

Prayer Letter

July 2009

Dear friends,

I'm here at last! I flew out on 1 May, a week later than planned because of visa delays. However travel went smoothly, everything arrived intact and I had a travel companion, a BMS volunteer called Paul Davies.

So what have I been up to in my first few weeks in Angola? Here are a few of the highlights:

- Offroading (in a Land Rover in the north of Angola to visit projects)
- Eating bugs (served up to us while travelling)
- Chasing bugs (out of my house!)
- Sitting in traffic jams (in Luanda... every day)
- Toy making (on a course run by another volunteer)
- Toy collection (from Unicef for PEPE (pre schools))
- Mosquito net collection (for distribution to PEPE children)
- White knuckle rides (in the bairros of Luanda in our Land Rover)
- Attending meetings (with my new colleagues to find out about the work they do here)
- Visiting orphanages and PEPEs

Things that I have learned

My name exists in Kikongo. It means 'level'. Some people reckon that makes me African. Not a bad start...

Sadly one quarter of children in Angola will die before their fifth birthday and that's mostly due to



A visit to an orphanage



preventable diseases like malaria and diarrhoea.

There is so much work to be done here, from the provision of basic sanitation and clean drinking water out in the provinces to further education projects in the city. And all of this depends upon funding from BMS and other parties such as the oil companies working in Angola.



Street in a bairro in Luanda

A week or so ago I was reading Psalm 54 and one part really touched me. The part where it says, "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted. I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires".

At the same time I have been reading a book called *90 minutes in heaven*. It is written by Don Piper, a pastor who died in a road accident, experienced heaven but came back to life through the prayers of another Christian who arrived at the scene of the accident. In the book Don describes heaven as such a wonderful place beyond human words or imagination and how he longs to return there. With all the new sights (shacks perched in dangerous places; scantily dressed toddlers alone in the street), smells

(a mixture of raw sewage and food being cooked in the street) and sounds (horns blasting; people trying to sell whatever it is that they have) still fresh in my memory, I've been reminded that the people here in Angola, who work so hard each day just to survive and who have little hope of a better future here on earth, can have a different kind of hope. The hope that awaits all who put their trust in Jesus. That the poorest of the poor (in earthly standards) can also experience the wonder of heaven for all of eternity and what a contrast that will be from their lives as they are now. Reading these things has given me a fresh excitement about heaven and a renewed sense of urgency to share God's love with others.

Over the next couple of months I hope to continue to build good relationships with my colleagues here and to increase my understanding of the culture and what the greatest needs are. I am hoping that my work visa will be granted before the end of July so that it will not be necessary for me to leave the country and then re-enter on another visitor visa. I am also hoping that my passport will not need to be stamped with the work visa in London, but that it can be done here in Luanda.

Please join me in giving thanks for:

- ◆ The small apartment that I'm now staying in next to Lynne
- ◆ Friends in the oil industry and other NGOs and the welcome I've received in the church
- ◆ Adaption – to the heat and my new surroundings
- ◆ Initial ideas about the direction of my work
- ◆ Health and safety

And in praying that:

- ◆ More and more of the Angolan people will come to know the freedom and hope that they can have in Jesus
- ◆ My work visa will be granted before the end of July
- ◆ That the process will soon be completed to allow a BMS Land Rover to be driven here from Congo
- ◆ Relationships with colleagues will continue to develop well as we work things through and reach agreement on where I should focus my efforts
- ◆ We will continue to have good health and safety in travel

Thanks for all the prayers and messages I've received over these past few weeks. They have been a real encouragement to me.

Love and prayers

Fiona

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