



# the calling

a worldwide christian schools® publication **Spring 2014**



## Mission Teams Done Right

*Can Short-term Missions Be Part of the Solution?*

**S**hort-term mission trips often get a bad rap from members of the mission community, sometimes for good reason. Why spend all that money to travel somewhere and do work that indigenous people can do themselves? This is a good question, and one that must be asked each time a mission team is organized. But, as with most situations, let's withhold judgment until we listen. Sometimes only God will know the whole story.

Within the last year I went to the funeral visitation of an older man I didn't know, but who had mentioned Worldwide Christian Schools in his obituary. I learned from this man's family that years earlier he, a farmer from Michigan, was part of a WWCS Worldwide Hands™ mission team that traveled to a Caribbean nation back in the 1990s. I was pleased to hear that the trip changed the man's life and gave him a better understanding of and appreciation for all of the diverse people his Savior God created. The change in him was noticeable to those around him.

Shortly after visiting with this man's family, I had the opportunity to visit the school where his team had worked. The older people from the school community

had smiles on their faces as they remembered the group from Michigan that had encouraged them as they worked, played, and talked together so long ago. It didn't surprise me to hear that a couple of these community members remain close friends with members of the Michigan team. It was obvious to me that the way the school community viewed God's world thereafter had changed for the better.

There is no doubt in my mind that some "mission teams" have done more harm than good. However, I'm also convinced that many of these trips are incredibly positive spiritual experiences for both the visitors and hosts. Based on the experience of Worldwide Christian Schools, the difference between a positive experience and a negative one seems to depend on the degree of humility present in both groups.

This issue of *The Calling* will highlight two short-term mission experiences and how God has used them. May the impact of this issue in your life reflect yet another wonderful part of the whole story. •

**Scott Vander Kooy**  
President, WWCS



## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

### Achieving Balance

*COCREF Schools On the Road to Sustainability*



**L**ong-time partner of Worldwide Christian Schools in the Dominican Republic, COCREF,

is gradually closing a perennial gap in its budget. This is excellent news for the dedicated staff and students who are part of this association of Christ-centered schools that is ministering primarily to Haitian immigrants living in *bateyes*, or sugarcane workmen's villages.

"We have been managing expenses and prioritizing the biggest needs," said Neuris Cerda, Administrative Director of COCREF and a Dominican national. "The Worldwide Hands teams that have come through WWCS help us greatly because the impact they have on the children is invaluable. When they see people from outside of

## Worldwide Hands™ Teams Reach Out



*Batey Mojarra, Dom. Republic*

**I**nside are reports from two recent Worldwide Hands teams to Latin America: one to the Dominican Republic that is investing long-term in a community through a school kitchen and health clinic, and another to Guatemala that described their trip as "pure joy". Read more about these experiences on pages 2 and 3.

*Continued on back page...*

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - MISSION TEAM REPORT

### Michigan Team Takes a Holistic Approach in Batey Mojarra

**A** Worldwide Hands team from Drenthe Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, MI traveled to the village of Batey\* Mojarra in the Dominican Republic to work at Peña de Horeb Christian School (COCREF\*\*). Hosted by Dominican national Victor Cerda, the team’s primary purpose was to build a wall around land that was purchased to expand the school.

As with most teams, building relationships was another primary goal for Drenthe. The team worked daily with local men who helped them mix concrete and set up the wall. They also formed friendships with community children who helped with smaller tasks around the job site.

The team learned of other ways they could add value within the community of Batey Mojarra by talking to the school’s director, Alejandrina Jorge.

“When we asked [Alejandrina] to tell us what her dreams were, she told us that she desired a kitchen so the children could be fed daily,” team leader Doug Walcott said. “She said that many of these children are coming from homes where their parents may not be home all week because of jobs they have in the city, so they may not get a meal until

evening. Hungry children do not learn well.”

Last year the Drenthe team built a kitchen for Jerico Christian School (COCREF) in nearby Batey Fao, which now feeds 350 students daily through a partnership with another Michigan-based organization, Mika’s Lunch. Now that the wall is built in Batey



A Worldwide Hands team from Zeeland, MI worked alongside community members in Batey Mojarra, Dominican Republic

**They are already teaching. We felt that the next step would be an opportunity to heal.**  
Doug Walcott, Drenthe, MI

Mojarra, their new goal is to do the same for Peña de Horeb Christian School on a future mission trip.

On the Sunday of their stay, host Victor Cerda took the team to his church, explaining that the congregation there attempts to do the things that Jesus did while He was here on earth – he preached,

taught and healed.

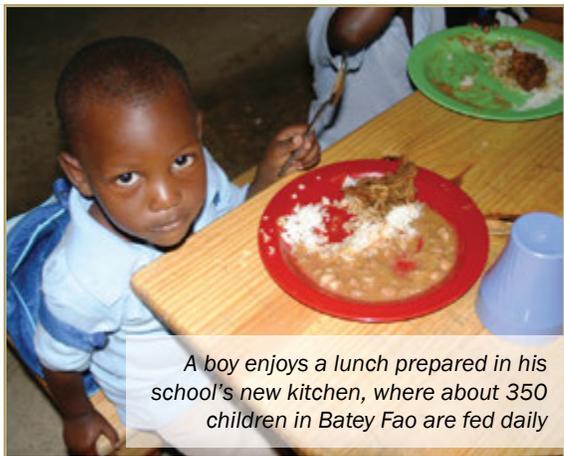
“That started us thinking about what was happening in Mojarra,” Walcott said. “They already have a church and they are already teaching [at the school]. We felt that the next step would be an opportunity to heal.”

The team had seen children with open sores and pregnant women who were not receiving prenatal care. Principal Jorge confirmed that a health clinic was greatly needed in Batey Mojarra, so the team now plans to help fund a clinic which will be built and staffed by local workers.

“Our dream is to build a clinic in both Batey Mojarra and Batey Fao, which are about five miles apart from each other,” said Walcott. “We would then hire a local doctor and assistant to split the week between the two.”

The Drenthe team believes the lasting benefit of their work trips is healthier students and families, as well as a lasting impression on every person who goes on a trip with Worldwide Hands.

“Every time I go down there, it reminds me that this world that God loves is so much bigger than my own little world in West Michigan,” Walcott said. •



A boy enjoys a lunch prepared in his school’s new kitchen, where about 350 children in Batey Fao are fed daily



Principal Alejandrina Jorge with COCREF administrative director Neuris Cerda in Batey Mojarra

\*A batey is a Dominican village for sugarcane workers and their families. Bateyes are mostly populated by Haitian immigrants.

\*\*Peña de Horeb is part of an association of Christ-centered schools in the Dominican Republic called COCREF, a partner of Worldwide Christian Schools.

## Illiana/Ohio Team Builds Desks, Finds Joy at Colegio Juan Wesley

**A** team of eleven people from Illiana, IL and Zainesville, OH joined forces on a work trip with the Worldwide Hands program to Colegio Juan Wesley, a Christ-centered school in the Western Highlands of Guatemala that serves 346 students, mostly from a Quiche (Mayan) background.

The team coordinated with the school prior to arrival so that all necessary materials were on site when they arrived, allowing them to get to work immediately. Utilizing the experience in furniture building of some members, the team built ten computer desks for 30 students, two units of 16 children's lockers and multiple storage cabinets. They also hung white boards, team-taught English classes, and completed miscellaneous projects and repairs, using local resources when possible.

"A couple of us helped a local painter spray paint the tops of the computer desks, and several members of the team also worked with a local glass supplier to glaze the exterior and interior windows of the new computer classroom," said team organizer Rich Smits.

Relationship-building was an essential benefit of the trip for the Illiana/Ohio team. They were hosted by Timoteo Chocoy Par (Timo), the school director, and his wife Marilu.

"Our team ate three lovingly prepared meals each day in the home of Timo and Marilu and their family," Smits said. "We helped with the serving and cleanup, shared time with the family and established some very strong bonds. We were made to feel at home."

On a Sunday the team drove to the town of Chuixchimal, the site of another WWCS school project with its partner EduGuate (eduguate.org), to worship with the people there.

**"It was amazingly freeing to be able to ask for a job and do it knowing that your mind was free to pray continuously."**

"We got a tour of their new school building after the service and then were treated to a great meal in one of the homes, ending the evening singing praises to God," Smits said.

The team as a whole reported that the lasting benefits of their trip were the relationships developed



Students at Colegio Juan Wesley in San Cristobal Totonicapan, Guatemala

with people of a different country, language and culture, and an appreciation for people who have a passionate desire for Christian education for both their children and others in the surrounding communities.

"Our first evening together at church was so sweet, feeling the acceptance of the people in a way our culture rarely [offers]," said one team-member. "It was amazingly freeing to be able to ask for a job and do it knowing that while doing simple things like sanding, painting and varnishing, your mind was free to pray continuously...over the children who would sit at the desks we were working on, the teachers who would write on the boards we hung. Seeing the work accomplished before we left was an amazing aspect of the trip."

Smits reflected on the trip as a time of joy - "Joy in the faces of the children and teachers...joy as we worked side by side, shared stories, ate meals together, joked and sang God's praises," he said. •



The team with Guatemalan staff and workers in a completed classroom.



**Learn more about Worldwide Hands teams** by contacting WWCS Short-term Missions Director Lori Anderson at [landerson@wwcs.org](mailto:landerson@wwcs.org). Support the work of WWCS at [wwcs.org](http://wwcs.org).





A hand-painted wall showing a map of the Dominican Republic at Nueva Creacion de Fe Christian School (COCREF)

**Achieving Balance**, continued from page 1...



Neuris Cerda with his family

their community investing their time and resources [here], the children are highly motivated to go ahead and do the same tomorrow, to overcome and give the love of Christ.”

Cerda said that with the help of teams, COCREF also receives resources to improve infrastructure and provide better education.

“The Worldwide Hands teams are very important to us. They help us show the love of Christ through their service and commitment when they visit the schools. They can see that our country is more than beautiful beaches; we have places where the

hand of God is vital.”

Now the challenge is to locate what Cerda calls “fresh funds” for COCREF to create a source of income that will help them cover expenses for more schools in the bateyes of the DR. Meanwhile, the benefits of the closing gap in the budget are already showing themselves.

“We have made an increase [in wages] for teachers and other staff from 10 to 15%. We value our teachers and principals who for years remained with COCREF despite our economic problems. They have always been faithful to the commitment [they have made] not with men, but with God.” •

**Learn more about Christ-centered schools in the Dom. Republic** by contacting Amie Spriensma at [aspriensma@wwcs.org](mailto:aspriensma@wwcs.org) or (800) 886-9000.



Dominican Republic

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“We cannot buy the lie that there are those who need and those who supply when the frightening and beautiful reality is that we desperately need one another.” - **Rachel Held Evans**, author and blogger

**Recommended reading:** “Poverty Tourism, Poverty Elitism, and Grace” at [rachelheldevans.com/blog](http://rachelheldevans.com/blog) (search the blog for the post title above)

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