

First Impressions

When we stepped off the plane in Entebbe, Uganda, on January 7th, we entered a different world. A world of palm trees, balmy air, and insect noises. It was hard to believe we had been in snow and cold only twenty-four hours earlier. We had expected the summerlike climate. What we hadn't expected were all the cultural differences we were about to experience.

First off, the Ugandans drive on the left. And the streets are filled with boda bodas (motorcycle taxis) continually zipping in and out of traffic in dangerous fashion, often hauling multiple people or balancing cargo of unusual proportions--bananas, goats, and caskets. And we quickly realized the condition of the roads, particularly in DR Congo, would not be suitable for those with back issues or prone to car sickness. On the other hand, drivers aren't as tempted to speed when the road surface is basically a series of unending speed bumps. We were so thankful to have great drivers so we didn't have to attempt navigation ourselves.



We also began to wonder why Americans don't typically eat rice, pasta, or vegetables for breakfast when so much of the world does. We still don't know the answer. But we enjoyed fish, peas, spaghetti, beef, rice, potatoes, beans, and huge avocados along with the fresh pineapple and bananas in the mornings while we were in Africa. We got used to mosquito netting around the beds, no ice in our beverages, outhouses with holes in the ground, darkness falling at 7:00 pm, regular electric outages, and handwashing stations everywhere. We made lists of things to remember for next time: anti-itch cream for bug bites, zip ties for luggage to deter snoopy airline workers, toilet paper, and flashlights with plenty of batteries.

But what we loved the most? The people. The soft-spoken, relaxed, joy-filled folk won their way into our hearts. We were shown incredible hospitality and felt so very welcomed, both by the team members as well as the widows. And we were reminded once again, as we worshiped on a Sunday morning in Bunia, DR Congo, that even though you might speak different languages, when you worship the same God, you already have a strong relational bond with your brothers and sisters in the Lord. We saw the fantastic work that Hope Centers has done, and we got a glimpse of what has yet to come. We saw the need, but we also saw the hope. And we thank the Lord we have been blessed with this incredible opportunity to partner with you in making a difference in a big way.



A Tribute

It didn't take a keen eye to notice immediately the impact Glenn Mork has had on the people of Uganda and DR Congo. As we traveled together, we had the sense of embarking upon a big adventure, but there was an undertone of sadness to that adventure as we watched so many with tear-filled eyes take the time to thank Glenn for everything he has done for them through the past ten years. His kind, encouraging words; his ability to empathize and value people's hearts; his forgiving spirit; and his generosity with both time and resources have not gone unnoticed. When you bring water in the form of a well, you've given life. When you help provide school fees, you've given a future. When you pray with someone, you've given spiritual hope. Glenn has done all of these, and the people remember and love him for it.



We were so privileged to be able to make this trip with Glenn, to watch him and learn the ropes. And we know full well we are following in some pretty big footsteps. We are thankful he is just a phone call away as we transition over into the role of director (and wife).



And we pray the Lord will allow us to be used in such a mighty way as well. Thank you for everything you've done, Glenn.

- Jonathan Unverzagt (and Hope)
Assistant Director, HCCA

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