

From: Rebecca Baldock

19 December 07

Dear All

I hope your Christmas preparations are going well and that you have a wonderful Christmas.

I get a magazine called "The Week" which keeps me informed about what's going on in the world. I read the following article in it and thought I'd share it with you.

"The quality of mercy was not much evidence in Rwanda in 1994, when about a million people, mainly from the Tutsi tribe, were murdered in the worst genocide in living memory. But for Immaculee Iligabaiza – a young Tutsi who lost her entire family in the killings – forgiveness was her only path to peace "If you do not forgive, you kill yourself," Immaculee, a staunch catholic, told Louette Harding in The Mail on Sunday. "To forgive is not easy, it is a process. I wished for forgiveness and, well, let us say my body didn't jump to obey" Which is hardly surprising given what had happened to her. Hunted by death squads from the rival Hutu tribe, Immaculee, then 22 had taken refuge with a protestant pastor. When international troops restored order in the region three months later, she emerged to learn that her father had been shot, her mother hacked to death and her brother caught in a crowd that was sprayed with machine gun bullets. The ringleader of this savagery had been a local businessman, who Immaculee knew; she had even played with his children at school. Believing it was what her family would have expected of her, she resolved to visit him in prison. "He was sobbing," she said "I could feel his shame. I reached out, touched his hand and said what I'd come to say: "I forgive you.""

I read these articles and wondered whether if I was in her position I could have done that? The way of forgiveness isn't easy, it wasn't for Immaculee, for God or for us, but it's the way that enables us to live and be free. So let's continue to celebrate Christmas, remembering we are celebrating Gods gift of love and forgiveness.

At times people have asked me about other charities that they support. At home many people give to charities but here we see the work that they are doing, so I thought it'd be good to share with you some result of peoples generosity. Before I continue I must stress that different organisations have different visions and different areas of work. There are many other charities doing great work in other parts of Uganda, Africa and the world. But these happen to be the ones I've come into contact with.

Save the Children – has started programs in various areas working with vulnerable children. They've targeted girls who have dropped out of school for various reasons including; pregnancy. I'm told that pregnancy is a huge problem as once a child is pregnant they are often made to leave school, or they choose to as they feel they no longer fit in. This feeling continues after having the child, so that they don't go back to school. Save the Children has got many many young girls back into education in the region near to us where they are working.

Compassion International - School fees is a huge problem here for parents and children alike. Compassion works in different districts. At each district they are linked to a school. They like to start sponsoring young children below the age of 5 where they can assist the family to establish themselves, buy animals etc, so that they can provide for their children. They continue to look after the children until the age of 20 providing for their schooling, health and giving them spiritual care. They cover the health costs of the caregivers (parents) of the child, and at times can assist with housing needs and other things. They try to ensure the family is set up so that if the Child's education is not finished when they are 20, the parents are in a better situation to be able to continue their education.

CBM (Christian Blind Mission) – I've worked quite closely with people from this mission. They don't only work with people with eye problems, but all children with treatable disabilities. The visiting Orthopaedic and Plastic surgeons we get are linked to this and **Interserve**. One of AIMs missionaries has worked with **CBM** to set up eye services throughout Uganda. They have trained many people and have eye services at many different hospitals including Kagando. Keith continues to travel between the hospitals doing more complicated operations.

Leprosy Mission – All leprosy patients get their hospital treatment free. There are TB and leprosy specialists in all communities and more specialised referral centres for leprosy like Kagando. The work of the leprosy mission seems to have been so successful that its now almost a victim of its own success. Previously a medical person would see several new leprosy patients in a week. Now there maybe a maximum of 1 newly diagnosed person a month. The fear is that the medical people with skills and knowledge of handling and diagnosing many of these patients will be retiring soon, and the new generation with less experience may not be aware that someone has leprosy until they have developed more symptoms and complications, purely because there are much much less people getting leprosy.

Agenda – Is an American Charity that is concerned with women who become incontinent due to obstructive labour. Their incontinence can often be cured by an operation, as it is caused by a hole forming between the bladder and vagina. However most of these women are abandoned by their husbands, isolated in society and poor as a result of their incontinence and therefore unable to afford treatment. Agenda paid for the conversion of our fistula ward, and covers these patients' hospital costs. The English based charity that also works with these ladies in Uganda is called: **Uganda Childbirth Injuries Fund**

Uganda Clubfoot Project – Is a charity that wants to ensure all babies born with clubfoot are treated. They run training courses, and visit the people they've trained to ensure they are performing the technique correctly. They are the people who supply us with the shoes that these children need to wear after their foot has been corrected.

SmileTrain – Is a charity that wants to ensure all babies born with cleft lip are treated. Adults are treated for free at Kagando and other places the plastic surgeon visits. With the young babies we now take them to Kampala to have their operation (again all costs are covered). The parents often come back to us to show us their baby as they are so happy.

Friends of Kagando – 5 years ago people who'd previously worked at Kagando formed a charity to help raise money and support the hospital. They visit Kagando regularly so they are up to date on the needs of the hospital. When I first arrived the staff received their salaries irregularly - often up to 3 months late. This caused huge problems for the staff. Friends of Kagando have been a huge help in enabling Salaries to be paid on time. They've also got a new X-ray machine for the hospital, as the one we have is old and often breaks down, and have built a new X-ray department. If anyone wants to know more about Friends of Kagando please contact: admin@friendsofkagando.org.uk or look the website www.friendsofkagando.org.uk

CMS (Christian Missionary Society) / AIM (African Inland Mission) / GMMT (German Medical Mission Team) / BMS (Baptist Mission Society) / CBM (Christian Blind Mission) / INTERSERVE - I work with many personal from many different organisations. About a year ago I met a young couple who'd just spent two years working in Kenya. They'd arrived very very sceptical about missionaries and the work they were doing. But as their work made them interact with people they were pleasantly surprised. They reported that many of the people they worked with were there for the money or to further their careers. But they commented that for the missionaries there was something else driving them, and that the projects run by them were the best ones they visited.

Hope you all have a wonderful Christmas
Love Becca

Prayer Requests:

- Ebola – thank you for your prayers. There are still new cases being diagnosed in Bundabudgyo district, but all suspected cases away from this area have turned out to be negative. Please praise God that at present there is no spread of the disease into other districts, and pray that this remains the case. Please pray for those that have the disease, and their families. For the families of those that have lost people and the health workers. There is a fear that many people with treatable conditions are not reaching hospital because of fear of Ebola – especially in Bundabudgyo district – please pray that this does not happen and that people get the treatment needed. If anyone wants to know more about the outbreak – there is a blog site updated daily by two Drs who are working in Bundabudgyo and will probably provide the most accurate information: paradoxuganda.blogspot.com
- Please pray for any of the different work going on that you've read about
- Please pray that people will continue to see "something different" in us as Christians and will come to find out what that difference is for themselves