

Bokoji Ethiopia 26<sup>th</sup> Feb-6<sup>th</sup> March 2011

This trip was the second visit by the medical team to the town of Bokoji having first been there in March 2010. The team this year included Helen Yohanis (nurse), Eleanor Clements (nurse) and Jillian Johnston (public health doctor) as well as Lynne McFetridge, Jonathan Stirling and Sharon Seymour who were part of the group last year.

On our arrival to the town we were met by the usual cry of “feringe” or foreigner but many of the children ran up to give us a “High 5” and hold our hands as we walked around.

It was a joy to go back and see many familiar faces and to see how the children of Bethany school were thriving on good education, a hot lunch and most importantly the love shown to them by their teachers and carers.

Our first few days at the school clinic saw us reviewing the HIV positive children and any of the other kids who had health concerns. The kids are well looked after by Girma who is a health worker for Kids Alive in Bokoji. We also had checkups for the parents or carers of the school kids. Overall we saw about 320 people over 3 days. Baby Grace was one of the children we saw again - what a difference a year has made in the life of this child who was abandoned at our clinic last year— she is a beautiful healthy one year old and we had the pleasure of being at her birthday party with balloons, bubbles, drinks, biscuits – just like a party here! What a great example of God’s love in action through Corrie who is her adoptive mother and Kids Alive who support her.

We visited the local health clinic on several occasions to visit the staff there, and understand more about the difficulties they face working with few resources amongst a very needy population. The team were particularly moved by the plight of a young mother of three who was dying of AIDS. She was alone apart from a neighbour who was looking after her children. The team were able to administer medicines and fluids but also provide a blanket, love and prayer. We also were able to help a baby who was very ill with vomiting and diarrhoea and it was a relief to see this little one revive with fluids and medication and improve enough to go home on her mother’s back (with a tellytubby for extra comfort!)

This week was one of highs and lows - we had times when we felt completely inadequate to deal with the scale of poverty and illness in the town; that what we were doing was a drop in the ocean. Then God would encourage us through the very people we were there to help; their gratitude was overwhelming and really boosted our spirits.

Our week ended with visits to some of the children’s families. Some had waited all day for us to call round and were very excited when we arrived. Their faces lit up and there were squeals of excitement as we gave them teddies to cuddle and had photos taken.

We are all grateful for the opportunity God has given us to be part of His work in Bokiji. Please continue to remember the people there with the many difficulties they face and the work of Kids Alive as it shines God’s light and love into their lives.

