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OA's Editor writes:, October 2004

"All Change" is the theme of Jerry Clewett's article about development work in Nepal. When I worked in Africa on a development project, I was surprised how quickly things changed there - mind you, 'change' is not the same as 'progress'! **Operation Agri BMM** has seen a lot of change recently, as we responded to our changing world and to pressures put on us. We hope it has led to progress.



Malcolm Drummond

Let me introduce the **latest change** for OA. **Malcolm Drummond** has been appointed to the OA's new post of "**Supporter Relations Officer**". Malcolm is a Baptist Minister, has a doctorate and, until recently, was working for "Churches Together" in London. He is a pastor of a church and is also now, part-time, OA's only employee, a change made necessary by our growth.

Having a Supporter Relations Officer will strengthen our team enormously.

Malcolm will handle the subscriptions of **OA Partners** (*Are you an OA Partner? - see [Support Us](#)*). He will acknowledge and deposit gifts and maintain OA's address list. For these operations he will use OA's **new computer data-base**. The data-base has been worked-on for over a year, mainly by Gill Ashley-Smith and Michael Putnam (our Treasurer). It is tailored to OA's needs. **That is another change.**

"What good is change unless someone benefits from it?" Ah! That's the beauty of OA, we know who benefits! Just as we know in whose Name we do it.

Glyn Jones, Editor

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ANG 4, Angola, School of basic computing, IEBA

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Computers and Computer Training

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Angola



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Angolan power supply

Outreach Abroad

by John Ottaway, October 2004

It is more than two years since the **Peace Accord** was signed in **Angola**, bringing relief from one of Africa's most intractable civil wars. How is life there progressing?

Before **The School of Basic Computing (SBC)** was set up in **Cazenga, Luanda**, two years ago, it was important to be sure of three things:

Would the equipment be safe?

Would the students be able to pay?

Would there be electricity to run the computers?

Happily, the equipment has been kept safe and well used too! The first 16 students were awarded certificates and another 18 have just finished. Some students, it is true, have found paying the 70% of the fees upon subscription difficult to deal with - and dishonesty is not completely unknown in this regard! But the biggest handicap has undoubtedly been the unreliability of the power supply. This has meant the courses run for longer than planned (particularly the PowerPoint course), and some students have dropped out. **Operation Agri BMM** therefore sent a grant for the purchase of a generator to overcome this problem and help more people like **Alfonso Vicente Pedro**, who completed his training successfully and now has a computing job at SOMAFIL. He says: *"I came to thank [the Baptists who run the SBC] for this great help, because what I learned was of great value in seeing my life stabilised. My acknowledgement goes especially to **OA**, the financier of this project."*



Clinic building, awaiting finishing, at Terra Vermelha

Maybe **Mr. Vuvu Kwanzambi** will eventually be able to offer a similar testimony. A married man without a family, Vuvu Kwanzambi completed his secondary education at Mbanza Ngungu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, specialising in agriculture. Now, local partners **IEBA** have identified his skills and would like him to become part of their **Development Department**, organising agricultural projects in the various church regions. But first he needs to take his own education further. He has just started a five-year course at the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences at Huambo in the south of Angola to equip him for the task of rural development. His studies are being supported partly by IEBA, and partly by a grant from **OA**. As people displaced by the war return to their home regions, they need as much help and support as possible to resume their former livelihoods in farming and horticulture.



Terra Vermelha Project staff and children outside their school

One of the places from which displaced people are returning is **Terra Vermelha**, the "red earth" township on the outskirts of the capital city. Terra Vermelha today is unrecognisable in comparison with the shanty town of just a few years ago, built on a rubbish tip. Makeshift accommodation has been replaced by houses constructed with breezeblocks; a busy major road runs through this Luanda suburb; a reservoir has been built and enclosed as a safe and protected water supply. The new facilities developed as part of the **Terra Vermelha Project**, initiated by the **Mabor Church** and supported with some **OA** funding, include the **school** and a **medical centre**. Securing a water supply has been a big advantage and the roof is now on and the interior decorated. BMS World Mission nurse **Mary Parsons** and her Angolan colleague **Alberto** hold a clinic there every Wednesday.

When the Centre opens properly it will be staffed daily, and health education will become a much bigger aspect of the programme.

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BRA 7, Brazil, Trapiá Bee-keeping project

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Agriculture

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Brazil



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Bugs, Bees and Eagles in Brazil

Outreach Abroad

by David Perry, October 2004

Mike and Daveen Wilson are BMS World Mission Workers undertaking rural development work in an isolated rural community in the normally arid region of North East Brazil. But this year unusually heavy rain lasting several months has transformed the region. Back in February Daveen wrote, "*The rain continues - we've never seen it like this. The kids and I waded to Jez's (a neighbour) in water almost up to my knees, and there were fish swimming in the water. How can that be? Today we walked through deep mud to do the group in Nova Trapiá - 8 km seems a long way in those conditions, I can tell you. Certainly a novelty anyway. The road we usually come in on is impassable - a long stretch has been washed away, so Mike is going to try the other way tomorrow. We are running out of food ...*"



Astonishingly lush vegetable garden at Trapiá

This heavy rain lasted into March. It totally transformed the landscape with green hills, full rivers and glistening lakes everywhere reflecting the bright blue sky. However, there was a down side to all this natural beauty: loads of **mosquitoes**, **flies**, and a terrible **blood-sucking bug** called a *mutuca*, which drove the animals crazy. The local goats have grown full, but some died from foot rot, of all things! Contaminated drinking water is another problem, causing widespread diarrhoea and vomiting amongst the local people. Thankfully, after the floods dissipated there has been enough ongoing rain to sustain the crops. A good harvest of rice and corn has been harvested and an organic garden planted near the church has done well.



New beekeepers practise their art

The lush vegetation also provided the perfect backstop to Mike and Daveen's latest venture: **bee keeping**. Thanks to support from **Operation Agri BMM**, Mike and Daveen attended a bee keeping congress in Natal with 3,000 other delegates. They are convinced that bee keeping could represent a reliable income source for the local population, whilst requiring a minimal outlay in terms of time and resources. The aim is to set up a minimum of a 1,000 hives so that a better price can be obtained for the honey. A proper training course has been organised covering topics such as biology of the bee, how to set up hives, capture bees and harvest the honey. Those who complete the course will receive a certificate which will give them the right to a loan to set up an apiary. The course has been open to anyone in the local community at a subsidised price.

At the end of June Mike could write, "*We now have 20 beehives occupied. This afternoon we watched a swarm of bees move into one of our bait boxes - just a cardboard box smeared with lemon grass, and baited with half a sheet of alveolated wax. The fact that it has kept on raining so long this year is a blessing from God for the beekeeping - not enough for another crop, but enough to keep 'the bush' flowering so that the wild bee colonies are doing well, and dividing - and the new colonies are finding their way into our hives. Some of the ones we captured first are already producing loads of honey. It's certainly encouraging the doubters among us.*"



The Church at **Trapiá** continues to go from strength to strength; they held a special New Year baptismal service. Daveen comments: "*One thing I found exciting was that those who made commitments came not through us - but through other members of the church. Neuma came from the constant encouragement of another member who recently had a big struggle with adultery and drunkenness, and who said to me, 'God is so wonderful - I never hoped to dream during those months that I would be here in church again'. Truly, God's grace is amazing ... Another young lady, Raniela, has been struggling for two years now with cancer (which is what brought her to Christ).*"

*After the service we had Communion, followed by a meal, and then fireworks at midnight, which was especially exciting for Mike and Claudio who set them off, as a fair number did **not** do what they were meant*

to! After it had finished, some folk came up and **complained** that we hadn't given an appeal, as they had wanted to respond ..."

Another exciting development has been the creation of an action team, "**The Eagles**", made up of seven young people who dedicated themselves to work full time for the church. The group meet each morning to pray and do a bible reading. They then do a drawing class before attempting to learn some English. They are helping Mike with the Bee Project and will hopefully be passing on their enthusiasm and new-found skills to the people they meet. The Wilson's have also been encouraging them to lead some of the more isolated congregations and do some preaching.



Debbie Wilson and Fatinha cut alveolated wax sheets for new beehives

Daveen writes: "**The Eagles** ... are a truly wonderful bunch of people, and doing very well - I am so proud of them, and the way they make such an effort to learn and pass on what they know. Their commitment to the groups they lead is impressive - Fatinha trudges off alone in the mud for 4 km, no matter what the weather, and does a superb job of leadership. Please pray that a lad in the church would commit himself to accompanying her - it's not good for her to go on her own on such a lonely road, and I can't always go. They have also preached some excellent sermons, in spite of nerves beforehand - we're preaching our way through Esther now. And even they can see the progress they're making in English. We've decided to start each week on Tuesday and finish Saturday with our main church meeting, so that we can have Mondays free for going to town or relaxing; it is working well so far. We've also restricted football to every other day,

which has avoided a few problems. We have an evaluation meeting at the end of each week. Everyone airs their grievances, and I love their honesty. They all get to vote for the one who's contributed the most during the week - either humour, or kindness, or hard work, or whatever. So far, each one has won at least once".



Mike takes hives to a new location

The muddy conditions and treacherous roads have made transport really difficult, and a reliable four-wheel-drive vehicle is an absolute necessity. Consequently, when Mike and Daveen's old Chevrolet truck broke down, **Operation Agri** responded to their request to help them purchase a new vehicle. It is a Toyota dual-cab pick-up truck that is coping well with the muddy conditions (picture page 11). The only problem now is that they have been told to beware of hijackers attracted by their new car!

All in all, it's been a fruitful and adventurous past few months for the Wilsons ...

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BRA 5, Brazil, Pre-School Regional Co-ordinator, NE Brazil

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Pre-School groups for disadvantaged children

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Brazil



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Travelling for PEPE in South America

Outreach Abroad

by Stan Creeves, October 2004

Iolanda Miranda, the **Regional Development Co-ordinator** for **PEPE's** work (*PEPE is the programme of Pre-School Education*) in **Northeast Brazil** will be known to regular readers of this magazine. **Operation Agri BMM** supports Iolanda's co-ordination activities, pays for her accommodation in Fortaleza and recently paid for her travel to a conference in Paraguay - a total of £5,300 this year. Recent reports from Iolanda describe her activities during the first half of this year, and her extensive travels.



Iolanda

In January, Iolanda moved house from Teresina to **Fortaleza** (by road about 350 miles). The main reason for the move was to cut down on travel expenses, Fortaleza being a more strategic location for her work. "I travelled to **London**" [in February] writes Iolanda, to "learn a little bit more English. I was amazed at the English culture. I was warmly welcomed in the churches, including **Kenton Baptist Church** [North London] and **New Park Road Baptist Church**." [South London, at the invitation of OA's Chairman]

"March: I travelled to **Bombay and Goa (India)** where I attended the **International Oasis Conference**. We received leadership training. There were seven countries represented (so) we could re-evaluate our project and add new knowledge to our work. I came back to **England** and participated in the **Baptist Men's Movement Conference**. It was absolutely fascinating to see how God works through those who are supporting projects all over the world."

Iolanda returned to **Brazil** in April and spent a short time sorting out problems in her own area. This is how Iolanda reports the next stage of her travels: "From 25th April to 1st May we attended the **First Meeting of Co-ordinators for the PEPEs in Latin America**, which was held in **Asuncion (Paraguay)**. It was really good, giving a clear idea of how much God has been using PEPEs. Six countries were represented - Paraguay, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Venezuela - with a total of 16 participants. We talked about the PEPE Project in Northeast Brazil, and suggested a few ideas for the implementation of the project in Latin America generally. We all came back home extremely hopeful since this was a very fruitful meeting. We believe that we might have more countries joining the project by next year including Ecuador".



Iolanda visits PEPE workers in NE Brazil. From left: Iolanda, Irene, Cida and Margaret Squires (BMS worker)

Since that visit Iolanda has been **travelling in Brazil** visiting several different states in the Northeast, "evaluating, sorting out problems, amplifying our vision with new ideas for supporting the PEPEs". At one place it was suggested that Mothers' Clubs be started, helping with handicrafts and kitchen gardens. Elsewhere Iolanda reports "there are three PEPEs supported by the Baptist Church and the Mothers' Club is running well making pottery. Two doctors, a dentist and an optician are working as volunteers for the project." Iolanda also added a PS: "I miss your cold weather; it's really hot here!"

Don't get the impression that travelling inside Brazil is easy for Iolanda. A recent **inter-state bus journey** took her **23 hours**, on a road where robberies from buses are common. My visit to Brazil last November left me with a strong impression of the sheer hard work of Iolanda and her co-workers. They, of course, give all the glory to God, as reflected in the scripture passage with which Iolanda began her report: I Corinthians 1, 27-29 "God chose the lowly things of this world ... therefore, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord'".

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Sri Lanka



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Postcards from Sri Lanka

Outreach Abroad

Photos and notes from Russell and Gill Ashley-Smith, October 2004

Two months ago we went to Sri Lanka to obtain material for next year's **Annual Appeal**. We saw the work of the two Christian development organisations that **Operation Agri BMM** partners there - **Farms Lanka**, which we have supported for the last 10 years, and **LEADS** starting this year.



Village Society meets to discuss their problems with "Leads" worker



"Farms Lanka" helped this family get going with a loan. Now they have a fine crop of carrots for market



Serious drought makes the Government Water-CARRIER very welcome. "Farms Lanka" has helped in the emergency



Making building blocks with a machine loaned by "Leads"



Chandrilal's family now has a successful business making batik pictures and clothing – after "Farms Lanka" rescued them from bankruptcy.

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NEP 6, Nepal, Banke Community Health & Development Programme, Nepalgunj Town

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Community Development

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Nepal



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"All Change" at Nepalgunj

Outreach Abroad

by Jerry Clewett, October 2004

If there is one constant in any development work, it is change. We work with people; people change. We work within external environments, and they are also constantly changing. And so our responses, which we call "projects" or "programmes", also have to change.

The work of the **International Nepal Fellowship** (INF) has been in a process of change over the past couple of years, and this has included the project in Nepalgunj supported by BMS World Mission and **Operation Agri BMM**. It is now called "**Banke Community Development**". But more than the name changing, the **content** of the project has also changed, and with it has come a renewed vision for what might be achieved in the next four years up to 2008.

The **focus** of the programme has not changed, however, as the programme will still address the needs of families from the poorest 10% of the population. It seeks to give the poor access to necessary services, and also to create self-help groups whereby the poor will have increased influence and control over their own lives. In other words, the programme will not be doing things **for** the poor, but rather will work **with** the poor, and crucially will empower the poor **to do things for themselves**.

To achieve these goals, the programme intends to work towards four outputs:

- A system to monitor the arrival of new people in Nepalgunj, and the circumstances they are living in.
- Group Leaders who can facilitate development at their own location. Their skills will include running local savings and credit schemes.
- Local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) with the capacity to work with INF in implementing components of the programme.
- Local Government officials who are supportive of the programme.



The women made this road themselves

For the past three years, the programme has been piloting group formation through a "**Group Action Process**" (GAP). The process enabled marginalized people to improve the quality of their lives through the formation of groups, analysis of their own situations and formulation of plans to improve their lives. There are now 50 such groups. However, the programme has realised that there are insufficient support structures for these groups, and the next phase will address this issue. Representatives from the 50 groups will form six or seven area committees, and in turn these will form a main committee, which will have the potential to evolve into a **registered NGO**.

Apart from this type of institutional support, the other problem in the long-term sustainability is the resource base for the groups. In order to address this issue, there are now exciting plans for a co-operative, a community bank, and a community owned business. These will be underpinned by an increased emphasis on savings-based credit and income generation activities.

Perhaps the most interesting change in the next phase of the project is the greater involvement of **men** in all the activities. Russell Hancock, the INF Programme Manager reports that "*At a recent workshop in which the women's groups discussed future plans for the programme, there was common consent that the men should now be included. The women felt that as they had gained some confidence in themselves, they would not be dominated by the men and their opinions in the meetings*".



"Workshop" for men – a women's initiative?

So change continues. But the staff remain constant and we should pray for **Russell Hancock** as Programme Manager, and also for the Programme Officer **Rupa Adhikari**, together with the facilitators **Ghana, Lalsari**,

Sushila, Hira, Shahanaaj and Sama. These facilitators are from the community they serve, and they will need all their skills and experience in meeting the difficult challenges that lie ahead.

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THA 4, Thailand, Corn grinding machine for Akha tribal village

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Thailand



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Maize Mill for Akha village, Thailand

Outreach Abroad

by David Pusey, October 2004

"If the cost of producing your product exceeds the price you can get for it, you are in an economic downward spiral to bankruptcy". Attempts by the people of **Sukasem**, one of the villages of the **Akha Churches of Thailand**, to move away from risky seasonal crops to more stable pig-raising, have encountered that problem. They presently have two options. One is to buy pig feed in the city and then find that, when they sell the animal, they often lose money or barely break even. The other is to allow the pigs to forage in the forest, but that leads to very thin and unhealthy animals, which sell for less! Neither option is economic. The people of Sukasem were 'caught in a cleft stick'...

But now there is a solution to their problem! Supplying them with a **machine to grind maize grain**, which cost **Operation Agri BMM** about £250, will allow the villagers to **create their own pig feed** from maize they grow themselves. This will eliminate the cost of bought-in pig feed and also create some self-sustainability. The machine grinds the grain sufficiently to create a good feed base. Vitamins, proteins and other ingredients will be added in accordance with training supplied by **Heifer Thailand**, the agency that advises the villagers on various aspects of their agriculture. Heifer has an on-going relationship with the village and has already invested a great amount of time and training to help the people of Sukasem. As the nearest maize mill is about an hour's drive away, it is probable other local villages will wish to utilise the facility or to buy the pig feed it produces. The grinder will become a micro-enterprise assisting the village to generate income.



The village of Sukasem

Sukasem is about 20 minutes drive from the city of Chiang Rai. Its population are **Akha** immigrants from **Burma** and **China**, who sought a better life in northern Thailand. The Akha are among the poorest of the Hill Tribes of the country. They were nomadic until quite recently, when the government asked all villages to stay in their present location. The Sukasem Akha once lived with a **Lahu** village but broke away and obtained the use of some land. They do not have title to it, but have given money to the Thai owner who allows them to be there. Hitherto they have been taking great risks in buying seed and planting and taking the produce to market to sell. If they could sell their rice, tomatoes (or other products they raise at different seasons) they might make a couple of US dollars a day ...



Akha children of the village

The village has adopted Heifer Thailand's philosophy of sharing and development. Heifer supplied training in the care of pigs and Sukasem has the electrical supply needed for a maize mill. Heifer will buy the machine, lend it to the village, set it up, provide training in its operation and monitor its use. The expectation is that all in the village who have pigs (and most do) will benefit - they will be released from the "cleft stick" ...

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our Liaison Officer reports, October 2004

Nicaragua Mudslides

The beginning of the rainy season in Nicaragua during July brought devastation to thousands. Disastrous landslides in the highlands destroyed property and there was severe flooding and loss of life in other parts of the country. As this crisis developed **Dr. Laura Parajon**, Director of **Providenic**, reported that the floods and mudslides had seriously affected eight of their communities. Although no lives were lost, crops were washed away and many homes destroyed. Help was needed with the additional cost of transportation into these communities, and for loans to provide replacement seeds. The rains gave rise to more illness than usual and extra medicine was needed. A joint **OA/BMS** grant of US \$4,000 (approximately £1,100 from each organisation) was sent to Providenic for the crisis.

Later Laura reported: "Every year we carry out workshops in the communities and this year the theme we had was **disaster management** and how to [support] victims of disaster." As a result one person was able to say: "I got all 20 members of my family to run down the mountain to the river where we passed all the children across, one by one. We got all 13 of the little ones across safely ... we headed to the clinic for shelter" A health promoter commented: "I share with my people words of scripture for comfort and remind them that, although it is sad to lose your home ... you can replace such belongings, but you cannot replace a life."

Laura continued: "It is a blessing and a privilege to learn daily from the health promoters and co-workers what it is to be a disciple of Christ. To us, their ministry is the light rising in the darkness of the rain that has been coming down day and night for almost two months. It is very wet out there, and very muddy ... yet the promoters keep serving through the mud and the rain. They visit each family, bringing comfort, hope and love in the name of the Lord, without anyone asking them to do so ... only because they love the Lord, and their gift is to serve their communities".

Zimbabwe re-focus

Amidst the huge problems that the political situation in Zimbabwe engenders, some changes are taking place, which it is hoped will breathe new life into development activities. **Revd. Nyathi** has been re-appointed as Chairman of the **Aid and Development Committee**. **Phillip Jambaya**, our contact there, reports: "We look forward to an exciting time as we refocus as an organisation and as a department." Meanwhile **OA** continues to finance development work there, recognising the desperate need for support and encouragement at this time.

Congo tensions

Development work in Congo continues through the pig and poultry projects at **Kimpese**, the training school for girls at **Mbanza Ngungu** and a small enterprise activity for widows in **Kinshasa**. Other activities are on standby. It is sad to report that BMS World Mission workers **Jon and Ali Budgell**, with whom **OA** had developed a supportive link, have felt they cannot continue their work in Congo. There are many factors that have brought them to this decision, not least the tensions of working in Congo affecting their health. Pray for Jon and Ali as they consider their future.

More power in Afghanistan

The development of the micro-hydropower industry continues in rural Afghanistan, helped by a £10,000 grant recently agreed by **OA**. **RESAP**, the local organisation carrying out the work, is training the private sector to build and install the hydropower equipment, thus increasing the potential spread of the technology and widening the opportunities for villagers who run small-scale enterprises to benefit.

Vehicle for Trapiá

We promised to give you details of the vehicle the Wilsons' bought for their work at Trapiá, with funds from **OA**. They now have a new Toyota Dual-cab Pick-up Truck and here is a photo of it. Obviously it is fully used!

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The Wilson's new Toyota pick-up loaded with hives



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October 2004

Please use this page in conjunction with other information in this issue.

BANGLADESH

1 The monsoon season is over and the disastrous floods have subsided, but many thousands of people will have lost homes, businesses, crops and livestock. Now communications are poor, water is contaminated and health will continue to be endangered for months to come.

Pray that the help coming in from aid and mission agencies may reach and encourage the poorest people, and that community life and productive activity will soon be restored.

INDIA

2 Remember the management team at WUAC, Diptipur who have a difficult path to tread as they seek to meet needs, balance budgets and be fair to all in their locality. David McLellan, of BMS World Mission, hopes to be able to visit WUAC in November.

Pray that he will be an encouragement to the leadership there and be given wisdom as he discerns current progress.

BRAZIL - PEPE Work

These requests follow the report on Iolanda's work in this issue, page 6.

3 Pray for the new churches coming in to the project and ask God to provide the financial resources for the development of the work in North Brazil.

4 Pray for supporters to meet the needs identified during the N.E. Brazil PEPE Co-ordinators' Meeting (held during September).

5 Ask God to give the leaders and co-ordinators wisdom to do His will, and that He will bless every aspect of Iolanda's work.

BRAZIL - Trapiá

6 We report in this issue (pages 4 & 5) on the activities of BMS World Mission workers Mike and Daveen Wilson. Pray for their ongoing activities, particularly for "The Eagles" training programme and for safety in travel.

7 Pray for their children. Debbie and Paul are now boarders at a school in Hertfordshire; Paul has commenced senior school and Debbie begins her A-Level studies. Remember too Julia, back in Trapiá, who continues her schooling with Mike and Daveen.

NICARAGUA

You will see from **News in Brief** (opposite) that the situation in Nicaragua demands our prayer support for:

8 The villagers who have lost homes and crops, and other forms of livelihood through the floods and mudslides, that they may recover quickly and re-build their lives.

9 The health promoters, to encourage and support the villagers who have suffered loss.

10 Laura and all the Provacenic staff, for the Lord's guidance as they continue the restoration work and resume normal training and outreach activities.

HOME FRONT

11 The visit of our Chairman Russell and his wife Gill to Sri Lanka had many purposes, one of which was to gather material for the 2005 Appeal. Pray that the design team who do this will be helped and guided by the Lord.

12 Pray for Revd. Malcolm Drummond, our new Supporter Relations Officer who commenced work in September, that the Lord will encourage him in his work, and will bless every aspect of OA's home support for our worldwide outreach.

13 Thank God for the faithfulness of Operation Agri's supporters, both churches and individuals (OA's "Partners"), who have enabled us to maintain our planned level of support for existing projects this year, and to finance some new ones.

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