



Matt & Becki Dillingham
in Chad

MAF's Impact in the Tibesti

MAF have been flying to Bardai, a town in Northern Chad since the early 1990s, when work began amongst the Teda people living in the region. It is the furthest destination that MAF Chad fly to, so far that it requires a diversion to a French military base in Faya for fuel. Travelling to Bardai takes 3 days by car, with only 200km of the 1700km distance, having any resemblance of a road. Other parts are over volcanic rock and sand dunes. Mark, who has been doing the trip for 30 years, recalls trips as long as 19 days when the car broke down under the stress of the journey. MAF fly to Bardai around 8 times a year and have built up a good relationship with the Teda people, who now see the aircraft as theirs! The pilots always return with spectacular photos and amazing stories of their trip and Becki has always wanted to take the family with her. That opportunity came, in our last month in Chad, when Mark chartered the Cessna 182 to return to Bardai after a 3 month trip to his home country. As this aircraft was unavailable, the Caravan was used instead and the extra space meant Matt and the children could join the flight.

The territory of the Teda people is vast, covering 3 countries (Niger, Libya and Chad) and spanning 1200km east to west and 1000km north to south. It is a single people group, not split into clans, and everyone uses a single language. However, the national language in Libya is Arabic and those Chadian children that go to school, are taught to read and write in French. Therefore their language was only ever a spoken one until 1998, when Mark, with the help of some forward-thinking Teda colleagues, completed the complex process of adapting latin script into an oral language. It had taken 5 years to get to this point and, initially, Teda were sceptical about the need to have a written language. Mark explained that "words on a page are the written script of languages they do not speak" so they were of no interest to the Teda people. The turning point came when the first picture vocabulary books were produced. "When they saw the books come out, when they saw the language written, they then saw that it could be done," Mark recalled.

From 1999 to 2012, Mark was forced to relocate to N'Djamena due to a rebellion in the region but progress continued without him and people were learning to read

and write. By 2012, there was a clear need for a centre in Bardai for the resources and classes to be held. A recently-married Swiss couple, Simon and Anja wanted to visit Bardai as tourists and Mark agreed, on the condition that they would pray about whether they should move up there for 9 months to start the centre. They felt God leading them to do this and as soon as they arrived, they had people handing them money to have their names put down on the list to enrol in the English and computing classes that were planned. "By the time we started the first course, we already had a waiting list for the next one," Simon describes. "It was way more positive than we ever expected."

During our visit to the centre (called Mosko Hanadii-ṛ, which translates as a place to sit and learn) we were given a tour by Mark and Simon, who also joined the flight, and were shown a presentation about how the project had developed over the years. They started with a single room and now have a thriving hub of learning, with 3 classrooms and a large conference hall which doubles up as a sports hall. They have a library, which houses many of the books that have been written in the Teda language and even a museum to showcase articles that relate to Teda life. One of most popular initiatives has been an annual writing competition, to encourage Teda people to write their own stories.

Mosko Hanadii-ṛ is a big success story but not the only one in Bardai. There is a British couple (Mark and Andrea Hotchkin), who hosted us, working at the hospital. And although they aren't in Bardai at the moment, there are other long and short-termers from Europe working here, all helping to meet the needs of the Teda people through education, medical and water projects. MAF's partnership with the team in Bardai has been crucial in getting these projects to where they are today. Mark explained to us that this type of work is "not just helping missionaries have a little easier life, it's doing things that can't be done otherwise." Simon added that "MAF is a huge help in our logistics, facilitating what we are doing, whether it's getting us, or people we invite, to Bardai and back, or transporting material and even mail.





(Top left) Mark showing us a classroom at the Centre

(Top right) Simon showing us teaching resources written in the Teda language

(Bottom left) A view of Bardai

(Bottom right) The Teda museum at the centre

Leaving Chad

This is our final week in Chad as we leave for the UK on 11th June, then travel to Tanzania in mid-August to start a new chapter with MAF. It has felt like a long good-bye as the community here in N'Djamena changes week to week when people go on home assignment or come in and out from "the village" where they normally live. So we've been saying goodbye to people since Christmas time! But now time is running out and our house is becoming more bare as our things go into boxes.

Our flight to Bardai was Becki's last one with passengers so MAF Chad celebrated her last landing in N'Djamena by organising for the fire service at the airport to spray the plane as she taxied back to the hangar. However, rather than forming the traditional arc over the plane, they managed to fire two water jets straight at the windshield giving her zero visibility!

With one last MAF-Chad assignment to fit in before she went, Becki flew the Cessna 182 to Uganda last week. The aircraft needs an autopilot upgrade and refitted interior and Becki is the only 182-pilot in the program so she flew it there over 2 days, returning the next day on an international flight.

Matt has held a number of different roles at our church and Becki taught Sunday school, so they gave us a nice send-off last Sunday. This week we will have a

farewell celebration with all the national staff at MAF Chad. We hope that time will allow us to visit a few of our favourite places in N'Djamena, in amongst packing, before we leave.

Thank you for following our newsletters from our time in Chad, we hope you have found them interesting and we look forward to bringing you more from Tanzania later this year!



(Top) The Caravan being sprayed as Becki returned to N'Djamena for the final time.

(Bottom left) Prayer as we say goodbye to The Fellowship

(Bottom right) Flying to Uganda with Philemon

Home Assignment 2024

We will be on home assignment, as normal, this summer. Below are the dates that we have arranged to attend our supporting churches. We are looking forward to

being able to reconnect with people and share some stories from the past year. Our travelling will be restricted to the South West of England, and Wales this year. Please get in touch with us if you would like to meet up with us while we're on home assignment.

Sunday 23 June, 10:30am - **St Andrew's Church**, Buckland Monachorum, Devon, PL20 7LZ.

Sunday 30 June, 6:30pm - **Emmanuel Church**, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5BZ. **TBC**

Sunday 7th July, 10:30am - **Bovey Baptist Church**, Bovey Tracey, TQ13 9HT.

Sunday 7th July, 6pm - **St Thomas' Baptist Church**, Exeter, Devon, EX4 1LZ.

Sunday 14th July, 10am - **Emmanuel Church**, Bath, BA1 3LP.

Sunday 21st July, 11am - **Rosemary Lane Chapel**, Clayhiddon, Somerset, EX15 3PQ.

*Sunday 11th August, 10:30am - **Martock Christian Fellowship**, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6JN

*Note: the date for visiting Martock Christian Fellowship has changed from the date we published in our March newsletter.

Prayer

- For our family as we leave our home, colleagues, school and friends in Chad. Pray for the children as they go through a major transition and prepare to start a new school in August.
- We will be able to find a suitable house, near to the school and airport in Arusha.
- Our month of home assignment will go as planned and we will be able to share how God is working in Chad through MAF. We are thankful to have an extra 2 weeks in the UK this summer to help us to arrive in Tanzania fully refreshed.

Praise

- Elections were held in May and passed peacefully.

- Becki will wait until she arrives in Tanzania to sit the exams required for her to obtain her Tanzanian flying license. It was thought that she would have to travel to Dar-es-Salaam to sit the exams in June, but thankfully that will not be necessary.
- A family will be joining the MAF Chad program in October, to take over Becki's roles as Flight operations manager and pilot. Having served with MAF for 5 years in another program, they will bring valuable experience to the team. Plans have also been finalised for a number of people to come temporarily over the next few months to enable the program to continue operating.
- The new family have agreed to employ Sarah when they arrive so she will continue to have an income and her children will be able to continue in education.

Bethan's Blog

Last month we went to Bardai. I didn't enjoy the flight as it was long and it made me feel unwell but I did like it when we were there. I did lots of rock climbing and had to help Daddy find a way to the top. He was much more scared than I was! I have finished at Wellspring Academy now. My teacher took me and 2 other children who are leaving, out to lunch to celebrate. I have loved school and hope that I can come back when I am older and teach there. I had my last horse riding lesson too, which was sad. But I am looking forward to going to England soon.





A Letter from Luke

My favourite thing about Bardai was looking for constellations in the night sky. We slept outside under mosquito nets and Mummy woke me up at 3am so I could see the Milky Way - it was amazing. I have a star chart, which I used to find the constellations and spent a lot of time reading about them all in a book. During the day we visited some rocks that had carvings of people and animals from 10,000 years ago. Our pool is broken at the moment so we haven't been able to swim at all during hot season this year. But we are going to go to Guinebor II pool this week to get a break from packing up the house!