

I would like to thank my parents and everyone who helped make it financially possible for me to go on this trip. I would like to thank my Alongside Nigeria team for being my family and teaching me so much during our time together. I would like to thank God for His amazing love and how He makes the impossible possible.

I would like to dedicate this report to David and Linda Miclash for the powerful work they are doing to love God and care for His people.

Many of the photographs in this report are not my own, but were taken by other members of my team. Therefore, credit goes to Cor, Dave Edward, Iain, Jeff, Jenn, Jim, Linda, and Mary. I could not have made this report without your contributions. Thank you!!!

Table of Contents

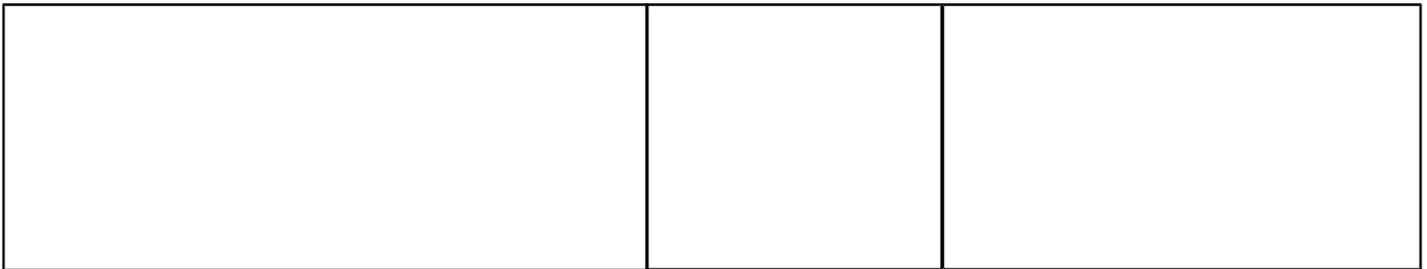
Introduction	3
Partners International	4
Alongside International	4
The Evangelizers Team Ministries International	5
Meet the Team	6
Some Facts about Nigeria	9
A Typical Day on the Trip	10
TETMI Church Conference	11
Culture Day	13
Second Sunday at Church	13
Sponsorship	14
Medical Clinic	15
Eyeglasses Clinic	17
Solar Lamps	18
Secret Service Team	18
TETMI High School	19
The Ruth Sommerville-TETMI Health Centre in Akaeze	21
Well Projects: The Issue	22
Well Projects: The Solution	23
Final Words	25

Hello! My name is Tamsyn Neale, and I live in Southern Ontario. I am a high school graduate and university hopeful with a love for Jesus and a passion for clean water. I like learning about what is going on in the world, especially with regard to the world water crisis, and I hope to make a difference in people's lives by helping provide them with clean drinking water. It is this desire that led me to Partners International and eventually to Alongside International and an amazing adventure, which is what this report is all about...

In November of 2011, I had the wonderful honour of going to Nigeria with a team of 10 other Canadians from southern Ontario under the direction of David Miclash, director of Alongside International. We travelled to south-eastern Nigeria where we met up and worked with The Evangelizers Team Ministries International (TETMI), run by David Umune. Eleven Nigerians joined the team, and together we were a very dynamic group of brothers and sisters in Christ who also grew to become great teammates and friends. Together we worked on a variety of projects, the main ones being a free medical clinic, a free eyeglasses clinic, well restoration, and teaching at the high school. Most people were assigned to one project or job throughout the trip, but I had the privilege of being a part of almost everything for at least one day each. I hope that through reading this report you will be able to get an accurate glimpse into what happened on this trip and will perhaps be inspired to go on an Alongside trip yourself!

Partners International

Partners International is a Canadian Christian development organization. It has a very effective development approach: rather than going into a foreign region temporarily to run its own projects, it finds local leaders and groups with great potential and provides them with support through finances and guidance in management. Partners International works by creating partnerships with local ministries and organizations in the areas it chooses to serve. Together they work to provide people in the region with help and healing physically, socially and economically. They also work to show the love of Jesus and share the life-changing Gospel in these communities. This is a powerful and sustainable method of development, as the locals are enabled to help their fellow people and produce long-term change. It's amazing to see this work being done, all for God's glory! To learn more about Partners International, please visit www.partnersinternational.ca.



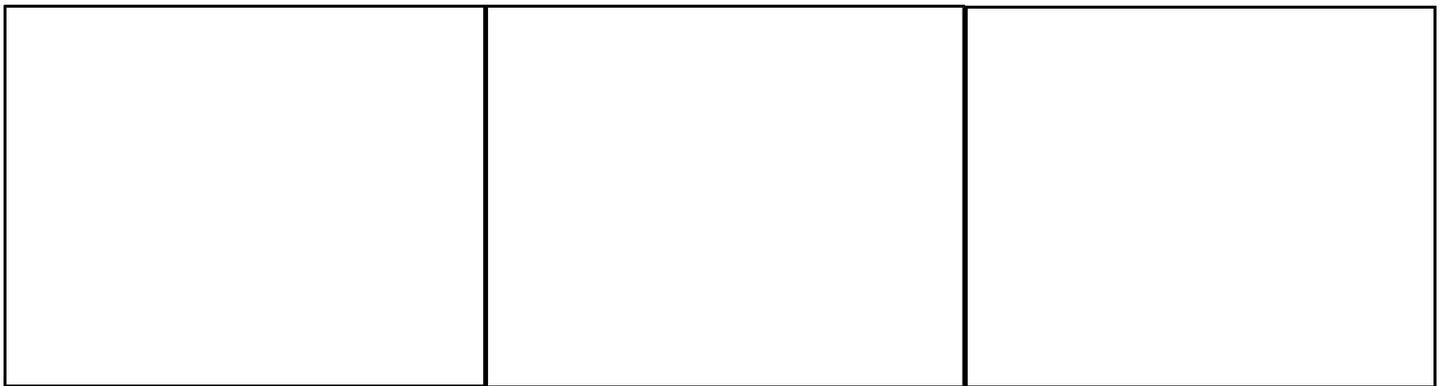
Alongside International

Alongside International is affiliated with Partners International and Crossroads Ministries. The directors, David and Linda Miclash, plan and lead many trips each year, bringing teams of Canadian volunteers to work on projects with Partners International's partner organizations. Every team is different, but there are some people who are very dedicated to this ministry who have been on numerous Alongside trips; some even help lead or coordinate the different projects. These dynamic teams, made up of Canadians and locals, work together on projects that meet the physical and spiritual needs of the local people. Examples of projects that Alongside participates in include construction of schools and orphanages, restoration of wells and water systems and holding medical and eyeglasses clinics. Some teams also work on special ministry programs for children. Many people's lives are changed through this ministry, both in the communities being served and within the Alongside teams themselves! David and Linda have a great passion in their hearts for sharing God's love with people all over the world, and this is evident from the very moment you meet them. This is NOT short-term missions; Alongside International creates long-lasting transformation in communities through the partner organizations and supports these organizations' effective, long-term projects. It is always looking to what will happen next and how it can help change more lives and touch people with God's love. Many team members continue to support Alongside International in various ways after their trip is over, or even end up going on the next upcoming trips! Please visit www.partnersinternational.ca/alongside/home.html to learn more about Alongside International and to find out how you can get involved in this awesome work.

The Evangelizers Team Ministries International (TETMI)

TETMI is a local ministry working in the Ebonyi state of Nigeria. It has been working in the area for approximately 20 years and in this time there has been much transformation! To date, sixteen churches have been planted; three primary schools have been established; a high school has been established with the building still under construction; many wells have been repaired, and a permanent health centre is currently being built. TETMI is Nigerian through and through; locals lead it and do all of the work so that local village people hear the Gospel and have their lives transformed. There are big visions for the future, including a boarding house for the high school and a water system for the clinic and high school. This ministry is growing and God is doing awesome things!

Jemima Umune, or "Auntie" as she is affectionately called by most people, is one of the most incredible women I have ever met. She is the pioneer of TETMI, as she is the first person who went into this region of rural villages to bring the love of Christ. She began by offering to take care of children so their mothers could go to work. As she built relationships with people in a village, she would share the Gospel with them and they would come to know Christ as their Lord. When the chief or authorities in a village would find out about her ministry, they would often run her out of the village or try to kill her. God preserved her life many times, and she would move on to the next village to try again. Finally, the people of Akaeze welcomed her in and TETMI was established in the community. Amazing transformations have occurred there since, and TETMI has been able to broaden its touch to more villages in the region. While she has passed the directorial position on to her son, Auntie is highly respected and still has a great influence in TETMI's work.



Pastor David Umune is director of TETMI. From a young age he aspired to be a pastor. He is full of wisdom and faith, and has a genuine love for Jesus and the people whom his ministry touches; just being near him fills you with joy. It was such an honour to finally meet him! His wife's name is Hope and together they have 4 children (from left: David, Linda, Rachel, and Grace).

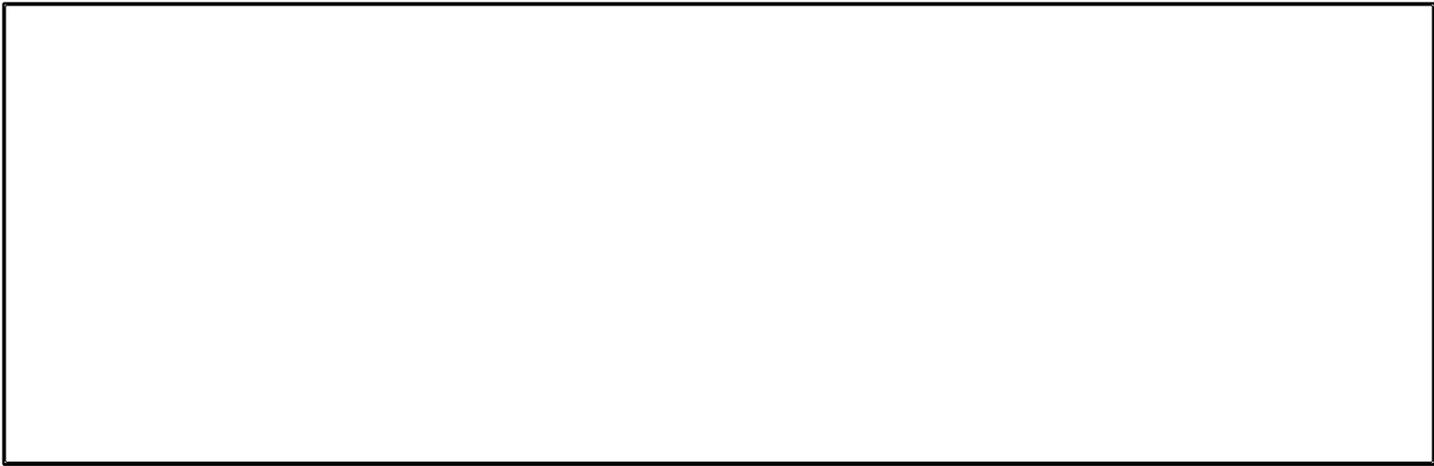
Meet the Team

This year's team was made up of 22 people plus our Secret Service team. As a team we ate together, worshipped together, laughed together, and shared with one another the amazing experience of working for God's Kingdom using our individual gifts. It was a very diverse group in age and background. This really showed me that it doesn't matter who you are or what you are good at –as long as you have a willing heart, God can use you for His glory! The youngest team member was a high school student named Mary, age 16. The team also included young and enthusiastic medical students, skilled and passionate adults, and retirees with a love for God's people and global missions. Some people had been to Nigeria with Alongside before –some many times! It was my first time but I immediately felt so at home in this group and very well taken care of. I was so blessed by my Alongside team members, my family in Christ!

David and Linda are incredibly passionate people whom God has used to bless many lives in powerful ways. It is no wonder faces light up with joy when they are near!

“One of the greatest things about being a part of a trip like this was to experience the oneness that Jesus Christ creates in His children. Though the team came from different backgrounds, circumstances, walks of life and even countries and were of a wide range of ages, we are a part of the same body. It was amazing to worship together, encourage and be encouraged by one another, be challenged by one another and then also to work together.”

–Irene London

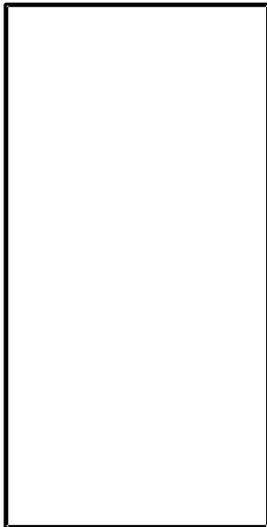


Cor, machinist
(well team)

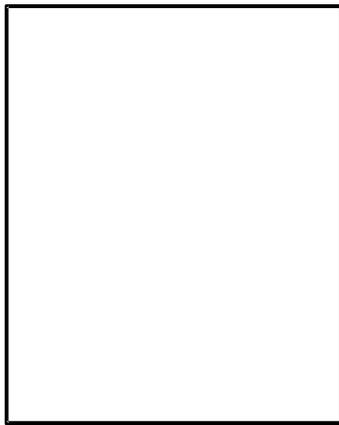
Dave, transportation
coordinator

Joe, engineer (leader
of well team)

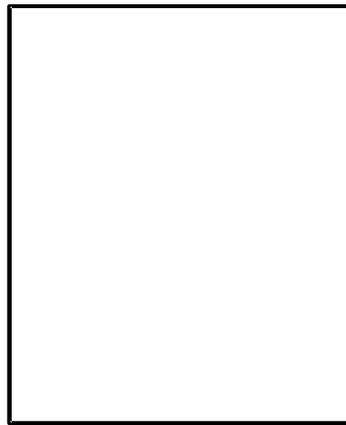
John, plumber
(well team)



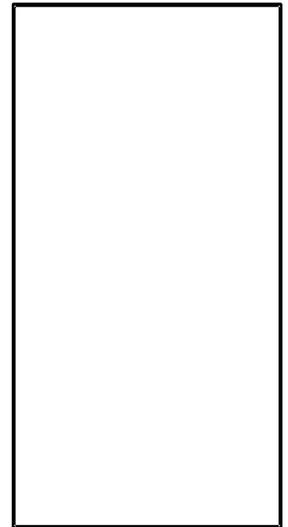
Amanda, medical
student (nurse)



Comfort, nurse
(clinic interpreter)

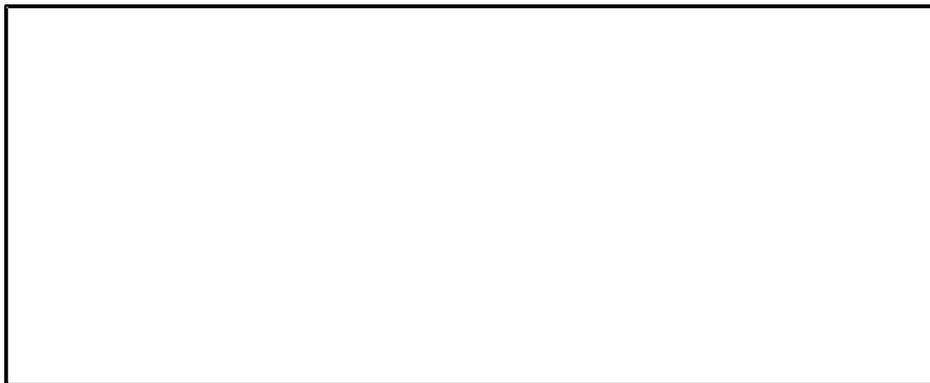


Maureen, principal
of Akaeze primary
school (nurse)

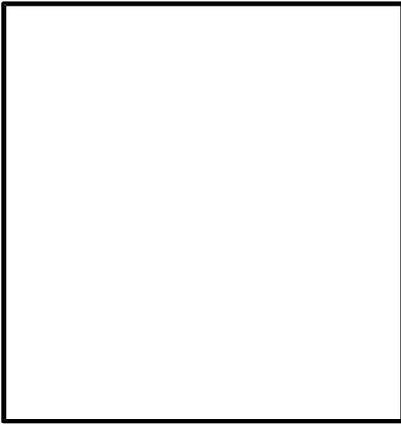


Jenn, paramedic
(leader of
medical team)

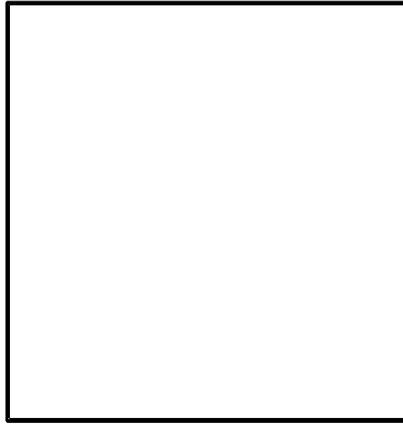
Emmanuel,
medical
student
(doctor)



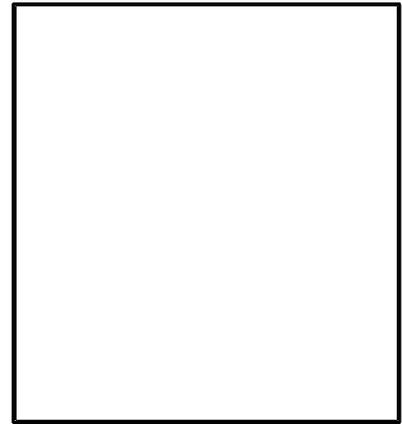
Kingsley,
medical
student
(doctor)



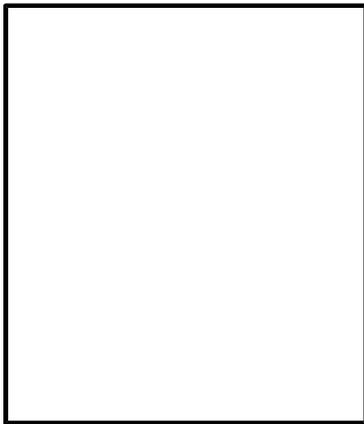
Jim, retired high school teacher
(high school team)



Irene, retired accountant
(eyeglasses team)



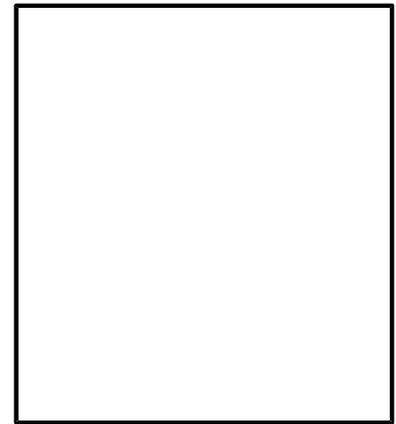
Iain, retired university
professor (high school team)



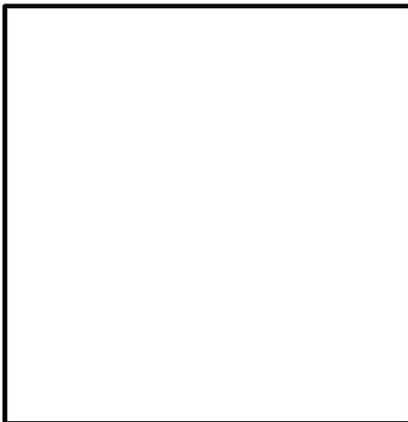
Mary, high school
student (pharmacist)



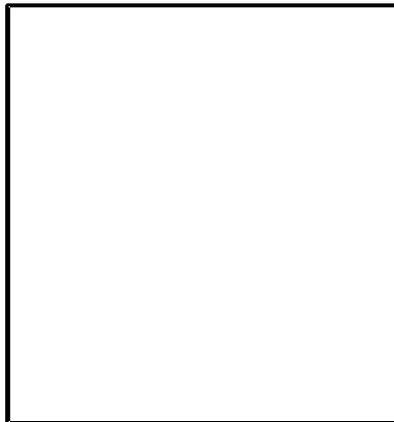
Oby, medical student
(pharmacist and doctor)



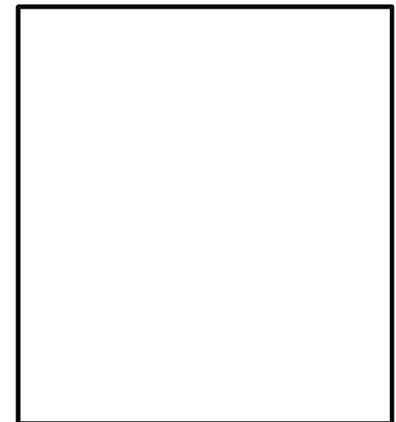
Caroline, nurse (nurse)



Dr. Nkire, doctor (doctor)



Chimdi, medical student (doctor)



Jeff, health care worker
(head pharmacist)

Some Facts about Nigeria

Nigeria is located in northwest Africa; it is the continent's most populous country. The northern half of the country is predominantly Muslim and the southern half is mainly Christian, except in the big cities which possess this polarization within themselves. Many rural areas are populated by indigenous tribes. The north is more arid while the south is more lush and tropical. Nigeria has the potential to be Africa's wealthiest nation due to its vast oil reserves, but the corruption of oil companies and other related parties has led to great disparity and crippling poverty in many areas.

Nigeria has 63 states which are made up of countless tribes and dialects. The region where Partners, Alongside and TETMI work is mainly within the Ebonyi state with the Igbo people.

Nigeria has two seasons, the dry season and the rainy season, and it is generally extremely hot and humid, which makes southern Nigeria an ideal place for growing rice and tropical fruits. The staple food is a root vegetable called cassava, which can be cooked and eaten in many forms including gari, a very common dish eaten with fish sauce. Other common foods include rice, fish, goat, chicken, beef, pork, yams, coconuts, pineapples, bananas, plantains, oranges, and mangoes.

Clockwise from left: goats;
harvested cassava root; rice
drying on road; fried fish;
plantains; yam with egg sauce.
Bottom: kids washing clothes
in a river

While food security is rather good in the area where TETMI works, poor access to clean drinking water is a major problem. Some organizations build wells in the villages but rarely maintain them; when the well breaks, no one is able to fix it so the people must walk farther to fetch water from another well, or must go back to drinking water from polluted rivers and waterholes and risk getting very ill.

A Typical Day on the Trip...

Every day has its own unique adventures and experiences, but there is a typical flow to the work days on an Alongside trip. First thing in the morning, you and your roommate will quickly get up, get dressed, and head to the dining room. There you will enjoy a morning devotion, during which you sing songs together to worship God, and someone says a few encouraging words that are on his/her heart. You will pray together and eat breakfast. Then you will go back to your room, get your things together and prepare for the day's work. You will pile into vans and Alongside vehicles with your team, and head out to the day's site, viewing many interesting sights out the windows on your way. Once you get there, you will set up and get to work! You will work hard with your team, having some tough times, some smooth times, some stressful times, and some funny times. When lunch arrives, you will take a short break to eat and then get back to work for a couple more hours, trying to see as many patients as possible or finish the well before it's time to leave. At the end of the work day, you will be very tired but thankful for the opportunity you had to serve the community. When you get back to the hotel you may take a nap or have a shower (using a bucket of water from your tap and then pouring it over yourself with a bowl), and will be very happy when dinner comes! You will eat lots of pasta and rice on your trip, plenty of chicken and beef, some yams with egg sauce, and perhaps some pork or even *gari*. After spending a great dinnertime together as a team, you will have a reflection time. This involves more music and then a time to share with the group any special experiences you had and to answer David's reflection questions. This reflection time is so precious because it gives you the opportunity to get closer to your team members and really think deeply about what kind of impact the trip is having on you. After this, you will probably help count pills for the medical clinic's work the next day. Then you will relax in your room and eventually go to bed early for some well needed sleep. Then, it all starts again!

TETMI Church Conference

The first event on our trip schedule was the TETMI church conference. The conference occurred from Friday, November 12th to Sunday the 14th at the TETMI high school. Many members from the 12 churches planted by TETMI attended the conference and Partners International's Dave Hunt was the guest speaker. The purpose of the conference was to refocus and recharge for the next year, while also coming to celebrate and praise God together. It was very inspiring to be there, seeing people on the other side of the world worshipping the same God and sharing the same truths with one another as we do at home. Our God is so big and His love is so far-reaching!

It was interesting to see that the participants were mostly women and children; I found out that this is because many men do not want to come to church because they will have to face the fact that certain parts of their lifestyles will be seen as sin and they often do not want to let go of these ways. However, there were some men and many young boys. It was encouraging seeing the young men present and even serving by acting in the play or playing music.

We took offering together multiple times during the conference, and this was certainly a very different kind of event from at home! We danced our way to the offering box in a conga-line-like procession. Even the kids joined in! Nigerians sure know how to give joyfully!

Another remarkable event during the conference was the play put on by the youth. What I expected to be a 5 minute skit turned into a half hour-long play about the end times! It was very intense and well done. It was evident they had worked hard preparing! Many of them were involved; it was so amazing to see this group of youth passionately and actively serving in their church. After the play, Auntie said a very heartfelt prayer over all the youth.

We also had the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful music of the choir, which sang several songs in both Igbo and English. You could feel the joy in the loud, clear melodies as the people praised God. Together we all sang praises with the worship band, led by some very enthusiastic singers. At one point, one of the young gentlemen handed off his microphone and broke out into a very lively dance! Some people also came up to share testimonies about what God had recently done in their lives.

On Saturday, Dave Hunt spoke about denying yourself, picking up your cross and following Christ. On Sunday, he spoke about obedience. Mary and I sang "How He Loves" on Sunday after David Micalash introduced our team to the conference's congregation. While the rest of us went on a walk to the nearby villages, Jim London had the opportunity to speak to the youth at the conference about love, sex, and marriage. It was very successful; he had the youth very engaged and was able to speak the truth in love to them.

The TETMI church conference was definitely a great way to start our trip, and being a part of it was very humbling and inspiring. It was such an honour to worship with these passionate people and get to see how they serve God. Three new pastors were introduced at the conference as well, so the church community in TETMI's region of influence will definitely keep growing and God's love will keep reaching more people in the future! God is doing great things through His people in this region.

Culture Day

On the Thursday in the middle of our trip, most of our team members went on a cultural day for a break. We took a long drive down the bumpy highway to a town with a tourist market. There we tried out our bargaining skills as we bought souvenirs for ourselves and our friends and family. We ate meat pies and ice cream for lunch at Mr. Bigg's and had a lovely time hanging out and getting to know one another better!

Second Sunday at Church

On the second Sunday we went to church in one of the other villages and it was a great experience! Some people played traditional instruments during worship and they had a joyful procession of dancing to the offering plate. There were some more powerful testimonies, and some young women sang beautiful songs including one about humbling yourself before God. The Alongside team performed "Blessed Be Your Name," and Jim preached about Jesus being the light of the world. It was truly a wonderful time. After the service, some of the kids sang a lively song for us!

Sponsorship

One of the greatest ways Partners International helps the regions it partners with is through sponsorship. Sponsorship is a way people can provide financial aid to a community. You donate a specific amount of money each month to a child, your “sponsored child”. The organization uses that money to provide the child's community with clean water, education, and health care. Sponsors can write letters and send gifts to their sponsored children, which develops a special relationship. Many people sponsor children through Partners International. Linda and Auntie had the chance during our trip to work on the program together.

Many of the Canadian team members already sponsor children; some even sponsor multiple children! By the end of the trip, we had a better understanding of how powerfully effective and valuable sponsorship programs are to the continuous development of communities. By the end of the trip, some of the Nigerian team members also chose to get involved in sponsoring children!

For several years, Cor has sponsored a young deaf boy who attends a school that helps meet his special needs; Cor has been able to meet the boy on several of his trips to Nigeria. At the end of our trip, Cor had the exciting opportunity to meet with his sponsored child again and give him some gifts. Jenn knows how to speak sign language and so she worked as Cor's interpreter during the time he spent with the boy. It was a very beautiful moment to share!

Hopefully more people will choose to sponsor children and thus enable organizations to provide more children and communities with access to health care, education, clean water, and a brighter future. If you already sponsor children, thank you for doing so, and if you don't, will you make the amazing decision to sponsor? It can change your life and a child's life, and can transform his or her community!

Medical Clinic

One of the main projects we worked on during our Alongside Nigeria trip was the traveling medical clinic. A majority of the team members were a part of this group, working as nurses, doctors, pharmacists, wound care nurses, and interpreters. Jenn was the director of the medical team and did a great job running the operation, even in the most hectic situations. Each day was very different, and they almost never knew what kind of building they would have to set up their clinic in, or how many people they would be treating that day. Sometimes there were small crowds of people coming steadily throughout the day; other times there were large crowds of people who had been waiting at the site since the crack of dawn, anxious to receive some medical help. Some days were hard or stressful, but every day was rewarding. In total, 1964 patients were cared for during our trip!

Each morning, the crew would arrive at the day's site and try their best to organize their space for the day's work using whatever tables and chairs were available. Then, before the clinic officially opened, David Miclash and the village's pastor, if it had one, would address all of the people. They would explain to the people that we were here to share God's love with them and care for them; then they would pray for them. This was such a valuable part of the day, as it emphasized the fact that there is a God who truly loves everyone and that we were there to put that love into practice so they could experience it. Jesus brought the Word of life but also provided for people and healed the sick, and TETMI is striving to do the same.

These clinics may only be able to offer a minimal amount of care, but they have a huge impact and can save children's lives. We distribute medicines, including malaria pills and vitamins, and clean up infected wounds so that people can heal properly. This kind of help is so easily taken for granted where we live, but it can make a big difference in the life of someone in rural Nigeria who does not have access to basic health care or things like sterile bandages and medication.

Anyone with medical training and experience who would like to use their gifts to make a difference by serving communities in another country should definitely consider teaming up with Alongside International. Even if you do not work in the medical field but have a heart for helping people, there is always a job that needs to be done that you can help with after a small amount of on-the-spot training!

I was able to help one of our nurses by taking people's temperatures, and it was a very special experience. At first I did not feel very passionate about it or see the importance of the work, but after a while something started touching my heart every time I saw someone's temperature rise up to feverish levels. I realized that this moment can seem so small when there is so much sickness in the world to deal with, but we are giving the opportunity of healing, one ill patient at a time. If it weren't for us being there, these people would have had no care at all for some time and would very likely have had their sicknesses worsen. I started almost feeling happy when I worked with someone who had a fever –not because I was glad they were sick, but because I knew they would get well. We were there to help them get well. I thank God for the opportunity we had to help people and I pray, and hope you will pray too, that more medical personnel will volunteer their gifts and that more medicine and equipment can be given so that more and more people can be healed, both physically and spiritually.

Eyeglasses Clinic

Another exciting project our team participated in was an eyeglasses clinic. It was set up near the medical clinic each day, and people were sent to try on eyeglasses with recommendation from the doctors. The eyeglasses were

donated through the Niagara Warehouse of Hope in St. Catherines and there were about 1000 in total. Irene was the main eyeglasses clinic worker; Linda was the director, and I was able to work there for a few days as well. Each morning, a suitable location was chosen close to the building the medical team as set up in, and the tests and glasses were set up with some tables and chairs taken from the medical team's building. It's not every day you see an eyeglasses clinic outside under a tree -unless you are on an Alongside Nigeria trip, that is!

The line of people waiting for glasses grew rapidly in the morning, and led to some tiring but valuable work. Eventually we got the hang of the work and started getting really good at quickly finding the right match for people. It was like solving a little mystery with each person! It was quite heartbreaking when someone's eyes were so bad that we could not help them, but the number of people who walked away happy and able to see more clearly was definitely reason to give praise! In total, approximately 600 people received eyeglasses during our two-week trip.

Solar Lamps

A very exciting new experiment for TETMI and Alongside took place during our trip. We brought 16 solar lamps with us, which we were going to test and then hopefully bring more of in the future. The lamps would be given to the high school so that students could borrow them and use this light to study in the evenings, since it generally gets dark at 6pm in the region. During the first part of our trip, the attempts with the lights were discouraging; although we kept the batteries in the sun during the day, the lamps would not turn on. Cor worked on the puzzle during the evenings for a few days. One day we brought them out with us to the work sites, laid them on a bag on the ground, and ensured they were constantly exposed to direct sunlight. This was finally enough light to fill the batteries and the lamps worked that evening! After that initial full charge, it is now much easier and simpler to charge them for evening use. A few lamps were brought to the school and the windows were blocked for a test, and the students who tried the lights were very pleased with them!

The plan now is to find a supplier who will make the lamps more financially accessible in large amounts so Alongside can bring them to Nigeria and other countries. These solar lamps are a very efficient way to provide families with light in the evenings so they can continue doing activities like studying. By enabling students to have extra hours of study time, we will see improved success in school which will help provide the opportunity for further educational success for these students!

Secret Service Team

While we were there serving the village people, we had the opportunity to bless our secret service men as well. As we got to know them, we discovered that they were very touched by watching us love and serve the people. Some had never been on a "missions trip" before, so this new experience had a big impact on them. Jim was amazed by "how the special services guys often set aside their weapons to assist in what was happening, whether to translate for the eye clinics or to off-load cement blocks from a truck at a well restoration site -- they were visibly appreciative of what was being brought to their people!" They truly were a part of our team!

TETMI High School

We had the privilege of having two retired teachers on our Canadian team, and they were able to put their skills to work each day at the TETMI high school. Jim was there to meet with the teachers and staff and work through various issues and ideas with them. Iain was also able to do what he loves –teaching students science. He taught them many of the same things that are taught in high school science classes in Ontario, but with a really special joy. As he taught them, he would frequently pause to interject an expression of praise and wonder at God's brilliant creation of the world. You could truly tell he loved what he was doing! Jim was able to see Iain in action each day, and thought it was quite remarkable “how the high school seniors were so eager to learn from Iain -- they wouldn't let him go at class-end -- just kept the questions coming!”

Pictures include: Jim in a staff meeting; Iain teaching science; Jim and Iain with the principal

I was able to spend the final work day at the high school, and I loved every moment of it! In some ways it was almost more tiring to interact with this group of rambunctious teenagers than it was to work the other jobs! Of course, all of the projects had their own stresses and joys, but being so close to the students as they very enthusiastically try to ask you questions and get your attention was a new form of exhaustion I had not yet experienced on the trip. It was thoroughly enjoyable, of course! They were great to be with and it was so fun just getting to talk with them and to hear about their lives. They challenged me to solve an equation using the quadratic formula which, thankfully, ended successfully, and then they wanted to hear about life in Canada and the differences between Canada and Nigeria. Seeing Iain and Jim do their work was very inspiring, and if I ever go on an Alongside trip again I would like to help teach at the high school.

The high school construction began 4 years ago and although it is not quite complete, classes have been held in the building for three years already. The teachers are Nigerian, and they teach classes including Computers, Igbo, English, Math, and Economics. There are several exciting plans being formulated for the high school, including the construction of a brick wall to encompass the school and Health Centre property, and the construction of a dorm to provide the opportunity for boarding students to attend the school.

The Ruth Sommerville-TETMI Health Centre in Akaeze

There are some very exciting things happening with TETMI and Alongside International's partnership! The Ruth Sommerville-TETMI Health Centre represents the power of long-term partnerships between developed and developing communities. The wife of Iain Sommerville, a long-time supporter of Partners International, passed away about 4 years ago. Before this happened, she requested that he do something meaningful in her honour to help people. Iain connected with David Miclash, who felt led to challenge Iain to do something big. Iain very enthusiastically accepted a partnership and together with Partners International and TETMI, they created the plan

for a very special project: a permanent Health Centre to be built in Akaeze, in memory of Ruth Sommerville. It is currently being constructed, by locals, at a site adjacent to the TETMI high school. When completed, it will provide holistic health care to people living in the nearby villages. This is going to bring the impact of TETMI's care in the region to a whole new level and open up the opportunity to change, and possibly save, many people's lives!

During our trip, we had the opportunity to have a special ceremony for the Health Centre, with all the high school students in attendance. Iain was able to see his dream becoming a reality! He, David Miclash and David Umune spoke at the ceremony.

TETMI and its volunteers are very forward thinking: Joe hopes to design and help construct a water system for the Health Centre and high school in the future, and Chimdi aspires to one day be the head doctor in the Centre. Clearly some amazing development is happening in Akaeze, with more to come in the future!

Well Projects: The Issue

The well projects are another extremely important part of an Alongside trip. With every well fixed, hundreds of people are able to receive access to clean drinking water and have their lives and health dramatically improve! Before I discuss repairing wells, I will give a snapshot of what life is like in a village without a working well.

In places that do have wells, maintenance is very important; unfortunately, it is often not practiced. Well-meaning organizations come into a village and construct a well but may not teach the villagers how to take care of it. This means that if a simple problem arises with the well which makes it unusable, nobody knows how to fix it and so it is abandoned. People go back to their old water resource, often walking long distances to fetch unclean water. Because of this, training locals is becoming part of many well projects around the world.

Before someone comes to repair the well, people drink from other water sources, such as ponds and rivers. This water is often opaque and it is filled with disease-causing pathogens that can cause serious illnesses and even death. Poor or non-existent sewage management as well as lack of sanitation education contribute to these dangerous conditions. People rarely boil the water before consuming it. Some people do not know that the water is making them sick, and others simply do not have the time and resources to spend on boiling water so they just drink the water to survive, even though they may get sick.

Well Projects: The Solution

Well restoration is a significant part of TETMI and Alongside's work. Initially they planned to go into villages and build wells, but they soon realized that this was not necessary –there were already wells in the villages, but they were broken and therefore unusable. Upon discovering this, the partnership decided to start fixing the wells that were already there! This has been extremely successful as it is much cheaper and less complicated than building new wells, while being equally important and impactful. Some of the wells were broken for months or even years, and through our work they are now fixed and usable again. People are able to have clean, safe drinking water again which will help them be healthier. They do not have to walk such long distances to fetch the water, since most of the wells are right inside villages. This saves women and children time so they can do other things, such as earning incomes or studying. Providing a community with clean drinking water is the greatest way to improve the quality of life; it can even save lives!

If you are an engineer, plumber, machinist, construction worker, welder, or are simply passionate about water and not afraid to get a little dirty, you should definitely consider joining the well restoration team! I was not really strong enough for the team, but I am grateful for how much the men taught me and how they gave me lots of things to do to learn and help. Working with Cor, Joe, and John was an incredible experience. They are all brilliant and humble, and they work so well together to solve problems, even with such minimal resources available to them. It was such an honour to be with them for two full days and a portion of another. During our trip, a total of 9 wells were repaired. This means that approximately 130,000 people regained access to clean water!

A wide array of things could be wrong with a broken well: the cement could be crumbled, the pipes cracked, the rods unattached, the pump broken, the water contaminated, plus a number of other problems. With a few materials and a lot of ingenuity, the problems were fixed and the wells were back in service. While some problems would be so easy to fix in Canada, it is very difficult in Nigeria where the proper technology and equipment are not so easily accessible.

There was always a crowd while the team worked, as people watched us fix their well and some young men jumped in to help out. Many excited children came to watch, creeping up as close as they could get until they were told to move back by one of the mothers. When a well was complete, there was a ceremony where the local pastor would tell the people that we were here to bless them and show God's love to them; he would then pray and dedicate the well. Seeing the clean water finally pour out of the well we had worked on for two days was the greatest moment I experienced during this trip!

Through all of the obstacles faced, miracles were able to happen as people worked together and trusted God. Hopefully Partners International, Alongside International, and TETMI will be able to continue changing lives in this way and reaching more and more communities with clean water and God's love.

Although I'm too weak to have a big impact fixing wells, I can be a big help here at home by spreading the word about clean water and raising money to help repair even more wells. You can have a big impact too; I challenge you to get involved in any way you can! It will save lives and change yours! With your help, either financially or by joining an Alongside team, more wells can be fixed in the future and more communities can be transformed through clean water!

Final Words

“While I was on the trip to serve in a practical way, I know that God also uses these trips to teach and bless me. This trip was a chance to reflect on my life in Canada with more context, and refocus my life and priorities. This trip also allowed me to grow in my faith and rely more on God. It was an incredible blessing to be able to come on this trip, and I hugely enjoyed it.” –Mary Miedema

After two amazing weeks, we headed home, exhausted and looking forward to a real shower and sleeping in our own beds. Although we were sad to leave, we were grateful for our experiences, knowing they would remain in our hearts and minds for a long time. We would think fondly of our dear Nigerian friends and pray that God’s love would keep reaching people. We would remember the great moments we shared and things we learned, and plan new ways to keep making an impact.

This trip was one of the greatest experiences I have had in my life. I was able to learn so much, see so much, and do so much in two weeks. I was able to meet new people and hear incredible stories. I heard new languages, experienced new cultures, and was able to help people in ways I never imagined. Our team got along so well and really became a family through this trip, and we were able to share God’s love with people as we served together. As tough as the trip was at times, it was absolutely incredible and I would definitely go again if I ever have the chance! I hope more and more people will find ways to help out, whether it’s through donating money or supplies, through prayers, or through going on a trip themselves! You will never forget your experience; I know I won’t forget mine! These words and photos can give you an idea of what an Alongside trip is like, but it does not do justice to how powerful the real thing can be in a person’s life.

I am so thankful that I had this opportunity, and thankful that I was able to share my experiences with you through this report. Hopefully it has inspired you to get involved in any way you can. Thanks for reading, and God bless you!