

# SIFAT Journal



Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

Winter/Spring 2014

## Meeting SIFAT for the First Time

Ashley Goad

Director of Global Ministries, Shreveport FUMC

I came to First United Methodist Church in Shreveport a little more than six months ago. When I interviewed, our senior pastor told me that he wanted a mission partnership on every continent, and it was my job to find the appropriate missionaries and organizations with which to work. Not a daunting task at all! The church had only worked in Haiti, and the mission committee showed interest in just two other countries – Ecuador and Uganda. I called the leaders of Operation Ecuador, a medical mission with whom several of our members had worked, and they quickly told me they had all of the help they could manage. They did mention another organization, called SIFAT, but did not know much about them. I picked up the UMVIM booklet and flipped through to Ecuador. Sure enough, there was SIFAT, the same mission organization mentioned, and not only did they work in Ecuador, but they also had connections in Uganda! God may be up to something here...

The first phone call to Peggy Walker gave me the widest smile and warmest heart. Could she be a better representation of SIFAT with her warmth, hospitality and ability to put the team leader at ease? Within 20 minutes, I had booked trips to Ecuador and Uganda to see firsthand what a difference SIFAT is making.

I have witnessed many missionaries knocking on doors to preach the Gospel to people they have never met and to whom they have no connection. I have seen missions work in a village bringing what they think the people need without ever meeting with a single community leader or member to see what they

want. I have observed mission organizations work tirelessly in a community, only to look back after several years and see the monumental dependency they have created. SIFAT, however, is on the opposite end of the spectrum. It only took me one taxi ride with Tom Corson to realize God had brought into our lives amazing people with a specific calling to serve God in practical ways.



Through our journeys to Ecuador and Uganda, I met two men I will never forget – Dr. Roberto Contreras and William Nsubuga. Dr. Roberto met us at the airport in Quito, along with Peggy and Tom. His aura oozes peace and reverence. He is mild-mannered and quiet, yet as he walks into a church or building project, leaders run to him to welcome him with open arms. Immediately we noticed how well-respected he is amongst his colleagues, and it is clear to see how much he has personally invested into the communities in which SIFAT serves. The working relationship Dr. Roberto has with all of the pastors and leaders is awe-inspiring. And then, we heard his story, how Christ is working in his life. My heart was melted, and from that point on, I knew this was a place God was calling First United Methodist Church. SIFAT is actively making a difference in the lives of thousands by investing in the pastors and leaders, who are already working to enrich the lives of their community members. Yes, there are construction projects. Yes, there are medical clinics. But the relationship building, the project management, the community involvement, and the leadership training is where Dr. Roberto Contreras and SIFAT are excelling.

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# Winter/Spring 2014

## 2014 International Teams

### Ecuador

Feb. 15 – 21	Montgomery FUMC (Medical)
Mar. 7 – 15	Auburn University School of Nursing (Medical)
Mar. 7 – 15	Auburn University McWhorter School of Building Science
May 3 – 11	Clear Lake UMC, Houston, Texas
May 10 – 17	University of Southern Mississippi Wesley Foundation
May 24 – 31	Montgomery FUMC
May 24 – 31	St. Luke's UMC, Tupelo, Miss.
May 30 – June 7	Guntersville FUMC (Medical)
June 7 – 14	University of Tennessee (Dental)
June 14 – 21	Aldersgate UMC, Montgomery
June 21 – 28	St. Luke's UMC, Pensacola, Fla.
June 21 – 29	Tallassee UMC
June 28 – July 6	Aldersgate UMC, Huntsville
July 5 – 12	Friendship Community Church, Nashville, Tenn.
July 12 – 19	Wilmer UMC
July 19 – 26	Alexander City Methodist Church
July 26 – Aug. 2	Calera UMC
Oct. 25 - Nov. 2	CenterPointe Community Church (Medical), Palm Bay, Fla.
Nov. 22 – 29	Shreveport FUMC, Shreveport, La.

### Bolivia

July 11 – 20	Auburn UMC
July 21 – 31	Temple UMC, Temple, Texas
Aug. 1 – 11	Auburn University Student Engineering in Bolivia
Sept. 4 – 14	Covenant Life Ministries, Alexandria
Sept. 18-28	Mt. Bethel UMC Men, Marietta, Ga.

### Uganda

May 30 – June 9	Western Heights Baptist Church, LaGrange, Ga.
June 13 – 25	Shreveport FUMC, Shreveport, La.

### Meeting SIFAT

*(Continued from page 1)*

Our mission committee did not think it could possibly get any better than Ecuador. Then we went to Uganda. SIFAT graduate William Nsubuga greeted us, and within ten minutes of sitting down at the dinner table, we knew our lives would never be the same. William exudes faith in God. The love of Jesus is ever-present in his countenance, with his words, and through his actions. As I sat beside him, I simply prayed God would let some of William's faith and hope rub off him and onto me. I truly felt as though I was sitting in the presence of God's most faithful disciple.

William took us to Agape Christian Academy... We entered the gate and were immediately surrounded by the 45 children living at the orphanage. Each child hugged us, and it was not just a small pat on the back; this was serious, face in the neck, wiggle back and forth, hugging ... 45 times over. The children called me "mom", as they were so thankful we had come to visit, and before we left, they each gave us a handwritten note to read on the plane ride home. The worshipping, the song singing, the hand holding, the lunch bowl sharing, the dancing and the abundant love ... these are all things I will surely never forget.

I will never be the same after meeting Dr. Roberto Contreras and William Nsubuga, and I will forever be thankful for how God opened the doors and paved our path to work with SIFAT. Now I cannot wait to take members of our church to meet these men and serve God in practical ways. I wish it were tomorrow!

### Shreveport FUMC Missions Videos

Dr. Roberto's testimony: <https://vimeo.com/album/2706777/video/82114873>

All Ecuador videos: <https://vimeo.com/album/2706777>

Agape Visit: <https://vimeo.com/album/2706781/video/84656923> (William's testimony coming soon)



## Micro Irrigation Systems Bring Food Security

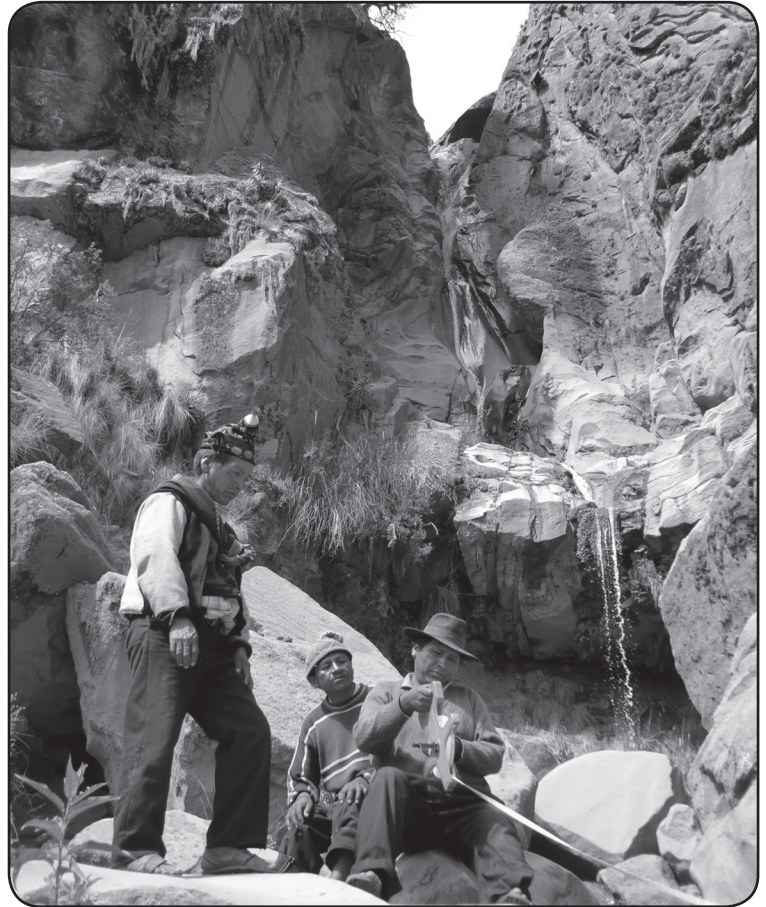
Ivan Roman  
Latin America Project Coordinator

One cold January morning a few weeks ago, I sluggishly walked into my office trying to shake off my desire to go back home to continue hibernating until the warmth of spring would wake me. But reality struck me as I turned on my computer. I received a Skype call from Isaac Paredes in the CENATEC office in La Paz, Bolivia. Casimiro Ojeda and his sons joined Isaac; Casimiro is a local leader and president of the community farm association in Llustakala, Quesimpuco.

After the usual heartfelt greetings, I asked him about progress on their micro irrigation system. As he shared the report, his face lit up—his smile warmed my soul and my wish of an early spring came to be. For the first time in more than a decade, the Llustakala terraces and fields will bloom with much needed crops full of life giving nutritious elements, providing a better diet to grow, fight diseases and be empowered. With better nutrition, children will grow to the fullest of their genetic potential, fight disease and prepare their minds to absorb knowledge that will mark the path to an abundant life.

In 2010, our Auburn University Student Engineering in Bolivia team began working with the Llustakala Association. This partnership's success has inspired three other neighborhood organizations to replicate the technology in their fields and terraces below Quesimpuco. The Tacana neighborhood system has been adopted by Temple UMC in Texas as their project. They will visit and work with the community this summer. Two other neighborhoods – Iputi and Waska-waska – need support for their tanks and systems. These communities are organized and committed to working on their own projects, but we need to believe with them the Lord will supply all their needs according to His riches in glory.

Join us to feed the hungry and heal the sick, not just for one time, but for a lifetime. This sustainable project will make a difference in the people of Quesimpuco and the surrounding communities, especially the children. We need pipes and construction materials for the reservoir tanks. If you, your church or organization would like to contribute to the project or sponsor a neighborhood, please contact me at [romani@sifat.org](mailto:romani@sifat.org). Let us celebrate this spring with our friends in Quesimpuco with the promise of a plentiful harvest!



*Above: Community members meet at the water source to measure for their micro irrigation system. SIFAT teams helped begin these systems by teaching locals appropriate technologies that would provide water for crops.*

*Below: One farmer stands amidst his first crops. These grew because of having a micro irrigation system. This is the first time in many years that farmers can grow crops in this area - possibly up to three per year, giving food security to the community.*







# Winter/Spring 2014

## Meeting Sonya, an Important Reminder to Me

Peggy Walker  
International Team Coordinator

There are no chairs in this humble dwelling, so we all sit on Sonya's bed. As I look up at the sky through the holes in the tin roof above the bed, I think about how miserable it must be for her family to try to sleep when the cold rain pours in, and I am once again profoundly thankful for the unmerited blessings God has bestowed upon me and the others on our team.

Sonya, an Ecuadorian mother of eight children, is very ill and cannot work. The older children bring in some income, but it is barely enough to sustain the family and pay rent on this tiny home. However, we feel the pride and hear the hope in her voice as she tells us that all her children are in school now. Five attend the Compassion-sponsored program at Dulce Refugio, which could not exist except for the efforts of SIFAT teams that worked for two years to build a facility onto the church in Villaflora where Pastor Rafael and his wife, SIFAT graduate Anita, work tirelessly to help provide a better life for the children and families in their community.

What perfect timing! Sonya's words of gratitude were exactly what I needed to hear. Caught up in the long hours of work, the many obstacles we are facing this year, and the day-to-day logistics of organizing teams to serve on our overseas projects, I



*On a recent trip to Ecuador, international team coordinator Peggy Walker (center) and SIFAT graduate Anita (far right) visited several families' homes whose children attend Dulce Refugio.*

sometimes lose sight of why I am here. I forget what a difference those who serve on our SIFAT teams can make in the lives of so many around the world.

Yes, we build the buildings, teach VBS and provide medical care to hundreds. But in the end, it is that caring we show, that ministry of presence of which SIFAT co-founder Sarah Corson so passionately speaks...it is sharing ourselves with these beautiful people who might otherwise never know what it means to feel God's love. It is not just words...SIFAT teams really do share God's love in practical ways, and the impact we make is huge.

## Planting the Fields in Zambia

Letson Kachoronga  
Zambia Project Coordinator

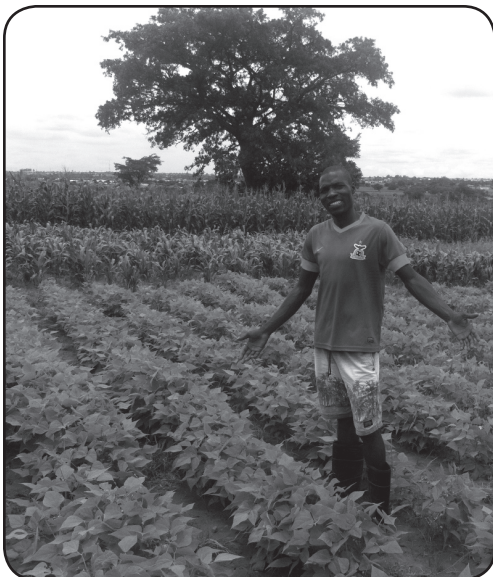
This season, we have planted several crops, including corn, sunflowers, soybean, sugar beans, cassava, pumpkins, peanuts, sorghum and pigeon peas. Corn is the main crop in the southern part of Africa. Sorghum, a small grain crop, can be grown as a cash crop or for consumption. It is a very good crop because it can be kept for up to 40 years without being affected by pests.

We are expecting a bumper harvest this year, since we had a great rainy season. We are conducting trials on corn and soybean

using different fertilizers – termite soil, cow dung and inorganic fertilizer – versus no fertilizer.

I am continuing holding periodic workshops for the local community, as well as daily training with the four men who work with me. The local people are more interested now, because they see how many more tons we produce at the SIFAT Training Center. In August, we will hold a training for YWAM.

*To support Letson, his agricultural training and finishing our training center buildings, please designate your gift Zambia Project.*



## Being Flexible: A Return to Villaflores

Peggy Walker  
International Team Coordinator

Flexibility. How often we hear that word as our mantra with short-term teams. In Ecuador this year, we have put that concept into action! Our original plans to work in Aida Leon to build a facility for 400 children, which we shared in our Fall 2013 Journal, were completely thwarted when the president of Ecuador decided to build his “bunker” on the land the church had permitted for its new cafeteria and classrooms.

Fortunately, the after-school program in Villaflores desperately needs to expand and complete the third floor to have room for about 200 children on its waiting list. We have 14 teams who will work on construction and VBS there, and 5 medical teams will provide health care in Villaflores and the other communities around Quito in which we work. We need at least three more teams to finish this project in 2014.

Aida Leon still needs a facility, and we pray that teams will be able to serve there in 2015. President Correa may have to place his bunker in a different direction because of the topography of the land. We continue to “wait and see” before making definite plans.

Please help us prepare for this project. We need at least 20 teams in 2015. Consider organizing a short-term team with members from your church or community. Ecuador is SIFAT’s Missions 101. It is a trip in which all ages and family groups can participate, be of great service to incredibly warm, loving and appreciative people and have a wonderful experience doing God’s work.



*Medical teams provide much needed health care for both children and adults who are involved in SIFAT graduates’ projects and from their communities in the Quito area. This year, five medical teams will visit different sites with women’s health care, dental, vision and general clinics being set up in churches and community centers. Many university students have the opportunity to use their skills in interesting settings.*



*Team members meet friends who change their lives! SIFAT emphasizes a ministry of presence – remembering why we are serving a community, not just focusing on completing a building or seeing a specific number of patients. SIFAT’s international team motto is short-term teams for long-term development. Being an encouragement and sharing hope to SIFAT graduates and their communities often have more impact than we realize.*



## AHMEN-SIFAT Initiative Seeing Progress in Honduras

Michael Franklin  
AHMEN Community Development

*Editor's Note: Three years ago, SIFAT and AHMEN began a partnership to train community leaders in Honduras with whom AHMEN had been working for more than a decade. SIFAT trainer Dr. Byron Morales began a three-year training session with a group of about 50 leaders. He has since started two more groups for a total of approximately 150 leaders receiving training. As our initial commitment ends and we evaluate additional funding, AHMEN is sharing wonderful stories about the positive impact they are seeing in their projects.*

Warm, stale air sat undisturbed within the empty church. Dozens of blue plastic chairs filled the space from the rear forward as pew benches often do in churches at home. A light dust, stirred up by adjacent traffic, carpeted the room. It was another day inside Cruzadas de Evangelico in the La Ceiba city dump community of Los Laureles. It was just another day that this church's walls had seen a million times, but the women inside were anything but stagnant. They were changing.

After 15 years of hearing stories about children scavenging food from trash trucks and never bringing our teams inside to see what God wanted us to do, a division within AHMEN spearheaded by Dr. Ezekiel Nichols founded a jewelry school in Los Laureles in 2012. God sent a volunteer jewelry teacher whom we began supplying with large amounts of donated supplies, so that she could kickstart "Dr. Zeke's" dream. Success followed, but only alongside its companion, dependency.

As a result, AHMEN's "Negocios con Amigos" (Business with Friends) team traveled to Honduras in March to begin transitioning the school from a model where all the supplies (beads, wire, etc.) were donated free of charge to one in which its students begin to learn how to use recycled and repurposed materials to supply 75 percent of the needed materials. Our team knew not to expect instant results. We merely aimed to build relationships and introduce supplemental concepts other sustainable jewelry businesses employ in the developing world.

Transitioning relief into development is, of course, tricky to even the experts among us, and we anticipated challenges. So as my co-team leader, FDIC bank examiner David Hutzal, and I led the group from the tiny room doubling as jewelry school and church



feeding kitchen into the church itself, we knew we had to be on target. We began our team's three-day seminar by separating nine mothers into three small groups to list positive and negative aspects of their school. After about 10 minutes, we began to review the results. Members of Negocios con Amigos served as group scribes and complained of having to "drag answers out of the jewelry students." We expected curveballs. As we reviewed the results, however, I never expected to receive such insightful answers

	Positive	Negative
Group 1:	Making good products	No consistent supply of materials
Group 2:	Selling more recently	Trouble getting to customers
Group 3:	Attended their first ASI workshop with SIFAT's Byron Morales	Unity improving, but still needs work

Yes, the women of the Los Laureles jewelry school known as "Las Mujeres Bisuterias de Dios" (Beading Women of God) are attending the quarterly community development workshops AHMEN and SIFAT have put into place in Jutiapa, Atlántida, Honduras. When asked why she enjoyed her first ASI (AHMEN-SIFAT Initiative) workshop, Yulian Barahona commented that she loves the access to education. She continued, "It makes me

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## Agape Orphanage, Farm & Dorm

Prayers have been answered! New and exciting opportunities for self-sustainability have recently opened for our Agape orphanage and Christian school. These opportunities come at a price, however, so we need your help to make them a reality.

**The Farm.** A generous donor gave \$150,000 to purchase a 3.5-acre farm that adjoins Agape. This property includes a home, chicken houses that can accommodate 1500 birds, an eight-stall pigsty for sows and piglets, a grazing area and a garden spot with fruit trees.

**Why buy a farm?** As Agape strives to become self-sustainable, a farm provides eggs, meat and produce for the children and staff to eat, and surplus crops provide an additional source of income. With 500 chickens currently on the property, the children are excited about selling 450 eggs daily while they learn valuable farming skills. The home can be remodeled for missionaries and teachers who want to visit Agape for extended periods. By adding electricity, an indoor bathroom and a kitchenette, this house can provide a safe "home away from home."

### Honduras

*(Continued from page 6)*

happy learning how to make a difference in my community on behalf of our country and to motivate others to do the same."

Every time I have returned to Honduras during the last two years to work with Las Mujeres Bisuteras de Dios, I have seen a positive change in the group. The process



SIFAT alumni and team members taught agriculture classes at ACA last year. The students enjoyed planting sack gardens and small beds on the Agape property. Having a farm next door will be useful for both classes and food production, while providing the children a useful life skill.

**The Boys' Dorm – An Immediate Need!** A boys' dorm must be built this year, as we shared in the last issue of the SIFAT Journal, for Agape Christian Academy to meet government accreditation. Not only are the number of boys outgrowing the classroom they are using for a dorm, but that temporary housing is too close to the science lab to meet government codes. Without a proper dormitory, ACA will not be allowed to operate as a boarding school. Parents who consider sending their children to ACA have concerns about students living next to the chemicals and gas in the lab. Agape has the land and is ready to build a dormitory, but needs funds for construction materials.

**Will you help NOW?** We must raise \$100,000 to build the boys' dorm and to upgrade the farm to make it fully operational.

The success of Agape is reflected in Milly and Elvis, the two Agape children who were given the opportunity to study at Lafayette Christian School in LaGrange, Ga., this school year. Even though their academic background consisted only of classes taken at ACA, they constantly earned top grades in their college prep classes at LCS, while making lasting friendships and participating in extracurricular activities. What a testament to SIFAT graduate William Nsubuga's leadership at Agape and love for the children living there!

Please give generously to help SIFAT ensure that Agape continues on the path to self-sustainability and can provide a safe home, family and education for these precious children. Please designate your gift *Agape Farm & Dorm*.

of transformation has already taken hold of these women. Now that they are attending ASI-Jutiapa, this process will only flow that much more smoothly.

*To learn more about AHMEN and its work in Honduras, visit [www.honduranmissions.com](http://www.honduranmissions.com).*

*To follow updates from Michael, visit [www.michaelsmissionsmusings.blogspot.com](http://www.michaelsmissionsmusings.blogspot.com).*

### SIFAT Mission Teams [www.sifat.org/international-missions](http://www.sifat.org/international-missions)

Some 2014 teams still need members, while 2015 teams are already scheduling dates. Don't miss opportunities to serve alongside SIFAT graduates in Bolivia, Ecuador, Uganda or Zambia!



## 48: A Slum Experience

Abbye Clevenger  
Learn & Serve Program Intern

*Learn & Serve's fifth annual "48: A Slum Experience" was held MLK, Jr. weekend – January 18-20, 2014. This annual retreat gives students and leaders an opportunity to experience the life of nearly one billion of those that live around the world in an urban slum setting. For 48 hours, participants live in SIFAT's simulated urban slum and are challenged to interact with characters played by staff and volunteers to meet their basic needs of food, water and shelter. After the experience, a challenge is issued: reflect on what their new connection with the developing world means for them.*

Abuja, the gleaming capital city of Nigeria, is filled with neatly landscaped roads and extravagant buildings. Its wealth, however, is matched by its poverty. The creation of the capital city of Abuja in the 1980s displaced many people from the area, as well as created an attraction for newcomers. The majority of the new citizens cannot afford the expensive housing, so urban slums have sprung up to house these families. This was the setting for our fifth annual 48: *A Slum Experience*.

Daki Biu, a slum on the outskirts of Abuja, was a challenging place to represent here in rural Alabama, but it proved to be a valuable experience. On Saturday, Jan. 18, 75 youth and adults from Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Georgia and Florida entered their new "home" of Abuja. During the event, youth and their leaders lived as citizens of this urban area to experience firsthand the material poverty in slums like Daki Biu, working hard to provide food, water and shelter for their family groups.

It was in these families that students were able to engage with the struggles of life in urban slums. At the end of 48, participants were asked to consider how the experience made them feel. Todd Sanders, youth pastor of The Pointe in Mississippi, has brought his students to 48 for the past 5 years and was prepared for the physical challenge that 48 had always given him. Todd shared, "This year, 48 brought challenges that were a mix of the

spiritual and intellectual, as well as the emotional. I had not had this mixture before."

In Nigeria, the population is divided into two groups: the north population being primarily Muslim and the south, Christian. Because Abuja is in the center of the country, there is a good mixture of both religions living in Daki Biu. During the simulation, participants were allowed affordable housing and protection if they would only bow down to and confess Allah as the one true god. Even though they knew this was part of an imagined situation, during the 48 hours they were hungry and needed a place to sleep. It really helped participants realize how many people in our world have to suffer to follow Christ and can potentially lose their food or home.



"This 48 was one of the best," Todd remarked, "It was a simulation, yes. Yet we were simulating the experience in such a way as to ponder: 'What if this was real?' It was challenging us to the very core of who we are and what we believe. Why do we believe what we believe? How far are we willing for our belief/faith to take us, even if it means we will starve or we will be without?"

"We can't convince you that you are in Africa," Addison Shock, L&S program director, said. "You know that you are in the middle of Alabama. But I can tell you the things that you felt this weekend, even if for just a minute, are felt everyday by the one billion people living in urban slums across the world. Now that you have this glimpse, what are you doing about it?"

That is the question with which we left students. Hoping that these thoughts and feelings spark change within them, leading to change in our world. We are thankful for all of our staff, volunteers, students and chaperones. For every participant that accepted the challenge presented in Daki Biu, you made this 48 a never to be forgotten experience!

*For more information about L&S programming, visit [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve) or e-mail [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org).*



## Why I Decided to be an L&S Program Intern

Courtney Holcombe  
Learn & Serve Program Intern

Graduation was creeping up sooner than I could begin to imagine. One more semester left of college, then what was I supposed to do with my life? Was I supposed to go to graduate school? Move back home with my parents? Go straight into a career? With all of these options and a wedding to plan, I had no idea of what I was going to do after I graduated from college, especially graduating in the middle of the school year, in December, instead of May like a majority of my schoolmates. I began to think seriously about my options, and the possibility of interning with SIFAT immersed.

I had participated in a retreat at SIFAT during my sophomore year and had served as a volunteer since then, but I had not thought that I could actually be a part of SIFAT by interning with Learn and Serve (L&S). I was looking for somewhere to serve for roughly four months, since I am getting married in May. I wondered if my short time would hold me back, but applied for the L&S internship knowing that God would open this door if it was His will.

Well, God is a God who provides, and I began my internship in January! I have loved every minute of it. People would ask me exactly what I was going to be doing while I was “living in the middle of nowhere Alabama”. I could not

give them a detailed list of exactly what I was going to be doing, but I did know, and tell them, that I was going to be serving the Lord in many and mighty ways by serving and loving on His people.

I hit the ground running by helping plan 48: A Slum Experience. The three week process of planning and hosting the event was unbelievably enlightening and powerful. From researching about Nigeria and its culture to playing the role of the store owner within Daki Biu, I learned an incredible amount of things about the ins and outs of the internship, myself, and about my loving God. This was the best way to begin this internship and to get a foundation for the rest of the semester.

I already know the things I am learning are preparing me for my future. God is preparing me to work in the mission field and to serve His people through learning skills and life lessons here at SIFAT. I am grateful for this opportunity to intern with L&S and would highly encourage others to look into the internship. If God is calling you to grow in Him, to learn more about His people, and to serve Him with your whole heart and

you are not quite sure how to do that, an internship with L&S will definitely help you discern His plan.



*Courtney Holcombe, a Learn & Serve Program Intern for Spring 2014, helps lead a youth work team. L&S interns lead retreats, give tours, host groups and volunteer in many behind-the-scenes ways. To download an application or to learn more about internships, visit [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve).*

### Schedule Your Retreat Now!

[www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve)

Groups are scheduling fall and spring retreats! Learn & Serve (L&S) programming offers experiences for all age groups. Visit [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve) for details.

Questions? Contact Mary Corson, [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org), for available dates and programming options.

### Don't Miss L&S Summer Experience 2014! Register Today!

Both individuals and youth groups can still register for our summer experience. Spaces are still available most weeks.

For more information, go to [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve). Each session lasts from Sunday afternoon through Friday morning and costs \$299 per person.

Questions? E-mail Mary Corson, [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org),



# Winter/Spring 2014

## Haitian Training at SIFAT

Kathy Bryson  
International Training Director

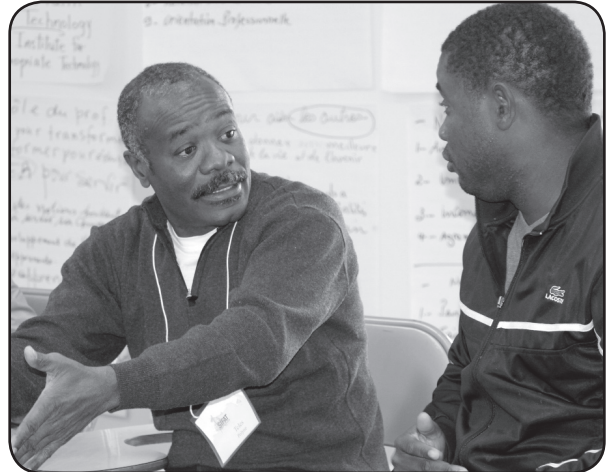
Have you ever wanted to help Haiti with more than handouts? While relief has its place, SIFAT seeks long-term solutions that address core issues of poverty. We are proud of SIFAT graduate Esai Dorce's vision to help his country through education.

A group of Haitian community leaders led by Dorce have formed a nonprofit agency to help children in Haiti get a better education. Their strategy is to focus on teacher training workshops, since the majority of public school teachers have not graduated from high school. Eleven of these Haitians attended SIFAT's two-week training on Community Development and Education in April. Each has a profession and area of expertise, such as computers, nursing, school administration, history and law, languages, math and physics, journalism, business or agronomy. They volunteer to hold periodic teacher training workshops. Haitian teachers are thrilled with the opportunity to learn skills that can help them in their sometimes overwhelming job of training Haitian children with very few resources and little support.

This group of Haitians came to SIFAT to learn practical ways to improve their teacher training workshops. Every day was packed with new learning experiences. The group felt that principles of integrated community development with physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions are similar to principles that help children develop, too.

This was SIFAT's first session on education specifically for those training school teachers. We accepted the challenge because our training department met with various educational experts in Alabama from the local elementary school level to the university level who were willing to share about current educational methodologies and classroom strategies. The Haitians were especially inspired by the field trips to local schools, where they observed new methods of cooperative learning and integrated curriculum.

In addition to the classes on education, the Haitian participants joined a Learn & Serve team for a Slum Experience and saw firsthand how youth in the USA were touched by living out this simulated experience instead of just reading about slums. The Haitians were impressed by the Challenge Course, during which L&S program director Addison Shock led groups to bond into a team by working together on focused activities instead



*Teles Polynes and Remy Juliste discuss ways they can mobilize their community associations to improve education for Haitian children.*

of reading or lecturing on subjects. They were also excited by the techniques of SIFAT gardener John Carr for increasing food production, even in urban areas and school yards. Trey Reed, who helped SIFAT install water purification units on numerous trips to Haiti after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake, taught water purification and pumping technologies by demonstrating how they worked and encouraging the Haitians to practice operating them.

SIFAT training director Kathy Bryson coordinated the diverse classes to emphasize the importance of an integrated approach to education and community development. In Haiti where thousands are still hungry and need clean water, it is important for a teacher to know how hunger or dehydration affect a child's learning ability and to be equipped to teach solutions. Participants' evaluations declared that they received far more insights and understanding than they had imagined possible in only two weeks.

We wish this session could have been longer for even more interactions with local educators and church and community leaders. We appreciate all who collaborated with this effort from the professors to the volunteer cooks! All who have interacted with them have been inspired by the dedication of these young Haitian professionals who are determined to improve their country's education system in this generation for the future of Haitian children. Our prayers go with them. If you are interested in supporting future teacher training workshops in Haiti, please contact Kathy at [brysonk@sifat.org](mailto:brysonk@sifat.org).



# SIFAT Journal



## May Field Study: Practical Skills for World Hunger and Malnutrition - May 11-24, 2014

Join us in a two-week intensive session to learn how you can make a difference. Visit [www.sifat.org/training](http://www.sifat.org/training) for more information. Questions? E-mail Kathy Bryson, [brysonk@sifat.org](mailto:brysonk@sifat.org).

## Alumni Update: Eva and Sara Mamani

Sarah Corson  
SIFAT Co-founder

Eva and Sara Mamani live in Tarija, Bolivia, with their parents and two younger sisters. Their mission is to bring the integrated Gospel to marginalized and needy people around them. Sara and Eva specialize in helping unemployed people start microenterprises, directing the Bolivian work of Five Talents.

Eva, Sara and their father Santiago are SIFAT graduates with whom we are very

happy to be associated. Both Eva and Sara are SIFAT Global Trainers and have helped us facilitate community development training in Haiti and Honduras. Sara has worked with the Chalmers Center in Guatemala. These ladies seem to be tireless as they work in poor urban neighborhoods and in rural areas to bring hope to those in need. Their success greatly amplifies the work of SIFAT and the other agencies with whom they partner as they labor to bring a part of the Kingdom of God to those who are lost and in great need.



### SIFAT Celebrates 35 Years in 2014! Be a Part of our Future!

Become a SHAREholder of SIFAT by giving monthly. Visit [www.sifat.org](http://www.sifat.org) or contact Marie Lanier, [lanierm@sifat.org](mailto:lanierm@sifat.org), for more information.

Give to the Sarah Fund, an endowment used to help offset staff salaries, so that more of our resources go directly to international training and projects. Designate your donation *Sarah Fund*.

## Commemorative 35th Anniversary Brick Fund Raiser

Since 1979, SIFAT has shared God's love in practical ways with the poor in our world. Without our donors and supporters, this could not have been possible! To celebrate these 35 years, we are building a commemorative patio and fire pit alongside the beautiful Mad Indian Creek on our international campus in Lineville, Ala.

What better way to create lasting memories than by honoring or memorializing your friends and loved ones with an engraved brick that will become a part of this new patio. For the perfect Mother's Day, Father's Day or graduation present, consider a gift that will make a difference ... a gift that will help SIFAT continue its ministry to improve the daily lives of the poor throughout the world.

Please order your commemorative brick today to help reach our goal of 1,800 bricks needed for SIFAT's new patio! Celebrate a special event in someone's life, honor a friend or family member and memorialize someone special.

Bricks cost \$75 or \$125, and all profits from this fund raiser will benefit SIFAT. You can purchase bricks online at [www.bricksrus.com/order/sifat](http://www.bricksrus.com/order/sifat).

For more information or help placing your order, contact Marie Lanier, [lanierm@sifat.org](mailto:lanierm@sifat.org), or 256.396.2015 ext. 222.



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**SIFAT's Vision:** Bridging the First and Two-thirds Worlds to alleviate spiritual and physical poverty, encouraging people to develop their God-given potential.

**SIFAT's Mission:** To share God's love through service, education and personal involvement with a needy world.

## From the Desk of Tom Corson

This May, SIFAT will be 35 years old. Looking back at the history of SIFAT, I came across a copy of the very first newsletter, "The Provoker," July 1979. One article read, "if SIFAT means nothing to you, join the crowd of about three billion. Less than 100 persons have any idea of what it means. It's nothing now. In a few years it could be dynamic, far-reaching, touching the lives of hundreds of thousands. It could be centered in Randolph County."

The lead article was entitled "Why SIFAT?" with the first paragraph reading as follows:

"The primary motivation for founding SIFAT is to activate a continuing practical response to human need which is prompted by Christian faith and love ... human need as it is felt in the spiritual, physical and material wellbeing of poor people in this country and even more urgently in the so-called 'third world' countries of our planet."

Early articles share insight to what the founders wanted to accomplish: "Helping people meet their basic human needs. The areas of basic human needs are found everywhere: food, water, shelter, clothing and disease, with always the spiritual emphasis." Looking back at the hopes and plans for SIFAT and seeing our goals and plans today, I marvel at how they have remained consistent. Our simple philosophy is *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways*.

Today, 35 years later, we can see what God has done through SIFAT with the support of people like you, and it is simply amazing! Civic organizations, such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions; colleges and universities; hundreds of churches; and thousands of individuals now engage with SIFAT to help accomplish our goals. This year, SIFAT mission teams are traveling to or supporting projects in Bolivia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Uganda and Zambia. Thousands of American adults, youth and children, as well as universities and international community leaders, will visit our campus in Randolph County to better understand and learn how they can be part of the solution to help the needy of the world meet their basic human needs.

During the next few months, we plan to feature some of the highlights of our history, but more importantly, we invite you to be part of the **next 35 years of SIFAT's story!** You can participate now by bringing your youth to be part of our weeklong Learn & Serve Summer Experience here on our Lineville Campus. You can lead or join a SIFAT short-term mission team. We need your prayers and financial support. Consider giving to the Sarah Fund Endowment or being an official SHAREholder of SIFAT by giving monthly.

I personally want to thank each of you who has invested in SIFAT's ministry over these 35 years. I look forward to working with you in our future efforts to make this world a better place.