

(Update 3) July 2011

Jambo tena (again) from Tanzania,

Delivering Medical Supplies

Many friends of the project and local businesses donated medical supplies for our trip. We had the privilege of delivering these much needed supplies to the Hospital in Kibosho. To see the joy in the eyes of the doctors as they were opening each box was like watching



a child on Christmas morning! There was a stethoscope in one of the boxes and one doctor immediately put it on. The hospital has only a few stethoscopes and they are shared by the 13 doctors who work there. Built largely by the Germans, but operated by the Catholic Diocese of Mohsi, the hospital is a full service facility (200 beds) with: surgery, maternity, emergency, dental, eye, geriatrics, malaria, and AIDS care. The patients pay a small fee for the services

they receive – if they can. It is not at all uncommon for a doctor to be paid in chickens. Our donated supplies help those patients who cannot pay receive much needed medical care. What is most amazing is the location of the hospital. The patients have to walk sometimes several miles up a steep and rutted dirt road to receive treatment.

The littlest follower

Our friend of many years now, Dr. Alan Minja, gave us quite a treat today. At the conclusion of a fascinating and at times heart wrenching tour of the hospital he asked if we would like to walk over to the river. Being 10km up mount Kilimanjaro, the hospital is situated amidst a stunning rain forest environment where numerous rivers cascade down from the mountain's 19,000+' heights carving deep densely forested gorges. Thinking that a walk to the river was probably a 5 minute stroll and we had already given up on our customary walk back to Moshi along the road due to the hour, we said, "sure!" Little did we know what we had just signed up for -- this was definitely an "off-road" experience.

The doctor led us along a well-worn foot path through dense greenery with steep and sometimes slippery terrain. After 30 minutes of pretty aggressive navigation, we reached a simple foot bridge crossing a beautiful boulder-strewn mountain river. The only problem was that we had come down some very steep terrain and turning around to hike back up seemed like a not fun idea. Dr. Alan motioned forward suggesting (we thought) that it would be easier to ascend the other side of the gorge and circle back along the road...presumably. Up we marched. Steep, but hardly impassible, and with monkeys high in the canopy above to keep us entertained.

After another half an hour we emerged atop a ridge line where our foot path intersected a larger foot path going up and down mountain. There were simple homes along the path and clearly many people lived in the surrounding forest. As we made the turn up mountain, some small children emerged from the surrounding trees to say hello to what were clearly unusual visitors. Jo Anne Coughlin had the forethought to bring a few pieces of candy along for the “stroll” and gave each appreciative child a piece. The littlest of the children was a small girl we guessed to be maybe four years old. It’s not too unusual for us to be followed by children when we walk on Kilimanjaro near Kibosho, so we didn’t think too much about it. After fifteen or twenty minutes of hiking up mountain, she was still with us...ever so politely bringing up the rear of our party. It was at this point that we came to learn that there was no “presumed road” to take us back to Kibosho, and anyone who knows rivers and gorges should have figured out that although you may not retrace the same steep path to get home, it’s going to be some *other* steep river crossing path just like it ☺

As we started down the steep path into the gorge we were now becoming increasingly concerned that our little friend was now probably very far from home and yet still continuing to follow us. We tried various ways of telling her to go home, worried that she might be lost, but she just kept on coming. Finally, the guilt overcame us and we called ahead for Dr. Alan, who was now pretty far up the path with our teenagers, to come back and tell this little one that she needed to go home. Words were exchanged between Doctor and timid child and Dr. Alan smiled and reported back, “she IS on her way home...she lives on the Kibosho side of the river” and probably wishes we would walk a little faster, please. Amazing that a child so young can manage an hour or so rain forest hike through terrain we considered challenging...no big thing. She escorted us almost all the way back to Kibosho and then trundled off alone down some other small path through the woods.



Terry Mulligan gives our new friend a lift

Kwaheri mpaka kesho.