

Who will help them?

Day of prayer for children-at-risk children planned

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

LAM News Service

Miami, FL (LAMNS)—Mention the term “children-at-risk” and one often thinks about street children. But, according to Bill Gibson, a missionary with the Latin America Mission, at least two billion children around the world face other risks.

“When I think of children at risk, I think of poverty—children with poor nutrition, no education, no access to things that we consider important,” Gibson says. “I also think of children coming from difficult family situations. Many parents worry so much about daily survival rather than taking care of their children.”

Gibson also highlights children who are at risk spiritually. “How are these children going to know the Lord?” he asks. “Often, there is not a church nearby to help them. Who is going to develop program to meet their needs and to help them hear the Gospel?”

To help raise awareness of the plight of children around the world, Gibson is encouraging individuals and churches to participate in the World Wide Day of Prayer for children-at-risk, scheduled for Saturday, June 1. The event is sponsored by Viva Network, a global Christian organization that works to coordinate and publicize the needs of children.

“Even though I have worked with street children in Mexico City, I can’t imagine what it is like for a six, seven, eight year old to worry about being beaten when he goes home each night, or wondering where his dinner will come from,” Gibson says. “I can’t imagine how bad it must make one feel about themselves to be dirty all of the time.”

Viva Network is working with thousands of Christian organizations to address the physical and social needs of children and to share the Gospel with them.

“I visited a program in Lima, Peru, where a church sponsors a school,” Gibson explains. There, the children get an education, they are fed a meal, and their mothers are trained about how to cook and care for their children. They are also taught the Bible.”

“Or, I think of the (LAM-related) Roblealto Children’s Home in Costa Rica where Christian foster care is provided for children, helping them with their education, medical care and spiritual training.”

Gibson, a native of Tampa, Florida, who edits a resource magazine in Spanish for those who work with children, also remembers befriending children on the streets of the world’s largest city, providing first aid, literacy classes, sports programs and presenting the Gospel. “It was amazing that when you offered to teach them, they really were interested in learning,” he remembers. “They just hadn’t had the opportunity to learn.”

The day of prayer is designed to help people “focus on the reality of at risk kids, to see that they are a huge problem, and to ask God to move in a mighty way to help them,” Gibson explains.

Material on the day of prayer is available in English at www.viva.org, then clicking on the World Wide Day of Prayer logo. Or, an information packet may be ordered from Gibson at Viva Network, Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152. The phone number is 305-884-8400. Gibson’s email address is bgibson@lam.org.

In Spanish, information can be obtained at www.redviva.org, then clicking on dia mundial, or by writing to Red Viva de America Latina, Apartado, 120-1011, San Jose, Costa Rica. The email address is dmo@redviva.org.

Latin America Mission works in partnership with churches and Christian agencies throughout Latin America and supports missionaries and projects in many Latin countries as well as in Spain. LAM is seeking to place new missionaries throughout the region. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 1-800-275-8410. The mission’s web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>. LAM’s Canadian office is at 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6.

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