

Por un Mundo Mejor

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Trip to the Saharan war refugees in South Algeria

30th of March 2009 – 18th of April 2009

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Project completion date: 30th April 2009

“Por un Mundo Mejor” focuses on aiding the different camps of refugees located in the Sahara desert, in the south of Algeria. For the last five years it has been our main project and concern to assist these war torn people called “Saharais”.

With the help of our many sponsors we were able to organize another trip in aiding the “Saharais” this year. There is a lot that goes into the preparation of the trip, considering that the location of our project is over 5000 km away from where we live, and located in the Saharan desert. We started this year as early as the beginning of February on working out the logistics for our trip. Beginning with a detailed report of our vision and goals on what we wanted to achieve in the camps, these reports had to be approved by the proper authorities. Once we got the proper clearance we began arranging the visas and the travel tickets. Besides all this the drivers, vehicles places to loge along with many other details for the trip had to be planned. In the meantime we also worked on the program for the shows which we held in the many schools and centers.

Accomplishments

All in all, our entire trip was a great success and it was an exciting time with each piece of the puzzle falling into place exactly at the right time. Following are some of the things we were able to accomplish this year.

- We performed in 12 schools of three different camps (El Ayun, Smara, and Dajla). A total of about 3000 children attended the programs.
- Due to Easter holidays there was a lot of Spanish and foreign people present, about 3000 people participated in different projects in the camps during this time. As part of this special event we were invited to sing in a cultural program, organized by the minister of culture, National groups participated in





this event, and traditional activities were on the program.

- The national radio had schedule a time in their program for us where we were asked questions regarding, our programs, songs and our feelings about their situation.
- Also we were invited by the General Director of culture to participate in the national television show where we were able to record six songs, these songs are going to be broadcasted by satellite in all the camps in Argel, and also from 21:00 to 23:00 throughout the year in a Saharai satellite news channel around the world.
- We distributed various sets of educational material for children that we gave for free in different centers and institutions. Also we gave a few hundred copies of the magazine

called “Motivated” that we translated into Spanish. These magazines formed the basis of the different seminars we held for different groups of people, including the women association center in the camp called Dajla.

- We brought along with us a variety of presents, clothes, shoes and toys, which we were able to donate to the many children and families we visited.



Peace March

Once a year the Saharai government along with other international associations organize a peace march of protest on the illegal occupation of their land. A group of about 2000 people, of different nationalities, and also Saharais, were chosen to go to the frontline. They were transported by trucks and jeeps to the border lines between the two countries. The Moroccans built trenches and have soldiers posted along the border lines. It’s been denounced, in the international community, but this border line of about 2500 kilometers has more than 10 million mines, and is very easily accessible especially during peace times.



We were invited to assist as observers, it was a rather unique experience to witness first hand this sort of demonstration, which in similar cases we have only seen in the international news, people screaming for peace and freedom. One of the young Saharai boys got too excited and got too close to the trenches, a mine exploded and blew off one of his feet. Everyone became emotional about the event and screamed his name as a hero.

Financial Aid

This project was made possible solely through the help and support of our sponsors. One of the main sponsors for our project this year was the Family Care Foundation which was able to provide us a grant of 5000 US dollars.

Due to the nature of our project being over 5000 km away most of the money we receive towards our project is spent on logistics and travel to and from the refugee camps. The full amount of the grant from the Family Care Foundation was spent on our airplane tickets from Madrid to Alger and another flight from Alger to Tinduf. The cost per person was 500 euro’s per person for a team of 10 people. Since the grant wasn’t able to cover the full amount the rest was covered by other sponsors and personal donations.

Personal responses



Jose

The following shows how some people see us, beyond our physical appearance, how we conduct ourselves, our behavior, and daily comportment in the relationship we have with each other and the ones we meet or encounter.

One evening while lying on the floor having tea with our host, we started having a deep conversation about life and how people behave, act, and live their daily lives, etc. He is the General Director of Culture, and we have known him for the past three years. Being the director of the department of culture, he gets to know a great variety of delegations from different countries and many people from different walks of life.

He told us that since the first moment we met and talked together he realized we were different and not like any other people he meets. He went on to say that their way of life, hospitality, and friendly greetings and conduct in life towards others were taught by their grand fathers and ancestors, a way of life and conduct that has been passed on from generation to generation. He gently affirmed that our customs and theirs were very much alike, I told him perhaps it is because we both have a common faith, he agreed by nodding his head and after a pause, replied it's like two brothers that were apart, and finally found each other. We both embrace and cried.



Anita 17

Every year it gets better. It's so amazing! It makes you look forward to your next trip with excitement, knowing you will encounter many wonderful opportunities and new experiences.

The Sahara really is a magical place, and its people are even more. I admire each and every one of them for their love, spirit of giving, endurance, positiveness, faith, sacrifice, and so much more. The Saharai's are an incredible sample to all who visit them. Everyone who visits the refugee camps just wants to come back again. I think it is because they come in contact with something that you cannot find too easily; their pure way of doing things, their love. These people are blessed by God. You can feel it. Their spirit, the way they live and interact with

each other. Sometimes you feel like you just can't get enough of them. They carry so much peace. It is wonderful to be around them.

I feel very blessed to have met the Saharai people and to be able to go on these trips. Even though I would love to stay longer, I still am very thankful for the time that I spend there. I really enjoy doing clown shows for the children. Seeing them happy and laughing is a wonderful experience. All you want is to do more & more for them, because they really do deserve it. I am glad that we were able to do all the shows that we did. All the schools we went to really enjoyed it and they all asked us to come back before next year.

Singing at the cultural program that took place in the refugee camp called "27th February", was something unexpected but, at the same time, exciting, as well as performing with a "Saharai" singing group, which made me feel closer to them.





It was amazing how we were able to sing and record some songs for the National TV. Those five songs will be in the air via satellite around the world, and for sure would touch people's lives one way or another. Those five songs were about love, freedom and happiness. It was incredible to see how each of those songs really applied to their situation.

Even though now I am back in Spain, all that I wish is to go back to those people I am now in love with, or perhaps it is God's love through me, I will be patient and wait for next year, trusting and knowing that even though I left them for some time, God didn't, and He never will. He loves them and will always provide for their needs and be by their side, whatever may happen.

So now, all I can do is pray for them and trust God, and wait for the day that I can return and give my all in those 3 weeks I have with them.

Conclusion

In conclusion we would like to extend our gratitude to each and everyone that assisted us in the completion of our project. We would especially like to thank the Family Care Foundation for their generous aid. We look forward to working alongside those who wish to continue supporting our future projects in any way possible.

With kind regards,



Jose Casals
Project Managers



Maria Mendoza



Cristina Casals

