

Summary of EMMA Mission to North Sumatra (17/8 – 3/9/17)

Team members : Drs. RS, TM and Becky Hodnett, paediatric student nurse Lydia Macey, OTs Caroline & Henrietta Louis, pharmacist Gertsy Roy, hospital administrator Lily Fok, teacher Malti Joshi, student Rosie Males and our linkman, Masao Sinulinga.

Introduction to Kabanjahe and GNKP ...

Kabanjahe was the town in which our church compound was situated, allowing us to travel 1 – 1.5 hours to each of our various village destinations. GBKP = Gereja Batak (the Church) of the Karo people, Protestant.

Thursday 17/8 – Friday 18/8 : a difficult start as Rosie was immediately homesick, whilst Malti was physically sick on the plane to Kuala Lumpur! Then our “hot transfer” of baggage from KL to Medan airports failed as we (but not our bags) arrived somewhat tired in Medan. No worries (or so we thought) as the next plane was due later that afternoon and TM / RS needed to supplement medicines already purchased by Masao in Jakarta with more from an Apotek in Medan.

However, having retrieved the bags, customs showed unhealthy interest in one suitcase containing hundreds of glasses! It took 2 hours, emails from our receiving church (and much international prayer) to establish that we weren't doing business, allowing the case to be released! With time passing and a long journey ahead to Kabanjahe, we then learnt that a short clinic was planned, in addition to a seminar, the next day. Right from the beginning we discovered that our plans, the locals' plans and God's plans would merely intersect! Prayer and considerable flexibility would be key attributes in this medical mission to Northern Sumatra.

Leaving Medan airport in our Diakonia bus, we dined at the huge convention centre where, in 2015, All Souls, Langham Place saw 2,000 (out of 14,500 youngsters) respond to Christ. The next one is planned for 2019. The centre also featured a memorial to Dutch missionaries - ironic in view of the country's current secularity. We were grateful to arrive, finally, later than planned on Friday night, at our rather more modest Church compound in *Kabanjahe*.

Saturday 19/8 : Rosie remained anxious, hadn't slept and wasn't eating properly so TM arranged for her early return home the next day. This did allow her to experience our first (short) medical clinic at *Beganding*. Dividing the Church building into sections using sheets and sarongs allowed for consultation areas and for us to iron out any wrinkles before the major clinics next week. Tony gave the pre-clinic Gospel message to waiting patients and our prayer team of Lily and Malti were immediately confronted by the stresses and strains of lives lived in poverty and in the shadow of the persistently erupting Mount Sinabung volcano.

The clinic was followed by an evening youth event focusing on choice. Locals sang, then Becky lead us as we proclaimed “How Great is our God”. God's sense of humour then came to the fore! The video sound recording of “Father Abraham had

many sons” failed, but Tony literally stepped in, dancing his way in a manner not approved on Strictly. The ice broken, we illustrated choice through drama and my testimony, before splitting the 100 kids into inter-active groups. This was the first of several seminars in which locals were asked to pinpoint their biggest issues. Free sex, drugs, gambling and excessive use of the internet leading to lack of parental respect and help came up. A good start as the Lord directed events.

Sunday 20/8 : Early start (8 a.m formal church service at *Kuta Buluh* over an hour away). I woke early, asking God for a different message but was still pointed to **Galatians 5**. So often, God uses comparison to make His point. The fruits of the Spirit are highly desirable, but must replace, not simply be added onto existing fleshly attributes. Despite the formality, 3 responded to the pastors afterwards, alongside many Christian women who came for prayer. One woman, just out of hospital, was amazed that the Scriptural teaching on anger hit the spot. Family problems predominated, as the women spoke of their dead husbands or whether to take a live one (drug addict, post-prison) back!

Lunch - sitting on floor mats, an introduction to fish head curry and snake fruit.

In the afternoon, we led a seminar with Sunday school teachers from 4-5 different churches at *Surbakti*. Following their excellent singing, our role was two-fold : firstly, we introduced the use of drama, before encouraging the teachers to do better! Much squealing took place as Jesus calmed the storm, walked on water and taught on the Parable of the Sower. More importantly, it was clear that salvation through works was an issue for these teachers. Cue for Henri to release the Evangicube with a short message after explaining why only Jesus can save us. We finished by giving the teachers presents for their children, including a childrens’ Evangicube.

In the evening, we finally managed to get together as a team. The twins had prepared Bible studies which proved excellent throughout the fortnight away.

Monday 21st - Wednesday 23rd : *Clinics in Munthe*

Unusually, we often had mornings off, allowing us to prepare for afternoon clinics and evening events. That said, stuff took place on rubber time. Henri explained what she’d taught prayer teams in Fiji and the Philippines earlier this year. Before praying, ask them whether they know Jesus. If YES, explain how that helps. If NO, could I tell you about him and why this matters? We are in debt to the Gospel, no different from being given some money to pass onto a friend and then failing to do so.

Caroline also told us how the twins’ flat had recently been robbed. No need now to declutter! God provides. Masao showed us that the Karo tribe believe in God - but which god?

On the way to Munthe, our first major destination, we had our first glimpse of Mount Sinabung - the volcano dominating the region and which, after hundreds of years of dormancy, erupted in 2010, killing 17 people. Over the subsequent 7 years, many eruptions have since occurred (the last significant one just 2 weeks before our

arrival). Crops and villages were lost with refugees in their tens of thousands. Arriving on the first day, we were simply scheduled for 2 afternoon seminars. Dividing the 100 church-going adults into 4 groups, we were able to gauge issues which they linked to a poverty-mindset. It was good to learn about micro-finance initiatives, while Becky and Lydia entertained their children brilliantly.

The next day, we turned down the offer of the town square meeting hall, asking for a Church instead. This was supplied, allowing us to create spaces for our medical clinics, pharmacy, glasses, therapy and prayer stations.

Wednesday wasn't a big day, but a huge day, according to my excellent translator, Pastor Oklin. One trainee pastor (Inda), on her first medical mission, loved the fact that we explained issues to patients and prayed as well as prescribed.

The Jesus film was shown on Tuesday evening in Munthe, with 45 people responding late in the evening to Henri's appeal. Names were taken for local pastors to follow up. Getting home at 1 a.m, we breakfasted at 6 a.m, prior to our next assignment.

Thursday 24th - Friday 25th : Clinics in Tiga Binanga

By our second major placement, the format was now established of a quiet morning, prior to seminars and clinics. The locals loved our echoing song, "God is Good, All the Time", allowing them to respond *Bujuur x 3* Yesus (Thank you Jesus). No-one responded either day to Tony's appeal in church, but they liked the Hands sketch and loved the Traveller, by now involving Hera and Oklin as local pastor participants. The chicken sketch, now involving orang-utans, we felt was important (so what exactly does make you a Christian?) - but possibly confused them!

Many with untreatable conditions were brought to clinic. Children with Downs Syndrome and cerebral palsy, several blind and others suffering from old strokes. Diabetes and high BP were common, resulting from the huge quantities of rice, palm oil and salt consumed. Pins and needles in all 4 limbs are symptoms of diabetic neuropathy till proved otherwise! The prayer team faced problems within families, notably between mothers and their daughter in laws, disobedient children and in, after a second marriage, between the children of a Christian mother and those of her new Muslim husband. In Indonesia, people aren't forced to convert to Islam on marriage, so we encouraged her in her desire to remain Christian. Malti prayed for several Muslims and saw some respond to Jesus.

We were joined by a local doctor for 2 days, who taught me about a hot rice compress for a facial twitch - handy in the absence of Botox! Stress manifesting as headache and indigestion was so common, along with the usual musculoskeletal aches following a lifetime of hard work. We saw many goitres, and were able to distinguish those needing hospital referral eg. a skin tumour infiltrating an eyelid, those needing a hearing aid and a pacemaker - from those who didn't eg. one man NOT requiring an amputation as he'd been advised!

After another floor supper eating with hands, we stopped off at a coffee shop for Kopi with/without susu (white condensed milk coffee). Travelling home late, the bumpy roads led to our hot tea urn spilling onto Henri's foot. No blistering resulted.

Saturday 26th : Seminar in Tiga binanga

A sad day, saying goodbye to Becky and Lydia. We really appreciated their enthusiasm, energy, Lydia's practical common sense, Becky's voice and guitaring plus, of course, being young they were great with kids! Hopefully they will join us again in the future. In their place, we were joined by a local team of 4 female dentists plus one student and a GP. They were part of an itinerant Christian team who weren't phased by working in church offices, using head torches. Just 7 patients arrived for treatment today, but the dentists would be busier tomorrow.

We had 2 seminars planned, but the monsoon came early, not being expected till September. Water gushed in through the Church roof, cutting off our electricity, and life resembled art as we dramatised Jesus walking on water and the wise man building his house on the rock. As the rain came down and the floods came up, the pastor was quite content, knowing that seeds had been planted despite no rain for 3 months. This was the answer to his peoples' prayers! Puji Tuhan (Praise the Lord). 11 responded to Carol's talk and locals loved Tony's action song : Jesus is the Rock and he rolled my blues away, bop shuwaddy ...

Our second seminar was cancelled as mops and brooms, hitherto employed dramatically as oars, now came into their own. But prayer was again answered as electricity returned, allowing 42 to respond to the evening Jesus film.

Sunday 27th : Church in Bintang Meriah (Happy Star)

We dramatized, then Tony spoke on the Parable of the Sower. Emphasising that only the Farmer can remove stones, and that he looks after the crops and the soil, he questioned whether our hearts are as fertile as the volcanic soil found here? We, too, can be farmers, spreading the Word. Pastor Oklin later added that once when she preached, God changed her message to the sower. She emphasised that we mustn't plant our seeds too deep - or they won't develop, meaning we mustn't over-think, worry or be over-burdened by about questions, money, rules.

That afternoon, controversially, we did our first ever Sunday clinic. 12 responded to my appeal after Lily did the pre-clinic Gospel talk on lost sheep. 2 women patients accepted prayer after similar stories of losing sons to accidents.

Monday 28th - Tuesday 29th : More Clinics in Bintang Meriah

Monday was busy. After breakfast we prepared our gifts for pastors, translators, drivers etc. before Bible study with the team wearing masks, due to ash floating down from the volcano's frequent mild smoking. On the way to clinic, we were taken to a ridge affording a panoramic view. At the summit was an elaborate grave for a departed king, whose head was placed in a safe, higher than his body. Clinic in

Bintang Meriah took place in the main town square. We began by entertaining and teaching the children Bible songs. Many adults responded to Malti's Gospel talk.

Sadly, Oklin couldn't join us as her father had been admitted with a mini-stroke. Visiting him in hospital, we prayed and saw much improvement. This spiritual attack cost me my translator but allowed Hera to step up instead. One male patient, with good English, explained the peoples' problems : not primarily one of health or economics, but faith in tough times. Tony : God is bigger than "spiritus Sinabung".

200 attended for our last showing of the Jesus film. Men watched from the adjoining coffee shop. Gratifyingly, 60+ responded, including 5 of the men - who had all ignored the footy on the shop's TV, focussing instead on the dancing and the film itself. During ministry-time afterwards, God gave me the exact words for a 13 year girl - who asked for strength following her father's death, 5 years previously. Another man asked for his wife, who'd disappeared, to return.

On Tuesday, we were shown a traditional house. 8 families, each existing in a square possibly 10 x 10 feet square each, including a "kitchen" but with communal washing facilities. Humbling. A lovely last spicy meal with tributes from both sides, including the GBKP Archbishop, who'd attended our clinic. We'd already met him briefly at a previous gathering of pastors - and learnt that he'd heard good things about EMMA.

Wednesday 30th : Synod + Work of GBKP

Tony did a last mini-clinic for the staff who'd looked after us so well at Kabanjahe. At the synod, the Archbishop presented the beginnings, works and vision of GBKP.

GBKP - the Protestant Church of the Karo tribe - is pleased that friends help them stay strong in serving people, including Muslims, with traditional problems eg. health, poverty and families, supplemented since 2010 by the eruption disaster. More than 20,000 church members were displaced to become refugees.

Karo people are divided into 5 clans including Karo-Karo, to which the Sinulingga's belong. They traditionally worship spirits and ghosts and wear amulets with magic powers. Then in 1890, the first Dutch missionaries arrived, with 6 locals baptised in 1894, followed by translation of 104 Bible stories. Health care followed, with a Leprosy Hospital built in 1903 and a school to educate Sunday School teachers in 1906. Over the next 50 years, 5,000 became Christians - but by 2017, the number has risen to more than 500,000 in 500+ parishes, with 888 congregations, 6,500 elders and 540 pastors (nothing like enough!). 40% pastors are female, but more women have recently been ordained (and a higher percentage of trainee pastors seen staying in our compound were female).

Existing ministries include young, old, female, music and (recently) counselling. Evangelism and inter-faith dialogue is important. In Indonesia, one of the 6 major religions must be stated on your Identity Card.

Financial help : Helping the poor via Community Economic Development and the rural bank is essential. Loan sharks charge 10% interest PER DAY! By contrast, GBKP charges 2% per month. The Church works in the disabled home, an orphanage and an elderly home, runs an AIDS Commission and is involved in solar power as well as health. Aim : to liberate people from poverty, helping farmers eg. to avoid the high cost of chemical fertiliser by utilising organic methods and biogas. Also involved in advocacy - so they're delighted the current President is good and anti-corruption. Many MPs have gone to jail. The poor mindset must change and pastors are now more rigorously selected to recue materialistic temptations / an easy life by first undergoing work placements in the orphanage or disabled community.

GBKP help in **disaster-response**. Since 2010, many landowners have become labourers, living basically as the ash destroyed crops eg. onion, coffee and tomato. Villages lost everything, not just agriculture but shattered lives & hopes. The solution involves mutual cooperation and mentoring kids who need help to cope and to understand that this isn't God's punishment. Muslims are helped too; one commented on the importance of the Church's presence among them.

Fund-raising - GBKP believe that God will provide, but they must work too. Aim for service-orientation, not business or profit as driver.

Refugees : children need help with school fees, transport and books. Education costs £1 per month and transport 30p per day (6-8,000 Rupiah). Must educate the poor or the eruption will lead to a student eruption! Educating the 700 refugees in university is also problematic. No-one knows how long refugees will remain in camps. Land is the big issue. The Government asks others to rent their land, and promised many a home by last December. Adult refugees may travel 24 kilometre by bus per day to farm what is left of their fields, hoping to feed and educate their kids.

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We sang and presented a report of our findings to the Synod - including the 911 patients treated - before the giving and receiving of gifts.

After lunch, we visited **Alpha-Omega** - a mentally disabled care home, where we sang to the 88 (mainly child) inhabitants so lovingly cared for - and later bought gifts and cards hand-made by them.

We then visited one **refugee camp**. 300 people in traditional-style "rooms" with no privacy. Initially they stopped singing, saying that after 7 years, they had nothing to sing about - but later joined in and allowed us to pray. As their children returned on the school bus, more singing aided and abetted by bubbles and balloons ensued. At the end of the trip, some of our monies raised will be directed towards these refugees. And our next trip should involve more refugee work.

Finally, work completed, we had our first proper wash for a fortnight in a **Hot Spring** swimming pool at dusk, with steam emerging eerily from various points in the surrounding hills.

Thursday 31st - Saturday 2nd September :

On Thursday, we travelled to **Lake Toba**- reputedly the biggest inland lake in the world; after crossing it by ferry to an island, we took the long road back to Medan.

On Friday, we got up at 4 a.m to travel to see the oranges in a National Park at *Bukit Laurang*. Auntie was left at base and Henri employed her stick to climb the hills. Success! In addition to gibbons and long-tailed macaques, a mother and baby orang were enticed to climb down by banana smeared on their tree trunks. Then the best sight of all - an enormous male joined our throng of tourists on the ground. Simply magnificent, he was given a wide berth, allowing him to pose and show off his climbing ability.

Saturday - flight home, arriving at 6 a.m, *Sunday 3rd* at Heathrow.

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FINAL PARA : there were many reasons why this trip could have been cancelled ...

- 1) Low initial team numbers, especially medics
- 2) A poorly-attended and funded training weekend
- 3) The fund-raising London evening was hijacked somewhat by Teresa May calling a general election that night (8/6/17)
- 4) Our respiratory doctor - was unable to come

But we still felt the trip should go ahead. Money came in, local docs and dentists were recruited by Masao and our 2 youngsters and older 2 prayer team ladies came on board at the last minute. God had it all in hand! Puji Tuhan!

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TOTAL no. patients seen : 911 at a drug cost of ~ £900 - as Kenya = £1 / patient.

Glasses : 328 + TM own clinic glasses, thus approx. 400 dispensed

Therapy : 229 treated

Dental : 29 patients treated

Prayer team : saw approx. 150 patients

Nurse : no accurate figures as Lydia moved seamlessly between teams!

Leftover drugs and glasses plus the adult Evangicube and DVDs of Jesus Film were presented to the Archbishop.

Fund-raising : **£6,600 raised** and given to Masao, to be used by GBKP at their discretion - with another £750 kept back for our next trip to Kenya.

Responses : **Hundreds!** But impossible to ascertain new from old responders!

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