



Baguma Family News...

We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.
Ephesians 2:10

Looking back on the last 2 months since our Easter update, it's interesting to see where the world is at now. Desperately sad and staggering figures of infection and loss of life, with each country facing its own story of the virus's impact and the decisions made. All walking in the dark trying to find the "right way" without really knowing. Amazingly, Uganda's numbers are still relatively low (950) with no deaths. But the lockdown has been severe and for many, more tragic than the virus itself. As Uganda slowly opens up, we tread with care as now the risks are probably higher and we really don't know the true picture of the disease here.

We are now able to drive our private vehicles again, and just over a week ago they raised the number of people per car to 4. Small blessings, in amongst many during this time. Public transport has also opened again and many more shops are starting back up, but we still have a ban on religious gatherings, schools, and our night time curfew still stands (7pm-6:30am). Lockdown for our family has not been a burden, but yet a necessity that we have been fortunate to be able to live very easily through. But for our neighbours and the larger proportion of Ugandans, lockdown has been relentlessly hard. Living hand to mouth in an economy that cannot provide any support means so many have gone hungry at this time. Mixed with heavy rainfall and severe flooding this has been a desperately hard time.

Through our small church, we were able to help a little and feed 300 families in our local community. Our drop in the ocean was mirrored across the country with so many churches, religious groups, charities and NGO's trying to reach out to help those around them. Small nuggets of hope in a dark few months.

Flying for life

In April, we shared how there was a huge downturn in flying across MAF globally due to the virus and travel restrictions. Sadly, we cannot report much different to this 2 months later as many of those restrictions have not been lifted and where there is flying, it is still very minimal. In Uganda, all domestic and international flights are still suspended and all the borders remain indefinitely closed. This in itself is a huge barrier to our work, but over the last few months, Uganda has also been battling heavy rainfall and severe flooding.

In May, four main rivers in the Kasese District, in western Uganda, burst their banks. Although the district has been hit by flooding in the past, this year's floods were considerably worse than they had ever experienced before. 8 people died and major infrastructures were destroyed including a hydroelectric power plant, primary schools, (2 schools in Kilembe were completely swept away), hospitals, bridges, roads, almost 4000 houses, over 1000 community latrines, 8 churches and nearly 100 water sources. In all, an estimated 123,800 people were generally affected with 13,000 people displaced and hosted in 27 camps in different areas.



Serving with MAF

Uganda – Jul 2012 - Jul 2014

Chad - Jul 2014 - Dec 2018

East Africa – Jan 2019



As a family, we joined MAF in 2012 when Sam took on the role of Finance Manager and later became the acting Country Director for MAF in Uganda.

We then moved to Chad in July 2014 for Sam to take up the role of Country Director for MAF's operations in Chad. After 4.5 years serving in Chad we moved back to Uganda in 2019 for Sam to take up a regional role serving MAF programmes across the East of Africa.

We are very excited about the opportunity we have to be witnessing and serving through the work of MAF. If you would like to support us in this work, through giving or praying or preferably both, we would be very grateful and would love to hear from you.

As the news of the flooding came through, MAF Uganda looked at how they could respond to this situation and MAF's Disaster Response team immediately developed a plan. As Sam sits in both teams, (Disaster Response and MAF Uganda) he was asked to oversee the work and organised the response with the MAF Uganda team. But due to the severe flooding also around the Lake Victoria area that had affected the MAF runway, plus the lockdown restrictions, this made it very difficult and frustrating to be able to respond quickly to the needs around us.



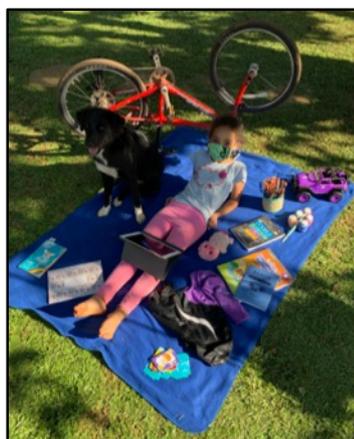
While Sam made every effort to connect with all the relevant Government agencies, including the Prime Ministers officer, to gain the right permission to offer emergency relief flights, a team at the MAF office were busy trying to relocate the MAF planes to the main international airport (which was also closed for repairs at this time).

Finally, after a few stressful weeks of working through so many hurdles, MAF was able to respond to the emergency and fly essential relief supplies and food, gathered by the government and local churches, to the affected people. Having finalised these disaster response flights, the planes are now grounded again as we continue to try to secure additional permissions to carry out domestic humanitarian flights.



Family

Our little family has been a blessing!! Okay, our girls are amazing!! They have walked this strange road with eyes wide open and understanding, but yet bravely, calmly, lovingly and contently. We don't use those words lightly, but with sincerity. Our children have been great! Home-school wasn't easy, but they knuckled down and worked incredible hard every day. Yes, they have felt cooped up but they have played so well together and have the best imaginations for creative play. They clearly missed friends and social interactions but they got on with what they had around them and made the most of it. They understand the need for masks, do not touch things when we go out and they have been content with being at home for so much of the last 3 months.



Their school encouraged them to make a 'living portrait' with 15 objects that have been important to them during this lockdown. It was fun for them to think about what to choose for their pictures and display it all.

School is now finished for the year and so we now have 6 more weeks of holidays to enjoy. We have currently driven out to Fort Portal in the west of Uganda this week for a break (now we can all travel in one car together). It is lovely to be out of the city and enjoy some time at our village home and with Sam's mum.

At the moment, we are very unsure about how this year will turn out. The coronavirus numbers are rising in the teens daily, but symptoms seem to be mild and everyone so far is recovering. There is speculation of further lockdowns if numbers start increasing faster, we will just have to wait and see. In relation to school, it is looking like that is the one area that may be kept out longer. The Ugandan school year runs from February to November and so many children had only completed 6 weeks of the school year before they shut in March. It is now looking like the Government may keep schools closed for this entire year and repeat this full academic year starting from Feb 2021. This is very concerning, but we will just see what develops in the coming months. For our girls, as they are in an international school their school year runs August to June and they were able to complete their current school year online. For now, if schools are not allowed back, then from August to December we will be doing school at home online again. This is a slightly daunting prospect for the girls and Abby but we are just so incredibly grateful that their education can continue at this time.

Please pray with us:

1. To date, Uganda has recorded 950 Covid-19 cases. With very poor medical facilities, there is still concern that the country may not be prepared to deal with the number of cases we are seeing in other countries with much more developed health systems. So, do please pray for God's intervention and provision.
2. We would value your prayers for the many desperate people in Uganda who are suffering as a direct result of the government restrictions. Even with the easing of restrictions, many people are still without regular income and are finding life extremely challenging.
3. We are still receiving a lot of requests for flights but this can't be done without the government allowing us to begin operations again. Please pray for Sam and the Uganda team as they work with the various government departments to see how they can get the right authorisations needed.
4. Please pray for those who were affected by the flooding in the west of Uganda. The government is now trying to disperse the camps, as they feel this poses a higher risk of the spread of coronavirus. They are encouraging those affected to move in with relatives or friends and be supported but the Government through the community.
5. With so many unknowns ahead of us, please pray for peace in our hearts and for God to help us to trust Him in whatever happens each day.



*Thank you for your continued support to us,
Love and Blessings
Sam, Abby, Rachel & Becca*