



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

March 2011

Let the Drilling Begin!

Once again, I feel blessed to return to a place and a people that I have come to love like home and family. I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya on January 27, ready to extend the work of our new ministry, Crossway Water for Life. Back in November, I reported that we had received the drilling equipment at the port in Mombasa and had successfully drilled one well near the town of Ukunda, just down the coast from Mombasa. Here is a photo of that well, and of the deplorable cesspool that had previously served as the water source for hundreds of families.

So, what was next for us in Kenya? Well, while I was in the US working with Dean to raise awareness for the ministry needs, our Kenyan team leaders, CEO Ken Gatithi and Director of Drilling Geoffrey Ndungu, were busy meeting with community leaders representing churches, villages, orphanages, and schools in the Eastern Province of Kenya, which has experienced severe drought conditions for 4 of the last 5 years. Their work produced a list of initial “projects” that were put into our database for consideration by Dean and me, along with Geoffrey and Ken, as we seek to focus on the neediest of the needy. So we now have a number of significant opportunities in front of us, where, with God's grace and guidance, we will seek to provide life-giving water, and extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to a people that truly thirsts for both.

As Ken and Geoffrey met with the community leaders, they also visited with local county engineers to obtain whatever geological information that was available – which was not much. However, they did uncover a problem that we were secretly hoping not to encounter this soon. The geology of large portions of Kenya, and in particular the far-reaching Rift Valley, is wrought with significant layers of formidable rock that require special rock-drilling equipment, which we do not currently possess. So I asked Geoffrey to research which, if any, of our initial projects could be accomplished with just our mud drilling equipment. In the meantime, Dean and I continued to seek the Lord to provide this additional rock drilling equipment.

All of this team effort eventually led us to a small community called Keonyweni, which is located about 130 km southeast of Nairobi. So, after spending several days in preparation by visiting material suppliers in Nairobi, we hitched up the equipment and set out on about a three-hour journey, all on (not so bad) hardtop roads...except the last 5 km, which was a pretty good dirt road, I have to say. The community was well aware of our approach and were waiting patiently for our entourage to alight. And when I say these people are “patient,” you should know that one of the reasons we chose this community ahead of several others was that their well-drilling permit was approved back in 1997! And their only source of water was a small dammed-up stream about 3 km away. So, after meeting the community chief, the well committee set about (with a lot of good help, I might add) to begin drilling.

Our best information had said that we should not hit impenetrable rock before reaching the water source. Well, forget that. We ran into an extremely hard rock seam only after drilling to about 8-1/2 feet deep. For the next 1-1/2 days, we tried everything to break through this rock with our mud drilling equipment. We



Women with new well in Ukunda.



Previous Ukunda water source...

modified a section of drill pipe to more than double the weight, but to no avail. At that point, out of desperation, I climbed onto the drilling platform to further increase the down force. Well, after several hours we had managed to penetrate (grind our way, actually) through only about 6 inches of rock. With my meager geological experience, and my best attempt at reading the data, I analyzed the small cuttings and guessed that we had hit granitic gneiss. Now tell me that doesn't sound hard! Indeed, we needed an air compressor and a down-hole hammer, and we began exploring possible rental places. While we found two likely sources, neither had the equipment available for at least a week. So, leaving the drilling rig in place, we returned to Nairobi to work on a well replacement project (more on that in my next prayer letter!).



Geoffrey and crew trying to drill through rock.

Now two weeks have passed, I've come to the end of my trip, and still no air compressor. And it will still take one to two more weeks, we're told. So once again I must leave the country having failed to complete our intended water well. As I write this letter, I am crammed onto a packed full Kenyan Airway Boeing 777 en route to Amsterdam, and on to San Antonio tomorrow. But prior to leaving, I asked Ken and Geoffrey to arrange a meeting with the Keonyweni Water Well Committee, and we made the 2 hour trip (we were able to take a shortcut over a mountain since we were not towing the rig). My intent was to assure them that we would not abandon them and that soon the CrossWay drill team (minus me, unfortunately) would return and, with God's grace and blessing, would complete the well and provide a pump. I asked the committee to consider one more thing, in addition to continuing to guard our equipment. Without demanding, I simply asked if they would consider planting a shamba (defined as anything from a small garden to a farm) nearby, using the water from the well for irrigation. I asked that they do this as a community-wide project, where entire families might take their turns working to complete and maintain the crops. I then asked them if they would give the vegetables produced to those in their community with the most need.



Meeting with the Keonyweni Water Well Committee.

To our delight they jumped at this suggestion, eagerly embracing it and even discussing where and how big it would be, and finally even choosing a name: The Crossway Shamba! Needless to say, I was overjoyed at this response, and I told them that I would soon return and rejoice in their efforts and in God's rich blessing. While I must now close this letter, I will tell in my next about one other thing that came up in this meeting (see, something else to look forward to)! Until then...

Live Blessed,

PS – ...just now leaving Egypt and starting to cross the Mediterranean!

