

SOM
INTERNATIONAL™



Colombia and Venezuela

By Stephen Miller (Russell Stendal's son-in-law)

Water, the Word, and a Willing Generation

Recently, a small team from Colombia flew into a remote city on the Colombia and Venezuela border to train fifty tribal leaders on how to test and purify water with water treatment systems.

The group included my nephew Isaac and our close friends Ethan and Daniel, two brothers, ages sixteen and twenty-two. **From the beginning, we sensed God's presence guiding every step.**

Heading West

After meeting our local contact, a Native chief, we quickly gathered the supplies we would need for the week—materials for water treatment systems, food, and other essentials. We then drove west for two hours, crossed a river by ferry under a starlit sky, and arrived at the chief's farm, where the training would take place.

After a warm welcome and a delicious meal prepared by the family helping with logistics, we set up hammocks and sat beneath the stars,

thanking the Lord for the opportunity to serve.

Preparation for Training

The next morning, we began preparing for the water treatment course. Two water purification systems had been sent ahead of our arrival to provide clean water for those attending the training. One had been running for nearly two years, while the other was newly installed.



▲ Colombia team headed to the field. Stephan, Ethan, Isaac, Russell, and Danny.

Within twenty minutes of use, both systems became completely clogged—an unexpected problem. The filters were covered in a thick red slime. At first, we suspected iron contamination, but our test kits showed very low levels of dissolved solids and no presence of iron. We concluded that the culprit was suspended clay particles, likely stirred up in the well.

A Challenge and a Strategy

This challenge reaffirmed our purpose: to teach these communities how to build pre-filters using local materials—specifically sand and charcoal—to prevent such issues. Although we planned to build the first filter with the students, we had to act quickly and build one before they arrived.

With no brick or concrete reservoirs available, we repurposed a clean trash can, collected quartz sand from a nearby quarry, and made charcoal in a fire pit.

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It took hours to wash the sand and rinse the charcoal, but by evening we were layering the materials into our first filter. When we turned the valve, the water rose. At first it was cloudy—but within minutes, it ran clear. At a rate of eight liters per minute, clean water flowed like a spring. We were in awe.

Water Treatment Instruction

Over the next few days, students began arriving—some traveling over twenty-four hours by canoe, bus, on foot, and by motorcycle. Daniel led the training, sharing insights from a course he completed through the Water Quality Association in 2023.

It was his first time teaching a group like this, and he did incredibly well. The students were eager to learn and stayed fully engaged.

By the end of the course, we handed out diplomas, and Galcom shortwave radios were given to representatives of each Indigenous sector. A local forestry company even joined the cause, donating barrels for future filters.

We are deeply grateful for your prayers and support. A new generation is rising—young people who fear God and are willing to go wherever He sends them. The impact of this work will be felt for years to come.



Clean Water / Clean Hearts

There is a severe water quality crisis affecting the river system near the Colombia and Venezuela border due to mercury poisoning from thousands of illicit gold miners and from toxic chemical runoff from drug labs.

Tens of thousands of villagers are being affected. We are training Native specialists to go in and test the water and then make rudimentary filters with sand and activated charcoal when there are no funds for more sophisticated water treatment equipment.

Just the logistics of putting together small kilns to make activated charcoal and the necessary tanks and plumbing are challenging. **Our plan can dramatically improve the health in hundreds of remote villages, particularly for the children.**

Helping to provide clean water helps persecuted and oppressed Christians and also provides **an excellent platform to win the lost with the Gospel.**



You can be part of the solution.

Scan to give:

Your support helps us train Indigenous believers to bring clean water and living water to communities in need. With your help, we can equip them with the tools and training needed to fight disease, care for their neighbors, and share the hope of the Gospel.

