



“He just ran away when he saw so many people.”

I will never forget our first meeting with Helen in Musa Ecweru’s home. Musa explained her dilemma. She had been a young girl when abducted by the LRA, and simply taken away to serve insurgent soldiers in all their demands. Eventually, she gave birth to Jeffrey and her arduous foot journeys across Uganda into Sudan and eventually into the Congo where her rebel leaders had been forced by Uganda’s military, did not destroy her spirit.

As she (and thousands like her) did what they were forced to do, they also waited on God...and He raised up men like Musa Ecweru who formed and led a rural militia of farm boys to rout the LRA, recapturing thousands of abductees, including 2000 girls. Helen was not one of them. But the day did come when Helen saw her opportunity. Holding young Jeffrey tightly, she ran into the bush and kept going until she found herself in Sudan. After a little time, she kept walking until she was back in her home district of Soroti (6 hour drive south of Sudan). Discovering her family members were all dead and her family home sold away from her, 12 years of repressed fear exploded within her and she became incoherent. Local people saw her as a “crazy woman” and someone notified Musa Ecweru.

Musa did not see it their way. He had freed thousands of desperate young people and he recognized the signs. After letting Helen fully express her fear, he simply told her it would be OK-*she was safe now*. For the first time in 12 years, Helen began to trust-a little. Musa provided what he could from his personal salary and at one point, directed someone to take Helen and Jeffrey to the market where they could buy a change of clothes. Upon seeing the people, terrified Jeffrey ran away screaming...until now, he was trained to run into the bush when he saw any person he did not know!

GOD CALL

Before we had left for Uganda on that trip, Marty had felt strongly impressed by the Lord that we would be supporting someone in a small business, and now before us was His choice. The peace of God was so very clear and *we knew that we knew...*

TIME

Over time, we helped Helen with small support that helped her get established. Having suffered two subsequent personal robberies that saw her attacked at knifepoint and her savings gone, Helen would not give up-and neither did we. Today, she works hard, making bricks by hand, buying and selling vegetables and even trading in goats-all so she might save enough money to buy her first property on which she could begin her life with young Jeffrey. It was an indescribable joy for us to provide for her a gift (from a Canadian who also heard of her story) so she might complete the purchase of her land. We now wish to help her with cost of materials so she might build her humble 2-room home.



FIRST MEETING WITH HELEN AND JEFFREY



VISITING HELEN AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN



JEFFREY (BLUE SHIRT) NOT AFRAID ANYMORE



MARTY OFFERED TASTY GRASSHOPPER SNACK



ROBERT HELPING STRANDED MOTHER AND BABY



DON AND DRIVER



MARTY AND MIDWIFE CELINA



NURSES DOROTHY AND ISAAC AT HIS NEW ONGUTOI HOME

OPERATING THEATRE

Before one can absorb one huge reality, another one lands at your feet... we were told of a mother who had miscarried and excessive bleeding almost took her life-thank God our donated ambulance had been within reach-*for her!* But so many others in maternal distress will not be so blessed. The district's only ambulance is not always available-we knew we must provide a facility for safe **delivery in stress**, and so far, our site has **no operating capability!**

GOD'S INTERRUPTION

Bouncing along the road to Savior FM and then Ongutoi, we tried to open our window (to let the dust *out*) but unable to do so, we chose to simply enjoy the drive through the cloud. Our discomfort soon paled when we came across a young mother bound for the Amuria health center with her baby. Her boda (bicycle taxi) broke down and she was forced to walk the many miles to Amuria. As we offered to help, she happily jumped in the back with her baby and together we all bounced on our way.

DADDY DON?

Upon arrival, surprised medical workers were introduced to us, and immediately we heard someone shout, "**this is the daddy of the ambulance**". And with that proclamation, we were whisked around back where I was thrilled to see the ambulance donated through us (from a UK Rotary club) was being washed. Standing beside it was a tired man who proudly identified himself as the driver. I felt I had hit the *mother lode*...and questioned him much. At the end of it all, I discovered it is the **ONLY** ambulance in the entire district, answering an average of 4 major calls every day, but 80% of those are mothers in distress. He was tired for a reason...he is the **ONLY** driver and is on call 24 hours per day. "*Does any of the mothers give birth in the ambulance?*" "Yes" he replied-"*over 20 so far. Maybe it's all the bouncing. Why is it they always seem to give birth in the night time?*" He seemed resigned to his fate and happily so!

ANSWERED PRAYER

Stepping out of the dusty car, and still buoyed by my Amuria "chance meeting" our arrival at Ongutoi was punctuated by more hugs and smiles...and standing before us was one of God's answered prayers-*her name was Celina*-a qualified and highly motivated born-again midwife!

No amount of excellent buildings or equipment would move past local cultural norms...*without a midwife*, no baby would ever be born here, even though we had 24 beds ready for the 500 pregnant women in this area. Only a few weeks earlier, caring Canadian musicians provided an excellent Christmas musical event (Cool Christmas) resulting in enough support for Celina's salary for a full year. And now, Celina and Marty worked out schedules for ante and post natal care as well as deliveries, medications and so much more. Pregnant mothers were now coming.

WORSHIP LEADS TO HELP

Suddenly, another answer to prayer appeared for her hugs. Dorothy is a 68-year-old nurse who faced the early huge crowds of people when we started in 2007, and still serves as a nurse but also acts as a mother to mothers. Watching her minister care through medicines, we were deeply moved to remember why she and the medicines are here...it is because a special worship group (**4Worship**-see Facebook & Twitter) provided both for a full year (again)...and as I looked at Nurse Isaac, (the son of a local pastor) now supported through an anonymous Canadian donor...as is our precious Okello, the caretaker, I simply stood there, *grateful to God and His people.*

Village leaders reminded us there is wider need than maternal...*so much for basking and daydreaming!*

WE NEED HELP

The depth of need here is truly overwhelming, almost taking one's breath away. Today, while Canada faces .4% HIV prevalence rate, Uganda struggles with 6.7% rate, and most shocking is the reality that people in this area face a 17% HIV rate. There are 710 people nearby known to have AIDS and officials report (quietly) the reality is that another 800 are suspected to be positive.

Village leaders went on... "*there are hundreds of AIDS orphans, and many of them have AIDS. We need help!*"

POST DELIVERY NEED

Most times these excessively poor mothers struggle through life with pain, scarring and stigma associated with complications in hut delivery settings-an *operating theater* will improve life for so many silent victims! Marty's emotional response was more than enough for me...we agreed to wait on the Lord.

SPECIAL AMBASSADOR

God's answer was *Kim Phuc* and our good friends at the *Rotary Club!* We had been back in Canada for 2 days when a Toronto Rotary Club invited our partner (and friend) Kim Phuc (www.kimfoundation.com) to share her testimony, and at the end, a gift was given, which was enough to almost build the operating theatre. Kim donated every cent to us for the project-we were so humbled by her sacrifice!

As we make plans to build the theatre (only \$5000 to go), we realize we also need help to equip it; including an anesthetic machine (\$30,000) an operating bed (\$3000) and portable stretcher bed (\$250) solar powered operating lights (\$500) a back up generator (\$2500) and many other smaller items. Please pray about these!

But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Luke 18:16 NASB

SPECIAL STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Just before Christmas, students at two York Region primary schools (Crossland School and Lake Wilcox School) heard of the need for AIDS care in Ongutoi and quickly launched their *Buy a Block - Build Hope* program in which funds were raised to help construct an AIDS facility to stand near the new operating theater. Staff, & students along with family and community members, linked arms to build hope through this strategic new facility. Can you imagine how isolated an HIV positive patient would feel there deep in Ongutoi? And can you imagine how they will rejoice to know help is coming? Hope is building-even now!

Jesus was so right-never underestimate the perceptive ability of child! And certainly never underestimate their ability to achieve. These unique students follow the example of internationally known ME to WE program (www.metowe.com). Canadian youth CAN make a difference-we thank God for them!

MORE ROTARY

Also working quietly behind the scenes are many deeply committed members of several Canadian Rotary Clubs who are taking on the challenge of water and sanitation at this planned facility. To participate in or support their April AIDS walk (which will help us) check out their site <http://www.trumpaidstoronto.ca/> and select SPONSOR PARTICIPANT; select *Team Ongutoi* and choose any participant. All gifts are tax deductible from Rotary. *SO FAR*-we are *half way* to building the AIDS facility-keep praying and giving! We need to begin construction in May!

LAST STOP-CHURCH

We could hardly wait for Sunday morning. Loaded with 100 kg of rice and 100 kg of beans (food has become scarce during the lengthy dry season) as well as the last 35 copies of the Ateso bible (we bought every available copy) Marty and I joined the medical team at a nearby Ongutoi Pentecostal Church for service-and what a service!

We discovered a resilient body of believers who had all been victimized by the LRA but were not focused on their painful past-they were looking to their future in Jesus! Standing before us was an elderly village mother who sadly recounted how the LRA had killed her husband... but she felt led of the Lord to donate this land so the church could be a witness in this area in recovery! The church holds 100 people but 300 people are members-they asked for help to build a new church with a metal roof-we are praying now!

REAL PRIORITY

Food distribution brought expressions of gratitude, but when the Bibles arrived...they *cheered and danced and hugged their copy of the Word of God!* Pressed down by 20 years of attacks, drought, flood and loss of personal stability, they need everything, but they hunger most for the Bread of Life. Almost no person in any church in this area has a Bible-we can provide them for \$7.00 per Bible. Please pray about this too!



MOTHERS NEED HELP



MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS WORK HARD



KIM LOVING UGANDAN CHILDREN



TEACHER LAURIE AND ME-TO-WE STUDENTS AT WALL OF HOPE



GOING TO CHURCH IN ONGUTOI

LIFE IN ONGUTOI

Four years after we first met with Ongutoi leaders and their pregnant women, we are so excited to say that within the last month, 15 babies have been born and lives continue to be saved daily through the malaria medicine provided by Canadians who care!

I share with you exactly what I share with them on every trip
-KEEP PRAYING!

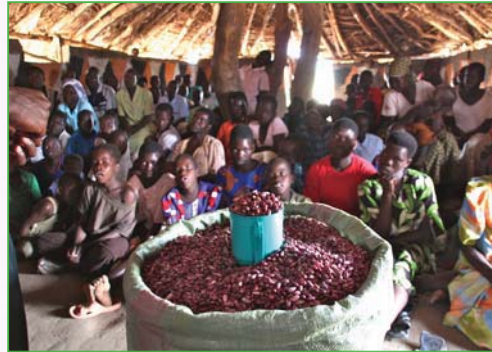
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ONGUTOI NEWBORN



ELDERLEY WOMAN DONATES CHURCH LAND



GIFT OF FOOD FOR CHURCH



LOVING HER BIBLE



MUSA ENCOURAGING MOTHERS IN LABOR



(left to right)
ANESTHETIC MACHINE ~ OPERATING BED ~ PORTABLE STRETCHER




CHILDREN SEARCHING FOR WATER

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MARCH 2011

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