



# COPA

Summer 2015

Building Caring Christian Communities

It is all change with the COPA newsletter! After many years hard work producing fantastic newsletters, Pam Tovey has passed over the responsibility of editing. To introduce myself: my name is Bryony, I taught English in Bombita in 2013/14, I am currently studying Geography at the University of Oxford, and I am also a member of the COPA UK Committee. I would like to start by saying a huge thank you to Pam for all her hard work. It is quite an act to follow!

It has been a busy few months for COPA with new staff, an International Conference held in the Dominican Republic and attended by members of the UK, US and DR committees and a hugely successful Big Breakfast held in Cricklade in May.

I really hope that you enjoy reading this newsletter and keeping up to date with the work of COPA,

Bryony Clear Hill—Editor



## FEATURES

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## WORLD ART DAY

**World Art Day is held every year on April 15th. Current La Hoya art teacher SOPHIE CASHELL tells us about celebrating the day**

On Wednesday 15th April English teacher Lucy and I decided to celebrate World Art Day. As we both had few lessons on this particular day we were able to rearrange them and dedicate the whole of this day to celebrating world art with the children. There are 13 classes in La Hoya ranging from age 3-4 up to 14. The idea was that each year group had a different country, and a large drawing of a monument or item that is individual to that country,

for example the pyramids of Egypt etc. The children and I chose Germany, the UK, France, Italy, South Africa, Australia, Egypt, China, Japan, Russia, the Dominican Republic, the USA and Canada. I had prepared the drawings before and cut it up into a jigsaw puzzle so each child coloured in a jigsaw piece without knowing what the overall picture was. In each mini workshop the children coloured their jigsaw piece and learnt a bit about that country and its history (for example year 8 learnt about Nelson Mandela and South Africa). Lucy taught them all to say "hello, we are from...." in their specific country's language. The day was a huge success, with the children learning and doing something

when we stuck the puzzles together and put the final collages on the wall, every child took delight in pointing out to me which individual piece they had coloured. The children were proud of what they all had achieved, which made everything worthwhile.

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## FAITH IN BOMBITA

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**Art teacher LAURA TOFFOLO writes about her experiences of religion in Bombita.**

The songs of worship give Bombita its sense of community. For a village in which you could walk the circumference in a few minutes, Bombita has at least six different

churches. And these are only the ones which Fiona and I have discovered thus far; we forever seem to be hearing choirs of voices coming from never-before-noticed candle lit shacks functioning as churches. For a community that faces so many problems it is the churches that hold it together. They give people a place to congregate each evening and share their love for each other. Babies are passed around, teenagers hold hands with their grandparents and the whole service is taken up with singing so beautiful that it lifts you, no matter how hard your day might have been. I can't imagine leaving this all behind, but for now I just want to soak it all up, so that I have as much as I can to remember before Bombita becomes that magical place that I spent a year in when I was seventeen.





## INTERVIEW WITH NICO

### **New Assistant Director NICO GHIONE tells us about himself and his role with COPA**

#### **When did you arrive in the Dominican Republic?**

I'm arrived on 4th May 2015, at Las Americas airport. Bob was waiting for me and since the beginning I had a good feeling that together we would do a really good job for COPA.

#### **Where are you from?**

I am from Northwest Italy, the Piedmont region. I live (I was living) in a small village close to Alps, and I have studied in Torino, the capital city of Piedmont. I am a graduate in International Communications, a

degree program that allows you to work with sociocultural minorities and migrants. I was working for the Italian Labor Union of Farmers and Ranchers. In particular I carried out a project of integration and hospitality for migrant agricultural workers for two years.

#### **What do you do for COPA?**

I am Bob's assistant. I am learning how COPA works and how to make COPA work better. I am doing accounting and maintenance, working closely with local staff.

#### **Why did you decide to work for COPA?**

Since the beginning I've been struck by this organisation with whom I share goals and objectives. As I was looking for an international experience in my field. I applied and, thanks to my background and my experience, I've been selected.

#### **In which village do you live?**

I am living in La Hoya, a beautiful Dominican village. Everyday, when I complete the daily activities here, I move to Bombita. Bombita is a bit different than La Hoya, due to its origins as a settlement of Haitian sugarcane workers. For different reasons is a little bit more problematic than La Hoya and my daily presence in Bombita is fundamental.

**What were your first impressions?**

People. They are wonderful and hospitable. They give without expecting anything in return. Part of my task here, is to share time with people of both the communities. It is, I think, the most important part of living here. I'm trying to be an active part of those communities and it is for that reason I spend a lot of my free time walking through the villages, entering into every house, sitting and chatting with everyone.

**What do you think of the Dominican Republic so far?**

That it is a lovely country, with a big potential. It can be and it is going to be one of the most important in the Caribbean area and not only because of the lovely beaches but because people understand the importance of studying, appreciate the culture and work to get the skills they need to have a better life and to make their country a better place to live for everyone. This is also thanks to COPA—we work where the government fails to ensure equal opportunities for all.

## BIG BREAKFAST

### **In May COPA held a Big Breakfast fundraising event in**

Over fifty people braved the inclement weather on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May to come to the third annual 'Big Breakfast'. Punters were able to choose between a 'full English'; bacon or sausage sandwich; or cereal and toast. There was tea and coffee on hand to wash it all down. The breakfast was again ably cooked by former professional chef Helen Samways. The high quality of the breakfast was demonstrated by the large percentage of clean plates that were returned.

There was a hard working team of helpers, both in and out of the kitchen, who helped the morning run smoothly. Our thanks goes to them.

Many people bought raffle tickets in the hope of winning one of the lovely prizes, all of which were kindly donated. The profit from the raffle was just under £100. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

A merry buzz of conversation was heard throughout the morning, making a very convivial atmosphere. As they left, several people said they would look forward to coming again next year!

The overall net profit of the morning's activities was £375.15.



## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

### **Members of the COPA UK committee travelled to the Dominican Republic in May to meet COPA DR and COPA US for an international meeting.**

This was five years after the first International Meeting that had been held in 2008. The main purpose of the 7-day Meeting was to review COPA's Vision for Bombita and La Hoya which is: *"to provide educational opportunities for all children and young people from Kindergarten through to University and/or Vocational Training"*.

Our visit unquestionably highlighted the amazing impact that the COPA Schools have on the everyday lives of all their pupils in Bombita and La Hoya. Even though COPA was set up more than 20 years ago there is still a very definite need to continue COPA's invaluable support into the foreseeable future.

It was an enormous privilege to be able to visit both schools, whilst they were in session, and undertake classroom observations which showed that pupils were eager to learn, in a well disciplined environment. The "new" Bombita campus appears to be huge, and it was amazing to see all the wonderful new buildings and facilities provided and built by the Government.

During the week in the DR we had more than twenty hours of discussion and debate. Following the discussion it was agreed to:

- Empower the COPA(DR) Board with the aim of them having much greater self-governance
- Strengthen the composition of the COPA(DR) Board
- Improve communications among all three Boards.

After a week of intense discussions and debate it became clearer and clearer that there was still a great need for COPA's involvement in the DR and "Yes" – COPA is making a huge difference!

All the delegates flew home to the UK or the US with a much greater knowledge and understanding of the current situation in the DR and a much re-invigorated desire and determination to work even harder to spread the "good news about COPA".

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## EDUCATION UPDATES FROM TERESSA

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I have spent a couple of weeks in **La Hoya** in the library, essentially doing what I did in Bombita at about this time last year: mourning the dead, dressing the wounded and reorganising the troops! I hope that it will convert in a better reading experience for students next year.

We recently received the news that all of **Bombita** grade 8, shown in the photo below, passed their external exams this year. Even better news is that out of the 35 who took the exam, 30 were in the top 23% of students in the whole country with 5 of our students being in the top 7% of the country. We have also heard that 22 out of 30 grade eight students from **La Hoya** passed the exam, with 17 of those getting letters of congratulations! This is the first year the government have run this scheme and I think it's a fantastic idea!



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## COPA BARN DANCE

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Come on down to Cricklade Town Hall on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October for a lively Barn Dance! You will be guided through all the steps by the expert Caller, so don't worry about not knowing them. Doors open at 7pm. A Ploughman's Supper will be served during the interval. There will be a bar where you can purchase both alcoholic and soft drinks. Tickets available from Geoff Haslam (01793 750785) or Sandra Samways (01793 751217) from the beginning of August. The barn dance will follow the AGM at Cricklade United Church.

## SAVE THE DATE

The 2015 COPA **AGM** will be held in **Cricklade** on **Saturday 3rd October** and will be followed by a barn dance.

Traditionally we have distributed the Newsletter together with the children's letters in June but due to unforeseen circumstances it was not possible to do that this year. Therefore we are combining the summer and September issues and enclosed for sponsors are the AGM Agenda, Chairman's report and a summary of the Annual Accounts. The full Accounts will be available at the AGM and also on request

### 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 write your name and address on the reverse of the envelope. This will help the volunteers when they are delivering the letters and cards.

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