



Bor/Nasir Trip Report - December 2007 Moses Project Placement Trip



After months of prayer and training, Aid Sudan's first Moses Project missionaries set foot on southern Sudanese soil this past December to mark a new beginning in the ministry God has entrusted to Aid Sudan. Just as Moses was launched into the Nile River to begin a journey led by the hand of God to deliver his people, the Moses Project was also launched in Sudan along the banks of the same Nile River that carried our predecessor in the faith. Only God knows the great ways He will use His missionaries as they walk with Him down the dirt roads of their homeland.

Trip Report by David Humphrey, Moses Project Director

On Thursday, December 6, 2007, our team of four arrived in Nairobi, Kenya and settled in to rest up for a busy day of gathering supplies and making final trip arrangements on Friday. During the team's brief stay, Agook was greeted by more than twenty friends and family members who traveled long distances to reunite with him for the first time in many years. Bright and early Saturday morning, the four of us and a host pastor boarded the small charter plane that would take Agook and Jengmer home with purpose for the first time in over twenty years. The excitement was building as the plane grew closer and closer to their beloved Sudan.



Bor town

Before lunch the team arrived safely in Bor, a town with great historical significance for southern Sudan. It was just south of Bor where some of 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. This day, a new generation of missionaries had arrived, but this time they were from among their own people and could relate to them better than any outsider ever would. Although the original plans of working near Agook's home village had been modified due to tribal unrest, it became increasingly clear during the team's stay that God had ordained that the Moses Project would begin work in Bor.

Our team was welcomed and hosted by leaders from the Bor Diocese, the base of operations for the Episcopal Church of Sudan in the area, who showed us gracious hospitality during our entire stay. Thomas, one of the leaders of the largest church in the area (known as the "cathedral"), knew Agook well from their time together in



Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and graciously welcomed us to stay in their compound. They also eagerly accepted our offer to train area pastors in Chronological Bible Storying and began getting the word out that we'd begin on Monday.

Sunday morning we worshiped in the cathedral with almost 1,300 believers as the light streamed in through bullet holes in the tin roof, a sad reminder of the long, terrible war. After the service in the Dinka language, the majority tribe of the area, Jengmer was pleasantly surprised to find that a congregation made up of families from his tribe, the Nuer, would be worshipping there in the afternoon and he eagerly joined them.

Being in Sudan during the Christmas season meant a special treat we hadn't



anticipated: Christmas caroling Sudanese style. As the people started to gather, we knew we couldn't miss this opportunity to see the town and experience a special Sudanese Christmas tradition. Dressed in white, hundreds of believers lined up in military style to march through the streets to the sound of the drums and various homemade rhythmic instruments, waving their crosses before them. They sang traditional Sudanese Christmas songs and stopped to preach the good news of Jesus'

birth whenever a crowd gathered. As we marched up and down the bumpy dirt roads of the town that was now crowded with people from outlying villages fleeing deadly tribal conflicts, one couldn't help but remember the humble birth of our Savior. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light."

After enjoying an evening meal of okra stew and spongy bread, eaten Sudanese style with only our hands, we enjoyed fellowship with our Sudanese brothers before settling down for much-needed rest in preparation for the pastor training the following morning.

On Monday, God opened up an amazing opportunity for the team as we were able to train seventy-five pastors and lay leaders from various denominations in the eight stories that make up the core of God's story from creation to the resurrection of Christ. It was with great joy that the missionaries stepped up to share the stories from God's Word with their brothers and sisters and the response was enthusiastic. The more stories the missionaries told, the more their confidence grew and it became contagious. Jengmer exhorted them that they were responsible for their people knowing the Word of God, so they had to learn it well. After Agook really brought home the fourth story, the long day of training ended with a meal and great fellowship as the trainees talked about what they'd learned.



The second and final day of the training was equally well-attended and God's Word was shared with boldness. It was amazing to see how quickly those being trained picked up the stories and told them back to us with amazing accuracy. The second day was attended by a bishop who is over a large area of Episcopal churches. This leader has had some formal theological training in the US. He encouraged us that this level of storying training is what the majority of the pastors in Sudan need, offering our team his full support and an invitation to share this training in the area where he serves.



Our time in Bor town was far more than the team had expected with the opportunity to train seventy-five pastors and lay leaders in Chronological Bible Storying, and new friendships formed as we helped Agook settle in to serve his people through survey work and more pastor training before he returns to the US for more training in late January. One of the most encouraging moments came as we were sitting with the local church leaders and sharing with them the vision of the Moses Project and how God might use Agook and Jengmer in their home areas. Thomas, who had helped lead the Lost Boys while in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya spoke up with tears in his eyes and said that the Moses Project had been theirs long before it was ours. He said that when the Lost Boys were at the refugee camp, their leaders told them that if God gave them an opportunity to go to the United States, they were to take it but not to forget about their homeland. They implored them to return with an education and to help rebuild their country. He then said, "Today this is fulfilled among us." These powerful

words reminded us that the Moses Project was born in God's heart and it's our privilege to follow Him as He leads the way for us.

Nasir

On Wednesday morning, Jengmer, Peter and David waved goodbye to Agook and his friends at the airstrip and boarded the plane for Nasir, Jengmer's home area. Jengmer was noticeably excited as our tiny plane flew over a landscape of mud huts and cattle camps. We finally touched down on a dirt airstrip flanked on both sides with settlements of people who turned the other way to avoid the dust stirred up by our landing. But soon, they were on their way to see who the plane had brought to visit. To the sound of excited children saying "kawaja", which means "white man" in Arabic, we unloaded the plane and met some of Jengmer's friends who would help host us.



The town of Nasir is located along the banks of the Sobat River, only a few miles from Sudan's eastern border with Ethiopia. This would be Aid Sudan's first time in the area. The people of this area are from the Nuer tribe and they are very connected with the river for fishing, traveling, bathing, washing clothes, and gathering water for household needs. Scattered across the town are the remnants of brick buildings built during the colonial days, but left by the war as mere shells of what they once were in their glory days.

After a warm greeting and reunions with friends from Jengmer's childhood, the team began to make plans for the pastor training that would begin the next morning. When we found out that some of the area churches were having a difficult time working together across denominational lines, we began to pray that this training would be an opportunity to share the Word of God together. Many asked what church we were from, but we emphasized that no particular church had sent us and that many different churches who believe in the Bible and love Sudan had supported us so that we could come and help them learn the Word of God.



On Thursday morning before the training, we were invited to a nearby school with hundreds of students all dressed in white. They greeted us with many songs and then Peter and David each shared our greeting with them. When Jengmer stood before them and began to speak fluently in Nuer, we were reminded of the benefits of training Sudanese to return to their homeland as

missionaries. They arrive ready to communicate clearly without the cultural obstacles that Westerners face. Jengmer stood before them as an example and a testimony of God's faithfulness. As we toured the school, we were encouraged at the nice building they had, but saddened to see how few books or school supplies were available. Two to three children sat on top of each desk, and we were told that few of their teachers have the training they need to be effective. Aid Sudan is eager to see what doors God may open in the future for teacher training and tangible help with school supplies.

We began the pastor training later that morning with around twenty-five pastors from different churches who listened intently as Jengmer shared the stories from God's word in their heart language. He also translated for Peter and David as they participated in the training. When the pastors stood to retell the stories, we were impressed with their comprehension and their eagerness to continue the training. As we walked through the market and saw the town that afternoon, we were continually stopped when Jengmer recognized friends from long years ago. These joyful reunions punctuated the rest of our time there.

On the second and final day of training, the pastors returned eager to learn more stories. When all was said and done, their response was overwhelmingly positive. They commented that they'd never had this type of training before and that they liked it very much. One pastor said, "I've always known these stories, but now I know how to apply them to my life." It was well worth all of the effort to see God's people applying His Word in their lives.

On Saturday we awakened with anticipation, because on this day we would accompany Jengmer to his home village of Torpuot. Jengmer had fled his village over twenty-five years ago, during the war. We traveled by boat up the Sobat River and were met with a warm welcome of brothers and sisters in Christ singing God's praises in their native language. They immediately ushered us in over their own "red carpet" (made of tarps of various colors)



and inside the mud walls and crude stick rafters of their church building that is under construction. Many groups sang and spoke as they welcomed Jengmer back to his village after many years. His smile said it all as he greeted them and thanked them for their gracious welcome. A goat was killed to celebrate his homecoming, which the team later enjoyed for dinner. The rest of the day was spent relaxing with old friends and family members and getting to know this little village again. Peter and David were the first two white men to come to this village in almost twenty years, so they drew quite a crowd of interested children and youth.



On Sunday morning (or shall we say night?), at 2 AM the youth choirs from the surrounding villages awakened us with their praises as they had already come for the early morning celebration service. After a little more broken sleep, we awoke for the ceremonial killing of the bull, later served for lunch, and headed outside to the 7 AM church service before the sun got too hot. There we worshipped with more than 650

believers and David shared the story of Adam and Eve's temptation while Jengmer translated. The youth groups from different area churches each sang and danced at this joyful occasion. When the time came for the offering, the deacons went around gathering the people's offerings of corn and sorghum, which would be given to the church to help those in need.

After a large afternoon meal of corn porridge, beef, and sweet rice with macaroni and beef, we washed it all down with a warm Coca Cola and prepared for our boat ride back to Nasir. As we waved goodbye to the kind villagers, we had high hopes of returning with Jengmer and future teams to help in whatever ways we can in Jesus' Name.

The next morning Peter and David boarded the plane to begin their thirty-nine hour journey back to the States with a renewed hope for the future of Sudan. It is thrilling to see God use the Moses Project missionaries and other returning Sudanese believers to help rebuild their homeland for the glory of God!