

# ***A Brief Report on a Mission to the Arata People of Kenyan Coast by Students and Faculty from Divine Providence Training Centre, Nairobi (31<sup>st</sup> Oct-8<sup>th</sup> Nov 2010)***

This cross-cultural mission experience was undertaken by the Divine Providence Training Center at the end of the 2-year training cycle. The aim was to expose the trainee pastors—who have undergone intensive training for the last 2 years—to different mission contexts, special needs and unique situation of the unreached people groups—especially ministering to people of other faith—using holistic mission strategies.

## ***Have you ever watched the movie “The Gods must be Crazy 3”?***

This movie summarizes the experience the team of 22 pastors, their faculty (Paul, Peter and Silas), and a team of medical doctors who partnered with them, to share the love of Christ through being holistic ministry activities among this marginalized people of Kenya.

We were hosted by Michael & Alice who have given their lives to make Christ known in the regions beyond—in the jungles of Africa. They are missionary linguists with the SIL/Wycliffe at their center, *Kampi ya Mayoonda*—of the great sea—the Indian Ocean.

With our great Mercedes Benz “jungle mate” christened “Amos, the journey and the whole mission trip was a riveting experience which we will all live to remember! The 4WD truck had been hired from AIM Diguna Ministries. It is engineered for the rough terrain like in Arata-land during this rainy season in the jungles of Africa.

The team arrived at the *Kampi ya Mayoonda mission center* on 31<sup>st</sup> October after two days journey from Nairobi, weary, dusty, but excited to arrive safely at this strange land. The journey took 2 days with a stop-over in Mombasa where we were hosted by the Mombasa Baptist church for the night.

The team also partnered with a team of medics—John and Lucy—who were of great help in the provision of free medical camps in the villages we visited. The medicines and the drugs used in this mission were donated by Christian Church International (CCI) of Thika, 25 miles North of Nairobi.

On the first day, the team spent time acclimatizing to the hot and humid weather of the Kenya coast—which sometimes would reach 104°F. Our hosts spent time training and preparing the team on the local mission context. It was also time to pitch tents!

## **Briefing on the Mission Context**

The pastors came with the concept of ‘hammering the gospel’ as they put it. Some wondered whether there were posters all over advertising their outreach. They got a rude shock! Preaching the love of Christ without “open air meetings” or revival meetings was indeed strange to our pastors!



***Pastors Time to Pitch Tents***



***Our Truck named “Amos”***

The Arata people are purely Muslim, who also practice African Traditional regions—hence our regular methods of evangelism which we use in other parts of Kenya to preach the Good News are not practical here. It was a bit frustrating to some of the pastors when Michael explained to them that there will be no crusades or gospel festivals in the villages. He explained that they were expected to preach through their lives and by meeting the felt needs of the Arata people. They were also encouraged to respond to every discussion or questions raised to them as they interacted with the community, by directing them to the love of God. “One-on-One’ evangelism is the most effective method among any Muslim community”, Michael explained.

Michael and Alice went ahead to explain the concept of preparing the ground before sowing. As most of the pastors had come from farming communities, they well understood the idea. Michael asked them what they would think of a farmer broadcasting precious carrot seeds or purporting to plant beans in the bushy thickets: *un-tilled, un-ploughed, and un-harrowed*. “Out of his mind!” they chorused. “*The same with the souls of men! You do not visit a people group who has never heard the Gospel, and you hope to plant a church the same day you arrive!*” I wish it can happen, but rarely has it happened anywhere I know. It takes time, time to live among them; to eat with them; to share their joys and sorrows; to attend their weddings (like Jesus did) and mourn with them as they bury their dead without hope. It takes sacrifice, denying yourself the earthly comforts and loving them enough to give out your productive life to help them. You become sort of a living Bible for them. To some, your godly and upright life may be the only Bible they will ever read!” Michael concluded.

One could clearly see the frustration and the internal turmoil in many of the missionaries after it dawned on them that they cannot pray loudly in the villages as they are used to, laying hands on the sick and anointing them with oil, and carrying Big bibles to evening revival meetings. It was a shock to learn that there were no Churches of believers in any of the Arata villages. Silas encouraged them by saying that a vehicle has both high and low gears. A vehicle on low gear does not mean it isn’t moving! (*This was soon to be illustrated when we used Four Wheel Drive slow gears for 25 km from Kwetu*

town to Sukuma Gari village as it had rained heavily!) He urged them to put 'low gear' and pray silently in their tents when they reached the villages.

### **Major activities**

The team had planned to hold free medical camps, donate farm tools, Knapsack Sprayers, Kangas/Lessos to women and Lantern Lamps to the villages that were not given three years ago when Silas had visited with another team and donated the above tools to four other villages. In total we managed to visit and do ministry in 5 Arata villages.

On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, our first visit took us 70 miles from *Kampi ya Mayoonda*—where we had camped—to *Sukuma Gari* village, camped there and then returned to our base the following day. We camped at Sukuma Gari village where we ministered to people from this village and the neighboring *Sima* village. Here the medical team took the centre stage as the rest of us were involved in Jigger eradication. The team had bought Lessos for the women in these two villages and second hand clothes that were distributed to the people. A Knapsack Sprayer for controlling pests and diseases on their farms was bought for *Sima* village as *Sukuma Gari* had received theirs three years ago.



**Ministry at Sukuma Gari Village**



**Donating Sprayer Pump**



**Pst. Mercy giving Lessos**

The Arata people led by the elders of the two villages thanked us for giving them the farm tools that have been of great help in food production. They confessed that today they don't have to borrow Jembes (Hoes) or Pangas from one another. Each family has one. As for us, we have noted a big difference since these people received the farm tools. Before we used to ask for food donations to take to them, but today we use our project vehicle to help them take their surplus food to the market to sell. This is real transformation.

### **Did you know that...**

- The cries of the hyenas punctuated the deep silence of the night.
- In one village, the eldest person died in the middle of the night with a loud cry, during our visit.
- The Pitching and unpitching of the tents reminded us the story of Abraham who lived in tents and looked for a city whose maker and builder was God.



**Loading surplus food to market!**



**Stuck! The 'road' to Sukuma Gari calls for tough driving**

During our second visit on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November, we went towards Kenya-Somalia border. It was a journey of 7 hours as we travelled through *Wangwana* village then through *Kampi ya Mbuji* village. To arrive at *Mwisho wa Dunia* village, we had to literally go through the bush to arrive at village on the shore of the Indian Ocean. This was 80 miles away from our base.

The scriptures, “*He will make a way where there is no way*”---was literally fulfilled as we had to drive through the bush and thicket for 15 miles to visit a village on the Indian Ocean. We had to endure the beatings and the lashes of the bushes and trees as we sat on the back of the open truck. It was a journey which tested our endurance! We had to endure the regular bites of Tse Tse flies which normally feed on the blood of wild animals.



**Completely stuck on the muddy water-logged road!**



**Typical Arata house**

We began with ministry at *Mwisho wa Dunia* village, which is the most remote and isolated village with attending to the sick, de-worming the children. The team was also involved in jigger eradication from the feet and hands of the children. Farm tools, Lantern Lamps, a sprayer and second hand clothes were distributed.



**Removing Jiggers on a Baby**



**Foot disfigured by Jiggers**



The most humbling ministry was the removing of Jiggers (*Tunga Penetrans*), which had infested the feet and legs of many children in all the 4 villages we went to. This gave a new contextualized meaning to the words of Christ, “I was in prison...I was naked... I had jiggers and you removed them, and nursed my wounds...” [*Jiggers, small insects which look like fleas, are the culprits in the epidemic which causes parts of the body to rot. They often enter through the feet. Once inside a person's body, they suck the blood, grow and breed, multiplying by the hundreds. Affected body parts – buttocks, lips, even eyelids – rot away*].



**A Woman receiving tools**



**Pastor Jacqueline giving Lanterns**

We camped for the night at *Kambi ya Mbuji* village which is at the centre of these three villages. On Friday morning by 7 AM, the team was ready for another busy day. We began with jigger eradication and treating the sick in *Kambi ya Mbuji* village. Here a sprayer and second hand clothes for the children were also distributed. They had already received farm tools and lantern lamps earlier. We left

*Kambi ya Mbuzi* for Wangwana village at 11:00 am. During such a mission all the gifting of the team members are needed.



**Lucy busy treating the sick**



**Pitching Tents again**

At Wangwana village we found the people eagerly waiting for us. Immediately after the medical team set up the tables, people lined up for treatment. The rest of the team washed and treated those whose legs were infested by jiggers. We also distributed the last bunch of second hand clothes for the children. At around 1 PM we were done and were ready to drive back to Mission station at least to have a shower after two days in the bush.

In all the five villages the response was quite remarkable. The Arata people felt that there are people out there who are concerned about their predicament.



**Silas Learning to be a "Pharmacist"**



**People lining for treatment at Wangwana Village**

We returned back to Nairobi safely early last week after 10 days cross-cultural experiences in the jungle of Africa. We experience great joy and peace despite the most grueling and challenging mission field among a people without Christ in the middle of nowhere!

Sharing with the villages through medical camps, eradicating the jigger menace and providing them with clothes, farm tools and lanterns.

### **Challenges Encountered**

- On Monday morning November 1<sup>st</sup>, the host's vehicle was taken to a government mechanic at Public Works at Mokowe for the replacement of a "pinion oil" seal that was leaking. This was done successfully but when the mechanic went for a road test the back wheels just locked. He couldn't diagnose the problem immediately. But on opening, he found the pinion bearings were completely stuck. We needed to use the vehicle to carry a few people and a few tools. Michael and Silas tried in vain to look for another vehicle to hire. This was the first opposition we experienced. The whole "**diffential**" was sent to Nairobi for repairs.
- This left the truck to carry a team of 38 people and luggage, causing some people to stand all the way to the villages.
- It had been dry and dusty all through, and we anticipated a trouble free mission driving through the earth 'roads'. But on our way to Sukuma Gari, a hundred kilometers away from our Kambi ya Mayoonda Mission Centre, it rained heavily. We got stuck in the mud on our way to and from Sukuma Gari. It was a tough experience for the driver and the entire team as they had to walk on foot in the jungles on some areas where the driver felt he needed to negotiate the mud alone. This is "untamed Africa" where lions, buffaloes, leopards, elephants, and many others of God's wonderful animals roam freely.
- We were overwhelmed by the jigger cases in all the villages. Some children were infested even on the fingers. The sight was pathetic. The medicine carried for jigger treatment was not enough as we never anticipated such a huge turnout!
- Poor roads to the Arata villages continue to be a big challenge to any type of a vehicle. The truck lost a big piece of its exhaust pipe in the jungles without our realization. It was noted when the driver took the truck to a mechanic at local market for welding. The mechanic asked the driver for the extra piece. "Which piece?" the German driver asked. We all laughed when we bent and saw more than a meter long piece of exhaust missing! No wonder the lorry could be heard by someone 20 km away!



**Enduring Dust and Dusty roads**



**The joy of being Jigger free!**

## **Major Benefits**

1. This mission was a big boost to Arata Project team in the area of community relations. Their presence continues to be felt and this makes our work of Language development and Translation acceptable to the people as they feel we are not only concerned about developing their language but also meeting their immediate needs.
2. Farm tools have encouraged many to start working on their farms all year round. Many relied on their fellows who had managed to buy good Jembes or Pangas. They were given for a few days after the owners were through with them.
3. The missionaries learnt that there are many different ways of doing ministry rather than holding a crusade. Many went back challenged at the great need of laborers among the unreached people groups, especially the Arata. Many said they felt embarrassed that many Churches keep springing up in Kenyan urban centers every year, and no one seems to care that there are such area like Arata land where the gospel is urgently needed. Some cried freely.

## **Conclusion**

In spite of the challenges encountered, the mission was a big success. We were able to cover all the villages we had planned to offer free medical camps and distribute farm tools and lantern lamps. No one in the team fell sick or was affected negatively by the hot and humid weather for that one week. We praise God for that.



**Pst Stephen Washing feet of children**



**Donations to Arata People**

Ministering to the Arata people through holistic missions—especially donations of Lantern Lamps—has helped light their physical darkness and the young ones can now do their home work at night. One woman at Sima village said ***“I can now visit my friends at night by using the light of the lamp. I don’t need to fear darkness again”***. We believe this is symbolic, that the light of the Gospel shall soon illuminate their hearts.

We appreciate the medical team’s partnership in this mission. They did a commendable work and complemented our efforts. Make God bless John and Lucy! They had to take a leave from their busy and demanding work at least to ease the pain of the Arata people in a small way. What you did is not in vain. God will reward you greatly. Thank you too for requesting your church to donate the drugs. And thanks a lot to Rev. Kanyuku and the entire pastoral team of Christian Church International for praying and standing with us for the success of the mission. The pastors were exposed to servanthood through washing the feet of the Arata people, removing and eradicating jiggers. What a ministry!

We cannot forget to thank our friends and partners from Roswell UMC, USA for their moral and prayer support through. Thanks to Beth Cayce and the board of Directors, Care to Learn International for providing finances that went to meet the needs of this mission. Your prayers and giving has made a difference. Indeed, light has now overcome darkness for the first time in many Arata homesteads! May the Almighty God bless you richly for giving generously towards this Mission.

We appreciate the prayers of those who stood with this team. Thanks our families and friends all over the world who upheld us in prayers before the Lord daily. May the Lord bless you all. Please continue praying for the Arata people as they are yet to worship our Saviour!

Our prayer for you all [those who gave, those who prayed, and those who came] is that one day you will hear these words spoken to you by the LORD of the harvest: ***“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me***

***water, I was a stranger and you invited me, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you visited me, I had jiggers and you helped remove them and treated my feet” (Matt. 25:34-36. Emphasis added).***

***May all the Nations bow down before the Lord Almighty and worship as God forever!***

Your Partner in the Labor Fields,

**Dr. Silas Kinyua Waweru**

**Executive Director**

Care to Learn International