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A NEW HOME

Greetings from an extremely hot and dry Uganda! The dry season has hit us with a vengeance and we have been struggling in unusually high temperatures. There doesn't seem to be any hope of rain anytime soon but no doubt when it comes, we will be longing for the sunshine and dryness rather than the muddy roads and heavy downpours that inevitably come during the rainy season! As many of you will be aware, Carlos and I enjoyed a wonderful visit home to Ireland over Christmas, which was just fabulous. We returned to a rather stressful situation, needing to move house (not having a home to move to!) in just two days – but miraculously we managed this through God's divine intervention, getting back to Uganda at 11.30pm on Tuesday 29 December, and by 10am on Thursday

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31st we had left the house we had been living in for a new one we viewed on 30th. We spent the next week or so settling into our new home – very awestruck that God had helped us manage such a feat! – and also visited Carlos' parents in the village, to surprise his dad on his 69th

birthday! Now we are back into normal life of work, friends, church and are enjoying our new home – we are glad to report that our two dogs are happy in our new home too!

RECESSION

It's incredible to think about how far God has brought us over the past year, particularly as we went through a financial crisis (as so many others have) due to the global recession. We have not had to close down a project or let any staff go (one part time staff stopped working in September 2009 but due to a structural change more than a financial constraint).

We have even started a new project – the Esteem course teaching about sex and healthy choices – in Mbale. We have had to tighten our belts, but this has simply made us more efficient and I hope not having lost any of our effectiveness! In fact, some fantastic things have been happening in Oasis projects over the past few months. The Beersheba Girls graduation was held on 4 December,



A Beersheba girl receiving her gift of a blanket

and 36 girls and their carers celebrated their achievements after their intensive one-year programme. It was such an awesome testimony to the difference that can be made in someone's life when they are giving some love, attention, and an opportunity which previously was lost to them. The presentations of the carers also demonstrated the value that the project had brought to their lives as they presented a drama showing a couple dealing positively with HIV in their rela-

tionship and also spoke of their confidence in using the training that they have received and their commitment to supporting their girls to return to school in 2010. Each of the girls was presented with a certificate and the gift of a blanket – such a blessing as many would sleep on the floor on mats. Amidst much laughter, smiles and sheer joy, lunch and sodas were enjoyed in the late afternoon and then girls and guests happily left us to walk home.

BAMBEJJA

Meanwhile in Bambejja, we were thrilled that one of our girls, Harriet, was the top student in her entire school for the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) that all students sit at the end of Primary 7 before joining Senior 1. She has consistently been a very bright and hard working girl. Getting aggregate nine, which is a first grade, was a tremendous achievement. Another girl, who also got nine, was disappointed that she didn't get the very top score of four (the highest is four; the lowest possible is 36). It's incredible that she would have such high standards – this is a girl who I previously spoke about who has not had a stable home for months as her mother abandoned her, and she has been staying at a boarding school, as the teachers saw her potential and wanted to ensure she managed to sit her exams in safety and relative comfort. As we plan for her to join a boarding secondary school, we pray that she will be able to reach her dreams of excelling in education, and continue to have such pride and belief in her own abilities.



A Bambejja girl in her school uniform at her home

In the Esteem project in Mbale, we have been teaching this valuable course on sex education to young people in various youth and church groups. Additionally, we have been able to expand the reach of this course by teaching it to adults. It is really exciting to get feedback from these people about how the course has also helped them to make wise and healthy choices regarding their sexual health, and how to also guide their children. For example, in Namabasa, a women's group of approximately 23 parents, thoroughly enjoyed the course. When asked the question, "Has the course helped you to understand more about relationships, sex and the consequences of sex?" 100% of the ladies answered a resounding yes. 86% said the lessons were interesting, 86% said the lessons were fun and 100% said the lessons were easy to understand. One parent gave this feedback: "This course is so good, the lessons have helped me to understand how to speak to my children and husband, as a married woman,

I have learnt that I am equally important in making decisions for my self, family and society."

In total we have reached more than 344 people this term, which is a great achievement. It is especially exciting to see parents learning from the course which will benefit not just them but also their children.

STRUGGLES

On the downside, have been having great struggles with our technology over the past few months, with problems with our email

server, our email router and our electricity all causing various problems at various times! Most issues have been solved – and amazingly wireless internet was introduced into our office! – but the electricity is still unstable, and with our inverter (which stores power on batteries for when the mains is off) currently broken, every day is an unknown! We are grateful for the progress that has been made and hopefully things will continue to improve!

Outside of Oasis, Carlos has been busy with his IT company, doing lots of trouble shooting and fixing of computers, and we are both enjoying being back in our church and look forward to seeing how we can serve God more in future.

Thanks as always for your support and prayer and love – do get in touch with us at anytime, as we are always thrilled to hear your news!

Gill & Carlos
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PLEASE PRAY

- For our technical issues, that electricity would be stable and we would be able to secure a good router that would work to ensure our internet would work perfectly in the Oasis Uganda and Net2Work offices
- Please pray for various staff issues we are undergoing, especially as we induct a new person into a key role (Gill's deputy) as the previous staff left Oasis Uganda for a scholarship in Australia.
- We thank God for His provision and direction, and as we enter 2010, we are really encouraged that we can trust Him to be our guide in all things, as He has been so faithful in the past

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