
Helping Hands

Students Reach Out to the World

Nina Martínez

They all had different reasons for going. Some went for adventure. Some went to have fun. But no matter what reason they gave, they always included another reason, too. They went to help others.

Following four weeks in the jungles of Sabah, an eastern state of Malaysia, 12 students from Pacific Union College (PUC) accomplished what they set out to do—help people. Sponsored by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the students worked with local villagers to install a water system to bring clean, pure water to two villages.

Students rose at the crack of dawn each day and made their way to the work site, a 45-minute drive on mountain "roads." It took a four-wheel drive vehicle to get them over the steep, bumpy paths to the villages where they worked.

In two jungle areas they installed water gravitation systems. The systems work by directing water from a high mountain source to villages in the valley below.

Working conditions were not pleasant. Jungle temperatures reached 90° F every day with 100 percent humidity. The students were drenched with sweat minutes after beginning work each morning. No one did much to look

nice during the day. The standard dress was old jeans and a T-shirt.

"This was a great trip, but it was no vacation," said Ken Miller, an elementary education major. "Anyone who thought we were going to relax on a beach was in for a big surprise."

The first step the students took was to dam up the water source on the mountain. Then they hauled an 800-gallon storage tank up a steep hill to an area above the villages. "This was our most difficult task" said Alex Fox, a public relations major. "Some of us pulled, some pushed, and we took frequent water breaks until we got the tank up the hill." The water from the dam fills up the storage tank each night so the villagers have water during the day.

The students then laid pipes through the jungle from the dam to the storage tank. Villagers had

earlier cleared the jungle brush so it would be possible to lay the pipe.

"From the storage tank we laid pipe to the villages and installed water fixtures in the village homes," said Sheri Ballard, a music education major. "We were all thrilled when we saw clean water, with good pressure, flowing from the faucets. All our sweat and hard work paid off."

"Clean water will mean healthier lives for the people. They will be able to drink and not get sick. That makes us feel great," Fox said.

The students ate, slept, and socialized at the local Adventist mission. Five women shared two rooms, and the men bunked in together in another room. Nightly activities included playing table games, talking, reading, and pillow fights.

"Though we had fun, what I remember most about this trip is the help we gave the people here," said Judy Dale, an elementary education major. "Even though it seemed small to us, it meant the world to them."

"I think if we could take all the PUC students there, they would return with a different perspective," said Lary Taylor, the faculty sponsor. "I'd like to see ADRA sponsor more projects



Students worked in Malaysia to provide safe drinking water for villagers.

like this. Students come back different people. They view the world differently; they appreciate what they have, and after seeing people with so much less, they see what they have as shareable with others. It's a great experience."

"I can't really explain what a trip like this is like," said Dale. "You just gotta go!"

An International Program

The student group from PUC was only one of several volunteer groups that traveled and worked during the summer of 1990. And 1991 promises to be another busy year for ADRA volunteers. These will include students from both denominational and public colleges and universities. Young professionals will also serve for longer periods. (See box.)

The Trans-European Division will send volunteers to Nicaragua for the second time to help build a vocational school near Managua. In 1990, 30 young people from Denmark and Norway spent a month at the school working on a drainage system.

"It was hard work," said Arvild Anderson, ADRA's project leader in Nicaragua. "We worked long

hours and didn't have the best tools available, but we managed. The Nicaraguan people are friendly—they made our experience in their country one we will never forget." The second group of volunteers will go to Nicaragua in December 1991 to help complete the vocational school.

About 400 people from the South Pacific Division volunteered in places as diverse as the Caribbean, Botswana, Hong Kong, Nicaragua, Kenya, Guyana, Korea, and Nepal. They taught, built, nursed, repaired, drilled for water, and enriched the lives of thousands of people living in developing countries.

Thirty young people from Japan went to Nepal in the spring of 1991 to build homes for people suffering from leprosy. The lepers have lived in Khokana, an isolated leper colony, under wretched conditions. "It was hard work, but the young people enjoyed it and were happy to help others," said Kiyoshi Fujita, ADRA's director in Japan. In October, 30 young people from Germany will go to Nepal to help the lepers in Khokana.

Canada had two volunteer groups going out in the summer of

1991. Fifteen students from Parkview Adventist Academy travelled to the Caribbean island of Dominica to work on a latrine project on the Carib Indian Reserve. Students from Canadian Union College went to Thailand to work on water projects that will bring safe water to villages in the northern region of the country.

Students from five Adventist colleges in the United States went to help people in some of the poorest parts of the world this past summer.

Andrews University sent volunteers to Sabah, Malaysia. Students from Union College went to Sarawak, Malaysia, to work on water projects. Because of their work access to clean water will improve the health of people in developing countries and reduces the number of children who die from water-borne diseases.

Pacific Union College sent volunteers to Irian Jaya, Indonesia, to build a swinging bridge so that people living in isolated villages could have access to the outside world. La Sierra University students travelled to Peru to build a school on the floating islands of Lake Titicaca. Walla Walla College sponsored students to Malawi. They built a primary school and teachers housing, and worked on a water project.

ADRA Projects

Working in more than 65 countries worldwide and able to provide immediate disaster relief to more than 190 countries, ADRA reaches out to help those in need in nearly every corner of the world. ADRA focuses its resources on seven specific areas:

Helping Disaster Victims.

Responding to the needs of those who are victims of natural and man-made disasters is ADRA's oldest area of help. Following a cry for help, ADRA quickly organizes shipments of food, medicines, clothing, tents, blankets, and other emergency



Volunteers and villagers usually become fast friends.

supplies needed in the disaster area. Volunteers distribute these supplies to the most needy victims. However, ADRA's response goes far beyond relief. ADRA stays in the affected community to rebuild homes and lives.

Improving the Health of Mothers and Children.

Children in developing countries are the most vulnerable victims of poverty. Each year 14 to 15 million die from diseases associated with poverty and malnutrition. Most of these deaths could be prevented.

More than half of ADRA's projects are designed to benefit and improve the health of mothers and children. ADRA holds clinics to immunize children against the major childhood diseases and teaches mothers about nutrition and simple health remedies. Supplemental food is given to pregnant women, nursing mothers, and preschool children. A combination of these activities increases the chance of survival for the most vulnerable children.

Improving Family and Community Health Techniques.

Recognizing that many of the world's poor are subsistence farmers, ADRA teaches the poor better methods of farming to double or triple their usual yield. More food results in better health and additional income for people who market their products.

Developing Clean and More Abundant Water Resources.

Developing clean water resources is a key element in ADRA's fight against poverty, hunger, and disease. Safe drinking water means less disease and better health. Last year four million children died from diarrhea, as a direct result of drinking contaminated water. Most of these deaths could have been prevented if clean water had been available. Abundant water for farmers means increased crop production and the difference between hunger and a full stomach.

Training People in Vocational Skills.

ADRA sponsors education and training in subjects ranging from tree planting to nutrition. ADRA also provides technical assistance for doctors, nurses, and community health workers. Giving people the opportunity to learn new skills enables them to find new jobs and become self-reliant.

Distributing Food in Areas Where Hunger is a Long-term Problem.

ADRA feeds hungry people in areas where there is no other alternative. Children are given supplemental meals at school, mothers receive milk for their babies, and men and women get their wages in food for projects they are working on that benefit the community. Roads, schools, and community centers are built in these food-for-work projects.

Building and Supplying Clinics, Hospitals and Schools.

ADRA builds and supplies clinics, dispensaries, hospitals, primary schools, colleges, and medical river launches. Many of these clinics and schools are in areas of the world where such facilities are inadequate or nonexistent.

Through hundreds of projects like these, ADRA brings hope to thousands of people who struggle each day for survival. This is one way to show God's love to the poorest of His children.

Nina Martínez is ADRA's assistant director for news and information. Nina served for one year as a volunteer in Italy, where she produced programs in English for Adventist World Radio.

ADRA Volunteers

Students

In summer ADRA works with Adventist colleges and universities in several countries to send students on six-week volunteer projects. No special skills are required, except a willingness to learn and to work. Students have served in some of the poorest areas of the world digging water wells or building schools or homes for the disadvantaged. Volunteers pay their own transportation, and ADRA provides room, board, and project costs. Some colleges and universities give scholarships ranging from U.S.\$500 to U.S.\$1000 for this service. Adventist students attending public colleges and universities are also involved in these volunteer projects.

Professionals

Adventist professionals willing to volunteer six months to a year are needed. Individuals pay transportation costs, and ADRA provides room and board. Language skills are not always required, but are valuable. At present, professionals in these areas are especially in demand: biomedical technicians, computer programmers, physicians, engineers, experienced construction workers, mechanics, nurses, persons trained in agriculture, persons with training in finance and management, and technical writers, for proposal research and writing.

In times of disasters ADRA needs medical professionals on an immediate, short-term volunteer basis. In those cases ADRA usually pays all expenses.

Contact

Dialogue readers interested in serving as volunteers should contact: ADRA Volunteer Coordinator; 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; U.S.A.