



# PCCR

PLAIN COMPASSION CRISIS RESPONSE



IRAQ

MAY - JUNE 2020



*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.*

*- Lamentations 3:22,23*

The month of June brought with it cooler weather, but also rain, rain, and more rain! The river that borders Arauca is again full. The paved streets are washed clean and the dirt paths of the villages have become a muddy challenge for all who dare traverse them.

Quarantine restrictions are still in place but are not rigidly enforced at this time. The elderly are again sitting in front of their houses. Restaurants are beginning to open, and traffic in the streets is returning to normal. We are told that flights to/from Arauca will again be available to the public on August 31.

In the past few weeks, we have purchased two motorcycles (motos, as they are called here). It's so freeing to be able to hop on the moto and arrive at our destination in just a few minutes. For the boys on our team, it is especially good therapy! They have plans to rent a house out in the one village and this will allow them to travel back and forth. In the short time we've had the motos we are finding so many uses for them.

This past month we have distributed over 7,000 pounds of rice and 3,500 pounds of lentils to needy families. To avoid developing dependency we are not providing all of the food needed for a family but enough to soften their hardship. We are beginning to experiment with monthly food parcels for the most desperate. We continue to distribute prepared food and water in the morning to families living by the riverfront. Recently we have also been taking this prepared food to bus loads of refugees that are returning to Venezuela.

The financial hardship of quarantine is still keenly felt by the poorest. There are regular requests for assistance with rent payments for those who are on the verge of eviction. It is difficult to decide who needs it the most. The handicapped, those recovering from illness, mothers with newborns and the elderly are some who have received aid in this way. \$75 - \$100 is the average cost for a month's rent and will make the difference between living under a roof or having to stay on the riverbank, the park, or the streets.

The rainy season is a reality which all must face. For our staff, it means frequently getting drenched in the torrential downpours that seem to pop out of nowhere or getting soaked with perspiration from the humidity that comes with the rainy season.

For those living in shacks it means leaking roofs, floodwaters that surround and enter their homes, wet dirt floors, and in severe conditions homes washed away where the river's bank collapses. These families need materials to rebuild and we are considering the possibilities of providing this aid but it would mean extra funding that we don't have at this point.

We have been helping with requests for medicine as well. The hospital is nearby and many who do not have money for treatment there will come to the center instead. There are a lot of cases of diarrhea among children right now. Of course, among all of the legitimate pleas for help come those who are lying to try to get money for other purposes. Most of these swindlers are obvious but there are a few who have taken advantage of our compassion. It is easy to grow cynical and view every request with suspicion when this happens, but then we remember the example of Christ who poured out His love upon a man who would betray Him. We pray daily for wisdom and discernment. It is impossible for us to meet every need around us. Our desire is to recognize the appointments that God has planned for us so that we can join Him in what He is doing.

Thank you for your prayer and financial support! Together we are sharing the love of Christ in Arauca, Columbia.

- Conrad



*Food parcels for families.*

*Food distributions have become a big part of outreach efforts in Colombia since the quarantines started in March. In June, our team distributed over 7,000 pounds of rice and 3,500 pounds of lentils to needy families besides daily distributions of prepared foods. Prepared foods are vitally important as many of the Venezuelans do not have the capacity to cook food.*

CRISIS REPORT: **COLOMBIA**



For \$10 you can support an impoverished Venezuelan or Colombian family with a monthly food parcel consisting of rice, beans, oil, pasta, salt and gospel literature. Because of these parcels, hundreds of families have received the gospel message.



Repacking food for distribution



The new motorcycle has proven extremely useful and has enabled the guys to reach even more people. A heartfelt thank you to those who helped make this possible! These will allow us to travel distances without having to rely strictly on taxis.



Scan the code above with your smart phone or visit our website for more information on the needs in Colombia and the difference your monthly support can make in the lives of Venezuelan refugees. If you prefer, you can also mail us a check each month marked "COLOMBIA MONTHLY SUPPORT". Thank you for your continued support!



Things continue to change in Iraq.

In May we did food distributions for several families, as well as helped a woman get kidney surgery done. We also spent some time visiting neighbors, and friends. Everything was pretty much on lock-down during this time.

Recently, we were notified that the project we were doing on the Syrian border will not be starting up again after Covid-19. The mass displacement of people in Syria has slowed down and almost stopped. Currently, there is no immediate crisis there.

By the middle of June, we were asked to open the community center again. We went in, cleaned, and bought a generator that was strong enough to power the A/C units. We rebuilt the classes and started teaching the last week in June. Our classes are not as big as they were before because of meeting social distancing requirements, however, the students were eager to get back into the classes and learn.

During the last half-year, Maribeth and I have been feeling that it's time for us to think about transitioning back to the U.S. By the beginning of May we felt like we needed to make this happen sooner rather than later! We needed to wait until things opened up enough to fly home as well as make sure the work here could continue without us.

With time we have realized that the community center is no longer dependent on having American staff there. We have a solid team of locals, led by a Yezidi believer who is more than capable of managing things.

We had a number of phone calls, meetings, and saw we can leave as soon as we tie up some loose ends, and finish setting things up to be managed by the local team.



*Tahseen (left) with the staff from the community center. They are a mixed ethnic group (Yezidi, Muslim and Christian) working together to bring hope to their people.*

We sold some of our possessions, put the rest in storage, and by the end of June, we were able to fly our family and all the International staff back to the U.S.

At this point, I still hold the director position, and the manager in Iraq reports to me. I will probably be returning for a visit in 3 or 4 months from now, as well as watching for any crisis needs that develop across the middle east.

Pray for us as we walk through this transition. It is a new step for the organization; however, it feels right. The ultimate goal of PCCR has been to eventually hand the work over to the locals so we can move on to other places. We feel like the time has come to put this goal into action.

We have other goals as well; they involve transitioning this project from a community center to something that will become more self-sustainable. Those pieces are not all clear yet, however, I believe it will come together with time.

Thanks for your support. We appreciate you.

--Daniel



*After the community center was shut down for 4 months due to Covid-19, we have been able to open again. We have smaller classes due to social distancing requirements but there is still plenty of energy and life there.*



*Loretta with some of the girls on the last day at the community center. Georgina (on the left) took the goodbye especially hard. In these girl's short lifetimes, they have seen far more than their share of goodbyes.*



*Two of my students - Georgina on the left and Salwa on the right. This was the last time I saw them.*

It's still hard to believe that I will be leaving so suddenly but I trust that God knows what is best. In the last two months of the quarantine I talked to each of these girls almost everyday on the phone. In this way we managed to build relationships even while being apart.

I have been working with some of these girls since I first came here. The news of me leaving so suddenly was crushing to these girls. Georgina put her head down and refused to look at me as she tried to hide her tears when I gave her a goodbye card. After a while she gave up trying to hide the tears that were streaming down her cheeks. As she clung to me in a farewell hug. She was groping for something to say, some way to show me how great her grief and her love for me was and then she found it, the wrist watch on her hand that was something very precious and valuable to her. With satisfaction she yanked it from her hand and thrust it into mine. I gave it back to her telling her I don't want to take from her but when I saw that it comforted her if I took it, I received it as the treasure that it is.

Some of the girls in my morning class were new students this week. For some of them, this was only their first or second day of class. But even these students grieved the loss of our parting so soon. Somehow I believe my presence here was more then that of just a good English teacher. The truth is I'm not that great of a teacher. I'm a new teacher who is learning how to teach a classroom as much or more as they are learning English.

But that's not really the point anyway. I think me just simply being here for them through the quarantine (even if we could only meet by phone) was comforting, and that our time in class is more to these girls then just learning English. It's a time they can almost forget there are masks on our faces and gloves on our hands. It's a small moment in time where their world actually seems at peace and the fear of Erdogan's threats and the terror of the bombs that were falling so close to camp this past week can seem far away for now.

- Loretta



We went to a village to do a food distribution for the poorest families and the widows, to minister to them through music and singing, and to find out if they had medical needs we could help with. We were also handing out some Lemongrass hygiene kits that were donated and taken over.

They were all delighted to see us and very open to visiting and the music. I loved just being in their presence because of their humble hospitality and openness.

- Katrina



We had the awesome opportunity to help manage and fund a football (soccer) tournament again.

This tournament was specifically for IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from Sinjar. The tournament went very smoothly, and the local military general told us that he has never seen a tournament run this well. Usually they need to have soldiers and police officers there to keep the players from fighting and turning against each other. There is so much tension and fear between different ethnic groups that tend to come to the surface during something competitive such as a tournament.

One team in this tournament team was actually a mixed team of Muslim and Yezidi players. That is unprecedented here in this area of Iraq, and people are asking us how we can do this, and actually have it work.

They believe putting different ethnic groups together on a team is a sure setup for sectarian conflicts between them, while we believe it's an opportunity to bridge tribal, and ethnic conflicts. This military general is still trying to figure out how we can do this without it blowing up on us. It's an amazing opportunity to give them a glimpse of the teamwork and collaboration that can happen when people focus on their similarities instead of on their differences. It's a great teaching opportunity on the Kingdom of God.

- Daniel



Tahseen awarding a trophy to the winning team's leader

*Yezidi boys and girls grow up with an understanding that they are superior to all other races.*

*Muslim boys and girls grow up with an understanding that all who will not accept Islam as their religion must be exterminated and that Yezidis are especially bad.*

*These sporting events have become a tremendous opportunity to teach them that we are all created equal, that God loves each one, and that Jesus died to pay the penalty for ALL of mankind's sins.*

*Tahseen's burden for his people is that they would learn to work together instead of against each other, that they would embrace the principles of Love instead of hate; forgiveness instead of retaliation; and most of all, Christ instead of Islam.*

*I burst into the room and saw that the rest of the family was awake. "I have food!" I said. "Here, an angel gave it to me!"*

Of course, I had to explain what had really happened since no one believed that I had really seen an angel. I was still convinced that I had, but really, at this point we were more concerned about the food. We quickly opened the bag and emptied it onto the one blanket. After all, we had nowhere else to put it. No table, no kitchen sink, in fact we had no furniture at all. Just one open room with a dirt floor and big window openings on the one side that let the cold wind blow right on in. However, for now we had food.

It really wasn't much. Six oranges, a small bag of cucumbers, some bags of rice and beans, and two bottles of water but to us it was a literal feast. My stomach was so shrunk by this time that I could only eat about half an orange and one small cucumber, but they tasted absolutely delicious! We had been able to buy a little food here and there on the journey from the Turkish border to here, but I hadn't had a full meal since the night before we left Sinjar, weeks before.

Over the next few days things improved slightly for our little family. We were able to find a few thin foam mattresses and the Americans gave us each a blanket. The nights were getting colder though, and we all slept each night in all our clothes, wrapping the blankets tightly around ourselves. It wasn't until we had been there for three days that we were able to get an electric wire run into the house. It wasn't much but it was enough to power one small electric heater which (if we all huddled around it) helped take the chill off.

The fourth day was when things really started to get interesting. For the first time I was truly grateful for all the hours I had sat in school and for the extra classes Dad had insisted we take. Amar had taken a full class in English Language and was pretty good with it. I hadn't had as much schooling in this but had a good enough grasp on English to get by. This proved extremely helpful when the Americans showed up. We had heard that they were helping to make the concrete structures more weather-tight by closing in the openings with wood and plastic, but they hadn't gotten to our house yet. On the fourth morning we were in the village they came to our house. They had a young man from the village with them to translate but were delighted to find that we knew English! I sat back and listened as they talked excitedly with my Dad and older brother. They were getting window and door measurements and said they would bring materials and close the openings in our room as soon as they could. However, there were many houses that needed to be enclosed and many families had babies, elderly, or sick people. While we were cold and miserable at night, others were still worse off than we were.

After chatting with my Dad and brother about our situation for a while one of them turned to me. "Do you speak English too?" He asked?

I was a bit taken aback. In my culture children my age were mostly ignored (unless we got in the way, of course) so for this important visitor to address me directly caught me by surprise. "Yes, a little" I said.

"Great!" He said, "Would you be willing to help us? We need more translators."

"Me?" I said in surprise, "Yes! I will help," I said. "I don't know English as good as Amar." I quickly added, "but I will help. I can translate for you. I will come with you now."

Of course, I was delighted with this opportunity. For one thing, working with the Americans gave me instant status among the rest of the refugees. Suddenly I wasn't just the newcomer that didn't know where he fit in anymore, I was important! The Americans wanted me to help them! But it didn't take me long to find out that the Americans cared about everyone. In fact, over the next few days, as I spent every waking hour with the Americans, I found out that they not only cared about every single person, they cared in a way that I had never seen before.

There was one young boy, probably seven years old, that had a growth on his stomach. It was a big, ugly thing, about the size of a large yam. Everyone made fun of him for it. No one even really wanted to be his friend for fear of being mocked as well. But the Americans were different. Not only were they not ashamed to be seen with this young boy, it seemed as if they sought him out, as if they really cared about him. The first time we met him they insisted that we stop and talk to him. Then they asked if they could pray for him. "Pray?" Amar said, "Well, of course, what can it hurt?"

'Not that it'll do any good,' I thought to myself. But that didn't seem to worry them at all.

There were four of us that day, Abe, Jason, Amar and I and when they asked if they could pray, I didn't expect them to pray for him right then and there but that is exactly what they did. Right there in the street, within sight of everyone, they laid their hands on his shoulders and prayed that God would bless this young man and that He would heal him of his growth. It really wasn't so much what they prayed as how. They prayed as if God could really hear them. As if He was standing right there with us! And they prayed in the name of Jesus! To me, Jesus was a prophet. Yes, he was a good man when he lived but why they would pray to him was beyond me. Hadn't Jesus been here a long time ago? Yes, he had died and been resurrected but wasn't it Taus Malek, the mighty angel, that had come down and resurrected him? Why would they pray to Jesus when it was Taus Makek that was the strong one? Why pray to God but in the name of Jesus? What did Jesus have to do with it? Wasn't he an angel just like Taus Malek? I wasn't sure, but Abe and Jason seemed very confident that God could hear them and so I just watched. What I saw over the next few days changed my life and the lives of my family forever.

## PLAIN COMPASSION CRISIS RESPONSE

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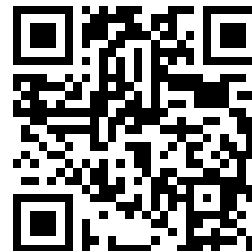
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**Colombia!**



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### COLOMBIA

Currently, all flights to the foreign fields have been closed because of the corona virus. At this point we are expecting travel to Colombia to resume after August 31st. Of course, there are no guarantees at this point but that is what we are being told. The needs in Colombia are even greater now than they were before the quarantine! Please pray about getting involved and helping us to meet these needs and making disciples of these nations.

- A mature, single girl to help in the kitchen preparing meals, cleaning, doing general housework and assisting with schooling Conrad's five children
- A mature, single man to serve as a team leader long term (3 months or more)
- Short-term (1 or 2 month) volunteers to serve in street ministry and assisting with general and household duties
- Another couple to join Conrad and Darlene as they serve and assist them with caring for the needs of team members and running day-to-day operations
- As always, Spanish speaking volunteers are greatly needed in Colombia

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