



Living Waters Intl

Living Waters Newsletter Life on Rusinga July 2007 Update

The woman's screams pierced not only my ears but my heart. They continued for hours coming from the small whitewashed building they call Tom Mboya Medical Clinic. I could hardly bear continuing my work on the water system that was only 100 feet away. Were they having to do surgery without anesthesia, was she going through a difficult child birth or had she just lost a child to one of many of the diseases that end life so soon in Kaswanga? I will never know.

How do you respond to the question of "what do I do" when a mother says, "I have no food for my children, no house, no blanket and I am dying"! Or, What about the woman who says, "I could not stand the crying of my hungry children anymore during the night and so this morning I did the only thing I knew I could do to get them food, I submitted to one of the local fishermen, who most likely carries the deadly AIDS virus".



How do you explain how your heart weeps as you look at so many children who have no home to live in, and only receive 5 meals a week that you are able to provide? And knowing there are 152 more that desperately need your help.

Come along with us, and experience what life in Kaswanga is like. It is typical of many small villages along the shores of Lake Victoria where the poorest of 43 Kenyan tribes, the Luo live.



Kaswanga is isolated from virtually all services and economic help. The wind mill that use to pump contaminated well water to the village had been in disrepair for 7 years. The long rains came only last year after a 5 year drought. It is a hot, humid, dry island that brushes the western edge of Kenya. There is a desperate need for suitable housing for many, medical care, food, clean water and basic education.

So were does one begin if one is so inclined to help. This was the question posed to Daryl and Mary Jo Oft of Diversified Solutions in August 2005 after returning from a mission trip to this area. Once a commitment to help was made they developed presentations that they have given in Rotary and civic clubs, churches and international television interviews. They raised funds to help meet the needs of this small community half way around the world.

They started Living Waters International, a non-profit organization developed for the sole purpose of meeting the physical and spiritual needs of those in third world countries.

July 27th they returned from their 5th trip to Kaswanga in two years. In two years they have refurbished the water infrastructure including repairing the wind operated water pumping system and trenching and laying over one half mile of galvanized 2" water line to bring water directly into the village center. Four water tanks were purchased and installed while other tanks were refurbished providing almost 13,000 gallons of stored water capacity. Water valves were replaced and a water intake system was designed, built and installed to bring water directly out of Lake Victoria.

The night before the water intake was to be installed was one of anxiety and fitful rest. How would I get a ton of steel 150 feet out into the lake with nothing but 2 canoes, a rope and some plastic cans? Would a local villager get his foot caught in the rope as the ton of steel descended to the bottom of the lake and would I have caused the death of this man? We only had one chance to make this attempt. Would the treaded pipe joints hold or would I end up with just a lot of very expensive pipe and valves laying in a crumpled mess on the floor of Lake Victoria? What would be the outcome tomorrow, after 2 years of work, with only one chance to get it installed? It all came down to this critical day, would we succeed?



After daybreak prayer session, we started the unknown. Everything must be completed before 11 am when the winds would come and we would experience 3 foot waves crashing on the shore. Imagine working with over twenty local villagers, all having their own opinion on how to get this monster into the lake and very few of them speaking English. But today would be God's day. Today He would be glorified in holding back the winds, in allowing clear communication of what needed to be done and in keeping all of the worker safe. By days end we were connecting the final pipes that connected the entire water system for Kaswanga.

One the day before we left Kaswanga the wind operated water system was drawing water through a four inch pipe that extends 150 feet into the lake and pumping it almost two miles with 6 major water distribution points.



For the first time ever water was flowing in two areas that service the community, one being right in the center of the village, the other about one mile away where a church stands and where a new orphan feeding center is about to be constructed by Living Waters International.

The exuberance and joy of the villagers can not be told in words. The ladies were dancing and chanting. The water cans came by the dozens to be filled. The women chattered in joy and happiness as they filled their jugs and placed them on their head as they headed home.

Our sense of accomplishment was driven by the overwhelming understanding that this was not about us, but how God had provided and intervened in so many circumstances in allowing us this moment.

The following is the experience of former Payson resident Sandra Thompson-Lambert who joined us for her first hand glimpse of Africa and life in Kaswanga.

Out of Africa - Almost:

When Daryl asked me to write about my experience in Kenya, the thought was overwhelming. Where does one begin to explain an almost indescribable experience? Here is my attempt to let others know what the trip meant to me.

A quick mental picture –

- ✿ The hammerbill bird that wakes us with its loud, “scolding” call.
- ✿ Soft blue skies dotted with clouds and dusted with peach and gold at sunrise and sunset.
- ✿ Prolific violet flowers and lush vegetation.

- * Beautiful and exotic birds.
- * Bumpy, dusty roads.
- * Sunlight glittering off the gray, blue and green waters of Lake Victoria.
- * Hot sun and cool shade.
- * The biggest “bee” I ever saw.
- * The “grassy” smell of the dung fires.
- * Many people walking. A few riding bicycles, “piki-pikis” (motorcycles), an occasional car, truck or van spewing gas fumes.
- * The people – slow easy gait, baskets and packages on the women’s heads and back of bicycles, soft throaty laughter, wide smiles, accepting and pleasing, pride in appearance, old look in the eyes.

As I read about the island of Rusinga, I found it has a very colorful and long history. For social scientists, it is rich in historical significance since it is where Mary Leakey did much of her field work. The island, just off the shores of Lake Victoria appears to be inhabited for many years. The Luo, the second largest tribe in Kenya inhabit the island and have been there since the 15th century. Kaswanga, the village where Living Waters is concentrating its efforts is almost to the edge of the island. To get there, we had to travel about 4-5 miles through Mbita, a larger village, and cross over a causeway on very bumpy dirt roads that are subject to being washed out during heavy rain. Most of the people do not have transportation, so they walk these roads day and night.

The village is the poorest place I have ever been with no electricity or water. It consists of a small cluster of about 10 “shops” on each side of a wide area. In the middle are cows and goats who chew on the vegetation. The shops for the most part, consist of planks of wood set up to hold items for sale, or “lean-tos” with an open front. Items for sale consisted mostly of vegetables such as maize, lentils, tomatoes and field greens. We did not ever see any customers.



The medical center is a small cluster of buildings that we in America would not send our pets to. It is kept as clean as it possibly can be considering there has been no source of readily available water. There is little medicine and not much staff. The day we visited we saw mothers with small children, men and women waiting patiently for whatever help they could get. The most common diseases are malaria, AIDS, tuberculosis, typhoid and other diseases related to polluted water. One thing I will never forget is the sight of very thin children racked with fits of coughing as their mothers held and comforted them. The mothers were not in much better shape than their children.



This is brief description of the setting where Living Waters has concentrated its humanitarian efforts. The needs here are very basic with most of the inhabitants of Kaswanga leading desperate lives. Illness, lack of clean water, food, and adequate housing head the list. There are over 200 orphans who live here. They live with grandparents, others who have taken them in, or by themselves.

As a counselor and a sociologist, I am very interested in women’s issues, so Mary Jo and I spent some time finding out about the women. The women shared their stories through a translator in individual “counseling sessions” and group meetings. As I talked to the women I heard many stories of suffering. The women told me stories of despair - they did not know where their next meal was coming from, they were cold at night because they had no blankets,

they were battling life threatening illnesses, some had no house or their house were falling down, their children could not attend school because they had no money for uniforms or fees, and some of the widows were ejected out of housing when their husbands had died.

There is a custom of “wife inheritance” which when a man dies, his widow then must submit sexually to the male(s) in the husband’s family. If she does not, she is “kicked out”. Since many men have died of AIDS, the women are naturally afraid of this, so their choice is submit and risk AIDS or leave and be homeless. This could include her children as well. Since women tend to be the primary caregiver of children, this custom does not just affect the women, but many of the children as well. If we look at the women in any culture and how they are treated, we will also be able to determine the well- being of the children. There is a great need in Kaswanga to address the unique needs of these women and their children.

Despite all the death, illnesses and hardships the people endure; they have such a spirit of generosity, kindness, gentleness and thankfulness. I saw people giving to others out of the little they had. They do not complain or rail against the unfairness of life. Nothing goes to waste. They can find a use for almost anything so there is not a lot of garbage or throw away items. Our first evening of the meetings that Daryl and Mary Jo spoke at, one woman put a shawl around my shoulders since the evening was chilly. She insisted their guests must be taken care of. This brought tears to my eyes as I sat in warmth while others were shivering around me.



During this trip Daryl concentrated most of his efforts on getting the water system set up. It was such a rewarding scene when water was pumped for the first time out of Lake Victoria to the four different sites – the school, the church, the medical center and the village. At the church, there was a gathering of 25-30 women who burst into song, singing “Joy, joy, Living Waters, God is so good to us!” What a sight! What a feeling of accomplishment after two years of planning, fundraising, digging trenches, solving problems. And what an outpouring of happiness and gratefulness by the villagers! By the time we were ready to leave, water was flowing.



There is still much more work to be done. The water needs to be purified, food provided for the most desperate women and children, medical attention, houses fixed or built, education for the children and adults to name only the most crucial. The need is so overwhelming, but it is not impossible. It can be done. Help is arriving for the people thanks to all the support given to Living Waters and the hard work of Mary Jo and Daryl. They have given so much of themselves and have risked their own health and material well-being to bring hope to such a desperate place. How can we allow others to suffer when we can do something to help?

I heard it said that going to Africa would change my life. It has. I will not forget what I saw, the people I met, the poignancy of life and death halfway around the world. I will never take for granted the life of abundance I have compared to the harsh reality of most of Africa. I will never see such beauty - in the people and country - as Africa holds as well. I thought I would never go again to Africa after this “once in a lifetime” trip - but God willing, I will return.

Sandra Thompson-Lambert

We held 2 different evangelistic campaigns while on this trip. In the village of Mbita on the shores of Lake Victoria we had an average attendance of about 2000 per night. Thirty nine gave their hearts to Jesus and chose to be baptized.



In the Wanyama district at Kibada we were blessed to have our meetings in an area that was cleared by hand and was at the base of a mountain about 2 miles from

the lake. The local members had cleared a trail to make a road that went almost a mile to the site. Our average attendance was around 500 per night and 67 people gave their hearts to Jesus.

I would be neglect if I did not share at least one story about that experience. One the last evening we were having meetings a man came to me and said you must hear this story. He escorted me to a very old lady that could not speak a word of English. This is her story.

When she was a young mother about 51 years ago she lived on the exact spot that we were holding the meetings. She had a dream one night and in her dream she heard the voice of a mzungu (white man) echoing off the very

mountain that rose above the area we were at. The voice was spreading the Good News of Jesus and just kept echoing.



On the first night of the meetings she heard an mzungu voice that she recognized echoing of the mountain. Our PA systems had enough power that my voice echoed for several miles. When she heard the voice she said she must go to the meetings because that was the exact voice she heard 51 years ago. I guess it isn't any wonder that I am 51 years old and that God has a plan and purpose for us even before we are born.

That story was a direct affirmation to me that God is leading me to be and do exactly what he has in mind for me. It is incredible that God continues to search out his children and is patient even when we go in other directions. This story is also testimony that God has a plan and does not give up on us even when we have given up on Him.

What is next in store for Kaswanga? Living Waters is in the process of building a feeding center for the orphans and very old widows. Once completed our goal is to provide 2 meals a day, 7 days a week to all 200 children and approximately 15 widows who are unable to care for themselves.

We would like to thank the warm hearts of all of you who sponsor Living Waters. My next trip is planned for February when I will purchase a 40 storage container and supplies for the feeding center. We have the funds for the container but still need to raise the money to get it transported. That will cost approximately \$2200. This must be in place to secure the building materials. We hope to start with the foundation and concrete slab at that time.

Please continue to pray for Living Waters and for the resources to help those in such a desperate need.

