslam or myself know. I am looking at trying to do it on August 24th between the hours of 10-6.

For a continued update of events and how the totals are rising, please visit: <https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/helensamways1>

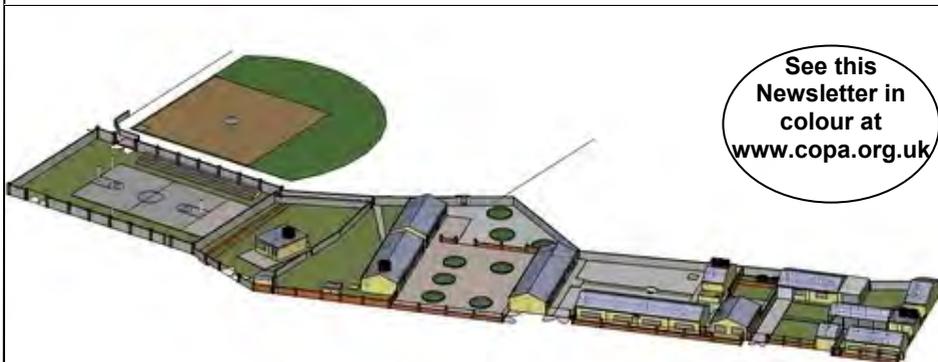
I am currently at £1786.66, almost halfway!! Thank you for all of your support, Helen

(Helen is a supporter of COPA and daughter of our Sponsorship Secretary, Sandra Samways)

The COPA Schools

Have you ever wondered what the COPA schools sites look like? All of the buildings have been built over the years by COPA with many workgroups, volunteers and much local labour used to create these classrooms, dining shelters and living accommodation.

Ronald Tipan has produced these plans which show the extent of the COPA sites. These two schools provide not only a haven for the children's education but also houses the long term and Gap year volunteers who live and work in the two communities.



See this
Newsletter in
colour at
www.copa.org.uk

La Hoya School complex



Bombita School complex

The villages of La Hoya and Bombita can be found on Google Earth—take a look and see how the two campuses stand out in the midst of the local housing. Start with Barahona in the south west of the Dominican Republic and work north west from there. You will soon come to the village of La Hoya and, further on to the north, the village of Bombita.

COPA is now on Facebook and can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/COPA-Community-Partners-Association/159479520829157>

Pray

Heartfelt and moving, the following article is from the 'blog' of Grace Koester, who is a volunteer from the United States working with COPA.

Despite the heavy Christian influence here in Bombita, spousal and child abuse is prevalent.

I don't understand this.

Today I coloured and shared an Ipod with one of my students hiding in a room alone waiting to hear the decisions the adults were making for her.

Today it came out that she is three months pregnant.

Today her dad beat her and her mom. This isn't the first time.

I prayed with her and told her to come over whenever she needs to get away, but mostly I felt helpless in the situation, ill-equipped to face these struggles with the kids here.

Please pray for God's protection to surround her, her mother, and this new life. Pray for the emotional and physical health of these three. For care and concern to stamp out rumors.

Last week we went to visit another one of my students in the hospital.

She is in the public hospital and sharing a room with 5 other beds, each holding small children and their mothers. The mother with the lazy eyes on the bed to her left Eskimo-kissed her giggling toddler.

She is here because of her mother.

Her mother who found out she had a boyfriend and burned her vagina with boiling water. She is 12.

Random people who heard the story come in to stare at her as we visit. Hattie paints her nails and I read Jorge el Curioso. The doctors ask very personal questions in front of us, she responds distantly. But she smiles as we page through the Ice Age coloring book and talk about our favorite characters.

As of now her mother has 10 days in jail, her lawyer was the only one heard out, and claimed it was "an accident". Again I feel insignificant, helpless, outraged.

She is the product of rape. Her mom has been neglecting her and abusing her for some time.

Pray for this sweet child's emotional and physical health. Pray that she feels and accepts love despite deep hurt and abandonment. Pray for her mother. Pray that the community would show their children they uphold their values, that this batey will no longer stand for such injustice. That they step in and defend the defenseless, and that I do the same.

Lastly, please pray for overall peacefulness and good nature among the students at school. That these kids will be the generation that ends all violence.

Contact names and addresses for COPA UK:

Treasurer:

Mr David Rush
Flat 98, Block B,
The Paragon,
Boston Park Road,
BRENTFORD,
Middlesex, TW8 9RP

Sponsorship Secretary for both La Hoya and Bombita:

Mrs Sandra Samways
57 Pauls Croft
CRICKLADE
Wiltshire
SN6 6AJ

Treasurer: COPA Guernsey

Mr Peter Keeling
Les Poplairs
Rue du Felconte
ST SAVIOURS
Guernsey
GY7 9QD

Guernsey Sponsorship Secretary:

Mrs Margaret Keeling
Les Poplairs
Rue du Felconte
ST SAVIOURS
Guernsey
GY7 9QD

Registered Charity No. 1027117

A date for your diary:

The COPA UK AGM will be held on
Saturday, September 21st at Cricklade.

More details in the next Newsletter

Comings and goings in the DR

There have been several changes recently in the DR. Patrick and Amanda, who had been Project Director and Education Advisor respectively, left in April and returned to the USA (an addition to their family is expected later this year). Stephanie, an Education Adviser, has also recently left and is now working in a school in another part of the Dominican Republic. Hattie, who was an independent volunteer from the UK, has finished her placement with COPA and returned home. We thank them all for all the work and effort they put in whilst working for COPA and wish them well for the future.

After advertising, short listing and interviewing the committee have been able to appoint the following people: Bob Hampton will be our new Project Director and will travel to the DR with his wife in October and Teresa Cornish will be an Education Advisor and will be taking up the position in July.

We are so grateful to Connie DiLeo, a previous Project Director living in the DR, who has taken on the role of Interim Project Director until Bob Hampton arrives.

Sponsorship Letters and Cards



The address for your letters and cards is:

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