

South Sudan 2014

Wesley-Knox continues to support the work of CASS—Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan. What follows is an e-mail record of the January 2014 CASS working trip to Gordhim, South Sudan. This year, mostly because of unrest in South Sudan, only three took part: Jane Roy, Carol Campbell and Abeny Nuoi. For clarity and ease of reading, these e-mails, largely composed “on the fly” on a cellphone, have been lightly edited.—HJM

From: CASS - Glen and Jane <cass.can@sympatico.ca>
Subject: Trip to South Sudan
Date: January 18, 2014 12:02:28 AM EST

Hi, Everyone...

We are all packed up and ready to go. We leave for Toronto early tomorrow morning to make sure that we don't get stuck in the snow or trapped on the 401 due to an accident (as unfortunately happened today).

CBC radio has been following Aben around yesterday and today for a radio documentary that they are doing in a couple of weeks about Aben. When I find out the details about when it airs, I will let you know!!

We fly from Toronto to Montreal and then off to Paris for a short stop-over before boarding the flight to Nairobi. We will arrive in Nairobi late on Sunday night. I will send out the next e-mail most likely on Monday when we have arrived!

If there are any messages, feel free to send them to Glen and he will get them to us. Alternatively, you can text us on our cells. I won't answer the phone due to the international charges (unless an emergency of course) but text will come through very easily. Carol is also available on her cell.

The cellphones will work both in Nairobi and South Sudan though at times the cell coverage is weak. E-mail Glen at glen@glenpearson.ca or Josh at josh@londonfoodbank.ca if you have anyone else that should be on this list and would like to receive the updates (or feel free to resend them out yourself!)

Take care and we'll TTYS!—Jane

From: Glen Pearson <glen@glenpearson.ca>
Subject: Update 2 from Jane
Date: January 22, 2014 5:40:15 AM EST

Well, hello everyone! Today was one of the those days! We spent the day working on the logistics of the trip which in Nairobi can take a while as phone and traffic can be very and I mean very congested! We dropped off our passports to the South Sudan for visas first thing in the morning and when I then went to update the Nairobi SIM card for the “Nairobi phone”, it turns out I couldn't do it because I didn't have my passport!

Yikes! The reason for it is increased security due to the attack on Westgate Mall a couple of months ago. You need a nationally recognized ID—a good idea of course—but a little bit of an inconvenience! So sorry everyone, we are still on our international phones!

We accomplished a fair bit though—visited the head office of AMURT (the group helping us to build the school)—visited the head office of AAA (the group that runs the medical clinic in Gordhim)—

had lunch with Kathy Mueller and Kelly Jacobs, two Londoners that have come on trips with us and who now work full time in development work! And made contact with CMA (the group that helps to oversee the Sud Academie). We will be visiting the school on Wednesday!

It seems that some of the international NGOs are starting to filter back into Juba, which is a good sign. They are sending teams in to assess the situation. We will meet with some of the groups in Juba as well.

Tomorrow will be some more running around in preparation for going in—and a bit of a catch-up day on the jet lag! TTYS!—Jane

From: Jane Roy <janeeroy@gmail.com>
Subject: Update 3
Date: January 21, 2014 at 12:57:09 PM EST

Well, second day in Nairobi. Not quite as hectic as the first but a tremendous load off of our shoulders! We went in to see AIM (the people that we normally fly with) to talk about the situation in South Sudan and to see if they were closer to going back in. It turns out that they have a special charter to the Aweil area tomorrow and we could throw (well not throw of course!) the medicines on the plane. William will go to the airstrip tomorrow to collect them so the medicines will get there before we do!! But the main thing is that we have them bypassing Juba and all the customs issues! Yipee!

Tomorrow we visit Sud Academie and pack for the flights into South Sudan. Everyone is healthy, happy and only a little tired. We are getting over the jet lag!

I'll do one more update before we fly into South Sudan. Then the updates will most likely be every couple of days!—Jane

From: Jane Roy <janeeroy@gmail.com>
Subject: Update 4
Date: January 22, 2014 at 2:28:57 PM EST

Well we are finishing packing for the plane flight into Juba tomorrow. The flight leaves at 7:30 in the morning so we will be up and heading out by 5 in the morning.

Word is that Juba continues to be safe. We have heard of three NGOs that have sent people back into Juba to assess the situation and to see about sending their staff back into the capital.

We will stay overnight before hopping on a UN flight over to Aweil. The medicines have already arrived safely and William Ater has transported them to the mission storehouse. They are waiting for our arrival!

This morning we went to Sud Academy where we met the students and staff of the school. We met the two head boys of the school and what was good about the two was that one was Dinka and one was Nuer (the two groups fighting each other inside SS) and they talked about how they needed to be one people—Southern Sudanese. Aben had also brought girls sports uniforms that she was able to give to the girls volleyball team.

Though the school structure has not changed much over the years, the administration of the school has seen a marked improvement and is operating much better than in years previous. Of the students that graduated in 2012, most of them have returned to work in South Sudan. The students that graduated in 2013 are just waiting for their results which they will receive in month and

many of them are talking about returning as security and safety gets better in their home areas.

Aben spoke to the students telling them of how important it is that they finish and go back. Everyone continues to be good—healthy.

I will send a message when we have arrived safely and will do my best to continue to send an update out daily. However, know they may be every couple of days while in South Sudan. Though cellphone coverage is good, it is not always reliable!—Jane

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From: Jane Roy <janeeroy@gmail.com>
Subject: Update 5
Date: January 23, 2014 at 9:33:28 AM EST

Have reached Juba safely. Things look like they are getting back to normal here in the city.

Everyone is good and ready to go tomorrow.

We were met at the airport by Aben's cousin and he has been giving us a tour of the city. It is very hot here—over 40 degrees! Looking forward to the cool 30 degrees of Aweil! Will text when we get there! All is good!—Jane

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From: Jane Roy <janeeroy@gmail.com>
Subject: Update 6
Date: January 26, 2014 at 11:31:06 AM EST

Hello, Everyone,

It is Sunday night here and things have been going very well. We were at church today and were welcomed very well. Afterwards we meet with the Women's Group and visited the women's centre. All is going well there. During the day it is a vocational school and during the evening an adult learning centre (numeracy and literacy) funded by CIDA for the next 2 years.

We were able to give the women's group the beads that Lynn and My Sister's Place donated. Today we were also able to give one set of uniforms to the "football team" and tomorrow we will give two sets of uniforms to the girls' volleyball teams. Aben says that she will play with them in her bare feet!

We arrived well on Friday, visiting with a Canadian peacekeeper in Aweil to get an update on the ceasefire that was recently signed. Tomorrow we go to the peace conference between the northern tribes and the ones here in Aweil. Grazing rights, trading, etc. will be discussed). We will meet the peacekeeper once again.

One of the Southern Sudanese introduced us saying that the he was sure that the Canadian was from London and that we were from the same area. Turns out Paul was from Montreal. We had a good laugh!

We have seen the progress of the high school and it is going very well. The walls are progressing quickly and we were very impressed with the work, mainly because it is 40 degrees outside and they just kept working! We took lots of photos and William showed us his old classroom when he was in Primary 3!

One of the interesting things that has happened is that Aben was one of the teachers and leaders of the lost boys from many years ago and hence knew William Ater as soon as she saw him. She was in charge of a different group but she remembers William from when he was a boy. She walked with him from Ethiopia to

Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and then was a teacher of the boys! William vaguely remembers her but he was only 10 years old!

Everyone is healthy. No one has gotten sick (touch wood) and it turns out Aben is the new Glen. Everywhere we go, someone is giving her coke to drink! For Carol and me, we survive on Lynn's example and have special medicine that helps every night! As always the meal is beans and rice—or rice and beans! But we are eating well and drinking lots of water.

On the agenda for the next couple of days are another meeting with the builders, attending the peace conference, going to Aweil to get registered as an NGO, the water project (WASH) with Abraham, visiting with the scholarship students, and delivery of the medicine.

Aben has also requested that she spend time with the young children so we are running a form of the camp! But it is a storytelling camp! She is going to tell stories and sing songs with the kids. We will only run it for a couple of days, but the girl scholarship students will help! We will also look into the returnee situation and Abuk's Herd

A full few days but know that we are doing well. The heat is not too overpowering. It is hot—over 40—but the nights are a little cooler and despite the dogs barking, we are getting some sleep! At least there is no snow here!

We will try again to send out another update before we leave for Juba which is on Thursday. Friday we come back to Nairobi and then the process of returning back to Canada!

TTYS!—Jane

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From: Jane Roy <janeeroy@gmail.com>
Subject: re: update 7
Date: January 31, 2014 at 8:08:44 AM EST

Hi, Everyone...

We are safe in Nairobi now. Arrived in Juba yesterday. It was hot—as hot as it was in Gordhim! We stayed at Aben's sister's house—and Carol was attacked in Juba!

Before you panic, it was by a monkey! A large red monkey (don't know the kind but it looked like a baboon) found it's way into the compound after being chased by a dog. I went running inside for the camera and before we knew it, it was trying to get into the house to get away from the dog. Carol was in its way! Aben chased it off with a chair and I was upset that I missed it all. Lucky Carol!

We left Gordhim in good shape. Met the scholarship students. Had the youth choir sing a number of songs for us. Visited once again with the builders of the school (We'll send the photos when we get home!) Got CASS registered as an NGO in Aweil, and we had a steady stream of people requesting help as there had been a flood a few months ago, so not as much food available. (We bought some sacs of sorghum seed for the returnees in Rumrul.)

There is an old blind man that visits me every year looking for help. He calls me Mama Jane. I thought he might miss coming this year as we were not a large team, and we weren't there for very long. Well on the last day he arrived! (We gave him two chickens.)

We are in Nairobi only for 24 hours. On the agenda is a meeting with AMURT, getting some items for silent auctions and thank you's, and following up with CMA once again re Sud Academy.

We are a little tired as the heat meant that we did not sleep very well (some days were over 45 degrees) but I am not sure that we are looking forward to the -20 degrees in London right now!

Look for the final update when we get ready to leave!
Know that we were all safe and everyone stayed healthy!—Jane