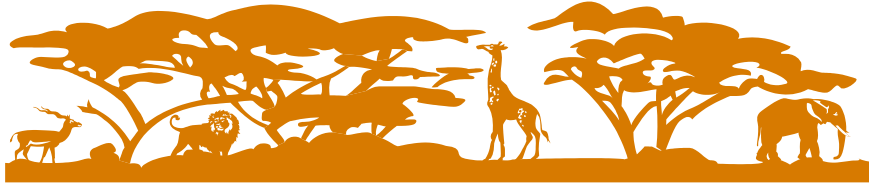


MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS

AFRICA REGION



December 2009

Ministry of Ecology in Africa

Like many African peoples the Kikuyu Ethnic Group in Kenya has a close relationship with God who is the Creator and Source of all life. God gave us all of creation, the earth, the planets. As part of oral discourse there is a Kikuyu saying: *You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children.* This saying sets the stage for this issue of our newsletter on the very current theme of the ministry of ecology and care of the environment in Africa.

This theme is a priority and challenge whose time has come. From our own 2008 Twelfth General Chapter of the Maryknoll Society the section on "Mission and Ecology" in *Keeping Alive the Flame of Mission* states: "Reflect on how to integrate into our personal lives, ministries and our Society the proper stewardship and care for the earth. With the Catholic Church we see the integrity of creation and the sustainability of the earth as both a spiritual and moral issue calling on us to promote Gospel values as children of God and children of the earth." In our post chapter discussions we read this challenging statement: "Make environmental concerns as central to mission as caring for the poor." In Africa we hear such statements as: "The next war in Africa will be over water." "No Trees. No Water. No Life." "An evocative and cogent metaphor for our time is 'homecoming.' Our ecological concerns call us home to plant earth and to the cosmos to which we innately belong and from which we are estranged."

Pope Benedict XVI has been called the "Green Pope." Catholicism under Benedict XVI is indeed turning ever greener. It's a distinctive shade of green — one that's not simply about baptizing secular environmental movements or applying a veneer of Christian vocabulary to a worldview that rests on very different premises. The pope has regularly made strong statements on ecology such as in October, 2009 when he made a call for "intergenerational justice and actions of solidarity with the world's future generations, as they are also entitled to enjoy the beauty of creation." Benedict XVI has backed up his statements with concrete actions such as putting 2,700 solar panels on the roof of the Paul VI auditorium in the Vatican where the pope gives his weekly address.

Jesuit priest Peter Henriot, based in Zambia and an advisor to AMECEA ([Catholic Bishops of Eastern Africa](#)) at the recently completed synod, pointed out that the topic of environmental concern was surprisingly absent from the "Agenda" of the [Second African Synod](#) on the theme "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace" that was published in

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

March, 2009. Issues such as climate change (global warming), ecological integrity, life-style adjustments, and industrial pollution by new investors coming to the African Continent (e.g., in the extractives sector) were not treated. Aside from one passing reference to multinational corporations not paying adequate attention to the environment, this topic was not in the forefront of the problems and challenges in Africa.

But during the synod preparations in Eastern Africa itself Henriot identified the specific theme of the “ecological context for reconciliation”: “Increasingly in Africa (and all over our world!) we are recognizing that we humans belong to the community of creation, the wider environment that nourishes and sustains all human life. However, we have not always respected that truth, with the disastrous ecological consequences that we now face every day and in every place. How can we reconcile with Mother Earth?”

All this changed at the synod itself that took place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2009.

Ecology and care of the environment emerged as priorities in the short interventions of the synod bishops and other delegates and in the small group discussions. The “Message to the People of God” of the Second Africa Synod” has these quotations: “Science and technology are making giant strides in all aspects of life, equipping humanity with all that it takes to make our planet a beautiful place for us all.” “The Holy See has set up many direct initiatives for the development and good of Africa. A case in point is the John Paul II Sahel Foundation to fight against desertification of the Sahel regions.” “Multinationals have to stop their criminal devastation of the environment in their greedy exploitation of natural resources.” “The future history of the African continent is still to be written. God has blessed us with vast natural and human resources.”

The “Final List of [57] Propositions” of the Second Africa Synod includes Propositio 22 (“Environmental Protection and Reconciliation with Creation”), Propositio 29 (“Natural Resources”) and Propositio 30 (“Land and Water”). Specific recommendations include:

- Promote environmental education and awareness.
- Persuade their local and national governments to adopt policies and binding legal regulations for the protection of the environment and promote alternative and renewable sources of energy.
- Encourage all to plant trees and treat nature and its resources, respecting the common good and the integrity of nature, with transparency and respect for human dignity.
- The [Catholic] Church will seek to establish a desk in various countries of the continent to monitor the management of natural resources.
- Agricultural workers be guaranteed a fair wage in light of the fact that investments promote the creation of employment.
- Promote the professional formation of youth in farming and the raising of animals as a way to stem the uncontrolled flight from the village to the cities.

Complete coverage on the synod can be found on the [“Yes Africa Matters” Website](#).

"If you want to cultivate peace, protect the creation" is the theme of the [World Day of Peace 2010](#) to be celebrated on 1 January 2010. Hopefully the day will be celebrated throughout Africa. The theme aims to raise awareness about the strong bond that exists in our globalized and interconnected world between protecting the creation and cultivating peace. This close and intimate tie is further accentuated by the many problems concerning human beings' natural environment, such as the use of resources, climate change, the application and use of biotechnology and demographic growth. If the human family is unable to face these new challenges with a renewed sense of social justice and equity, and of

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

international solidarity, we run the risk of sowing seeds of violence among peoples, and between current generations and those to come.

This “Papal Message” for the World Day of Peace 2010 makes it clear that the protection of the environment is a challenge for all humankind. It is a shared and universal duty to respect a collective asset destined for everyone, impeding any use of the various categories of beings with impunity. It is a responsibility that should mature in light of the global extent of the present ecological crisis and the consequent need to face it on a global level, as all beings depend on one another in the universal order established by the Creator. If one seeks to cultivate peace, they should also favor a renewed awareness of interdependence that connects them to all the other inhabitants of the earth. This awareness would work to eliminate the various causes of ecological disasters and will guarantee a timely response when such disasters affect peoples and lands. Ecological questions must be faced, not just because of the dreadful prospects that environmental degradation presages; they must be translated, above all, into a strong motivation to cultivate peace.

In Maryknoll’s 63 year (1946-2009) history in Africa we have been deeply involved in the ministry of ecology and care of the environment long before those words became popular. We may not have been making the headlines and winning awards, but we have been in the field, on the grassroots, out with the people doing it. So in this issue we present a variety of case studies, experiences and reflections by Maryknollers on our deep involvement in water, trees and the land in Africa especially in [Tanzania](#) and [Kenya](#). This ecological portrait covers our work for many years in Musoma and Shinyanga Dioceses in Tanzania and more recent projects in Kenya. So let’s all go green!

Water and Ecology in Shinyanga, Tanzania

By Dan Ohmann

Theme
Article

In 1964 I attended the Makoko Language School in Musoma, Tanzania. In the evenings I would go and sit on the cement *baraza* (Swahili for verandah) of the “Beach House” bathing my feet in the waters of Lake Victoria. There were four Misongoma trees. By the end of the year three had fallen to the lapping of the waves. It looked like the “Beach House” was also going. But that was the peak year — 1965. Today the water’s edge is at least 20 meters from the baraza where I had sat. The lake is at least a good two meters shallower. Lake Eyasi in Tanzania, that all Maryknollers in Shinyanga know well, has gone dry five times in the last 15 years. This year it will go dry again. None of the oral history of the older people tells of it ever being dry before.



Dan Ohmann helps some villagers dig for water in a dry river bed

World climate warming and Africa climate heating, seems the only logical explanation for this radical and rapid change. Father John Brinkman, M.M. in the section on the “Vulnerability of Africa” in the paper “A Reflection on Mission and Ecology” states: “An increase in average global temperature by even two degrees Celsius is likely to raise the annual average in some of Africa four degrees or more.” If he is correct with this information then we can look forward to disastrous years ahead.

Shinyanga is especially vulnerable. The Dutch have had a long-standing program called “The Shinyanga Shallow Wells Project.” This

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

is because digging deep wells only gives you salty water, sometimes warm. Deep wells are rare here. All 32 villages of our vast parish of Ndoleleji are along rivers. The Dutch project put five shallow wells in the town of Imaleseko (the Sukuma for “stop laughing here” because of nearby lions). Last year three of the five wells went dry. Adding to the rapidity of the approaching problem is our own program of pumping water to villages by windmills so people could have clean drinking water. We now are pumping to 18 villages — again increasing the water consumption.

District Farming Officials are advising people to have gardens along the rivers. They have done well. There are Honda and Chinese water pumps popping up all over further draining the meager water supply. I can't vouch for it but water officials of the Tanzania Government must be aware of the approaching problem. Five years ago with Chinese funding a one meter diameter pipeline was begun tapping Lake Victoria water 45 kilometers away. It will soon be in operation. This in turn will affect Egypt's water supply problems some 1,240 kilometers away.

Any solutions? One thing being done is catching (harvesting) rain water from tin roofs before it can evaporate. Another effort is to make “water catchments” — little earthen dams like we see in many parts of the Midwest, U.S.A. Even the Watatulu (the local ethnic group) cattle herders are seeing the problem. All over their area they are digging 10 x 20 meter cisterns, three meters deep, to catch the rainy season water for their cows and homes as the rivers are running dry more rapidly these days.

These are temporary measures for the water shortage problem. The best long range approach to the problem that I've come across is Brinkman's suggestions in “A Reflection on Mission and Ecology.” He asks, “What proclamation of Christ best conforms to the deepest concerns and aspirations of humanity confronted by this unprecedented alienation of the human community from the earth community? What engagement would promote the spiritual and structural change necessary for effective mission response?” He again asks, “Where in the resources of our message do we find the insights that would inspire the energies and guidance for effective mission in an ecological age?” His answer based on patristic insight is our understanding of the Eucharist. His reflections reinforce my own reflections about the Offertory Prayers preparing the bread and wine for the consecration. Again, my own reflections on the unexpected remark in St. Mark's Gospel after the calm restored by Christ from Peter's boat: “They were utterly and completely dumbfounded, because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant; their minds were closed.”



One of the windmills in Ndoleleji Parish

Let My People Eat

By Herb Gappa

Theme
Article

Jesus of Nazareth, Norman Borlaug of Iowa, St. John's Parish, Bariadi in of Shinyanga Diocese, Northwest Tanzania, Tanzania - all three were roused to action by growls from hungry tummies. The miracle of Jesus, the itinerant preacher, in a sign-act of what can be, was to use the available but meager supply of food to produce enough for five thousand. The miracle of Dr. Borlaug, a plant pathologist from the University of Minnesota, was a seed of wheat developed to use earth's available and limited resources to produce food for billions. The Father of the Green Revolution is among those people most beneficial to our history. Sadly his death on 12 September, 2009 was barely mentioned in the media.



The sign-actions of St. John's Parish also increased production from available and limited resources. While hardly miracles, the results are not insignificant for the time and place. As the new parish pondered “How to be Church” we found that everything is part of pastoral life. In all our work the goal has not been “conservation” but “regeneration”, i.e. to bring dead or

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

sick land back to life. Our parish is along the main road in town so people can easily see what we are doing and what works.

AGRICULTURE:

Our main message has been "FEED THE SOIL." Some farmers proudly showed me their expertise in land husbandry on small plots. Some do companion planting and crop rotation, application of manure, tree leaves, etc. Drought resistant cassava and sorghum are still too scarce. There are still too many cattle, but the growing swine market has helped many families. The major disappointment is that marejea (Swahili for "sun hemp"), a legume, has almost disappeared. When I introduced it I hoped it would do for large fields what alfalfa does elsewhere. Small vegetable gardens show promise with water available from personal shallow wells, and with a growing market for salads, etc.

WATER:

In our semi-arid area, most of the old shallow wells did not work. During our December, 2008 safari, a team of us visited a couple dozen shallow wells constructed during the parish's "Pentekoste" campaign in the mid 1990s. The WUG'S system (water user groups) has made ownership and responsibility clear. We found most wells satisfactory, several excellent with millions of shillings for internal micro-financing, and a couple almost dead because of poor leadership and meek members. Return visitations brought amazing transformations to most wells.



Herb Gappa pumping water at a shallow well

TREES:

Of all our endeavors, forestation was most often mentioned for the benefits to the people's lives. We



Herb Gappa plants a tree

had planted some 40 species including fruit trees. Negatives: The people lament that they started so late to plant. Little open land remains for more trees. Some issues about "brigands" in the dark forests. Positives: Firewood for cooking is now plentiful, and burnt bricks are standard for building. Almost all kinds of trees are now used for lumber. Economic transformation for most families: some who followed the "plant five trees a year" policy have made dramatic turnarounds. Trees are no longer "the enemy". They are a handy cash crop and financial asset, assist in regeneration and cause people to smile.

In Bariadi, trees are there to stay. Wells, with encouragement and discipline, can work. Agriculture practices will improve as people become tired of being hungry.

In Your Lifetime How Many Trees Did You Plant?

Maryknoll priest Herb Gappa worked for many years in the Bariadi Section of Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania in East Africa. He encouraged the local Tanzanian people to plant trees as a concrete way of preserving the land and promoting ecology. Gappa led the way by doing. Some 15,000 trees were planted on parish plots. He encouraged each local family to plant five trees a year for present needs and to regenerate the land for the future. To get this message across in a humorous way he said: "At the Last Judgment St. Peter will ask you only two questions. "In your lifetime how many trees did you plant? How many trees did you cut down?" Your answers will determine if you go up (to heaven) or down (to ???).

SCCs Promote Environmental Care in Kenya

By Joe Healey

Theme
Article

How does care for the environment work on the local level? Here is a Case Study of St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC)'s involvement in the Third Week of the 2009 Kenya Lenten Campaign. St. Kizito SCC in the Waruku Area is one of the seven SCCs in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi, Kenya. It is the neighborhood SCC where the Maryknoll Society House is located.

The Kenya Lenten Campaign is promoted by the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC) Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. The 2009 booklet in English and Swahili had the theme "Justice, Reconciliation and Peace" and covered the five weeks of Lent. The "See, Judge and Act" Process drew on the experience of SCCs on justice and peace-related themes/issues such as "Parental Responsibility in Youth and Formation," "Constitution, Governance and Rule of Law," "Environmental Care," "Food Security and Empowering Farmers" and "Reconciliation." The proposed action steps directly involved SCCs. A sample question was: "Are you aware of similar families in Small Christian Communities?" (page 9).



SCCs throughout Kenya used these themes, scripture readings and questions in their weekly meetings during Lent. Here is a Case Study (my verbatim notes) of one SCC that I participated in:

St. Kizito SCC, Waruku in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday afternoon, 8 March, 2009 from 2 to 4:15 p.m. Walking with Sammy and George. Total of 17 participants: 10 men, 7 women. Mixed ethnic groups. Newly ordained Kenyan Spiritan priest Fredrick Barasa Wafula participated. We used the reflection process of Week Three of Lent in Swahili on "Environmental Care (Ecology)"— "Kutunza Mazingira (Kuhifadhi)" of the *Kenya Lenten Campaign 2009* on the overall theme "Justice, Peace and Reconciliation." The booklet, calendar and poster were distributed to SCC members. We read *Ezekiel 36: 23-25* especially verse 25: "I will pour (sprinkle) clean water on you." Read twice with silence in between. Also read the Gospel of the 3rd Sunday of Lent (*John 2:13-25*). Read the "Dibaji" ("Preface") of the booklet from Archbishop Peter Kairo, the Chairperson of the Kenya Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. Good group discussion on the meaning of the drawing on page 38: eight examples of harming or destroying the environment and seven examples of helping or caring for the environment. Then we read and discussed the Three Steps in the reflection process of the Pastoral Circle:

SEE: Starting with the practical story of the Taya community was helpful.

JUDGE: Using Question 4 and adding "in our SCC" ("katika Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo ya Kikristo yetu").

ACT: Using Questions 1 and 2 and adding "in our SCC" ("katika Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo ya Kikristo yetu").

Emphasis on encouraging our SCC members to get involved in cleaning up the garbage and trash in the Waruku informal settlements. **ACTION:** After the 7 a.m. Mass on Sunday, 15 March, 2009 Washington Oduor will lead the first Clean up Team at 10 a.m. and Anastasia Syombua will lead the second Clean up Team at 10:30 a.m. **EVALUATION:** One and one quarters

hours spent on Week Three. The Lenten materials are a great help, but the booklet is demanding for ordinary SCC members. SCCs need to be specifically mentioned in the text; they cannot be assumed or presupposed. The explanation on page 40 of the Swahili text in the booklet (Step Two on "Judge" - "Amua") was hard to follow and the key *Ezekiel* quotation was left out.

What happened on the action? The good news is that between 10:15 a.m. and 12 noon on Sunday, 15 March, 2009 (the beginning of Week Three on "Environmental Care") 12 members of St. Kizito SCC took turns collecting the trash and then burning it in small fires at the main dump in Waruku. We successfully cleaned up the whole area. This relates

to two important proverbs on ecology that we have been discussing. First the universal proverb, *If each person sweeps in front of his or her own house the whole world will be clean* (based on German and Russian proverbs). Then the Kenyan saying: *You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children.*



Water Projects That Are Environmentally Friendly

By John Lange

Theme
Article



Sister Theresa at the intake in the mountains

Perhaps my most environmentally friendly water project is at Ijinyu near Same, Tanzania, where the Little Sisters of St. Francis have a novitiate and a girls' boarding high school. I spent two days there in July, 2009 on my vacation. Two years ago I helped the Sisters with funds to lay a 1 and one half kilometers pipe line from a spring in the mountains to their premises. Unfortunately the spring diminishes in the dry season and the water was not sufficient for their domestic needs and their irrigation garden and fish ponds. A year ago I gave funds to lay a 14 kilometers pipe line from a much bigger spring in the mountain (pictured). The project was completed and I went to enjoy the sight of the water flowing. I did thrill at the sight of the water, but my joy was sobered when they explained that most of that line was plastic and kilometers of it

was lying over rocks. The government water engineer made a survey for replacing those kilometers of plastic pipes with steel pipes. The cost was a sobering \$21,500, but I agreed because I know that herders will cut the plastic pipes to get water for their cows, and even if they don't the sun will soon ruin the pipes. Also the plastic pipes had burst in several places because of the extreme pressure. The Sisters plan to expand greatly their irrigation farm and fill their fish ponds that are on the verge of drying up.



The second pipe line starts at the box

Many of my other water projects involve a borehole and these are not environmentally friendly. They



A small section of the Sisters' irrigation gardens

are necessary for there is no other way to get water for the people in those areas but they deplete the water in the aquifers (layers of water that are far below the surface). Also in the areas where water is needed most like in Kambaland in Kenya, the water has a high content of alkali? Also borehole projects involve pumps, and electrical equipment. And the more I do borehole projects, the more I say: "Africa and machines do not go well together." In a big project in the Mua Hills near Machakos, Kenya the people have burnt out two submersible pumps and two booster pumps. One booster pump burnt out because of overuse; it got too hot. The second booster pump was run without water and got too hot. The booster pumps costs about \$7,000 each. Ouch! I have helped them with the biggest part of these expenses. You have to stick with people until they learn from their mistakes.

NOTE: John Lange's articles on water projects are available online at:
the [Maryknoll Africa Region Website](#) and the [Maryknoll Society Website](#)

Treated Mosquito Nets and the Environment

By Francis Njuguna

Theme
Article

What a gift!

Just as Kenya and the rest of the world were marking 2009 World Malaria Day on 25 April, members of the Maryknoll Movement (priests, Brothers, Sisters, lay missionaries and affiliates) working in Kenya in the fight against malaria were busy distributing badly needed treated mosquito nets to some of the poor and needy families in Nairobi's Kibera slums.

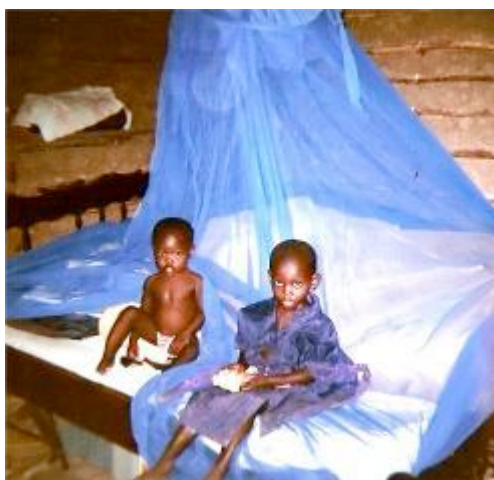
The purchasing and distribution of the nets otherwise referred to as insecticide treated nets (ITNs) were facilitated through Maryknoll lay missionary Vikki Smith, the head of the Education Department of Christ the King Catholic Parish in Nairobi that ministers to the pastoral needs of Kibera inhabitants estimated at 700,000 — most of whom are living in abject poverty and with poor sanitation.

According to Smith an estimated US \$112 was spent on purchasing 30 mosquito nets for some of the poor families within this locality. Other members of the Maryknoll Movement were involved in buying and distributing of mosquito nets to other poor and the needy families. A total of 600 mosquito nets were given to the needy in Mombasa, Coast Province under the Maryknoll Fathers Aids Orphans programme at a cost of US\$3,438 as reported by lay missionary Coralys Salvador. 100 were Arusha Treated Nets while 500 were Best Treated Nets.



Kenyan mother, child, and infant with new net

Father Joseph Healey, one of the Maryknoll priests serving in Nairobi, Kenya says that the malaria project is part of the Maryknollers' wider concern on healthcare among the poor and needy communities that they serve in Africa. This is closely connected to protecting the environment and focusing on ecology in Africa. "We members of the Maryknoll Movement -priests, Brothers, Sisters and Lay Missioners — working in Kenya have, for example, purchased and distributed close to 3,000 treated nets to poor and needy communities in the country's Kitale area in Western Kenya, Nairobi in Central Region and Mombasa in the country's Coast Province in the last five years at a cost of US \$15,000", he told this writer in a recent interview. The money to purchase and distribute these nets has been made possible through donations from Ray Chambers and other people connected to [Malaria No More](#), a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in New York and other benefactors around the USA, he also explained during the interview.



Two children will be safe from mosquitoes

Kenya launched its national anti-malaria campaign aimed to eradicate the dreadful disease in the country on 25 April under the slogan "Towards a Malaria-Free Kenya." The launch coincided with the marking of this year's World Malaria Day whose theme was "Counting Malaria Out."

Good news in the fight against the deadly malaria disease is that both the Kenya Government and the United Nations (UN) have expressed their desire to have Christian Churches involved in the campaign through faith-based organizations (FBOs). This is because of the churches' closeness to local communities. In a recent interview with Kenya's head of the Malaria Unit in the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, Dr. Elizabeth Juma, she said that the government planned to work closely with both FBOs and the Community-based Organizations (CBOs) in the just launched national malaria eradication campaign. "It would be foolhardy to imagine that the government could do much towards this goal without the total involvement of other stakeholders, the FBOs and CBOs included", she explained during the interview.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

In New York during the marking of 2009 World Malaria Day the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Malaria, Ray Chambers, affirmed the role of faith communities. Chambers said that the UN had already welcomed the involvement of faith communities in the global fight against the malaria.

On his part the head of the Health Commission for the Catholic Bishops in Kenya, Dr. Robert Ayisi, in a recent interview with this writer, welcomed both the Kenya government and the UN invitation to the faith communities in the fight against malaria. "We shall challenge it within our wider healthcare concerns for our people just as we are doing in the area of HIV/AIDS," he stressed during the interview. He further said, "We are already involved in the distribution of ITNs with particular attention to poor and marginalized communities such as those living in slums."

Those who strongly support the idea of the Catholic Church's involvement in the fight against the dreadful malaria disease but wonder what difference we can really make may find solace in the South African proverb that says, *If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.*

Climate Change and Rainfall in Musoma, Tanzania

By Art Wille

Theme
Article

Tanzanian rainfall patterns reflect very much the world wide climates changes. When I arrived in Nyegina Mission in September 1951, Brother John Walsh had taken the corrugated galvanized sheet roof off the rectory. He had to do this to remove the two feet deep bat excrement that had accumulated above the ceiling that the Missionaries of Africa (formerly the White Fathers) had installed by placing sisal poles side by side when the rectory was built in 1911. John knew that the short rainy season would not begin until sometime in October. He had the new roof finished before the rains came.



Irrigated rice paddies

When the short rains began, they were very regular. We used to say that you could set your watch by the rains that came just around 4 p.m. There would be heavy downpours at this time. Then frequently there would be longer periods of rain during the night. Because the rains were good and regular, the people were able to raise their crops of corn, finger millet, sorghum, bulrush millet, sweet potatoes and cassava. Father Lou Bayless had brought cassava for the people in this mission. Cassava at this time was not popular. It was considered a famine food.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the rain remained plentiful. In 1961 there was an overabundance of rain. It is called the Year of the Uhuru (which means "Freedom" in Swahili) Rains -- the year Tanganyika (now Tanzania) got independence. During this year the rains began in September 1960 and continued without the normal dry period at the end of December to March until the end of July. These rains were so heavy that the water level of Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water lake in the world, rose 10 feet. This flooded the Musoma Port on Lake Victoria. It also cut off the main road from Mwanza to Musoma. The government had to bring in rocks and gravel to build up this road because it is vital to the town of Musoma.

There were dramatic changes in the weather in the four years of 1970 to 1973. These were years of drought. With it came famine. President Julius Nyerere ordered the government to buy American corn. Because Tanzania was considered a socialistic country, the USA would not help them with free corn. The corn that was supplied was yellow, not the white corn that is the ordinary corn in Tanzania. For some unknown reasons in a number of primary schools, where children were fed this yellow corn, there were cases of mass hysteria in the children.

The cost of buying American corn over these four years of drought was one of the principal factors that caused the Tanzania economy to go bankrupt. Up until this drought the economy was good. The Foreign Exchange Reserve had continued to grow. But the cost of buying this corn used up much of the reserve. President Julius Nyerere had said that as long as they had money, no one in the country would starve. At the same time as this famine the OPEX oil producing countries doubled the price of oil. This was the second major factor that devastated the economy of Tanzania.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

During this same period the government implemented its villagization program in areas where the people did not customarily live in villages. The government felt that when people lived together they would develop more rapidly. The government could also provide them with easier access to education, medical care, water and social life. In Mara Region the people on the whole accepted this program. However, in other regions they resisted it. In Mara Region each family was given a one acre plot. When the rains failed while this program was being implemented, some people blamed the drought on the villagization program.

At this time at Komuge Mission together with the village chairman Charles Nyakitende and the catechist Julius Mwita, we organized an Ujamaa (which means "Familyhood" in Swahili) Village. Some 200 families voluntarily joined to work together. Others in Komuge did not join. The first endeavor of this Ujamaa group was to clear about 100 acres to plant Katamani corn. I had brought Katamani corn seed, a fast growing corn that had been developed in Kenya, for areas where the rainfall season is short. We planted this corn in the beginning of March. The rains were good. Each day I enjoyed seeing the growth. It reached three to four feet when April began.



Irrigated alfalfa

From rain records that Father Dick Quinn had started to keep when he was pastor at Komuge Mission, and that I continued when he left, I knew that April each year had the highest amount of rain -- five to six inches. These records show that during the small rains, mid-October to mid-December, the rainfall averaged ten inches; the heavy rains from mid-March to first week of June averaged twenty inches. Unfortunately during this year there was no rain in April. Our 100 acres of corn dried up.



Earthen dam at Baraki

This convinced me of the need to have supplemental irrigation. The following year our Ujamaa group planted corn at Magubia near Lake Victoria where we could irrigate if necessary. We did get a crop. Prior to planting we had hauled a great deal of cow manure that added humus to hold the moisture in the soil. It was the only crop harvested in Komuge that year.

When I became involved in helping the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa select land for their Baraki Farm, it was important that it be located near Lake Victoria. At Baraki Farm we put in three-inch galvanized pipes into the lake to pump water. We used both diesel and windmills to pump this water for irrigation and also for domestic use for the African Sisters, their Postulants, who were there for three years of training, the dairy herd and the workers on the farm. It soon became apparent that with the high cost of diesel for pumping water for irrigation, it would not be economical. I built in the valley an earthen dam 700 yards long and eight yards high to store the rain water for irrigation below this dam. There the Sisters raise rice, corn and alfalfa for the dairy cows. Each year the rains filled up the dam. This worked well until 2005 when again there was little rain. Not only did it not fill up the dam, but the level of the water in Lake Victoria went down four to five feet. It became necessary to extend the pipes some 100 to 120 feet into the lake. Fortunately the electricity company TANESCO brought electricity down to the pump house. This enabled the Sisters to add lengths of pipe and put an electric pump at the end.

In 2007 we moved one windmill from near the lake to below the dam and connected it with a pipe to the water in the dam. It now pumps water from the dam to the vegetable garden on the hillside and to the several hundred citrus trees and other fruit trees of the farm. A government irrigation officer came to help the Sisters lay out this vegetable garden for irrigation. He told us that the government had built three earthen dams similar to the Sisters' farm dam to help the people irrigate crops. I remember years previously after our dam was working well and enabling the African Sisters to irrigate their crops below the dam using furrows for irrigation that Julius Nyerere came to visit the Baraki Sisters Farm. When he saw how well the dam was working to irrigate the crops, he told the Regional Commissioner Kaisi, who was accompanying him, to look for areas in the Mara Region where the government could build earthen dams like this one to help the people irrigate their crops. Earthen dams enable the people to irrigate land below the dam by gravity flow without the high cost of fuel.

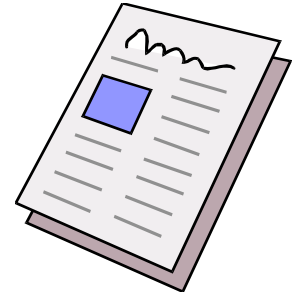


Windmill on Lake Victoria shore

How Maryknoll Lay Missioners Communicate Worldwide

By Vikki Smith

Webster's Dictionary defines communicate as "impart, participate, share, to convey knowledge of or information about, make known." As a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Kenya it is essential for me to be able to communicate with my family and friends for peace of mind and to keep in touch. Also, it is essential to communicate to benefactors and donors about my ministry. It would be impossible for me to write or email every one of them to keep up-to-date. The Maryknoll Lay Missioners have a computer software program that allows us missioners to impart, share and make known information about our ministries through a very simple and efficient method.



Here is how it works: We have the option of writing a two-page newsletter every month, or as often as we wish, in a template form, that is, specific empty boxes on a computer screen are filled in with information and data and have places for two photos. There is a deadline, usually around the 15th of every month when we must email our newsletter by File Attachment to our publication department at Bethany, Maryknoll, New York. From our File Attachment they produce a two-page paper newsletter with a donation form that is mailed out at the end of each month. Previously, when joining MLM, each missioner submitted a list of names and addresses that can be added to or subtracted from at any time, of the people they want to receive this paper newsletter. The newsletters are also a way that our organization can obtain names of persons who want to be sponsors. They receive an Easter and Christmas donation request in support of our organization.

This monthly newsletter is a wonderful way to share personal, cultural, and ministry knowledge, as well as inspiring others to share and participate in my ministry through prayers and donations. Also, many missionary newsletters are used for other purposes by our organization in sharing our ministry work far and wide, through our website and other resources.

A Tale of Two Michael Obamas

By Mike Bassano

After Barack Obama's election as president, the people where I live in Mji wa Huruma (which means "Home of Compassion" in Swahili) near Musoma, Tanzania were very jubilant and proud. They would chant and sing, "Obama, Obama." Then somehow they started calling me Father Michael Obama and the name stuck. Earlier this year one of our homeless women named Pendo (which means "Love") gave birth to her second child. She wanted to have her baby boy baptized. As the time arrived for the day of baptism I asked Pendo what will be the name of the child. She looked at me and said smiling, "Michael Obama." So on a beautiful sunny Easter morning we baptized Michael Obama along with two other children Lucia and Alexis.

She Does What She Can To Help Others

By Tom McDonnell

The conflict in Kenya in January, 2008 emerges after the Christmas celebrations that found the local people "on the road" among beloved family members across the country. Rumors of violence are rampant. In major shopping centers machetes have been sold out. The network of cellphones is alive with warnings from friends: "Hide. Get somewhere safe. Seek shelter in Police Posts."



A truly heroic nurse from one of Maryknoll's HIV/AIDS clinics sees bleeding patients all around the Police Post in Nairobi where she has sought security. She has nothing more with her than basic suturing needles and suturing thread. She realizes that she is close to panic herself as she has no antiseptics, no protective gloves, no antibiotics, no pain medicine. "But at least I can stem the awesome flow of blood from all these open and bleeding wounds," she says. And she proceeds to do just that. In tears and near panic she does what she can to help others.

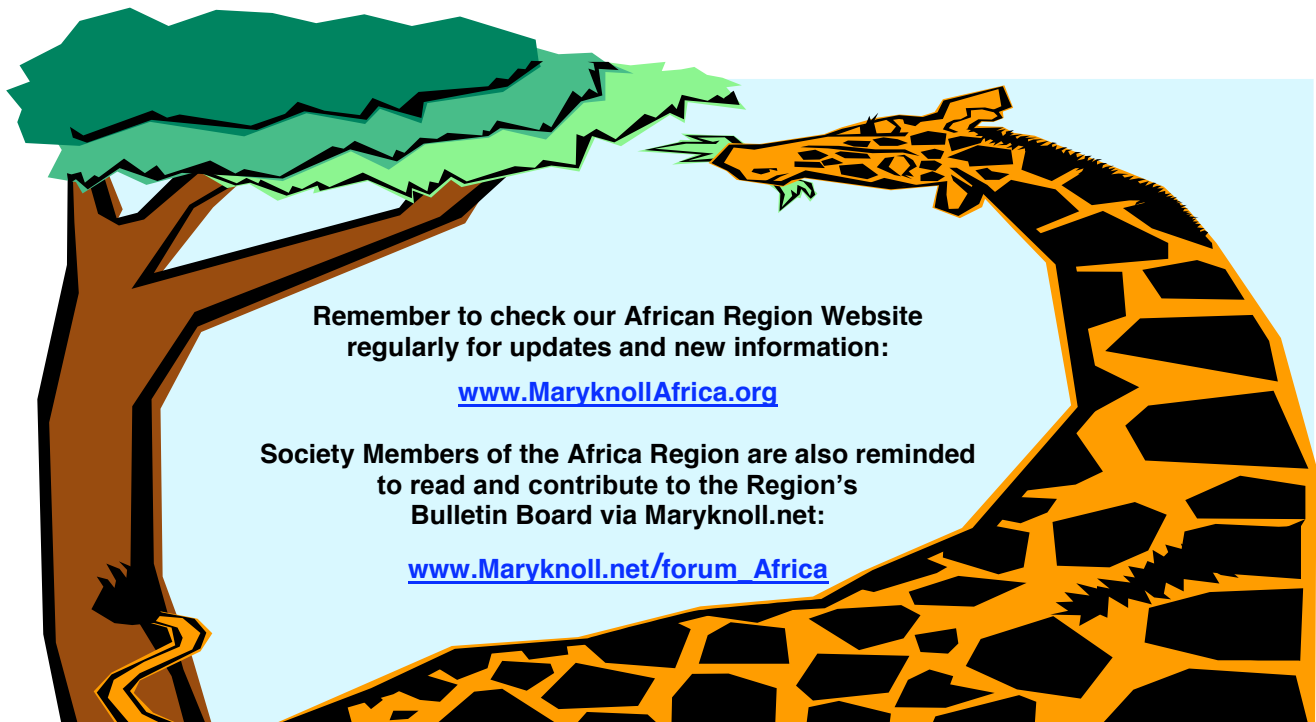
Later she cries profusely as she recalls her ordeal and wonders how she survived. She thanks God for bringing her home safely.

A Young Kenyan Man Tells of His Ordeal

By Tom McDonnell

A young Kenyan man tells of his ordeal. After the post-election violence in 2008 he is hiding in Nairobi. Then he gets word that his much loved brother has been brutally murdered in the city-wide tribal clashes. He has to pretend that he is from another ethnic group as he makes his way to the City Mortuary to claim his brother's body. He cries as he describes the pitiful corpse – his brother's head smashed open with clubs and his whole body cut with machete blows wielded by a violent mob of "others" – members of the very ethnic group he now pretends to belong to.

The young man has no money to claim the body so he goes on a city-wide search for financial help among friends and family who are also threatened, hiding and terrified. Heroically he collects enough money to claim the body and arrange for transport home to his now widowed sister-in law and the orphaned children of his beloved brother. Chameleon-like he assumes another ethnic identity so as not to be killed himself as he carries his dead brother home.



Remember to check our African Region Website regularly for updates and new information:

www.MaryknollAfrica.org

Society Members of the Africa Region are also reminded to read and contribute to the Region's Bulletin Board via Maryknoll.net:

www.Maryknoll.net/forum_Africa

Call for Articles for Our Next Issue

Date: June 2010

Theme: Partnership with Other Mission Groups in Africa

Material to Editor by: 15 April 2010

Please send material to the Editor, Joe Healey, by Email to:

JGHealey@aol.com or by paper mail to: Maryknoll Society House,
P.O. Box 43058, Nairobi, Kenya (for scanning into a computer).