

Link Letter No.13 November 2012

Dear all,

I am feeling a little frustrated! A couple of weeks ago I made an outline of this link letter, but can I find it now? No way! It wouldn't be so bad, except on the same lost clipboard were all my notes from two trainings I needed to type up... so, as you can see, some things never change!

As I write, I am currently 'lonely in the office' as my many concerned friends here will say (though actually, I have many frogs keeping me company!). This is because Sam is currently in South Africa on training; in February he did training on working with traumatised children, and this is the follow up course. The first was to do the work; the second is to be trained to train others!

I have to confess... I am relieved he arrived safely, because as is always the way, the few days before he flew there were a number of problems, one being he didn't actually have the plane ticket I had so carefully booked two-three months ago! Apparently the e-ticket I had received had only been issued so he could get his visa and wasn't a real ticket... but thankfully with the help of some colleagues, it was all sorted out! Please pray for the right opportunities to be able to use this new knowledge and pass it on to others.

40 years of Across

Across recently celebrated 40 years of ministry, having been set up in 1972 by four mission agencies: MAF (Mission Aviation

At the 40th anniversary celebration for Across



Ruth Radley
CMS mission partner
South Sudan

Ruth is a CMS mission partner seconded to the Children's Department of Across and serving in Yei, South Sudan. Across is an interdenominational Christian NGO that has worked in Sudan for over 30 years. Ruth's ministry includes developing child protection policies, leading trauma workshops and training Sunday school teachers. The years of war in Sudan make this work so vital to a future generation of Sudanese.

Fellowship), SUM (Sudan United Mission which became Action Partners UK and is now Pioneers International), SIM (Sudan Interior Mission) and AIM (Africa Inland Mission), formed during the first time of peace, between the two wars. Each location had its own celebration, and we certainly enjoyed ours here in Yei. The day before we realised that we hadn't organised a cake; sadly I was out in the community training all day, and couldn't therefore bake, so Hilda went to work from home, working in between throwing cakes in the oven (well, our ad hoc oven anyway). The following morning we met in my kitchen to set about icing them! We do not have a single icing tool between us, but I think we did a good job! We iced three cakes with the Across logo on – in green glitter no less! I learnt later that Elly had said to Walter to watch out for

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Icing the anniversary cake



Bishop Hilary cutting the cake

when we arrived at the celebration because, when we did, it would mean that the cakes were ready!

We had in attendance various people from communities who have been involved in the different programmes Across has in Yei, and it was so encouraging to hear people share. We had two ladies from Goja share about children's ministry and what the programme meant to them. I have talked about the PAP (Participatory Awakening Process) in many link letters before this one, and the fact that we try to work closely together. Well in this community at least, we seem to have succeeded! Although Cecelia (one of the two ladies) talked

about the work children's ministry has done, Cecelia was calling it all 'PAP'. I was actually really happy to hear this, because it seems that she can't tell the difference between us, and that is really positive. We don't need to have a separate department, but we do need work to happen for children. It was such an encouraging day though, and we all enjoyed it, especially with our new t-shirts to celebrate the day with!

Prayer needed

Please do pray for us, as our executive director has stood down after five years here. Please pray for the board members to find us the right person to take us on further and for all the different programmes and staff; much amazing work is being done even though many challenges of road and sickness abound. Please also pray for our executive director as he moves onto pastures new.

Child rights

One thing that we seem to be getting more and more concerned about is how child rights are being introduced here by a number of NGOs. Please don't get us wrong, as we do support Child Rights (this was what I studied for my first essay... I have to confess I didn't want to do that one, but I am SO glad I did!). I now have much more confidence in using them, and how they fit within a biblical perspective. I hadn't considered

Singing and dancing at the Morsak Church fundraiser - see page four





Learning about rights and responsibilities in Goja

that all four categories of rights, survival, development, participation and protection can all be found within the pages of scripture. I also concluded that we also need to explore the self sacrificial side of our faith as demonstrated by Jesus and Paul, and that comes through when we teach our children in an equal balance of their rights as well as responsibilities.

If you read my blogs (www.ruthradley.posterous.com) then you will know that this is a little bug bear of mine, and somewhere where I believe we went wrong in the UK when we were sharing this! We could see ways in which children were being abused and not being nurtured in the way we believe that they need to be, so we started shouting about rights... but never with an equal balance of responsibilities! In fact, after the riots in 2011, I read a speech David Cameron gave where he insinuated that those involved knew all about their rights, but nothing about their responsibilities; this was only a couple of weeks after I had written my blog... does the PM read my blog I wonder?!?!? I doubt it, but I think that it's something that is coming up more and more as we have more hindsight into things!

Rights balanced with responsibilities

When we see rights balanced with responsibilities, I believe then we are teaching our children more about living a more self sacrificial life, modelled by Jesus! Before we can claim anything we believe is a 'right', we think about the others around us, and what effect would my claiming this right have on them? If it would harm them, or deny their rights in anyway, then I cannot claim that.

If I understand that I have a right to education, then I understand that my responsibility is to go to school regularly, and to do my best. If I have the right to live in a clean environment, then I also have the responsibility to keep my environment clean and tidy. I understand my responsibility of living in community and helping to do this too.



Looking at locally available things and how children can play with them to aid development

If I understand that I am not to be discriminated against because of my language, colour, religion, or anything else, then I understand that I am not to discriminate against others. On a similar note, if I have the right not to be badly treated, I have a responsibility not to treat others badly.

Children rise in the face of responsibilities – when they are appropriate to their age and ability. I was so saddened to hear the comments of an older lady from another western nation who told me rather forcefully "*Our children all want to grab their rights, but they are not bothered and don't want their responsibilities*". I had to question, how have these been taught?

Underestimating children

My experience in general of over 20 years of being a children's worker has taught me so much, namely that we underestimate children so much! WE don't allow them to be fully involved in life, and we treat them like one day they will have something that they can offer. We often cause them to misbehave because we don't take the time to understand them, listen to them and empower them to try new things

Take *Finding Nemo* as an example of this! If only Marlon (the father fish) had actually believed in Nemo in the beginning, and didn't try to stop him all the time, they wouldn't have had to make a film at all and we wouldn't have seen his learning journey... oh it's not real? Okay, but I think it's a film we can learn SO much from about children! I often feel an ache inside me when I see children not having things explained, because they 'can't understand' or when children are being so misunderstood and acting in accordance to how they are being treated, sometimes then

getting into trouble for it too.

Life...

We should be coming to the end of the rainy season here, but the rains have been very funny I must admit! They have not been nearly as regular as they should have been, but I hope it's been enough for everyone's second load of crops which are still growing. I simply can't believe we are at the end almost of another year; it's been a bad year to be away from the UK. Whilst you were all celebrating the Diamond Jubilee, I put off my plans to do something here, as I was struggling to get time to write my essays.

Then during the Olympics, our TV was not playing the right channels. I was gutted, although I saw some of the Paralympics, which were fun to watch with people here. We are waiting for the opening and closing ceremonies to arrive here on DVD from the UK, and then we will gather a gathering together and have an outdoor party. I had a wonderful goodie parcel from the UK arrive recently, with a Union Jack stencil for face paints, bunting and many other things, so I think we will have a good – albeit late – celebration! I am glad that there will be a few other English people here; our numbers have grown in Yei of late with the arrival of VSO, and I believe from what I have heard that it is very 'British' so it will be good to be able to talk about it with others too!

I have mentioned my essays a couple of times; I need to make a start in my next module, and I am aware that next year, with a new proposal, life will get crazier and so I hope that somehow I can fit it all in! I was pleased to have passed the first two, with a higher mark than I ever got in my diploma essays (my piano teacher as a child always told me I was odd as I couldn't play the easier pieces as well as some of the harder ones – I guess some things will never change!). This module is an independent study module, which I am hoping to link into my research somehow; I am hoping to go to talk to Bishop Hilary this week about it all, but I am currently thinking of something related to parenting will be my focus. Whatever I do do though, I pray that it will be a blessing to the church here in South Sudan and something which will be able to be used to God's glory here.

I have been blessed by the support of Cliff College, both

with tutors over email and the library staff helping me out when I needed something that I couldn't access from here. I am actually looking forward to getting stuck into the next essay, and was scared to admit I had enjoyed looking at the last ones too! As ever though, I had too many words and yet I could have written so much more!

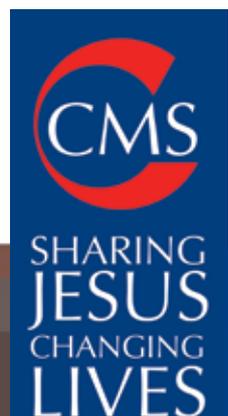
In my last link letter, I shared how we had gone to Goja community to celebrate the opening of the school; this time I will share how we travelled to Morsak community, where Sam is from, for a church fundraiser. The community is building a church, and already has the foundations and walls up. It was a fun day of celebrating together. We travelled with Sam, Irene and Onesimus there, and we talked and laughed the whole way. I was driving, but the road was mainly good (except for a bridge which was broken!). On the way back we also brought some other friends with us (a ride to Yei is not something to be missed if you get the opportunity... a much nicer way to go than on the bike of a bike!), and everyone had to share a story with three items in it – how we laughed at the peculiar stories which people came up with! The journey passed so quickly and I was almost sad to be back in Yei! These are the times I really cherish, times when we can just laugh, share together, sometimes deeply and truly, forgetting that we are different cultures. We are just friends who enjoy being in each other's company.

The day after I sent my last link letter, we heard that a proposal which had been put in with two other NGOs had been passed. We are still waiting for it to be put into action, but please pray as we sort out logistics. Unfortunately there are mistakes in the budget, which will be very hard to work within, but we have no choice, unless we can find some funds elsewhere for these budget lines. I am feeling rather overwhelmed by this, as this is taking us deeper than we have been before, but every day I am choosing to trust the Lord, that He has brought us here for a reason. We think we will be starting this in January 2013; please do pray for us as we look to implement it all, and for the communities we will be working in.

Many blessings

Ruth

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