

APRIL 2011

Greetings from Uganda

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THREE QUARTERS... OF ONE HALF

It's strange to shift suddenly from "almost done" to "just getting started" within one week. Now that I've signed on for a second year-long fellowship with IJM Uganda, that's exactly where I've found myself. I will be home for a quick refresher in June and July, but then I head back to Uganda to continue working for justice here.

Many of my tasks as a Communications Fellow will roll over to my new position as Media Relations Fellow. The main differences will be coordinating a branding strategy for our office and interacting more directly with local news media. These ventures involve a lot more responsibility, so I appreciate your prayers as I take on this work.

The last few months have been quite busy for me. Amid Uganda's elections and the random public holidays they provided, I helped finish up our materials for IJM's Global Prayer Gathering. For the last six months, I have been recording our morning hymns here in the office to assemble on a CD for GPG participants. There were a lot of stressful moments, but I am thrilled with the result. The CD provided a cool way for IJM's supporters to participate in life in the field and response was really great!

I've also gotten to take part in a lot of cool events with our clients recently. Early in March, I went with our director and legal team to physically evict a man who had stolen his niece's home five years ago. Later, I watched one client's broad smile as he received the keys to his restored home and another client's frustrated frown as her abuser lied about her in a courtroom. The highs and lows of work here are intense – but worth every exhausting day.



our gpg cd!

*a village
courthouse*



UNREST IN UGANDA

Elections in February were definitely tense, but went much smoother than I anticipated. President Museveni won another term and quickly suppressed calls from the opposition parties for Egypt/Tunisia style protests. An intimidating military presence blanketed the city for the next month, but we ended up with very little violence. Tension has risen again recently as opposition leaders have tried to rally protests and riots throughout the city, so please continue praying for peace.

It's been so interesting witnessing a completely different political climate at work in Uganda, particularly with all of the uprisings across the Middle East. Recent events here, like mob justice, police brutality, and government attempts to block Facebook, are unfathomable back home. I've learned to appreciate the freedoms available in the US much more and to always consider things in a global context.



FOR A WIDOW LIKE SUSAN, A HOME MEANS SURVIVAL

*A story from IJM HQ
with help from yours truly!*

“She has nowhere to live and she fears being killed by the perpetrator. Someone has to protect her.” ~Juliet Musoke, IJM Uganda Attorney

It was the dead of night when a bully intent on stealing Susan’s small patch of land arrived on her property. The man began to violently demolish her small brick home. As mortar and dust rained down on her terrified grandchildren, he made his threat clear: “Let me kill this lousy woman.”

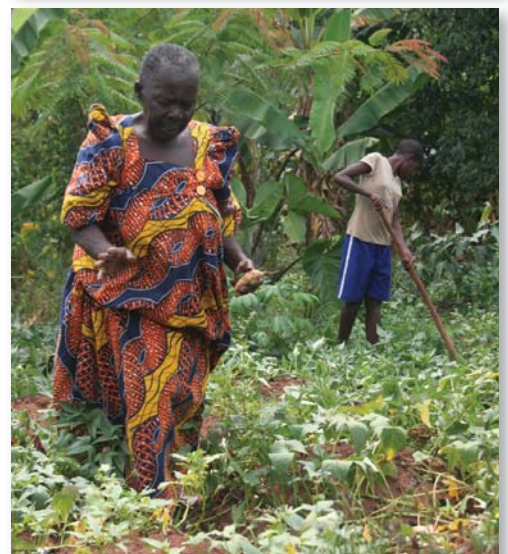
Susan and her grandchildren fled. She begged the police to do something – to get her home back, to stop the man who had threatened to kill her. They did not.

For vulnerable widows and orphans across Africa, the violent crime of property grabbing is both common, and a matter of life and death. Without their property, many have no source of income for food or medical care. And, like Susan, some are even threatened with murder. But these widows and orphans are not alone. We are watching, and we are defending.

IJM’s Ugandan legal team mounted a top-rate legal case for Susan and her grandchildren – securing their safety and their home.

Today, Susan and her grandchildren have returned to their land, rebuilt their home and received compensation for the terror inflicted on them. Susan is not only able to grow her crops again, but is now managing a small new chicken business that IJM aftercare staff helped her start.

“He knows he has been beaten. He can’t come back.” ~Susan, Uganda



WISE WORDS

“When our grandchildren ask us where we were when the voiceless and the vulnerable in our era needed leaders of compassion and purpose, I hope we can say that we showed up, and that we showed up on time.”

Gary Haugen, IJM President and CEO

“We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don’t give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

“Rise free from care before dawn, and seek adventures... Grow wild according to thy nature... Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport.”

Henry David Thoreau

Disturb us, Lord,
When we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Sir Frances Drake

ADVENTURES IN EAST AFRICA

Random public holidays in February and March allowed me to knock a few more items off of my bucket list. In early March, I travelled back to Kenya to revisit the orphanage and to stop by the IJM Kenya office. Navigating a new, bustling city was tough, but I managed to get ~~almost~~ ~~most of the time~~ where I needed to be. I met with the interns and fellows working in Kenya and compared our experiences so far. Their communications intern and I are planning some cool media outreach, so I'm hoping we can pull it all off.

A couple weeks ago, I fulfilled a dream by accompanying some friends on a whitewater rafting trip on the Nile. The whole adventure was really cheap and crazy fun. My skinny arms got quite the workout, but the aching muscles were well worth it.

For my next adventure, the IJM Uganda interns & fellows trekked over to Tanzania for a long weekend. We stayed in Arusha with a family who had hosted IJM interns for years in Uganda. While there, we got to hike around the jungles near Kilimanjaro and around the open plains of Maasai land. I will never forget visiting the Maasai in their village, seeing their distinctive dress and jewelry up close, and being welcomed so warmly at their tiny village church.

For Easter weekend, I went west to Uganda's Lake Bunyonyi, reportedly one of the most beautiful places in all of Africa. It was far colder than I expected, but definitely beautiful and fun. After a busy few months of work, these opportunities to relax and explore have been huge. I will do far less international travelling in my second year, but I'm excited to see more of what Uganda has to offer.

*Just as a note, my non-work trips are all done on the cheap and paid for out of my personal savings or donations specially ear-marked for vacation.



Prayer Requests:

1 Please pray for my trip back to the US in June. There are so many people to see and so many fast food places to frequent (Five Guys, how I've missed you!) that I'm nervous about fitting everything in. Pray that this trip will be a relaxing intermission before I'm back to Uganda for more.

2 Pray for all of the planning involved in this new fellowship. I am intimidated by what's ahead and really want to create quality work, so please pray for peace over this new job.

3 Pray for my fundraising efforts as I seek financial support to continue my work in Uganda. It will be harder to network with people when I have so little time back home, so please pray that I can connect with donors in a meaningful way.

As always, you can check out my blog for more detail on my day-to-day life in Uganda, including an explanation of my extended fellowship.

I am still fundraising for this work, so please consider making a donation at:

ijm.org/getinvolved/internshipsupport.

Thanks for everything and hopefully I will see you when I'm home this summer!

Scott

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