

## Out of Africa

### Sun of Sorrow and Winds of Change.

Our second MAF prayer letter and it is was great to see, hear from or receive mail from so many of you over the Christmas period. Before bringing you up to date with our lives it is worth saying we have on our hearts much more than ourselves at this time. We are not fully aware as to how this is being reported in Europe but much of East Africa is experiencing a serious drought. In Dodoma we have only had one serious fall of rain since we arrived last April, which was in October. The season of the short rains that should have taken place in November and December did not happen and much of Tanzania is in the grip of a life threatening dryness. The Tanzania Programme manager and I spoke to a local director of the World Food Programme last week and it was his opinion that there has not been a time as bad as this in the last twenty years.

What does this mean for the people of Tanzania whose staple food is maize? For those in the rural areas it means that water is very scarce and therefore they are not planting crops. It is estimated that only one fifth of the arable land available has been planted. This will exacerbate the famine that is already with us. These people are also the first to start running out of food. At several of the villages that we serve with medical clinics our pilots are reporting that there is little food and children are starting to loose weight. In the towns there is maize available but it is now very expensive. The normal price would be TZ 50/- per kilogramme the price has already reached TZ 400/- and will continue to rise. Just imagine what would happen if your grocery bill had increased eightfold in the past six months. People in the towns will starve too as they run out of money. The worst thing is this is just the beginning and even if it rains now it will be a year until the situation can be resolved.

What does it mean for us? In truth, a lot of praying and soul searching. It is very difficult to be relatively rich in a land where there is so much poverty and famine. We are aware that as a couple we can not feed the country and we are concerned to target our resources in the correct directions. What we have resolved to do is to work through our church as it is the Tanzanians who know where the biggest needs are and to help as we at MAF find villages that need urgent support. Water also generates the bulk of electricity so we believe we may have months of power cuts. These are inconvenient but at present not life threatening.

What does this mean to MAF Tanzania? It means we must have our eyes and ears open to every opportunity to use our aircraft to target appropriate aid. There are still many areas of this country where wheeled vehicles can not go so that is where we will. We will be working with missionary agencies and other organizations to support their life giving work. Here you see the villagers of Birise on our first delivery of food to their village. Please pray that the Lord opens the heavens and allows the rains to fall. Please remember the people of Tanzania in your prayers and think of us and MAF as we try to show God's love.



Life is full of joys and sorrows and it is with a mixture of both that we wave good bye to Teresa and Peter Smithies our present prayer secretary and her husband. The Lord has called them to New Zealand. We hope you will join with us in saying a massive thank you to them for all they did to maintain contact between yourselves and us. We are very grateful for the way in which Teresa developed the task into something much more than just sending letters a couple of times a year. Please thank the Lord for them both and pray He will be close to them in their new lives and country.

It is with much joy that we introduce you to Peter and Stephanie Wells who have agreed to be our UK link with you. At present they are unique as they are the only people to have seen us in our Tanzanian environment. They will introduce themselves to you in their own way but for now their contact details are 12 Twynham Close, DOWNTON Wilts SP5 3LD, Tel 01725 512127 E-mail [wells@peter-stephanie.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:wells@peter-stephanie.fsnet.co.uk) . Pray they will know the love of Jesus moment to moment in their lives.

Now a little about us. There will be a great change in the MAF staff in Dodoma over the next six months so knowing we would be unable to visit the UK this summer we came to the UK for thirteen days over Christmas. We spent a blessed Christmas period with our children and our church community in Durrington. The Lord willing, we will return at the end of 2006 and intend to meet with you and your churches. One of the posts that will be vacant in the middle of the year will be that of Programme Manager. After a lot of prayer and waiting on the Lord I felt he was calling me to apply for the job. I did so and will have the great privilege of leading the Tanzania MAF team from July. As you have previously read MAF Tanzania will be busy this year please pray that I will be open to the Lord's leading, listen to the other team members and have wisdom to know what things to change and what not to. Things have become more on an even keel since Andrew the operations manager returned but I feel that the work load will become larger again as we fill the personnel gaps and mentor new staff over the next nine months. Please talk to the Lord about people obtaining the relaxation they will need.

Davina continues to be as busy as ever and I am constantly amazed at her initiative and abilities for teaching and motivating pupils and staff. I have had the privilege of sitting in on a couple of her instructional sessions and have listened spellbound. There are times when it is not easy because she is in quite an isolated position in the task she is trying to achieve.



What do you think of this?

Friends in UK have provided the money for a wonderful piece of outdoor apparatus for the children.

Please pray for a focussed Godly leader and dedicated staff to replace those who are leaving.

On the domestic front we now have a flock of eleven chickens and two ducks though sadly the chick we saw emerge from the egg died at age three months. We delight in our garden and watching the plants grow and spread though that too might soon be curtailed because of lack of water.

We do thank you all for your continued prayers and practical support.

God bless Alan and Davina.