

Returned from Brazil again and without any extra surprises or adrenaline rushes from gun play. Thank you for keeping us in your prayers. We do see the increase in violence and the areas where we serve are in the middle of the most active. God has been good to us and our workers and for the most part we have been spared any direct violence. One of our workers, Edna, was punched by a lady's husband, while she was counseling the family. She is fine, nothing broken and says she is more vigilant and more aware of the signs of tension and will know to avoid them.

On our trip to Fortaleza, we were proud and honored to see the playground finished and functioning at the school.



(Ready to Play)

One thing that is different is that they made the slide out of wood. This does not seem too practical, due to wear and tear and then the appearing splinters, but it is out of necessity. Plastic would melt in the sweltering heat and metal would just be impossible to use in the sun; so wood it is.



(My Turn)

Since the Brazilians run the school and interview the families who apply, I don't always know the situations of the families. This time we went to see several "homes" of the families. When you see people in a safe, clean and happy environment like the school, you tend to forget about their lives outside of that place. I am always aware that the children need a safe and nurturing place to go, but this time I saw the reason for the great need for such a place.



(Home)

I found out that most of the children's parents are trash pickers and live in a make shift village. They pick up and sell trash, cans and bottles to sell. Pulling carts around the city for 10-12 hours, filling the carts and then taking the items to a center to be sold. I asked how much they can make and was told 5-10 dollars a day. The other



(Kelly)

alternatives for these people are selling drugs and prostitution. Kelly, one of the ladies whose children attend the school and also attends Bible study and classes, took us on a tour of her neighborhood.

Jer. 29:11 (NIV)

"For I know the plans that I have for you," Declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

These are not areas that you go into without permission and escort, but with Kelly we were welcomed into their lives.

You walk down streets of mud and dirt. People are hanging out everywhere, always looking at us as if we're from Mars and always wondering why we would come into such a place if we have other options. Truth be told, I have asked myself that question at times.



(Kelly's Neighborhood)

She takes us first to her current house. A humble home, but one with windows, doors and a bathroom, a palace compared to where she lived before. She tells us how it is just through God that she and her family are different and how the Novidade group has made it all possible with their Godly teaching, love and support. Then we go to the village.



(Village)

A collection of many cardboard shacks with people packed together living in a very precarious situation. There is no water, no electricity; no anything but a shacks with tin roofs. On this particular street, is where Kelly previously lived.

Her husband, 3 kids and she actually lived in a corner; they could not even afford a shack. They would just pull in their trash cart and sleep; the cart provided their only protection. She introduces us to several of the



(Kelly's Corner)

families as we walk through the village. On this particular street there are probably 8 shacks, they are attached to each other and are probably all the same size. Each one has just one room that serves as living room, bedroom and kitchen. None have electricity, except for what they boot-leg from the street pole, none have water and none have a bathroom and all have multiple people living in each one. They have banded together to bring water from the street into one sink that they all use for laundry and dishes.



(Washing Clothes)

I did not have the courage to ask about bathrooms, but there is a large wooded area behind the village that I assume is used for such things. All the time as Kelly was giving us the tour, she was giving us her testimony. She and her husband have been delivered from drugs, they no longer live in the street, her kids are in school and have a wonderful and safe place to play and learn. Telling us how blessed she is and how her life is wonderful. They still make their living by collecting trash and cans, but they no longer spend their money on drugs and alcohol and their children have a safe, nurturing and fun place to go every day. They are indeed a blessed family.

