

## UPDATE FROM NANCY McGAUGHEY – SOUTH SUDAN

Swarming bees, strong winds, strange languages, speed boat trips up and down the Nile – what do they have in common??? They were all a part of my recent trip to Kodok in Upper Nile State.



IMA World Health, the organization with which I currently work, recently received funding to open mobile clinics for people displaced by recent conflicts in Upper Nile and Jonglei States. Dr, Jenny Bell and I flew to Kodok, north of Malakal, to conduct trainings for the staff – she in management of childhood illnesses and me in reproductive health. Kodok has a population of about 51,000, but now has added another 52,000 to that with all of the IDPs (internally displaced people).

Our first day there we delivered supplies to a new clinic opening in Ogod, a village 1 – 1 ½ hours up river from Kodok. The noise of the motor prohibited conversation, so it was a great time just ‘cruising the Nile’ and enjoying the beauty of God’s creation. It was obvious how Moses could have easily been hidden among the reeds along the banks.

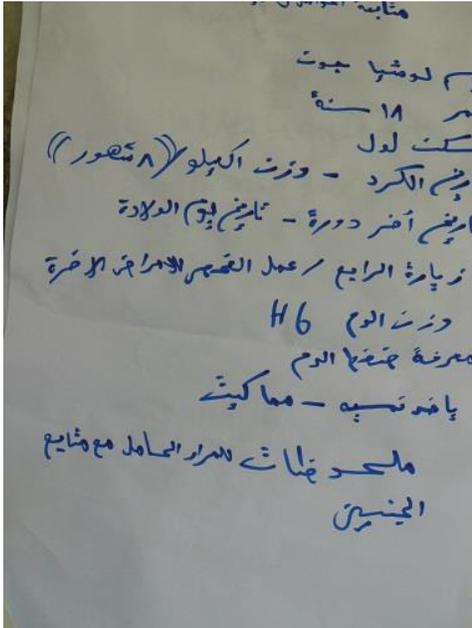


The room I was given for our training was too small for the 8 women so we moved outside onto the verandah.

As it was the weekend, we didn’t disturb any of the other offices in the building. The first afternoon the wind became so strong, we had to move around the corner. The next afternoon a swarm of bees came up from the bushes so again we had to pick up our chairs and move around the corner.



Only 2 of the eight women in the class spoke some English. Fortunately for me, one’s English was good enough to serve as my interpreter. They all spoke Shilluk (their tribal language) and Arabic. It is customary in South Sudan to start training by asking the participants expectations and sharing your goals and objectives for the training. When I asked the women their expectations, they said things like: “gain new knowledge and skills, learn more about prenatal care, and learn more about



anemia” – all of their expectations were about gaining knowledge and skills. I was excited. When I told them this was the first training I had done in South Sudan that did not include “good food, certificate, t-shirt” among the expectations, one of them replied, “We are here to learn. If the food is bad, it is only for 2 days. We will survive. We are here to get knowledge and new skills.”

I like to start my trainings with a short devotion – a song (in their language), a prayer, and share a few verses from the Bible. Since these were all women, I decided to talk about women from the Old Testament. I chose Hannah and Esther, neither of whom they had heard of before. After telling the story of Esther, I mentioned the verse where Mordecai says “Who knows but

what God has put you in this position for such a time as this”. One of the women said, “Maybe God put us in this place, at this time so we can help save the lives of women in our communities”. It is so exciting to see/hear them relate scripture to their own situations.

At the end of the training, one of the women asked if she could close in prayer. She prayed in Arabic, but I had someone translate for me. She said, “We thank God and IMA for sending us a good teacher from so far away”. You are the ones who have sent me here, so in essence, she was thanking you. I also thank you for the privilege of being and working in this place at this time. Your prayers for safety, for work and travel, for good health are greatly appreciated.

Psalm 34:18 comes to mind when I think of these people. “The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; He saves those who have lost all hope”. God is near to them, He gives them hope, and He sustains them. Please continue to hold them in your prayers, the country and its leaders as they try to find a solution to fighting, for people trying to survive in a place other than their home.

My plan now is to return to the USA the latter part of December. I will be available for itineration January through April 2015 (and perhaps longer). It seems so far away, but the time will go quickly. As you plan for 2015, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet and thank you in person and share more of my journey with the people of South Sudan.

Blessings, *Nanc*



Waiting to be seen at Wau Shilluk clinic