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News from EMMANUEL INTERNATIONAL

GIVING PRACTICAL HELP - MEETING SPIRITUAL NEED

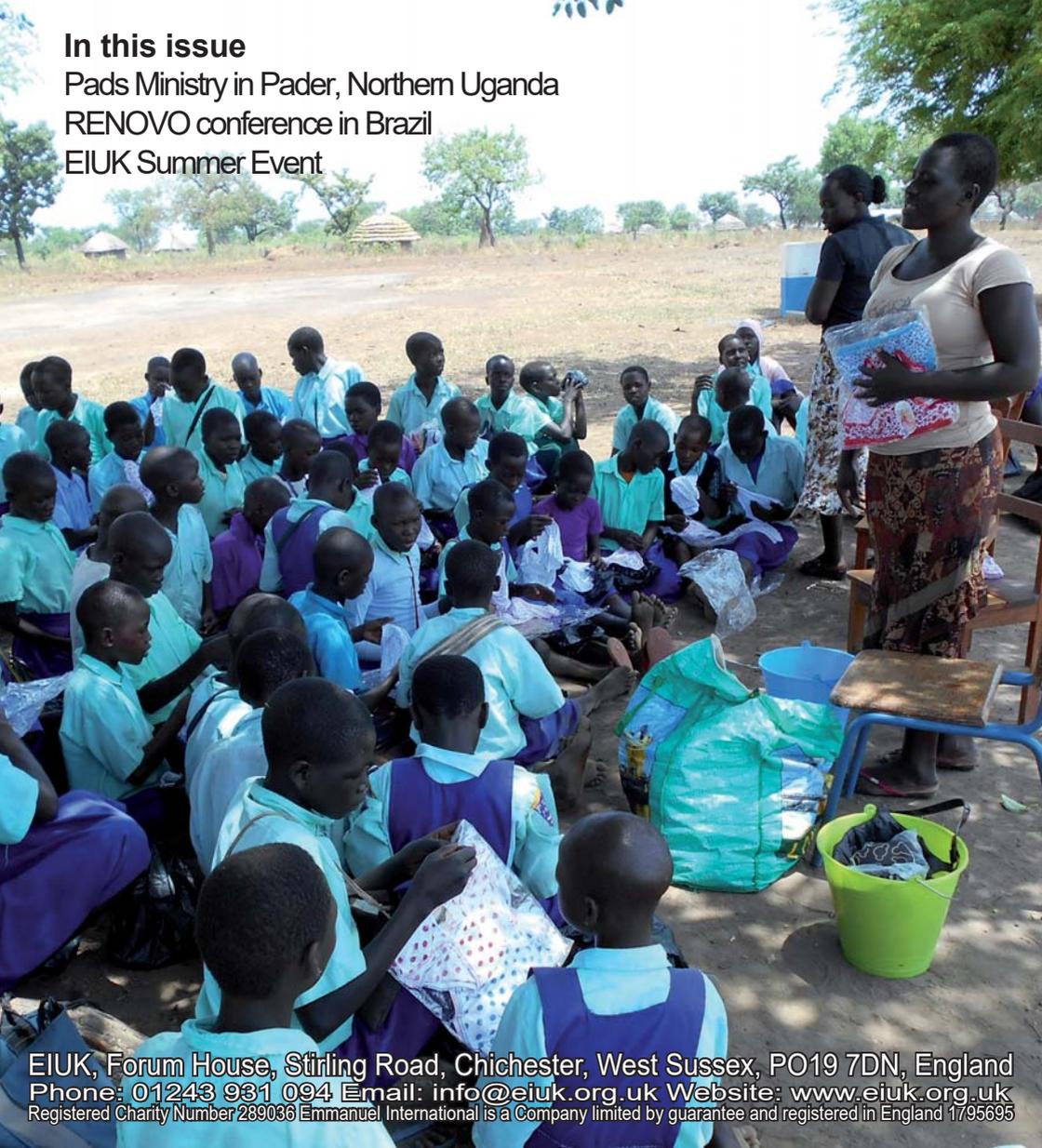
Issue 1 of 2016

In this issue

Pads Ministry in Pader, Northern Uganda

RENOVO conference in Brazil

EIUK Summer Event



The purpose of this ministry is to help the girls stay in school and receive the education they so badly need for a better future, for themselves, their children and their community. And also to point the girls towards the God who can be trusted for the whole of life.



Pads Ministry



Tom Edom works in Pader, Northern Uganda and partners with Milly in the Pads Ministry.

It's tough being a menstrual hygiene practitioner and not being able to experience what you are talking about. A bit like training deep sea divers how to avoid the bends when you have never actually put on flippers and mask. Or maybe making critical ice climbing equipment for an attempt on Everest, when you have always lived in the Sahara Desert.

Of course, one learns from the those who have been there and are prepared to generously share their experience. The feeling of being in the grip of uncontrollable

forces, the pain and discomfort, the fear and worry. And there have been times when I have seen the impact up close on loved ones but the real experience will be for ever out of my reach.

So let me share with you what the experts have shared with me. If you are female then it is a 99.9% probability that some time in your pre-teen or early teen years the day will come (or has passed) when your body starts to kick in to womanhood. You will get no perceptible warning but will suddenly start bleeding uncontrollably (but not profusely) from your private parts. If you happen to be at home, good for you. If you happen to be at school in a mixed class and maybe you



Distribution at Paiula Primary School



Packing their new supplies at Ogom Telela



Teachers bring their babies to work in Kibong

have not even noticed (there is no specific pain to warn you) then the consequences can be embarrassing. So embarrassing that, depending on the culture, you may never be able to face school again. If you do survive that first surprise attack, you have been given notice that very roughly 28 days later, it will happen again. And again. For five or six days at a time. For the next 40 or so years.

It is odd but true that almost every culture has taboos about menstruation, including our western ones. It is not something you talk about, especially across the genders. Even across generations there is a surprising lack of communication, except perhaps in the current generation of (western) mothers and daughters things seem to be more open.

It is curious that something so human and so bound up with the continuation of the human race should be so hushed up. After all, everyone reading this was conceived following their mother's menstruation. Yes even you!

Here in Africa, the cultures vary but the taboos certainly are there. In theory the traditional way of informing the developing girl of her impending crisis is through an aunt (apparently there is some kind of shame if it is through the mother). It may have worked in the past but seems to be failing in the changing world. Aunts do not seem to get round to 'the talk' in time. Too many girls are hit by the crisis and have no idea what

is going on. Have I got cancer? Am I cursed or dying? I know one young woman here, who was so confused and anxious when her first period hit that she wandered the town in a kind of daze and was only found by her worried parents in the late evening, roosting high up in a tree.

This is where we can come in with a little help - we visit the girls of 12 years and over in school and prepare them for the crisis. At least, once they have the essential warning, they will know what is happening when it happens. And we equip them with sanitary materials so that they can at least be prepared for the onset and hence be equipped to stay in school and compete on a par with the boys.

They get four washable pads that we make here and four pairs of knickers all in a black plastic bag, as well as information about how their body works and tips for coping without anxiety. Then we always give the message from Psalm 139:13 - that they are each handmade by God, unique and precious to Him. This is contrary to the prevailing culture which has girls well below boys



This girl has just demonstrated to her classmates how to assemble a pad into knickers. The tee shirt makes it both amusing and rather poignant: So much ambition; so uncertain a future. At least we are addressing one of her key vulnerabilities with our pads ministry.

Facts

- We provide each girl with 4 washable pads, made by a local tailor, and 4 knickers. It costs £2.14 per girl and should last them a year with good care.
- From the start of 2014 to end of June 2016, we have visited 65 schools. We have actually reached 42 schools, the remainder are revisits. We provided for 6,336 girls.
- There are 229 Primary schools in Pader and Agago Districts; about 25,000 girls currently 12 and over.
- We have reached only 18% of the schools.



Tom and Milly talked to three girls who have high hopes for their future: two want to be nurses, one a doctor. We pray that they will be able to continue their education and fulfil their dreams.

in terms of value. (Girls will get married and leave the family, so what is the point in investing in them? Boys will stay and take responsibility for the parents. In the past, some fathers called their daughters 'visitors' and refused to address them by name. It does at least show that attitudes are shifting).

We now have 42 schools that we have visited at least once and we are working through the list again to revisit as the girls grow up. This year, to the end of June, we have visited 17 schools and given materials to 1562 girls; all at a cost of about £2.14 (2.93\$US, 3.80\$CAN or 3.97\$AUS) per girl. Emmanuel International is, so far, the only NGO in Northern Uganda's Pader and Agago districts that is addressing the issue of menstrual hygiene with any real effectiveness and with a systematic approach.

Every school has a 'Senior Woman Teacher' that is responsible for the welfare of girls. Whenever we visit a school, they welcome us with open arms. On revisits they tell us of how, before we came, girls would approach them with "Please Miss, I've started my period, can you help me?" on a daily basis but they had no help to give, only a sympathetic ear. Now such calls are rare and tend to be "Please Miss, can I run home to get my pads?" That seems like progress.

There is one aspect of keeping quiet about menstruation that most girls and women would sign up to... Probably most men too, come to think of it. It is that girls should not have to advertise the fact that they have started their periods or that their period is 'on' or when it might be. That is another less obvious benefit of the knowledge, materials and confidence we give: that, with our assistance, only they themselves need be the one to know, together with who they choose to tell. A girl that stays at home for a week is telling the whole school and the whole village; knowledge that, if misused, can be used against her in unpleasant ways. Which reminds us that 'it is a jungle

out there' in almost any society and girls in particular must be careful in order to not attract unwanted attention (and of dealing with it when they do). In male dominated societies, often with little or no accountability for (male) wrongdoing, girls really do need all the help they can get.

So far the funding for the pads ministry has come from Australia, Canada, the US but mainly the UK. The only institutional funding we received was from ActionAid last year, for 10 schools. Applications for trust fund money have so far not been successful, but a charity concert here, a 'Run for Righteousness' there will keep us ticking over. We have our eyes on those 82% of local schools where the girls are still struggling. It would take about £45,000 to visit them all once. Please pray for that funding to be made available.



Milly



Acting out "I can't go to school today" at Olwornguu School

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:13-14

Milly used to work only as housekeeper in Pader, but had a heart for the girls of Pader and instigated the restarting of the Pads Ministry. She kept on saying to Tom: "We should restart the pads ministry, our girls really need it."

Milly does the marking and cutting of all the pad materials, to be sewn by a tailor. She takes the local truck down to Lira to buy hundreds of packs of a dozen pants at a time. Then she rides a motorbike to visit the schools to fix a visit date and time, often alone. She and Tom visit the school (normally next day) and she teaches the girls of 12 years and over about the realities, problems and solutions for their periods, always with a lot of fun and good humour. She translates for Tom as he talks to the girls about their value from a biblical perspective. If Tom can't make it then she manages very well by herself.



RENOVA Conference in Brazil

On June 3rd and 4th, Emmanuel Brazil participated in the 1st RENOVA Conference, held in Montes Claros. RENOVA is a Christian network of churches of different denominations and local NGOs that are working to connect people and organizations - to strengthen them, pray and discuss strategies to bring in its fullness the Kingdom of God to the area. The main theme of the conference was 'The Church of Christ and the regional challenges'. The sub-themes were also very challenging and covered the ministry of God's people from the message of the Old Testament prophets, the ministry of Jesus as the model for the mission of the Church, and the Church of God and advocacy. A question and answer session was also carried out. Organizations such as Emmanuel Brazil, Crescer Project, Isac Project, PAC Project, and Esquadrão da Vida set up

stands during the conference to show their work. There was good attendance of pastors, church members, and Bible School students, including participants from other towns.

The north of Minas Gerais State is one of the poorest areas in Brazil, basically because of the lack of good sources of water and frequent droughts. Social injustice is brought by corporations and their initiatives that bring environmental destruction as a sub-product of their activities. Thousands of poor people have lost their small pieces of land, used during decades for subsistence farming, to large mining and reforestation projects.

Tarcísio Porto, Emmanuel Brazil representative in the area and one of the RENOVA leaders, and Fred Silva led two of the sessions. It is exciting for us to be



One of the conference sessions

actively involved in the area, not only working side by side with partner churches to show God’s love to needy families and communities, but also helping build the basis of holistic ministry principles, so more churches will be able to raise their eyes, see all the needs of people and communities, and respond to them.

This was just the first action taken by the RENOVA group. Their goal is to have more Christian churches and organizations working together that will, at the light of the Kingdom of God’s principles, reach out and



Question and Answer session

be salt and light to thousands of people in the north of Minas Gerais.

Their genuine desire to walk in unity is great and Emmanuel Brazil is fully committed to working side by side with them, so the Church of Jesus Christ can be the answer of His prayer: “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe...” John 17:21.

By Fred Silva, General Secretary : Missão Emmanuel do Brasil



The official conference photograph



Some of the speakers (from left to right): John Naudé, recently returned from Malawi, Richard McGowan, EI Canada Executive Director, and Andy Sharpe, recently returned from Tanzania.

EIUK Summer Event 2016

Where else, in less than 5 hours, would you speak to and pray with folk in Iringa and Mwanza (Tanzania) and Pader (Uganda), hear about practical projects and theological training, and what you do once you've worked in the UK for 25 years as a water engineer???



for pastors in Malawi, the food shortages necessitating the distribution of emergency food supplies in south Malawi, the niece gone missing from Iringa, the water projects bringing clean, reliable water to isolated villages in Tanzania, the sanitary pads being made and distributed in Ugandan primary schools, the training being prepared in honey harvesting and community health education (CHE).

Only at the EI summer event 2016!

I do wonder what someone walking into the get-together, with no EI knowledge, would have thought of our group. At first glance we would have seemed a group relatively small in number, spanning in age from 1 ish to 80 ish and representing an eclectic mix of locations and backgrounds. I suggest, however, that what united us is stronger than what differentiated us: a love of the Lord Jesus and as a result of this love, a passion for the EI vision to meet the needs of the poor both spiritually and physically. That unity and vision shone through the day as we heard, thought and prayed about (to mention but a few) theological training



How encouraging it is to be reminded that we're all part of the production team, supporting those "in front of the cameras"

who are serving churches in the countries where God has placed them. May we all, whether or not we made it to the get-together, persevere in prayer for the work being done in God's name and for his glory!

Mairi Dorward, EIUK Board Member