

SIFAT Journal



Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

Spring 2011

Continuing to Provide Clean Water to Haitians

By Sarah Corson
SIFAT Cofounder

Brian “Cowboy” Ferguson, a SIFAT worker to Haiti, parks his rented truck on the edge of Shada, the largest slum in northern Haiti. With him today is Cameron King of Bahamas Habitat and a guide, Hannah Steadman of Cap Hatien Health Network. Hannah soon locates Madam Bwa, a resident midwife who says she has delivered half of the babies born in Shada in the last 30 years. She takes them to one of the two shallow wells where many of the 20,000 people in this slum get their water. A stack of dirty car tires keeps the dirt from caving into the hole.

“People want to use this water only for bathing and washing clothes,” Madam Bwa says, “because they know the water makes them sick. But clean drinking water costs four goudes (12.5 cents) a gallon, and few can afford that so they have to drink this water.” The well is less than 10 feet deep.

But on this day, Cowboy only has four Sawyer filters left. They will purify enough water for about 100 people each. An elderly woman is sitting on the ground near Cowboy as he gives the demonstration on how to use the Sawyer filters. Before leaving, he speaks to her through the translator. She looks up at him with suffering eyes and says, “Thank you for the clean water. Do you have any food, too? I am so hungry.” But Cowboy doesn’t have any food with him. And if he did, it could provoke a fight as many other people are hungry, too.

Arriving back at his truck, Cowboy realizes he has a Pop-Tart



Madam Bwa stands by a 10-foot deep well that people in Shada, the largest slum in northern Haiti, were using for bathing, washing clothes and drinking. They know the water makes them sick, but could not afford to buy clean drinking water.

left over from his lunch. He gives it to Madam Bwa and asks her to get it to the woman. Would Madam Bwa eat it herself? She must be hungry, too. But no! While Cowboy studies his road map, preparing to leave, the elderly woman comes running, with her hand clasping the Pop-Tart to her chest. Crying, she hugs him, saying, Merci! Merci! (Thank you!).

More than half a century ago when Ken and I started working among the poor, I often cried out to God, “Why? Why is there so much suffering?” Then God showed me that He designed the world with enough for everyone. But human beings who choose corruption, injustice and greed have pushed God’s plan aside. Even when natural disasters like this earthquake in Haiti occur, there is enough for all if we share. Those of you reading this are likely the ones who have joined with SIFAT to help change some of this suffering in the world.

In February, Hannah introduced SIFAT and Oxfam workers. Together they brought clean water to 4,000 people. Oxfam piped the polluted water from artesian wells to large holding tanks where SIFAT installed water purifiers. In March, SIFAT sent Tom Corson and Cowboy to set up purifiers for 16,000 more people in Shada and northern Haiti.

We cannot change everything, but together, we can change so much! Since the earthquake in Haiti—with the help of God and many people—SIFAT has made clean water accessible to more than 100,000 people. Your support is needed to continue our work in Haiti; please donate today!



Spring 2011

Invest in our Learn & Serve Summer Staff

By Mary MacInnis
Learn & Serve Coordinator

Through our Learn & Serve (L&S) program, youth *learn* about the diverse cultures and living conditions of many of our brothers and sisters around the world. A bridge is built as students are exposed to what life feels like in urban and rural communities in developing countries—settings very different from their hometowns. Through their new knowledge, they are empowered to *serve*. The effectiveness of the L&S summer experience is directly related to the quality of staff that we hire each summer. During the past four years, summer staff from both America and abroad have modeled radical lifestyles of service for the 7th-12th graders who attend L&S.

- Youth in Mobile, Ala., are collecting loose change to end sex trafficking in developing countries.
- Youth in Pontotoc, Miss., have committed to visiting a local nursing home and building lasting relationships with its residents.
- Youth in Orlando, Fla., have committed to hosting a clothes closet to assist local families in need.

These examples are just a few of the action steps taken after youth groups attended L&S. During their five-day stay at SIFAT, youth interact with our Summer Staff, who follow Christ's example by choosing to serve in their everyday lives.

Please consider contributing to the support of our Summer Staff.



Learn & Serve counselors, such as Leah Pickens (third from right), lead the junior high and high school students attending L&S each summer and often return to volunteer with weekend retreats. This year, we are trying to raise \$2,100 for each of the eight L&S sessions to pay our summer staff, including nine counselors, a worship leader and a media coordinator.

Each summer, we strive to hire the most authentic, college-aged Christians that we can find. We know the importance of modeling service in our lifestyle and the impact that image can have on the hundreds of students who attend L&S each summer!

In Philippians 4:18, money given toward helping others serve Christ is described as a "sweet-smelling sacrifice." Thank you in advance for considering this sacrificial gift that will provide an opportunity for our Summer Staff to dedicate their time to the growing ministry of SIFAT.

Our goal is to raise \$2,100 for each of the eight L&S sessions.

This amount will allow SIFAT to hire nine counselors, a worship leader and a media coordinator. Please designate all donations to L&S Summer Staff Support. Contact learnandserve@sifat.org for more information.

Space is limited — Register for L&S 2011 now!

Are you looking for a summer experience for your youth? Limited space is still available for both groups and individuals for summer 2011. Visit www.sifat.org/learnandserve to learn more about our summer program and information about registering. Questions? E-mail learnandserve@sifat.org.

Reflections on 48: A Slum Experience

By Daniel Strandlund
Youth Minister, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

I've been in full time ministry for several years now, and SIFAT's *48: A Slum Experience* is in the top two or three overnight church events I have ever attended. Fourteen youth and parents from my parish participated in *48: A Slum Experience* this year, and each of us is still processing the implications the slum experience has for those of us who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. For Christians, this event is not so much a retreat as it is an immersion—a kind of baptismal experience after which you are not the same. You are reminded that you are marked by the Holy Spirit, and that you are Christ's own forever. Moreover, you are reminded that everyone you pass on the street or see on TV is, too. Here is what I mean:

Each of the more than 80 participants became cold, hungry and thirsty. The climate-controlled walls of our regular lives were stripped away, and we were faced with the blunt realization that each of us needs to eat, to drink clean water and to find a way to stay warm. (It was in the 20s or 30s both nights we were in the slums.) These are biological imperatives about which we First World Christians rarely, if ever, worry. For this reason, 20 or so of those who started the retreat left before the 48 hours was up. That is how real it is! That is how hard it can be; even though for participants, there is always an end in sight never more than two days away.

We do not like doing without the things we feel entitled to: food, water and shelter; to say nothing of caffeine, the internet and beds. We do not like doing without our

usual buffet of opportunities. Moreover, we do not like seeing our friends, family members or the kids in our youth group doing without those things either. They are too real and too threatening. For us, hunger is something that only other people feel. For us, it is something we talk passionately about on Sunday mornings or a few days a month when we go to the soup kitchen. It is something we hear about as a metaphor for "spiritual hunger" from the pulpit. But, for those of us who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the vulnerability of the cross is not a metaphor. Why should we treat our own vulnerability to the elements, to hunger or to thirst as such? Or the vulnerability of our brothers and sisters across the globe?

We didn't have that luxury during *48: A Slum Experience*. The poor that Jesus talks about in the Gospels stopped being some vague demographic of other people with whom we could not identify. During the slum experience those who were poor and had no power to choose were people whose names we knew. They were our friends and fellow church members. For two days, we were the poor. If anyone had said, "Christ was speaking metaphorically when he talked about feeding the poor," or "Christ wants us to do outreach two days a month," none of us heard it over the growling of our stomachs. For two days at least, every bite of food and drink of water was a gift of God.

If your youth group is interested in participating in a retreat at SIFAT, please contact learnandserve@sifat.org



Above: Participants in 48: A Slum Experience received a firsthand experience of a team installing a water purification system, like the ones SIFAT installs in Haiti.

Below: On January 15-17, youth and their leaders lived in the Urban Slums on SIFAT's campus for 48 hours. During this experience, participants were challenged to meet their basic physical needs of shelter, food and water.





Spring 2011

Short-term Mission Teams: Project Updates

By Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

Much was accomplished in 2010 by short-term mission teams to advance SIFAT's work in many countries, although team member numbers were less because of our depressed economy. The year ended with 436 people serving on 23 teams in Ecuador, Bolivia and Zambia, with another 20 medical and water purification teams working in Haiti.

For 2011, we already have 534 team members on 32 teams set up to continue work in these countries, plus monthly water purification teams being sent to Haiti.

Ecuador

SIFAT's commitment in Villaflora on the Dulce Refugio project ended this month. Our teams completed the second floor on the proposed three-story building to provide classrooms for Compassion International sponsored children. The church and community members in Villaflora will continue working to complete the building, which will provide a safe haven for 400 at-risk children.

In 2011, SIFAT teams begin a similar construction project in Puengasi called Children of Hope. Pastor Oswaldo, a SIFAT Ecuador graduate, is now using his tiny, cramped church to offer classes for 125 Compassion-sponsored students. SIFAT teams will build the first floor of this proposed three-story facility, which will have room for 450 children when completed.

Auburn University sent a women's medical team to Aida Leon in February. More than 400 women were not only examined by doctors, but were also

given classes in health, nutrition, birth control and prenatal care. More medical teams are scheduled to work in several other communities around Quito in 2011, including our first, much needed, all dental team from the University of Tennessee. This team will have four dentists working with the children and will also provide cross-cultural training for many of UT's dental students. Their plan is to make a commitment with SIFAT to bring a service learning team to Ecuador for the next five years. A unique component of this team will be The Ecuador Bereavement Study, conducted by a team member who is a Vanderbilt University faculty member.

Under the guidance of Dr. Roberto and Monica Contreras, SIFAT Ecuador continues to work productively in many impoverished neighborhoods near Quito. In 2011, we are expanding our work into the Amazon jungle region, where an all men's team from Florida will work on a church rebuilding project with Pastor Wilson, the pastor at Aida Leon and a SIFAT Ecuador graduate.

The classrooms at the Aqua de Vida church connected to Mama Yoli's are ready, but the opening is being delayed because of a lack of funding by Compassion International. The need is so great for this facility to provide a safe after school environment for almost 400 children, but they need sponsors before Compassion will begin its work in Atucucho. **To sponsor one of these children, contact Compassion International and ask for a child in the Compassion project at Aqua de Vida. Use the designation EC 177, LOS NINOS SON DE CRISTO, Agua de Vida Methodist Church, Atucucho neighborhood in Quito, Ecuador.**

Bolivia

Working in Bolivia continues to be difficult for SIFAT as the government of Evo Morales continually changes the law. SIFAT supporters are committed to our work in Bolivia, however, and we are sending several teams in 2011.

Auburn UMC will take a dental, veterinarian and VBS team in July. Texas A&M is prepared to make a three-year commitment to Quesimpuco and has laid out an aggressive agenda for training health care promoters in the area. Auburn University Engineers Without Borders will send teams for four years. Their project for 2011 is to build new showers for the student dormitories. The men from Mt. Bethel UMC will go in October to continue work on the parsonage.

Zambia

Trinity UMC of Birmingham sent a team to Zambia last October to help with Phase 1 of our SIFAT Training Center/UMC Conference Center outside of Lusaka. Working in blistering heat, they were able to almost complete the caretaker's house, which will also serve as a home for the UMC District Superintendent in Zambia.

Having a family on the property full time answers our need for security as we continue to build the center. Electricity and water are still issues that must be addressed before we can develop the property fully. **Donations are needed to fund the water and electricity projects.**

Auburn Wesley Foundation will serve for three weeks in June to continue the building construction and on agricultural development outside the fence. Our plan

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Adapting to the Unpredictable: Medical Teams in Haiti

By Caleb Cooper, RN
Short-term Mission Team Member

Caleb served in Haiti on one of the medical mission teams SIFAT sent to man the clinics of some of our partnership organizations. Although it has been more than a year since the earthquake, we want to remember the people of Haiti and the conditions with which they are still living.

On January 12, 2010, the nation of Haiti suffered a devastating earthquake that is believed to have killed more than 200,000 people. Efforts in disaster relief began immediately. Despite the rapid and enduring response, Haiti's pre-quake condition as the poorest nation in the western hemisphere proved difficult for responders to overcome.

In June, a few of my former nursing school classmates and I joined a SIFAT team. Five RNs, one physician and two water filtration workers arrived in Haiti eager, yet nervous, about what we were going to encounter.

As we flew over Port-au-Prince, it was clear that we were going to see the nation's pain firsthand. Words cannot express the experience of serving in a developing country, much less one that has been ravaged by a natural disaster. Many Haitians face the daily struggle of meeting basic physical needs. For example, starvation is the leading cause of death in Haiti. Also, finding shelter is a critical dilemma. The earthquake forced millions to flee their homes; most seek shelter in make-shift tents. Entire cities of blue and white tents, tarps and any other available materials are sprawled across any uninhabited space. With these conditions and no clean water source, an infection control nightmare looms—only one evolving challenge that Haiti faces in its recovery process.

Our team adapted to the unpredictable as quickly as possible. One day, we manned an existing medical clinic in the capital's police station. We were told that some patients had been waiting for five hours. Within only a few minutes of the clinic opening,

a child having febrile seizures was rushed to a hospital. Most of the patients' immediate ailments included scabies, fungal infections, sexually transmitted diseases and severe hypertension. At a mobile clinic set up in an orphanage, we were able to treat patients with respiratory infections, as well as treat the numerous cases of scabies and fungal infections. Limited access to clean water and lack of education regarding hygiene make conditions favorable for these recurring skin infections. The most difficult cases involved patients that needed HIV treatment. Medications were not available. We witnessed single parents bring their children to be tested for the virus because the other parent had passed away only weeks before from HIV/AIDS. These are a few examples of the Haitians that received treatment. We treated as many patients as we could, but thousands more are living in horrendous conditions.

Experiences like this bring out a broad spectrum of emotions, and each day presents its own challenges. At times, we faced helplessness. We did not always have access to the correct medications or tests. On another hand, frustration arises when there is access to a tangible solution but existing institutions stand in the way. Even in such tragedy, one cannot help but be overwhelmed by joy when watching a grateful mother finally receive necessary medical treatment for her child. These glimpses of joy and contentment serve as reminders to live a life of humility.

Despite the negative emotions, there is an incredible peace in knowing that God's sovereign plan surpasses our own finite humanity. May He receive all glory for the work that is being done to serve the people of Haiti.



Caleb Cooper joined one of the medical teams SIFAT sent to Haiti last year. He shares his experience and the needs still facing Haiti.

Help still needed in Haiti

SIFAT water teams continue to make monthly trips to Haiti to install water purification systems to provide clean drinking water. To support our work in Haiti, please designate "Haiti" on your donation.

Raphael Teaches Cookstoves in Nigeria



SIFAT graduate Raphael Ogbole recently taught a group of 46 Nigerians how to build fuel-efficient cookstoves.

SIFAT graduate Raphael Ogbole recently held a seminar on fuel efficient cookstoves in Nigeria. His plans included enlisting the help of SIFAT graduate Livinus Obi to train 25 participants in cookstoves, water filters and hygiene.

Although funding for 25 participants did not come through, Raphael did not cancel any of those expecting to come. Instead, he decided they could stretch the food and materials. However, 21 more people showed up unexpectedly, bringing the total participants to 46! Somehow, Raphael made it work, and each person was able to learn how to make a fuel efficient stove. They postponed the water filter part of the seminar to May 7. Pastor Obi gave parasite medicine to each person and explained how to avoid getting re-infected.

Raphael and his family serve among the Muslims in northeast Nigeria. Training seminars allow him to share God's love in practical ways by meeting a physical need. He also has the opportunity to build personal relationships among the participants and share the Gospel with them.

Get Involved: Donate a Scholarship

Help empower community leaders in developing countries by making an investment in the SIFAT scholarship fund. The practical technologies and training students receive at SIFAT will improve the lives of children and adults living in developing countries for years into the future. Please designate your donation "Scholarship Fund".

Teams (Continued from page 4)

is for this team to also organize a day camp on the property for the HIV/AIDS orphans under the care of Pastor Mary, wife of the District Superintendent.

Uganda

William Nsubuga, SIFAT graduate and founder of Agape Total Child Care Center, has started work on a new orphanage in Mukono to replace the old, cramped facility in Lugasi. With the new buildings, he can increase the number of children in the orphanage from 34 to 60 and have the space to add a Christian school for 250 children from nearby communities.

A SIFAT team from LaGrange, Ga., will work with us in July to put a roof on the school and also hold a VBS for the children. This will be our first team to Uganda, but several more will be needed to complete this project in the next two years.

The support for most of these children is being provided by sponsorship from SIFAT team members.

Haiti

SIFAT continues to provide relief to Haiti by sending in water teams each month to install water purification systems where needed. Transportation for the teams is being provided at no cost to SIFAT

by Bahamas Habitat, a group of 400 volunteer private pilots using their planes for humanitarian projects.

They have committed to SIFAT to take at least one team every month for all of 2011. To date, we have installed water systems in Haiti providing clean drinking water to more than 100,000 people..

SIFAT instructor, Byron Morales, is conducting training classes quarterly in La Cayes for Haitians wanting to learn more about SIFAT's methods for community development. We will partner with KNH, a German nonprofit, to provide jobs for some of these graduates as health promoters when they complete the SIFAT training.

Short-term Mission Team in Ecuador

By Charlie Darling
Short-term Mission Team Member

Christian. You could call our faith that. You could call our trip that. Or, you could say it is the name of the boy that befriended me without question the moment he saw me, showing the kind of trust that I can only strive to obtain. Whichever you choose, unconditional love accompanied by unrivaled appreciation is what was experienced by each of our team members during our trip to Quito, Ecuador.

After spending our first full day visiting the Equator and participating in a church service, our spirits were high and hands at the ready for providing physical and emotional care to the God loving people of Ecuador. It did not take long for a sweet little girl to capture our hearts, literally, by using one of the nurse's stethoscopes to listen to our heartbeats. Not one person that spent a day engulfed in the joy of the children wanted to leave, but the women of this neighborhood needed our help, too. And if the nursing students could do one thing better than love those children, it was care for their mothers.

Equipped with three nurse practitioners, twelve Auburn University nursing students, two registered nurses and two Auburn University pharmacy students, our group served as a women's health clinic for five days. Women attended an education class on nutrition, safe sexual behavior and proper hygiene; then, they were seen by the nurse practitioners. After their exams, they were provided with medication from our pharmacy located in a Sunday School room. The nurse practitioners proved to be excellent mentors—they demonstrated to the students how to care for these less fortunate women and shared their knowledge with the next generation of health-care providers. While some nursing students were teaching, others were enjoying the company of children in VBS. The children colored pictures based on the day's Bible lesson, played soccer with our group and created more with scissors and glue than they had ever done before.

Every day provided a new learning experience, as well as new perspectives. One moment, in particular, defined who we were and what our mission was. When Pennie Osburn, one of the nurse practitioners, began to tell a 17-year-old girl and her grandmother that she was pregnant, the clinic grew solemn. The pastor, translator and nurse began to pray and offer her comfort. The pastor gave us a phrase to keep in mind during our work,



Auburn University nursing students Christina Rosser, Sarah Moore and Stephanie Works let one of the girls at Aida Leon listen to their heartbeats with a stethoscope.

which was "love plus kindness equals compassion." Pennie showed this compassion when she told the teenager, "You are not a bad person, and God forgives you. Do not feel as if you have let anyone down for their imperfections are equally abounding." The compassion shown by Pennie ignited a fire in us all so fierce that it was contained only through dinner when the gates of inspiration and empathy opened and flooded the group during devotional and tore us to our spiritual knees. One team member even shared her experience of being a teen mother and the similar challenges she faced, which reminded us how alike we all are as God's children, regardless of culture. Very few dry eyes left the room, and inspiration provided that night would give us strength to show more love than we knew possible.

Needless to say, the week flew by with our team seeing more than 40 patients per day and entertaining all the children. By Friday, we had bonded not only with each other, but with the members of Iglesia Cristiana Esperanza Eterna. As we left, many tears crashed down, but our hearts were raised as one to give thanks to God for this opportunity afforded to us all. As we enjoyed the best way to end a trip—zip lining through the Ecuadorian cloud forest and enjoying the best pizza I have ever had in my life—I began to get the feeling that this would be an experience that will be forgotten by none, but instilled in our souls until we meet our Ecuadorian siblings again in Heaven.



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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

On April 27, Alabama was devastated by tornadoes unlike any we had ever seen in our state. The tornados ripped through multiple towns, just one of which was Cullman, where trees and houses were wiped out for a 28-mile stretch. Brian "Cowboy" Ferguson, one of SIFAT's main workers who has volunteered so much in Haiti since the earthquake, lives in Cullman. Twenty of his neighbors took shelter with his family in their basement as the storm felled trees and flattened houses all around them.

While the storm was raging, John Short, another Cullman resident who has served as a volunteer pilot for Bahamas Habitat, was in Haiti helping missionary Greg Roberts. When he heard of the devastation in his town, he hurried to fly back to help his people. Greg, a missionary from Church of the Cove in Tennessee who serves in Haiti, dropped everything and rushed to Cullman with John.

"You all have been down here volunteering to help us in Haiti," Greg said. "Now it is time for us to go help your people!" Quickly, he called his supporting church in Tennessee and organized teams to come help the residents of Cullman. Before the plane carrying John and the Haitian missionary landed in Cullman, five teams had been lined up from Church of the Cove.

It is a beautiful story: Cowboy and John working hard in Haiti to help the suffering from the earthquake. Then the Haitian missionary and his friends helping Cowboy, John and their friends who had lost everything back in Cullman, Ala. Jesus calls us to love our neighbor. Our neighbor is anyone in need, whether in Alabama, Haiti or any other place across our world. One of my mom's favorite poems by Lon Woodrum speaks of our efforts with peoples in the many countries in which SIFAT works.

I met a stranger in the night
Whose lamp had ceased to shine.
I paused and let him light
His lamp from mine.

A tempest sprang up later on
And whirled the world about,
And when the wind was gone,
My light was out.

But back came to me the stranger,
His light was glowing fine.
He held the precious flame
And lighted mine.