Paraguay sits landlocked in the heart of South America. Indigenous people dwelled in the land for thousands of years prior to Spanish colonization. Most Paraguayans are mestizos, a mixture of Spanish and Native American descent, whose blended traditions produced Paraguay's unique culture. To this day, the primary language is Guaraní, their native tongue, which mimics sounds of animals and the environment. While the nation's overall literacy rate is a stellar 95 percent, the figure is disproportional. Among the indigenous communities, the literacy rate is only 51 percent.

Paraguay is home to 6.9 million people, 22 percent of whom live in poverty, particularly in rural areas. Agriculture and industry sectors include cotton and textiles, sugar, soybeans, and cement. However, much of its economy depends on its role as a middleman: re-exportation of imported goods to nearby countries. Half of the population experienced life under a dictatorship, which ended in 1989. Although the citizens are free today, a guerilla insurgence has sought to force a socialist government into power. Many Paraguayans migrate to adjacent countries in search of a better life, due to the nation's history of civil war, political upheaval, and poverty.

Lutheran Hour Ministries conducts outreach in Paraguay through mass media, technology, and interpersonal channels.

Ministry Response

There is tremendous opportunity to share God's love and reach out with the Gospel in Paraguay. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM–Paraguay) responds to the spiritual hunger across this South American country through a variety of strategies:

RADIO. Our original radio programs in Paraguay are geared toward young adults, 23 to 40 years old. They offer practical guidelines to young couples, who are making critical decisions as they raise their young families. These concise broadcasts share the love of God, encourage listeners to attend a church, and promote Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs) for adults and children.

DIGITAL OUTREACH. Young adults gravitate to the internet seeking help, including millions who are curious—or have doubts—about Christianity. The Vivenciar.net website serves as our hub for digital outreach in Paraguay and throughout Latin America. Through Vivenciar, we establish online relationships with individuals and provide biblically-based answers for their lives. Eventually, as God opens their hearts, we share the Gospel with them and guide them into church.
FILM SHOWINGS. Illiteracy is prevalent among the low-income population, particularly the indigenous groups, and access to movie theaters is limited for them. Film showings provide a special way to communicate the Gospel to these individuals. During these events, volunteers show the love of Jesus to those who attend, offering more information to those who do not know Him or are new to the faith.

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS. LHM–Paraguay conducts Equipping the Saints (ETS) workshops to provide a new generation of Christians with practical ways to carry the Gospel into their local communities. After attending these sessions, believers feel more confident sharing the Good News with their neighbors and inviting them to local congregations. We continue to keep in touch with the participants to help them apply what they learned.

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES. LHM–Paraguay offers Bible Correspondence Courses to introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus, and to reinforce a biblical understanding for people who do. When someone responds to an outreach activity, LHM–Paraguay will typically invite the respondent to begin a BCC as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. BCCs are available for both children and adults. One key avenue for promoting BCCs is LHM–Paraguay’s radio broadcasts.

YOUTH MINISTRY. Our puppet ministry brings Bible stories to life for children in elementary schools and encourages their imagination! As adolescents struggle with conflicting moral and social choices, our Project JOEL program tackles tough topics—from relationships to sex to drugs—in an honest, relevant manner, rooted in God’s love for them. We work with schools and public institutions to incorporate Project JOEL into curriculum.

Impact

MARcos’ STORY: How God Used a Lutheran Hour Ministries Radio Program to Restore a Hurting Family

I never wanted you as a son. I became your father out of pity.

Unwanted by his father, Marcos has known rejection and pain from a young age. Heartache continued once he married and had children. One son died while young. Another son departed the family for another country. They haven’t heard from him in a long time. Marcos’ wife, Lourdes, sank into deep depression and turned to alcohol for comfort. Treatment for her addiction was unsuccessful. Lourdes passed away.

Yet Marcos’ heartache continued with the worst ordeal a parent can know: His daughter died, leaving behind a son and daughter. Both children were orphans before their fifth birthdays.

Marcos’ life hit rock bottom. He struggled alone. Without a church, he had no place to look for answers. Fearing he couldn’t be the grandfather his grandchildren would need him to be, Marcos prepared to give them up for adoption.

Then, while listening to the radio, Marcos heard a radio spot from LHM–Paraguay. Desperate for help, he contacted the ministry staff. As they shared Christ’s love with him, Marcos grew hopeful … and decided to keep his grandchildren in his care.

Working through the LHM–Paraguay staff and its radio programming, the Holy Spirit brought Marcos restoration. Today, he lives with his daughters—and grandchildren—in the town of Pirayú.