

# BCMWorld

An Inside Look at BCM Global Ministries



Making a difference for Jesus Christ



# A ROYAL CELEBRATION FOR BCM PHILIPPINES

By: Lisa Biegert

On the island of Mindanao, Philippines, just below the inactive volcano Mt. Matatum amidst tropical fruit trees and pineapple fields, lies BCM's Camp Española. Over Easter weekend, April 22-25, 2014, multi-colored traditional Mindanao and Manobo clothing, children's laughter, praise music, and bright decorations turned the camp into joyous celebration as 260+ people gathered to celebrate the silver anniversary of BCM Philippines' national church association, Bible Centered Fellowship, Inc.



Keseph 25 sign

Held in conjunction with the annual conference for BCM Philippines ministry workers, the celebration was entitled: "KESEPH 25: A Kingdom Driven 25<sup>th</sup> Year" ("keseph" meaning "silver" in Hebrew). Its theme: "Gathered for Royal Celebration, Encouraged for Kingdom Mission."

Each day of the conference, attendees listened to challenges from God's Word by a variety of speakers. Traditional dance troupes in regional Filipino clothing were part of the worship time. Praise music was sung in three different Filipino languages—English, Tagalog, and Cebuano.

Bible Centered Fellowship Inc. (BCFi) is the church planting ministry of BCM Philippines. Miss Bessie Traber, the founder of BCM international, was a missionary to the Philippines when forced to return to the United States due to illness. She began what was then the Bible Club Movement in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As BCM expanded internationally, Bible clubs caught on in the Philippines. Originally, BCM Philippines consisted of only a few Bible Clubs and home Bible study groups. The three main Bible study groups developed into churches and were incorporated into what is now BCFi. Today, BCFi has planted more than a hundred churches. Sixty of these are among largely unreached tribal groups across the island of Mindanao.

The celebration constantly returned to BCFi's vision statement. Rev. Joe Dukes, BCM's Vice President, who was in attendance, says, "One aspect of the daily meetings during *KESEPH 25* was that various individuals or groups quoted the BCFi Vision & Mission Statement from memory. This included a group of children in full unison and another time one single little boy."

BCFi's vision statement is: "To see the Kingdom of God established in every community where there is BCFi ministry – thus making the local BCFi church a visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God and a catalyst towards a society where love, justice, and righteousness reign, where there is progress and prosperity (abundant living), and where peace and goodwill prevail among its people and environment; wherefore Jesus Christ is recognized as King of kings and Lord of lords."

In a land of more than 7000 islands and 98 million people, this vision can seem a daunting task. Upwards of 200,000 children live on the streets just in the city of Manila and its surrounding districts. Most BCFi churches are linked to some type of outreach to street children. As well, the BCM Philippines ministry is organized to undertake *TRU ministry*: T – Tribal; R – Rural; and U – Urban.

How does TRU translate into reality? BCM Philippines continues actively working in tribal groups considered unreached, meaning having little-to-no Gospel witness. BCM missionaries are developing outreach into rural communities and planting churches in remote locations. With the Philippines' rapidly growing population, urban ministry is vital. BCM Philippines conducts urban outreaches in such metropolitan areas as Metro Manila, Cebu, and Mindanao's own largest metropolis, General Santos City.

The *Keseph 25* celebration came at a good time for the BCM Philippines family. Recent months had been filled with immense pain, and deep-set need was felt of spiritual healing and encouragement to continue on in ministry. In September, 2013, BCFi's Chief National Overseer, Bishop Vernon de Jesus, had presided at the funeral of the 12-year-old daughter of a BCFi pastor in Metro Manila. Two weeks later, Bishop de Jesus himself unexpectedly entered into the presence of his Lord. Then, in January, 2014, the global BCM family mourned the sudden loss of Dr. Vararuchi Dalavai, BCM's Senior Executive Vice President of International Ministries. This was the first year Dr. Dalavai was not involved personally to raise funds for BCFi ministry workers to attend the annual conference. Ultimately, God did provide marvelously for more than 260 to be able to attend.



Boy reciting BCFi vision statement

BCM president Dr. Marty Windle along with VP Joe Dukes represented international BCM leadership at the celebration. Dr. Windle was keynote speaker at three of the five conference Bible sessions. On Easter Sunday, he also spoke at a joint celebration of BCFi congregations in Metro Manila, encouraging the 400+ in attendance to continue forward in the Kingdom Mission as laid out in their vision statement.

Dr. Windle also spent time meeting with the BCM and BCFi leadership, encouraging them and affirming the appointment of new BCFi leadership. They prayed over the future and made plans and decisions to further the ministry of BCM Philippines.

Rev. Joe Dukes spoke also at one of the conference sessions and at a youth worship service. He visited as well one of the Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) that BCFi churches hold to reach neighborhood children with the Gospel in April and May, which are summer vacation months in the Philippines. BCM Philippines is successfully training lay people in effective children's ministry by way of BCM's teacher training program, *In Step with the Master Teacher*. Their vision is to reach many more children across the Philippines as well as plant additional churches. ***Pray for the 100+ missionaries of the BCM Philippines ministry team, especially with the recent change-overs of leadership.***

Among the goals shared at the Keseph 25 conference is the vision to plant a church in the same locality where Miss Bessie Traber, founder of BCM International, ministered during the 1940s, an area that in all the decades since her leaving has seen little Gospel witness. A BCFi church-planting couple is already available to begin this ministry, but they are in need of financial support for the first 3-5 years with the aim that the church plant itself would by then be able to fully support a pastor. Full support for this ministry couple is \$150 monthly. ***Pray for this specific financial need.***

**To participate in the Bessie Traber church plant, a one-time donation or monthly pledge can be made**

**[HERE](#)**



Dr. Martin Windle preaching – Keseph 25



BCM Philippines VBS

# ***WOMEN REACHING WOMEN AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD***

By: Jeanette Windle with Shila Vaidhya

Kathmandu, Nepal (*BCM World*) —Why is Shila Vaidhya, BCM missionary in Nepal, so passionate about ministry to women who are hurting, down-trodden, widowed, abandoned in old age or left to raise children without shelter, food, basic life necessities? Shila shares one experience:

“I was in Dhading [a mountainous region in central Nepal] to preach the Gospel with my husband [Rev. Robbin Vaidhya, national director for BCM Nepal]. A woman with whom I shared accepted Christ as her Savior. But then she started to cry. When I asked what was wrong, she told me how every day her husband came home drunk to beat her, so badly she was forced to hide outdoors during the nighttime when he was home. As I listened to her, I felt so sad I started to pray about how I might help such helpless women find shelter.”

This abused wife was not the only woman in desperate need to cross Shila’s path. A high-altitude, landlocked country in Central Asia perhaps most famed for possessing the planet’s tallest peaks, including Mount Everest, Nepal is still dealing with the effects of a decade-long civil war between Maoist insurgencies and Nepal’s Hindu monarchy. The fighting has left thousands of widows and orphans with no means of support.

But beyond this is a deeper problem. Nepal remains a male-dominated society where women are ranked second-class citizens. Arranged and teenage marriages are still the norm, and domestic violence is so prevalent that almost 50% of Nepalese women are estimated to have been victimized by spouses, in-laws, even parents. While some protective legislation has been passed, such laws are rarely enforced. If women attempt to escape their situation, they have no place to go and few means of earning a living.

As Shila and her husband Robbin served in a BCM church planting ministry, Shila was not just encountering more and more married women enduring extreme physical abuse. Human trafficking was another major social problem with upwards of 10,000 women and girls sold each year from Nepal into prostitution or forced labor in neighboring India or the Middle East. Women or their children who contracted HIV/AIDS were driven out onto the streets. Then there were the elderly who had no families to care for them. If they were fortunate, they might find a sleeping pallet in an old age home where there was little food and squalid living conditions.



Rev. Robbin and Shila Vaidhya

Shila counts herself blessed to have come from a very different background. She was born into a Christian family, hardly typical in Nepal where Christians are only 1.4% of the population. She accepted Christ as a young girl. Well educated in a country where more than half of women are illiterate, Shila went on to attend a Bible and missions training institute. But she was decidedly not interested in a spouse involved in Christian ministry, a livelihood that promised neither financial nor social stability. Shila shares how God turned her life plans upside-down.

“When I was 20 years old, I learned in a lecture at the Bible institute about choosing our life partner. I started to pray for my partner. Then one night I had a dream. I was walking on a path that was dangerous and slippery with water from a river. Suddenly I slipped and fell into the river. I shouted for someone to save me and prayed to the Lord. Then I saw a hand. As I caught that hand, I saw a red marking on the right arm. Waking up, I asked the Lord the meaning of my dream. That same day Pastor Robbin Vaidhya visited the Bible Institute. On his right arm I saw a red birthmark exactly as in my dream. Amazed, I asked the Lord what was the meaning of this. Sometime after, Pastor Robbin proposed marriage, and I accepted.”

Robbin and Shila Vaidhya were married in 2001. A year later God gave them the gift of a son. Robbin had been serving as a BCM missionary in Nepal since 1999 and became national director of BCM Nepal in 2003. Today the BCM Nepal team includes eight full-time missionaries and five more volunteer pastors. A major focus has been church planting.

Which has not always been easy. Until 2008, Nepal was the planet’s only Hindu monarchy. Preaching any other faith was illegal, and Christians routinely faced persecution. When peace accords with Maoist rebels brought an end to the monarchy, new freedoms led to an explosion of church growth, including construction of BCM Nepal’s first permanent church sanctuary, Milestone Church on the outskirts of Kathmandu, where Robbin Vaidhya serves as senior pastor (see [From Rice Paddy to Light on a Hill, BCM World, Summer2010](#)).



Shila teaching women



Old Age Residents with BCM team

Since 2009, Shila has served as BCM Nepal’s children’s ministry coordinator. But the plight of Nepalese women has remained heavy on her heart. As the BCM Nepal churches have grown, Shila has not only developed women’s ministries within the churches, but built up a team of Christian women to serve with her in reaching other women at risk outside the church.

Such ministries have included job training programs, adult education, outreaches to old age homes, hospitals and jails, HIV/AIDS effected women and children, as well as victims of domestic violence. Although often very poor themselves, church women collect offerings, food items, and clothing to give out. Shila likes to involve the church children as well to minister to the needy and even share the Gospel.

A recent outreach to an old age home offers one small glimpse of this growing ministry to the neediest of Nepal’s women. Not far from BCM Nepal’s Milestone Church, the home gives shelter to elderly women with no family, widows, the very poor, and even some with living children unwilling to care for them.

After packing individual gift bags with fruit, groceries, and clothing items, BCM Nepal church women and children carried them to the home. The residents were especially delighted to have children distributing the gifts. Though the home’s Hindu administration would not permit open teaching of the Gospel, the visiting BCM team was permitted to pray with the women for their health and express Christ’s love for them.

Shila tells of one resident in particular. “One woman is very rich with rich children. But her children don't care for her so she was very frustrated with family. When we shared with her the love of Christ, she was very encouraged.”

Nepal holds a never-ending multitude of needy people. Bringing a gift that meets material needs opens the doors to share Christ and reach spiritual needs. The goal of the women’s ministry outreach is to visit one needy group—whether a hospital, prison, orphanage, old age home—at least once a month. On some outreaches they’ve been able to help 20 or 50, others 100, and sometimes more than 500. The biggest obstacle, Shila explains, is finances.

“We collect, then we go visit our target homes and distribute, giving the Gospel to them. We have vision to serve, but not enough funds, so if we can go just for the visit with a small gift, please pray for that.”

Nor do the new political freedoms ensure it is always safe to share the Gospel in Nepal. Hindu nationalist groups still target Christians for persecution and are working to restore Nepal to a Hindu-only country. Churches have been bombed and burned to the ground.

But more and more Nepalese are coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior. Shila shares of visiting a carpet factory, where women and even young children spend long days bent low over looms to tie the thousands of tiny knots that make up the fine Persian rugs so prized by the wealthy. End result for workers is often loss of sight, extreme arthritis, and lung ailments from breathing in dust and dyes. Shila was able to lead one family to Christ just months before the mother passed away.

**Shila shares some of the prayer requests on her heart:**

- 1) The construction of a women's professional training center.
- 2) Workers/teachers for adult education.
- 3) Funds for monthly outreach at old age homes, orphanages, hospitals, prisons, HIV/AIDS-affected women and children.

Shila concludes, “There are still so many more stories of healing, victories over Satan, changed lives, we could fill a whole book. I want to thank God He is faithful forever and ever. And to thank the BCM International ministry family worldwide. Pray for our country of Nepal.”

To donate to BCM Nepal’s women’s ministry outreach, click [HERE](#).



BCM church Children giving gifts at old age home

# Unexpected Travelers:

## When a Short-Term Missions Team Unraveled, God Made a Way



American and Brazilian English team leaders

By: Erika A. Bruckner

Recife, Brazil (*BCM World*)—Joe Dukes, VP of Personnel for BCM International, had traveled to Brazil six times. He had no immediate plans for a seventh trip. But God did.

A full team from BCM was scheduled to go to Brazil to lead a camp ministry in January, 2014. Under the leadership of Maria Gusmao, BCM missionary in Recife, Brazil, short-term mission teams serve at *Ministerio Centralizado Na Biblia* (Bible Centered Ministries) vacation camp. The ministry leads Bible Clubs, which reach thousands of Recife’s street kids and underprivileged teens, and also hosts eight weeks of camp annually designed to reach Brazilians of all ages. The BCM team was planning to minister through one of those camps, helping teach English as a second language.



Recife, Brazil

On December 1, Joe received an unexpected phone call. The entire team scheduled to leave in January was no longer able to go. Just weeks before the scheduled departure, Joe was named the team leader of a team that did not exist.

“How was this going to come together?” he wondered. “I feared it would be cancelled; yet I felt the determination from the LORD that this should move forward.”

Joe explains now, “I knew God had a purpose, and certainly He would provide.” However, at the time Joe had no idea how, or who, would be part of the solution.

Joe’s first action? Ask people to pray. He also reached out to Maria, asking the unthinkable, “What options do we have if we don’t have a team?” Both felt they should not cancel the camp.



Group shot English camp

As Joe and Maria were waiting, Maria received a phone call. A medical evangelistic trip to Brazil had been cancelled, and their team leader wondered, “Could you use any help for English camp?” Dr. Chris Scherier, the man asking the question, knew nothing about Maria’s own cancelled team and the need for new team members. But God did.

Through various means, God brought together 13 people from two different states to comprise the brand-new team to Brazil. The last was confirmed January 13, nine days before departure. God was working through this trip, and the airplanes had not yet even left the ground.

“It is completely obvious to me that the LORD brought this team together,” says Joe. “Our efforts are without merit if we do not depend on God to form what He desires and not for us to ‘manufacture’ the desired result. I could clearly see that each team member had a vital part to play. God enabled it, and He was to receive the attention and glory for what was accomplished.”

A medical doctor, nurse, physician’s assistant, restaurant owner, worship leader, former missionary kids, church evangelist and sound technician set off from January 22 to February 3, 2014 to MCB’s English Camp to teach English to Brazilians for the purpose of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Team members bunked with Brazilian campers, ranging from age 14 to 62. “I had a lot of great discussions with my roommates,” recalls Duane Miller, a team member who spent his childhood with his missionary parents in West Brazil. When the medical missions trip was cancelled, Duane and his son Korin eagerly joined the camp team to, “share the truth and the love of Jesus while helping at English Camp.” Although they primarily spoke English to reinforce learning, Duane’s Brazilian background enabled him to communicate on a deeper level in Portuguese, so topics such as the Gospel could be clearly understood.

Robert (BJ) Allen, an engineer from Campbelltown, PA, served as worship leader. He found out about the trip December 18. The following day, he committed to join the team. His daughter Kathleen, who had neither a passport nor a visa, also joined. BJ immediately purchased plane tickets and trusted God to bring in the money to cover the trip. Kathleen’s visa arrived the day before departure.



Leading worship – English Camp



Worship Time at English Camp



Good Samaritan Parable Offers English Practice

This was BJ's first mission trip, and he readily admits, "Nao fala Portugues!" Instead, he communicated through other languages – English and music. "I bonded with the musicians that were there. We played together as if we had known each other for years," he recalls. "It was amazing." BJ had the privilege of leading a young girl to the Lord. At camp that week, 10 souls professed a new faith in God.

One highlight for BJ was building relationships with team members, who have now become good friends. "I have made connections with folks in Brazil that will likely last a lifetime," he explains. "Our team gelled right away," Duane agrees, "We had one vision." Team members continue to keep in touch and recently enjoyed a "reunion" at Joe's home this spring.

The purpose of the camp was to teach English and Bible to campers, and days were filled with English lessons, Bible teaching, small group experiences and sports. The curriculum and Bible message series were developed by Joe. But more than teaching a language, the team taught love. "Jesus is real. He loves them, and he is the only way to the Father," Duane summarizes his core message for campers.

However, Brazilians were not the only ones who learned something through camp. "My faith was challenged, and I saw that God was in control of all the little details I was anxious about, from funding the trip to the safety of my son," says Duane. The sovereignty of God was apparent through the entire experience.

This team came together in mere weeks. The first time they met was on the bus to the airport. However, Joe says, "I do not think I have experienced greater love and unity in a team. Though we are all different in many ways and from different ministry or job backgrounds, there was a strong determination to serve together and set aside differences for the furtherance of the Gospel."

When from a human perspective the Brazil English camp team had unraveled, God had only just started building the team He had planned from the very beginning. No one on Earth imagined this outcome. But God did!



Sandy teaching children - Romania

## *FOOTSTEPS OF FAITH BECOMES A “FISHING POLE” FOR ROMANIA’S CHRISTIANS*

By: Lisa Biegert

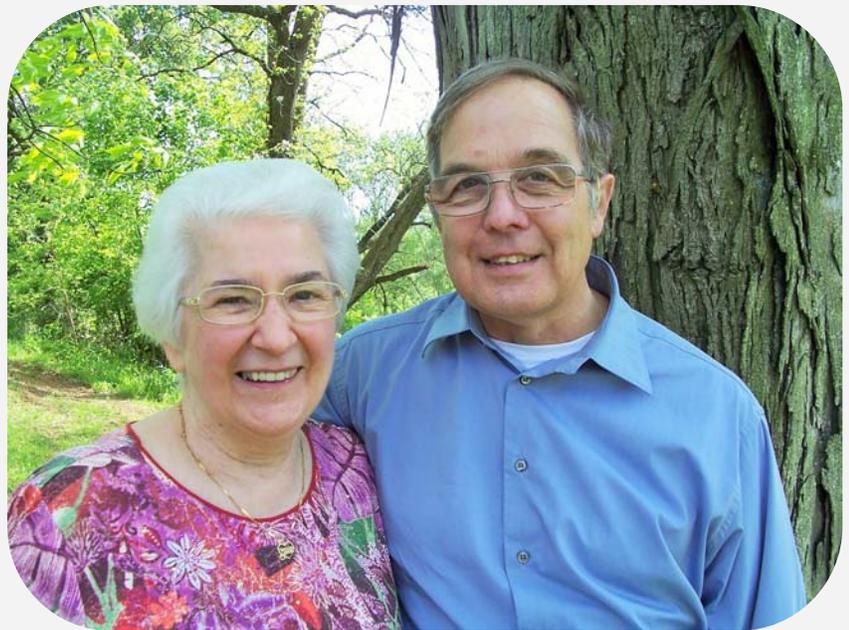
*"We have learned more from you through the years than from any other group. We are so thankful that you gave us a 'fishing pole.' Others gave us many things, but they didn't encourage us to prepare and to do things ourselves."*

*"Many missionaries have visited us through the years, but you are the only ones who have come back."*

These quotes are just a few from the feedback BCM missionaries, Bob and Sandy Barber have received in response to their ministry in the country of Romania. The Barbers made their first trip to Romania, located south of Ukraine in Eastern Europe, in 1991. By then they'd served for twenty years with BCM in Scotland.

Romania's Communist regime had fallen in 1989, permitting once again access to this small country just off the coast of the Black Sea. Romanian Christians had spent years living under oppression and persecution with minimal access to biblical instruction, training, and their needs were myriad. Bob and Sandy answered their plea for help.

Sandy recalls, "Opportunities to serve were mind-boggling. In one weekend, we conducted a two-hour adult Bible study, a three-hour youth fellowship, five hours of teacher training, two four-hour seminars for young couples, and Bob preached. On another occasion, while Bob was preaching in a three-hour church service one Sunday morning, I taught five separate Sunday School classes. In the course of one trip, we did 38 hours of teaching, had 27 meetings with individuals, another 13 meetings about translation projects, and slept in 21 different beds."



Bob & Sandy Barber

While the Barbers' primary ministry focus was reaching children and training others to do the same, Bob and Sandy found themselves filling pulpits and leading marriage seminars. Sandy explains, "Often we were asked to prepare fifteen hours or more of teaching on topics like Christian marriage, building a Christian home, bridging the generation gap within the church. Now Romania has many books on such topics, but back then there was virtually no Christian literature."

Out of all the material the Barbers introduced to Romania, the one that has had the greatest lasting impact is BCM's chronological Bible teaching curriculum Footsteps of Faith (FoF). The Barbers recount, "March 23, 1993, was a day of more significance than we could have imagined. We gave Rei, a Sunday School superintendent, four of the eight FoF teacher's volumes along with flannelgraph figures as a gift. When we visited Romania again that autumn, we stopped by to see Rei. He immediately launched into the most convincing promotional we have ever heard for FoF!! Having used the material in his church's Sunday School of 450 children, Rei was thoroughly convinced that this was what his country needed—and asked permission to begin translating it!"

Rei was serving with a ministry organization, New Hope International, that published Christian material in Romania. A translation agreement was reached, and by early 1996—just one and a half years later!—all eight volumes of FoF were ready for distribution in Romania."

Over the next years, the number of Romanian churches using Footsteps of Faith skyrocketed. Flannelgraph figures were shipped in from the United States. But by 1998, the availability of teacher's manuals in Romanian was running low, and it was no longer cost-effective to ship in flannelgraph from overseas. In 1999, the Romanian teacher's manuals were reprinted and flannelgraph figures began being printed right in Eastern Europe. By mid-2000, 6.5 tons of flannelgraph figures had been printed, every single sheet flocked by hand.



Bob preaching Romanian church



Romanian church



Publishers with Romanian FoF curriculum

Flocking (the fuzzy backing that makes cut-out figures stick to a background) is a tedious process that makes flannelgraph expensive to produce. But FoF publishers in Romania have now devised an ingenious solution that has made it much faster, therefore more affordable. Swiping an ordinary kitchen sponge over front and back of anti-glare plastic sheets allow unflocked figures to stick to the front and colored story background to the back for up to a week. The plastic sheets can be rolled and put in a poster tube when not being used or while being shipped.

With this new advance, Sandy shares, “The publisher has said that Footsteps of Faith is becoming a national curriculum. Today, nearly 50,000 Romanian children have been reached through Footsteps of Faith.”

Delia, a children’s worker from Zalau, Romania, writes, “Footsteps of Faith is a great aid in teaching the many children in our church. The extremely well organized lessons help us to teach the Bible so that they can understand it. The images keep them focused. I am very pleased to see the results of using this material.”

However, just having good curricula is only half the battle. After so many years of few resources, the Romanian church needed instruction in how to use the program. When the Barbers first traveled into Romania, they had no curriculum for training teachers. As soon as BCM’s teacher training program In Step with the Master Teacher (ISMT) became available in 2001, the Barbers worked to have it translated into Romanian. Not only did ISMT meet the need of training teachers, the Barbers were able to implement the Train the Trainer program, an advanced course to become ISMT trainers, thereby multiplying both teachers and trainers.

Sandy shares the following quotes from a few who have attended Train the Trainer seminars:

“I’ve attended other training before and left so discouraged that I did nothing about it. This training was different, though. Now I’m ready to do something!”

“We taught the entire ISMT course to 44 children’s workers in our region within a year of attending Train the Trainer.”

“We have a great group of helpers that we are planning to do ISMT training with. Most of them are the children of those you [the Barbers] originally trained for our first annual summer holiday club many years ago!”



ISMT training

In March, 2014, a special ISMT conference, Mobilize 2014, was held in the Ukraine, its purpose to prepare regional leaders to head up the Train The Trainer program in their countries. Among the new Lead Trainers were two for Romania. Daniel and his wife Camelia are excited and challenged to have the massive responsibility of training children's workers across Romania.

Bob and Sandy are quick to say their ministry in Romania has flourished because of one main strategy—relationships. Frequent visits to the country and lots of training sessions are only fruitful if relationships are maintained between the visits. Pastors, pastor's wives, and young married couples have come to trust and confide in them simply because they made themselves available. One ministry leader shared, "The Lord brought you into our lives when we were very much alone and unsure if we were going to make it in the ministry. You believed in us, and visited us regularly. I am sure there are many others like us in your lives, yet you always made us feel like we were the only ones."

Since that first trip to Romania in 1991, the Barber's ministry there has spread to impact much of Eastern Europe. The eight volume Footsteps of Faith curriculum is now available in five different Eastern European languages with over 4000 teachers in that area are using it. Upwards of 120,000 children in Eastern Europe have been taught the Word of God through FoF. The ISMT material is also now available in four Eastern European languages. Romania itself is now in charge of printing FoF flannelgraph for all Eastern Europe.

"BCM's ministry in Romania has truly been the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes," say Bob and Sandy. "It is our prayer that God will continue the wonderful work He is doing through our brothers and sisters in Romania and bless their efforts with fruit that remains to His glory."



TTT Event



TTT Group Exercise

# MULTIPLYING “BREAD AND FISHES” FOR BOLIVIA’S FLOOD VICTIMS

By: Jeanette Windle with Freddy Camacho

Cochabamba, Bolivia (*BCM World*)

—It was raining again as it had been—not for days, but months. Already flooding rivers had devastated the potato crop that was a mainstay against starvation for this high mountain community in the Bolivian Andes. The adobe houses among which the elderly grandmother picked her way were melting literally from their dirt foundations as water saturated the mud bricks of their construction.



Home destroyed by floods

The grandmother had found shelter when a terrible rumbling, grinding roar drowned out the rain. When she stepped outside, it was to find a river of mud, rock and water where a community had been, including her own home that moments before had held husband, children, and grandchildren.

This devastated village was not the only one suffering death and loss across Bolivia. The rainy season that started October, 2013, and ran through March, 2014, had already brought some of the worst flooding in Bolivian history. By January, 2014, the Bolivian government had declared a state of emergency. More than 150,000 families had been affected, along with massive loss of crops and livestock, mostly in Bolivia’s Amazonic lowlands, but thousands more across the highland Andes province of Cochabamba. International and government aid could not keep pace with need. By March, displaced survivors were combating malnutrition, dysentery from dirty drinking water, and disease from unsanitary living conditions.

BCM Bolivia missionaries Freddy and Lizet Camacho had been following the disaster on the news. Freddy and Lizet had both grown up in Cochabamba province. They’d both come to Christ as young children. After Freddy graduated from seminary, they entered ministry. Freddy served as pastor in five different churches, while Lizet was involved in children’s ministry. One-third of Bolivia’s population is under the age of fifteen, a majority living in severe poverty. The Camachos saw the urgency of reaching this future generation with the Gospel. They were among the first to attend BCM children’s ministry training seminars held in the provincial capital, the city of Cochabamba, and almost a decade ago were among the first group to be commissioned as BCM Bolivia missionaries.

Today Freddy continues in pastoral ministries. As well, the Camachos are involved in Bible club ministry, teaching Bible classes in schools, evangelism outreach to communities, and children's ministry leadership training. Six daughters and a son ranging from 3-16 years in age keep them busy at home. Already the three oldest daughters are involved as volunteers in the Bible club ministry.

Since the floods started, the Camacho family had participated in church clothing and food drives for flood victims. Freddy and Lizet longed to do more, but the very scope of the disaster was far beyond their resources. Then Freddy received a request from a member of a prior church he'd pastored to visit relatives in Valle Alto, or "high valley", where landslides had buried a dozen homes and floods had swept away crops and belongings. Driving up the narrow, rutted dirt track to the chilly mountain valley of Arani, Freddy found Sister Dalsi and her family among the survivors, their home still standing. But he also witnessed destroyed homes and survivors living in donated relief tents with neither food nor warm clothing against such freezing temperatures.



Freddy and Lizeth Camacho with Flood Victims

Among the affected were a grandmother who'd survived the mudslide that swept away her home along with husband, children and grandchildren because she'd been in a different house at the time. A single mother who supported her children raising pigs had lost her small herd to the flood. A family of seven orphans who'd lost both parents were in desperate need of food and clothing.

Here was a need the Camachos could do something about. Returning to Cochabamba, Freddy shared the need with the church he pastored, Nueva Sinai (New Sinai). The church immediately began collecting bags of clothing and food staples. Two days later, on February 22, 2014, a team of volunteers, including the Camacho children, Freddy's sister Lidia Chavez, also a BCM missionary, and South Korean missionary Helen Kim, loaded up vehicles to return to Arani.

Freddy had asked Sister Dalsi to gather those families most needing supplies within the mud-brick perimeter walls of her own patio. The team was passing out food and clothing when Freddy's oldest daughter Helen hurried up agitatedly. Others in this poor community had heard about the giveaway, and a large crowd was heading towards the house.

Concerned a riot would break out, the team quickly closed and barricaded the patio gate. Then Freddy emerged to explain the situation. If the arriving crowd would be patient, any remaining clothing and supplies would be distributed. Meanwhile all were invited for a special program and refreshments the team had prepared.

The crowd settled in peaceably for a time of lively music and a Bible lesson. At the end, the team pulled out all remaining bags of clothing and food supplies from the vehicles. To their surprise, far more remained than they'd expected. As Jesus once multiplied a boy's lunch of bread and fish to feed a multitude, so there proved to be enough for the entire crowd to receive some help.



Sharing Gospel with flood victims

But one eight-year-old boy dissolved into tears because there were no shoes the right size for his bare feet. Freddy's sister, BCM missionary Lidia Chavez, reassured the little boy they'd be back. Once home, the team shared the day's happenings and photos with the church. Immediately the church began gathering more supplies. One man, who'd recently come to Christ, called to donate an entire bushel of sugar.



Survivor crowd gathering at schoolhouse

The next Saturday, the team returned to Arani. This time Freddy had asked Sister Dalsi to have the crowd gather at the community schoolhouse, whose brick construction was not affected by the floods. Again the team shared a program of music and Bible teaching, then distributed what they'd gathered, including a properly-sized pair of shoes for the eight-year-old boy. Enough supplies had been gathered that the team was able to distribute the surplus in a second community also affected by the floods.

Back in Cochabamba, Freddy was approached about another community in even greater need than the first two. Over 250 kilometers away, Morochata had been devastated by a mud slide. Because it was so far into the mountains with no reliable roads, they'd received minimal aid and were in desperate need of bedding, coats, dishes, as well as food. But by now church members had already given to their limit. Freddy agreed to come, but was concerned they'd have nothing to take.

The Camachos began to pray, and the miracle began to happen. First, an elderly candy vender brought from her scant proceeds 5 bolivianos (\$.75US) for the people of Morochata. Then a nursing student offered \$20. Over the next two weeks, another woman brought by 100Bs and a church family donated 200Bs. Then a Christian friend in Spain heard of the need and sent a gift to buy food supplies, pots, pans, dishes. Church members dug into their wardrobes for more clothing.

And so the survivors of Morochata gathered in astonished joy as the vehicle filled with supplies jolted into their community. Freddy shares, "They were so grateful that we felt the pain they were feeling at the loss of their loved ones."

Freddy remembers one little girl in particular insisting on an adult-sized coat. When Freddy questioned her, she announced happily that it was for her mother. "I am astounded with these children, that they will think more about the needs of their parents than their own."

For the Camachos themselves, these outreach trips have been a leap of faith, even the cost of vehicle fuel a sacrifice. "I've worried the gas would run out, and we would be stranded," Freddy admits. "But God has always sustained us and provided. Psalms 37:25 says, 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.' God has placed these needs on Lizet and my hearts, and whether few or much help comes in, we feel the urgency to carry the message of salvation to people in need. This is what motivates us to carry out these trips. We prayed. We saw the need. We went."

Donations to BCM Bolivia's Disaster Relief Fund can be made [HERE](#).



Distributing dishes to flood victims



## CUBA: WIDE HORIZONS IN THE PEARL OF THE CARRIBBEAN

By: Marion Odicio

Cuba (BCM World) —Cuba has been lovingly term the “Pearl of the Caribbean”. Now I know why!

I’d never been to this often forgotten—and certainly surprising—country in the northwestern part of the Caribbean. But Latin America has always had a special place in my heart. Although born and raised in the Netherlands, I’ve served in Peru as a missionary under BCM International with my (Peruvian) husband Carlos Odicio since 1994. Since receiving training in BCM’s teacher training course, In Step With



Cuba’s Colonial Heritage

The Master Teacher in 2004, I’ve known God wanted me to make this great tool for training children’s ministry leaders available throughout the Spanish speaking world.

After teaching ISMT in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Aruba, Brazil, facilitating training in Ecuador, and training Hispanic churches in the USA, I was thrilled when doors opened in March, 2014, to conduct an ISMT training for ten days in Cuba. By then, our family had moved from Peru to the USA to begin a new ministry under BCM: Latino Ministries. So an added joy was team-teaching with my oldest son, Jonatan, (now Director for BCM Peru) and Francisco Barnuevo (BCM Peru).

Getting to Cuba wasn’t easy—even though I have a European passport—at least not from the United States. Although Cuba is only a forty-five minute flight away from Miami, the U.S. government embargo of Cuba permits no direct air travel there. So I booked the only reasonable connection I could find through the Dominican Republic . After one missed flight and delays, I arrived safely, meeting up with Jonatan and Francisco.

The reason for our trip was to train Sunday School teachers and children's ministry leaders in the Cuban province of Holguin. We had met the pastor of our host church when he and his wife attended a conference hosted by BCM in Lima, Peru, almost three years ago. But we had no real idea of what to expect—not about Cuba, neither about the church.

The host church is in a much polluted area in the nickel mine region at the far eastern side of Cuba, near the crocodile's neck. (If you never noticed that Cuba has the shape of a crocodile- neither had we, but it's what Cuban children learn about their country!) On Sunday we found the church bursting out of its seams with 1200 people in attendance. Sunday School easily counted 250+ children.

On Monday morning, we loaded into a truck converted for people transport to travel to a camp some thirty miles further inland. Though bumpy, it was a beautiful trip through lush forests, around high mountains, through coconut plantations, and along an unspoiled shoreline with white sandy beaches. Approximately forty people attended training, representing nine area churches.

We conducted training sessions all morning, all afternoon, and also two hours or more in the evening. That is a lot of information! Yet, we never saw the trainees sleepy, bored, or weary.

Like sponges, they drank in the teaching and didn't want us to stop. We ran 17 of ISMT's 22 sessions, a four-session training course on evangelism called Sharing Christ with Kids, and a puppetry workshop. After the week of ISMT training, four teachers, including the children's pastor of our host church, remained for two more days of specialized training that would enable them to teach ISMT themselves in other churches throughout the country. We left them with an action plan in place and materials to get started. Two USA churches had collected a lot of teachers' supplies for the participants, and these were much appreciated as such supplies are hard to come by in Cuba.



Thank You USA for Sending Supplies



Children's Activity—Send Me Map

On Sunday morning, our host church asked us to minister to their children. While Francisco preached to the adult congregation, Jonatan and I were privileged to teach the children about missions. The children were delighted to each receive two brightly-colored foam stickers representing various countries around the world—one of a flag, another of a child wearing that country's national costume. At the end of the program, we encouraged the children to respond by placing one of their two stickers on a world map if they were willing to say to God: "Here am I, send me." The end result? A world full of flags and children! We were amazed and humbled to see their sacrificial response in giving up one of their oh-so-precious stickers to give back to God!

We learned a lot about the Cuban reality of life. Education is excellent and free, so people are highly educated. It is common to meet people with a masters or even doctorate degree. However, even a medical doctor in Cuba lives on a mere \$40.00 a month. The government provides a ration of rice, black beans, oil, sugar and coffee per month, and just one piece of bread per person per day. Milk is only provided for children up to seven years old. Occasionally, there's some chicken, pork or lamb. The staple is a mixture of rice and beans called *congrís* with tomato salad and fried sweet potatoes, or plantains. We ate this twice daily for ten days, but it was delicious, and we never got bored of it.

Without material distractions, the Cuban believers we met had one passion and one goal in life: to live a life that honors Christ and to make Him known to the world. For now, that world is still very much confined to the island of Cuba. However, God's people in Cuba are proactively and intentionally preparing to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth—"when the horizon widens".

Meanwhile we found the Cuban believers to be very audacious in their faith and consecrated in their lifestyle. I was dealing with some necessary paperwork when a clerk noticed that my passport holds a religious worker's visa for the United States. She asked me what my religion is. I told her I am an evangelical Christian and that I know Jesus Christ as my Savior. Much to my surprise, she took off her glasses and started to cry. Between quiet sobs she confessed that she, too, is a believer. Opening the bottom drawer of her desk, she reached down underneath other things and took out a small Bible. It was hidden lest it be discovered and cause her to lose her job.

She was fortunate to even have a Bible. Only 25% of the 250+ children we ministered to on Sunday morning own a Bible. Some of the teachers who were in the training do not have a Bible. Beautiful Cuba and the believers there left me deeply impressed, with a stronger understanding of what it means to be fully committed to the cause of Christ, to sacrifice for the privilege of partaking in His suffering, to serve Him no matter how high the cost.

God's Church is alive and vibrant in Cuba, and desiring to be a blessing to others. Although they lack resources—Bibles, Christian books, teaching aids, Bible lessons, apart from so many stuff we take for granted—they refuse to let this keep them from being a missionary sending nation. In their poverty, believers have learned to tithe, to give for missions, and to share with those who have even less. They minister to orphans, to inmates, to children with cancer, to children with Down syndrome, in rural areas and to students. Cuba is not just sowing the Gospel seed, but harvesting its own harvest and preparing one day to be a sower of the seed of the Gospel in other fields.

Let's not forget our Cuban brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's pray for their pastors, that they may remain bold in their preaching and in their convictions. And let's help them to be and to do what God called them to be and to do in this time—and in the time that is waiting “when the “horizon widens””.



ISMT Training Cuba



New clothes for flood victims in Cochabamba, Brazil. (See story within)

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