

## **LIVES OF 700 FLOODS AFFECTED CHILDREN SAVED IN LIBERIA**

By Charles Johnson

In a recent interview with BBC's Mark Doyle, who is producing a documentary "Why Africa is poor," President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was optimistic. She said within 10 years Liberia will not beg, and must have established its economic pillars to stand on its own. And hand outs of donors or from Charity Organizations such as the one we recently received from The DCI Fund to save the lives of 700 floods affected children in Grand Bassa County will no longer be needed. But how realistic is this optimism?

In post war Liberia, our mindset is that of over dependency on the Chinese and their NGOs. Our fiscal budget has no allocation for the fixing of our roads and highways. The Chinese will have to do that for us. Not until it is done, we will have to continue to risk our lives going through impassable and deplorable highways to upcountry.

In late last August we inched our way under heavy torrential rains, along the worst flooded and muddy highways in history, in search of floods affected children in Bokay town's Kingdom Kids Academy and in District No:3 in Grand Bassa County. We took this risk because "one cannot sit by his own soup and look it wasted in the fire," according to a Liberian proverb.

The first set back we encountered was in Firestone, 45 miles away from Monrovia. The sedan car we were travelling with broke down in the middle of the flooded highway. Flood water entered its carburettor, and it could not continue the journey.

We got off the car, and helped the operator to push it away from the main road. Not long after a heavy duty jeep came by, as if God sent, the cheerful operator offered to take us to Bokay town at a small fortune. And we all heaved a sigh of relief.

From Firestone, the rain fell in torrents till we reached Bokay town. Most of the towns we passed by were empty. Floods damaged the dwellers' homes, and sent them away in search of refuge in upland areas.

We got off the jeep several times to walk through muddy highways barefooted; otherwise our weight, that of the foodstuffs and the heavy bales of clothes would have sunk the jeep in the mud. At 5.00 pm we reached Bokay town. But none of the children were in the flooded Kingdom Kids Academy . They had left for upland places to seek refuge with neighbours. We got off the jeep. Its operator promised to come back for us the following morning, and we headed towards neighbouring hillside. There we saw three of the Kids picking fire woods, and they took us to where others were taken refuge.

Though fatigued, we managed to install our film equipment at 7.30pm and began to play Gospel songs. When enough children and adults were attracted, we started to show our film, "The life of Jesus for Children."

Though the flood disaster had made life dull, but those who witnessed our film revived and became as happy as larks after we prayed and led 150 Children and 50 adults to Christ.

Before we retired for a peaceful night rest, we shared 200 plastic bags of Rice and Corn Meal to both the children and adults. We did not share used clothes among them, because the kids managed to leave flooded Kingdom Academy with all their clothes intact.

Early the following morning, the jeep's driver kept his promise and came for us. We left Pastor Ehis Okudugha, my nephew, in Bokay town to disciple the new converts before heading towards Buchanan, capital of Grand Bassa County. Although it did not rain till we reached there, but we faced tougher problems crossing dangerous creeks and broken bridges. The worst of it all was at St. John River Bridge. St John River is one of the longest and most fearful rivers in Liberia; with giant size crocodiles sunning themselves on top of huge and flat granite rocks protruding out of its waters, and waiting for any hapless person to fall from its unsafe and decrepit bridge to serve as their meal.

God in His goodness saw us through this crocodile infested river and we arrived in Buchanan at 1.00pm. We refreshed, and headed towards District No: 3, an enclave of clustered villages, about 60 miles away from Buchanan. Fortunately we arrived there at 5.30 pm, most of the farmers have returned from their farms and we received a rousing welcome from them. Here, most of the children were naked, but we were forbidden from taking the snapshots of their nakedness by their parents. Being farmer's children they have enough food to eat but have no clothes to wear.

We opened the three heavy bales of clothes containing 1,500 assorted children wears, such as knickers, tee-shirts, sweaters, blouses, skirts, jeans and trousers and under wears. These were shared among 500 excited children scrambling here and there for more clothes. It was a happy moment to behold them wearing the clothes, before we were allowed to take their snapshots.

The farmers gratefully treated us to a chicken dinner. At 8.00pm we featured "The Life of Jesus for Children" on our makeshift screen for one hour. 1,600 people were in attendance, 600 children and 1000 farmers. We preached the love and grace we have by God freely sending Jesus to give us eternal life. 721 people, 300 children and 421 farmers, responded positively to our invitation and accepted Christ.

More happy days were spent with the farmers, discipling them, winning more souls to Christ and setting up praying and Bible fellowship groups in all the villages before we returned to Buchanan. While in Buchanan, we also spent some days preaching and showing our films before returning to Monrovia. Besides being a successful rescue mission to feed hungry and clothe naked children, our trip to Grand Bassa also served as an eye-opener to us that nothing tangible is being done in our country for us to walk away from the cycle of infinite and shameful begging in the next ten years, except for political rhetoric!

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