



FIONA's NEWS March 2022



“Therefore my dear brothers and sisters....always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”
1 Corinthians ch15 v58

There were some special times in the weeks prior to my departure from Papua New Guinea. One highlight was the conference organised by a team of the national ladies. I enjoyed preparing a talk for the morning but I think the small group sessions in the afternoon, when they could discuss some of the questions raised, were more valuable. It was fun to have a photo taken with each lady and to have this group photo (even if most are partially hidden by masks!).



I had specifically asked for no gifts as I had such a tight luggage allowance for my return to the UK.



The families on my compound and the staff at MAF Technologies, however, each kindly compiled a video of messages on a memory stick. The verse at the top of this page is taken from one of those messages. MAF Tech also kindly provided me with 2 audio Bibles (small and light!), preloaded with Christian content in English and in Juba Arabic for me to take to South Sudan and use there as appropriate. The ladies also gave me several more bilums which I just managed to squeeze in by donating some clothes to Christie (far right) to use in hospital ministry.

The majority of plans for my home assignment have fallen into place remarkably well, with just a few details to put in place. These are, however, only plans and have to be held lightly – especially with the prevalence of covid-19 around the country. I am looking forward to speaking in several churches though and catching up with as many people individually as possible. The talk preparation is quite time-consuming but I find giving them is a very satisfying part of home assignment, sharing how help, hope and healing is being brought to isolated people to show them Christ's life. (I am disappointed to have been prevented by covid from given 2 talks myself, but I'm thankful that my mother remained clear of infection and did an excellent job standing in for me!)

An example could be a story from Dr Diana Zwijnenburg, wife of Jeroen (MAF PNG finance manager). (Photo: Diana Zwijnenburg, 2nd left)
The Zwijenburgs are based at Kompiam hospital, with Jeroen working remotely from there about half his time and travelling to Mt Hagen or Goroka for the remainder. Diana is not spending all her time at “base” either but is involved in the regular patrols which see a team of around 5 health workers plus an evangelist being flown to one of the outlying clinics and collected a few days later.



In early February, she went out to Yambaitok where, over 2 days, 58 patients were treated for various illnesses in addition to seeing 14 ladies at the antenatal clinic, delivering 75 childhood vaccinations and treating 6 patients for malaria. One of these was a 4 year old boy who had been carried by his

father all the way from Yenkisa, about a day's walk. He was also treated for worms and anaemia, had his vaccinations updated and was given a mosquito net to prevent further bites – a worthwhile visit!

Yambaitok's previous clinic visit had been "only" three months earlier. The local Community Health Worker, Patrick, cares for people in the interim from his busy aid post.



Contrast this with situation in Indagen in Morobe Province which had waited 20 years for a patrol visit – achieved last year thanks to external funding for some flights, since the two hospitals covering the wider area already have a struggle with a shortage of resources. The visiting team found that the local health centre was a well-maintained building – with empty shelves. No bandages, no IV drips, no medicines – and no money to restock. As you can imagine, the demand for medical assistance was very high. 600 patients were treated over the course of 3 days.

(Photo: Dr Simon Ganai, performing minor surgery in Indagen.)

I am now also turning my attention to what will be needed for South Sudan. I'm beginning to receive standard daily reports on security incidents – as in most cities (including Mt Hagen in PNG) one needs to be alert to bag-snatching as well as other issues. I've a full orientation briefing on security coming up and sometime in the next few weeks I must start looking at a language book.

I will be living in a new apartment on MAF's newer compound in Juba. This is an aerial view of part of the MAF housing (and across to a neighbouring compound). You may just be able to make out a playground for the children in the centre. There is also a small swimming pool to provide some welcome relief from the heat.



(Photo: Chris Ball)

Furniture is provided but all the other contents will be my responsibility though there will be a temporary kit in place for use when I arrive. I will be able to buy some things from a couple of families who will be leaving the programme and other items can be bought in Juba. For the rest, I'm aiming just to take a couple of pieces of excess luggage with me from the UK.

I continue to be humbled and amazed at your generosity, both financially and in faithful praying. Throughout my time in Papua New Guinea, funds to MAF for my support have always exceeded the minimum target (and I have no doubt that will remain true for my assignment in S Sudan too). It is your prayer support, though, that is a far greater source of strength and comfort and I thank God for that and for you. Know that "your labour in the Lord" in this manner "is not in vain".

- Thank God for all the ladies on the staff of MAF PNG and MAF Technologies, serving in a wide range of roles – managerial, secretarial, cleaning, engineering, administrative etc.
- Thank God for the perseverance of health workers serving in isolated communities and the skill and dedication of medical staff who already live quite remotely themselves and then travel even further to give care in Christ's name.
- Please pray for all the plans for this period of home assignment – that I recover quickly from covid-19 so that I can go on my booked retreat, for safety in travel, for good conversations with current and potential supporters, for a relaxing holiday with my mother, for wisdom in what to purchase and pack for South Sudan – and within it all the gift of being able to relax in God's presence knowing that He has everything under control.

Please let me or MAF know if you no longer want to receive this prayer letter or would like it in a different format (post or email) and let us know if you would also like to receive the briefer prayer letter without pictures that I send in the interim months.

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