



Dear friends - warmest greetings from Juba!

The first half of the year has literally flown by! Life in Juba continues to be busy. Social distancing is possible in our office, so most days you'll find me behind my desk at MAF's Airport Office or on a flight seeing firsthand the work that MAF's partners are doing in remote corners of South Sudan.



Before I left for Christmas in December I joined a flight with passengers from the Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund. Flights continued right through until the end of March as the team brought together communities for peace talks. You can read more in the upcoming Flying for Life

Several flights in January carried cargo for NGOs delivering a variety of programmes. The diversity of projects being delivered and the range of needs they are trying to address is impressive.



Left: MAF flew 2,900 kgs of mattocks for Samaritan's Purse who are running a food security project amongst Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS).

Middle: Rolls of fabric and boxes beads were flown for Humanity and Inclusion to help people dealing with trauma to generate an income through craft products. **Right:** Antibiotics and medical supplies were flown to Nagishot for The Carter Center to aid in their campaign to fight sight loss by treating trachoma.



On 19 February, I joined Every Village on for the last flight leg of their two-week tour visiting their programmes across South Sudan. MAF has supported the organisation for many years and was a privilege to talk to Executive Director Andrew Brown about the mission's evolving ministry model as we flew them back to Juba.

On 3 March I flew up to Aweil in Northern Bahr el Ghazel State to visit missionaries. These missionaries are thriving despite living in a place with limited electricity, where water has to be brought by donkey and there is a noticeable lack of fresh fruit and vegetables. The trip gave me a change to see some ministry on the ground and see the challenges they face serving in remote areas.



I spent the first four days with Shannon who is working with local translators to translate the Bible into Dinka Malual. Shannon's heart to produce a literal translation of the Bible, is partly the result of her own journey to faith which came through reading the Bible as teenager.



Alongside the translation work, Shannon is amassing an army of readers through her Dinka literacy programme with local children. Shannon is currently helping to pioneer a new outreach in one of the remotest and least reached areas of South Sudan.

I spent the next four days with Cush for Christ in Wanjok, an hour and forty-minute drive east of Shannon's village where the Hanna family, Melissa, Lucas and their five children welcomed me into their home.

The team of three families, three singles and two short-termers run a school and Pastor's training programme. The school uses an American home school curriculum which enables the students to learn at their own pace. As they advance, the students get the opportunity to become junior teachers, teaching the younger students to read and write in Dinka first, then English. The junior teachers receive an income, practical experience and an opportunity to receive a high-quality education.

My favourite part of the trip was riding out with Lucas on the back of his motorbike to one of the communities where he delivers training. I was struck by the excellence of the teaching delivered to just a handful of students in the shade of the grass thatched church and excited about the fruit that will grow as a result. In the afternoon we returned back to Wanjok where Lucas teaches a larger group of locals on the same campus as the school.



In the same location as the school and training centre is the Weer Bei Gospel Radio Station. The team took time to share about their work. As I joined them, they were listening to audio from a recent episode of intercommunal violence and preparing a message on peace and reconciliation message to broadcast into the community. The station is so valued by the communities its now completely self-supporting.

On 16 March I had the privilege of witnessing a very different mission model when I had four hours on the ground in Tonj (Warrap State) with 'In Deed and Truth' (IDAT). The organisation runs a hospital which is both saving lives and empowering the community by training local hospital staff. I got to know nurses Zac and Rebecca when they stayed with us on the MAF compound last year before beginning their assignment in Tonj. The New Zealand couple joined fellow Kiwis – Dr Jono and Destiny and their three girls.



We saw the in-patient ward where 70% of the patients are babies receiving support for respiratory conditions complicated by malnutrition. Rebecca shared about the challenges these fragile new-borns face. There were no less than four children with painfully swollen limbs receiving treatment for snakebites. IDAT keeps a stock of anti-venom which is expensive to buy and beyond the means of most people that need it. The busy outpatient ward sees hundreds of patients each month.



After a busy few weeks, Easter was thankfully quiet. I attended a Seder Supper to mark the Passover, Good Friday worship gathering and managed to rest and catch-up on some sleep.

The following week I was in the right-hand seat for the first of four flights bringing thousands of Neem trees to Ganyiel, an area close to the Nile in Unity State affected by severe flooding last year. The trees will replace those lost in the flooding and help shore up the dike which is part of the flood defence. In total the pilots made four trips with several thousands of trees. Landing in the opposition area we were reminded of the invisible boundaries between tribes as we were ferried about the community to try and resolve a dispute over landing fees. Rural areas receive very little support from central government in Juba.

On the Tuesday after Easter, I boarded another flight for a few days in Maridi with MAF's Peace and Reconciliation Team for a workshop being hosted by the Catholic Church for some of the Christian youth. Participants were drawn from all the denominations present in the town and it was great to see the young people come together to learn about God's heart for healing for those who have experienced trauma.

The workshop had a very different emphasis from the last one I attended where the participants were older and had first-hand experience of war. These young people continue to live with the disadvantages of underdevelopment that have resulted from the conflict.





I returned on Thursday in time to catch an MAF flight to Kenya for some r&r and a chance to catch up with friends who have left Juba over the past few months.

I was able to get on one flight in Kenya up to the north of the country where we picked up some passengers including a Hyena Conservationist, delivered some tables to a missionary for a women's village he was setting up and brought a team of NGO workers back to Nairobi after the completion of a short-term project distributing food for Ramadan.

Thank you for praying!

- Praise God that Covid-19 hasn't had a severe impact in South Sudan and MAF has been able to continue flying throughout 2020
- Pray for the missions and NGOs working in Juba and other areas of South Sudan. Life often feels like a round of welcomes and goodbyes which can be challenging but new people also bring fresh energy and vision to the task
- The US and UK governments are cutting overseas aid budgets. Pray for renewed commitment by the international community towards countries in crisis like South Sudan
- Pray for ongoing peace and reconciliation efforts. Pray that the country's leaders would have the courage to seek brave solutions that help communities heal
- Pray for good lines of communication with MAF colleagues, family and friends