



NIMULE MISSION TEAM

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By Andrew Brown



The Dinka people originally from the Bor area of Southern Sudan are a distinguished tribe. Tall and muscular, their black skin contrasts sharply with their white teeth. The older generation usually displays a vertical row of v-shaped scars on their foreheads – the traditional marking of their area. But it is not until the topic of cattle arises that the true Dinka can be seen. Mention the word “cow” and their dark face is instantaneously lit up by their bright smile. See, in the Dinka culture, the cow is at the very center of society. From childhood to adulthood, cows are the focus of life’s biggest events. Many a Dinka child is named after the color of a cow; a marriage’s dowry is measured by the number of cows; even wealth and status are ultimately tied to the neck of each cow that a man owns.

The June 2009 team was comprised of David Brown (my father who lives in Saudi Arabia), Ernest Buyondo (Ugandan who owns a taxi company), Kerry and Neltia Henderson (Aid Sudan’s family in Uganda), Johnny Johnson (a vet from San Antonio), Mike Navolio (a geophysicist from Houston), Faryka Rogers (a vet student from New York), Bob Snell (a vet from Alabama) and Dan Sullivan (an underwriter from Houston). The team was originally slated to travel to Bor and work in the areas of animal health and water. In the months leading up to the trip, we changed destinations to Nimule due to some insecurity in the Bor area. We knew that even in Nimule, we would still be working primarily with the Dinka’s Bor population who had relocated there during the years of civil war. However, the trip was full of many unknowns. Not only was this Aid Sudan’s first veterinary team, it was also our first team to go to Nimule, home to Moses Project Missionary, Maker Manyang. Confident in God’s plan, we prayed that He would go before us.

God certainly answered our prayers and in so doing, allowed us to lay a foundation upon which future teams will be able to build. It excites me that less than a month after our team’s departure, another team will travel to Nimule along with Maker to continue the work. After that team leaves, Maker will remain for three more months ministering to the needs of his people. God is truly moving among the people of Nimule and the following tells how He enabled our team to be a part of that work.

THE WELCOME

Staying with Maker’s family on their compound, we were astonished time and again by the incredible hospitality our hosts provided for us. Always known for their incredible generosity, the Sudanese showered our team with warmth and care that left us humbled with gratitude.

When we first arrived at the compound, we were welcomed with cold sodas bought in town for our team’s arrival. After arranging our luggage and bedding, we sat drinking the sodas in the shade of an enormous sausage tree (it has “fruit” hanging from it that resembles large sausages). The men would sleep in Maker’s house while the ladies would stay in Makol’s (Maker’s brother) hut. Meanwhile, the family moved into the tents we had brought as they insisted that as their guests, we would stay in their homes. A mansion by Sudanese standards, Maker’s house had three rooms with a tin roof and concrete

walls and floor. Although more traditional with mud walls and a grass roof, Makol's hut was also far from ordinary. It had vinyl flooring, a double bed, a couch and armchairs and several pictures hanging on the mud walls.

During our stay, Maker's wife, Rebekah, was our primary caretaker as she cooked our meals, washed our clothes, and brought our water. Most meals, she would add flavor to our rice and beans (the food we brought from Uganda) with delicious onions, okra or kissera (a spongy bread). Rebekah's tireless labor of love continually left us speechless as we who had come to serve felt honored to be served.

THE CATTLE CAMPS

Upon arrival at the cattle camps, we met with the leaders of four camps to discover the needs of the area and to set a plan for the week ahead. Some of the leaders were skeptical about our team injecting their cows, but one camp allowed us to work with their cattle. So we set up plans for the next day – we would treat the cows for two hours, educate the camp in our work and then share Bible stories.

Filling syringes, giving injections, squirting dewormer, and keeping records, the first day working at the camp was exciting as the entire team got involved. The most vivid memory came when we needed someone to restrain the temperamental cows while giving injections. Without any reservations, Dan jumped in, grabbed a cow by the horns and wrestled the 800 pound beast into submission. It was a special example of how God used each of the team members to perform His work. By the end of the first day, we had given over 300 treatments, shared two Bible stories, and earned the trust of the people. Already relationships were forming as the camp gave a pail of milk to Faryka as a gift.

The next few days working at the same camp were moving as we saw the people's appreciation grow along with their receptivity to our work and our words. By the third day, the chief warmly greeted us. He told us that already they were seeing the results of our treatments; there were far less flies and ticks, the cows were eating more and were happier. We praised the Lord for allowing the people to see the results so quickly. That day, instead of our team performing the treatments, we walked beside the Sudanese while Bob and Johnny trained them to deworm and give injections themselves.

The culmination of our week at the camp came when we shared the last of our Bible stories with the men, women and children. As I was telling the final story, the people listened intently to the account of Christ's crucifixion but when I reached the resurrection, the camp began to clap and shout "Hallelujah!" It was a powerful moment to see their hunger for God's Word, and when we finished, the chief thanked us for sharing the stories of God with the children so that they might grow up to know God.

Before leaving Nimule, we visited this camp one more time to distribute our remaining supply of medicines. Once again, the camp expressed their deep appreciation for the work we had done and as a way of showing this gratitude, they gave us a financial gift. It was truly humbling to receive such generosity from a people who have so little, and it is exciting to know that we will be able to use that gift to purchase blankets and bedding for their children.

God had truly gone before us and blessed the work of our hands. It was clear that by treating the cows of the Dinka people, we had touched their hearts at a deep level and it had opened the doors to share God's Word with power and authority. We praise God for His work!

THE WATER WELLS

Just as the expression goes, "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime," we desire to walk beside the Sudanese to empower them in our areas of work. When we

switched locations from Bor to Nimule, we were interested to see what the water situation would be in this town which borders Uganda. Because of its proximity to Uganda, we assumed that there would be greater access to both the supplies and knowledge necessary for local water well repair. This did in fact turn out to be the case, which provided our team a special opportunity that most water teams are not able to have. We were able to work side-by-side with the Sudanese in repairing their broken water wells.

After meeting with the Director of Water for Nimule, we learned that he is currently training five Sudanese in water well repair. In fact, he was taking the team to a water well with broken pipe stuck in the hole and asked if we would go with the team to assist them in fishing for the pipe. Working together, the group was able to successfully fish the broken pipe and reinstall a working pump system. What a joy it was to see clean water flowing from a well which had been inoperable for over three months. It was so encouraging to work side-by-side with the local people knowing that this type of work would continue after we left!

As the week continued, our water team was able to spend a considerable amount of time with the Nimule water team working on wells and developing relationships. It was truly exciting as our team had an opportunity to share all eight Bible stories with many people as they watched the work and on one well, we were asked to pray before beginning the repair. The last day of the work, the local people whose well was being repaired slaughtered a goat in our team's honor and after working on the well, the group sat down to enjoy the freshly cooked meat. It was a great moment for us to enjoy a gift given on our behalf.

THE FAREWELL

As our time with the people of Nimule came to a close, we were especially grateful for the opportunities we had to connect with their culture. Maker's family and the entire Sudanese community gave us great joy with the warmth, generosity and honor that they had showered on our team while there. We prayed that we, too, had brought encouragement, hope and joy through the work of our hands and the stories we had told.

On our final day, Maker's father, Manyang, assembled the family to give us a parting ceremony. Makol began by sharing from Galatians about carrying one another's burdens. Then Manyang got up to speak. As he told the history of his nine children, only five of which are still living, it was a tremendous privilege to realize that for a week's time, he had welcomed us, complete strangers, to be a part of his family. How wonderful it had felt to belong! We had not been treated as strangers but had been cared for as family. We were not foreigners to them but brothers and sisters. They had given us their homes; they had cooked our meals; they had brought our water; they had washed our clothes; they had honored us with their love. Truly, they had carried our burdens.

As we drove across the border to Uganda the next day making our way back to Kampala, I contemplated this feeling of belonging. This is exactly what God has done for us. When He invited us to be His children, He welcomed us to be a part of His family. And so we are to do the same. We are to go into the nations inviting others to be a part of our family, God's family. We are to give our homes, give our food and give our love. That is how we can carry another's burdens.



Johnny gives dewormer as Faryka injects a cow



Mike and Dan assist the Sudanese with well repair



Dan grabs a cow by the horns to restrain it



Neltia spends time with the women and children



Bob shares a Bible story with the cattle camp leaders



David prays over a newly repaired water well