

South Sudan/Uganda update  
September 28, 2011

It's 9:41pm on Wednesday night and we are finally sitting down for dinner at our hotel. Wow, it's been quite a trip so far and we haven't even made it to South Sudan yet! There are 8 of us on the trip this year, with quite a varying amount of missions and practical experience.

Our 2011 South Sudan & Uganda Global Outreach team includes Marc Merrill (a pharmacist), Carrie Biggers (a nurse and an artist), Joe Biggers (Carrie's son, pre-med student and an artist), Michelle FitzGerald (a teacher and an artist), Steve Schwartz (has helped me lead trips to Haiti & is leading our efforts with micro-finance loans), Kathy Smarrella (Art for the Heart of Africa Chair Person, photographer and is helping me lead this trip) and my personal favorite, Rose Schwartz (our photographer/videographer & experienced missionary). We started our journey by leaving The Vineyard Church at 1:30pm on Monday after having our intercessory prayer team pray for us and didn't arrive in Uganda until 10:00pm local time Tuesday night (7 hour time change so that was 3:00pm Indiana time). It's hard to explain how tiring just plain 25 ½ hours of travel can be, but it is exhausting. Our travel went extremely well with no delays. We flew from Chicago to Belgium, had a 2 hour layover and then flew from there to Entebbe, Uganda. Pastor Solomon was at the airport to pick us up with 3 vehicles to handle all 8 of us and our 16 suitcases! (We filled 8 of our suitcases full of medical supplies, art supplies and toys for the children) We checked into a hotel we hadn't stayed at before, the Central Inn, but it turns out to be very nice. Thank-you Jesus! J We went to our rooms and took showers and went to bed as most of us were very tired.

The next morning we met for breakfast around 7am as the electricity was off in the hotel and we couldn't take showers. Thankfully the electricity came back on after breakfast and we were able to prepare for our day. We decided to fill our largest suitcase full of medical supplies and take it with us for the medical outreach. Pastor Solomon had a driver pick us up at 9:30am and we began our 1 ½ hour trip to Pastor Solomon's church and school. Upon arrival there was already a room full of people waiting to be seen by our medical team. We quickly unloaded and Marc, Carrie, Joe & Kathy began seeing patients. One neat thing that happened while preparing for this trip was that Marc Merrill heard about the need from Pastor Solomon for an ultrasound.

So, he researched portable ultrasounds and also raised the funds from his friends to pay for it. So, we had a brand new ultrasound machine to take with us on this trip! Pastor Solomon had 3 med-students there to help us, and one of them was a senior in college majoring in Radiography! The team saw 150 – 200 patients throughout the day with quite a range of physical issues. Below is a list of the types of conditions they saw:

- Fungal infections of the scalp
- Acute malaria
- 50+ pregnant women (all getting an ultrasound to see their babies!)
- A woman with an ovarian tumor (she will seek immediate attention at the local hospital)
- A woman with a tumor on her head
- A 9 year old with syphilis
- 1 person with Measles
- Cough, fever, upper respiratory infections
- Skin diseases and infections

- Open skin wounds
- A baby with a hernia
- One child had a broken femur that wasn't healing properly
- A person with Arthritis
- People with worms
- Head aches and fevers

Since Marc Merrill is a pharmacist, they had LOTS of medications to administer and were able to take VERY good care of most of their patients. A few were referred to more extensive medical care, but most were able to walk away with a sucker in their mouth and some directions and medications to take. Praise God for His provision for these people! Marc, Carrie, Joe & Kathy all did a wonderful job and worked hard all day.

While the medical clinic was going on, the rest of us took on the task of purchasing food for the poor in the area. The Vineyard Church donated just over \$12,000 to help feed the poor in Africa as part of the Radical Offering this past weekend, so we had quite a lot of money to spend! We decided to set aside \$6,000 for Uganda with the rest going to South Sudan. This task took several hours as it's not as easy as just running over to Sam's Club... We first had to drive into downtown Kampala to exchange our money. What a surprise when we walked out of the exchange office with over \$16,000,000 in Uganda Shillings! We felt like we had just robbed a bank and had to be careful to hide the money in our backpacks so that we didn't have any unwelcome "fans" following us. We then divided into two cars to go shopping; me Rose & Pastor Solomon were in one car with Steve, Michelle & Pastor Solomon's wife Doreen in the other car. My car first went to a pharmacy to purchase some additional medicines for the medical outreach and then on to the "bad side of town" to purchase food in bulk.

Pastor Solomon said this was the area that we could buy the food the cheapest. After several hours of negotiating and food packaging and loading, we were able to purchase several hundred pounds of beans and posho (a maize flour (cornmeal) cooked with water into a porridge or dough-like food). We rented a big flatbed truck to haul the dozens of bags back to Pastor Solomon's campus as there was no way to fit it into our car. The other car purchased several hundred pounds of rice, sugar, salt, seasoning, cooking oil, and milk. They also rented a flatbed truck to transport it back to the clinic. Once all the food arrived, Pastor Solomon's helpers unloaded the bags into a large storage container to keep it safe from the impending rain. They also purchased hundreds of small bags to be used to divide the food so that it could be given away to needy families.

It was now 5pm and the Wednesday evening church service was about to begin, so Pastor Solomon quickly divided up some of the food into bags so that we could take it to one of the families nearby. This particular family had 4 young children and had come up to Pastor Solomon on Sunday and explained that his family hadn't eaten for a couple of days. Pastor Solomon gave this family some food after church but wanted to be able to do so much more. So, when we arrived into Uganda and I was able to tell him about the money that The Vineyard Church had given through the Radical Offering, he was overjoyed! We carried the food to this man's one room home that was about the size of a small bedroom (there were 6 people living there). We each carried our bag into his home one by one as there wasn't enough room for us all to go in there together. With tears in his eyes, he expressed his thankfulness to Pastor Solomon and to us. Thank-you Vineyard Church for your generosity!

We then went back to the church and joined into worship. Boy, they sure know how to worship in Uganda! After much jumping, shouting, singing, sweating and dancing... worship time was finally over. It's quite an experience to behold! Then, each of our team members went up one by one to the microphone to say a few words of greeting before the message time was turned over to me. I didn't have much time to prepare, but God gave me a message about the sermon on the mount from Matthew Chapter 5, 6 & 7, and it was received well. After service, it was now after 8:00pm and we still had a 1 ½ hour drive back to our hotel, so we said our good-bye's and got into the 8 passenger vehicle (with 9 people in it) and traveled back. We settled down in the hotel restaurant and ate dinner before finally heading back to our rooms to get some rest for another eventful day tomorrow.

Tomorrow (Thursday) we will eat breakfast at 6am, pack into a shuttle by 6:30am and check-in to the airport by 7:00am for our 8:00am flight to Yei, South Sudan. Steve Schwartz is actually staying behind by himself to spend one more day with Pastor Solomon to assist with more food distribution and to check on current and future micro-loan opportunities to help the Uganda people create jobs. He will then fly out on Friday morning to go to Arua, Uganda to spend a day with a Micro-loan institution that we have connections with so that he can learn better how to possibly start one of these in Yei, South Sudan and in Kampala, Uganda. The plan is for him to take a 4-5 hour taxi ride to Yei on Saturday, be praying for him! Also, be praying for Steve as he is the only one so far that hasn't felt very well, so keep him and the rest of us in your prayers for health and safety.

We hope to see the children of New Generation Dreamland Children's Home tomorrow afternoon, but this is Africa and you never know what tomorrow may bring. Thank-you all so much for your prayers!

Clint Schwartz