

Symmonds' Soundbites

News from Papua New Guinea



Welcome to our latest newsletter, which is again overdue - sorry! It doesn't feel like six months since we last wrote, but it is. They do say time flies when you're having fun! Thank you for taking the time to have a read of our update.

Much has happened since October. Here are some of the highlights...

Bougainville Cyclone Response

Tropical cyclone Maila hit Bougainville, an island of PNG, on April 9th. It brought significant destruction and has resulted in at least 11 deaths.

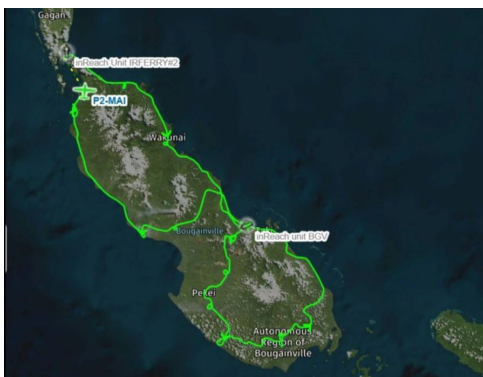
As we write, our neighbour, Glenys, is in Bougainville with one of MAF PNG's C208s, working in a disaster response role. She is flying relief supplies, medevac and survey flights, identifying the locations of greatest and most urgent needs. Almost all road bridges have been washed out, hindering land based travel.

Australian Aid and New Zealand Aid has already arrived and is being distributed, with the MAF aircraft able to take it into the remote airstrips that are too small for the large military transports.

The aircraft is scheduled to remain in Bougainville until 1st May, with another pilot relieving Glenys this week.

Please pray for the relief efforts, safety for the pilots and for the love of God to be demonstrated through the work of MAF.

Pray also for the embryonic MAF Bougainville program and its team. This new program is just getting established. MAF Technologies have already begun activities and there will be an aviation program soon, but there is no aircraft based there permanently yet. Although the Bougainville program will operate under MAF PNG initially, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville is seeking independence from PNG, so it is envisaged that the MAF program will be standalone eventually.



Left: Survey flight route Right: Damage to bridge



*Clockwise from top left: Aid being loaded into MAF Caravan,
MAF Bougainville team, Young medevac patient, Arrival of Australian Aid*

Photos courtesy of Glenys Watson

A new role for Andy

Last time we wrote, we mentioned that Andy had done a training course which qualifies him to act as a Supervisory Pilot, introducing other pilots to areas and airstrips that are new to them.

Since the new year, Andy has been able to put this to use on a few occasions. Part of this was introducing Andy Little to Goroka and the surrounding areas. Andy L is no stranger to MAF or PNG, having had a couple of multi-year stints serving as a pilot here, as well as in an instructor role in Australia, but he will now be operating extensively in the areas east of Mount Hagen, where he has not flown before. The Andys flew together over two one-week periods, giving Andy L the opportunity to learn the geography and topography of the area, as well as the challenges and finer points of the airstrips and weather patterns. Andy has also been flying with Josef, a pilot new to MAF PNG, who is serving in the Telefomin area.

It's a privilege to be able to help expand the knowledge, capability and flexibility of the MAF PNG pilot pool in this way. Please pray for all the training that goes on in program, enabling MAF PNG to reach the isolated communities we serve.



The Andys at Tapmange, Finisterres mountains. A delivery of store goods has just been unloaded.



Andy and Josef, somewhere near Aiyu, Hela Province.

An opportunity to learn more...

It is very rare that we get to spend much time in the communities we serve. By necessity, we drop off and/or pick up at the remote airstrips, and fly off again, so we can serve as many places as possible during the day.

It's always a pleasure and privilege to explore away from the airstrip and learn a bit more about life, work and ministry in these remote communities.

One such opportunity came in October, when Andy took John Dallmann, the CEO of Engineering Ministries International to Mougulu in Western Province. This is a story of many organisations working together to achieve what would be impossible individually.

EMI currently have only one representative in PNG. Terry Fahey is seconded to MAF and is working alongside SDP to build floatplane infrastructure and other projects in Western Province. John and his wife, Gala, visited to see first hand the important work Terry has been doing, and to explore the possibility of expanding the work and partnerships of EMI in PNG. As part of this they visited the mission at Mougulu. MAF have long had connection with the Hoey family, now second and third generation missionaries. Tom Hoey was among the first to make contact with cannibalistic tribes in the area, and through these missionary efforts the gospel was received and has been the means through which peace has (largely) come to the people groups around Mount Bosavi. Thanks to the ongoing work, Mougulu has a primary school, high school, medical clinic and hydro and solar electricity. Discussions were had about how these projects were constructed and how EMI could support to improve things further, at Mougulu and other locations.

Please pray for this initiative, that God would guide thoughts and ideas and provide for any partnerships and projects that he wants to bring about, for the glory and expansion of his kingdom.



Clockwise from top left: 1) Current high school student dorm rooms. Replacement is planned. 2) Newly completed school classrooms. 3) John and Gala Dallmann (EMI), Terry Fahey (EMI/MAF) and SDP representatives Solomon and Silas. 4) Medical clinic

Oral Story Based Trauma Healing

In January Helen had the opportunity to again run the Trauma Healing course which she has now done quite a few times at different places around PNG. This time Helen returned to the orphanage in Mount Hagen to run the course with some of the older teens there.

What we would consider traumatic events are much more commonplace in PNG life (e.g. loss of home or family members to violence, fatal illnesses, abuse/assault, etc.). Although our local friends and acquaintances talk about such things in a rather matter of fact way, these events still have a significant impact.

The OSBTH course is an internationally recognised course, rooted in solid biblical teaching. It helps participants to assess and acknowledge the traumatic things they have experienced and to bring those things to God, and the cross. A big part of the material is about forgiveness - the forgiveness that we can receive from God for our own wrongs, and the forgiveness we can extend to those who have wronged us, enabled through the work of the Holy Spirit. Please pray for all the young people who took part in the course, that they would continue to bring their hurts to the God who loves them, that they will find and be able to offer forgiveness, and receive the peace and healing from Jesus that is beyond all understanding.



Above: Photos from the OSBTH course in Mount Hagen

Hospital and Women's Prison Ministry

Mama Care, the hospital ministry on the neo-natal/premature baby ward resumed in January after a short Christmas break. Continue to pray for these visits which bring good food and a good message to women who may not hear the true gospel elsewhere.

Pray specifically for Irose who came to town with her new baby, needing attention to a large boil the baby was suffering with. Hospitals in PNG do not provide food to patients. People rely on 'wan toks" (extended family) for support when in hospital, but Irose has no relatives in town and is struggling to get food. Mama Care regularly provides one meal a week. Pray for wisdom for Helen and the other ladies as they seek to care for the needs of these new mothers. Pray for the regular hospital staff, as they try to cope with overcrowding. The population of Goroka is growing rapidly, and the hospital is becoming too small. Last week there were 25 ladies in the neonatal ward, which has 9 beds!



(Live?) electrical cables dangling from the hospital ceiling outside the neonatal ward.



The overflowing neonatal ward

A big change...

At the end of May, two of the four Goroka based MAF families will leave PNG. The Paas family and Venter family are not just colleagues, but great friends and we will miss them immensely. They are going to new roles within MAF, with the Venters going to Uganda where Brad will take up a position in the flight training department, and the Paas' going to Cairns, where Arjan will work in the flight standards department.

It will be a huge loss to the PNG program, but their experience will be put to great use in their new roles.

We and the Watson family will remain in Goroka. The compound will be reduced from fifteen kids to five! We will also become a one aircraft base for a time, as we will not be able to fly two aircraft with only 1.5 pilots (Glenys is our Flight Operations Manager, so usually flies half time with the rest of her time given to management responsibilities).

Please pray for the significant changes coming to the Goroka base and compound, and for the two families moving as they adjust to different settings, cultures and roles.

Let's hear it for the Boys!

Joel and Daniel are doing well. They are also a little apprehensive about the loss of friends, so please pray for the cultivation of other relationships and provision of new friends. As families depart, others are constantly arriving or moving within country as well.

Pray God will help them develop their full academic potential in school, and more importantly, help them to walk with and follow Him more closely.

Daniel is very into all things ancient Greek and Roman empire at the moment. He is regularly practicing his weaponry skills with the other boys on the compound, making good use of home made swords and shields!



Thank you for continuing to take an interest in our work, for your support and your valuable time given to reading this update. Please continue to pray for us and the ministry of MAF.

As always, if you have time to get in touch personally, please drop us an email. We'd love to hear from you! Love from Andy, Helen, Joel and Daniel

Please Pray:

Give Thanks

- For the rapid delivery of aid to Bougainville and the ability of MAF to respond to immediate needs.
- For all the frontline ministries MAF supports with transport logistics.
- For the work MAF is able to do helping and supporting remote communities.
- For the ministries Helen is involved with at the hospital and prison.
- For the training Andy has been able to deliver in the last few months.

Pray For

- Safety and wisdom for the team in Bougainville, the longer term future of the island and the new MAF program there.
- Our car! It has broken down with an electronic fault. The car is a vital tool, particularly for Helen's hospital and prison ministries. Parts and expertise are not in country. Please pray for miraculous intervention.
- Prison and Mama Care ministries.
- Bible Box ministry, that the Word will speak to the people who read and hear it.
- MAF PNG's ministry to continue to have lasting Kingdom impact.
- The big upcoming change as our friends and neighbours leave PNG.