

News from Aru February 2012

I returned to Aru from Bunia with some relief. The time in Bunia was good but very dusty. There is less traffic in Aru so although the temperature is higher it is a more pleasant environment.

The work goes on here and I have also had the pleasure of the company of Stuart (from Puddington on the Wirral) who is visiting IPASC to learn more about micro finance projects. These exist in both the HIV/AIDS and Safe Motherhood groups. IPASC has been responsible for introducing this for the benefit of various groups.



We visited Leri a village close to Aru about a half hour drive away. In the absence of structured Health care planning many communities take it upon themselves to obtain land from a local Chief and build a Health Centre which will serve perhaps 4 or 5 villages. It is often the women who make the bricks and build the structure, employing a mason to complete the floors, ceilings, doors, windows and rendering. This visit was to encourage the Leri women in their project. We were told about their micro finance project. Each village has a M F group – contributions are given each week and when a woman is ready for delivery she receives money either to attend hospital if there are complications or to deliver

in the Health Centre. She may also have some money to buy maternity and baby clothes. The money is repayable and the women are learning to work together in groups to gather wood or local produce to sell in the markets. In this way they can be more cost effective.



The women dance and praise God for their new building and also our visit

Lussi Banage, (Head of Safe Motherhood) the President and Secretary of the Leri Project



We visited another village, Yebifu, where we supplied two doors and windows for the newly built Health Centre. Here again it is mainly the women who have completed the work. The welcome was noisy. The supplies were received with great joy.



New bricks are being made for additional buildings.

The basket on the woman's back contains her baby!



The HIV/AIDS Department has also set up micro finance groups in Aru and other strategic locations. The meticulous attention to detail is inspiring. Every group member contributes a set amount of money each week, fine are paid for late arrival or absence without good reason. The whole group supports requests to borrow money for health care or to set up a small business. Money



borrowed is repaid with interest. The money box is kept in a secure location and is locked by three different members of the group who also keep the key. This ensures security of the funds. Every three months all the money is distributed equally among the members and the process starts again.

Life here wouldn't be normal without a wedding or a funeral most weeks. The man being married this week works for the Diocesan Board of Development. He



was widowed 3 or 4 years ago and has been blessed with another wife. The cake cutting ceremony is also traditional here. After cutting the cake together the wife cuts and serves small pieces to each guest with the help of her matron of honour.

Today I have learned about yet another major project which was started in July and completed in November last year. IPASC heard that roads to Ingbokolo (towards the border with Sudan) and surrounding villages were blocked completely and the people were starving and dying because there was no way of getting food to them or transporting the sick to hospital. IPASC staff mobilised the local communities to open and improve the roads. Together with PAM (World food programme) villagers received basic foods to sustain them until they were able to become self-sufficient again by trading produce in larger towns which were once again accessible. IPASC are talking to the local communities and encouraging them to continue with this road improvement project. The Chief of the area has expressed his heartfelt thanks to IPASC and PAM for this mercy mission.



Today saw the arrival of more food donated by PAM for distribution to people living with AIDS. This includes soya flour, sugar, salt, oil and dried milk. Two members of the HIV Department supervise the unloading and storage



There is a small guest house near to the IPASC where people can stay if they have no relatives in the area. These people come great distances for treatment – sadly for many they have left it too late. The HIV Dept. plans to take members of the CARM group to some of these places to help establish similar groups there. This will encourage people to seek medical help before it is too late.



Finally, as in any organisation, IPASC is currently going through a time of change. Members of the Executive Committee have asked me to work with IPASC in Aru and so after a short stay in UK I anticipate returning mid to end March for several months.



I will continue to work with the ABC Diocesan Link and have been liaising with clergy here to prepare for the visit of Bishop Keith and the Rooted in Jesus team.

One of many groups following the Rooted in Jesus course

Once again thanks to everyone who prays and supports the work here. IPASC makes a huge difference to thousands of lives through its programme of student training and operational projects and this enables communities to improve their own health and wellbeing.

Gill Brown