

**Philip and Laura Shero**  
**April 24, 2007**

**Rakai Visit**

[Note to regular readers: I have been severely delinquent in sending journal letters over the past year, for various reasons. Some are written and on my hard drive but never sent--often for want of that perfect picture to accompany the story. If I can, I will send those out along with the current letters I write.]

For the week ending: April 14, 2007

### Rakai Visit

It was a good trip! I said to Stephan just a few miles from Kyotera. He nodded in agreement. We had left Mbale nine hours earlier to begin a six-day visit to Rakai District on the border of Tanzania. After a moment's thought, I burst out laughing at my own comment. During those nine hours, we had:

- stopped at 14 fuel stations (there is a nationwide diesel shortage right now)
- blew a tire (requiring two jacks, three rocks, and two tire irons to change)
- stopped to repair the tire for an hour
- endured a brief and abortive ride on a motorcycle taxi with a drunk driver (Stephan was riding, not me)
- and watched a small car make a poorly judged passing attempt and nearly spin out of control in front of us.

We both had a good chuckle over agreeing that it was a good trip. But, there you have it. We have been in Uganda too long and have lowered our standards as to what comprises a good trip. The good parts we were thinking of are:

- no accidents or breakdowns
- light rain and overcast skies to cool us off (Stephan's truck has no A/C)
- light to moderate traffic and low stress driving
- arrival a good hour before dark!

(We are in the maroon SUV four cars back. There were seven vehicles in front of us when we pulled in to the petrol station.)

We are traveling with three evangelists, one women's teacher, and Stephan's administrative assistant in the AIDS Orphans Program (AOP). One of the exciting things about this trip is Stephan's upcoming announcement of six orphans from the Rakai area who will be receiving sponsorship. The AOP provides a mattress, mosquito net, blanket, school supplies, and school fees for children who have lost one or both parents (usually to AIDS). The children remain in the homes of local Christian guardians (often extended family members), but their biggest monetary needs are provided through individual sponsorship. Christian Relief Fund (CRF), a Christian Church-Church of Christ relief ministry in the US, solicits families to sponsor needy children all over the world (similar to the well-known ministries of Compassion, Int'l or World Vision). We will be delivering the bedding and good news to four churches.

The other major goal for our trip is to officially introduce William Mbulakyalo to the local churches. William is one of our Rural Ministry Counselors, and he has accepted missionary responsibilities for Rakai and Masaka Districts. Since these churches are so far away from Mbale, it is important to have clear lines of communication so that we can provide the best level of spiritual care and training as these churches develop from infancy to maturity.

William is a former schoolteacher who has been working towards his bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies. He is fluent in Luganda, the language of Rakai/Masaka and is an excellent preacher. He fills the pulpit at Mbale Church of Christ once a month and is active in evangelism in and around his home church (45 minutes from Mbale). Stephen Namabako, the counselor who formerly had teaching and coordinating responsibilities in Rakai/Masaka is with us this week to help in the transition. He and his wife continue to have a bond with the people here, and she is along to organize a women's seminar for Rakai later in the year. Stephen is one of our most effective evangelists. With the help of his home church, he has personally planted over 20 congregations in the past 10 years. His work closer to Mbale has expanded so much that we needed to hand off the Rakai/Masaka Districts to another counselor.

I'll write more about our four village visits next week.

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