



# Newsletter

*Number 11 - March 2013*



## Dear Partners in Mission, Greetings of Peace to you!

*My name is Marilia Alves Schüller, Global Ministries' missionary, serving KOINONIA Ecumenical Presence and Service, an ecumenical organization based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*

Since I came to KOINONIA in 2007, I have contributed especially in the areas of development of institutional policy on gender, racial justice, relationships with churches, ecumenical networks, social movements and networks of civil society, both in Brazil and internationally. Since the floods and landslide disaster on the mountain region of the State of Rio de Janeiro in 2011, which affected thousands of urban and rural families, I was deeply involved in the emergency and rehabilitation response program carried out by KOINONIA on behalf of Brazilian ACT Alliance members and Forum.

## Brazil

- Brazil was a colony of Portugal from the 16th to the 19th centuries and declared its independence becoming a constitutional monarchy in 1822. As a republic, since 1889, Brazil suffered many dictatorships in the periods of 1930–1934, 1937–1945 and the military rule 1964–1985. Democracy was re-established in 1985. The Indigenous Peoples were the first people of Brazil. The trans-Atlantic slave trade brought millions of enslaved African people. Brazil has the second largest African population outside Africa (the first is Nigeria). The Caucasian population is of European descent. A major part of the Asian population is of Japanese descent.

KOINONIA's partner organization, Christian Aid, has published in a new report, **The Real Brazil: the Inequality behind the Statistics:**

- *With almost 200 million people, Brazil is one of the world's biggest economies, yet more than 16 million people still live in extreme poverty. The poorest have little say and little influence on decision making in the country. The poorest pay more than half their income in tax, while the richest pay less than a third. A huge gulf still separates the haves from the have-nots in Brazilian society, with rural areas particularly badly off.*
- *Just three percent of the population own two thirds of all arable land.*
- *On the question of race, the report is damning. 'Inequality of opportunities and access ends up outlining a picture where black people have less schooling, occupy worse jobs, have fewer possibilities of social mobility and live in regions with worse infrastructure'.*

KOINONIA's vocation to promote justice and human rights (economic, social, cultural and environmental) in the framework of transformational development is a contribution to change this inequality. In my diaconal ministry, God has been present through providing the opportunity of doing humanitarian aid in situations of emergency and doing the agro-ecological gardens' project in the rural area of the Mountain Region of the state of Rio de Janeiro. As part of KOINONIA's team that coordinated **The project on Agro-ecological Gardens: A Path to Food Security**, I have observed that the agro-ecological practices have generated a number of positive changes in the lives of people. That is the case for Tania Cristina. The practical learning offered by the agronomists of the Agro-ecological Gardens' project, such as how to use organic fertilizer (Bokashi) and how to better prepare the land for planting vegetables and salads, was extremely helpful for Tania. She feels empowered. Other women who were engaged in the project experienced a similar outcome.

Likewise the work we do for **the rights of Quilombolas - (Traditional Black Communities)** whose land is collectively owned and guarantees their living conditions, responds to their needs. The training programs that are offered by KOINONIA's program with Quilombolas Egbé Black Territories has a positive repercussion in women's lives. Marilene Santos Silva, a small farmer and social movement activist affirms those affects.



Marilene Santos Silva (on the right)

Income generating for the benefit of the family is experienced as well. Women acquire a sense of security that takes them beyond the limits of the household and housework. More and more conscious of their rights, women assert themselves for meaningful participation in the community and in spaces in which they represent the community. God has been present and is nurturing life and living through this work we do. Jesus said: "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." *John 10:10*

## An Invitation to covenant

I invite you to covenant with me in prayer and through assisting with my salary support so I can remain faithful to the call the Lord made on my life. You may support me:

1. Through utilizing Global Ministries' website: [www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org) to send a donation for my salary support. At the bottom of the page, click on "Missionaries". Scroll to my name on the missionaries' page and my profile will appear. At the bottom of my profile is a link to make an online donation.
2. Through mailing a check. Make your check payable to ADVANCE GCFA. Write "For Marilia Schüller, Advance # 15172Z" on the memo line of the check.  
Send your check to:  
Advance GCFA  
P.O. Box 9068  
New York, NY 10087-9068.

## A word of thanks

From my heart I am thankful for all of you for your support of me since I became a missionary five years ago. You and your congregation are instruments of God in the world by your work, your prayers and your financial support. My gratitude as well for birthday wishes I have received through cards and messages.

**Muito obrigada!** Many thanks!

## Prayer request

I ask for your prayers for all women, men and children who live in situations of violence; social or domestic violence. Remember particularly the people of many of the slums in Rio de Janeiro as they face the violence of drug trafficking and police brutality.

I ask for your prayers for Black Communities in Brazil, those living in rural areas and those living in the cities, particularly Quilombola women. May God sustain their struggle for rights, feed their faith and maintain their commitment for justice and equality.

I ask for your prayers for my ministry in 2013:

- a) For the nurturing of institutional relationships with Churches, ecumenical organizations, ecumenical networks and networks of Civil Society, both in Brazil and internationally, especially in relation to Human Rights and environmental issues.
- b) For KOINONIA in its leading role on response to disasters on behalf of ACT Alliance, particularly on capacity building.
- c) Pray that I may serve KOINONIA helping its team to maintain its critical edge with regards to the work with women in vulnerable situations, particularly Black women of the Traditional Black Communities, urban and rural.
- d) For God's guidance as I serve as a reference on feminist theological reflection for the whole institution.

As I close this newsletter, I pray for you and your congregations, asking God to accompany you and guide you today and always. In Jesus' name. Amen.

  
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