

## Link Letter No.2 May 2013

### Dear brothers and sisters,

It has been a long time since I last wrote and a lot has happened in the meantime. Most importantly, I started working in the hospital! At the beginning of this year I moved into my house and I love being there. *"It's even better than the other place"* is what my visitors say. When the rain came, the crops in the garden started to grow, and we could eat from our first harvest – it is really a blessing to be able to eat from your own garden! I appreciate the opportunity to grow some vegetables and herbs that we cannot buy on the market, adding variety to the diet. Other good news is that the hospital provided me with broadband and that this connection, when it works, will make communication easier!

### Maternity ward life...

Have a look at Stephen's drawing! It shows the hospital entrance through his artistic eyes. He is an 18-year-old boy who spent about a year in the surgical ward and enjoyed making pencil drawings as a way to pass the oceans of time he had. I can see that gate from my bedroom window. The ambulances will enter it and either go left to the emergency ward, or turn right and reverse half way with a high pitched interrupted beep to get into the right position to offload women on a trolley that can roll them into the labour ward.

I am working in the maternity ward; you may associate 'ambulance' with speed, but everything evolves by its own pace here. I can leave home and reach the labour ward before the patient does. The nurse who collected the patient at the health centre may be on her way back to the emergency room and the doors at the back of the car may have opened. Perhaps a



**Wies Landheer**  
CMS mission partner  
**Rwanda**

Wies Landheer is a Dutch doctor and CMS mission partner working at Gahini Hospital in Rwanda. If you want to learn more about Gahini you can visit [www.gahini.blogspot.com](http://www.gahini.blogspot.com)



*Gahini Hospital according to Stephen*

young woman and an older one will have come out and put bags full of clothes, pots & pans, and food on the floor. The driver and two male cleaners then start to struggle to get the patient out of the car onto the trolley... or not (because if she can walk, she is encouraged to do so!).

Through a narrow hallway the patient will enter a small room packed with four delivery beds, a resuscitation table for neonates and two cupboards. Curtains divide the room and can offer a little privacy, but they cannot stop a patient from being aware of the repetitive moaning of the lady on the bed next to her. *"I'm dying, I'm dying"* is



*With the 10-pounder born normally, on my birthday. I was able to stop the caeserean section.*

what many women here say who are experiencing labour pains. Fortunately, they don't! Usually there is a nurse or midwife working in the delivery room. Together we help women to deliver safely, trying to avoid unnecessary caesarean sections. (There have been examples where the staff up to the very last moment when the head pops out have thought that a normal delivery was impossible.)

However, the number of babies dying either before or directly after birth is still quite high. In the

Netherlands it would have been at most one a year within a busy district hospital; here it is at least one per week. This means that on the one hand I enjoy the privilege of witnessing the miracle of new life every day, seeing how each child is amazingly and wonderfully made by God. Psalm 139: 13 says: "You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body." On the other hand, I find it difficult to accept that some are dying, but I comfort myself with the words of the same Psalm and the knowledge that God knows and takes care of each one of them. Their death is often due to bad antenatal care or bad management of the delivery. Most of the antenatal care is given in the health centres



*One of the first lessons that I prepared. In the middle is the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

and we try to improve the management of the delivery by instructing our staff and future health workers well. At the moment, 14 nursing students are being trained "on the job" in our ward. Moreover, the hospital board has recently acknowledged the need for – and supplied us with – an extra nurse during the dayshift to look after the newborn babies with problems.

### **The Sunday school**

Proverbs 22:6 says: "Train a child in the way he should go. When he is old, he will not turn away



*Kelly reading from the Kinyarwanda children's bible*

*from it.*” In response to that call, the Anglican Church in Gahini organises a Sunday school. Every Sunday before the main church service, around 8:30-9:50am 30-100 ‘Anglican’ children flock together into one of the dusty classrooms of the Compassion project. It is run by volunteers, mostly young men, who have committed themselves to be there. Only by exception will they miss a session. (I think the reason that there are hardly ever any mothers helping is that they are too busy at home.)



*With kids at John and Jemimah's*

Jesus said in Matthew 19:14: *“Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away.”* I like to work with children and I want to help them to come to Jesus, hence my reason to join my brothers of the Sunday school in teaching last year. When I joined them, we used to be about five, but two have now found work elsewhere. So currently we are three, praying that God will send us others. Limited by lack of space, materials and the number of ‘teachers’, we try to teach the children the gospel.

Before I got more involved in the organization, a Sunday school session would be started by praying and singing by the teacher who had arrived first. The next one who arrived would start reading a random story or text from the bible, sentence by sentence, the children repeating after him. Another teacher would continue to ask questions about the story, helping them to understand. Yet another teacher would find a text for the children to memorise. Therefore I tried to show them that lessons can be structured around one story or theme, and that you can make it more fun for the children by alternating the story with drama or a game, doing a simple craft.

The feedback I received of both children and teachers has been positive, but the challenge remaining is preparation. Its concept is foreign to my brothers and they don't see a need for it. Meaning that despite my frequent attempts to get them more involved, I am often preparing a lesson alone with the person who is translating the English into Kinyarwanda. In preparation



and teaching, the Kinyarwanda children's bible, which was a gift from the children of my home church, has been very useful. Next Sunday we will start our Sunday school classes in another room of the diocese. This is a room with electricity and we can close it, meaning that we can prepare the room the evening before and store teaching materials!

#### **Choir activity...**

In our church we have three choirs. *“That's not many! We have nine!”* is what a friend who lives in

*Thank God for family!*

another Rwandan town told me. Yes, three is only a few according to Rwandan standards. Society here is saturated with choirs that not only adorn the church services but also all other ceremonies such as wedding receptions and graduation parties. I don't know the reason. Most likely Rwandan people just like singing a lot! One could argue that singing is one of the few affordable creative leisure activities here. However, every respectable choir has at least three different uniforms, likes to travel to meet with other choirs and makes recordings of her songs. The costs are mostly covered by the individual choir members, a big sacrifice relatively.

I also like singing a lot and wanted to do something to divert my mind from the daily work in the hospital. Therefore, I joined one of our three choirs, the one where most of my Sunday school brothers were singing. I soon found out that singing with them is more like a part-time job or a life-style than a 'leisure' activity. During a not so busy week, the choir meets three times for a two-hour rehearsal, has a prayer meeting and performs on Sunday during the service. The choir rehearsals start at 4pm so that everyone can be home before it gets dark. This is not a problem to most of the young members (students and others helping at home because they could not afford further education and cannot find a job). I am allowed to join them after work, often rushing down the hill at 5:45pm to catch the last five minutes of practice. My experience in the Netherlands was that moving to another town for my job and joining another black gospel choir, I didn't have much difficulty with the transition because most of the (mainly American) songs were the same. In Rwanda I wouldn't expect a similar experience, because all the choirs compose their own songs. The favorite theme is heaven.

Usually in the beginning of the week we start to practice a new song, writing down the read out lyrics in our notebooks. By Sunday we have to know the lyrics, tune and additional moves by heart, which is quite a challenge for me as the wordy songs are in Kinyarwanda! (I understand some of the individual words, but to understand the sentence I have to puzzle.) I don't regret the effort, however. Being a member of the choir has helped me to be informed about and attend most of the important events in the church and the wider community of Gahini, and along the way I have learned much about Rwandan culture, enjoyed learning new songs, making new friends and the opportunity to praise God together. In the future I hope to find some time with the composers of the songs to put the music and lyrics on paper, so that you will be able to sing them too if you would wish to do so! Our choir is finishing its recordings and preparing to make music videos. I will keep you updated!

#### **Points of praise and prayer:**

- Thank God for my own place to live and pray that it may be a place filled with His peace and joy where others feel at home.
- Thank God for the internet connection that will hopefully make communication easier. And thank Him for all those who were not discouraged and continued to write to me over the past months.
- Pray for the hospital staff and our students – for a good work ethos and team spirit; that we will take responsibility and treat our patients with the compassion and respect Jesus would give them.
- Pray for the children in Gahini that they may know Jesus, for the Sunday school to be one of the ways in which they learn about Him, for good lessons and more enthusiastic volunteers to teach them to the children.
- Pray for harmony in the choir, that we may sing to God's glory and be a good witness in this community.

God bless

*Wies*

[www.cms-uk.org](http://www.cms-uk.org)



**Church Mission Society**

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375  
Email: [info@cms-uk.org](mailto:info@cms-uk.org) [www.cms-uk.org](http://www.cms-uk.org) Registered Charity Number 1131655