

Belarus And African Refugee Brethren, September 2006

Belarus remains the only old-style Communist dictatorship in Eastern Europe and many of our brethren and contacts live in poverty, and yet are driven by that towards a great hunger for the things of God. Some of them remain victims of the large amount of nuclear radiation in the south of the country following the Chernobyl disaster. Although large areas have been declared unfit for habitation and crops aren't supposed to be grown there, people have no option but to live there and grow food there. The effects of the radiation are still little understood. One sister, herself battling radiation-induced cancer, cares for Chernobyl orphans; and we were able to take three wheelchairs there for those who are suffering from cancer and growths affecting their muscles which leaves them immobile.

We earlier mentioned the baptism of two brothers, who are housebound and immobile in a small village. Their mother is unaffected and works all hours as a subsistence farmer trying to harvest enough food this Summer to provide for them over the Winter. Their wheelchairs, given to them in 1990, had long since ceased functioning, and they were deeply appreciative of being given wheelchairs which enable them to have a degree of mobility around the house and yard. Our brothers are very prayerful and enthusiastically read their Bibles each day, correspond with others about the Bible, and enjoy their cats.



Brother Sasha was quite overcome at the gift of a wheelchair:



Brother Valerij:

Throughout the trip we distributed scarves and shawls made by the sisters of Cape Town, South Africa. Here's our brethren's hard working mother with one of them. You will notice the wheelchair ramp which she made with her own hands so that her sons can get out of the house a bit. Now they have wheelchairs with which to use it.



Mother and wheelchair ramp:

Another sister lives in a house built on a plot of unclaimed land which lies across some railway tracks. It's impossible to drive to her home- everything has to be brought over the railway tracks.

Here's a picture of the third wheelchair being taken to her home across the tracks:



We found all the brethren and sisters visited in good shape spiritually, and we were very happy to baptize ANDREJ into the Lord's saving name.

AFRICAN REFUGEE BRETHREN

The following two emails [spelling corrected], one from a sister currently in a refugee camp who gets online at a nearby internet cafe, and the other from a brother who got out of such a camp and who was assisted to escape to Guyana, speak for themselves as to the very real danger faced by our African refugee brothers and sisters. We do appeal for us all to put our thinking caps on, and to pray, as to how concretely we can assist in these situations.

The first email is from a refugee sister in a camp in Mozambique:

Dear Sister Robin,

Thank you for your effort and I hope God Almighty will pay you. About what you asked on what I am still subject to in the camp; first, it was one day when my husband was travelling they came at home well armed with knives at night and broke down the door of my house so that they may get in. I shouted loudly to the point all my neighbours were aware of the situation and this made them to flee.

Secondly, another day went to fetch water, they pursued me after then they undressed me and did things which are shameful to say on my behalf. I have left that area till police station of the camp to report.

Seeing all these, I am peaceless and unsecured.

God bless you.

The following is an email from brother Abedi, now safe in Guyana, South America, which independently confirms what she says above [in addition to reports by other agencies on the internet]:

Dear Sis. Worrell.

Warmest greetings in our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Now, the informations you request concerning the living in the refugee camp in Africa is as I have experienced it for 10 years very hard. I can just say that refugee camp is not a safe place with regard the moral, spiritual even physical standards. The international political interests have brought people to give their backs to humanism.

I wish to answer your questions as following:

When we arrived in the refugee camp in Tanzania, we had International NGOs to assist us with plastic sheets (for tent), food items, little furnitures just to start a new life since most of us came with empty hands. But the food could not cover the needs of the family; every body had to strive to get a complement. Many lives were lost in that time because it was just the survival of the fittest. In the refugee camp there are no allowances except some refugees who had chance to work for these NGOs. They were receiving between US\$15 to 20 a month. The lack of money pushed many family to breakage (divorce). Women and daughters were running after the Tanzanians working with these NGOs to get money: prostitution. The atmosphere in the camp was generally fearful because of the influence of politics. Refugees were brought by one way or other to participate in the conflict going on in the country. Youths were recruited to go to fight. Government as well as rebels had their representatives in the camp. Therefore, the supporters were antagonistic. Then if you don't support either of them you are enemy of both to everybody.

The refugee brethren received donations from CBM; food items, clothes... but I don't know for how long! Now, as the conflicts in Africa are not to end in the short term (DR Congo conflict is now at its' 11th year and still no responsible Govt), I think the best way to help brethren should be to work out a durable solution so that they can resettle somewhere and work for their living. My case is a good illustration; like a troubled sea , I went from country to country without rest but now, I am settled and my children can go to school and I can serve my Lord.

You want to know how my problem came to be known by the brotherhood; It's because sis. Sonia Hemmingray who brought me into the truth didn't forsake me. During my trouble, she kept in touch with me and every where I was going she was helping me to get in touch with the local ecclesia there. Therefore, I was always in good hands. Then, the Carelink (Bro. Duncan Heaster) got fully aware and appealed on my behalf for help. Then Bro.Clive decided to sponsor.

To my brother in Malawi, Just trust in God and pray, leave it to Him then He will answer.

*Much love
Abedi*