

# Operation Rescue the Children, Inc.

*A Special Field Report... by Sandy Gil*



Operation Rescue The Children, Inc.'s Mission Trip  
Japón, Choloma-Cortés, Honduras, 12/7/06

We arrived at San Pedro Sula's busy airport on a rainy Thursday afternoon. Our mission team of ten members received a warm welcome from local project staff, volunteers, and smiling children who greeted us with bright-colored hand-made posters reading, "Welcome to Honduras." This was my first time traveling to Latin-America, and I was eager to see for myself what life is like for the residents of the Japón village in Choloma-Cortés, Honduras. As our team of ten got on the bus and traveled away from the city and into the municipality of Choloma-Cortés, where ORC's programs are based, I was confronted with image after image of unpaved and narrow roads with deep potholes, trash on the sides of the streets, and homes with tin roofs that looked like they would be blown away if the wind only intensified a few notches.



A church in the village of Japón

Our first stop was at the local chapel, where teens from the project were beginning to gather for a time of worship and brief introductions from the "visitors" in town. I was deeply moved to see so many adolescents engaged in passionate worship, a sincere expression of a living faith in the God they serve, despite the daily poverty that surrounds them.



Our next stop was at the feeding center located just across the street, which is operated primarily by volunteer staff from the community through a partnership with Fundación Esperanza VIVA (Living Hope Foundation). Children lined up outside of the feeding center with their own bowl, cup, and spoon in hand eagerly anticipating their last meal of the day. The streets were wet and muddy, but the majority of the children came to the feeding center in either flip-flops, if they owned any, or no shoes at all. Their shirts and hair were wet, but no one seemed bothered by that. The children began their mealtime with a prayer of thanksgiving for the provision of food, and a heartwarming request for God to protect every other child in the community who would not share the same blessing and would go to bed that night on an empty stomach.



Mealtime at the feeding center



Sandy with a feeding program participant



Japón residents leaving feeding center

After mealtime was over, I began assisting the child sponsorship program by obtaining brief histories of children who remain without a sponsor. After only a few interviews, I became aware of the lasting effects of malnutrition on the development of the children in Japón. Many children reporting thirteen and fourteen years of age seemed to me to have the appearance of eight and nine-year olds. Self-reported cases of anemia, abscesses, and skin conditions were frequent. I came face to face with the painful reality of illiteracy among women in the community when I asked a mother whom I was interviewing to spell the name of her child for me and she was unable to do so.



Sandy interviewing families



Sandy with a feeding program staff member and mother of program participants

It was the next day that I met José. Eight year old José has been living with his grandmother ever since his parents abandoned him. It was about one or two in the afternoon and José was hanging around the office, getting the attention of adults who were helping to coordinate the



outreach activities for the day. It was a Saturday morning and the feeding center, which currently has a budget to provide only two meals per day on Mondays through Fridays, was closed. Fanny Chavarria, the Vice-President and Executive Director of Fundación Esperanza VIVA, called me over to listen to a very moving dialogue that she was having with José. She asked little José what he had to eat that day. "Nothing," he replied. "Are you hungry?" she gently inquired. A very somber "yes" was his response. Since the feeding program does not have a budget to provide meals on the weekends at this time, José would typically go without a meal until Monday when the feeding center reopens. We sent another child off to the corner store to buy a carton of milk and some bread for José to eat. José was waiting patiently in an office chair, staring at the muddy street outside, when I noticed that he was awfully silent, with a sad expression on his face. I bent down next to him and softly whispered, "What are you thinking about?" His poignant two-word response was, "drinking milk." When José caught a glimpse of the boy coming up the street with the milk he had just purchased, José bolted out of his chair, ran to the boy, and grabbed the milk carton out of his hands. Eight-year old José is only one of the many at-risk children living in the poverty-stricken village of Japón who would go to bed hungry without the hands of Christ in the community to feed them.



8-year old José



José and Fanny Chavarria, Vice-President and Executive Director of our partner ministry Fundación Esperanza VIVA (Living Hope Foundation) in Honduras.



Left to Right: Sandy, Fatima (Kitchen Manager), and Holly (Child Sponsorship Coordinator)  
Front: Fatima's daughter



Left to Right: Pastor Nehemias Chavarria (President of Fundación Esperanza VIVA and Pastor of ORC's partner ministry Iglesia Avance Misionero), Sandy, and Diana (program participant)



Christ commissioned us all to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Each of us has an individual responsibility to share the love of Christ and not allow the voice of poverty, hunger, illness, and despair to cloud the voice of the One who calls in the midst of that darkness. We must respond to the call to help the poor, for if [we] spend [ourselves] in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then [our] light will rise in the darkness, and [our] night will become like the noonday” (Isaiah 58:10, NIV).



**Mural on a busy street of San Pedro Sula, Honduras. It reads,  
“Jesus Christ, Lord  
Yesterday, Today, and Forevermore”**