



# A Ministry of Hope and Healing: Enga Province, Papua New Guinea

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## “What is that Crazy Girl Doing these Days?”

Another couple of months pass and here I sit, writing to you, my friends and family, my brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you to everyone who continues to support me with prayers, emails, care packages and through financial means. It is all needed as I continue on the path that God has laid before me. Also a big thank you to Bernie Wilde and the mission team at St. John's as they continue to hold fundraising events for me. Thank you also to Pastor P for making so much chili and all you who attended these events.

Since last I wrote, UTB has been busy spreading the Good News of Christ, with a focus on the comfort He gives to those suffering with HIV/AIDS. I have continued my work with WICS primary school and Wapapis Lutheran Primary School as well as branched off into the unexpected territory of helping out the local Alampus Primary School (grades 1-3). Nyaimanya VCT Centre has gone mobile, through the unsettled areas of Laiagam.

I continue to keep up relationships within the community through gardening,

playing volleyball and hanging out with people in the market. These have been amazing opportunities for me to witness to people who wouldn't otherwise cross my path.

I am also preparing, drum roll please, to come back to the States...yes, you heard correctly...the girl that would never come home is looking forward to spending a well-deserved break in St. Louis and beyond. While this break will only be a month long, I am also preparing to finish serving God in Papua New Guinea (for now at least). I feel that God is calling me to endeavors that would benefit not only people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States but also continue my partnership with United to Be and Concordia Lutheran Professional Mission Services here in Papua New Guinea...only God knows the plans He has for me :) I'm just a feather in the wind, prepared to go where He leads me.

Also, as I prepare to leave Papua New Guinea, if anyone knows of job opportunities in the States for a Social Worker with her MSW...feel free to email me :)



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## World AIDS Day 1 December 2008

While this article dates back to last year, I still think that it is important to tell you about World AIDS Day in Papua New Guinea. While Wapenamanda District tries to unite to such events like World AIDS Day and International AIDS Memorial Day, this year we decided that since so many stakeholders were interested in providing programs, it would be best to divide and conquer.

Daphne Kapau (an amazing Engan woman who has initiated several projects on her own in order to benefit the disabled and

people living with HIV/AIDS) organized a march and program for Minab Valley. Ree Sakali (a motivated nurse providing amazing wholistic care for people living with HIV/AIDS) took HIV/AIDS education to Tsak Valley). And United to Be concentrated its three day World AIDS Day campaign to Wapenamanda Central and Lower Lai. This way, all “counties” of Wapenamanda District were reached with education and awareness regarding HIV/AIDS.

We continue to unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS.



*Josephine and Michael perform Image of God on World AIDS Day*

## “United to Be” Going Strong...

*“United to Be” ...loved, healed, aware, educated, empowered, one, HIV free....*

United to Be continues to struggle with its identity. It is true that United to Be is going strong, but sometimes falls to the distractions of this world. Unlike in the United States where volunteerism is praised and admired; in Papua New Guinea, volunteers are seen as silly little shmucks (what that makes me, who knows!). So, when it looks like other people are going to benefit from UTB’s hard work, everyone gets distracted from the real reason we are doing work—to help our fellow man. I have to gently remind them that we have to continue to focus on the Cross because other distractions take away from our focus. Anyway, during these times of struggle, some members of UTB stop coming until they remember why they became UTB members to start with—so that they will see a better PNG in the future.

Even with some members becoming disenchanted with volunteerism, UTB still had its core 12 members that are faithful as ever. And with these few faithful, UTB continues to go strong. Solo Yokopiyao has taken an interest in traveling to remote or “bush” villages to educate people about HIV/AIDS. Since January, Solo has traveled to Porgera and the Hewa. He flew to Hewa and hiked through the mountains bringing messages of hope and healing to people living with HIV/AIDS or at-risk for acquiring HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, in his travels to the Hewa, Solo became sick with Malaria, which has stuck with him over the past three months. Just last week, he started the medication for complete eradication of the Malaria bug from his system...he is doing much better these days and its great to see a smile on his face once again.

UTB members have also been instrumental in traveling to Laiagam District to talk about HIV/AIDS awareness and Voluntary Counseling and Testing . This has seen an increase in people being tested for HIV/AIDS in the Laiagam District.

In February, the Enga Province hosted the National Executive Council along with the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. While United to Be did not present any programs for the Prime Minister, we did our duty by standing at the road junction of the hospital and waving, with signs, to welcome the members of the National Government. (side note: I did get to eat dinner with the Prime Minister).

March saw a renewed vigor from United to Be members to work, or volunteer as the case may be. We traveled to Pompabos Market, where we visited for World AIDS Day. At that time, the members of the community requested that UTB return for a more detailed awareness program. When we did return, much to my surprise, members of the community actually remembered what we had said about HIV/AIDS during World AIDS Day. I guess I never realized just the impact that UTB has. I think our main role during awareness events is to give community leaders the opportunity to really talk about HIV/AIDS to their community members. It opens the door to what would otherwise be a subject too sensitive to discuss. During March we also provided awareness to Unda Primary School, urging them to be the tidal wave of change that Papua New Guinea needs.

For Easter, UTB dyed Easter Eggs and gave them to patients in the hospital. The eggs were treated with much suspicion until I assured people that they were safe to eat. Before we handed out the eggs, we read Easter Bible Texts and I presented a message on the New Life, the New Contract that the blood of Christ presents us (for more information see Faith Focus).

Our program for April has already included Easter in the Wards and a trip up to Amapyaka International High School and will include trips to Lower Lai and Yaibos Four Square Church.



*Pricilla, Jackie and Jennifer support HIV/AIDS in the “Tug O’ HIV drama at Pompabus Market.*



*Roselyn falls off the “Bridge of Life” due to poor decisions... luckily, next time around she’ll have a support system that God has put into place for her.*

## Nyaimanya VCT Centre goes Mobile!

January saw the start of the Enga Mobile Clinic, a mobile clinic associated with the Nyaimanya VCT Centre. Elaizha Joe, a volunteer counselor and volunteer UTB member, has been instrumental in getting the mobile clinic up and running. He struggles daily with his desire to volunteer and his traditional role as a man. In the Engan culture, Elaizha should already have “bought” or married a woman, or at least be working toward being able to afford to get married. He should have a house that doesn’t leak when it rains (and it is rainy season) and he should be able to look after his mother and his brother’s children. However, Elaizha is a faithful servant of God that has sacrificed more than anyone I know to look after the children of God. He lives in a dilapidated house, but doesn’t have time to fix it because he spends his days counseling and providing God’s love to people living with HIV/AIDS. He faces scrutiny within his family because he is not married and because he “works for nothing”. They ridicule him because of the state in which he lives and because he works so hard... “Where are the fruits of your labor” he is often asked by his mother...but he continues to remain faithful. How I wish that I could assist him in at least building a house...something that would cost US\$500, maximum, because he would pay community members to assist him in building as he spends his days at the VCT Centre.

But through his hard work, people in the Laiagam District are also receiving counseling and education about HIV/AIDS. When Elaizha gives counseling, he gives spiritual counseling

as well as emotional and physical counseling. He encourages people to trust in the Lord when they find out they are positive, to find comfort in the Cross and to live positively. If someone is negative, he encourages them to change their behaviours so that there is no risk for them to get HIV in the future...God has given them a new lease on life, as it were. In a country that is 96% Christian, this spiritual counseling is quite culturally relevant and provides people with the balm for which they were searching.



*Elaizha provides counseling and testing in Laiagam*

Anyway, through his efforts, nearly 500 people in the Laiagam District have been tested in the last three months. The Enga Mobile Clinic is seeing around 5% of the people who are getting tested, test positive for HIV/AIDS.

Elaizha’s next endeavor is the Care House—temporary housing and care for people living with HIV/AIDS who are receiving ART education from Immanuel Lutheran Rural Hospital. With the help of UTB, he should be able to realize his dream soon.

### **A Dying Man’s Wish... AIDS: My Brother’s Story, written by John Kian**

Last year, I assisted primary schools around the area with an HIV/AIDS manual or toolkit to be implemented in the classroom. I was blessed enough to see its successful implementation in two primary school, Wamapis Lutheran Primary School and WICS FourSquare Primary School. This year, I am taking the book *AIDS: My Brother’s Story* written by John Kian, a local Mambisanda community member, and creating a comprehensive study guide so that it can be taught in the schools. The story is about a Mambisanda community member, brother to one of the UTB members, who died from AIDS in 2001...back when people were being relegated to the pig houses to die and buried at night. It is a culturally relevant text that deals with the real issues that people living with HIV/AIDS in Enga face. While Jimmy (name has been changed—both here and in the story) was dying from AIDS, he was alive in Christ...and he insisted that his story not die with him. To honor his wish, John wrote his story and I am helping in keeping his story and spirit alive through the study

guide. I hope to have the guide finished by May 2009.

In other work with schools, I am preparing a Universal Precautions Training for teachers of local schools. As the HIV rates increase, teachers need to be prepared to use Universal Precautions to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS as well as other diseases carried through blood contact. I already have some donated Band-Aids, ointments, gloves, etc. but still need to buy more materials to be put into the First Aid Kits that I plan on giving to each school in the area. The training is still in the works and has not yet been implemented due to the many, many hats that I tend to wear... what ever will I do when I get back to the States and have only one hat to wear?

Next on the list for schools: Red Ribbon Schools...an idea started by Julie Lutz, Linda Davis and myself but not yet seen to fruition...here’s to hoping I don’t leave before getting something off the ground...



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 ✝ Faith Focus ✝  
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Easter in the Wards...message presented by Liz Neuf to the hospital patients (translated into English by Liz herself and summarized to fit this space).

Readings: the Last Supper, Jesus Dying on the Cross and the Resurrection.

What an amazing gift God has given us...to suffer and die on the cross, to suffer the humiliation of man in order to save our black souls. What was it that kept Jesus to that cross? The nails and ropes that bound Jesus to the cross were weak compared to the almighty power and strength of our Lord...how many angels were looking on, suffering along with Him, waiting for the word to come down and untie his bound hands? So, what was it that kept him to that Cross? It was our sins...not just the sins we have already committed, but also the ones we will commit in the future. But why? What have I done, but cause him more suffering? It was His amazing mercy, compassion and grace for us that kept him bound, thirsty and in pain, to that Cross...suffering the silence of His Father so that we don't have to.

Jesus spilled his blood in order to cover us with its holiness and righteousness. So that the Father no longer sees our black souls, covered in filth and sin, but sees the pure blood of Christ...we are made holy through that one mighty act. On one Black Friday, he died, bound by our sins...was placed in our tomb...but broke forth with Glory on Sunday...leaving our sins on the cross and in our tombs...where they remain today. Leave your sins on the cross and walk in the light of Christ.

By dying on the Cross and raising again, Jesus created a New Way, a New Contract, A New Life...so that we can leave our worries, our sins at the foot of the Cross and move on. What an Amazing Love to have died for me...He has taken us poor, worthless creatures and made us holy, pure, precious and priceless in His eyes...there is nothing more He desires than to have a relationship with each and every one of us...praise be the Lord.

**Financial Support**

NOTE: To support this mission financially, you may send tax-deductible gifts to:

LCMS World Mission  
 Debbie Feenstra  
 1333 S.Kirkwood Rd.  
 St. Louis, MO 63122

Make checks payable to LCMS World Mission. Include "Support for Liz Neuf" in the memo line. Thank you!

**Prayer Requests:**

- For the Lutz family during this challenging time
- That God continue to bless the work that is happening in Papua New Guinea
- Thanksgiving for all that the Lord has already accomplished through me
- That the Lord place a protecting arm around the women whose lives are in danger because of an unjust system
- For those in the community who are dying from HIV without feeling the comfort of Christ
- For Elaizha as he suffers ridicule for his servant heart
- Continued blessings, strength and perseverance for UTB
- For my job search in the States...
- For perseverance and courage for myself as I continue to face corrupt systems and try to work through them and within them.

UTB dyes Easter Eggs...to be given to patients in the wards.

