



## Biong/Padak Team Trip Report - July 2007



After arriving in Kenya late Thursday evening, both teams spent Friday in Nairobi adjusting to east Africa's climate and the time difference after traveling across eight time zones. Both the Padak and Biong teams were grateful for the work of advance team members Dennis Anderson, Jeff Dillard, Russell Jonas, and Brad Saltzman. The advance team arrived several days early in Nairobi to complete logistical arrangements for both teams.

Early Saturday morning, both teams arrived by car to Nairobi's Wilson Airport for the 4-hour-plus flight on the chartered DC 3 aircraft into southern Sudan. An additional ton of cargo needed for the water well pump repair work would arrive on a separate aircraft the following Monday. Several hours later, the plane bounced down the dirt airstrip in Padak, Sudan. The arrival was special for all team members, and especially for Sudanese team member Gabriel Atem who found himself back in southern Sudan for the first time in almost twenty years! The smile on his face said it all...

William Majok, a former Lost Boy now living in the Nashville area, also accompanied the teams into Sudan. William had been sent by his Nashville church to do assessment work in the Bor area. While William was in Pagook, the teams joined William as he was welcomed warmly by his Sudanese family and friends.



Upon departing the Padak airstrip, the teams quickly realized that local transportation would be a critical issue, partly due to the condition of the local roads during the rainy season, and partly due to a scarcity of vehicles in the area. Both teams set up camp together in Pagook at a small, very rudimentary compound formerly used by another mission organization. It was an indigenous compound with mud huts, beds made of wood and millet stalk, a separated area for bathing out of a basin and a long drop toilet.

After a friendly welcome by local Sudanese hosts and a time of shooing unwanted livestock from the tukuls (mud huts) to be occupied by the teams, the teams relaxed over the first of what would be many meals of rice and beans!

### **Biong (Makolcuel), Sudan Mission Team**

**Biong team members included:** Jennifer Almon (*TEAM COORDINATOR*), a teacher from Franklin, TN; Debbie Brown, a registered nurse from Redmond, OR; Jeff Dillard, a graduate student from Dallas, TX; Russell Jonas (*TEAM LEADER*), a member of *Aid Sudan's* staff from Dallas, TX; Gai Bol Luom, a student from Nashville, TN, and Rob Merritt, a teacher from Nashville, TN.

#### **Trip goals:**

- Health and hygiene training
- Teacher training
- Training of pastors through Chronological Bible Storying and the sharing of stories with as many people as possible
- Growth of each team member

Sunday the teams split to worship with their host communities. The Biong team worshiped with the Pagook community. Right away, the team began to work Chronological Bible Storying into their greetings to the communities and into their relationship building times among the people - the Sudanese responded enthusiastically!



Biong team poses with local villagers

Sunday night included a SERIOUS rain storm. Most tukuls leaked badly; Brad and Russell awoke in the night to discover that a goat had taken refuge from the storm in their tukul (they invited the goat to stay for the rest of the night).

Monday was dedicated to meetings with various local officials—government, community and church—and to transporting the remaining water well pump repair supplies after their late morning arrival at the Padak airstrip.

Tuesday, the Biong team worked with students and staff at the Magaal orphans' school. Jennifer, Gai and Rob worked with students and teachers; Debbie presented a basic health and hygiene course to students and teachers; Jeff and Russell took a 3-1/2 hour assessment tour of the area, guided by a community elder who also shared responsibility for the school. There were no boreholes (drilled wells) in the community, only hand-dug water collection pits scattered among the homes and animal pens. At one point, Jeff and Russell visited a family with a critically ill one-month-old baby. After a time of prayer and encouragement, the family was motivated to take the baby to a MSF (Doctors Without Borders) clinic in a nearby community.

Transportation continued to be a major issue, so it was a topic of prayer with both teams after the evening meal. The next morning, a great truck—one capable of hauling both people and supplies (it was a dump truck)—simply appeared at the compound!

Thursday the team worked at a school in Makolcuei (the Biong area) and had MANY opportunities to share Bible stories among both students and teachers. Again, Debbie was able to make public health and hygiene presentations to students and teachers; Jennifer, Gai and Rob worked with students and teachers on classroom issues and teaching techniques; Jeff and Russell also worked with students and made an assessment of adult training underway at a newly-opened technical school in Makolcuei.



Debbie takes the hand of a Sudanese child

More rain overnight, followed by a very large herd of cattle walking over the muddy road, made the road impassable for vehicles on Friday. The Biong team traveled by foot through over-the-boot-top water and mud to work again with the children and teachers at the Magaal school for orphans. The children were fascinated by the Bible stories, which were presented in their entirety, and followed by an offer to trust Christ presented in Dinka by Gai.

All in all, the Biong team experienced a wonderful time of fellowship with the people – both adults and orphan children – while accomplishing the community work through health, hygiene and teacher training. Through many opportunities to present the truth using Chronological Bible Storying, the team was able to spread the Word of God and impact the greater spiritual need of the people!

### **Padak, Sudan Mission Team**

**Padak team members included:** Executive Director Peter Swann, Richard Adams, Dennis Anderson, Gabriel Atem, Andrew Brown, David Humphrey (Aid Sudan's newest staff member), Bonnie Przybyszewski and Brad Saltzman. The team was largely from the Houston area.

#### **Trip goals:**

- Repair of broken water wells (a partnership with Living Water International)
- Training of pastors through Chronological Bible Storying and the sharing of stories with as many people as possible
- Growth of each team member

“We will share the stories of God,” the pastor told Padak team members, his large, intense eyes underscoring the passionate tone in his voice. “On the path, in the garden, in the market, in church, outside of church, to the old, to the young, to those who believe, to those who don’t believe...” It was a striking and significant statement, one that led the Padak team to great praise and thanks as God’s Word began to spread in a fresh way around the area of Padak, Sudan!

On Sunday morning, the Padak team walked 1 1/2 miles to attend Magaal Church, where the team preached using Chronological Bible Storying in both the regular service and to the children. Gabriel Atem, the team’s Sudanese team member, gave powerful witness to God’s work through his life and encouraged his fellow Sudanese toward full obedience to God’s Word.



David sharing the gospel through Chronological Bible stories

Sunday afternoon, the teams enjoyed a special time with others in the community as a group began to sing and dance for the teams on the compound. After the group shared a couple songs, the Aid Sudan team members then took turns sharing Chronological Bible Stories. This went back and forth between the two groups as both sides heard traditional music and the life-changing stories of God.

Monday included a visit to the office of the local Civil Administrator and the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Having been received well by local government officials, the team returned to the compound to prepare equipment for work on the wells and for continued songs and stories with Sunday’s group.

As Tuesday morning arrived, the teams had not yet found reliable transportation and the Padak team decided to walk the mile to the first broken well. Having carried basic parts there, the team was able to take the well apart. After walking back to the home compound, though, the team had no way to get the load of pipe and equipment to the well in order to finish repairing it. With no option available, team members felt at a loss when a local school let out and as if led by the Hand of God, children began in mass to head straight into the team's compound! Soon the pipe and equipment were surrounded by eager children, who began to carry pieces down the path. Within minutes there was a long train of children carrying water well parts and the well was repaired within hours! For the Padak team, it was a powerful example of God as our provider, just as He provided for Abraham during the sacrifice of Isaac, the fifth Bible story in the set of eight that all teams learn and share with the people.



Children help the team by carrying pipe

By Wednesday morning prayers for transportation were answered as a large truck pulled into the compound. The Padak team began work on a second well, but was soon hit with a seemingly insurmountable challenge as the pipe was stuck in the well and would not come out. It was an amazing moment for the team when, after stopping to pray, the pipe came right out! Once again, God provided...



Gathered around the well

During the well repair, the cattle nearby wandered right up to the well and sheep also came close. Near the completion of the well, the team stopped to pray. Children from a neighboring school had come to watch the well repair, and as the team bowed to pray, the chatter from the children quickly subsided as echoes of "langku, langku" ("pray, pray") rang through the group. Though a significant language barrier existed, the children had clearly seen the team place their dependence upon the Almighty God.

By the end of the day, the second well was repaired and the pastor training, which began Tuesday, continued Wednesday with almost twice the number of attendees. Pastors from around the area came to learn and dialogue two Chronological Bible Stories each afternoon. For the team, it was powerful to share God's timeless stories with the pastors, who were so eager to hear and receive and live out His truth in southern Sudan.

Thursday held the repair of the third water well, but by late Thursday word came that the well had already broken again. Friday morning, the team arose eager to return to the well site and repair the well. However, with the relocation of hundreds of cattle blocking the road, the vehicle could not make its way to the compound. So, in the midst of a pouring rain, the Padak team made a 2 1/2 mile walk to the well location, slipping and

sliding around the muddy road while carrying the equipment needed to repair the well. By the time the team arrived, all team members were soaked and tired! But the Lord blessed again, and the problem was near the top of the well. By the end of the repair, the team began the walk back but was soon surprised with a ride from a local organization. It had been powerful to see three wells repaired, knowing how desperately the people needed clean drinking water, and knowing the thousands of people who were affected by the repair of the three wells.

The pastor training reached its conclusion Friday afternoon, as team members shared the seventh and eighth stories and an offer to salvation. In the process, local pastors had learned stories spanning chronologically from creation through the crucifixion and resurrection. In the end, they implored Aid Sudan to return and teach more stories from God's Word. It thrilled the hearts of the team members to see such a desire for God's Word, knowing that in southern Sudan there is no complete Bible in any heart language, and most cannot read or write anyway. What a blessing it was to see water wells repair, teachers trained, and health and hygiene taught while witnessing the sharing of the Word of God to so many people in the Biong and Padak areas.



Executive Director Peter Swann speaks with a local pastor

On Saturday, both teams made the twenty mile drive to the town of Bor, Sudan in 3 1/2 hours, thanks to rough road conditions and the vehicle getting stuck multiple times. Bor is a very significant location in the history of southern Sudan. It was just south of Bor where the first missionaries came around one hundred years ago, and it was in Bor town where the first shot was fired during the last civil war. The team was struck by the location of the local mosque, which was centered near the middle of town, while the local church was on the outskirts of town. After traveling to Bor town, the teams were burdened and excited for Aid Sudan's radio station project, which will place stations in each major city in southern Sudan, stations that will broadcast Chronological Bible Stories in the heart languages of southern Sudan. That night, the teams spent time praying that one day soon the sound of the stories of God may go forth through a radio station in Bor town, countering the call to prayer from the mosque and drawing people to the Living God.

The local host for the teams shared that “southern Sudan is like a baby, needing to be helped and nurtured as it grows and develops.” The vision of Aid Sudan involves community development, but even more burdening than the physical need of the people is the spiritual need. What a blessing it was to see water wells repaired while witnessing the sharing of the Word of God to so many people in the Padak area! Between both teams, more Chronological Bible Stories were shared than ever before, and we rejoice in God’s Word going forth.



Jennifer, Gai and Peter enjoy a typical Sudanese afternoon of fellowship and shade

On Sunday, the Padak team visited Pagook church and preached there while the Biong team returned to Magaal to worship with the community there, including the children from the orphans’ school. Rob was invited to speak at the morning service.

The afternoon featured an invitation to join the family and friends of William Garang Majok, a former Lost Boy from Nashville, in celebrating William’s return to Sudan along with the Biong and Padak teams. The community slaughtered a bull in honor of the Aid Sudan teams’ work in the area and the teams enjoyed the meat as their evening meal!



Villagers singing as the team drove away

Except for Sudanese team members from both teams, who remained in Sudan, by Monday afternoon teams were back in Nairobi. Over the next couple days teams spent time adjusting to the outside world and enjoying Kenyan tourism. Team members arrived back in the States on Friday, July 13, grateful for the way in which God blessed the teams in all trip goals.

On behalf of Aid Sudan’s Padak and Biong teams, thanks to all who prayed for and supported this trip! We rejoice in God’s work in southern Sudan and thank Him for the privilege of being a part of what He is doing. We cherish continued prayer for His stories to go out and transform lives, whether on the path, in the garden, in the market ...