



A Cup and Much More of Cool Water

Hands Across Nations Newsletter

4/13/2015

The "Rainy Season" is upon us here in Northern Uganda! The burning of the dried bushes and grasses is finished - some unfortunate villagers accidentally ended up burning the thatch off the roofs of their homes! Most everyone has begun "digging in their garden" using a hand hoe as their main tool.



The compound around our home is beginning to look like it could become like the garden of Eden as Keith is again using the "Farming God's Way" method of gardening (in the foreground). It's yield will be compared to the same size plot in the background using the village traditional gardening method.

Last year he used it to produce three times the yield of the traditional gardening methods for corn and beans. In search of fresh cow dung for manure we've searched the golf course (they pasture cows there) and all the paths that cow herds have taken near us. We've now made a friend who's happy to let us take all his cow waste - happy day! There are 3 growing seasons here - something people in America can only imagine.



Lucy, our fabulous house girl for the past 3 years, is game for anything, including grinding charcoal with the blender, then sieving it by the gallon. Keith mixes it with the compost and cow manure in all of our gardens. There are so many viruses and diseases affecting the plants here. His concoction seems to be keeping the plants healthier.



We're hoping for a healthy crop of sweet corn, cabbages and broccoli, seen in the background. Over many months, we've been collecting egg shells to mix with ground charcoal for Keith's experiment making calcium carbide, and putting it in water to make acetylene gas. He had his first trial this week which was hugely successful with lots of celebrating and lighting of gas bubbles! His ideas of how to use this are still a mystery to be tested in the future.





Carolyn had her own experiment going testing various tools to extract a "Jigger" from Keith's toe. A panga (machete) and tweezers were the best choice and the surgery was successful! (just kidding)



Imbedded Jigger before "surgery"



Successful removal and 2 days of charcoal healed it well.

The Hands Across Nations' "Learning to Read to Read the Bible" program has literally exploded into 7 of the 8 Lango districts! The foundation has been set well, and our head trainer, Peter, is following up with the teachers and learners in the remote villages. He is ensuring the teachers are using the correct method, and encouraging them to "own their reading program".



Wherever Hands Across Nations travels, children congregate, curious about having a "muzungu" (white person) in their midst. Debbie handles them so well with her cheerful ways - she tried teaching these children a line dance but they had real difficulty following instructions!

There are so many wonderful stories now coming from teachers, learners and local leaders. They are a far cry from the refugee camp reports of the last 2 decades, where charities came to distribute "food and things" to them, and they could do very little for themselves. Some village classes are learning how to make liquid soap, candles and jam to raise the funds for their program. Other classes are planning a large community garden for all the classes in which learners are from different church denominations. At another village, one class has decided to take advantage of the wonderful clay God has provided them, and make pots to sell at the nearby market.

One local leader told how his job has now become quite easy. Community unity is becoming a reality. Women in his village who frequently came to him with disputes with their neighbors are now peacefully working together on their homework in the classes, doing projects together, and have purpose in their lives. Several women stated that their husbands have new respect and love for them as they are progressing with their reading and writing. One lady said that she and her children do their homework together each day and she has gained their respect also.

The Lira Main Prison classes are moving forward at a blistering pace. In less than 4 weeks, 4 men's classes totaling over 100 learners have completed 21 lessons!. A new class of 15 non readers has started and has already completed 7 lessons in just over a week. Their program coordinator, an inmate himself, said that many of them have said they want to complete all of the 72 lessons before being released from the prison so they are motivated to go to classes for 3 1/2 hours, 5 days a week. Classes are held under a tarp, sitting on a papyrus mat - no cushy classrooms there! The women's class of 48 learners is moving more slowly because most of them had never held a pen let alone written their name or learned even their alphabet. However, they are progressing more rapidly than most of the village groups because they meet, like the men, 5 days a week for several hours of class.



We have taken 800 pairs of glasses to numerous villages and into the prison. Almost 200 pair were provided to the prison inmates and guards. Reading glasses have made it possible for hundreds of old people to join the literacy classes. Without them, they can't see the words in the primers let alone a Bible. But the ones that received glasses are beyond ecstatic that they are able now to be in a class and are becoming readers for the first time in their lives.

Our supply of glasses is now exhausted! The learners could easily use 2,000 more in the next several months if we had them but we have not found a good source here. They have truly "given sight to the blind" for almost 800 people, nearly all of them in the "Learning to read to read the Bible program". If any of you are interested in helping provide glasses please contact Mike and Helen Salapka who donated 780 pair of glasses this year: [sisternell@hotmail.com](mailto:sisternell@hotmail.com). There's not another gift that could bring so much joy to so many people.

Our greatest joy is hearing the descriptions of how people have learned through their classes of God's love for them and desire to become a follower of Christ. Through reading the scriptures in the lessons, without arm twisting or badgering, people are finding "Life" in Christ. Two of the new believers were Muslims.

To date, the numbers of teachers and learners encompassed in the program are astounding in our minds: 1009 teachers trained since the end of February 2014, over 300 classes now in progress with more than 10,000 learners becoming readers! How is that possible? Who besides God could have such a plan for such a small group of people from the small town of Chewelah, working with another group of poorly appreciated trainers and teachers, by the world's standard, on the other side of the world? It's preposterous to think of setting out to do such a thing! Each night as we talk about how we are beginning to see the fruit of our labor, knowing that it is actually God's hands which are drawing those He wants to use and teach for His greater purposes, we are humbled and so grateful to have had this chance of a lifetime.

The marvelous, caring people who have supported Hands Across Nations can be proud that they have had a hand in transforming lives and communities in N. Uganda for over a decade. We're grateful for all of you, and would not be here without your willingness to take part. God bless you abundantly.

Sharing the love of Christ in practical ways,

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