

# Turkana Tales – 2014

A few excerpts from Sean Mars' journal while on a trip to Kenya with his son, Nathan



## Friday - 8/8 "Glory hallelujah, Look what is doing" (song)

Wow! Today was very encouraging to see what God is growing up and has grown up! Starting with the two farms we saw near Lodwar (Naoyamug and Kaaligo) and symbolic as well of the wonderful team meeting we had in the afternoon and the maturity in Christ of the team. After a drive of about 45 minutes we arrived at the two farms. Gene was encouraged to see how well things were for the most part being cared for. They had a lot of Kale, some onions, a lentil like that can be made into a soup for protein, impressive green peppers (selling two for 20 shillings

(about 25 cents US) - as much as tomatoes which are also grown but none were mature at that time. The people were saying that they would not plant sorghum anymore because it was not "enough value" -- which is a growth point for the people's understanding. The people were happy with the farms. At the second farm they reported that their solar had been stolen, but the people of the garden purchased their own replacement. This is huge as it shows a responsibility and ownership instead of a "receive a gift" mentality that is dependent.

After returning home to grab money to shop and eat in Lodwar (about 12:45 so Nathan and I ate a cliff bar), Gene said I would drive a second truck so we could drop the main truck at the shop to check out a noise we were hearing. So, I hesitantly grabbed the keys and muttered now would be a good time to start praying Nathan. The truck is set up just like my 1990 Toyota p'up, except it is the opposite! The gear shift is on the left, wheel on the right, etc. I was doing fine, including the one lane bridge, Nathan telling me I had several inches of room still. Before long though, Gene stopped in front of me and stayed there and did not move. In time we came to find out that the truck had quit running! Hallelujah it did not happen while we were 45 minutes or more from town as in earlier in the day or 3 hours away like we will be tomorrow. Next Gene and I switched vehicles and he towed me to the shop-- so now I am driving in town connected with a long rope! I was very hesitant about making the turn into a tight gate without power, so thankfully all agreed we would push it in from just outside the gate. But I still had to maneuver between several cars to line it up in the one bay available.



The 2:00 meeting with the farm team was very encouraging. We started with praise choruses and hymns and then read out loud a chapter from a book they had been going through. The meeting was mostly led by Haron (see picture at left) who is the "farm expert" who grew up in Eldoret, yet is Turkana by birth. John, the technician/welder/ handyman wrote down the reports on the white board and plans for the week. Sylvester, led at times as well. All throughout you sense a great community of team work and allowing different ones to lead in what they do best - and Haron has only been there 8 months. John would be assessed as a humble worker but had very mature biblical thoughts to share during the chapter time. You could sense

Sylvester's heart for people in comments made about how the lost people really need the hope a relationship with God brings.

Finally, we went and visited New Hope, the orphanage being run by the lady we met on the plane -- Gene again was an encouragement and source of knowledge and ideas, humbly and appropriately, gradually dispensing ideas and suggestions. He gave Rebecca contacts for who could do different things and how to use the property to sustain the mission. Then off to Lynn Pottenger's (CMF missionary) for dinner. Tomorrow we head to Nakor.

### **Sunday – 8/10 Church**

We arrived a little after 10:00 even though we could not hear the drums yet. Not many were there when we arrived as we later heard people came late last night to talk to people about the raids. Soon more came though. The music seems to emphasize the off beat and is very energetic, with one person singing out a verse of testimony and then the group responding with the chorus. The brief translation I was given showed good concepts, ex. Jesus is the right road, and there is a coming judgment. A young adult (youth) wrote the agenda on the blackboard as the singing continued for a long time. Eventually Lopunga did the first reading or message -- Jerimiah 7:1-5. A lesson about the people of Judah needing to repent and reform their ways. Then we sang some more and had communion with a meditation. Yes, it was still a common cup of Chai and some broken pieces of a type of cookie -- and yes, I participated, but drank a sip from the part with the handle after praying for protection :-). A youth (young adult choir) then sang several songs and were natural in their movement with the drum. Then the second "reading" was announced, which meant it was time for me to share from the Bible. I shared John 15:5, where Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." I had pulled a branch off a tree as a visual aid and then spoke on a few suggestions for staying connected to Him during the day:

1. Keep God's truths in our mind and heart always with a song or a thought

Psalms 119:105

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." -- the song

2. Pray all the time - include Him in everything -- short prayers, especially for guidance and thanksgiving. 1 Thess. 5:16-18.

It went fine, I think I was able to communicate the ideas -- I just decided this was the opportunity God was giving me and I just needed to be faithful. I even sang the chorus to the song, Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path - my first solo!

A couple other insights from church... The people were quite learned in the Bible, the leaders' Bibles were worn from use -- may that be more the case for all of us. It was also very encouraging to see many men leading during the service (not a church following only one man, but a team of mature leaders, shepherding their flock) and even women serving the communion and collecting the offering. We even had a greeting time at the end as well as a time for visitors to introduce themselves. Church ended about 12:30pm.



### **Monday - Water in many ways**

#### **Dowsing, river, evangelists, skip of joy, read the dirt, happy hat man...**

Today we went south to put in a well across the Kerio. Yes across the Kerio so that meant we had to wade the river, maybe 50 meters or so. The water had gone up a little so we didn't know exactly how wet we would get. There were some low spot / holes but none deeper than mid high and the river was not flowing fast. When we got there, the drillers had drilled for two days and had gone about 26 feet. It was hard going turning and pushing down on the two person hand "T", that was connected to a metal digging "sand point." We had about 3 feet of progress by a late lunch due to going through hard clay. After lunch and Bible Study, I was just praying that we might see some water. Within 45 minutes we had wet mud and soon the man with the Backstreet Boys shirt did a little skip -- the drill team was encouraged! We were helping again by that time and Chris (see picture), whose church had donated the well money did a turn and was excited. We eventually found consistent water at 32 feet and were able to put in 20+ feet of casing -- praise God for good progress and encouragement! Earlier in the day Gene showed Nathan and I two steel wires used for dowsing or finding where the well should go -- Nathan in particular was doubtful! But soon even we were able to see it working. Still lacking in comparison to Brother Dario though, who can use a wood Y-shaped branch and have it twirl in his hand to estimate the depth of the water! Two of the drill team members had recently returned to the team after a two year absence as church planters sent out from the church in this part of Turkana. I believe they started four churches. These were the two with "Backstreet Boys" and "Bastrop Bears" on their shirts. The short man with the fancy hat was always wanting to be a part of things as he was a local guy, but at times we thought the 15 feet of steel rod might just pull him over when he held it high -- but he would just smile and take the big section from us. I would help lift the steel rod out of the hole but strategically locate myself so I would never have to hold straight up the 20 foot section. We finished the day with a song and a prayer of praise for God's provision of water and a well for the people. Note: After lunch they read a couple sections from the Bible and go around and talk about their insights -- they knew their Bible well!



### **Tuesday - 8/12 - Farms and Prayer**

Gene, Nathan and I went with a church leader and a young boy back across the river to visit three farms. The water was about the same depth as yesterday and it was not as wide across. The first two farms had quite a bit of weed grass growing, yet the people were actively weeding -- later we figured out they were feeding the weeds to their goats, so they might not be as upset about the weeds. See in Turkana, often the goats do not have enough nutrient rich food to produce milk, but with weed grass (that only grows in watered farms, they will produce. Gene expects that when the vet missionary arrives that she will encourage that a part of each farm will go to grass for the goats to be fed - outside the farm to control them. The kids at these farms were more curious about us and some even acted a little afraid, but soon they would follow us around, lean-up against me and later three held my fingers on my left hand at the same time. I had the blessing to prayer for each set of farmers and farms and asked God to bless the farms with produce and the workers with insight, ability to follow through, encouragement and energy. It was special to be able to pray for them. At one farm they had grown papaya - which needs a male tree and a female tree! A few other farm facts: each watermelon plant can produce 12 melons which average at least ten kilos in weight or roughly 22lbs. Right now the going price would mean about \$8.50 per melon if they could be brought to a bigger market farther from Lodwar. Now a worker in Lodwar would average 4 to 10 dollars a day, but in the bush at Nakor, a person would make maybe 1 or at the most 2 dollars a day. Many in Nakor right now are turning to burning limbs of trees to gather and sell the charcoal in big bags that a truck brings either to Lodwar or camps of Kenya Oil workers -- 500 schillings (\$5.60 US) for a bag of Charcoal 2 foot round by 4 feet high. This seems like a great deal to the poor of Nakor, but they are beginning to burn more than the few dead limbs and so some of the farm team are concerned that it will result in deforestation and erosion in an already arid climate.