

## **My Mission Trip to Uganda**

By Georgette Vujcuf

### **June 2, 2011**

The day I left for Uganda was the day that changed my life forever. On that day, I woke up early in the morning at four o'clock. I could not patiently wait to start my journey. I had enough time to say my prayers and to complete all of my tasks. I made sure that nothing was left undone. At 5:30 pm, my son, with my adorable grandson M. J., came to pick me up. Shortly afterwards, we were on our way to the airport.

The departure time from Toronto was at 11:05 pm. We arrived in Amsterdam on the following day, June 3, at 12:10 pm (noon time). In Amsterdam we had to wait nine hours for our next departure to Nairobi Kenyatta. Although we were extremely tired, we tried to make the best of our time at the airport. David Miclash, our leader, (I called him our shepherd) was very protective of us. He did not allow any of us to stray away from the group on our own. David took care of our belongings while we toured the airport. We all had lunch, laughed, prayed and sang. Our departure time from Amsterdam was at 9:00 pm and we arrived in Nairobi Kenyatta at 6:35am on the next day, June 4<sup>th</sup>. Kenya Airways operated the flight, which is indeed the "Pride of Africa". From the time we boarded the aircraft, we received warm greetings from a wonderful African crew including both men and women who displayed sincere, friendly and welcoming smiles.

The service was impeccable. There was nothing to complain about. Although we were seated in economy class, we were treated as if we were in business class. It was then that I knew instantly that my trip would be as pleasant as could be, just by judging from the first encounter on this journey with the African crew. In our missionary team we had David Miclash, our leader, and eleven other wonderful women. They were David's wife, Linda Miclash, from Burlington, Ontario, Alyssa Best from Oshawa, Karin Pellizzer from Oakville, Ontario, Sharon Crause from Salt Spring, B.C., Vicki Formosa from Lions-Head, Ontario, Ruth Markle from Waterloo, Ontario, Carolyn Sommerville from Oakville, Nancy Desruisseau from New Brunswick, Makaila Huntley and her mother Cheryl Huntley from New Brunswick, and I, Georgette Vujcuf from Woodbridge, Ontario. I felt blessed to work side by side with everyone from my missionary team. As I mentioned before, David and Linda Miclash were our leaders, who had a strong motivation for a successful and accomplished mission. They had started the Crossroads Mission Alongside program in 2003, and continued their mission with Partners International. David and Linda's devotion and their hard work helped to change the lives of thousands and thousands of unfortunate children, men and women. Both of them carried their mission, wherever it was needed the most, educationally, spiritually, and financially, as well as giving moral support and counseling to youth, women and children. David and Linda took their mission to the Dominican Republic, El-Salvador, Burkina Faso (West Africa), Mali, Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda, and Peru. We thank you both for the miraculous things you do for all impoverished people, giving them hope and a ray of sunshine to their lives. I will pray and wish that God gives you health, a long life,

and showers both of you with His best blessings! When I heard, for the first time, about the Crossroads Mission program, my heart was filled with an enthusiastic desire to do my part in making a difference in the lives of those wretched, unprivileged people who are struggling with poverty beyond our imaginations. I knew that for everything that happened in my life, there was a reason behind it. God had chosen me and the rest of the team to do His will for His people, who He will not forsake or abandon. Before I left for my trip, I prayed that God would help me do a very good job, to give me strength and power, and to keep me safe. I feel accomplished and very happy because my prayers were answered. **TO THE WORLD YOU MAY BE ONE PERSON, BUT TO ONE PERSON, YOU MAY BE THE WORLD.** I learned from childhood that when God takes anything away from us, we feel bad. However, **it is far better to do what we can for others.** The results are greater than we could imagine. God will shower us with mercy and with an extinguished love. Isn't that what we all want?

From Nairobi Kenyatta Airport, our departure time for Entebbe was at 7:55 am and we arrived at 9:10 am. At Entebbe Airport, Pastor Robson Atoke from Victory Outreach Ministry, greeted us and was joyfully pleased to meet each and everyone of us, by showing us kindness and giving us a sincere welcome. From the airport, we were transported by a school bus to Alpha Resort Hotel, our lodge in the town of Lira. It was approximately nine hours away. The bus was very old. On the way there, we had some mechanical problems. We had to stop three times, luckily at gas stations to add water to the radiator, which was hot and steamy. We were afraid that the motor would get caught on fire. We were exhausted from the heat and after thirty-two hours of traveling we were still singing and enjoying the view. At every stop we made, we had friendly encounters with the local people. Few of them could speak English and others spoke their own native language. Looking into the children's black, beautiful eyes, I felt a cloud of sorrow surrounding me. This is because I could read their pain and sadness. With their friendly smile, even though they could not communicate with us, they were showing an expression of happiness because we were there to help bring a little sunshine into their hearts. When we arrived at our lodge in Lira, the staff politely welcomed each and every one of us. Then we all went to choose our rooms. The accommodations looked very inviting. The rooms were clean and had a bathroom with shower, sink and toilet. We had canopy beds with net wrapped all around, to prevent mosquito bites. Sorry, but no air-conditioning even though the weather was extremely hot. In every room, we were supplied a fan which helped a little bit. After we settled into our rooms, we went to the dining room for supper. What a wonderful meal they had cooked for us. For the entire time we were there, the food was always fresh, tasty and safe to eat and prepared carefully so that we would not get sick.

Most Ugandans pray at mealtime. It is a Christian practice introduced by the British and French missionaries. At every meal, before and after, we would all say grace. We would pray and sing every morning before going to work and every evening before going to bed. What a beautiful and enjoyable way of beginning and ending the days!

**Sunday, June 5, 2011**

At 7:30am we had breakfast at our lodge, then we all went to town for the church service. Pastor Robson amazed us with his beautiful voice. We very much enjoyed how enchantingly and entertainingly he sung 'Amazing Grace'. But what was most amusing, was when he started to dance on stage and clapped his hands. The local people of Lira were all dressed in their Sunday clothes, which I believe were the only special clothes they had. They wore them each and every Sunday. At the service, when praying, everyone kept his or her eyes closed, but I couldn't. I kept my eyes open to observe a genuine faith. How intensely and desperately they were praying to God! I noticed how vigorously the women were praying, holding their babies close to their chest and the tears of sadness and pain dropping from their faces like rain drops. I was not aware that at a Protestant church service, they praise God with singing and dancing. Suddenly, at the tune of a happy song, my eyes could not believe it when I saw how their tears of sadness and pain quickly turned into joyful, happy moments. Everyone was singing, dancing and clapping their hands, praising God! Even in that happy moment I could still notice the trace of the tears on their faces. I believe that the only time their sorrow turned to joy was when attending the Sunday service to worship God. The children sat on little plastic chairs against the wall away from the adults. During the service, the children carried their little chairs to the next room for a Bible study class. When the service ended, the local people of Lira greeted and thanked us for being there for them. The children were happy to take pictures with us, smiling with such an expression of joy and love. After our interaction with the local people, we returned back to our lodge where a delicious lunch was waiting for us.

In the afternoon after lunch, we went on the school bus that took us to the site where the new school was built. There was already construction in progress for an additional school which will be completed by January 2012. While traveling there, we were deciding what kind of job we could do to help this project continue successfully. On the way to the school, we stopped in Barlonyo, a village called district with an unforgettable, historical, and tragic past. We met with Ogwang Moses, the chief of Barlonyo district. His duty is to protect the remaining people alive from another tragedy that could happen. In 2004, on one single night, Joseph Kony, the chief of the Ugandan Rebel Tribe, attacked the people of Barlonyo and massacred about 300 people. The uprising took place unexpectedly. The local people were not aware that Joseph would lead his tribe to overpower the existing government at that time. After 300 people lost their lives, the government successfully took over the power and control of Uganda. The Rebels finally fled to Sudan and so far, they have not returned. Unfortunately, the remaining people are living in fear every single moment, worrying if Joseph Kony will return and destroy them all. The only hope they have is Ogwang Moses, who is their leader and protector. We saw at the cemetery a mass grave for all of the 300 people that were massacred.

Today in Barlonyo, children are left orphaned with no one to look after them. Some women were left with small children and no husbands. Some old and sick with no one to look after them. Every orphaned child is HIV positive, and this is the sad part, they are suffering from the disease and don't have medication for it. People do not receive any

social benefits, pensions, welfare, or mother allowances. The only source of survival is working on the farm, but having no proper equipment. They use very old, primitive methods to work the land. I saw women with little babies on their back while working on the field. Everyone is walking barefoot. They only wear sandals, on Sundays at the church service. The Crossroads Alongside Organization donates all the clothing and sandals they have. From my own experience and from what I saw, I believe that Ugandan's people are dealing with the same state of poverty as the rest of the countries in Africa. This tragic situation in Uganda escalated when the 2004 uprising took place. The people were massacred, children were left orphaned, women left widowed, with no food, clothing or clean, safe water to drink, and their homes were destroyed.

**What a dramatic struggle for survival!**

**Monday June 6, 2011**

At 8:30am after breakfast, we all went to work at the new school in Barlonyo. Every day, we traveled one hour and a half to get to the destination and one hour and a half to get back to our lodge. I believe that our missionary team was the most hard working team ever! We worked in any area we were needed; in construction, in the optical room, triage room, pharmacy room and we also worked with the children.

When we arrived at the school, there were already more than 200 people waiting for us. On that day, 132 patients received 287 treatments; 63 for malaria, 45 for respiratory infection, 9 for skin infection, 15 for joint muscle pain, 6 for GI, 28 for worms parasite, 8 for ENT/mouth, 44 for GU, 3 for cv- dehydration, 2 for HTN, 18 for general illnesses and 46 for eyeglasses. We had an excellent Ugandan doctor, named Jennifer Omara, and two volunteer nurses from Lira, named Milber Ogwang and Joan. On our team we had three wonderful nurses. They were: Ruth Markle from Waterloo, ON, Sharon Crause from Salt Spring, B.C., and Vicki Formosa from Lions Head, ON. I found Vicki to be a remarkable, hard working lady who was cooperative and ready to help at any time. In her hometown, she runs her own business called Vicki's Kitchen. In Uganda, she worked as a nurse, which is just what we needed! On our team we also had Makaila Huntley who helped Nancy Desruisseau dispense eyeglasses to people in need. Nancy, who is a grandma of six, had a bubbly character and was full of energy! She brought tremendous joy to hundreds of people who received eyeglasses. Nancy, you are a treasure!

The people received prescribed medication and new eyeglasses, all brought in by Crossroads Alongside Organization. Some of the older people could never afford to buy glasses and their vision got weaker day by day, causing them to lose their sight. During the day from the optical room, we could hear people singing, clapping their hands, dancing and praising God because they could see with the glasses they received. They were screaming, "It is a miracle. I can see!" As long as I live, I will never forget the expression on their faces of such gratitude and appreciation. I knew from the beginning that this mission trip would not be easy at all, but what is two weeks of hard work compared to the joy and happiness we brought to these people.

We worked outside, sweating in hot weather, by shoveling the crushed stones with sand for the foundation of the new school addition. On the first day of work, Pastor David Ebong from Barlonyo and I built a table for the optical room that was needed to display the eyeglasses.

Today, not everyone could go through to see the doctor to receive medication and eyeglasses. Some of the people with young children, who walked from a far distance, had to sleep on the concrete floor at the school to wait their turn on the following day. What a day it was! After a day of hard work we returned to our lodge in Lira feeling the joy of accomplishment and we all shared at the dinner table, the stories of the people we had seen on that day.

**Tuesday June 7, 2011**

After we had breakfast, we were enthusiastically ready for a new day of work. On this day, 232 patients received 399 treatments: 77 for malaria, 68 for respiratory infection, 3 for skin infection, 33 for joint muscle pain, 17 for GI, 47 for worms parasite, 9 ENT/Mouth, 49 for GU, 2 for cv- dehydration, 7 for HTN, 23 for general illnesses, and 64 for eyeglasses.

Cheryl Huntley, David Miclash, our leader, and I, Georgette Vujcuf, were able to paint some of the walls on the outside of the school with primer. We also helped with the brickwork for the new school addition. Carolyn Sommerville brought papers and crayons for the children and we taught them to draw pictures. After they finished their drawings, (even the little ones who were two and three years old) they wanted to know how good their drawings were. The children were happy when I wrote my name on their papers George and when I admired their artwork, even if they drew just a circle or a straight line. In-between the children was a ten-year-old girl, who was very intelligent and beautiful. I was amazed how good her English was. I asked her this: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" She answered, with a smile on her face, "I want to be a docto." The Ugandan people do not pronounce "R". They have a little bit of an English accent. I said this to her, "You made a very good choice and I'm sure that you would be a wonderful doctor. When the time comes you would have to give back to your community, because they will need you, the same as you need us today." With tears in her eyes she hugged me and said, "I know that. Thank you." I noticed that the Ugandan children who came to see us were very respectful, obedient, and most of all, driven with passion for knowledge. Another 12-year-old girl wearing a pink dress, made a dramatic impact on me. She touched all of us so much that we were crying and hugging her, to comfort and express our love for her. Her parents and brother died from aids. The girl herself was born with Aids. She was living with and taking care of her old, sick grandmother. They had no food, money, or clothing. After she saw the doctor and received her medication, she came to the optical room to receive eyeglasses. We all felt sorry for her and tried to put a little smile on her face. Indeed, she looked happy when we also gave her a pair of sunglasses to wear on top of the prescription ones. For me, those moments were the saddest ones that I had encountered on that day. I cried all night thinking of this girl who was only twelve years old. I thought of the pain and sufferings that she was going through, knowing that her days would come to an end sooner than expected. This was the only day when all of the people waiting had gone through and received treatments and eyeglasses with no problems. We had sad stories to share at the dinner table. We closed the day with a prayer for all of the sick people we saw and especially for the girl wearing the pink dress.

**Again, what a day it was!**

**Wednesday June 8, 2011**

After enjoying a wonderful breakfast, we were ready for a new day of hard work. In Uganda the soil is all red clay. It is stiff and sticky earth used for making bricks and pottery. The night before it had rained, so the roads were muddy with path holes filled with water all the way to Barlonyo, our destination. Because of this, our van got stuck in the mud twice. Some local men who were working on the farms, helped us to push the van out from the mud. The children from the area came to greet us. They were smiling and laughing because they could not understand the sign language we were using to try to communicate with them. Finally, we arrived at the school where more than 200 patients were waiting to see the doctor. They had neither food nor water to drink. The babies were crying and the old, sick people were lying down on the ground. Today was a very productive day. Dr. Jennifer Omara, with all of the nurses, attended to 219 patients receiving 391 treatments: 100 for malaria, 61 for respiratory infection, 11 for skin infection, 18 for joint muscle pain, 28 for GI, 51 for worms parasite, 5 for ENT/Mouth, 29 for GU, 6 for HTN, 21 for general illnesses, and 61 for eyeglasses. The pharmacy and the triage room were extremely busy in preparing the medications for all of those patients.

About late afternoon when we were painting the outside of the school, we noticed an old lady crawling in-between the bushes and onto the rough, dusty road. We rushed to help her. She was lame of both legs. She crawled more than three miles, like a little worm, through the bushes and the rough, dusty roads since morning. She helped herself to drag her body on the ground by using a piece of stick made out of wood that was about 8 to 10 inches high. David, our leader, immediately asked for a chair to sit the old lady on, and carried her to see the doctor. Her eyes were yellow from the dust. Her dress was so torn to pieces that you could see her thin flesh hanging from her bones. When I saw her, I was in shock. I do not remember how I felt or what my reaction was. Nancy, from the optical room, said that I was screaming and crying loudly and uncontrollably. After David gave the old lady some water to drink, he tried to calm me down by saying; "Georgi come with me to see that the old lady is okay. She is smiling and she is happy because we treat her with care and compassion. After the old lady received her medication, David had sent her home with one of the vans that takes us to the school in the mornings.

David, being a motivator and having a good heart, immediately arranged that a wheelchair be delivered to the old lady before our departure to Canada. This was indeed the most tragic day we had since our arrival in Uganda. At the dinner table, we all prayed for the old lady and the rest of the Ugandan people.

**Thursday June 9, 2011**

Today, we enjoyed a culture exposure day that, allowed us to explore the beauty of wild, African nature. Victory Outreach Ministry arranged for a school bus to take us to see the African Safari. It was a long ride, but very pleasant. Dr. Jennifer, Nurse Joan, and a few people from our lodge came with us. Along the road, we saw little tiny baby monkeys with spiky, red hair on their forehead eating mango fruit. While riding on the bus, I was reflecting on the experiences I had encountered since we arrived in Uganda. Along the way to the safari, I had pictured in my mind the old, lame lady who had been crawling on the dusty road. I was still crying about it. I know that her memory will be frozen in my mind for the rest of my life. What an enormous impact she had on me, as well as the little girl in the pink dress who was born with aids.

At the Tangi Gate River entrance, we arrived where the wild frontiers of the Nile River Safari starts. From there, we had to drive 23 km more to reach Safari Paraa Lodge. While we drove through the safari roads, we saw many wild animals. Everyone was taking pictures, but I did not. I felt no amusement. I was just going for the ride, feeling isolated in a zone with my own thoughts of sadness and pain. On the way to Paraa Lodge, we had stopped at the Children Centre and enjoyed a wonderful lunch prepared by the staff from our lodge. Paraa Lodge was only a few minutes away from where we ate lunch. It was the only place we could feel air-conditioning. This magnificent lodge is located up on a hill looking down to clear blue water called White Nile River, which its streams flow into Victoria Lake. European tourists occupied the lodge. What a serene and splendid view! We all enjoyed the view, absorbing the scenic beauty of nature. Some of us purchased souvenirs and others rested before our drive back to Lira. On our journey back, we rode through the safari roads, seeing more wild animals from a very close distance. We arrived at our lodge after 9:00pm. We had supper and closed the day with a prayer. Then we retired for the night.



**Friday June 10, 2011**

At 7:30 am we ate breakfast and then were ready for another day of hard work. Cheryl Huntley and I helped the local men with the brickwork for the new school addition. On this day, there were 199 patients with a total of 346 treatments received: 50 for malaria, 78 for respiratory infection, 12 for skin infection, 22 for joint/muscle pain, 5 for GI, 55 for worms parasite, 6 for ENT/Mouth, 40 for GU, 7 for HTN, 18 for general illnesses, and 53 for eyeglasses.

In the afternoon, Pastor Robson and David took a few of us to the nearest huts to visit the local people and to see what the huts looked like on the inside. The huts are square, about 10' x 10'. An entire family of four or five people lives in one hut. I could not believe what we had seen. The huts are built from red, clay mud and covered with a straw roof.

There are no windows, just an opening used as an entrance. There is no light, water, or washrooms. It is like living in a grave above ground. Inside the hut, we saw a few planks of wood covered with a straw mat, which was used as a bed. On the other side, opposite to the bed, there were some plastic bags used to keep the family's belongings. In the middle of the hut, there was a string hung from one side of the hut to the other used to dry their clothes. Beside their huts, the people built smaller, round huts where they preserve their crops. Close to the huts, I saw a large pile of soil that was gathered together around the bottom of some trees. I thought it was a playhouse for the children. When I learned the truth about what it was, I was more than astonished and my heart melted with sorrow for those unfortunate people. Pastor Robson explained to us that it was a home for termites, which is called a Terma Hill. From his explanation, we understood what the people's relationship was to those living things. Ecologically, they protect the natural environment, and the termites and their eggs are also used as a source of food for them. The deplorable conditions that the Barlonyo's people are living in are inhumanely unacceptable. They are deprived of standard necessities, which each and everyone of us are taking for granted. We should try our best to do as much as we can to help these people in building a fountain of hope for a better life and for a glimpse of joy and peace. **This was another sad day.**

**Saturday June 11, 2011**

I forgot to mention that I was the “alarm clock” for the girls in our team. Every morning at 6:00 am, I had to knock on everyone’s door saying, “It’s time to wake up!” Indeed, it was my pleasure to help! At 7:00am, we said our grace before and after breakfast and then we were ready for another day of hard work.

It had rained again the night before, making it impossible to arrive on time to our destination due to the unpaved roads of clay soil. The van got stuck in the mud four times. The local people working on the farms helped us to push the van out from the mud. The children from around the area came to greet us. I gave them candy and Carolyn Sommerville gave them balloons. One little boy, about five years old, was wearing a pair of shorts, which looked more like a skirt. The material was hanging from his waist down, torn to pieces and you could see his naked body.

Finally, we arrived at the new school. Each one of us tried to attend and accommodate, as much as we could, to the needs of the patients who were waiting for assistance. People received a number to wait their turn in line, from morning until evening. Luckily, everyone who came today had gone through to see the doctor and received their medication and eyeglasses. We had 178 patients, who received a total of 285 treatments: 44 for malaria, 66 for respiratory infection, 6 for skin infection, 23 for joint/muscle, 6 for GI, 53 for worms parasite, 8 ENT/Mouth, 32 for GU, 1 for HTN, 13 for general illnesses, and 33 for eyeglasses.

In the late afternoon, some of us went on a ten-minute walk to see the Borehole well that the Crossroads Alongside Organization repaired in January of 2011. The well allows the local people to drink safe and clean water.

I washed the dry mud from a little boy’s legs and when I touched his feet, I felt a stone hard surface on the bottom. This was because they do not wear any shoes. Everyday they walk barefoot on muddy, spiky roads. The tough, hard layer of skin from underneath their feet is protecting them, from feeling any pain when stepping on hard objects.

Before the Crossroads Alongside Organization repaired the Borehole well, the people were drinking polluted water from a swamp filled with flies and mosquitoes, and frogs jumping in and out of it. With that kind of water we would not even wash the floors, or water our gardens, nevertheless drink it. Most of the children are suffering from E coli disease and intestinal worms due to the polluted water. This causes a loss of lives, which is increasing on a large scale.

The people travel from far distances to fill one or two containers of clean water from the repaired Borehole well. The Crossroads Alongside Organization have already projected and planned, for the near future, that an additional fifteen Borehole wells be installed. After an intense analysis and searching process, they learned that in order to reach safe clean water, they would need to drill 200 feet underground for each well. I am pleased to inform everyone that the Crossroads Alongside Organization has made a decision to install the first Borehole well this year, in 2011, on the grounds of the new school. This project will be complete and ready for the children, when the doors of the new school will be opened for the first time.

I am imagining and wishing to see the school with clean grounds, green grass, trees and flowers, children wearing beautiful uniforms, smiling and running freely like butterflies. It would be wonderful to see the children enjoying a playground with swings, slides, tree houses to climb up, gym equipment and to hear their joyful laughter day after day. Wherever we traveled in Uganda, I never saw a single swing for the children to play on. I do not believe that those children even know what a playground is.

From my young childhood, at the age of 6 years old, I was raised in a convent. I was taught to love and respect everyone, regardless of his or her race. I practiced this all my life and I will continue to do so, as long as I live.

In my orthodox religion, we must fast every week on Wednesdays and Fridays. We are allowed to have only bread and water and pray all day long. Knowing that I would work hard in this mission in hot, steamy weather, I brought with me a bag of almonds to avoid eating any food while I was fasting. I had given some almonds to a local young man who did not know what they were. The children are thankful and happy to receive just a candy. They are respectful when you give them anything. They bow down to touch your feet as a sign of gratitude and appreciation. It is so unfair that this humiliation and degradation are upon those remarkable children.

The Victory Outreach Ministry had welcomed us with open arms. We had very comfortable accommodations and three wonderful meals every day. We could not drink tap water or brush our teeth with it. We were supplied with bottled water, as much as we needed. We had to drink water, even when we did not feel thirsty, to avoid dehydration.

We all thank the staff from our lodge, Alpha Resort Hotel, for being attentive to us, cooking our meals, cleaning our rooms, and most of all greeting us every evening when coming back from Barlonyo, with dirty and dusty clothes after a hard day of work. Thank you to you all: Margaret Akullo, chef supervisor, Osota Daniel, chef, Susan Aol, chef, Sam Epongu, food service, Fiona Adong, food service, Kauma Joan, front office clerk, and our happy driver, Patrick, who made us laugh everyday on the way to the new school and back to the lodge.

### **Sunday June 12, 2011**

After our ritual of saying grace before and after breakfast, we all got dressed up to go to the church service. Our leader, David, and Pastor Robson, decided to have the service right at the new school where we were working and helping to get it ready before classes would resume. It was a wonderful service with lots of children, men, and women who attended with joy and passion. We were all dancing and singing Gospel music. During the service, the pastor had two bags filled with oranges to sell. As per their tradition, when a local person has no money to put in the collection basket, they bring oranges. A guest they choose has to buy the oranges and offer the money to the church. The pastor gave me one bag with oranges and the second bag to Linda, David's wife. I did not understand it. I thought that the oranges were given as a gift. I was very happy to receive them and I said in their language, "OPOIA", which means thank you. Everyone was laughing and clapping their hands saying, "No, you have to buy the oranges!" What a fun time we had. I bought the oranges and gave them to Patrick, our driver, to take home to his children.

At the service the children's choir put together a wonderful concert in English, praising God for choosing us to be there to love and help them. The Pastor, in his speech, called our mission team the Eleven Apostles. This is because we were eleven women in our group. With gratitude and appreciation, he thanked us all for the good we had done.

At the church service, there was a girl who was 14 years old, named Angida Alice. The pastor from Barlonyo introduced her and her 4 younger siblings. The Rebels massacred both of their parents, at the time of the uprising in 2004. At that time, Alice was 7 years old and her other siblings were 5, 3, 2 and 1 year old. They had no one to look after them. Alice, being the oldest, had to take care of her siblings having no food, money, or clothing. She sang for us with a beautiful, angelic voice and with such compassion, a song that praised and thanked Canada. That courageous, young lady touched my heart so much, I gave her my necklace and watch. However, I had made a mistake by acting on impulse, not realizing that the other children would also have expected to receive gifts.

After the church service, we all returned to our lodge in Lira. We enjoyed a wonderful dinner outside in the garden. The pastors from several churches, along with their wives joined us. The pastors were Pastor Johnson, Milton, Peter and Pastor Robson Atoke. Each of us took turns explaining what kind of job we were doing, since our arrival in Uganda, and what we would do in the future to keep the mission going. After saying grace, the pastors thanked and congratulated us for the work well done and for the love and compassion we expressed to the Ugandan people.

**It was a pleasant and enjoyable evening!**

**Monday June 13, 2011**

At 8:00am, we all got in the van and went off on our way to the school in Barlonyo. It was indeed a very hard day of work. The people from the nearest districts knew that we were leaving soon to go back to Canada and so, they were walking from a far distance to get to our location. We were astonished to see so many people at the school. There were more than 300 people waiting for us. Babies were crying, sick and hungry. The chaos and commotion was unbelievable. The sound was depressing. You could hear people crying in pain everywhere. Children's faces were covered with flies and mosquitoes. They were hungry and thirsty. We had not seen a day like that, since we arrived. Every one of us tried our best to help as much as we could to bring peace, order and calmness to the agitated atmosphere. David was going up and down every room, trying to improve the system, by giving priority to the most needy children and to the elderly sick people. It was a hot, sunny day. To protect the heads of babies from the sun, the mothers used a dry shell of a large vegetable that looked like a pumpkin. They would put the shell over the baby's head as protection from the sun's heat. What an unusual way to improve the comfort of their babies.

On that day, only 257 patients had gone through to see the doctor and received a total of 466 treatments: 92 for malaria, 107 for respiratory infection, 16 for skin infection, 29 for joint/muscle, 64 for worms parasite, 13 for ENT/mouth, 52 for GU, 7 for HTN, 19 for general illnesses, and 67 for eyeglasses. Some of the people, who came from a far distance, had to sleep on the concrete floor at the school to wait to see the doctor on the following day.

At the dinner table we prayed for all of the Ugandan people who were poor, sick, hungry, thirsty and powerless.

## Tuesday June 14, 2011

Today, we enjoyed an African breakfast. They served us the most delicious toast bread I had ever tasted. The native people extract the flour used for bread from a large fruit that looks something like a cucumber. It grows in a tree and is called cassava. This fruit is sweet and could even be eaten raw. It is delightfully tasty.

After breakfast, we enthusiastically were ready for another day of hard work. When we arrived at the school, more than 300 people showed up and only 260 patients had a chance to receive medication for 447 treatments: 69 for malaria, 93 for respiratory infection, 11 for skin infection, 27 for joint/muscle, 19 for GI, 70 for worms parasite, 17 for ENT/mouth, 26 for GU, 5 for cv-dehydration, 12 for HTN, 30 for general illnesses, and 68 for eyeglasses. Like any other day, you could hear children crying due to pain and hunger. Each and every one of us was trying to bring comfort and a little joy to the people. Nancy was in the optical room and although she looked tired, she encouraged people to dance and sing. If any one of us would enter the room, we also had to dance and sing with them. This we were doing only to change the people's mood, and to see them smiling.

We could call June 14, 2011 an historical and significant day! In our team, we had a young, brave lady named Carolyn Sommerville from Oakville, Ontario. Her mother, Ruth Sommerville, had passed away on April 2, 2007, leaving behind a wonderful, loving husband named Ian, three sons, and a beautiful daughter, Carolyn, whom I had the pleasure to work, cry and laugh with. I deeply felt her pain and sorrow to see her grieving for her mother. In January 2012, Ian, Carolyn's father, is going to build a new medical clinic on the grounds of the new school for the people of Barlonyo. The medical clinic will be named after his beloved wife as: "The Ruth Sommerville Memorial Clinic."

Today, at the site of the future medical clinic, a dedication ceremony took place in memory of Carolyn's mother. Ian wrote the speech that Carolyn read on his behalf. It was a reflection of his wife's memory. The speech was touching and brought me to tears feeling sorry for this wonderful family that was struck with a heartbreaking, painful tragedy. I could only congratulate Ian, for loving his wife so dearly. At this dedication ceremony there were some Ugandan Officiates and a reporter from the local newspaper. Carolyn had the honor to dig the first hole in the ground, where the medical clinic will be built in her mother's memory. **We all love you, Carolyn!** Ian already had built the first medical clinic in Liberia. The second is going to be in Barlonyo, and the third will be built, next year, in Nigeria. All will be done in the memory of his beloved wife, Ruth. This could be called a true love story! I'm sure Ruth is smiling up in heaven, knowing that her children and wonderful husband love her, by showing their appreciation because she was a good, loving, devoted mother and wife. The Sommerville's remarkable sacrifice and devotion will bring healing, happiness, better health, and a gleam of hope for thousands of unfortunate people of Africa for many, many years to come. **From the entire mission team and from the Crossroads Alongside International Organization, we thank you Sommerville family and God bless you all!**

### **Wednesday June 15, 2011**

Regretfully, this was our last day of interaction with the wonderful people we met in Uganda. When we arrived at the new school, the local people from Barlonyo and from other neighbouring districts were there to see the doctor and get the medications they needed. In total, we attended 126 patients who received 235 treatments. They were 46 for malaria, 51 for respiratory infection, 9 for skin infection, 17 for joint/muscle, 21 for worms parasite, 4 ENT/mouth, 18 for GU, 13 for HTN, 11 for general illnesses, and 45 for eyeglasses.

The number of days we spent in this mission was short, but the voluminous help in reaching the Ugandan people was performed in an extensively large scale. In this short time, we were able to complete the work on the new school and our medical staff had attended, in total, 1,603 patients who received medication for 2,856 treatments: 541 for malaria, 569 for respiratory infection, 77 for skin infection, 184 for joint/muscle, 81 for GI, 389 for worms parasite, 70 ENT/Mouth, 290 for GU, 10 for cv-dehydration, 55 for HTN, 153 for general illnesses, and 437 for eyeglasses.

Today was another special, memorable day. The Crossroads Alongside Organization delivered the wheelchair to the old lady, who was crawling a few days ago to get to our location. David Miclash sent the van to get her and had someone clean and bathe her.

When she arrived to the school, we sat her on the wheelchair and I covered her legs with my own blanket that I had brought with me from Canada. I thought that my blanket would give her some comfort, knowing she has to sleep on the ground.

In Barlonyo, there are many orphaned children. Their parents were massacred in 2004, at the time of uprising, or dead from aids. Later on that afternoon, Alice Angida, the girl with the voice of an angel, brought to us a list with the names of 25 orphaned children, asking if we would consider in sponsoring every child whose name was on the list. I spoke with David Miclash, our leader, about it. He assured me that any funds donated to the Crossroads Alongside International Organization, would be given to the orphans looked after by the Victory Outreach Ministry. I wish I could afford to be able to sponsor all of the orphaned children of Barlonyo, who I love dearly, each and every one.

What a day we had of expressing showers of joyful and sorrowful tears. Today being the last working day, we left earlier at around 4:00pm. David and Pastor Robson went to inspect and finalize the new Borehole well, which will be installed soon at the new school.

At about 7:00pm, David and Pastor Robson arrived at the lodge just in time for supper. We prayed, saying grace before and after supper and we sang gospel songs praising God for helping us to do His will and accomplish things that many people could not believe we could do. By January 2012, the new school addition will be complete and the orphaned children will be able to step inside into the world of knowledge. I pray and wish that one day their dream for a better life will come true. With our donations to the

Crossroads Alongside International Organization, the Victory Outreach Ministry in Uganda will be able to serve the children hot meals daily, and clean, safe water to drink. With just a little help from each of us, we can make a huge difference in the lives of these beautiful children. Those desperate people need our help. Please, let us all do, something about it! As I mentioned before, **To The World You May Be One Person, But To One Person You May Be The World!**

We closed the day with prayer and thanked God for given us the strength and power to complete our mission, according to His will.



### Thursday June 16, 2011

This was the day when, with a broken heart, we said our good-byes. We felt a strong feeling of sadness to depart from the Ugandan people, who have big hopes in their hearts that, we will return to continue to help build a prosperous and better life for their community. The women in our missionary group, were called the eleven apostles and David Miclash our shepherd, who motivated and led us to accomplish a successful mission. Pastor Robson, with his beautiful wife Eunice, had accompanied us to the airport in Entebbe, which is from where, we departed to fly to Amsterdam. It was a long drive to get there. It took more than 9 hours. We drove through the towns of Luwero, Bombo, Wandegaya, Kampala, which is the capital of Uganda, Kajjansi, and Zana. When we finally reached Entebbe, we hugged and said good-bye to Pastor Robson and his wife. Farewell and God bless Uganda!

Sharon Crause, I do not want to end my journal without saying thank you for the beautiful card you gave me at the airport, before we said good-bye. I feel that I do not deserve those kind words of appreciation from you because you all worked as hard as I did with love and devotion. Anyway, thank you Sharon for your wonderful thoughts, which will be treasured in my heart. By the way, my ankle is starting to heal and I appreciate your consideration.

I very much enjoyed being around Karin Pellizzer from Oakville, Ontario. Out of all of us, she was the quietest one. She did not talk very much, but her beautiful face would light up when she spoke passionately about her two daughters. Thank you, Karin, for the advice on the New King James Version Study Bible. Good luck to you on finding what you are looking for!

When I arrived back to Toronto, my son asked me: "Mom, do you have anything in your suitcase, because it feels very light." I told him that I gave everything I had to those unfortunate children, who need it more than I do. I came home with an empty suitcase and an empty purse, knowing that it was the right thing to do.

This unique mission trip was an educational experience for me. I feel blessed and it made me feel stronger. Those unfortunate human beings are struggling for survival and here, some of us are constantly pressured with passion to possess great richness. The excessive desire for wealth conquers our hearts, keeping our eyes blindfolded that we are unable to see the pain and suffering of others. I just pray that my message will enter deeply into your hearts. **Let's do something about it!**

God bless you all and thank you!

**Georgette Vujcuf**