

Liberia 2009 #2

“Con-mee we nee shamu” - What I thought I heard – “That guy was calling me Shamu”. What he was really saying, “The Economy went into shambles”

“geda dryer aw de row” - What he said, “Get that driver off the road”. I am using this one!

English is the primary language in Liberia. However, most of the time, I had no idea what the Liberians were saying. It is the only place where I have heard English spoken without using consonants, at least, only at the beginning of a word.

We have eaten ‘Palaver’, a mixture of cassava, greens and hot pepper sauce. We ate Fufu, which reminded me a great deal of the gag-reflex sound, ..for good reason.



This trip has been unusual in many ways. First of all, I connected with a returning missionary from Zambia, David Hunt in Lagos. We spent the entire time together in Nigeria with our partners. It was nice to have his company and expertise as we worked with the organization in Eastern Nigeria and met with their board. He has great experience in constructing schools and providing curriculum. David Umune from Nigeria, accompanied me to Liberia and benefited greatly from sharing ideas and having his vision re-charged.

I had also arranged for the US office West African Director, Rene Mbongo, a Senegalese, to meet us in Liberia. He is obviously African and has a great deal to contribute to these ministries. An Area Director takes the load from me. He reduces the need to travel more regularly to Africa and has a much deeper cross-cultural understanding of the ministry needs and strategies. My missed flight from Lagos put me on the same plane as Rene out of Abijan. What a coincidence. It was great for preparing for the visit to Liberia.

I say all that because some of you have asked “What do you really do on these trips”. I first thought my boss put you up to it, but I now realize that you are actually interested. Our focus at Partners is to enable church planting movements in frontier areas or areas that are under-resourced. We do this through partnerships with indigenous ministries that have great potential to grow rapidly. We provide financial resources but also develop deep relationships that encourage and motivate. We help them with organizational development issues, boards, administrative tools and all that boring stuff. There is also a whole area of responsible reporting to the Canadian government and Partners International donors. The results have been extraordinary and it is an amazing privilege for an old guy to be able to do this. I had considered being a Walmart greeter when I retired. As much as I appreciate their smarmy congeniality, this is much more fun.

In true West Africa fashion, my flight was delayed 3 hours in Accra on the way to Lagos. A plane had damaged its undercarriage on the runway and they shut down the airport in Lagos. I was held up in Nigeria by customs because I did not have a multiple entry visa. My flight home through Amsterdam, was also delayed because of the airport closure. I was told repeatedly that the gate was closed and there was no way to get on the KLM flight. But, there is always a way in Africa. Here I am in Amsterdam writing this note.

Thanks for your prayers and interest. I would not have made it this far without them.

-Phil



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