

ACTS East Africa February – April 2010

The Lord has consistently blessed us and the volunteer groups we have been privileged to handle throughout these last two months! The el Nino weather phenomenon continued to affect Kenya and the East African region with unseasonal rains throughout February and March and that always makes for interesting safaris! However, we are blessed that these rains have coincided with the arrival of the DAF 4-Wheel-Drive overland truck which we purchased recently to add to the 2 trucks (a Mercedes and a Scania) we have been using for mission and other group trips to date.



One of the DAF's first tasks was to take a group of 11 men from Calvary Road Ministries from Knoxville, Tennessee, USA, and 4 translators, (Maasai Pastors and church members), to a remote region of 'Maasailand', straddling the border between southern Kenya and northern Tanzania.

The roads were rough and progress was slow. They camped the first night on the border and the following day, with the permission of the local authorities, travelled further into Tanzania where they set up camp for 10 days. The focus of their mission was simple – to reach as many Maasai for Christ as possible. Their technique was brilliantly simple: The team divided into groups of 3 or 4 and, with a Maasai translator and guide, they set out each day on foot and visited local "manyattas" or "bomas". After gaining permission from the elder or chief of the village they gathered the residents and hung up what they call a "story cloth". This is made up of 42 consecutive pictures depicting the creation and fall of man through to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. With the assistance of the translator, one of the group members would tell the story pointing to each picture as he went. At the end of the story an invitation was made for the listeners to pray to accept Christ. God blessed the efforts of these 11 men and their translators and many Maasai decided to follow Christ as a result of their preaching, including 170 high school children and all 7 of the village chiefs they met. Maasai pastors and evangelists are following up with discipleship work among the new believers. The group ended the trip with a one night safari to the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

We at ACTS feel honoured to be able to share in this work by providing the means for this group and others like it to do what they do in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and southern Sudan.

In February a group of Christian business executives from the USA came to Kenya under the banner of the Convoy of Hope for a "Hope Walk", facilitated by the local Assemblies of God mission. They walked through slum areas and saw local AG church community projects which provide solutions to some of the huge challenges they witnessed. They then took a short safari before heading home. These execs were coming up with amazing ideas for fund-raising and solutions for sustainable development projects and ways forward. We do not know how much money was pledged, but it was a huge success and we were proud to have been able to help by handling almost all their Kenyan logistics for them.

In addition to other mission trips we have helped facilitate with logistical support, we also assisted the bi-annual CMDA, (Christian Medical and Dental Association) training seminar here at Brackenhurst, Tigon, with transfers, hotel and safari bookings and other logistics.

Highlights from volunteers:

"Spending time with the LCCK children (they are so loving & fun)"

"Going to the slums and meeting the ladies who are so much devoted to God, which was VERY inspiring for me."

"First of all, all three ministries I did (Slums, In his image, and Cheshire) were so wonderful. I really enjoy going to projects everyday and I have gained so much from working with these 3 groups. Secondly, the people in the ACTS/Global Connections house are very welcoming, fun, exciting, and just great people to grow in faith with. I enjoyed spending two weeks with all of them!"

Things learnt and perspective gained

"It was a very refreshing experience to see the way of life in Kenya (& Africa) for the first time. It is mind-blowing to see how people here are so happy, welcoming and trust God despite poverty and hardship. It really humbles me that we have so much back home, even wastage, and we often complain a lot and always want more."

"A huge difference I see in my life is how grateful I am for things back home. Now I am so grateful for a real toilet!! But really I see that I am so blessed to be a Canadian. I am so blessed to have a God as good as He is, and how loving as He is. This trip has definitely made me think about my future, and what I can do to serve others and not myself. I have also learned that God is constant. Even when I am away from family, friends, comforts of home, God is my constant. God is the solid rock, and I can take him anywhere!"

Reflections:

"Through this experience, I feel that I have regained the close relationship with God and that I will always be thankful for all the blessings/things that I have and gained through my life so far."

"God has done so much for me. He has proved to me time and time again that he is my solid rock and I can trust in him. God has opened my eyes to the lifestyle and people of Kenya. He has shown me that there are people all over the world (His children) that he loves so much. I definitely came into volunteering thinking I could give something to these people, but in all honestly I have gained so much myself from seeing these projects and people. God is a great God!"

Volunteer Involvement in February and March

We had two short-term volunteers, Moon and Nicole, with us at the end of February/beginning of March. And we currently still have one long-term volunteer, Bethany, who arrived end of January and will be with us until May. All of them have been greatly involved at “In His Image”, “Cheshire” (a vocational training facility for disabled women), and “LCC-K”, (a children’s centre for orphans and vulnerable kids), which they have really enjoyed and gotten deeply involved in. Moon and Bethany loved working at the Nursery School, assisting the teachers especially, whereas Nicole enjoyed spending hours with the babies, taking care of them and showing them love and attention. Bethany also helped to finish repainting an entire nursery school, with pretty designs and cartoons. It was a fun project that has been very rewarding!



Otherwise, there were two special events in the past two months: One took place at end of February, when the Power Women’s Group was taken on an outing! We took them to the ‘Maasai Market’ and another (very well developed) craft-shop, where similar products are made as these women produce themselves in their business. This gave them a real opportunity to gather more ideas and perhaps even find some additional training. After that, a scrumptious picnic and bible study awaited under a tree in a public park - it was not only an amazing and invaluable experience for the women’s group, but a special day for our three volunteers as they were allowed to share in their excitement.

The second event saw all the girls from Cheshire Home going on a trip to Mombasa on the beautiful Kenyan coast. Our volunteer Bethany was privileged enough to be able to join the girls, and they all thoroughly enjoyed their 4-day ‘getaway’. Having never seen the ocean before in their entire life, these 30 girls were awestruck at the spectacular sight and sound, many of them just standing at the shore in awe, staring into the dark blue water for a long time. Bethany of course had a wonderful time and was delighted she could share in this incredible experience.



Khumi's Bag by Amy Whitlock

I graduated from the University of Delaware in May 2009 as an Apparel Design major. One reason I felt called to come back to serve at Living Hope for a second year was to use my area of expertise to help a very special friend I made on my first visit. I was deeply moved when I first met Khumi - she had an exceptional determination and sense of innovation to overcome challenges. The plan was for me to serve at the Living Way entrepreneurial program, where I could use my skills to teach Khumi and a group of women how to make products that they in turn could use to sell and generate income.



Sadly, only a couple of days before I was scheduled to arrive in Cape Town, Khumi passed away. What heartbreaking news to receive! I was so excited this whole past year because I knew I'd get to come back and work alongside my friend, but when I received that news, everything seemed to be falling apart. Suddenly one ministry I felt called to come work with was stripped right out of my hands - I just didn't understand what God was doing?

I asked if there was any way I could still be involved in Khumi's bags or if there was some way I could still use my gift of designing and sewing. It was then that I was introduced to a women's support group that met in Capricorn on Tuesdays, who were learning how to sew. I started going to help teach them sewing, and what a blessing it turned out to be! Not only was I able to teach them, but I had been given the opportunity to keep alive Khumi's dream of starting a bag-making business. I showed them how to design and sew Khumi's bag, which they can now produce themselves to sell and generate an income. What a blessing it has been to meet these women and to start to get to know them. While I thought everything had gone array, God had it all mapped out perfectly!

Another reason for me to return was to run soccer clinics in communities to reach kids for Christ. I found out about a week-long soccer coaching training program run by Ambassadors in Sport (AIS), who's aim it is to bring the hope of Christ to people through soccer. I attended the training and had a blast, and started to realise more and more that I was where God wanted me to be. Now I plan to take what I learned and use it to run Living Hope soccer clinics in Capricorn.

So, despite two seemingly major setbacks, God has provided me with greater opportunities than I could ever have hoped for. Not only that, but by serving here and undergoing the AIS training, I believe that God is calling me into soccer ministry after I finish serving with Living Hope!

There are two Bible verses that I love, that get me through a lot, and that I am always reminded of. The first is from Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths".

The second verse is Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".

Touched by the Children by Molly Brummet USA, ACTS Volunteer, Cape Town

Nathaniel is a 10 year old boy who has more gumption for life than anyone I've met. He has a smile that spreads across his face. We enjoy chatting about school and how he likes learning. He tells me about his soccer skills and laughs at me when I try to kick a ball. He has a true servant heart and is always looking for ways to help us during Kids Club ministry.

Romeino is my personal translator. Each day I'm at Mountain View she helps me understand what is being said in Afrikaans. Her face lights up each time she explains something because she always want to be a helper. She loves to wear dresses and be "girly." We enjoy chats about nail polish, hairstyles, and her day.

Lorenzo is my quiet, shy friend who looks for me until I find him. He is a man of little words, but I know his heart is full of love for others. He always listens intently as we teach during Kids Club and can answer articulately. When we color, he always shows off his masterpieces with pride on his face. He especially loves to play the jumping game I created for the kids. I know if there is any spare second then he will be by my side ready to jump!!

These are just a few of my friends I've made thus far. Each child that comes into Kids Club brightens my heart. More than that, they each have a part of my heart. These are children for whom I want the best. These are friends who I will be fighting for justice, reconciliation, restoration, and compassion for, for the rest of my life. For Christ himself stated, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Luke 18:16)



The end of the world, or just Cameroon? - Update: Ambassadors in Sport (AIS) Cycle Trip
Tangiers – Cape Town

Just 200 metres after crossing the Cameroon border, the “Cycle for Hope” team and their guide leave the vehicle - stuck in the mud - with one change of clothes and their tooth brushes, setting off on their bikes for a real adventure.

All this came about after the team realized the ferry would cost over US\$3000, and had decided to tackle the 80km road instead of the 800 km round trip. However, seeing the state of the road and having got the truck stuck once already, they quickly decided that it would be best to turn around and make the long round trip ... the only hiccup being that the cyclists and crew only had single entry visas into Nigeria and were therefore not able to take the trip with the vehicle! And so they set off on their bikes down the muddy road, passing trucks and cars stuck in 10m deep mud holes. Making the most of it, they enjoyed the en-route hospitality of villagers, including fried snails and spicy food, even having great fun swimming down some rapids during a lunch break!

But, the spicy food (or was it the fried snails?), didn't sit well with everyone, as some of the team slowly realized they wouldn't be able to carry on very comfortably. So, with 8 of them squished into a taxi, it made for an interesting and rather uncomfortable ride, not helped by the fact that the clutch cable broke half way! This meant the driver not only had to start the car in 3rd gear, but was hesitant to bring the car to a halt ... so, approaching a police check point (they usually have either a rope across the road or a piece of wood with nails in it - this time it was the wood with nails!), he yelled out the window to the police man sleeping by the side, who quickly moved the spikes out the way a second before we passed. No one seemed to be too concerned!

Finally, 6 days after leaving the overland truck near the border, without any interim contact, the team and truck were reunited, and so the journey continues ... the team is just about to reach the Gabon border and enter into their 11th country. It has certainly been an adventure, with some great ministry time on the way. Keep them in your prayers as there is still a long way to go!

Follow the team on <http://www.cycleforhope.org/> ...

