

RESCUE MISSION TO BOKAY TOWN, LIBERIA.

As we drove towards Bokay Town, most of the villages looked like ghost towns, deserted, and submerged in dirty and muddy flood water. Visibility became poor and poorer all we could do was to drive slowly but due to the muddy road we began to encounter problems as the road became treacherous and full of mud that made steering very difficult. Along the sides of the road, women, children and some men lined up with buckets hoping that European Water trucks would come through as there is still no safe drinking water in 90% of Liberia. We approached a large water truck that had slid off the road and buried itself up to its frame. As we proceed to pass, we began to slide toward the truck until we could no longer drive without sliding the rear of our vehicle into the truck. Some of the men started to shovel us out but we just kept inching closer to the truck but we reached higher ground and got past the stranded truck.

The road ahead was much worse than what we had just struggled through and with intense anxiety we finally arrived at Bokay Town which unlike many of the other villages, was full of people. James Gono, our resident Pastor and members of our Church were on hand to welcome us and help carry the relief items across the risky plank bridge leading to our church in the centre of the town.

We were told by them that those who deserted the villages, submerged with flood water, had taken refuge in the town increasing the population from 10,000 to 20,000 overnight. Pastor Gono told us that the prices of food and other basic commodities had skyrocketed because goods are no longer coming due to the impassable roads. For this reason, we were advised not to distribute our relief items in the day to avoid a stampede which could lead to deaths.

The following day the rains pounded down. Many children were running around naked in the street, those indoors were all naked. Some parts of the town were a sea of filthy water, rising as high as 2 to 3 feet in some places. Only very few families had no deaths due to cholera, cold, starvation, malaria and other water-borne diseases. The filthy water all over the town had increased the spread of cholera and malaria. Every night and even in the day we were been bitten by mosquitoes which produced itchy and painful swellings all over my body.

More than 300 children queued patiently to receive fairly used clothes. More than 50 hungry families received plastic bags of rice. One elderly woman, with her son and daughter who were clothed, after receiving a bag of rice from us gratefully said, "Thank you for coming, I and my grandchildren have not eaten for the past three days." Most of the fortunate families who received plastic bags of rice from us have not eaten for almost a week so it was not surprising that even at 10 pm, we saw most of them cooking the rice they just received from us!

Though the relief items we distributed were like a drop in an ocean of suffering more than 300 children were clothed, 250 starving people were fed, 20 families received mosquito nets and rehydration salts. Last but not the least, James Saloti, Chairman of Bokay Town, visited the distribution without wearing a shirt, and hoped to receive one but ended up being given a bag of rice which costs a fortune in his town! If the chairman had no shirt to wear and only got one in a handout, you can imagine what the rest of the people are like.