

Aru – 4 March 2014

Dear Friends

Time is racing on here in Aru. It has been a steady 30 degrees C and also humid. Not my favourite weather! Even the Congolese are complaining about the heat! (4th March is the day they anticipate the rainy season starting, however I remember last year climate change caused a delay in the rains coming). Despite this I have made several more visits with IPASC, delivering equipment to Health Centres, reviewing a water source and attending another meeting of the Aru HIV group. The UK knitted vests have gone down a treat and the mother's and health centre staff have been greatly encouraged by the visits. The translation of the last Annual Report is finished and may soon appear on the IPASC website. I have been working on more information articles for the website which are 'too big' to send from here so they will appear after I return to UK.

The students in Aru are a lively lot and the boy's dormitory being on site has made a big difference to the sense of 'family' and has also had an impact on the singing each morning at prayers. It is so much easier for them to practice now that they are all together. Last year one of the male students was always bad tempered and looked as if he would rather be anywhere but at IPASC. This year he is continuously smiling and is a regular member of the praise group. I told him I could see a big difference in him – joy and peace are written on his face all the time. I asked him if he knows Jesus now and he told me he has given his life, has been baptised and is now walking with him. How much more effective he will be as he works with the people in the community bringing joy into their lives together with health and well-being.



The visit to the water source was a great experience. First we went to a source built in 2012 to inspect it and ensure that it is being well maintained. It never ceases to amaze me that the source appears to be isolated, with no dwellings near to it. But in fact it serves at least 4 villages which are nearby and hidden in the bush. We also saw a new Anglican Church, again apparently isolated, and similarly a school. The children were in school as we drew close, but by the time we had passed they were all outside wanting to greet us.



The Anglican Church from a distance and then as we passed it – It will be packed every Sunday – people walk several kilometres to attend from the surrounding villages.



The school as we approached and by the time we passed it we were greeted enthusiastically. Would you believe I shook every hand!!!!



We were accompanied to the water source by members of the 'management committee' and the chief nurse of the local Health Centre. IPASC has built 4 safe water sources in the locality and there is water available to build 20 more. Sadly, however, there will not be available funds to build these in the near future. Two more will be built in the next month. As IPASC reaches people with campaigns to raise awareness about health issues, not least the need to drink safe water, both by direct contact and by radio, communities are becoming increasingly aware of the need to build sources.

The water source:



*The source is protected from animals with
The water runs continuously and the surplus
channelled for cultivation.*



*fencing.
is*

*One of the villages close
to the source*

The proposed new source



*Women gather
contaminated
water*



*Head of IPASC Health Promotion
demonstrates route of new source*



A meeting followed with committee members from all the villages some of which are in the picture.

The members of villages where sources have been built thanked IPASC for this provision of safe drinking water. They spoke about the reduction in water-borne illnesses which in turn allows the people to work more effectively. Without exception they said the extra family income would go towards the education of their children. However those who are not yet enjoying the benefits of safe water sources asked for these to be provided as soon as possible.

FACTS AND FIGURES:

- Deaths from water borne diseases have reduced from 51.3% to 43.4% Acute respiratory infection has reduced from 10.48% to 7.2%
- Diarrhoea has reduced from 65.6% to 54.1% **Total reduction** in endemic water borne disease **19.94% to 16.69%**
- **Family income** amongst those with a reduction in malaria, diarrhoea and acute respiratory disease has increased **from \$31.8 to \$38.8** per household per month
- 855 health workers were trained to relay information as a means of preventing local diseases
- 174 members of radio listening clubs were trained to pass on information throughout their communities
- 5327 pupils/students were reached in schools with awareness training on hygiene
- These facts emphasise the importance of this aspect of the work done by IPASC and perhaps tells you one of the reasons why I continue to return to help in any and every way possible.

And finally – the annual visit to Buta Health Clinic, built with funds from a Wirral Mayor’s Charity. Probably the best aspect of this is that from villages with diverse church affiliations and little desire to work together, a sense of unity and working together has emerged and following the initial building the population has become mobilised to construct additional buildings for the extension of the work at this site. The visit this year included taking gifts from UK and more importantly gifts from IPASC: a purpose made bed for maternity and a new autoclave.



The amazing welcome.



The entrance



Handing over new mattress and autoclave together with other U K donated items



More vests!!! And blankets



Extra ward for 8 beds and sick woman having saline infusion with IPASC trained care assistant sent to IPASC by Buta community. Fired bricks to build new unit



Through its Safe motherhood programme IPASC reports a reduction in infant death from 34 to 19 per 1000 and maternal deaths from 370 to 270 per 100,000. Increasing numbers of women are able to deliver their babies in safety at centres like Buta.

IPASC took delivery of many mattresses recently and are distributing them to clinic centres across the Health Zones. The latest delivery this week involves an overnight stay by IPASC staff due to the distances travelled.

The Diocese of Aru has recently received a gift from Chester Diocese to complete its Diocesan offices. Various building material is arriving daily and work has begun on building the staircase and installing the water supply. My final letter may well contain pictures of the progress. It will enable all Diocesan staff to work together under one roof and at the same time release the buildings in use at the present time to be converted back to houses for members of the clergy. Most of these buildings were originally missionary houses.

My trip to Bunia did not materialise due to several factors not least the unreliability of MAF flights.

Thank you all once again for your interest and support for the work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thanks also for your prayers for IPASC and for myself.

Best wishes
Gill