



COPA news

Building caring Christian communities



One of the newly built classrooms in Bombita

The President of the Dominican Republic is committed to improving education by creating single session schools. Historically in the D.R., schools have been organized in double sessions with some students attending in the mornings and other students scheduled for afternoons. Creating single sessions schools requires more classrooms and the COPA Bombita school was chosen as one of the first schools to receive additional classrooms. The construction has progressed rapidly and will be completed this summer and ready for single session classes to begin in September. Read more on page 6.

Take a photo journey of how the work has progressed from beginning to end on copa.org.uk, click on COPA USA and follow the link to the COPA US Spring newsletter.

STOP PRESS: A date for your diary!

**The COPA UK AGM will be held at Wesley Place Methodist Church,
Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent on Saturday, September 20th 2014
All welcome. Full details in the next Newsletter.**

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

June 2014

Health Matters



Cathy with Katusca our new Bombita doctor

The clinics in Bombita and La Hoya continue to run smoothly. A lot of Cathy's workload is associated with the care of individuals who need help with getting in to the system for investigative appointments and support by units in Barahona and Santo Domingo.

Our resident Dr Katusca has settled well in Bombita, She reports that she is happy in Bombita and people have welcomed her into the community.

In Bombita and, more recently, in La Hoya and further afield there has been an outbreak of a mystery illness, widely cited to be Chikungunya, a non-deadly West African mosquito virus that causes very high temperatures and joint pain.

This has affected the community in Bombita very badly, including almost all the teachers. Some people are still suffering joint pain some weeks later. Cathy says, 'We are still awaiting on serology confirming whether we have an outbreak of Chikungunya, Denge or Malaria or good old fashioned flu.' The village, houses & school have since been fumigated.

Water Channels are being built in Bombita which may reduce the amount of stagnant water and so the breeding habitat for parasites and mosquitos. Also latrines continue to be built in Bombita which is changing the living conditions for the better all the time.

Staff changes in the DR.

Ron, our Maintenance Advisor in the DR, has decided to return home to the USA. We thank him for his work for COPA and wish him well for the future. Bob, our Project Director, has taken on some of Ron's work for the time being.

We still have a vacancy for an Education Advisor in the DR to work alongside Teresa. The job description appears on our Website but if you would like more information or would like to apply for the job please contact John Youe on copahr@gmail.com



Finishing Teaching

We have officially finished as teachers at Escuela COPA Bombita! Teaching finished on Friday 23rd May, followed by a week of exams. My last lessons were really good fun, but also sad as I am going to miss seeing my students everyday in school. We will still see the majority of them around Bombita, but as this school is the best in the area some students come from other villages so I may not see them again. For my last lesson with each class, I baked biscuits and we played lots of bingo, noughts and crosses, splat and hangman. Each class signed a sheet on which I am going to stick a photo of the class as a memento. It is a mix of emotions knowing I will never have to plan a lesson again, or grade work, or teach a lesson. Most of the time I loved it, but I also really struggled at times. One thing is for sure - I am looking forward to not having to be up at 7am every day!

The English exams taken and I am really happy with how they went. There were some amazing results, with one girl in 7th grade achieving 100% and another writing a grammatically perfect paragraph in 3 tenses. There were some students who answered next to nothing correctly in January and this time managed to pick up a few marks here and there. I can honestly say that I am proud of every single student - everyone had clearly done at least some revision and it paid off; they were certainly very happy when I gave them back their tests on Thursday!

Even though we are done teaching, we are not just on holiday now. We have plenty of other jobs to keep us busy, including writing a curriculum as guidance for the next volunteers (there is no government curriculum for English or art) and preparing resources for Christmas cards. Yes, in May. To explain, each student has sponsors in the UK and USA, and they make Christmas cards each year to be sent. As they have to be posted across the world, they have to be done in October. Volunteers arrive in August and it is a huge job to prepare resources for nearly 1000 cards whilst still finding your feet teaching. So this year it has changed it around slightly so we are doing the preparation now to make it easier for the next volunteers. Which means lucky us, we are the only volunteers to have to cut out hundreds of stars, trees and stables twice. But it should be worth it to save a lot



of stress in October! We are also in the process of designing murals to paint on the walls of some classrooms.

Bryony Clear Hill (Project Trust Volunteer)



Last lesson with 7A - playing Bingo

World Environment Day

Written by Bryony Clear Hill who is one of the Project Trust volunteers and has been working for COPA since last August.

June 5th was World Environment Day (Día Mundial del Medio Ambiente), but as the school term here in the Dominican Republic finished in May, I decided to celebrate it a bit early. I chose to mark this specific day as the environment is something I care passionately about and something that is not really taught in the Dominican curriculum.

I started the day by speaking in 'fila', the time when all the students line up to pray, raise the flag while singing the national anthem, and that day, listen to a speech about the environment. I spoke about what the word actually means, how we can improve the environment in school and in Bombita, and a bit about climate change, an entirely new idea for the majority of students present.

My usual English lessons were changed to lessons about the environment, which for 5th and 6th grade involved thinking about what they like about where they live, what they do not like, what worries they have and how we can improve it. They then made posters about throwing rubbish in the bin, turning off lights and caring for the natural world.



With the older students, I taught them the basics of the greenhouse effect, and they made posters with information about what is causing climate change, what the effects could be and what we can do to make a difference.

I was really pleased with all their work, with some students giving incredibly thoughtful answers about problems in their community. It remains to be seen if there will be less rubbish on the ground in school next week!

Alexander with his poster about throwing rubbish in the bin.



Children enjoying sports day

In the last edition of the Newsletter we showed a picture of many large cardboard boxes just unloaded from a Mission Plane from the USA at Barahona airport. Inside them were enough Christmas present boxes to give one to each student at Bombita and La Hoya schools. These boxes are as a result of hard work by members of the New Covenant United Methodist Church in Florida who have filled each box with toys, games, books, etc. The picture below shows some of the children excitedly opening their boxes to discover the treasures inside.



Single Tanda Day

The local community was positively impacted by this project as Bombita residents with construction skills were hired as workers.



With the classrooms built in Bombita, work has slowed down to a trickle. This is proving extremely frustrating as many jobs have been started and not yet finished. The engineer has assured us that work will pick up again from next week (and indeed has already picked up today) and that they will be finished by the 20th June. Given that a work team from the USA is arriving on June 22nd I'm sure you can imagine the pressure that we all feel under, especially as it is quite hard to

visualise what everything will look like, even with the plans. I am trying to bear in mind that so far the engineer has been true to his word on everything, so we need to have some faith in him to finish on time. He has agreed to do so many things for us and I can see that the school will look fantastic when finished.

In Bombita we have started interviewing some teachers for available posts. Out of 4 teachers, I think we have invited all 4 to *concurso* – this interview process is still a little hazy to me, but it involves further selections. Of the 4 teachers we saw, the best by far was our very own Javier (Secretary)! It is actually quite startling to see the difference between teachers used to the standards set by COPA and others. In the case of the other 3 teachers we felt that although their lessons were exactly the same – ask some questions, talk a bit, read something, do some writing – they did have a good classroom presence and had the potential to improve further.



New classrooms in Bombita

Teresa - Education Advisor

News from the Schools

Taken from some of the monthly reports received from Teresa, our Education Advisor:

Ruth and Alice, our two Project Trust volunteers in La Hoya, really involved themselves in school and community life. On the 15th March they went on a pilgrimage to Higüey with some of the Catholics in the community. There is a very important Cathedral here that holds an important Spanish painting of the city's patron saint the Virgin of La Altagracia. Thousands of Dominicans visit every year, and it is first mentioned as a site of veneration in 1650. An extremely interesting excursion then. However, I declined the offer after Cathy told me I'd have to get up a 3am! Perhaps another time..... In La Hoya on the 7th March girls from 5th -8th grade gave a drama and presentation for women in La Hoya to celebrate International Women's Day. On the 19th March the girls' volleyball team played in the semi-finals of a local competition. Also in March I also stumbled upon a group 'parent's evening' in La Hoya. Ruber had invited some young men to apologise to the parents of their peers for their poor behaviour in lessons! Fantastic.

Fiona has been working with Yasmine (1st grade) on a series of lessons based around *The Gruffalo*. These went really well and even Moises has commented on the high student engagement. Fiona also gave two talks in fila in March on the subject of International Women's Day and has been experimenting with a little drama in Art, which has been very well received by all the grades.

In Bombita I have begun some work on the library. With the help of the PT girls we have cleaned 800 odd books, thrown out those that are irreparable and repaired those that can be saved. Books have not been categorised for a while into even general reading abilities. I have seen little evidence of teachers actively using their classroom libraries and I am disappointed in the care that some teachers have taken with the books in their classrooms. I will be making reading and books a primary focus of next year. I have plans to rearrange the library and to categorise books into general reading abilities. (For those teachers among you, I hope you appreciate that this is extremely difficult in a second language and without readability statistics! So categories remain rather general. However, I think any sense of progression must be an improvement on none at all.) The lack of categories is very interesting – Moises told me that the reason new books had not been categorised is because the stickers came from the USA! Yikes. I bought my stickers in Barahona in the hope that this excuse will no longer fly! I have had a discussion with Diego (Librarian) about raising the profile of the library and reading in general. I am also planning on buying a number of new books for the library and to this end have done an inventory of all 800 books. New books will be sourced mainly in Santo Domingo.

I cannot stress enough how privileged we have been this year to have such fantastic Project Trust volunteers. They are independent and mature and have coped with various difficulties and setbacks. In Bombita Fiona and Bryony have had to justify several times to Moises, the head teacher, why they aren't staying another year! They celebrated their last day of teaching on Friday 23rd May and I know all the girls felt a bit of a pang as they said goodbye to their classes. As I promised at the beginning of the year, some of the worst classes turned into some of their best! I know the whole team will be extremely sad to see them go in July. Our new Project Trust volunteers arrive in August and we look forward to welcoming them. I am particularly keen to work on creating a sense of responsibility to the next set of volunteers by presenting important information clearly and clearing out old paperwork that is past its sell-by-date. I think this sense of continuity and community is important in a team that is constantly changing.

COPA UK Sponsorship You may recall that included with the December Newsletter was a letter from Sebert and a form with which you could amend your monthly sponsorship. The letter started; 'It is now some years since COPA has asked sponsors whether they could increase their sponsorship payment – in fact we have managed only to increase it once in the 21 years since COPA started! Recent new sponsors will already be paying £8 per month whilst others are contributing a lesser sum per month.'

The response from this was excellent but in case you intended to amend the amount but had mislaid the form during the Christmas period it has been reprinted on the facing page for your use. If you would like a copy of the original letter please let me know (pam.tovey@btinternet.com or 01452 301633).

Andrew Nemr visits COPA Bombita

Earlier this year the charity associated with the sugar cane company organised a visit from a tap dancer from the United States. He gave



various short performances of this famous type of dancing. He explained that this type of dancing is simple, with a pattern of only 4 steps. Then he asked which students wanted to learn and various students came up to have a go. Not only this, but he explained that he wanted to learn about our dances – the bachata, merengue, salsa and dembow and they taught him the steps, resulting in a lot of fun. We are grateful to the *Fundación Central Barahona* for the visit.

By Darwin Rafael de la Cruz Novas
(Teacher of ICT, Bombita)



Please complete this form and return it to:

David Rush, COPA Treasurer, Flat 98, Block B,
The Paragon, Boston Park Road, Brentford,
Middlesex, TW8 9RP

Registered Charity
No. 1027117

Title: _____ First Name: _____
Surname: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____ Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to **AMEND** your standing order.

To: The Manager _____ Bank/Building Society
Address _____
Post Code _____

Name of Account Holder(s) (Block capitals Please)

Branch sort Code

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Bank/Building Society Account number

Reference No: (to be completed by COPA)

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Instruction to your Bank or Building Society:

Please **AMEND** my existing standing order to COPA at Barclays Bank, Gloucester, Sort Code: 20-33-83 Account 20250236 by cancelling my existing amount and substituting the sum of:

£ _____ each month/quarter/half year/year (delete three as applicable) starting (date): _____ until you receive further notice from me/us and debit my/our account accordingly.

Signature(s) _____
Date _____

Fund raising for COPA



Big Breakfast

Following the success of the Big Breakfast held at Cricklade last year, the COPA Marketing & Fundraising Committee decided to serve another one this year. The doors opened at 6.30am and in walked our first customer. Throughout the morning there

was a steady stream of enthusiastic diners, who tucked into a full English breakfast. Everyone commented on the high quality of the breakfast, which was cooked by former professional chef Helen Samways (of Machu Picchu fame!). Helen was supported by a merry band of helpers who did sterling work waiting at table and washing up. Our thanks goes to all of them. Thank you also to Brian & Marilyn Chunn who did a fantastic job in organising the raffle. There was a large variety of desirable prizes for people to choose. One highlight of the morning was a sausage sandwich, complete with lit candle, making a surrogate birthday cake! A very enjoyable time was had by all who came. The event made a net profit of £410 for COPA funds.



Would you or do you know someone who would like to raise money for COPA and experience life changing challenges? Whether it's trekking in Peru, cycling to Paris or walking the Yorkshire 3 peaks we have activities to suit all abilities. Please contact Paul at copa.secretary@gmail.com if you are interested.



easyfundraising.org.uk If you are looking to book your holiday online in the next couple of months, please consider using easyfundraising.org.uk as this will provide much needed funds for COPA at no expense to you! For example, Thomas Cook offers a 2.75% donation, or Thompson will donate £10, you can even get 1.5% donation from EasyJet Holidays!

But it's not just holidays online that give donations, one of the COPA committee members has used Argos, Screwfix, Lakeland, John Lewis and even places regular orders with Wiltshire Farm Foods and has earned donations online for COPA. There are so many other companies that participate - every donation helps!

The Bournemouth Half Marathon

John Amos, the nephew of the COPA UK Chairman, Geoff Haslam, has recently completed the Bournemouth Half Marathon in aid of COPA raising the magnificent sum of almost £700. Here is his story of the race.



I had been looking forward to the race for a few weeks. My confidence was high following a great 12 mile training run that I had managed in 2hrs 5 mins. That was my longest ever training run and gave me confidence that I could finally hit my half marathon target of under 2hrs 20 mins. I'd also started running some 4 mile hilly routes at lunchtime with an experienced running colleague (Jacqui) and was managing them more easily the more I did them. Jacqui had also said she would run the half with me to help me get my PB which was very kind of her.

So things were looking good, I'd also beaten my target for COPA of £100 thanks to generous friends, colleagues, relatives and COPA supporters. And then on the Friday of race weekend I started to feel a bit washed out and aching. Come Saturday morning I was feeling dreadful, I was having stomach pains and had no energy. At this moment I was thinking it would be a miracle if I even attempted to run. However my kind wife let me go back to bed Saturday morning and so I rested until lunchtime, I then felt a bit better. Come Saturday evening I felt a bit better but still had some stomach pains and no appetite which was not good for my planned carb loading!

At this stage I was thinking I might as well give it a go in the morning so long as I manage a bit of porridge for breakfast Sunday morning! However at 4am Sunday morning I was in great discomfort with shooting pains in my stomach, I thought I'm not going to even bother going! However as quickly as they arrived they went again, and I managed to go back to sleep. So a few hours later I felt ok enough to try and run, but really had no idea how I would feel once I started. As usual for the Bay races there was a great atmosphere and as per most of my races the rain stayed away and we got a bit of sunshine. Starting the race Jacqui and I managed to stick to our target pace for 3.5 miles but after that I started to feel as tired as I normally do around the 8 or 9 mile mark and I knew it would be tough. My energy gel I had to take for the 10 mile mark was consumed at 6 miles, not even half way around. As we started running on the roads and cliff top as the sun got warmer my energy levels were quickly dropping off. Luckily Jacqui was carrying water (I don't normally bother) and let me have some, I think she thought I might end up collapsing like the man we saw being wheeled into the back of the ambulance on the cliff top.

However with a lot of nagging from Jacqui and a couple of her dextrasol tablets I summoned a bit of energy for the descent down to Boscombe Pier and then managed to run and walk my way to the finish. Amazingly whilst no PB I managed a time that was half a minute or so quicker than my October 2013 half marathon and it was my second quickest of the 5 I have done. This is in the main down to Jacqui's nagging as we ran and me not wanting to let COPA and the sponsors down by not running!



Contact names and addresses for COPA UK:

Treasurer:

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Sponsorship Secretary for both La Hoya and Bombita:

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SN6 6AJ

Treasurer: COPA Guernsey

Mr Peter Keeling
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Guernsey Sponsorship Secretary:

Mrs Margaret Keeling
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Registered Charity No. 1027117

After 15 years of editing and circulating the Newsletter I have decided to step down from this role at the end of 2014.

Many of the articles and photos used are gathered from reports, 'blogs' and special articles from the COPA volunteers and the Project Trust volunteers working in the Dominican Republic. There are also items about fundraising and projects happening in the UK and I hope that over the years you have found them to be an interesting mix.

Currently, three editions are published each year (May/June, September and December) to coincide with letters and cards from the young people in the DR and also the COPA UK AGM paperwork.

I now feel that the time has come for me to hand over to someone who may have a new approach, new and fresh ideas. Of course, I would be happy to help with any hand over and also with the logistics of the mailing of the Newsletter if that would help my successor.

Would you, or someone you know, be interested in taking on the role of Newsletter Editor? Please don't think that you need to live in the Gloucestershire/Wiltshire area to do this as most of the input is from emails and the internet.

Please contact me by email if you would like more information: pam.tovey@btinternet.com or phone 01452 301633

Pam Tovey - Newsletter Editor

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.

Editor: Mrs Pam Tovey, 30 Maidenhall, Highnam, Gloucester, GL2 8DL Tel: 01452 301633