

December 2006 from Antananarivo / Madagascar

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Dear Friends!

Christmas is near, the year 2006 almost over: Time to look back and see what happened during this year. With the help of our newsletters you are quite informed, but let's give you an update about the last 3 months: We want to continue with the story we reported about in Heli-News 10: Remember - We were flying to the villages of our house helper after several members of her family had been murdered and kids died after that. As we promised those people, we came back, with a medical team, additional to the evangelistic team: our French Pastor friend, his translator, a local Pastor of the area, 2 doctors and Tanja as a midwife. The joy of the people was overwhelming, when they saw us coming. While waiting to be treated by the doctors (and receiving free medicine), they were listening to the evangelism. Within 2 days about 1000 people in 4 villages heard about Jesus Christ and 248 people in 2 villages were medically treated; most of them have never heard about Jesus nor seen a doctor before, since the next village and the doctor is a 2 or 3 days walk through the mountains. Who wants to walk for such a long time when he is sick? You can probably imagine that we saw sicknesses that you would never find in the western world. Our favorite experience was to save a little boy's life: 6 days old, 3 pounds, mom and twin sister died during delivery, hasn't eaten for more than 24 hours, and has never eaten anything different than water with a teaspoon of condensed milk, infected belly button. It was more than obvious that this boy was closer to death than to anything else. When it was time to leave (even though we haven't treated all the people) we took the baby and his father with us to the small village, where we spent the nights. You can get there by car most of the times. We went to the hospital and were pretty amazed, about what we found: the government runs a center for malnourished kids. One parent can stay with the child and all that is free. Best part: it was only recently opened. What a joy for our team and this family! The funny part: before the baby was taken into the center, they walked with all of us to the maternity ward. Without explaining a word, the doctor made a lady, who just delivered her first baby 2 days before, to breast feed this tiny baby boy, we just brought. She did what he wanted her to do without asking a word. Tanja was smiling while she imagined peoples' reaction back home to such a situation. We will keep in touch with the center to see how the baby is doing. We, this whole team, plan to go back to the villages even before Christmas. People there know that we are celebrating Christmas soon, but they don't know, why and what it is all about. So we will treat the folks medically and bring them the good news at the same time. Isn't that the perfect time to do so, just before Christmas?



Left up:
Bush clinic in Ambondrona
Right up:
Bush clinic in Sakamadio
Centre up:
Gerd with the twin boy before we took of and brought him to the hospital
Down:
People listening to the evangelism while waiting for the medical treatment



Gerd: During the last months our flight program was huge. I was gone more than I was home in Tana. I spent almost a week with the teams in the bush and could see how blessed their programs were. For us "vazahas", the white people, living in the bush is a challenge: rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner, sleeping in a hot hut without much air, plenty of fleas as "pets", surrounded by sick people... I am always happy when I come back to Tana to recover, get new strength and health, and wait for all those fleabites to disappear. Then it is usually time to get back into the bush villages! Tanja thinks it is quite funny when I am freezing in Tana, in 85 degrees weather; but in those villages it is so much hotter. When you get to know folks in the bush, when you see their circumstances of life, when you see their joys and struggles, I am more than willing to go back and suffer for a while. Often I am asked, if I am off work, when I am in town: far from that! Maintenance and fixing the helicopter, writing the flight plans, who goes when to where, how much weight can they take, where do I get fuel, who can bring it to the remote places... All the work that we have is split between the pilots and their wives. Being bored is something we haven't experienced since arriving here!

Tanja: I have a very varying program every day. In the hospital I find an adventure almost every time I go there. Interesting enough, the midwives are responsible for the patients who had surgery as well. Since I used to volunteer in the ambulance, I am quite interested and have some knowledge about all that. Every now and then I can assist surgeries. I am so amazed, how many things they can do with their very limited equipment. My main focus is on midwifery: doing the prenatal check ups, if possible deliveries. By now, I can ask many questions in Malagasy, but it is still a challenge, to understand the responses. ☺ My colleges and the pregnant ladies are very patient with me and help me to improve. I HAVE to have a booklet with me and they write down new sentences which I HAVE to learn. I will get there, one day... Besides my office work for Helimission, where I put all the flight hours for both pilots and the 2 helicopters in the computer and make all the reports concerning those hours, I am more than glad to be back in medical work! The very rewarding part in the medical work was the program in the bush, which you read about. I cannot wait to go back there!

Can you believe it? Only 5 more weeks, than we celebrate our 1 year arrival in this wonderful country!? Time has never past as fast as here. In our newsletters we can only share so little of what life is all about here. But we are glad we had some friends come and visit us here and we could share our exciting lives with them. All of them said, that they couldn't imagine before coming here, how it really is. And yes, most things you cannot describe, you have to see them! When are you coming?

WE WANT TO SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL THE SUPPORT YOU GAVE US DURING THIS PAST YEAR,
THANKS FOR ALL EMAILS, CALLS, VISITS AND FINANCES. ONLY BY YOUR SUPPORT WE CAN BE HERE!
WE LOOK FORWARD BEING HERE IN MADAGASCAR IN 2007 WITH YOU AS OUR STRONG PARTNERS!

*Have a blessed Christmas season with your families
 &
 May God bless you abundantly for the New Year 2007!*

Your Missionaries

Gerd & Tanja

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