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Prayer Letter 9

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It was so wonderful to return to our home in Kampala in November last year, having spent four months in the UK on home assignment. Whilst it was good to have the physical (not so much for Caroline!), mental and spiritual refreshment in the UK and to share more about our life here with family, friends and supporters, we did miss our friends, church and the challenge of life in Uganda.

Over the past few months we have felt the tremors of the Kenyan crisis. In the days that followed the outbreaks of violence across the border, fuel prices in Uganda shot up. Enormous queues for petrol formed when any fuel got through. Only just over a year ago we were paying 1,900 Uganda shillings per litre (about 60p) but recently the prices shot up with some places selling at 14,000 shillings per litre (£4.50). Uganda relies heavily on the Kenyan port of Mombasa, so when the lifeline to central Africa was blocked by rioters, operations ceased, power cuts increased and business faltered. What a reminder that God is a God who loves peace, values relationships and sets guidelines which order society. When disorder comes and conflict breaks out, everyone suffers.

Nakawa remains another textbook example of fragility. In December 2007 all the residents of Nakawa and Naguru estates were issued with eviction notices to vacate their homes by 31 January 2008. Whilst the residents have some legal protection under The Land Act it became apparent that the legal safeguards had been ignored in favour of what looked like a mass forced signing by the residents of an agreement to forgo their property rights, thus leaving 12,000 people facing homelessness. Our church still has no written guarantee of land in the redevelopment and we have been readying ourselves to break camp and move lightly as exiles without a home. Steve has been very involved in this situation and has been able to offer advice to people, lead a land rights legal education session and advise the newly-elected residents association on legal courses of action against government. Towards the end of January, the residents association brought a case in the high



Court challenging the proposed development based upon the fraudulent acts of the previous tenants association and a temporary injunction was granted bringing a halt to any demolition or development work for now. Further, the inspector general of government requested the ministry of local government to suspend the eviction pending an investigation into government corruption vis-à-vis the former tenants association. These courses of action may yet be a chance for justice to be done or may merely be a stay of execution. Do pray!

Whilst some things appear to be disintegrating, others continue to grow. At the Ugandan Christian Lawyers' Fraternity (UCLF) we are working on our next five-year plan which should see operations extending to many more remote areas of the country. The next legal education programme has a major focus on northern Uganda where we will try to work alongside churches to tackle the triple scourges of domestic violence and the abuse of child and land rights. Prisoner public defence is expanding and the criminal law paralegal scheme (PAS) has really taken off with our four paralegals working in police stations and at Kigo prison offering 'first aid' legal help. Since July 2007 they have managed to assist over 600 people and we have really seen the benefits of the project.

As a family, we are generally quite robust and not so subject to the fragility that surrounds us. Hannah is doing

well and, despite the occasional mosquito bite, is growing fast, is now six months old, able to sit up on her own and enjoying some solid food. She has become a mini celebrity at church and each week a small troop of kids hang around her in order to stare and maybe even chance their luck with a cheeky stroke of her skin.



Hannah's dedication pictures

Mostly she smiles but sometimes is less tolerant and cries. The woes of being a mission kid! We had a special day on 10 February when Hannah was dedicated at Nakawa and were joined by BMS colleagues and our old friends, Graeme and Jenny Riddell, who are Hannah's godparents. We then had a great BBQ at home after church.

Steve has conducted a number of legal education sessions so far this year, which have involved some up-country travel. In February he travelled to Kitgum, near the Sudanese border, with Graeme and Jenny (who are also future BMS Uganda mission workers and were here for their one-month placement) and taught peace building to a group of UPDF soldiers. Then in March, he travelled to Mbarara to teach child rights on a course for young people from Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sweden. This month he is also preaching from Philippians at church. Caroline is still at home full-time with Hannah



Soldiers receiving peace building training at Kitgum

but is keen to return to work on a part-time basis in the near future, in order to further assist with representation and ministry to prisoners.

In April we look forward to welcoming all the BMS Africa mission personnel to Uganda for a retreat. It will be a great opportunity to relax, get some good teaching and hear what God is doing across this vast, troubled, amazing and

beautiful continent. We long to see real change and pray for God's Kingdom to be realised; bringing salvation, comfort, release, forgiveness, healing and hope to this wonderful Africa. We only survive by your prayers and support and are grateful for your partnership with us in mission.

Please continue to pray:

- ◆ For up-coming projects at UCLF – legal education and public defence work (that they would go ahead without delay and would impact many lives)
- ◆ For Nakawa and wisdom in the midst of uncertainty
- ◆ For our work – that we would know God's leading as we plan future strategies for UCLF
- ◆ For our health and safety, particularly for Hannah

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