

# SIFAT Journal



Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways

Spring 2015

## A New Home on Galilee Campus

Jarrod Suits  
Campus Director

To strengthen and enhance the ministry of SIFAT, we are building a Campus Director House that will serve our campus in numerous ways, including a place where staff and volunteers can gather for fellowship and spiritual growth opportunities. It is located between the Lodge and the campground, which is a central spot to better serve our visitors and offer hospitality to those who come to our campus.

Construction began in February. We have been blessed by a donation from the Scott Bridge Company in Opelika, Ala., which allowed us to prepare our foundation up to the floor decking for the house. Don Green, the contract administrator for Scott Bridge, dedicated a large amount of his free time and brought a group of Carpenters for Christ from Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Ala. to ensure we were prepared for our first out-of-state work team. Bruce Smith, a professor in Auburn University's McWhorter School of Building Science, has inspected each phase of the construction.

On March 15, a group of 58 UMVIM (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission) volunteers from Wisconsin arrived to continue construction on the Campus Director House. SIFAT is honored that Wisconsin UMVIM has dedicated much to see this house become a reality. Last August, one of their most dedicated and faithful leaders passed away. Vince Ramsden and his wife, Carol, were a cherished team who brought joy to many people in their lives. Vince served with UMVIM for years and inspired countless others to live their lives dedicated to the mission of Christ. Vince, a strong supporter of SIFAT, led the team that built our Duplex. This year's team came in his honor and memory with a goal of framing the house and beginning the electrical work.

On April 19, a work team of 19 from Clear Lake UMC in Texas arrived to help with the next step on the house. They worked tirelessly to install windows and doors, as well as put up the porch's railings and ceiling. This was the seventh consecutive year a team from Clear Lake has dedicated their vacation time to visit SIFAT and spend hours working!

These work teams were able to complete much during their time here, but work is still left. If you have a group from your church or community that would be interested in working on this project or others on our campus, please e-mail [suitsj@sifat.org](mailto:suitsj@sifat.org). Although much of the labor is being done by volunteers, we are still in great need of financial resources to see this house completed. To make a contribution, please designate your donation Campus Director House.

*Meet Jarrod and see pictures of the house construction on Page 2.*





# Spring 2015

## Welcome Jarrod, Our Campus Director

Hello Friends,

I wanted to take a brief moment and introduce myself. My name is Jarrod Suits, and I am the new Campus Director at SIFAT. I started working at SIFAT in early January. It has been a fast, busy, wonderful and exciting few months! Before we moved from northeast Tennessee, my family had been praying for an opportunity to serve God in a unique way, and SIFAT is one unique ministry. After reading and learning about all that SIFAT does, we felt called to seek out an opportunity to join this great organization. Moving away from friends and family was not easy. However, the Christian life is not about making easy decisions, but impactful ones. As we continue to adjust to our new life living on campus, we are hopeful for what the future will bring. SIFAT is impacting lives all around the world and to be part of that incredible mission is truly humbling. I also look forward to meeting many of the friends of SIFAT and discovering new ways we can work together. Our campus has incredible opportunities for retreats, day trips, training events, work teams and much more. Please know my wife, Sarah, and our two children, Henry (4) and Olivia (2), look forward to welcoming you to campus the next time you visit.



Thank you,

Jarrod Suits



## Why are Mission Teams Important?

Peggy Walker  
International Team Coordinator

As I sit here looking at a photograph of the new Agape Total Childcare Center's boys' dormitory, I see so much more than bricks and mortar. I see the time that has been spent telling the story here in the USA to raise the money to build this structure; I feel the hard labor it takes so many daily to erect the walls. I see the smiling faces of the children as they proudly make many of the 70,000 bricks themselves. But most of all, I see the fulfillment of a dream. I see a safe shelter for young people who had no future and no hope until they were found by our brother William Nsubuga and made to feel a part of this family we call Agape.

What a joy to know that this is happening because of SIFAT's commitment to this project, our belief in William's vision and because of love, labor and financial support of SIFAT short-term mission teams and donors.

To know that, in a country where child sacrifice is still practiced, a young albino African boy very much at risk for this horrific fate is now safe and thriving in the nurturing environment of Agape. He has been given the care he needs with special eyeglasses and health care for the many problems manifested by this condition and is now near the top of his class and wants to be a lawyer. Hassan barely spoke or looked at us when we met only five years ago, and now he is the emcee, the head of the show, for many of Agape's special events.

I marvel as we hug and we dance during the anything goes, fun times the teams share with the children and staff on our free days at Agape. I think, this cannot be the same Hassan; these cannot be the same "children" I met on my first visit to Uganda. Tears fill my eyes as he and all the others at Agape, no longer children, but now young adults, bring us into their world, share with us their love of life, of God, of learning and of their plans for their future.

A SIFAT short-term mission team is not there to build a building or paint walls, or even to have a VBS and spread the word of Jesus to these people. These are good and necessary things and part of the "objectives" which those in our goal-driven culture seem to need. But most of all, we are there to form relationships, to become a part of their lives and their



*Although tackling construction projects, such as the new boys' dormitory in Uganda, is one reason team members go on international trips, teams do more than paint walls and play games with children. They build relationships with communities and help dreams become reality, communicating through action what SIFAT teaches about short-term teams for long-term development!*

culture, whether it be in Uganda, Ecuador, Bolivia or Zambia. We are there to hold their hands as they dream, and do what we can to help those dreams become a reality. Without our SIFAT mission teams, none of this could have happened. The buildings could have been built and maybe the kids would be off the streets and learning about the Lord. But, they would not have learned to trust and to love and to build the self-esteem that can only happen when you feel safe and part of a family. Our SIFAT teams become that "family" to the adults and children with whom we work in so many countries, and our team members communicate through action what SIFAT teaches about short-term teams for long-term development to make real changes in a needy world.

### International Mission Teams in 2016

Teams are already reserving dates for 2016. If you are interested in leading a team from your church or community, visit [www.sifat.org/international-missions](http://www.sifat.org/international-missions) to learn about our projects or contact [internationalteams@sifat.org](mailto:internationalteams@sifat.org) with questions.



# Spring 2015

## Exploring SIFAT Ecuador

By Jessica Adams and Sara Rains  
Auburn University Students

As many of you know, the graduates, staff and volunteers of SIFAT are a special group of people. As a part of our research for an undergraduate thesis on sustainable community development, we recently experienced a unique opportunity to witness just how special these people are and some of the incredible ways that God is working through SIFAT in Quito, Ecuador, and surrounding areas.

First, we traveled to Caliata, a small Quichuan community and the birthplace of SIFAT Ecuador. Here was the first of many times that we heard of the transformation that occurred in a community after leaders learned about the integrated Gospel through SIFAT's training. In the past, well-meaning evangelists had come and only focused on spiritual well-being without considering social and economic status. The people we met shared how learning about the integrated gospel from SIFAT was the first time anyone had focused on both their physical and spiritual needs. SIFAT training showed them that we are all equal in God's eyes, and no one is a second-class citizen in His kingdom.

The next day, we boarded a bus to Calderon, where an Auburn University medical team would provide a much-needed women's health clinic during the next week. We were able to accompany Pastor Raul, a SIFAT graduate, on a home visit to one of the mothers of children in the Compassion International-sponsored program at his church. Her one-room cinder block home was small, and she had little by our American standards, but the love she had for her children was evident. She told us that her husband was absent, but she wants to raise her son to be a good man and for all of her children to become good people. The work of

Pastor Raul and his church, teaching the love of Christ to these children, is helping her do just that.

Pastor Rafael and his wife Anita greeted us in Villaflores next. Their church was hard at work, finishing the final two floors of a building that SIFAT teams had been helping to build. In our conversations with Rafael and Anita, we could see their heart for the children and youth of the community. They dream of converting one of the rooms in their new building to a space for teenagers, whose only other option is to hang out in the streets,

where the risks of gangs, drugs and violence are high.

Finally, we ended in Atacucho, where we had the opportunity to visit two daycare centers SIFAT has helped construct: Mama Yoli's House and Little Seeds of God. Laughter and smiles were the theme of the day as we met the children in the daycare program. Here, we met Little Seeds of God's director, Ledy Sanchez, a woman with an abundance of determination and a huge heart. We were amazed at the innovation she showed when faced with challenges. She created a microenterprise project that employs former daycare teachers, who are now ineligible to work without a college degree, to cook and deliver food to multiple daycare sites throughout the community.

SIFAT is not your typical nonprofit.

It provides its graduates with more than just technologies and resources; it introduces them to a different way of thinking. Through the integrated gospel, people are finding hope and being empowered to make a difference in their homes and communities. Our week in Ecuador will not be one that is quickly forgotten. The work God is doing there through SIFAT and its graduates left us amazed and excited for what the future holds for this country and its people.



*Sara (left) and Jessica (right) visit a family's guinea pig farm in Caliata, Ecuador, where SIFAT teams first began serving in the mid-90s.*

## What's Happening in Ixiamas?

Gabe and Marci Livingston  
Ixiamas, Bolivia Project Partners

*Gabe, Marci and their four young sons have joined SIFAT's work in Ixiamas, Bolivia! Our Ixiamas project has been in transition during the past few years as the needs of the area changed and our director resigned. When the Livingstons visited SIFAT after their first monthlong trip to Ixiamas, their excitement and plans showed our staff that God brought this family to us at the right time. They have great ideas about how to continue helping this jungle community. You can follow the Livingstons' adventures on their family website, [www.domorethanexist6.com](http://www.domorethanexist6.com).*

After much deliberation, we have decided to live on the town property instead of moving out to Two Trees. Although Tom suggested this to us months ago, we had living on the Two Trees property on our minds. While we were in Peru for three months waiting on our truck and household items being held in customs, we felt God was showing us we needed to slow down. We decided we would not get in a hurry to do things, but try to find joy in everyday tasks with our four children. We plan to finish the top floor of the two-story building on the back of the property to make it usable for our family. Currently, the building is just a shell, and we must run electricity, add plumbing, finish the flooring and walls, etc. We plan to finish the bottom floor soon, so that if groups come to visit, there will be additional space for them.

We still want to be a part of the Two Trees Property and help get it developed with the dreams that SIFAT envisioned.

Gabe has purchased a bulldozer and will start on a road that runs along the right side of the property and goes all the way to the river. We still have to inspect what is growing on the land, but hope to have positive news to report about the chocolate trees growing there. We have friends that are moving to Ixiamas in June that are much more capable at farming, and we think they would be a great fit for living and working on the land. We have spoken with them and are waiting to hear their decision.

Marci, a former teacher, has the vision of a community library. The nearby school sometimes uses our extra space for classes, and our family has the opportunity to play with them during breaks. Marci has even been a substitute teacher! We share the future library's books when we visit with the children, but are waiting to open the library until after we return from our trip in May, since we do not want to start something new and then close it for a month.

Because of a lack of hotels and continual growth in Ixiamas, we think we can rent a few rooms to help cover the monthly cost of caretakers. When we move out of the main building, we can use five rooms as a guest house.

Our caretakers, Efraim and Rosemary, are doing so well. Within days, they were treating the property and buildings like their own. They are constantly helping clean and freshen up, so the place looks much better already. We love having them over for dinner often, and the boys visit with them many times each day.

We are becoming farmers. We have 15



*Rosemary and Asher take a break from all of the projects we have in progress. She and her husband Efraim are our caretakers and are quickly becoming part of the family. The boys asked them to join in our Easter egg hunt, an unknown tradition to Bolivians!*

chickens and 2 movable chicken houses. They are not producing enough eggs for our family yet, but we still hope for more chickens so we can sell them. We are making plans for a small fish farm/aquaponics system. If we can raise fish and vegetables to sell, it is more income for the project. We are growing vegetables in pots, tires, metal cans, wheel barrows and any other items that we find on the property. We are doing this to show others that even if they do not have land, they can still grow food for their families.

Another project we want to start is opening some of the land for community gardens. We think it might be of interest to people in town that have a desire for

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## Helping the Elderly in Quesimpuco

By Ivan Roman  
Latin American Project Coordinator

Life in Quesimpuco and other villages in the Chaupirana Valley is not easy for anyone, especially the elderly. With no markets or steady influx of goods from far away productive areas, our people there live on the verge of a tragedy should a prolonged rainy season or drought hit the area. Most of the elderly population live by themselves. The distance to their small plots bears a heavy load on their everyday struggle to survive. Facing a shortage of firewood, they walk great distances across rough terrain to collect a few sticks to cook the small yield their farms produce. With such insufficient nourishment, their health is poor and they are more than likely to skip a medical visit the few times doctors are available.

As part of SIFAT's five-year development program for Quesimpuco and the Chaupirana Valley, which includes the areas of education, missions, economic growth and public health, a pilot program for the elderly will be implemented. Quesimpuco Community Church is heading this project, the goal of which is to provide health care, food security and fellowship opportunities for our senior citizens. Alfio Cori, CENATEC's Education Campus Manager, and Angel Roman, CLM (Covenant Life Ministries) Bolivian Missions Coordinator, have already begun using the hydroponic beds built by Auburn University's Engineers Without Borders to grow fresh produce for the elderly. This method turns nonagricultural spaces into vegetable gardens near the village. We hope the elderly will adopt this new method to provide for themselves and sell surplus. This method will also be used to raise food for guinea pigs to increase their protein intake. Dr. Ruth Mamani, SIFAT's Public Health Project Manager, will provide healthcare for them. The church's new oven and stove will help to provide a monthly fellowship experience with a meal and freshly baked bread.

We need your prayers and support. Please pray for our elderly population to understand and embrace this initiative, that they may feel the Lord's hand reaching out to them through all of us. We need to buy plates, cups, tableware, gas, flour, milk, medicines, seeds and plant nourishment. Your contributions are greatly appreciated; designate your donation *Quesimpuco Project*. For more information, contact [romani@sifat.org](mailto:romani@sifat.org).



*Dr. Mamani with one of our elderly, Brother Lucas.*



*Angel Roman planting vegetables for the elderly program.*

## Approved Graduate Projects

Community leaders from more than 90 countries have completed training courses with SIFAT to become our graduates. They return to their countries with hope to teach others what they have learned and to help their communities develop in an integrated way. SIFAT would like to continue to help those who go back as lights into dark places in our world. Many of them suffer persecution, as well as poverty, along with their people.

Some of our graduates live in places where we can take teams to help them with their projects, while others live in dangerous places where we cannot. For graduates who have done all they and their people can do, in a needed, well-planned project, yet still lack something to complete it, SIFAT may approve their project and promote it to help them.

**Uganda** Pastor Michael Ejok Edeke's Faith and Technology Fish Project urgently needs to provide food and a microenterprise for new Christians from a previously unreached tribe of cattle rustlers, the Karamojong. This tribe lives in the poorest area. The Christians have quit stealing cattle, and now have no means of support for their families. Pastor Michael has helped them with small fish project he learned at SIFAT. It is not large enough for the entire village. They need to dig more fish ponds.

Right now, one of them, a new Christian young man named Paul, is living on the banks of the fish pond to take care of it for the community. He has been sleeping in a shelter made of saplings and leaves. In a recent rain storm, it almost collapsed, and he has found poisonous snakes inside

twice. Paul now sleeps outside in fear of the snakes.

Pastor Michael needs \$3,500 for the fish project, but more urgently needs to build Paul a small house in which to sleep that will be safe, so that he can stay to care for the fish pond. Pastor Michael says he can build a safe home for \$380.



*Pastor Michael's son stands behind Paul and Paul's current home, in which he cannot sleep now because of the snakes.*

**Nigeria** Pastor Obi lives in a dangerous zone in Nigeria. He and members of his church travel to unreached remote tribes to preach the Gospel and teach health, sanitation and parasite control. Although he has no funding, he continues this work with the sacrificial giving of his church in Nigeria, but could reach out to more if he receives funding for this proposal.

Last year, Pastor Obi was kidnapped by terrorists, but escaped by jumping

off the motorcycle on which they were taking him away. They fought to catch him again, and he suffered several brutal machete slashes on his neck and head. Thankfully, the police heard his screams and were able to rescue him. He has recovered and is continuing his work as pastor of a materially poor, but spiritually strong, church.

The total projected cost of the work they want to carry out for the year is \$11,000, but his church has already raised \$5000. The church is asking SIFAT supporters to help them with \$6,000 more. The biggest part of the money is to be spent on parasite medicine and teaching materials for the workshops, which teach how to stay free of parasites and other health topics. Other funds will cover transportation and food costs for the three-day workshops held quarterly.

**Nigeria** Since Pastor Bola returned home after graduating from SIFAT, he has led his organization, Gilead Global Initiative for the Less Privileged, to include community development and training in education and health for the poor, in addition to church planting. Pastor Bola needs \$3,700 to hold a four-day workshop to train 40 pastors on eradication of cholera and other food/water borne diseases, sending them home with knowledge and materials to train their communities. Cholera is very prevalent in their area of Nigeria.

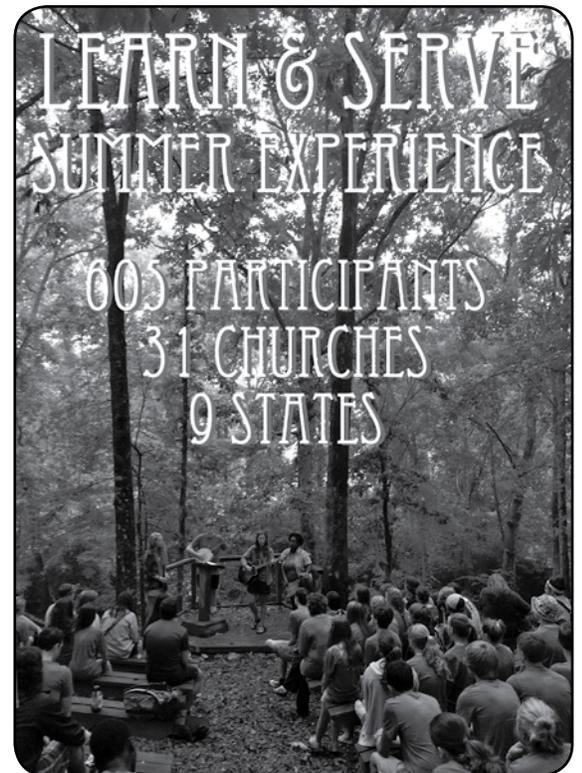
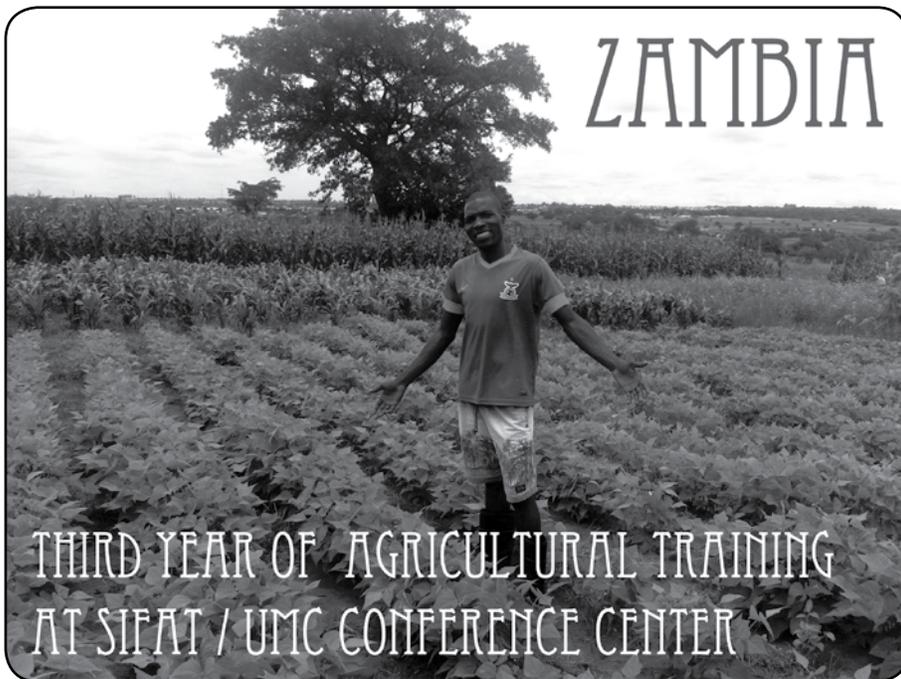
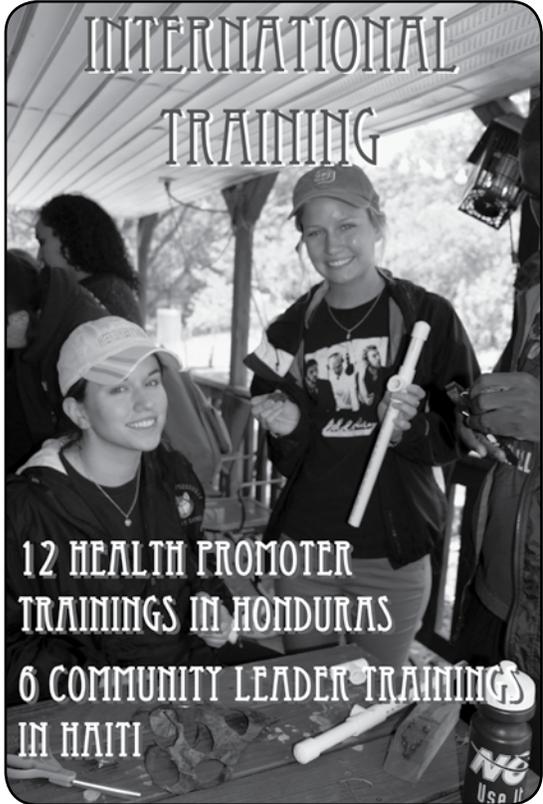
**Nigeria** SIFAT Graduate Pastor Ogbatabo\* is known and loved by our summer Learn & Serve youth whom he has taught for several summers while

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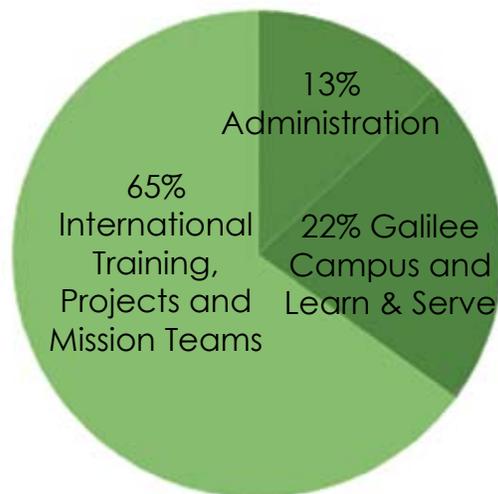
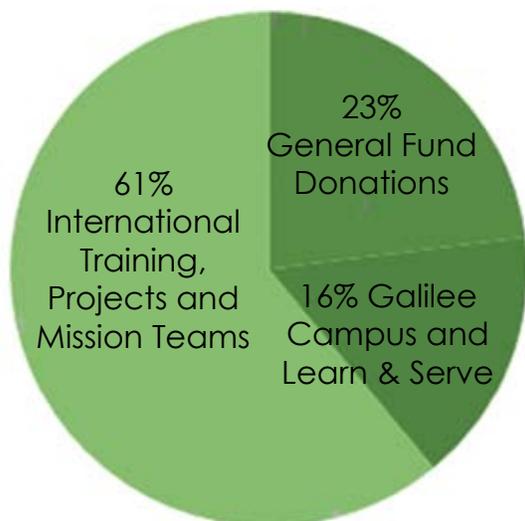
## A Look Back at 2014



# SIFAT Journal



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## Graduate Projects

(Continued from page 7)

teaching at SIFAT. He has successfully finished his first project with SIFAT—quarterly workshops where he taught fuel-efficient cookstoves and water purification in northern Nigeria.

Because of the great danger and persecution of Christians in the area where he lived, he has moved his family to a safer area since completing his training. His new proposal asks for SIFAT to help him repeat this work that has helped hundreds of very poor people both to know Christ and to have a better quality life. He needs \$13,650 over a period of three years. It would be divided into 12 quarterly workshops at a cost of \$1,137.50 each quarter for training 75 participants from different villages to take these teachings back to their villages.



*Pastor Ogbatabo\* trained hundreds of community members, both Christian and Muslim, in northern Nigeria on fuel-efficient cookstoves and bio-sand water filters.*

## Pakistan

SIFAT Graduate Sam\* founded a Christian school in his ancestral rural village in Pakistan where there was no school. He teaches all the children, Christian and Muslim alike. Because they have access to his school if they work together peacefully, it has made a tremendous difference in the village where all are seeking an education for their children. The Muslims are willing for him to teach their children about Christ as long as he also teaches them to read.

Sam needs to add two more grades to make it a complete high school, so his graduates can go to college and be able to influence their country more widely. In March, the Christian church where Sam's family are members was bombed by terrorists. Fourteen church members were killed and seventy seriously wounded. He and his family were visiting another church at the time and escaped injury. But they know every time they step out of their home, they may not return. They need prayer, as well as funding for the school.

## Supporting Graduates' Projects

Only SIFAT-approved graduate projects may receive funding. To donate to one of these projects, please designate your gift with the country and graduate's name.

*\*Some of our graduates ask to use pseudonyms for their safety. Please share their story, but be careful when posting online to protect their identities.*

## Planning for SIFAT's Future

It has been a while since we shared about some of the ways our administration and donors are planning for SIFAT's future. As we celebrated 35 years of ministry last year, we took time to not only reflect on what we have accomplished, but also dream about the years to come!

Our monthly commitments — the SHARE program — help us budget throughout the year, because we know how much has been pledged. We also have donors that have pledged to give through planned giving, stocks and bequests.

SIFAT has two trust funds that will one day pay our administrative costs, so more of our donations go directly to mission projects.

Questions about setting up a monthly donation, setting up planned giving or our trust funds? Contact Tom Corson by e-mail at [info@sifat.org](mailto:info@sifat.org).



## Volunteer Spotlight: Anne Marie, Becky and Marge Take Care of Haitian Students

Sarah Corson  
SIFAT Co-founder

Volunteers supply the missing link! They become our heroes as they add the finishing touches to make the difference between something being ok or excellent! Often, they are the backbone of work projects, which our staff could not do alone.

Anne Marie Toraya is a caretaker for disabled children. She has developed patience and perseverance as she regularly demonstrates compassion to children, while working under stressful situations. This is the second year she took her vacation to volunteer during a SIFAT seminar. Although she traveled overnight by bus, she arrived to campus looking rested and ready to start work.

When Becky Powell was 18, she spent the summer in Puerto Rico with our family on the first mission team we hosted. That

was almost half a century ago, before SIFAT began. Becky is a retired teacher now. What a joy it was this week when she reconnected with us by volunteering!

Marge Stephens was an English professor at Alabama State University in Montgomery until retiring. Her deep faith and passion for justice has prompted her to volunteer with many charitable agencies. She likes to meet people from diverse backgrounds and has enjoyed the Haitian students while working hard to make them feel at home.

We were blessed by having these three women as volunteers at SIFAT during this last training session! They prepared meals, ran errands and became house moms to our Haitian students. In addition to their physical help, their beautiful attitudes and concern for the students added spiritual dimension to the training!



*Becky Powell (left) and Anne Marie Toraya stepped into the roll as house moms for our Haitian students during the recent training.*



*During the second week, Marge Stephens from Auburn was a tremendous help as she joined the training volunteers.*

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## Training Session for Haitian Educators

The month of April brought new friends and old to SIFAT for the April training session, *Education in the Context of Community Development in Haiti*. Esai Dorce, SIFAT alumnus and founder of a Haitian nonprofit that works to improve public school teacher training, returned with 10 other Haitian professionals working in education for a special capacity-building session. Training director Kathy Bryson collaborated with several regional institutions and agencies for this training session, including the College of Education at Tuskegee University, the Educational Leadership program at Auburn University, the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Foundation Center in Atlanta.

In addition to learning technologies at SIFAT such as bio-sand filters for clean drinking water and better nutrition by making concentrated leaf powder full of iron, the students learned from field trips to Auburn City Schools, our local Folsom Headstart preschool and the Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve. These educated Haitians are all committed to working for a better Haiti and volunteer their time to invest in a better education system by training teachers in the things they learned here. The students included two nurses, a Haitian Red Cross worker, a radio journalist, a social worker, a businessman, a computer networker, a microenterprise specialist, community educators and program administrators.



The Consul from the Haitian Embassy in Atlanta attended the graduation ceremony and spoke, thanking SIFAT for what we are doing for his country. Consul Thomas said that Haiti has too many agencies who give handouts to the poor in his country, but what they need are groups like SIFAT who partner with the people and empower them to take charge of Haiti's development.

The graduation was an inspiring time with the graduates sharing specific things they learned. A number mentioned that the visit to the nearby North's Family Farm changed their understanding about how children can learn technologies and microenterprise principles at an early age. They were surprised to hear 14-year-old Luke North teach a class on beekeeping and show the honey he harvests to sell. Seven-year-old Jesse impressed them as he pulled handfuls of earthworms out of the bin where he grows them for gardens and explained how to grow and sell them for a profit.

The students expressed their sincere appreciation for the churches who brought potluck dinners, for those who welcomed them into their homes and churches, for those who shared sweaters and coats, and for those who gave to the scholarship fund to enable SIFAT to offer the training sessions. Sarah Corson brought a handful of sticks to the ceremony and broke a few, one by one. Then she held the remaining ones together and tried to break them at once, but was unable. "These twigs represent SIFAT," she said. "Alone, we can do only a little. But working together, we are not so easily broken. With God's help, we can change the world—at least part of it. SIFAT is the result of God working through thousands of people united in this effort."

Attending the graduation were a wide variety of people from a retired director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and an HIV educator from Alabama Public Health to a volunteer work team from Clear Lake UMC in Texas and a farmer. Some are involved in politics, academics or business, while others are involved in cutting edge technologies, factory jobs or religious work. From grassroots to those in formal institutions, SIFAT is all of us working together to make a better world. Our prayers go with these committed Haitian leaders as they return better equipped to face the challenges as they forge a new Haiti!

## Spanish Students Participate in L&S Programs

Kelli Dodd  
High School Spanish Teacher

Every year, I tell my Spanish students at Ranburne High School that they will have the opportunity to travel around the world. I tell them some of the places we will go: the Philippines, Nepal, Uganda, Nigeria, Liberia, Guatemala, Ecuador and Bolivia. Although we do not physically leave the country or even the state, I am telling the truth. For the past nine years, I have taken an annual trip with groups of my students to experience the *Around the World* program. The students spend a day stepping into foreign cultures through the Global Village. They spend time in each country visiting replica houses. While there, students encounter these cultures firsthand through engaging conversations with the excellent staff and hands-on activities, which push them out of their comfort zone to think beyond their borders. They would otherwise have to leave the country to have this valuable experience.

Besides the *Around the World* program, SIFAT offers a variety of opportunities for school and church groups. One program that I participated in for the

first time this year was *48: A Slum Experience*, a two-day event during Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. Kye Gibbs, a ninth grade Spanish I student reflected that it was much harder than he imagined it would be, but that he was very thankful to have had the experience. "It made me appreciate what I have more and made me wonder how those people do it in developing countries."

Our trip to SIFAT has become an invaluable Ranburne High School Spanish tradition and a turning point in my classroom. The students begin to change their mentality about developing countries as they take an honest look at native cultures and walk

a day in the footsteps of another. We use it to make classroom connections to reality the entire school year. When I talk to students who have graduated, they ask me if I still take students to SIFAT and share memories of how it impacted their lives. The younger students have heard about from the older ones and ask me when it will be their turn to go. It is truly a hidden treasure here in Alabama, and I believe every school needs to take advantage of SIFAT's Learn & Serve programs.



### And here are a few of the students' reactions...

SIFAT showed me that every day I wake up and get to eat and drink is a blessing. It taught me never to say that I was 'starving'. – Lacey Smith, 10th grade

SIFAT opened my eyes that here in Alabama isn't the whole world. – Jessica Isbell, 10th grade

If more people were to take part in SIFAT, it would definitely help them to understand problems around the world and possibly help to better it. – Ben Barnwell, 10th grade

It made me reflect on myself and not to

feel bad, but to feel responsible and help in some way. – Misti Jones, 10th grade

SIFAT is an experience that everyone needs to have. It has taught our class a lot about developing countries that we couldn't learn anywhere else. – Peyton Merrill, 10th grade

It was a good experience to feel and touch what we learn in Spanish class. – Jesse Limon, 10th grade

It was very eye-opening. It changes your outlook on the world and makes you realize how lucky we are to have what

we have. – Gabby Hendrix, 9th grade

SIFAT showed me that I could have an impact on the world and help people who have less than I do. – Nicole Jordan, 9th grade

SIFAT made me want to travel as I get older to help those places and help those in need. – Shelbi East

SIFAT showed me that I take the "little" things for granted and that I should appreciate everything and how we can help under-privileged people. – Trey Yarbrough, 10th grade



# Spring 2015

## Why I Return to Volunteer at 48: A Slum Experience

Carmen Sanders  
Learn & Serve  
Participant and Volunteer

The first time I ever went to SIFAT, I went through the Learn & Serve summer experience after my 7th grade year. I immediately fell in love with the organization and their mission, and I have returned at least once a year. During SIFAT's first 48, I was in the 9th grade. I remember crying myself to sleep the first night because of all of the fatigue, hunger, loneliness, confusion and empathy that welled up inside of me.

"How can people go through their whole lives surviving in poverty like this?" I thought to myself. The better question was, "How can we, as people who call ourselves Christians, sit by and watch this happen?" Going through this experience changed my perspective of the world. It made me see that this place we are living in is much bigger than just ME. It made me see that feeling guilty about seeing this kind of poverty can quickly turn into "toxic remorse" as pastor Timothy Keller puts it. If I just go around feeling guilty for all my wealth, but never turn that into a feeling of responsibility for the rest of this suffering world, what good is that? The connecting feelings that I, and many others, experience at 48 should be a call to action.

The past two years, I have volunteered to represent a character. It is definitely a different kind of experience, representing a certain character in the slums, but it has still been impacting. It makes the experience more personal, knowing that the person you are representing is actually real and living in those conditions. I always think to myself, "What would my life be like if I had been born in this person's situation instead of my current one? How would I feel about Americans?" It has been interesting to see that while there are definitely universal factors of poverty, there are also issues that make each community unique. For example, while the slums in Kenya have problems because of a lack of clean water, a slum in Ecuador may have issues breaking the cycle

of poverty because of a corrupt government.

One of my mother's co-workers has fasted from lunch every Wednesday for 20 years. When people ask her why she does it, she responds, "My family never had much growing up, so I fast every week, so that I will never forget what it is like to be hungry." I would probably give a similar answer if someone asked me why I have been to 48 five times. Although the slum experience is not meant to be an entirely emotional one, there are emotions one feels during the experience that connect us to those in poverty all over the world. Emotions fade away so easily, so I like going back to be reminded of what it feels like to be hungry, tired and cold. Some people ask me why

I don't go to a real slum in a foreign country instead of going back to rural Alabama each year. I go back to 48 because I remember what it was like for me to go through this experience, and I want to help others learn what I did. I have learned the importance of helping those in need. I have learned that we cannot simply stay inside our churches and pray for those in poverty, but we must step out of our comfort zones and actively help them. SIFAT has done a great job of explaining that while some of us may not be able to go to a foreign country to help those in need, there are people right next door to us that need the love of Christ. It is

our job to step out and show them that love in practical ways.

This year at 48, the staff emphasized that, throughout the world, it is usually the powerful that crush the weak. That is just the way life is for the most part. To stop this, we must have an aggressive love; one that looks past outward differences and loves the person we have absolutely nothing in common with. More than anything, I believe that this assertive love is the main thing that all these years at 48 have taught me. It is the love of Christ being shared in practical ways that can help break the cycle of poverty. I hope that many more people will go through this experience, so that they can feel what those in poverty are feeling and learn how to share this love with them.



## Learn & Serve Summer Experience 2015 Theme Reveal

Our Learn & Serve Summer Experience is coming soon! Rising 7th graders through recently graduated seniors spend a week experiencing what daily life is like for those living in developing countries. Students get to spend time in our Global Village, cook some of their own meals and use appropriate technologies that international community leaders learn at SIFAT. Other activities include the Challenge Course, Slum Experience, a cross cultural soccer game, community service projects and more! Encourage youth you know to register for L&S 2015, an experience unlike any other!

This summer, our theme DUST explores how the dust from which God created life is good from the start, how life should not be wasted as it is in slavery and that life can be good again when we notice God's constant efforts at communicating with us in different ways. Life comes from dust, and by the way God made it, it grows and encourages more life. This summer will be a celebration of the life that God has given us!

**It's not too late ... register TODAY  
for L&S 2015!**

**Individuals and Youth Groups Welcome**



Each session begins on Sunday afternoon and ends mid-morning on Friday. Cost is \$299 per person. For more information or to register, e-mail Mary Corson, [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org).

### Summer 2015 Dates

Session 1: June 7-12  
Session 2: June 14-19  
Session 3: June 21-26  
\*Session 4: July 5-10  
\*Session 5: July 12-17  
\*Session 6: July 19-24  
Session 7: July 26-31

\*limited space available

### Ixiamas Update

*(Continued from page 5)*

land to grow food. We will charge a small monthly fee to cover the use of water, but we think if at least one family participates, others might be interested, too.

*Right: Marci and some of the children from the nearby school that use the extra space in our building not only for class, but also visit to read books and play games with the Livingston family.*



### Learn & Serve Interns Needed for 2015-2016

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

Are you a college-aged person looking for a place to serve for a semester or two? Internships with our Learn & Serve campus programs are available for Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. For more information, e-mail [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org).



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Return Service Requested

**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 is what the Lord says in Isaiah 43:19. *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

Recently, a team of volunteers drove through storms to and from Houston, Texas, to SIFAT to help us build a much needed facility that will improve our ability to do ministry here on the Galilee Campus. That same week, we heard from our SIFAT Graduate William Nsubuga in Uganda with his report of the almost completed boys' dorm that will house our orphans and others, up to 250 who will come to be educated at Agape Christian Academy. Can you believe that on the same day both teams were installing the windows in these buildings that will serve to impact the lives of children for Christ in these vastly different cultures on two different continents!



I cannot help but also reflect on the building project that is going on this year in Calderon, Ecuador, led by SIFAT Graduate Pastor Raul and supported by SIFAT mission teams. This project will impact the lives of another 200 children struggling to survive in South America! It will ensure these children have education, spiritual formation and health care and that they are loved and fed, as well as tutored in academics, ensuring they can go to school. Pastor Raul shared about the impact we are having on their community by caring for and training up a new generation starting with three, four and five-year-olds that have their entire lives ahead of them.

This year, we hope to accomplish more than ever before, I believe God has a challenge for us, daring us to believe in him as *He is doing a new thing!* Making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Thank you for standing with SIFAT as you, too, are part of God's testimony to our hurting world. Thank you for helping SIFAT minister to those in need!