

Dirtying Feet in Ecuador by Scott Mikula

When I and eight other members of MRCC decided to go on a missions trip to Ecuador, we were making a choice to get our feet dirty. In a literal sense--digging holes and tromping through mud will do that--but also in a figurative sense. We left behind our clean, safe home environments and walked paths that were unknown, uncomfortable--unclean. Christ sends us to make disciples of all nations, but when our journey is done he also washes our feet.

*"... Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:33*

This concept of "dirty feet Christianity" was just one of the ideas we were introduced to on the trip. Compassion Connection's purpose in having short-term teams is as much to educate and prepare the team members to be missionaries as it is to have them do work, so the first half of our trip was composed of Bible study, team building exercises, learning about the Ecuadorian culture, and training in missionary work. We had an opportunity to tour the Missionary Aviation Fellowship airfield in Shell Mera, learning about the history and the current state of missionary aviation in the region. (This was where Jim Elliot and Nate Saint flew out of in the 1950's--if you're not familiar with their story consider reading [Through the Gates of Splendor](#), by Elisabeth Elliot.)



After these days of training and preparation, the real work began. Our first work day was in a town called Arosamena Tola, a jungle town some twenty minutes by bus from the city of Tena where we were based. This town has a dark spiritual history--they have not been able to retain a pastor for more than eight months, losing them due to sins such as infidelity or other difficult circumstances--and this has progressively discouraged the believers there. We worked on a church building, painting it and also building a retaining wall and an area of level ground behind it for a patio. We had a chance to meet a local man named Julio who Steve Youngren—the founder of Compassion Connection—believes is capable of rising up to be a church leader for that community. Our work, we hope, was an encouragement to the believers there and especially to Julio, reminding them that the body of Christ is alive throughout the world and that they are not on their own.



The following work day was at a village called Muyuna Huarayacu, smaller, more isolated, and less developed than Arosamena Tola. This day of work could not have been more different than the previous. Muyuna was a new mission field--at the time we were

there, they were just attempting to start a Bible study there. We were there to work on the village's school buildings, in order to benefit that community and hopefully open doors for future missionary work there. No sooner did our bus arrive than the entire town turned out to greet us! Toddlers, teenagers, adults, men, women--they were elated that we were there, effusive in their welcomes, and keen to offer us help in everything that we were doing. There was much work done that day--endless painting, moving playground



equipment, pouring cement--but the real work was in our interactions with the town full of people. We taught games to the children--and learned some of theirs; we laughed alongside the Ecuadorians, trying to talk to them in our broken Spanish; we shared their foods (sometimes without quite knowing what we were eating!); we played Frisbee and volleyball and soccer. It was with weighted hearts that we piled back on the bus, long after the sun had set that night, but we were invigorated, knowing that our hands and our hearts had been used in God's work that day.

We were in Ecuador for less than two weeks, but we trust that God will use our trip to have an impact over a much longer time--both in Ecuador and in Redmond.

As we learned, being a missionary doesn't have to be in a foreign country, and it isn't just something you do for a few weeks over the summer. It's a life for the entire church to live, every day. Take a look at your feet. How clean are they? What can you do to get them a little bit dirty?