



Health and Hope

UMCOR and Mission Volunteers bring assistance to Brisas del Mar, Colombia

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” 2 Cor. 4:8-9

UMCOR ADVANCE # 982168
Hospital Revitalization

BRISAS DEL MAR

Brisas del Mar is a small community in northeast Colombia near Cartagena. It sits at the edge of the country’s vast ranchland just before its rolling hills reach the sea. Its name is descriptive: Ocean Breezes.

This remote town suffered greatly in the hands of the paramilitary and only recently freed from their oppression.

“They are a forgotten people,” says Bishop Juan Cardona of the Methodist Church of Colombia. He describes the town: “There are about 150 homes, just little huts—three to four families in each hut. There’s no employment.”

UMCOR’s INVOLVEMENT

UMCOR became aware of Brisas del Mar in late 2007 and began exploring work in the community through Global Ministries’ Mission Context and Relationships unit.

The community’s terrible past and need for some of life’s most basic necessities brought together several units in Global Ministries with capacities to bring help and healing for this community.

Early in 2008 a Volunteer in Mission team repaired a damaged well outside of the community and installed a water pump to bring water to the people. This is the first of many projects to come.

OVERCOMING A DARK PAST

Brisas del Mar, Colombia, is a community that has been hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down, yet there is an inexplicable resiliency there. Martha, community health nurse from Brisas del Mar is a symbol of the renewal that is taking place in this town.

She serves five communities, including Brisas del Mar, with limited resources. There are no doctors, no clinics and little support.

At one time this area was rife with violence. Martha’s own community was literally held hostage by paramilitaries for years. Brisas del Mar, like the surrounding communities, bears the deep scars left by this time in their history. Nearly every family lost a member to the violence of those years.

HEALTH AND HOPE

The United Methodist Committee on Relief went to Martha to learn about the health needs of Brisas del Mar and of the surrounding communities. As a result, Volunteers in Mission are constructing a clinic in the town that will serve the entire area. Clinic construction is set to begin January 2009.



GBGM missionary Lu Garcia gives a community health workshop in Brisas Del Mar.



Volunteers and Brisas del Mar community members watch water flow into their village for the first time.

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Plans are also in place to build a facility for visiting doctors to stay in while in Brisas del Mar.

In the meantime, UMCOR is working with Martha to ensure that the clinic and related health programs are created with community involvement. This empowers community members to take charge of some of their most basic needs. It also ensures that the health program will be sustainable by the community. UMCOR is also connecting Martha with additional resources and relationships to improve the life there.

Throughout the process UMCOR has worked closely with Bishop Juan Cardona of the Methodist Church of Colombia. It was

Bishop Cardona who first brought the needs of Brisas del Mar to light. “The effort is to create a new reality, for a future filled with hope,” he said of the work in Brisas del Mar.

“We want to bring new life into this community that has suffered so much” –Sam Dixon, Deputy General Secretary, UMCOR

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