

Filipino Women Experience 'New Birth' Through Midwifery Ministry

Glory Reborn, which offers free maternity care to poor and homeless women, has delivered 400 babies since 2003

A 20-something woman from Texas has launched a midwifery ministry in the Philippines, causing hundreds of expectant women to experience new birth.

Since September 2003, Hilary Overton's Glory Reborn Organization (GRO) has provided free maternity care to the homeless and poor mothers of Cebu City, located 365 miles south of Manila.

Overton, 24, said GRO has delivered more than 400 healthy babies and helped many more women in the community through medical care and services. Expectant mothers are offered prenatal and post-natal checkups, vitamins, health teachings and a feeding program, as well as weekly prayer and worship sessions before their babies are delivered.

Overton estimates that at least 200 women have accepted Jesus. "It is amazing to see the many lives that have been transformed not just physically but spiritually throughout the course of pregnancy and delivery, and how many little lives will be impacted to live for Jesus," Overton said.

A native of El Paso, Overton is part of a family of ministers. Her uncle is popular worship leader Tommy Walker. Her aunt and uncle, Janey and Sam Stewart, head a worldwide feeding ministry called Charlie's Lunch. Another uncle, Dale Walker, is founder of Heart for the World Mission Organization. And

her father, Steve Walker, was founding pastor of Jesus Chapel West in El Paso.

Overton said she fell in love with ministering in Cebu during a June 2000 missions trip with Youth With a Mission. In September 2000, she moved to Cebu and lived there for 15 months while working on her midwifery degree through a New Mexico school.

She went back to Texas for five months to plan her June 6, 2003, wedding to David Overton, also 24. "I came back to Cebu in September 2003 to start Glory Reborn in my apartment, where we delivered our first baby," said Overton, noting that her husband is GRO's clinic administrator and "fix-it" man.

Overton said Glory Reborn's name is based on 2 Corinthians 3:18. "We chose 'Glory Reborn' because it sums up the process of going from glory to glory after we are born again," said Overton, who doesn't have any children. "The name really has to do with the ministry being a birthing center for new life."

Mercy Sanchez, 32, knows this firsthand. Shortly after she came to GRO, she learned her baby had died in her womb. "In the midst of all my sadness and despair, I had to look to Jesus for hope, and through this struggle I gave my heart and my baby to Jesus," Sanchez said. "When I went home, I felt freedom and happiness for the first time, and I knew that my baby was in heaven with Jesus. Now Jesus is helping me change my life."

According to a newspaper in Cebu City, which has a population of 610,000, only four of 10 births in the region occur at a health facility. Three out of 10 infants in the area die

before reaching age 1, and 20 percent of newborns are born with a low birth weight. For every 100,000 births in Cebu City, 200 mothers will die.

Overton said GRO has outgrown her apartment, and she hopes they will soon be able to purchase a facility for the ministry. Support comes mostly from churches and individuals, though GRO () hopes to receive a grant soon.

Ron Acton, pastor of 300-member Jesus Chapel West, said God is using Overton “in a mighty way.”

“She is able to do so much with so little,” Acton, 54, said. “She is able to train others to do what they never thought they could do. She gives the glory to God.”

Overton’s mother, Sharon Walker, echoed his point. “At the age of 24, Hilary experiences daily what many of us will never experience in a lifetime,” said Walker, 50. “There are great joys and deep sorrows. Hilary literally handles life and death daily. Even if I was not Hilary’s mom, it is so utterly amazing to see someone so young with such unwavering passion.”

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