

# LIFE BEGINS AT 40!

December 2008

Since I first came to Uganda seven years ago in 2001 I have wondered how best to share the reality of life and work here, to give an honest yet balanced picture of the rollercoaster of great times and challenges. As I write this today I am so relaxed and rested, sitting on my friend's verandah overlooking the River Nile. It's quiet and peaceful and the only movement or noise is from the spectacular array of birdlife, or from an occasional fisherman meandering down the river. Yet if I had written this last week, the scenario and my mood would have been so very different. The past two months since my return to Uganda have been so very full and busy with a combination of challenges – catching up with many folk all desiring some of my time, medical work, doing language study, a teenage girl pregnant, a teenage boy in jail for drug abuse and stealing, trying to find a place to stay, car problems, and much more. I was feeling so stressed and just overtired as I struggled to sleep well with so many adjustments and different places I was sleeping.

To explain my title, it is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday today and I am celebrating and rejoicing. I know the western concept is that people assume 40 is either so old or so wonderful (of course it depends on whose perspective you choose to listen to!). Well, I truly believe we have one life and we can choose to live it with vitality and thankfulness or we can keep wishing for something different. As a Christian, my life belongs to God and my desire is to know Him more and to bring Him glory in ALL that I am and ALL that I do – whether that is in Scotland or Africa, whether I am 30, 40 or 80! I do realise that I make so many mistakes along the way and yet I love having a purpose, a hope that gives my life such meaning. Despite all the things that I have encountered and

struggled with in the past two months, indeed these past years, I LOVE the work that I feel blessed and privileged to be a part of here in Africa.

An update on things at DP – we are coming to the end of an academic year and also coming to the end of the rehabilitation process for more than 30 of our resident kids; they will go for resettlement with family members next month. We hope and pray that this transition in their lives will be successful and they will be settled quickly. For some, it is the first time they will have lived with family members as they spent their whole childhood on the streets. They have found a place of refuge and safety at DP and yet our hope for all our children is for them to be resettled back with families and in communities. Because of limited resources, we are unable to recruit new kids from the streets next year, so will remain with around 30-40 resident kids in the Home.



However, there is still much work to be done on the streets. In my health work I also work in the slum area with families from the streets, doing a variety of things like teaching about health, family planning, hygiene and sanitation, HIV and STDs and also helping in some emergency situations. I also work with Juliana, a nurse from a fellow organisation called Tigers Club which has a drop-in centre for street boys; we sometimes

do clinics together. Juliana and I also try to visit the remand centre twice a month to do health clinics for the kids there. Since I first started in that area in 2002 we have seen such a variety of numbers, varying from 100-800 street kids there.



As I mentioned before, I have restarted some language study and I am trying to do that Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. I feel it makes such a valuable contribution to my life and work here, building relationships with my neighbours and friends, the DP team, the clients and of course my kids!

Another area that we would really value prayer for is our older teenagers going into independent living. The government do not allow us to have resident kids over the age of 18, and many of these youth do not have existing relatives or the situation is not suitable for resettlement. Some will live alone (only boys); some are in cluster homes (boys and girls), especially suitable for our teenage girls; some are studying in secondary education or in vocational skills training; some have had children, so balancing their responsibilities as mothers and students is not easy at times! We hope to have a workshop/camp for all of them (about 60) in December. We hope it will educate, encourage and motivate them to make good life choices.

Last but not least, an update on Nalule Sylvia. Many have known this young lady and some of the incredible struggles she has faced in her life. She spent years begging on the streets and would take her 'earnings' back to her Mum and siblings each night. Her medical prognosis is very poor with complicated multi-organ failure. We have been helping her for years and it was a

delight to visit her on my return and to find her looking so happy and bright. However, her condition is so fragile and can change rapidly and she has been admitted to hospital twice in the past month. As I write, she is unwell again and in hospital and requiring oxygen. Her medical bills have escalated as she requires intensive care therapy which is difficult to access here and therefore expensive. Thank you so very much to all those who have helped recently and over the years towards the health costs here at DP – I simply could not do what I do without your support. Your help helps so many – paying for medicines for hundreds of kids I see at clinics, paying for dental services, HIV testing and care, eye tests and glasses, splints and wheelchairs for disabled kids, operations for injuries or emergencies. My heart overflows with thankfulness to each of you. If you are able, please continue.

As always, you are welcome to write to me at [mcampbell@aimint.net](mailto:mcampbell@aimint.net) or check out the work of Dwelling Places at [www.dwellingplaces.org](http://www.dwellingplaces.org)

WITH LOVE FROM THIS HAPPY 40 YEAR OLD IN AFRICA!!

MARSALI CAMPBELL



Marsali & Sylvia