

## Coloplast - Graham Garner

I am writing this on Friday, 25th June, our last full day in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, conscious of the fact that I should be back with you by the time it is published in Mission Update. We start the long journey back home, via Colombo, tomorrow. The team from Coloplast UK (5 men and 5 women) have worked hard and much has been achieved in difficult circumstances. They have just left the Smile Centre and are heading for a local Hotel, via the beach, for some well deserved R & R.

We arrived here shortly after the untimely death of Ronali de Silva, Smile Lanka's in country Project Director, the impact of which is still keenly felt, particularly by the school staff and by her family. She has left a husband, who is the pastor of a Baptist Church in Colombo, and three children, including a 3 month old baby.

Much of the preparatory refurbishment work on the buildings had not been done when we arrived here and we have spent a lot of our time working on buildings at the same time as local roofing contractors and other tradesmen - a bit chaotic and not unlike some London building projects I have been involved with! There are interesting health & safety standards out here and they are either low or non-existent!

The team rose to the challenge and both the main building and IT building have been repainted externally and much of the interior of the main building has also been redecorated.

One frustration was the fact that some vital wireless IT equipment, sent out in advance by Coloplast, got stuck in customs in Colombo and only arrived yesterday; but God's timing is amazing - it got here just in time to be installed so that the computer suite was up and running in time for the official opening yesterday afternoon. We had to have the opening yesterday because today is an official holiday in Sri Lanka and the Centre is closed and strangely quiet without the 150 plus children who normally attend for a good lunch and education each weekday.

A highlight of our trip was the day out with the older children. We visited some hot springs, a reservoir, a fish farm and the Udawalawe National Park where there is an elephant orphanage. It was a 7am start and a long, hot day but a very interesting and enjoyable one.

There is much more to say but the rest will have to await another time. Thank you so much for your prayer support whilst I was away. It was a challenging but fruitful time.

## Arthur & Louise Brown, Lebanon

The Browns have been keeping very busy over the last few months. In their last prayer letter they asked for prayer support for the development of a youth and community centre at their church. Good news! Since then the church has started its first structural stages of building work and is almost finished! Please keep praying however that financially they as a church will be stable as they still have to furnish and equip the floor (they have applied for numerous grants and are still awaiting responses).

Arthur has headed up organising June's Middle East Conference 'Muslim and Christian Youth as Present Future: Seeking Understanding, Sharing our Faith.' This has kept him very busy, meanwhile Jack has started at Nursery and with the girls at school, this has meant Louise can re-commence her Arabic Studies with the mothers group at church. This is

## John & Mary Featherstone

The French branch of "Crescendo," started last year in John and Mary's home, seems to be providing a real need in supporting Christian classical musicians in France. It is also reaching out by providing creative church services incorporating classical music, visual arts, worship and communion. Last month a gentleman said "I came in with a burden which was gradually lifted during the service." Two more services have just taken place. With the church doors left open on a balmy Sunday evening in central Paris, people wandered in to listen to the music, and stayed around.

The next major Crescendo France event will be a weekend of special services on 16/17th October. Please pray for John and Mary to find best location in Paris to enable the general public to connect with these, and for a longer-term project for events linking jazz and theology.

John has been making a 7 string guitar recording. We forget the power of CDs and the internet. Please pray that this CD and others, especially the recent recording of "Passage" will reach out to people even though they have never set foot in a church. Further outreach has been made possible by the organisation "La Fonderie" which brings together Christian artists, musicians, writers etc. John has just performed at The Venezuelan Embassy at an exhibition opening of Ephrain Pinero a Venezuelan Christian artist, and is due to go back for a radio interview shortly.

We continue to pray for possible ways forward for the "Ozone" Musical project, especially the meeting with a secular theatre manager. In a country where the Government prevents the public face of religion, isn't it amazing the opportunities that God provides?

John and Mary are also becoming more involved with their local church, where they help lead an 'open' cell group (it meets in the church and anyone who is new to the church, or just turns up can join). John helps out at times with the music, and Mary is on the diaconate.

Finally, personal prayers for John and Mary:

- For Hannah to finish her album in the autumn and for openings for her singing career.
- For Matthew and Sabrina getting married next month, all the wedding preparations, and for their work. Matthew is currently on trial with others for the post of 2nd flautist with the Ulster orchestra but is also pursuing a freelance career in London, where his music network is based.
- For Cara, coming to the end of her PhD studies. Recent cuts have meant that she's just heard that funding for the post-doc job at Edinburgh she had lined up has been refused. She's applying for research assistant posts, and pursuing other funding avenues in order to continue her research.

## Guinea Bissau

The Evangelical Church of Guinea Bissau is the Mission of the Month for July so look out in the next 4 weeks in the Newsheets for Prayer Points. You will hear and see more about Guinea Bissau in the Sunday morning service on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

really helpful in breaking through the language barriers and developing deeper relationships with people in the surrounding community.

Please keep in your prayers:

- Our work/life balance and wisdom to be involved in the right things.
- For the Baptist children and youth ministry in Lebanon.
- For the gift of Arabic tongues.
- Deepening relationships with people whom God is asking for them to get alongside.
- Reduced Political tensions in the region.
- BMS as they seek to impact the communities in some of the toughest places around the world.
- People to take up the challenge to get involved in mission- including the Muslim contexts in the UK and beyond.

# Tearfund in Congo

June 30th saw the Democratic Republic of Congo celebrating 50 years of independence from Belgium. This timeframe has also coincided with an intensification of violence both within and around the country. The crisis in the DRC is complex and constantly changing. It seems to be a combination of competition for valuable mineral resources and clan tensions which spill over into cyclical conflict, with women and children in particular suffering untold violence. Rape is a weapon of war and it's not uncommon to hear of women and children who have been raped multiple times by Congolese army, rebel troops and local militia. It is also easy to become discouraged by the corruption you see at every level. Although the conflict is officially over, in practice it is still very much alive and impacting people's every day lives in the east of the country. Tearfund has been working in DRC since 2002 and in April I was able to spend just over 2 weeks visiting our teams working in the eastern part of this massive country near the borders of Rwanda and Burundi.

One of the highlights of my visit was travelling to Kindu in Maniema province. It is a hot place, right on the banks of the River Congo, the largest river in central and western Africa, and pretty impressive at 2922 miles in length. Most people travel across the river in dug out canoes, called Pirogues and some of them have about 100 people squeezed into them; one of these canoes recently overturned in rough conditions, and all but 4 people on board were drowned. Travel is never without danger in the country – both from the effects of weather on poor 'roads' and also due to attacks from poorly paid soldiers or militia groups.

Tearfund have been supporting around 4500 households resettle back on their land by giving them seeds and tools. Land is really fertile but people find it hard to access good quality seed and the range of crops they grow are very limited. Tearfund has encouraged farmers to grow vegetables such as aubergines, carrots, onions as well as disease resistant cassava (the stable crop of the region). It has been amazing to meet people who have gone from growing very little and living hand to mouth to starting vegetable gardens and selling produce at the local markets enabling them to send their children to school. Now people are having 2 meals a day as opposed to one and are able to harvest up to 3 times as much as before. The families are also repaying seed at harvest time in order that more families can benefit in the coming years. The church has a strong presence throughout the country, and Tearfund is partnering with the local church in Maniema to ensure that they are able to maintain the project once Tearfund staff leave.

In South Kivu province, Tearfund has been constructing schools, latrines and community water systems, in order that families who have recently returned from Burundi can resettle and restart their lives in a healthy environment. In North Kivu province, around Goma, Tearfund and a local community are building a water supply to meet the increased water needs for a community. Please do pray for a long lasting peace to come to the country and also pray for those working there in the meantime – that they may know God's protection as they travel and work in this challenging environment.

Rachel Stevens

# Haiti - Amy

For our second month in Haiti, we made the 2 hour drive from St Marc to the capital, Port au Prince, the epicentre of the earthquake. Apparently, Port au Prince is the third most dangerous city in the world at the moment, after Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town. Bagdad rolls in at no. 7. Fortunately, we weren't told that until our third week there.

The earthquake damage is surprisingly not as bad as I had expected. Many of the roads are fairly free from rubble, which has been shunted to the sides, and apart from the tent cities, which occupy any free space from petrol stations to sports pitches, you could almost forget about the earthquake. On the outskirts of the city however, the scene is sickening. Buildings totter drunkenly to the side, and men sway drunkenly on their roofs – Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and the second poorest in the world. There were few jobs before the disaster but even fewer now. Children in crisp, coloured school uniforms pick their way through makeshift stalls, dying dogs and lumps of concrete. At certain times of the day, especially where our base was, the streets and lanes are a solid mass of bottle green, navy blue, chocolate brown and rose pink gingham. The dutiful enthusiasm and smartness of the school children is an example of Haitian resilience. Tossed from one civil war to another, from hurricane to earthquake, they are tough, selfish, emotional, with an infuriating persistence when demanding "agua" and an ironic propensity to label you "sheesh" (greedy) if you do not comply.

For this, and for the dirt and destruction, I was not happy on our arrival in the city. YWAM has only had a base here since the disaster, which is on the site of an established orphanage. We camped in their field and had one of their outbuildings as a kitchen and common room. Our ministry was based in the poorest and most dangerous area of Port au Prince, a tent city with a population of 12,000, called Citi Soleil. Here we played games, performed dramas, gave testimonies and Bible teaching, offered prayer, distributed food and tarpaulins, laid the foundations of a church and, I hope, by the grace and strength of God, showed the way to eternal life to people who may not have a chance at much earthly life. I found it extremely

challenging working there, especially as I simply did not feel much love for the Haitian people. They have become used to white aid workers giving them handouts and now see it as their due, rather than a blessing, which I found tremendously discouraging. Eventually, on our last day before de-brief, I was playing with and praying over some of the disabled children in the orphanage, with whom we had made friends in our off-time.

As I put oil on the forehead of one of my favourites, Schneider, who had a cranial embolism, he laughed with delight, rubbing it all over his head and pointing for me to give him more. He then reached out to hug me – movement for him is difficult with his disability – and held me and talked to me in Creole for a long time. I was so moved and delighted that even if I didn't see physical healing, God showed me a release of pure joy. It was humbling and beautiful and I shall remember Schneider forever. Later on, I was praying over some young girls from the orphanage, and blessing the institution that had saved them, as God says to do in Matthew 10.10, and suddenly felt overcome with God's approval of the orphanage and how well it cares for the children. I looked at the girls clustered around me and God gave me His eyes for them – I saw them as beautiful, chosen, wanted, intentionally created and each with a specific purpose. Far from finding them annoying as I had done, I was willing to die for them, and almost wanted the opportunity to do so, just to show them how much God and I loved them.

Fortunately, I was spared that occurrence, and after six days of rest and de-brief in a boarding house by the sea, we returned to LA to reunite with the rest of the DTS school, and for further de-brief. In DTS, and especially during my time in Haiti, God taught me to be more thorough in my faith, to seek Him and His kingdom first, to serve others for their sake and Jesus', and to positively re-frame any situation in which I find myself. I am so grateful that God led me to YWAM and for all the work He did in my heart and through my hands in the last five months. Thank you all so much for all your continuing prayers and support.

Amy Plender