

Aru 12 February 2014

The time has flown by since the day I arrived in Entebbe without any luggage which was still sitting in Heathrow. The next flight arrived Saturday but landed after I left for Congo. My friend Frank in Entebbe collected the bags and put them on a bus. The bags were collected on the Monday and all was well. IPASC was delighted to receive some medical stuff for distribution to various Health Centres. They were particularly pleased with the kits for testing sugar levels in diabetics – a particularly prevalent disease here. The 200 knitted vests sent to me from all over the UK



were also well received and we have begun to distribute them to maternity centres. Some knitted dolls were also given for the babies. I received the inevitable gift of a chicken so thanks very much all you knitters – lunch was delicious – although it is quite difficult to eat something you have stroked and talked to!!!



We have had good and sad news here. The good news was the marriage of Fatuma which happened just before I came here. She had been longing for this day – let's all pray she has many years of happiness. She worked so hard in the HIV department and brought hope to many people living with the disease.



The sad news is that her friend and colleague Banage Lussi passed away on 5th February, in Bunia, after a long illness and much suffering. Banage was head of safe motherhood and was a person of energy and vision. It was she who planned and brought into being the identification of women with fistula for repair and reintegration into their family and community life. My favourite picture of Banage is one taken when my family visited – her energy and sense of fun can clearly be seen as she piggy backs Abby during a celebration. Members of IPASC from Aru and Bunia attended the thanksgiving service in Bunia. Please pray for Banage's family and especially her widowed mother who lost another daughter recently in a road traffic accident.



I have been given the task of translating the last Annual General Report into English. Doing this brings home just how much IPASC is achieving in its various aspects of work. Students who qualify and go out to work in the Ituri area of N E Congo are commended by their new employers and it is certain that they are making a difference to the quality of health care in this part of D R Congo. It is inevitably a slow process introducing good health practice and management where there has been none before and where the levels of poverty remain among the highest in the world. The operational programmes are beginning to see a reduction in some endemic diseases through the work building safe water sources and many ways of outreach to educate the population. Better control of these recurring diseases also means an increase in family revenue.

Safe motherhood has seen a reduction in infant (34 to 19 per 1000) and maternal deaths (from 370 to 270 per 100,000). 125 women were repaired of fistula last year and were re-integrated into their communities and supported in revenue raising activities. The fight against HIV/AIDS continues and I am continually impressed and moved by the number of people living with HIV who volunteer to help others in the same situation. In Aru a house is being built for people who come for treatment from outside the immediate area and have no relatives to stay with. Before I left someone gave me a generous donation part of which will complete the house in Aru. The pictures show the money being given to the Chairman of the HIV club together with a picture of the donor and the house which will be completed with ceilings and rendering.



In Ariwara the HIV club members are building a meeting house and a further donation was given to this group to help them to make progress with the building. At present they meet in a building lent to them for occasional meetings and for food distribution. Having their own building will enable them to give greater support, encouragement and skills to their brothers and sisters who are also living with HIV.



The proposed new building, committee members and giving the donation with picture of donor

Life keeps busy but has been disrupted by the comings and goings of various staff members. I hope this has settled down into normal routine again this week.

I hope to visit Bunia at the end of the month depending on available flights with MAF. I will be able to report back on the work at IPASC University and hopefully also meet with Bishop William.

Following a visit to the retreat centre at Ffald-y-Brenin in November I have been able to share some of this experience with members of the church in Aru. As a result we have formed a prayer group for all churches to pray for unity within the churches and with each other. Christians must stand together against the tide of disruption which is everywhere.

I will be in touch again after the Bunia visit and hope to send more good news of the work of IPASC.

Blessings

Gill