

FSM 391
C/M/FM
August 2002



Into The Congo

Have faith, will travel! See page 18. (L to R) Kelvin (Zambian), Lisa (SGA), Becky (YA), Josh English, and Andy (YA)

From the Africa Shepherds

Please note that Congo is one of Africa's sensitive countries. Prayer and counsel are an important part of trips there, and those involved in the activities reported in this FSM counseled about their trips and plans. They also had the benefit of experience in other situations in Africa, opportunities to get to know the field in other, less demanding circumstances before going into Congo.

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The Congo is Africa's second longest river, providing a major transportation network. It gives its name to the entire region—a river basin referred to as “the Congo,” full of dense forests, savannas, grasslands, and mountains.

The Congo River has also given its name to two countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (the DRC, formerly known as Zaire) and the Republic of the Congo (often referred to by its capital, Brazzaville). In November of 2000, the Lord first led our

Family into this region marked by civil war, violence, instability, and economic chaos. There, in the receptive hearts of a people who have suffered so much, He started a team of disciples who are winning, teaching, and training many others.

The first trip to the DRC was reported on by Oli in FSM 375, “Our Amazing Trip to Congo.” The following reports give more details about the initial trip and subsequent ones. They paint a picture of the challenges and rewards in reaching out to the Lord's sheep in such a war-torn yet receptive field.

Getting Activated in Eastern Congo

A History by Josh English, Uganda

OUR FIRST TRIP November 2000

In November 2000, Oli and I made our first road trip to eastern Congo following an invitation from Makwa, a Congolese friend we met here in Uganda. We had wanted to go to eastern Congo for some time, but were unsure of the stability, safety, and security of this rebel-controlled region. Makwa, however, assured us that the security was generally okay, largely due to the presence of the Ugandan army assisting the rebel government in maintaining stability.

Makwa said that there had not been any missionaries in this region for about eight years—mainly due to the war—and he felt many of the people there could benefit from our input and encouragement. After

discussing a basic week-long agenda, the three of us decided to travel by bus from Kampala to the border town of Paidha in northwest Uganda, and from there cross the border into the DRC.

Leaving home at five o'clock in the morning, Oli and I met with Makwa at the bus stop. The 500 km bus journey to Paidha started on asphalt and continued as far as the Karuma Falls, 225 km north of Kampala. From there, the route diverts westward along the very bumpy dirt roads of the Murchison Falls Park (also known as Kabalega Falls National Park).

Before we were allowed to enter the park, the Ugandan army first had to authorize clearance for travel, due to the ongoing presence of rebel soldiers whose activities

MAP OF CONGO/ UGANDA

(Inset shows our route)



involve raiding villages, ambushing vehicles, and killing travelers. Once the army had given clearance, the long queue of vehicles entered the park to commence the very bumpy and dusty ride up to the river Nile.

After crossing the long bridge over the Nile at Packwach, we continued to bounce along the rutted dirt roads all the way to Paidha. Seven hours after leaving Kampala, we arrived in Paidha very sore and tired due to the bumpy roads, uncomfortable seats, and being crammed into the bus like proverbial sardines.

But our journey was only beginning! Covered head to toe in red dust, we gathered up all the Gospel tracts that had spilled out of the bags across the floor of the bus, and made our way through the town. After visiting immigrations, we proceeded directly to Mahagi in eastern Congo by hiring an unofficial “taxi” driver with a small Nissan pickup truck, as there were no other vehicles going that way.

Along the way, we met a Congolese Christian named Jakisa who asked us for a ride, and so we obliged. This encounter with Jakisa developed into a special friendship that would later play a key part in our work in eastern Congo. *(Editor’s note: Since that time, Jakisa has become a strong Active member in the Family, teaching many others to follow Jesus. Read his reports in FARs 146, 165, 166, and FSMs 375 and 387.)*

About halfway to Mahagi, the driver unwittingly drove the pickup truck into a ditch, but we were able to lift it out and continue on. A little further down the road the rear suspension totally collapsed, but the driver continued on regardless, assuring us that all was well. We weren’t particularly convinced, however, as the combined sounds of the pickup scraping along the ground and the prop-shaft spinning against the metal body became ear shattering!

Arriving in Mahagi we immediately met with immigrations officials to negotiate free visas for our stay there, which they happily

consented to after learning of our mission. From there, Makwa took us to the house of the district administrator, with whom he arranged a place for us to stay. The administrator’s house was riddled with bullet holes, which gave us some insight into the realities of living in a war zone. Not long after reaching his house, the sun began to set and we found ourselves sitting in total darkness, except for the faint flickering of a kerosene lamp.

We had expected to stay in one of the typical mud huts we had seen along the way, but instead they gave us the administrator’s “guest house”—one of the few brick buildings around. It was probably considered good by their standards because it was made of bricks, but in actuality it was quite pitiful. In fact, the bathroom was so badly soiled that it was completely unusable, so bathing was completely out of the question. We didn’t mind, however, as sleeping was all that was on our immediate agenda. We were just so thankful that these wonderful people were willing to provide a secure roof over our heads.

The following morning we made our way to immigrations for further formalities (while devouring a brief breakfast of biscuits and



Josh and Oli with Pastor De Gaule in Mahagi, Congo

sodas bought along the way). It was there that we learned the bad news—security headquarters had ordered us to leave the country by five o'clock that evening. The reason given was that some armed robbers had murdered a Belgian expatriate just a few days earlier, and the rebel authorities didn't want to risk further incidents.

Our hearts sank. No sooner had we arrived than we were being asked to leave. We looked at our watches and realized that we only had about seven hours left in the country. We decided to do all that we could to make our time there count. We went to a meeting of Christian pastors arranged by Makwa, where we were led to teach them how to spread the Gospel through personal evangelism. We gave them 5,000 Gospel poster tracts (in French) for their own free distribution, and declared our intent to return at a later date to give them more training. Passing out hundreds of color Gospel tracts everywhere we went led to us being mobbed by hundreds of people in the market place. Oli spoke to them and led them all to salvation in Jesus.

By early afternoon we had found our way to a Catholic mission that had some jeeps. (We desperately needed to find a way to travel out of the country, as there were no vehicles going back to Uganda that evening.) We were able to negotiate a deal with them to take us back at five o'clock—although it wasn't cheap!

After a rushed meal of meat and rice at the pastor's house, we rendezvoused with the Land Cruiser provided by the Catholic mission and quickly drove to immigrations, arriving just in time at five o'clock. Our friends at immigrations assured us that we would be very welcome to come back again

sometime in the future, which encouraged us very much.

The Land Cruiser could only take us as far as the Ugandan border, so from there we walked on into the late evening until we arrived at a small trading area, waiting in total darkness for a passing vehicle. Eventually, a



Learning a favorite local strategy game called "Sorrow," Josh is shown with Patrick and Andrew, owners of the hotel that put us up in Paidha, in the main courtyard of the hotel.

small pickup loaded with people and luggage pulled up. We paid the appropriate "fare" and jumped on, sitting on top of the luggage and admiring the beautiful starry sky as we bumped along the road.

Arriving back in Paidha, we were directed to a small motel run by two Christian men named Patrick and Andrew. We asked if they could donate the use of a room for us to stay in, and they kindly agreed.

We discovered that they run a video club where they show various Christian movies as a way of reaching out to people, especially to those who do not already belong to a church. They expressed their intent to start teaching groups of local believers, and so we spent the next evening teaching them from the Bible.

During our brief stay in Paidha, we made friends with several key people, including the local radio presenter, the army colonel, and the town mayor. After explaining the

programs we have to offer as missionaries, our new friends requested that we return as soon as possible to help organize some programs in their communities. We assured them that as soon as we were able to get a vehicle of our own, we would bring the children to perform in the schools, while teaching Bible classes to those interested.

After our last meal of barbecued goat and chicken, we prepared to leave at dawn for our return journey to Kampala, inspired with the exciting prospect of returning at a later date.

WE COULDN'T RETURN TO CONGO, SO CONGO CAME TO US!

December 2000 and February 2001

Due to various commitments in Kampala, we were unable to return to eastern Congo as soon as we would have liked. Not willing to wait for us to return, Jakisa came all the way to Uganda on two occasions to get extra training with us—once in December (a month after we had met), and again the following February. He told us that our brief encounter with him in eastern Congo had meant so much to him, and he had already distributed the thousands of Gospel tracts we had given him. He had also established a group of followers where he lives in Bunia, and had wanted to give them missionary training with our Family materials.

As we got to know him better, he related to us a dream he had had that foretold of two white missionaries who would come from Kampala to Congo, shortly after his son was born. The dream told him that he should follow these white men to Kampala, where he would find a great storehouse of blessings. He was convinced that our first visit to Congo, which happened shortly after his son had been born, was a direct fulfillment of that dream, and so he decided to come to Kampala to find his “storehouse of blessings.”

We were not expecting his arrival until he was halfway to Kampala, as there are no telephones in eastern Congo to call from. Despite having other commitments,

our whole team pulled together to make it possible to give him constant input from morning to night, for about a week. Various ones gave him Bible classes on Christian discipleship, and also took him out for training in outreach. We donated a complete set of Christian study helps and other devotional books from Aurora, including the *Get Activated* series, to help him get started in his new ministry. He has found these books to be invaluable in his service for the Lord, both for his own personal growth and for training others, which he started doing as soon as he arrived back in Congo.

A few months later he visited a second time, turning up unannounced at our doorstep. As with his previous visit, we did all we could to give him yet more training.

We also learned that since his last visit, a vicious tribal war between the Hema and Lendu tribes had broken out in the region where he lives. Sometimes as many as 20,000 people would converge on a town, intent on killing everybody, including the children. It was during this time that two of Jakisa's helpers at the orphanage in Bunia were killed, while the other 17 fled.

Despite this, Jakisa and his wife stayed on with two of his most faithful disciples to continue caring for the orphans. They also visited other institutions and hospitals to encourage the injured, including many children that had suffered severe wounds. The fighting and burning of buildings caused the displacement of many people, and finding food during that time was a daily struggle.

Even in the midst of all the fighting, Jakisa continued to train his new group of 25 disciples, despite the fact that they were from rival tribes. Their continued unity was a testimony to the miraculous power of God's love. Jakisa was able to continue teaching them Bible classes on Christian faith and evangelism using the various books we had given him.

As the fighting receded, the group in Bunia began sending teams out to the surrounding

towns and villages to share the Gospel with others. Jakisa and two others even walked a 160-km round trip into the forest, to share the Gospel with the Pygmies. After giving the Pygmies some bags of salt as a friendship offering, they patiently took the time to explain the Gospel and the concept of eternal salvation to them. About 25 of them eventually prayed to receive Jesus as their Savior. Apparently this was the first time any missionary has ever had any success with these Pygmies, as those who had gone before had failed to find a way to communicate with them in a way that they could relate to.

Considering Jakisa's great love and dedication, we have wanted to do all we can to encourage and support him. We were able to give him about 500 kg of macaroni received from a donor here in Kampala, which he took for the orphanage in Bunia. Due to the expansion of his work, he presented the need for us to return to eastern Congo to help consolidate his efforts in training his group of believers. We responded by promising to do all that we could to return as soon as circumstances would allow.

Around this time, we also had an unexpected visit from our friend Andrew who runs the Gospel video club in Paidha. We gave Andrew and his friends an impromptu Bible study at our house, and also gave them a few Christian movies that they could show at their video club. Before leaving, they too requested that we visit them as soon as possible to give them more training.

OUR JEEP ARRIVES AND WE DEPART

March 2001

After struggling here for two years without a vehicle of our own (except for an old VW van that hardly ever worked), we finally got a jeep! The Service Center in Japan acquired an old but immaculate 4x4 Mitsubishi Pajero Turbo Diesel and decided to donate it to our mission here. God bless them! This jeep was about 16 years old, but had been kept in storage for most of that time, and only had

about 40,000 km of use (on Japanese asphalt). So although it was old in years, it was pretty much brand new.

After driving it down to Kampala from Kenya, we had to pay about 50 percent combined tax, so we needed quite a bit of money just for the tax and registration formalities, plus the shipping and transport costs. Thankfully, the Lord supplied all of these funds fairly quickly through various gifts and donations, and within a few weeks we were on the road.

OUR RETURN TRIP TO PAIDHA

April 2001

As soon as our new jeep arrived, we began making plans to return to Paidha and eastern Congo. After much prayer, counsel, and receiving many confirmations from the Lord, we decided to take some of the children with us on this trip, so they could have the invaluable experience of witnessing to such receptive people, and so that the sheep could learn from them as well. The Lord assured us again and again of His protection and care, and that this plan was His will, so we proceeded with His blessing. We organized ourselves into a nine-person team of five adults (Ben, Oli, Ken, Sabine, and me) and four children (Lisa [9], Julie [8], Ricky [7], and Teresa [5]), while the remaining members of our Home willingly made the sacrifices necessary to enable us to go. God bless them!

There was some unfinished business in Kampala requiring Oli to stay back for an extra day, plus the trip would have been a bit uncomfortable for nine people squeezed in one jeep traveling for seven hours to Paidha, so we decided to split the team up for the first part of the journey, and meet later on. Ken and I volunteered to leave first, taking the bus to Paidha to fulfill the agreed rendezvous with Jakisa, and then meet with the rest of the team arriving in the jeep the following day.

This worked out well, as we were able to meet the town mayor ahead of time to organize some school shows right away.

MAKING TRACKS TOWARD MAHAGI

April 2001

The Lord also helped us to get our team's lodgings worked out ahead of time. After re-establishing our acquaintance with the army colonel (who owns the main lodge in Paidha), we asked him if he could help accommodate our team. He kindly agreed by donating three rooms for the three adults and four kids arriving the next day.

Ken and I still needed a room for ourselves, so we approached our friends Andrew and Patrick (who had helped Oli and I with a free room on the first trip). They willingly agreed once again, and told us the room was ours for as long as we needed it.

With the accommodations sorted out and some school shows in the works, our next agenda was food! We didn't know where we would acquire meals, as the only public places to eat were very tiny cafés, and requesting donated meals for a week would have been a little inappropriate. The Lord didn't fail us, however, as François (a Congolese friend of Jakisa) invited the three of us for dinner.

So that evening we went to François' cozy little mud house, where he and his family treated us very kindly. They served us well with a typical local dinner of meat, rice, fried cassava leaves and local tea (which has quite a bland taste and is therefore served with lots of sugar). The hospitality and warmth of François' family was very touching, and was typical of the kindness showed to us by many of the people we met on our trip. They also extended their hospitality by offering several meals for our whole team during our weeklong stay in Paidha.

With the arrival of the rest of our team the next day, the outreach got into full swing. Oli, Sabine, and the kids began visiting various schools with the mayor. They performed for hundreds of children, and prayed with all of them to receive Jesus. Ken also accompanied the school teams to capture their shows on video, while Ben and I taught Bible classes to small groups in Paidha.

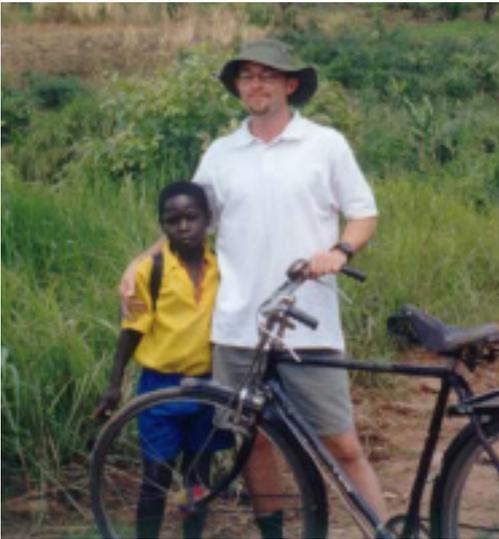
Our main agenda after Paidha was to travel straight to Bunia with Jakisa. We had also wanted to follow up on our friends in Mahagi (in Congo, just across the border from Paidha in Uganda). So we tried to find a way of sending a team across the Congo border for a few days, while the kids finished performing in the schools around Paidha.

On our previous trip to Mahagi the immigrations officials had given us free visas, so we wanted to enquire if they would do the same for us this time, especially as we were only planning to stay there a few days. So Ben, Jakisa and I set out to walk the 12-15 km from Paidha to Mahagi to make the necessary inquiries. As an afterthought, Jakisa mentioned that he could have tried to borrow some bicycles for the trip if he had known earlier. Looking at our watches, we realized that taking the time to find some bicycles would still save us hours in the long run. So after a few words of prayer, we set about asking around to borrow some bikes, and about 45 minutes later we had three—just what we needed! By the time we got the bikes and finished the formalities at Ugandan immigrations, it was already midday, but we were on our way.

All the bicycles in Uganda are based on an ancient design very similar to the old English post office bikes. They have just a single gear and archaic brakes made of inter-connecting metal rods—real heavyweight clunkers! In one sense that's good, because once you pick up speed, the momentum keeps you going along just great.

Stopping the bikes, however, was a whole different ball game. Ben's bike had brakes that only worked partially, and mine didn't work at all! A few times we had to bail out while plummeting down the steep valleys to avoid crashing unceremoniously into the streams at the bottom. We later learned that the locals have a far more sophisticated way of stopping—they just drive into a bush.

After almost breaking our necks several times, we got wise and decided to push the bikes down the steepest slopes, as well as pushing uphill (groan). We promised ourselves that next time we would have to bring mountain bikes on which to scoot up and down the valleys, instead of having to struggle so hard with these heavy clunkers under the intense heat of the scorching sun. Nevertheless, it was an interesting experience in African life, and helped us to understand yet another small part of the struggles that people here endure on a daily basis.



Have cycle, will travel! Josh on a dirt road, crossing the border between Paidha, Uganda, and Mahagi, Congo

But our struggles with the heat and the hills were more than compensated for by the beautifully scenic trail. We took a shortcut away from the main road on a narrow dirt trail passing between the fields. Moving along through open countryside, we biked over rolling hills, through beautiful valleys, across gentle streams, and through tiny trailside villages.

These tiny villages consisted of small mud hut clusters, and often had pigs, chickens, and goats running around outside accompanied

by excited children. As we scooted by on the bikes, the locals would stare at us in disbelief. The children (and probably some of the adults) had most likely never seen a white person before. To them we must have looked quite ridiculous, hammering along the dusty trail wearing big floppy sun-hats, totally red-faced and panting for breath. The children often ran out of their huts to get a better look at us, laughing and waving as we greeted them in their local language.

After cycling (and pushing) for a couple of hours, we came to some woods with a wooden tree-trunk barrier crossing the trail. Jakisa explained to us that this was the border post into Congo. Just beyond the barrier, there were a couple of mud buildings with poorly written immigrations signs set up outside.

We entered the tiny building and found an old man who was apparently the immigrations officer. Through Jakisa's translation, we explained our work and our reasons for coming, and thankfully the old man was very helpful. He told us that for security reasons he would have to escort us to the main immigrations office in Mahagi, and with that this sweet fellow got on his bike and joined us for the rest of the journey. After another hour of cycling (and pushing), the four of us arrived in Mahagi at about 3:30 PM, and immediately sent word of our arrival to Pastor De Gaule, our friend from the first visit.

Arriving at immigrations, we discovered that the former immigrations staff had been transferred. So we had to take quite some time with the new officers to explain our work, our previous visit to Mahagi, and our request for free visas for a few days. Although they were very happy that we had come, the new man in charge remained very sticky over the visa fees. He kept quoting different prices for visas and seemed more interested in trying to get some money from us than trying to help.

We knew that we wouldn't be able to pay the large amount of money he was trying to

get from us, as we needed the funds we had in Paidha for the trip to Bunia. So after thanking him for his time, we started back to Uganda a little discouraged at the outcome, wondering what the Lord's plan would be for Mahagi at this time.

On the way back through town on our way out of Mahagi, we visited Jakisa's sister and tanked up on freshly boiled tea. While there, Pastor De Gaule finally caught up with us. He suggested that he cycle back to Uganda with us to further discuss our plans, still hoping to find a way to make it possible for us to come and stay in Mahagi. With that, he went to fetch his bike, saying he would catch up with us along the way, as the immigrations officer was quite anxious for us to get going. It was already six o'clock and we knew that we would not make it back to Paidha before nightfall, as the equatorial sun usually sets at around seven o'clock.

Thankfully, the journey back was a lot easier and faster. The cool evening temperatures made cycling more comfortable, and it was generally downhill most of the way (except for the steep-sided valleys). By nightfall we were already halfway home, and continued the rest of our journey under the beautiful starlight. It was Jakisa's turn to struggle with his bike this time, as his handlebars came loose, making steering the bike very unpredictable! Nevertheless, we made it home safely, pulling in to Paidha at around eight o'clock, totally exhausted, with very sore muscles and sunburned bodies.

Over dinner that evening, we discussed our desire to return to Mahagi with Pastor De Gaule, and agreed to meet him the following morning to find a practical solution to the visa problem. The pastor didn't show up the next morning, however. We found out later that unknown to us, he had gone straight back to Mahagi to appeal to the district administrator to authorize free visas for us. The administrator consented to his request and told immigrations to allow us in for free.

Unfortunately, the zealous pastor hadn't informed us of his intentions, and by the time he returned with the good news, we had already left Paidha for Bunia.

ONWARD TO BUNIA!

April 2001

For the trip to Bunia, we had originally thought of sending a three-man team, while the kids traveled back to Kampala in the jeep with Ben and Sabine. The Lord led differently, however, by showing us to take the jeep to Bunia with the three oldest kids, and for Ben and Sabine to take the bus back to Kampala with the youngest, Teresa.

Of course we had been very desperate in asking the Lord about taking the children into Congo, as mentioned earlier, and it was with His leading that we proceeded. In addition to His promises, there were assurances of good security from the rebel authorities. We also wanted to ask the Lord to supply free visas, fuel, and road taxes, so that we could use our funds for other needs and for emergencies. So we made a "contract" with the Lord that if He wanted us to go, then He would have to do miracles of supply—which He did!

The road to Bunia is only 200 km, but we decided to leave Paidha early, as we had been told that the roads in Congo are very bad. It was quite a long drive through various villages before we even arrived at the Congolese immigrations post. Once there, we set about explaining our work and our need for complimentary visas for the three adults (the kids go free). The officers liked us and wanted to help, but didn't know how they would justify letting us in for free without approval from headquarters in Bunia, and they had no radio.

They asked us how much money we had for visas, and we showed them what we had available. The amount was still too little, and again they turned us down. So having done all that we could, we informed them that we would have to turn around and go home. We knew the Lord had told us to drive there and

that He would supply for us, so the outcome seemed strange.

After Oli and I had walked halfway back to the jeep, the officers called us back to the office. After further discussions, they agreed to give us two visas for the money we had, and told us we could apply for a free one for Ken in Bunia. For us to be able to do that, we had to agree to being escorted to Bunia by one of the immigrations officials.

That in itself turned out to be quite a blessing, as his presence in the jeep helped us at the various checkpoints along the way. The Lord also continued to do miracles by getting all the road taxes waived.

The mountainous scenery along the way was incredible. One particular mountain had been terraced like a huge surreal staircase, and we learned that it had previously been mined for gold. The whole mountain was apparently full of gold, but the mining had since been banned as many people had lost their lives on the steep slopes.

The roads in Congo are unimaginably bad. On the way up, the recent rainy season had turned the hard clay surface into a gooey mess with a consistency somewhere between chocolate custard and fudge. At times we found ourselves sliding sideways, totally perpendicular to the road despite having power steering and four-wheel drive. Some of the holes were deep enough to completely swallow a six-wheel container truck, and that is no exaggeration.

Most of the holes were still full of water, so we were very careful not to go in too deep, as our jeep doesn't have an air snorkel. There was no way of knowing the depth of the holes, so choosing which route to take often meant walking ahead to assess the road and even measuring the holes with a long branch.

It helped to have a good sense of humor. At one point, we found ourselves stranded in a huge hole with water halfway up the doors, thinking we were all going to get very wet! Although Oli was revving the engine, the jeep was not moving anywhere, and the look of

horror on his face was unlike anything I've seen! But then we noticed that the wheels were not spinning at all, and that the four-wheel-drive selector was actually in neutral! After re-engaging, the jeep pulled through easily and we were all able to have a good laugh about it.

Unfortunately, one large truck was not so fortunate and had gotten stuck on the up-slope of a nine-foot hole, unable to climb out of the three feet of water in the bottom. The locals know how to get the trucks out by patiently using washbasins to scoop out the water, and digging under tree roots to gather gritty soil to put under the tires. We didn't have time to wait for this to be done to this truck, however, as we still had a lot of driving to do before nightfall. So the immigrations official and I went to scout for an alternative route around the holdup. Thankfully we found another trail that some other vehicles had previously made around the line of trees that ran along the ridge above the road. There we were able to get in front of the struggling truck, and continue on our way.

In some places, the road was so badly rutted that the floor of our jeep would scrape and bang along the road. Of course we tried to keep our wheels on higher ground, but the horrendous condition of the roads often made that impossible. In fact, we couldn't even see much of the road due to the deep water. When we eventually got back to Kampala after the trip, we had to make repairs to all three skid plates, the broken gearbox mounting, the smashed fuel tank, and the suspension—as well as service the engine, replace the fuel injectors, repair the alternator, and re-grease the whole jeep! Raising the suspension would have made a big difference toward minimizing the damage sustained underneath, and is a definite must for any trips like this one (that's if you're crazy enough to try it in the first place).

Just as the last moments of daylight were disappearing, we arrived at the remnants of a somewhat deserted village being guarded

by soldiers. The soldiers offered to take us in and protect us, but Jakisa declined, later explaining that sometimes it is the soldiers that cause problems for travelers, and that we should stay elsewhere. We prayed for the Lord to provide a place for us, and eventually found a local Christian man who offered the use of his pastor's mud house while he was away.

The conditions inside the house were too rough for the children, so Oli made beds for himself and the children in the jeep with blankets we had brought. Being at a higher altitude, the nights there were especially cold. There was only one rickety bed available for us inside the house, so Ken and I slept head-to-toe wearing our sweaters and jackets to keep warm. Jakisa and the immigrations official slept on straw mats on the dirt floor, which, although more comfortable than the bed, had its share of problems. Throughout the night, they both were bitten by weird bugs that left their shirts bloodstained. Needless to say, none of us adults got much sleep, but the Lord did keep us all safe.

By sunrise we were packed up and ready to continue. The following stretch of road was among the worst parts of the journey, so we were very glad for the Lord's leading to not continue driving in the dark the night before. In fact, it was so bad you could almost get stuck going downhill, believe it or not. With the jeep sounding the worse for wear, we finally arrived in Bunia later that morning. It had taken us 24 hours to travel just 200 km, but we were consoled by the fact that at the height of the rainy season it could take about four weeks! By comparison we had done okay.

Arriving in Bunia, we immediately went to look for the immigrations officer to work out the third visa for Ken. Considering that it was a Sunday and we were obviously very tired, he kindly told us to go home to rest, and come back first thing on Monday morning instead.

We didn't know what to expect for our living arrangements, but to our surprise we discovered that Jakisa's friends had rented

a very nice house for us. Apparently one of their friends had paid for it as his contribution to the discipleship training camp. In many ways they wanted to treat us like VIPs, and although that was very sweet, it embarrassed us a little. We had come there to serve them, not for them to serve us. It took quite a bit of explaining to help them understand that we didn't want special treatment, and that it was okay for us all to be on the same level.

For example, even though the rented house was large enough for classes, they had suggested using a different building for that purpose, and for everybody to eat somewhere away from us. Of course, we didn't want anything like that, and insisted on doing everything together as much as possible. We wanted to provide a living sample of Christian love, to help them feel part of a bigger family.

We opened up the house for everyone to come to, and used the gigantic living room space for classes. The only place we kept off limits was our bedrooms, so that we could keep our belongings and camera equipment safe under lock and key.

It took a good part of the evening to sort all that out, as everything we suggested was a bit of a surprise to them. We also had to work out how to feed everybody, as due to a radio miscommunication they had expected us two weeks earlier, and all the special foods they had bought for the week had long since perished. We decided to send a team out the next day to get enough food to cover all the daily meals for those attending the classes.

The next morning, we went straight to immigrations and continued to pray desperately for the free visa. Thankfully, the Lord answered our prayer. Once that had been resolved, the immigrations officer that had been traveling with us lightened up. He even ended up attending the training camp! He had seen the Lord do many miracles for us along the way, and so wanted to learn more about the Christian faith life.

After we all returned from immigrations,

Jakisa and I went back out to the market to buy some ground maize to make porridge for the daily breakfast. We also bought beans to boil for the lunches, to which we added some of the donated macaroni we had sent with Jakisa several weeks before.

Also while out that morning, we went to see the owner of one of the only two fuel filling stations in Bunia to ask for a donation of fuel. Our jeep was almost empty, and we needed the remainder of our funds for food and other necessities. So after praying desperately, we went to explain our need, and this good-hearted man agreed to fill up the tank for free.

We discovered that this man had been running the fuel station for the last ten years. During that time, he and his family had had to constantly flee from the fighting, only to return and have to start the business from scratch again, time after time. Yet in

spite of such troubles, he had not become at all bitter, but was all the kinder for it. Before parting, we invited him and his family to visit us at the house one evening, so the children could sing for him. He came by and filmed the songs on his camcorder. Before we left, he kindly gave us an extra donation to help with our trip.

Having acquired all the visas, fuel for the jeep, food for our stomachs, a house for living in, and a large group of people to teach, we began the classes in earnest. We planned a basic daily schedule for the attendees, starting with a porridge breakfast at nine o'clock, followed by a two-hour Bible class. After the daily lunch of beans and macaroni, we allotted an hour of free study/rest time, and then another two-hour Bible class in the

afternoon. We used the *12 Foundation Stones* classes that are available on the Members Only site for downloading.

For two of the afternoons, we also planned some local outreach. We had brought about 14,000 color Gospel tracts in French that were donated to us by the brethren in Nigeria, God bless them. On these outreach afternoons, we split up into teams and passed out tracts on the street. We also visited schools and hospitals where we prayed with many people to receive Jesus as their personal Savior. I don't speak French or Swahili myself, so I usually teamed up with Jakisa's wife Amina,



Fatu (disciple won by Jakisa) and Josh, witnessing at a school in Bunia

who is Ugandan and speaks English. She would help me by translating from English to Swahili, and in turn, she gained some extra witnessing experience.

We also took Fatu with us, one of Jakisa's most committed disciples, who had faithfully stuck it out at the orphanage during the tribal fighting. Fatu has a real love for souls, and a special burden to reach young people.

As well as visiting schools during the day, a few of us also went out in the evening to a popular pub to find some young people to reach out to. Although moving around at night should be minimized for security's sake, we prayed for the Lord's guidance and He confirmed that we should go. After pulling up outside the pub, we started handing

out tracts to the crowd milling around in the street. We were soon surrounded by a throng of people, including some of the soldiers patrolling the area. We prayed with everybody to receive Jesus, and then asked the soldiers if they would like to help keep an eye on our jeep while we went inside, which they were happy to do. In fact, we later found two of the soldiers standing guard over the jeep with their guns.

Inside, we asked the pub manager if it was okay to hand out tracts to the customers, and he happily agreed. While there, we met so many sweet people looking for love and encouragement, and we were glad not to have stayed at home that evening. Naturally, a few of the people there were quite drunk, but even to them we were able to offer words of encouragement and also pray with them to receive the Lord.

PERFORMING FOR THE PYGMIES!

In addition to the local outreach in Bunia, we planned a trip to the forest with Jakisa to visit the Pygmies. Oli kindly volunteered to stay back at the house to teach the classes in French to free Jakisa, as without Jakisa with us to translate, Ken and I would not have been able to teach anything to the Pygmies.

So at sunrise on Saturday morning, Jakisa, Ken, Lisa, Julie, Ricky, and I jumped into the jeep and headed out of town toward the forest. The 78-km journey was quite comfortable, as the dirt road was pretty smooth for most of the way. Much of the journey took us through an open landscape set against a backdrop of rocky hills and a deep blue sky. Some distance to the east, we also caught glimpses of the glistening snow-capped peaks of the famous Rwenzori Mountains (the “Mountains of the Moon”). As we drew nearer to the “forest” (that’s the jungle to you and me), we were awed at the immense swathe of trees extending across the landscape in front of us.

Shortly before arriving at the little village area where we hoped to meet the Pygmies,

Jakisa noticed one of the Pygmy chiefs walking along the road. This man immediately recognized Jakisa, and offered to come with us to help call the other Pygmies from the forest. Many of the Pygmies had entered quite deep into the forest, as they were afraid of the army soldiers camped out near the little village. In fact, most of them were too far away for us to meet that day, but there was a smaller group not far from the edge of the forest that we would be able to meet.

After the chief went to call them, we could hear various calling sounds going back and forth from within the forest. We learned that this is their way of communicating over larger distances, with certain sounds having different meanings. By calling in a particular way, they communicate that the chief required them to come out of the forest.

While waiting for them to arrive, Lisa, Julie, and Ricky practiced the “The Heart Skit.” The wooden keys used to unlock the door of the bright red wooden heart usually represent things that are more highly esteemed in western culture. For the Pygmies, however, we had to use other symbols that they could more easily relate to, such as clothes, food, and fire, all of which are very important to them. In fact, fire is so important that they can’t live without it, and they often keep their fires burning all day inside the forest.

In this version of the skit, we decided to use some items of clothing, a fish, and some matches (which we lit to make fire), before finally using the key of love to open the door of the big red heart. By the time the Pygmies had come out of the forest, the kids were well rehearsed and ready to perform.

As a matter of custom, we were first of all introduced to the head chief, who was very happy to see us. Surprisingly, he was the smallest and dirtiest of them all, but nevertheless had unquestioning authority over all the others. *(Note from Lisa CO: Some tribespeople are quite clean, but after washing apply ash or mud mixed with oil as protection from the sun.)*

Some of the Pygmies had already met Jakisa on his first pioneer trip to the forest, and therefore realized that we had come to tell them more about the God of love. They were all quite amazed that the little white children had come to see them, and waited in excited anticipation to see what we all would do.

We explained that the children had prepared something for them, and asked them to arrange themselves in a semicircle. Jakisa translated for us from English into Congo-Swahili, which all of these Pygmies understood, despite having their own indigenous language. The kids did a wonderful job of acting out the skit, pausing between sentences for Jakisa to translate, just as they had done back at the schools in Paidha.

Judging by the Pygmies' reactions, they obviously related to the different keys and symbols used, and clearly understood the concept we were sharing with them. This in itself was quite an accomplishment, as the various missionaries who had gone before were apparently unable to communicate in terms that the Pygmies could understand. When the key of love finally opened the heart to reveal a picture of Jesus inside, we explained that Jesus is like a picture of God's love for us. We then asked them if they would like to receive God's love in the form of Jesus into their own hearts, and they all agreed enthusiastically. The salvation prayer we used included a simple confession of sin and an acknowledgement of Christ's free gift of salvation, so by repeating the prayer with us they all got saved.

We also gave out color posters to each one present. The message written on the back was in French, but it didn't matter, as they are all illiterate. The main reason we gave out the posters was so that they could keep a reminder of God's loving care; the posters we gave show a pair of heavenly hands protecting and caring for the Africans sitting below. We explained all this to the Pygmies and they understood clearly, again

showing their appreciation.

After finishing their show, Lisa, Julie, and Ricky distributed packets of macaroni to each of the Pygmies, while we explained how to prepare the macaroni by boiling it in water. One of the Pygmies wasn't paying attention and tried eating the dried pasta straight from the packet. After spitting it out, he eventually learned that it first needed to be cooked! Receiving these gifts made them so happy, and they were very thankful.

As a return gesture of friendship, they offered to take us for a walk into the forest to show us their natural surroundings, which the kids were very excited about! We weren't able to see any monkeys or antelope, as they are only found much deeper in the jungle, but it was still a nice walk. We documented much of our time with the Pygmies on video, and even the chief spoke a few words into the microphone. The Pygmy women thought that was very amusing and reacted by cheering and laughing at him. He responded by giving them a very stern rebuke for being disrespectful! Of course, that part was also captured on video, and was quite amusing for us to review later on.

Jakisa had some extra copies of our Bible classes that he had translated and typed out in Swahili. He had brought them for the one and only literate Pygmy that he had met on his first trip to the forest. This man had somehow been given an opportunity to attend school, and so could read and converse in Swahili quite well. We hope that by our training this one literate Pygmy through the Swahili translations, he will in turn be able to teach others and carry the Gospel deeper into the forest to other Pygmy groups.

BUNIA FAREWELL!

We arrived back in Bunia while Oli was teaching the last class, and so were able to meet with the attendees once more before finishing the camp. Each of the classes given throughout the week were followed by question-and-answer sessions, and by the

end of the camp the attendees had received a comprehensive grounding in the basic principles of Christian faith and discipleship.

One of the most interesting discussions was during the class on Bible prophecy and the future events of the Endtime. Most of the attendees had already heard varying Endtime teachings that had left them quite confused, so they asked us to explain these events in a way that was easy to understand. To help explain the various future events and their proper sequence, we drew a basic timeline on the blackboard. As the class progressed with them asking more complex questions, the chart expanded into a larger diagram that left us struggling to find space on the blackboard.

They appreciated the class very much, as it obviously helped to clear up a lot of confusion in their minds regarding this sometimes complex subject. After answering all of their detailed technical questions, we went on to explain the importance of nurturing our personal relationship with Jesus, being faithful to share the Gospel with others, and being strong in the Word, prayer, and faith—qualities which will help us all be fruitful during the Endtime.

We left a box of about 14,000 color Gospel tracts with Jakisa and the rest of the disciples, commissioning them to distribute them far and wide. Throughout the training, we emphasized the importance of passing on what they had learned to others who could do the same, so that the missionary work in eastern Congo could grow and expand further.

THE JOURNEY HOME

The day before we left Bunia for Uganda, we learned that all the shops were closed due to a financial crisis caused by the rebel government's decision to stop using certain denominations of local currency. This made the preparations for the trip back to Uganda a little difficult, as we were unable to buy the fuel or oil needed for the jeep. We were able to meet with one businessman dealing

in oil products, but he said that his boss had told him not to sell anything because of the financial crisis. Realizing our need, however, he kindly opened up the stores and gave us a can of engine oil free of charge. We couldn't get any fuel, however, and decided to try to find some on the way back to Uganda.

We left at six o'clock on Sunday morning, with Jakisa volunteering to be our guide back into Uganda so we wouldn't get lost. During the week that we had spent in Bunia, the roads had dried up considerably, making the going much easier and quicker. It was ironic, therefore, that we should get stuck on the way back. The deep ruts in the road created by container trucks had exposed a huge boulder in the middle of a steep-sided hole, just high enough for our jeep to get grounded on. After a quick assessment, however, we selected high four-wheel-drive, gave it a shove, and to our relief pulled away.

The unexpected sight of the remains of two burned-up Land Cruisers belonging to the International Red Cross also marred our return journey to Paidha. They had not been there on the journey up to Bunia, so we realized that the attack must have taken place shortly after we had passed that same route ourselves. The sobering sight made us pause momentarily and seek the Lord about whether to keep going on, and Jakisa counseled us to continue forward, as turning back would make no difference.

When we arrived back in Paidha later that afternoon, we learned that the vehicles had in fact been ambushed and all of the Red Cross volunteers had been killed, including four Congolese, an older Colombian man, and a young Swiss woman. Although we had heard nothing of this while we were in Bunia, our friends in Paidha had received some initial reports via radio and prayed desperately for our safety.

This unpleasant incident made us very thankful for the Lord's protection on our trip. The attack on the Red Cross workers clarified that we cannot take anything for

granted, and consolidated in our minds the great importance of getting our directions from the Lord in prayer. In our case, we had felt led to travel by road because the Lord told us specifically that it was the right time to travel, and that He would keep us safe.

We will continue to assess the possibilities of returning to Bunia (depending on the circumstances and the Lord's leading), but will probably explore alternative means of travel, considering both the danger and the terrible road conditions. Please pray for us to find the right solutions for continuing with the Lord's work in Bunia.

Before arriving in Paidha, we decided to take a different route across the border so that we could touch base again with Pastor De Gaule and our friends in Mahagi. Upon our arrival, it was pretty obvious that they wanted us to come and stay with them, due to the preparations they had made to facilitate our stay. Not only had they seen the district administrator to work out our visa situation, but they had also prepared a small but pleasant mud house for us stay in. Seeing their faith and enthusiasm touched our hearts, and we organized a smaller team to stay there for a few days of teaching. After discussing it further, however, we discovered that many of the attendees wouldn't be able to come at such short notice, negating the need for us to stay at this time. It was a good lesson for our friends there regarding better communication and going slower by taking the time to counsel properly. With these lessons learned, we'll be able to have better communication for making more practical plans for future visits.

Jakisa has since been back to Mahagi to teach them the same classes that we covered in Bunia, using our class materials.

THE NEXT STEP...

Congo is a very interesting and complex place, and although we don't know what the future will hold, we know that the Congolese people do the very most with what we give

them. They often exceed our expectations. Our friends in Bunia and Mahagi already consider themselves to be very much a part of our overall work, and our great desire is to find the right solutions and practical ways to continue working with them. We certainly don't want to abandon the missionary work in eastern Congo because of the instability of the region, and so we are continuing to pray for peace, and also that the training we have given will continue to have far-reaching effects.

Jakisa has often expressed his desire to see our Bible classes and publications printed in Swahili, as that is the language most universally used in the region. He has already translated over half of our *Bible Basics* book into Congo-Swahili on an old typewriter, which he then photocopies for the local people that he is training. Please pray for the Swahili translations and for the Lord to supply the means to print Swahili books both for studying and also as a distribution tool for the disciples to be able to sustain themselves.

More in Swahili

By Oli (CO)

A couple of the Homes in Tanzania are now undertaking the translation into Swahili of the *Bible Basics* and *Keys to Happier Living* books. Tanzania has the purest Swahili, apparently the best for publications that will be widely used. This project will have a great impact on the whole East Africa area, as well as supplying a way for the Active members in Congo to support themselves through the sale of these books. Please pray for the funds needed to print these books in Swahili, and for anointed translations that will reach many!

Missionary Training Camp

PAIDHA, UGANDA, SEPTEMBER 2001

By Lisa (SGA) and Josh English

In September 2001 we held a missionary training camp for Ugandan and Congolese Christians in Paidha, northwest Uganda. This camp was held in cooperation with our dear Congolese friend and associate missionary, Jakisa.

Lisa: Jakisa has a heart for missionary work and a sincere desire to do more for God. Having played his part in organizing a group of believers and disciples in eastern Congo, the Lord led Jakisa to relocate across the border to Paidha, a town in Uganda next to the border between Uganda and Congo. *(Editor's note: See FSM 387, "Followers of the Teaching," for Jakisa's testimony of his move and all the Lord has done since then in Paidha.)*

The purpose of this training camp in Paidha was to help support Jakisa in his efforts to train others in how to be missionaries to their own people. This is how a team of five of us came to stay in Paidha for two weeks of Bible seminars and discipleship training. The team was Andy (YA), Becky (YA), Kelvin (Zambian), Josh English, and me, Lisa (SGA).

Josh: Our team of five Family members had originally planned to travel to Sudan to do some teaching and witnessing, but in spite of our having secured the donation of airline tickets up to the Sudan border, our Sudanese host suddenly had other plans. (Please note: The plan to visit Sudan was done in counsel with area leadership, as Sudan is a war zone and classified as a sensitive country.) So with that, the Lord redirected our team to Paidha, northwest Uganda, telling us that great works were awaiting us there.

We had no idea what lay ahead, no assurance of a place to stay, etc., but the Lord supplied every single need as we followed Him step by step.

HAVE FAITH, WILL TRAVEL!

Lisa: This trip was a series of miracles from start to finish, with the Lord leading, guiding, and opening incredible doors for us. One of the first miracles and answers to prayer was for our transport. We were a rather large team, and traveling from Kampala to Paidha is no small distance.

The Lord had already touched the hearts of people at a small national airline to provide free tickets to Arua, close to the Sudan border in the north of Uganda, so we decided to use those and then travel overland from Arua to Paidha. However, on the morning we were supposed to fly, we arrived at the airport to find that there were only two seats available! As we only had standby tickets, all we could do was pray. So pray we did, and by a miracle, a few passengers cancelled, so that there were exactly enough seats on the plane for our team of five.

One thing that made this trip wonderful was how we were driven to ask the Lord to lead step by step as we went along. There were many times when things looked difficult, if not impossible. But every time we brought our questions and problems to Jesus, He came through for us in wonderful ways, showing us what to do next, and encouraging us that He would never fail. He kept all of His promises and was faithful to supply transport, food, accommodation, and all our needs.

After traveling by plane to Arua, we traveled three hours to Paidha by mini-bus

taxi on bumpy dirt roads, and arrived in Paidha that evening. Although all of the attendees live in and around Paidha, some originate from different towns within Congo, having moved to Paidha to start a new life in Uganda. The other attendees were local Ugandans.

We never ceased to be amazed at the spirit of these precious people. They have all suffered in various ways, such as going through the civil war in Congo and/or living in severe poverty. Yet despite such difficulties, they still express trust in Jesus to take care of them, knowing that He is in control of their lives. Not only that, but they are ready to unselfishly share what little they have, even to their own hurt, which was beautiful to see.

TEACHING THE 12 FOUNDATION STONES COURSE

Josh: After meeting Jakisa in Paidha, we began teaching the *12 Foundation Stones* course to 15 attendees from both Uganda and Congo, with running translations in the two languages of Swahili and Alur (the local tribal language spoken on both sides of the border).

We taught all day every day for over a week, with a break for lunch, rotating our five teachers for variety and inspiration. We held the classes in a local village church; the actual church building itself had burned down, so we used the old marquee tent that had been set up in its place to shelter us from the scorching sun and intense rainstorms.

As well as photocopying the relevant material from the course, the Lord had shown us to photocopy all the corresponding sections from the *Word Basics* to leave with the attendees for further study and for teaching others. This literature complemented the basic classes supplied with the *12 Foundation Stones* course.

Lisa: Teaching the *12 Foundation Stones* course helped us to ground the attendees in the various aspects of Christian life and

faith. We taught classes on eternal salvation, the Word, prayer, praise, hearing from God, the Holy Spirit, the Endtime, Bible prophecy, witnessing and much more, with lots of songs and skits to keep everything lively and flowing.

We had about 15 attendees, of which half were Congolese and half Ugandans. We were very thankful for Jakisa, as he translated every class for the Congolese, some of whom only spoke Swahili and French. Some of the people were so eager not to miss out on any of the classes that they brought their food with them and ate lunch in our borrowed classroom so they could make sure they were there when the afternoon class started.

Some of the attendees had originally come from Muslim backgrounds and had faced persecution and opposition from their families in order to become Christians and follow Jesus. (*Editor's note: See FSM 387 for Jakisa's testimony about Muslim Rukia and her family coming to know Jesus.*)

One thing we noticed was that all the hardships these people have been through have made them more desperate to do something for Jesus. They have seen with their own eyes how precious life is, how quickly it can come to an end, and are eager for any training they can get on how to use their time on earth to do the most they can for Jesus and for others.

WITNESSING AND FOLLOW-UP IN PAIDHA

Lisa: Rotating the teaching schedule freed us to do quite a bit of witnessing in the town. The Lord led us to visit the local orphanage to spend time with the children there, all of whom prayed with us. There were so many people in the town wanting to hear about Jesus that we often got mobbed when passing out tracts on our way to and from the classes.

There were also many people in town who were eager to learn more about Jesus and attend Bible studies, but who weren't

able to leave their work places to attend the daily courses. So each day we also had a team in town teaching Bible classes at different people's work places, with sometimes as many as four classes a day.

We are following up on these new believers both by sending them *Activated* magazines through the mail, and also by committing them into the care of Jakisa and his closest disciples. We left *Word Basics* classes with Jakisa for use in following up on these sheep.

THE NEED FOR MORE AFRICAN DISCIPLES

Lisa: It was a blessing to have Kelvin, a Zambian national disciple, on our team. He hadn't been with us for that long, but he was right in there with us, passing on the training he'd received to these new disciples. It was encouraging for them to see him being a missionary with us, as many Africans often consider it a "white man's job" and something they have thought they couldn't do. But seeing him up there teaching, training, and winning people, as well as living by faith as we do, showed them that anyone who is willing can be a missionary, whatever their color.



Kelvin

All in all, we had a wonderful time of pouring into these new disciples. We now have a group of indigenous missionaries who will be faithful to carry on the message, even though we can't be there all the time. The seminar was a wonderful opportunity to see the Lord doing miracles, and working through us in ways that we had never thought possible. Several of us had never taught such large groups before, but the Lord came through and helped us to do the job. We can surely say it was only Jesus.

Josh: After we finished working through the *12 Foundation Stones* course, Lisa, Becky, and Andy went to Kenya to fulfill a previous

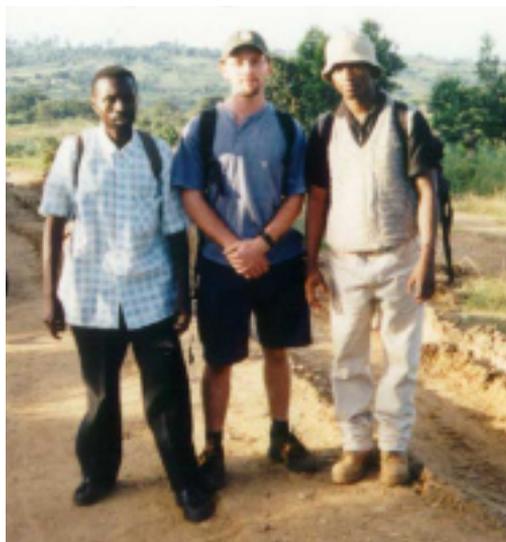
engagement, while Jakisa, Kelvin, and I took a brief trip across the border into Congo (which ended prematurely, as is related in the story below).

Upon our return to Paidha, we taught more follow-up classes, as the seminar attendees begged us to stay for a few more days and continue teaching them.

We had a blast putting the witnessing classes into effect by organizing practice skits where each person had to do their best to witness to another attendee and get them "saved." They invented some funny scenarios, and, of course, made it very difficult for each other by pretending to be utter atheists, etc.!

As usual, we spent a lot of time answering their many questions (including consolidating their understanding that salvation is eternal). Before leaving, we left them with the vision to reach the whole border area with the Gospel and to teach others to teach others, as the Bible teaches in 2Tim.2:2.

We encouraged the Congolese immigrants living in Uganda to take the teaching back across the border to their own people when they have opportunities to do so—which they are now doing.



Pastor De Gaule, Josh, and Kelvin, en route by bicycle

Reactions from Attendees

I met a member of the Family when my wife and I were having difficulty getting along. He told me that if I would receive Jesus in my heart, Jesus would solve my problems. I did, and so did my wife. Now we are fine, loving one another and serving Jesus.

—*Francois, a Congolese carpenter*

I learned wonderful things that I was never expecting to hear about, like eternal salvation—that I have it right now and cannot lose it.

—*Lydia, a Ugandan student*

I assure you that the classes were very wonderful. I can't tell you which subject was the best because I discovered that all of them were needed. I sincerely thank God for this discovery, for the Bible says, "My people are destroyed because of lack of knowledge." My desire after this [seminar] is to serve Jesus as a missionary, winning souls and teaching

those people to also become disciples for Jesus.

—*David, a Congolese radio station worker*

The class I liked most was about witnessing—telling people about the good news of the Kingdom of God. This class helped me know much about God and His love. Now I will pray that God will help me tell others about Jesus.

—*Leonida, Ugandan household worker*

I received Jesus when yet young, through my mother's message. After this [seminar] training, I will now arise and do what the Lord will tell me to do.

—*Hellen, Ugandan maize roaster*

Since I started learning from Jakisa, I am now able to tell the good news to others. I have decided to drop everything else and serve Jesus.

—*Julias, a Congolese businessman*

A BRIEF VISIT BACK TO MAHAGI

Josh: In addition to giving missionary discipleship training in Paidha, Jakisa, Kelvin, and I also tried to do some teaching in Mahagi, eastern Congo, but sadly our trip only lasted 24 hours, as did our very first trip over a year before. (Please note: Our follow-up in Mahagi is done in counsel with area leadership as Congo is classified as a sensitive country).

Originally, we hadn't had concrete plans to go there, but we did set a conditional fleece before the Lord for Him to indicate His will by opening a door for Kelvin and me to get free visas. (Paying for visas is ridiculously expensive, as a one-week visa in eastern Congo is like paying for a yearly visa in Uganda!)

Well, the Lord took us at our word, and fulfilled that very condition, which gave us His go-ahead to make the trip. Here's how it happened.

While still in Paidha, we witnessed to a Muslim Congolese-Iranian businessman who took a liking to us. He introduced us to his traveling companion, who, amazingly enough, was a high-ranking army commander in the Congolese rebel government. This army commander also liked us very much, and offered to take us into Congo, saying that we didn't have to worry about paying for visas.

After getting a confirmation from the Lord, Jakisa, Kelvin, and I decided to travel into Congo with him the next day in his old beat-up Land Cruiser. Initially, the Congolese

immigrations officials refused to give us free visas, saying that the army commander was out of his jurisdiction in that particular area (Mahagi). The army commander responded to this by pulling rank on them, and they speedily changed their mind and gave us the visas we needed, for which we expressed great appreciation.

After dropping us in Mahagi town, we asked the army commander if we could take the time to pray for him, as up until this time we had not had an appropriate opportunity. He took us into a private building away from public view and wholeheartedly prayed with us to receive Jesus into his heart. He got wonderfully saved, and it was quite an intense experience in the spirit for him.

Before leaving, he asked if he could come back in a few days to pick us up from Mahagi and drive us to his hometown, as he wanted to help us spread the Gospel to his people. Of course, we agreed to consider it (i.e. pray about it).

We didn't know where we would stay in Mahagi, how the Lord would provide our meals, or anything like that, but Jeff (one of Jakisa's friends) gave us a room in his mud house to sleep in. Jeff was so happy to receive us—his bright, happy spirit and constant chuckles made us feel very much at home. It wasn't until the following morning that we realized the house only had one bedroom and that in order to accommodate us, Jeff and his very pregnant wife had slept on the floor of the shed around the back of the house. Needless to say, we were very humbled by their giving.

That morning, Jakisa and Pastor De Gaule quickly got a meeting organized, and we soon found ourselves inside the church teaching a group of about 15 people.

Within a couple of hours, however, we received a letter from immigrations asking



David (L) has fun practicing how to witness.



Starting each class with inspirational praise time! Center: Julias, Rukia, Amina, Vincent, and François

us to come to their office. There we were informed that the newly appointed local chief of immigrations did not want to honor the army commander's request, and subsequently we were to pay for the visas or leave. Of course, we didn't have the money, but tried our best to explain our situation. Unfortunately the immigrations chief had just left town, so we had no opportunity to plead with him against his decision.

When the immigrations officials realized that we had no money to give them, they told us to leave immediately, and refused to even give us permission to return to town to get our belongings! So our sweet Congolese

(continued on page 24)



Josh and Lisa witnessing at an orphanage shortly before “mommy” (back row) passed away



Josh outside the house of Congolese villagers after a salvation prayer



(Counterclockwise) Becky, Josh, Julias, Jakisa, Kelvin, and Andy filling up on the Word



David (Congolese), Lisa, Helen (Ugandan), Julias (Congolese), and François (Congolese)



Andy (R) teaches a class in the tent.



Jeros, Josh, Kelvin, and Patrick after witnessing



Kelvin, Lisa, and Josh take a break between classes, enjoying the peaceful hills of Paidha.

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friends went back to the house, packed our bags for us, and brought them to the border.

It would have been a long walk back to Paidha, except that our friends offered to carry us there on the back of their bicycles. Instead of going by the main dirt road, we traveled back through fields and villages with the sun setting behind us. It was beautiful, and we savored every moment of it. We also stopped at little mud huts along the way so that our bicycle companions could introduce us to their friends, whom we then witnessed to.

Leaving Congo after such a short visit was heartbreaking, as the people there were very hungry for the Gospel. We know the Lord had a plan in leading us there and then cutting our visit short, which we had to take by faith. The concept of reaching this country is overwhelming and it often feels like you are just scratching the surface, with obviously so much to do in such a vast country. This episode confirmed the need to train indigenous missionary disciples to do the job. We'll have to keep praying that the Lord will open more effectual doors for the work there, and especially for the progress of our current Activated witnesses and disciples.

After returning to Kampala, we learned that fighting had once again erupted in eastern Congo. An opposing rebel faction fought to overthrow the existing rebel government in Bunia, causing mayhem in the area. Some tribal groups also took advantage of the disorder by engaging in tribal clashes. During this time, the main dirt road from Bunia to the Ugandan border was completely closed, after a vehicle traveling toward the Ugandan border was hit by a rocket, killing 15 people. About 1,000 people in outlying

areas fled to Bunia as refugees, in the hope of receiving some protection from the few Ugandan soldiers guarding the airport. An outbreak of hemorrhagic fever in the region also sparked another Ebola scare, creating increased concern on both sides of the Congolese-Ugandan border.

Despite the difficulties of living in the region, our associate missionary disciples in Bunia are still standing strong and growing in faith. According to their most recent missionary report (covering the period since Jakisa's departure to Uganda), their work is flourishing and their ministry to the Pygmies is steadily expanding. Some of the disciples frequently walk 78 km each way to the jungle, so that they can continue to follow up on and teach the Pygmy believers, who have grown to about 80 in number. The Pygmy chief is very keen to make progress in promoting the Gospel among other Pygmies, and has taken to witnessing, teaching, and passing on what he knows, as best he can.

Their report also explained that the Pygmy chief walked 160 km round trip to stay with the disciples in Bunia, in order to further his understanding and receive more training from them. This is a significant testimony, as the Pygmies are known for not wanting to integrate with society outside of the forest. All of this shows that the disciples in Bunia are doing a fantastic job despite Jakisa's absence, especially in their approach toward the Pygmies and the many other people they minister to in the surrounding towns. This speaks well of Jakisa's training of them, before he left Bunia, and also of their implementation of the *12 Foundation Stones* Bible study course that we taught them on our visit to Bunia earlier in the year.

Please do not forget to pray for our brethren in Congo! If you'd like to support any aspect of this work by making a donation to Jakisa's new ministry in Paidha (Uganda-Congo border), or the ongoing work in Bunia (Congo), you can send gifts to your office care of Josh, Uganda. You can also write to us at: fcu@africaonline.co.ug.