

# History of the Dominican Republic

“Las Palmas” or “The Palms” was started in 1982 by Ken and Alcyon Fleck after they had begun the project in Guatemala. Due to the Dominican Republic’s poor economy, many of its citizens lived in poverty and were unable to receive proper medical treatment. This resulted in many ill parents unable to care for their children or leaving them behind as orphans. Fathers would abandon their families and leave their wives with no way to provide for their families.

While living and working in Central America for many years, the Flecks were very aware of the needs of the people and especially the helpless children; they also knew people who would help them with this project. Ray and Berta Jacobs were the first folks to direct the Dominican project, and Gladys Williams became the children’s services director.

After purchasing about 130 acres of land near the city of Bonao and the Adventist University, the development of a children’s village began. Over a short period of about three years, ten children’s homes were built and filled with loving, Christian parents and needy children. Staff housing, an elementary school, office, warehouse, shop and two churches became part of the campus. The village was developed quite quickly due to the help from Maranatha groups and several board members.

While the project was being administered by the Jacobs, there was a great need to find a children’s services director. In about 1988 Gladys Williams willingly took the position after having had a dream where she saw herself caring for children in association with her former boss, Pastor Fleck. She knew right away that this is where the Lord wanted her to serve. After working with a couple of other administrators at the Las Palmas campus and 12 years of experience as children’s services director, Gladys became Las Palmas’ first native administrator and stayed until she retired. This took place in 2001 and at this time her niece, Samilin Williams, who had been working as the children’s services director, accepted the responsibilities of administrator and continues to the present.

Over the years, Las Palmas has developed three different means to help supplement their monthly budget by about 10% and provide food for the village homes. The first is farming where they raise several staple crops including yucca and plantains. Besides these important foods they have raised sweet potatoes, egg plant, okra and rice to help with their food needs.

The second is that a dairy of about 100 cows was developed. This provided the milk and cheese that the campus uses with enough leftover to sell. Recently they have been fighting an outbreak of a disease called brucellosis. The government has tried to help them eradicate it and we have finally taken drastic means by selling all the cows. The pasture is being treated and new higher quality cows will be purchased. We will be starting over.

The third, and probably the most active industry, is the bakery. It also produces vegetarian meat substitutes which they use on campus and package to sell to restaurants and stores.

A few years ago we expanded our school to include the secondary level of education. Our children are growing quickly and are starting to graduate from University and are getting married. ICC now has many grandchildren.