

Link Letter No.1 November 2010

Dear praying friends,

Sewing – a dynamic and life-changing activity?

Well, God uses the little, everyday things in life to make big changes. I'm writing my first ever "official" CMS link letter to tell you more about the good things going on in the sewing workshops within our churches in Paraguay.

Sewing workshops

With the help of some wonderful, talented mission summer volunteers from Paraguay, we ran two special one-off sewing workshops. The developments from these have been amazing. One weekly group asked to learn shoulder bag making. We expected 14 people but 20 came so all hands were on deck preparing and cutting patterns beforehand. Everyone took home a participator's certificate – Matthew 25:21, the parable of the talents, and 10 of the participants are now making bags to boost their income.

Juana and some of the bags she made



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Get creative

We ran a pattern cutting and garment sewing day for 13 people. Sally Bartlett, our Bishop's wife, talked about 'Our creator God and our creativity' (Job 8:10). Everyone brought as examples of this something that they had either made, or been given. We learnt afterwards that this talk had affected many of us, deepening our appreciation of simple things and valuing our own potential. The day was intense, full on learning. Comments like "This is spectacular" and "I'm learning so much" were heard.

Building on experience gained at the workshops, two participants have recently been given machines for the first time. Juana runs Esperanza Foster Home. She has been longing to learn to sew for years but now she is a micro enterprise in the making. She told me: "Thank you from my heart for this chance and the tools to make it possible."

The blessing that we couldn't have foreseen...

These two workshops were the first time anyone could remember that women from the six different churches in the city had met together to enjoy a practical workshop and learn a new, marketable skill. The build up and enthusiasm

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were tremendous. As soon as people heard about them, they wanted to come. Two of the volunteers thought the workshops ideal for groups in UK churches – for teenagers and senior citizens. I'm re-learning too and, besides the machine, my most useful gadget is the quick unpick! Sewing machines 'go wrong' of course, so I've had to become a bit of a techno geek.

The blessing on wheels

One enterprising seamstress, Angela, lives in a semi rural area 20 kilometres outside the city. She has a handicapped son and sews to help pay their way. I supplement her resources with the help of a rolling suitcase; 45 minutes on the bus and then down the grass track to her house. Now Angela has met a housebound older lady who is longing to sew and wants to borrow the suitcase to share her machine with her.

This development has made a huge difference to some needy people and, all being one family in this relatively small diocese, the positive ripples are spreading outwards.

Prayer and praise points:

- Thank God for the blessing Mission Paraguay volunteers bring
- Praise God for the continuing unity and joy in the workshops
- Thank God for the new purpose, confidence and fulfilment for many women
- Praise God for the start of small attempts at self-sufficiency and a break away from dependency on others
- Please pray for creativity and breakthroughs in finding new markets for sales goods
- Pray for Juana, needing to raise the funds to build her own house
- Pray for the sewing club helping to raise money towards its church's youth room
- Pray for patience and wisdom for new sewers getting to know the ways of machines

- Finally, please pray for me as I teach machine 'management' and run the cloth bank.

With love and God bless you

Caroline



Angela's son Isaac with one of the t-shirts he has painted