

Liz and Sergio Vilela

Prayer letter, December 2017

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Dear friends,

Christmas is upon us and we are so happy to be back in the UK to celebrate in this special time with many of you. Here is an update of what we have been up to recently.

Trial separation

At the end of October, Sergio and I had a trial separation...well, only for work, when Sergio had to travel to South Africa to renew visas with the Action Team and I had to give some PEPE training in Chimoio, a town near to the Zimbabwe border. This was the first time that I would drive outside of Beira and without Sergio by my side. So with some trepidation, I set off on the journey with the children. With thanks to God, we arrived safe and well in Chimoio.

I spent three mornings teaching on child protection to 27 people who were training to be PEPE teachers. It was a great opportunity to speak about child protection to people who have never had training on it before. Training is based on the child protection policy that was written for PEPE. We spoke about dangers to children and why it is important to protect the children in our care. In the training, we discussed good code of conduct of teachers, how to create a safe physical space for children, certain policies like drop off and pick up and photos/videos, as well as positive reinforcement and how to deal with challenging behavior.



Training

There is an activity that we do every time to teach about different forms of abuse. I put signs around the room, each with a different category of abuse and I give a scenario that could happen in PEPE. The students then move to the form of abuse they think relates to the scenario. For example, "it rains a lot and the roof falls in". This is highly possible in Mozambique when Churches are not built like Churches in the UK, and there are times when it rains very heavily. I explain that it could be an accident when the roof falls in with unexpected high winds and heavy rain. However, if someone knows that the roof isn't very stable and needs fixing and does nothing about it, that then becomes negligence. Other scenarios emphasize the need for an enclosed space to prevent children leaving the venue and other people coming in that could cause harm to the children. These are issues that are obvious and embedded into us in the UK, but this isn't the case in Mozambique. Most people understand the dangers but don't necessarily think of the consequences and take precautions to prevent the children from being hurt.

This is training that focuses on how teachers can protect children in PEPE, but it's much more than that. The students also reflect on what this information means to them personally, in their homes and in their community. So our prayer is that lives will be transformed through learning about child protection and that the people that work in PEPEs will be able to show the love of God in a more effective way through the way they treat the children and provide a safe and secure place where the children will develop and thrive.

The A-Team has arrived

In October, we were very pleased to welcome this year's action team to Beira, Mozambique. The team is made up of Iain, Ellie and Rhiannon. They will be living with us for the duration of their stay. The first month consisted of a lot of Portuguese, getting to know Beira and making use of the public transport, visiting PEPEs and different Baptist Churches, acclimatizing to the heat, cooking some meals for us, and putting up with 2 small children!

While the team are here, they will get involved in a local Church, teach English, PE, and other lessons at a local Christian school, teach English to adults and children, help out at a homework club, get involved in the work of PEPE, amongst other things. They have already started doing most of these activities and are really getting stuck in.



Action Team

The team weren't able to get the visa that previous teams got, so they have already had to apply once and will need to apply again in the next few months. Please pray that everything will go smoothly for this.

Home Assignment

We have already visited our home Church, Saffron Walden Baptist Church, and we have attended a cluster service at Newbridge Baptist Church in Birmingham.

When you read this, we will probably already have been to Hereford, Stirling, Teddington, Crayford and Ashdon, before spending time over Christmas and new year with family and friends. We will visit Colchester and our home Church again before attending the retreat/gathering with other BMS missionaries at IMC in January. We will return to Mozambique on 19th January, ready and enthusiastic to start another term of service.

Here are some specific points for prayer:

- Pray for the Churches that will start PEPE next year, that protecting the children will be a priority, and that the Gospel will reach the children and their families.
- Pray for the action team, that they will be blessed and be a blessing, and that they will together and support each other as a team .
- Pray for our family as we travel around on home assignment, particularly for the children, but also that it will be a time to renew our energy ready for our return to Beira in January.
- Pray for the appointment of a new national coordinator of PEPE for Mozambique.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas, that this will be a time of unity for the body of Christ in celebrating the birthday of our Saviour.

God bless,

Sergio, Liz, Chloe, and Joshua

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