In this issue:

ACK Diocese of Marsabit spearheads famine interventions

ACK Diocese of Bondo Gets a new Bishop
ACK DIOCESE OF MARSABIT SPEARHEADS FAMINE INTERVENTIONS

Past the long traffic jams into the city, the city building race away from us. The skies are getting less orange-revealing the bluish color. Above the skyline, the sun introduces the day, brightened by the rays which promise a good day for those getting into the city. Along Thika road, a white land rover sprints out of the city. In it, Charles Mugo-the driver, confidently, steers us into what I would refer to as – the journey to the Great North. The other occupants, Eddie Ozol (Anglican Aid Australia), Bwibo Adieri and Dixon Andiwa (ADS Kenya) engage in long chats that fade and give way to new topics. The car radio is on, though the volume has been turned off. We all take turns to look at two newspapers that are in the car. The stories look new every time we read them, as a way of keeping us busy for the long journey ahead.

6 hours later, with a couple of stops in between, we get to Isiolo-some 273Kms, North of the country. The town, a rather busy market ushers you to the lives of the multi religious setup of the North. A road cuts right in the middle. Our Contact Person, Rev. Omar, receives us at the Boman Hotel. Here, the drought situation is complicated by the rise in cases of banditry. The Children have to travel far, to get an education. The crops have failed-and as we would later be told-the rains won’t be coming till some time later in the year. And that would only be for a short time.

After Lunch, he briefs us on the schedule for the next day then we retreat to our rooms.

By 8:00am, the following day we
take our breakfast and visit ACK St. Peter’s Church Waso, in Isiolo Town. We are joined by Norm Gorrie, An Australian missionary working at the ACK Diocese of Marsabit. The Diocesan food distribution truck is on site. Gallons of oil, sacks of maize and beans lie adjacent to the church. A few men and women can be seen streaming into the Church compound with bags tucked below their arms. The distribution, however, won't start soon because most people haven’t arrived. We then set for more centres along the road. Since the road here isn’t safe in the afternoon, we have to make it to Marsabit Town early. At a daring speed of not less than 130km/hr, we lurk into the remaining stretch of 263kms to Marsabit. The more we move, the more clear the road gets. Less people can be seen on the roadsides. No houses and villages. We are on our own. Few animals graze on the roadsides. Mountains appear before us, race against us and within no time we get past them. It is really a journey, in the wild. A few kilometers from Archers Post, at a police roadblock, we come across a truck that has been attacked by Bandits. The truck was carrying cattle to Marsabit town. The occupants, two middle aged men, look terrified. They have shrapnel and blood stains on their shirts. A police van full of heavily armed administration police speed towards us and stops. After talking to the two men, they proceed to inspect the truck. One thing to note that every vehicle that passes this point is thoroughly checked for security reasons. No incidences happen to us during the rest of the journey, though. We get to Marsabit town few minutes past 4:00pm. The breeze is less strong than that of Isiolo. We take lunch at a local hotel and proceed to the ACK St. Peter’s Cathedral Marsabit. After a few minutes of waiting, The Rt. Rev. Daniel Wario Qampicha, the Bishop of ACK Marsabit Diocese joins us. Tea is served and we get to discuss the situation on the ground. Early the following morning, we set for food distribution centers along the Marsabit-Moyale road. On the roadsides, women lead donkeys loaded with 20litre gallons. Rev. Omar tells us that they are going to look for water. We stop two women who have two donkeys with them. They have walked for ten kilometers to Marsabit town. They tell us that, each household will use 80litres of water in two days (there are approximately six people in every household). Most women have marks on their backs, because of carrying the gallons on their backs for long distances. The rain is very unpredictable thus there are no permanent water sources. The water pans and dams that have been dug are dry since there has been no rain for years. This, coupled with lack of food makes the situation dire.
On the first center that we visit on that day, an unfinished borehole is covered by sticks can be seen. The residents can however not use the water because it has not been extracted to storage tanks. For them, help seems near, yet far from their reach. This happens to be one of the few sites within the county where water can be found in boreholes. Women and the elderly person rest in groups. Their story is written on their faces. Their happiness appears once—when relief aid comes, and goes as soon as what they are given is over. Its hard to understand though, why they keep on staying there. “Where would we go anyway? The whole area is a desert…” the local parish priest tells us.

Eddie, in his speech to the people, reminds them that just as the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia made contributions to the people in Jerusalem, (Romans 15:26) we are here to offer a little help to them. They appreciate through their traditional songs, which we can only understand by their look on their faces. The further we go North, the fewer the men we find. Most of them moved with the remaining livestock to Isiolo and Parts of Laikipia and Samburu counties in search of pasture. The women are left behind with the burden of taking care of the Children and the elderly. The children attend nearby nursery schools. After that they join upper primary schools which are kilometers away. There, they board. Food and water is provided. They can call that home. But for how long can they stay comfortable when their siblings are suffering at home. Those who cannot afford to go to school resort to taking care of the few livestock left in the plains. Most people stay in clustered villages. At one point we engage a few. One, who speaks in the Borana language, tells us that what we see around them is what has been with them for long. On their old dusty radios, there is talk about government relief—but that remains at that.

Some few kilometers from Moyale, we take a rusty, dusty and man-made road to the interior. It is dotted with scarce vegetation. Animal skeletons litter the plains. We come across a group of women at a water pan. A young girl innocently indulges in the activity of the older ones—scooping water into large cans. One can easily ask why the girl is not in school—but it matters to stay alive. They appear excited in their local language. Some, with their bare chests and young children clinging on their backs, wash their feet in the same water that others are scooping! Animals too are brought here to quench their thirst. The birds and other wild animals too, seem to enjoy the available resource. A complete sketch of the interdependence in the ecosystem. They tell us that the pan will last them for two weeks before it dries up. They will then have to travel to other points around Bubisa, some 15 Kms away.

As we go back to Marsabit, Bishop Qampicha passes his appreciation to all the partners who have done something to better the situation. He invites more to come on board and compliment the work of the Church in feeding the people. The situation can only be alleviated if we all join hands and contribute.
The Diocese of Bondo celebrated the enthronement of its 2nd Bishop on the 4th of June. The Bishop Elect Rev. Canon Prof. David Kodia was consecrated in a ceremony that saw over 1000 people gather at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University, among them Bishops, Church leaders, Christians, academicians, politicians and businessmen and women. ACK Archbishop Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Ole Sapit presided over the function. In his Bishop’s Charge, Prof. Kodia outlined his vision for the Diocese and promised to be faithful in his service to God and the Church. He noted that indeed this was an opportunity for the Church to rise and defend the gospel as well as unite the country. He thanked his predecessor, Bishop Emeritus Rt. Rev. Johannes Angela for his service to the Church and wished him well in his retirement. In his sermon, the Bishop of Mt. Kenya South, Rt. Rev. Timothy Ranji encouraged the Church to act as a pillar of hope to the society, country and the world.
The Anglican Development Services held its annual General meeting on the 29th of June. The meeting brought together ADS sister institutions, Board of Directors, trustees, staff and other stakeholders to take stock of its progress and milestones. The Provincial Secretary, The Rev. Can. Rosemary Mbogo, who was present at the event, commended ADS for its work in transforming the communities in the country. She challenged the management of ADS regions to come up with new ways of sourcing for funds in the wake of dwindling donor support for project work. She also encouraged the Bishops to fully own ADS as the development arm of ACK. She noted that maximum impact at the grassroots could only be achieved if “the church collaborated with other partners to solve the common problems facing our society.” ADS Kenya Board Chair the. Rt. Rev. Kibucwa on his part urged those present to continue advocating for peace as the country heads towards the general elections.
Beneficiaries of Relief Aid pose for a photo with ADS Kenya and Anglican Aid- Australia staff.

Rev. Omar (Right) supports an elderly woman to pick her relief food.

The ADS Kenya Programs Committee in a meeting.

The Rev. Canon David Kodia, the Bishop Elect of ACK Diocese of Bondo is escorted by Bishops Tim Wambunya and John Okude during the procession.

Women load water cans into a lorry in Marsabit.

The Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Ole Sapit Commends Dr. Agnes Abuom after she received an award for her work in Ministry from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

ACK Archbishop with Eddie Ozol and Dr. Agnes Abuom.

A section of members of the ACK Policy Reference Group during a recent meeting.

Members of the Inter-religious Council address the press after a meeting with Presidential Candidates on the upcoming general elections.
ACK Archbishop congratulates The Rt. Rev. Prof David Kodia, the newly installed Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Bondo

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