



Margaret Storey does an amazing job supporting our sponsored children and their families in the city of Bluefields. Here she shares with us about her work.

Isaiah 6 v 1-8 is a special passage in the Bible for me, particularly verse 8 - an occasion in the temple when Isaiah responded to a question asked by God.

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I, send me’.”

I had heard that passage so many times before, but on one particular occasion it didn’t fall on deaf ears and I ended up telling the Lord He could send me... and He sent me to Bluefields, Nicaragua!

I was already sponsoring a child through SIFT, so I asked them if I could make contact with my child and they invited me to join the next trip to Bluefields. During that trip I was asked to consider being the ‘bridge’ person between the students in Bluefields and the office in Devon and since then that has been my role – spending eight months each year in Bluefields and four months back in the UK.

My main role is to look after the welfare of the 140 students we sponsor. I make monthly checks on the eight schools where we have children studying and organise for the school fees to be paid. I constantly have a waiting list and as soon as we find



a new sponsor or lose a child from the programme, then I carry through the necessary procedure for accepting a child for a sponsorship.

I try to attend activities at the schools to support the children, as well as to take photographs which are often sent to their sponsors.

We also have students studying at university. Some of these I have watched over the years, scavenging at the rubbish dump and now here they are in advanced education! Children who would never have had this opportunity if they weren't being sponsored make the SIFT programme so worthwhile.

In a day, I can go through many different emotions. There are always sad moments, particularly when I see a sick child suffering because mum can't afford the medication, or someone knocking at the gate for food as they've not eaten that day. There are disappointing ones when a student throws away the opportunity to study because he doesn't like school anymore, but then there are times of joy when I see so many students excel, knowing they wouldn't have had such an opportunity if it weren't for receiving a sponsorship.

One of our former students is now a qualified teacher and is working at one of the Bluefields schools. Another will complete a degree in psychology this year. It has been a great struggle for him; sometimes he and his brother had to share the same pair of shoes, which determined who went to school that day. He also met opposition from his mother who wanted him to quit his studies because she needed him to work. I remember him pleading with me one day to never take away his sponsorship. One other boy, having just completed high school as a student of excellence, has won a scholarship to study in Costa Rica.

The children are so friendly and always wanting to give me hugs, hold my hand or carry my bag. I'm often nearly forced down to the ground with the strength of so many of them fighting to hug me. These moments are what make the frustrations and disappointment of some days just melt into oblivion.

I love the work I do and I know God protects me. He gives me the strength to keep going and I feel it's such a privilege to be working to further His kingdom among the amazing people in Bluefields.



Sue's story

Sue Forrester recently spent some time in Bluefields helping Margaret with her work.

My first impressions were of a poor rural community, accepting of their fate and sustained by their deep religious faith. The climate would at best be described as unfavourable, and the economy as lacking the boost of a tourist trade. The words "short straw" sprung to mind!



I met many of SIFT's successes, students who have been sponsored from nursery right through to university level. I can see why SIFT concentrates on education. In the long term, this seems to be the best way to break the poverty cycle. Other well-meaning quick fixes could either undermine the fragile local economy or foster a hand-out culture. But a kind word here, a little help there and a few balloons for the kids goes a long way, something which Margaret demonstrates every day.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my stay in Bluefields was my work as teaching assistant in the pre-school section of Verbo School, attended by many of SIFT's students. I was assigned to work with a boy with special needs, and I also helped two children who don't get much support at home. Some of the parents can't read or write, making it difficult for them to help their children. With a little extra encouragement and individual attention, these children did very well.



There were so many contrasts to my Nicaraguan experience. I took part in pamper sessions at the local maternity unit and saw the excellent work done by the feeding programmes conducted by the Verbo and Moravian churches, where I gave out some toothbrush sets kindly donated by the Largs Dental Suite. I saw Margaret's dream of providing a shelter for the workers at the quarry fulfilled, gave out food parcels to the families of SIFT students, saw the well that supporters in Newcastle have funded in memory of their friend, and assisted at the Verbo School Fun Day.

I had no call to complain that I had not been challenged! I felt privileged to act as Margaret's friend and assistant. We all helped in some way to improve the lot of these children - myself and other supporters only in the short term, but Margaret and SIFT in the long term. Perhaps we sowed a few seeds! If my reveries encourage others to support the work of SIFT, then it will have been even more worthwhile.

Casa Rahab

The ambition to become a doctor is not an unusual one. However for a teenage girl who has been involved in the sex trade it could seem an impossible dream. Being sold for other people's pleasure destroys your hope and removes your choices. Often your dreams can only be restored with the help of other people.

This is the kind of ambition which the team at Casa Rahab (Rahab's House) are hoping to give back to the girls they work with. Through a programme of therapy, education and vocational skills, the team work to rebuild the girls' self-esteem and give them the skills they need to rebuild their lives.



Gabriela and Natalia

Gabriela, the centre's psychologist, meets with each girl when they arrive at Casa Rahab and provides them with an individual programme of counselling to help them recover from the trauma they have experienced. The centre's sewing teacher, Natalia, teaches the girls how to make items like purses and bags so that they have an alternative means of earning an income. This year we are partnering with Casa Rahab by funding both of their salaries.

If you would like to help us bring new hope to these vulnerable girls by giving either a one-off or regular donation please get in touch with Ali.

Gift Aid

We really appreciate everyone who supports us financially - our work wouldn't be possible without you! Did you know that if you're a UK tax payer your donations could go even further at no extra cost to you? The Gift Aid scheme enables SIFT to receive an extra 25 pence for every £1 donated to us. To find out more and to sign up, please visit www.seed-trust.com/giftaid.



Contact us

SIFT, 1 Harepath Road, Seaton, Devon, EX12 2RP

✉ info@seed-trust.com 🌐 www.seed-trust.com

☎ (01297) 22484 **Patron:** Andrew Selous MP