

# El-shadai Newsletter & Update, June, 2007

## *The Children*

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak with many of the children on the phone while they were home on holidays. I asked about their health, favorite activities and school subjects, and if there was anything they needed. Here's the notes I took while speaking on the phone; hopefully you'll feel their wonderful spirits come through!

Eunice- "I'm doing well. I'm fine. I'm in a better position and I'm going to improve. My best subject? It is English but now also social studies. I still want to be a Bank Manager. My favorite activities are playing netball. I like it so."

Rogers- "I am fine. I am enjoying the good breeze and I am very grateful. I'm looking forward to this month and the preparations for the introduction [note- which has been postponed again!]. I want to be smart, to be a gentleman. I'm praying to God to provide coats and dresses for the wedding. I have done very well in school, apart from a few subjects which I think I'll become better. The problem is with physics. I do not understand the teacher well. It takes more concentration. Next time, I'll tell you my marks."

Emma- "I'm fine. School? Auntie, I like it very much. My favorite subject is fine arts. For activities I like football [note: American soccer] and athletics. I am more than healthy. I am so much happy."

Frank- "I'm fine. School is fine. Social studies is the subject I like best. Which team do you support? You support Arsenal? For me, I support Man U [Manchester United]!"

Rebecca- "I am fine. School is ok. Yes, I am healthy."

Anthony- "I am very fine. I am doing very well. I just have one problem with my eyes. They are really disturbing me. I still need my eye checks. Sometimes I feel pain in them. My favorite subjects is that I like football, physics, and math. Now I have decided from being an accountant to being an engineer. I hope to do civil engineering at university. Auntie, there is something, there is some struggle with my legs. The scars remain red. I have heard there is a cream in other countries which you put to change the color of skin. The hole in my leg, it is red. It is not a normal color because it is bright. Do you know this cream? Can you get some?"

Jackie- "I am healthy Aunt. School is good. I like studying and sports. Christian Education is my favorite subject. I have trouble with mathematics and chemistry, but I promise I will do better. I'm trying my best so I can succeed."

Robert George- I am fine Aunt. My favorite subject is science. For my favorite activities I like football and running. Yes, I like my school. I am healthy."

Eddie- I like my new school. It's nice; it's a Christian School with all qualities. I'm trying and doing well. I am happy. My favorite subject is physics. I like it but I'm not doing best. It's all about practicing and trying. I'm best in geography. My favorite activities is playing football. I like Arsenal. Today we played football with Uncle. It was Manchester United versus Arsenal. Man U with Uncle won. It was fun! It's ok, it's ok that they won. I like using the football. We are missing something for a family team; we need team uniforms and socks in either red or yellow. If possible I am humbly requesting or begging for shin guards for us. [What about the girls, Eddie?] For the girls sneakers are good."

These are all the substantive conversations I had (past volunteers know the phone gets passed around to all the children so quickly you hardly have time to get their names and ask "How are you?" before another child is reaching for the phone for their turn!).

However, quite recently El-shadai was hit with a series of health problems and I'm quite concerned about this all at the moment. Here is a portion of an e-mail from Stephen:

"This end things are abit stressing as many children are falling sick. Rancheal has been bleeding for almost three weeks and now she is vomiting blood. We took her for medical check up in everything but I will write you the results are not good news. I picked edward from school while he is serious sick, Ronald is sick, Betty, George, Immaculate, Joseph and I have been sick too. Therefore, less days at internet. It costally in terms of mediacations and proper feeding fort eh sick children to gain their health back. Jacky"s mother is very sick and the children are worried she might die quickly."

I haven't been able to reach Stephen. I received this 2 days ago and I try to reach Stephen on the weekends generally (it's when I have the most luck and I'm traveling right now). I'm hoping to speak to Stephen very soon and will keep trying! I'll send you any updates in a future e-mail, as these health problems, some quite extreme, are of great concern.

### ***The Wedding***

Stephen's introduction and wedding is almost continually postponed and it brings him much distress as a result. As we've written in past newsletters, family approval is of most importance and her family continues to have reservations about her joining herself to a man with 30 [foster] children! Sometimes it seems Stephen and Dinah take one step forward and two steps backward, but other times small leaps forward are made. Still the continual postponement saddens the children. Stephen and Dinah have been a good example of staying committed and working through family problems. Here's the latest update from Stephen:

"We are meeting with the foster father of Dinah to discuss the challenges. The meeting is next week. We hope to leave the meeting with a confirmed date for the introduction."

### ***Past and Current Volunteers***

El-shadai has had many volunteers over the past while and all have done phenomenal work! Both Stephen and I are so grateful that El-shadai continues to attract dedicated, thoughtful, and compassionate people. It can be hard to enter a new culture and different environment and accomplish much in short periods of time, but each volunteer has found ways to contribute that have lasting impacts; whether it is implementing a more efficient way to wash the many dishes or starting a new women's support group, it all is so very appreciated and we're both grateful. Here's some details on recent volunteers and their activities:

Ellie and Melissa, from America, spent a week at the project recently. They arrived in the midst of a traffic jam and Stephen and Isaac, who went to pick them up at the airport, were worried Ellie and Melissa would think they weren't coming! Luckily these two are experienced travelers and despite Stephen and Isaac arriving a bit late, all was well and everyone arrived safely back at El-shadai. They arrived in the midst of the illnesses Stephen discussed above and I have not had a chance to learn of their particular experiences at the project.

Nick and Laurie from America are currently at the project and have been working diligently in a number of areas. Nick has a background in construction which is a benefit to helping Stephen plan for the future home that Friend of El-shadai are raising funds for. Laurie, who has a background in social work, has surveyed the women's groups to research which topics they would like to learn about and came up with a list. Future volunteers with experiencing or access to information in these areas could help by developing presentations or bringing materials, such as books, that may be of help. Here's the list of topics given by

the women to Laurie: parenting teenagers, discipline, behavior development, budgeting and planning within a household, child development, HIV/AIDs, business, reclaiming lost hope, bereavement (grief and loss), nutrition, and self esteem.

Nick and Laurie arrived in time to meet Penny and Joe from Canada. They were an amazing support and help to Stephen and El-shadai. Accounting, budgeting, in general financial accountability, has been a struggle. As you can imagine, orphans in Uganda do not experience passive knowledge gained from receiving and having cash or making many purchases! Of course, formal schooling in these areas is lacking, and you wouldn't be able to find mentorship either. The facts that Stephen, a former street child, has a bank account, paid bills, and used money selflessly were a tremendous accomplishment, but it was a struggle to understand what monies were going where and how much was available at any set time. Penny and Joe, with advanced degrees in accounting and financial management, as well as open and compassionate hearts, taught Stephen, the children, and the women's groups several principles and practices which have truly changed mind sets. I have not spoken directly with the women's groups, but Stephen and the children have all told me they have a clear understanding now of how to track monies, to make personal and communal decisions appropriately when to spend monies, and in general how to be accountable for monies, and they all feel wonderful! It's reduced their stress and given them greater insight into a way of life they all wanted but couldn't quite grasp. Penny and Joe have had a great impact on the organization!

Sue, an experienced nurse, manager and consultant from Australia with experience with HIV positive patients, was also at El-shadai when Nick and Laurie arrived. She as well had a great impact! She was able to take the children to medical appointments, organize records, teach classes, and ensure the children had received proper check ups and care. What a great benefit. Sue moved on from El-shadai to visit another KWW project, KAASO, and is continuing her good works there!

### ***Future Volunteers***

Coming to the project in July and August: Chris and Becky from the USA, Aviv from Israel and Lauren from the USA, Julia from Austria, and me! I'm looking forward to reporting to everyone from Uganda once again!

### ***Donations***

A note from Sue: Stephen has 2 memory sticks, more than enough to meet his needs.

El-shadai also now has 4 laptops, none of which are working. Perhaps working to resolve the problems with the existing ones should be a project. Emma contacted Srijana, who is going to try some long-distance sleuthing to figure out the potential problems. If any future volunteer has experience in tech support and fixing computers; count on El-shadai needing your help!

I've asked the current volunteers to begin to inventory the supplies at El-shadai. While kitchen supplies, clothing, books, etc have all been on the list in the past, it has been difficult to know exactly what all the volunteers have brought over time, what supplies have been used to extinction or damaged, and what supplies are most needed. I've asked for an inventory in 4 areas minimally: school supplies, kitchen equipment/utensils, the library, and clothing. We'll get the inventory out in the newsletter as soon as they're complete and let you know!

Please review the list of topics provided to Laurie from the women's groups to see if you can bring items to assist! [It's in the volunteers section above.]

As always, please let me know of any questions or concerns you may have!  
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