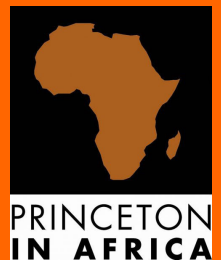


PIAF FELLOWS' FLYER

News and views for and by current Princeton in Africa Fellows.

March 2008



2007-2008 FELLOWS' RETREAT

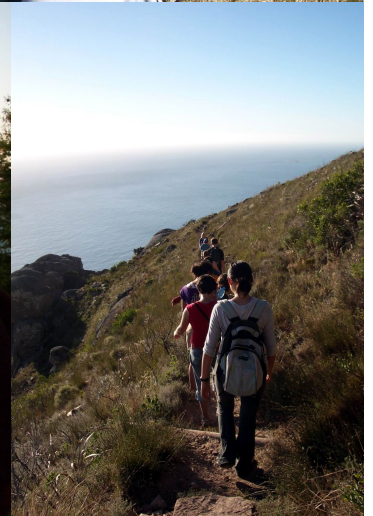
February 21-25
Cape Town, South Africa

Right: Group photo by Camp's Bay



Below, left to right: Guest speakers Linda and Robyn Scott show off a solar-powered water heater; sundowners on Signal Hill; descending Lion's Head

Bottom row, left to right: Getting wind- and sand-blown on the beach; enjoying ice cream's availability; on Long Street, just before a rousing rendition of "Old Nassau"



by Florence Cheung, '07-'08 Fellow at Africare in Angola

Standing in a circle, village women clad in colorful African sarongs cannot help but steal furtive glances at me. Curiosity and expectation grow thicker and thicker in the air, like clouds pregnant with raindrops, gathering for the onset of a summer rainstorm. The question on everyone's mind is: "What will this *branca* (white girl) do?"

Then, to their bewilderment, I—the only foreigner in the group—join in the singing in Umbundo, the local dialect. I even dance. "*Malária utue, utue avala chalu / Malária obambi, ame ndiluma chalu...* (With malaria, the head hurts a lot / With malaria, I shiver)." As I shake my head and draw my shoulders together, acting out the symptoms of malaria one by one, the women—our community health volunteers—together with young kids pulling at their mothers' skirts, never fail to smile. And what a smile it is.

To confess: Singing and dancing *for* the locals were probably among the last things I had expected to do in Angola. And yet they have become such an important part of my day-to-day responsibilities here that these songs sometimes even creep into my dreams.

Of course, singing malaria songs is not all that I do here. As Africare's site manager in the municipality of Quibala, I have been extraordinarily blessed to have the chance to participate in the full gamut of work that a well-established NGO does in the field, from project supervision to evaluation, and from liaison with government officials to finance management. With generous support from the ExxonMobil Foundation, the projects we implement in Quibala are varied and innovative. A snapshot: we are now in the second year of a three-year community-based malaria project, in which we regularly train volunteers from more than 130 villages to disseminate basic health messages about the cause and prevention of malaria to local families through the use of pictorial placards and songs (and that's where my infamous singing comes in). We have also distributed more than 5,000 rechargeable solar-powered flashlights to help school-children without access to electricity to read and study at night. Being entrusted with such a challenging level of responsibility, in addition to operating in a culture and language foreign to my own, means that my learning curve has been steep, which has only rendered my experience in Angola all the more fulfilling and exciting.

Above all, the biggest reward of living and working in Africa for me has been the opportunity to see with my own eyes the enormity of the development challenges facing the continent. Before coming here, I knew the situation in Africa was bad, but I wasn't able to imagine how bad it is, nor put it into context, let alone describe it in human detail. Now I can. In Quibala, for instance, it is sadly common to see people living in half-collapsed buildings whose facades are riddled with bullet holes, kids playing hide-and-seek in overturned tanks gone to rust amidst rubble and rotting trash. Each trip to the field often resembles an amusement park ride; as our Land Cruiser veers around potholes and puddles on the dirt road, each swerve never fails to cause a minor heart attack, each jolt ready to overturn my stomach. It can be a grim exercise to imagine the herculean efforts required from all sectors to rebuild a country like Angola. Durable changes, I have come to realize, will take years, if not decades, to happen.

At the same time, however, the courage and hopefulness of the individual Angolans I have come to know have also taught me not to lose heart. Some of the most inspiring—and humbling—conversations I have had with the locals are about the future of the country, and it never ceases to amaze me how people emerging from such a violent past can harbor so much hope for the future.

See more of Florence's photos on page 4.



Above: volunteers and kids learn symptoms of malaria through songs

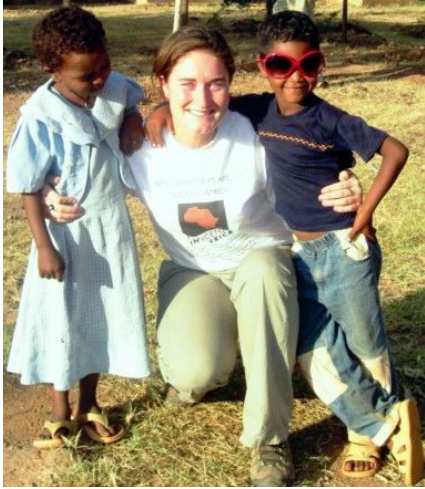


Left: Attentive volunteers at a malaria prevention training conducted by Africare's health promoters (*animadores*); above: Florence (right) with the provincial health coordinator in Bié

TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

by Sarah Hammitt, '07-'08 Fellow at IRC in Ethiopia

Moving to Ethiopia is like entering another time—literally. I arrived in Addis Ababa, the capital, on September 11, 2007, on the eve of the Ethiopian Millennium celebrations. Ethiopia persists on a combination of the Coptic calendar, giving it 13 months, and the Julian calendar, setting it back about 8 years. Buzzed from a mixture of altitude headiness (Addis sits at a lofty 8,000 feet) and déjà-vu (I partied like it was 1999... again), I rang in the New Year amid fireworks, red, green, and yellow lights, and dancing crowds draped in traditional white dress.



Above: Sarah and friends at Shimelba Refugee Camp

Ethiopia takes its history seriously, and for good reason. Lucy, the eldest of our distant biped ancestors, was excavated in the Afar region of northeastern Ethiopia. The treasures of Ethiopia's lavish ancient kingdoms date back over 3,000 years. Southwestern Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee and this 'black gold' remains their biggest export. Emperor Haile Selassie, in power until the mid-1970s, is believed to be a direct descendent of King Solomon and Queen Sheba; he continues to be revered by devout Rastafarians who consider him to be God incarnate and Ethiopia to be Zion. And it is incontrovertible to Ethiopians that a church in Axum, northern Ethiopia, is the keeper of the Ark of the Covenant, replicas of which are paraded around every town and city in January. Ethiopia's history plays a huge role in my everyday life, as I frequently respond to the question, "How do you find Ethiopia? You know we have never been colonized...," which is inevitably followed by a lengthy, boisterous account of the country's achievements.

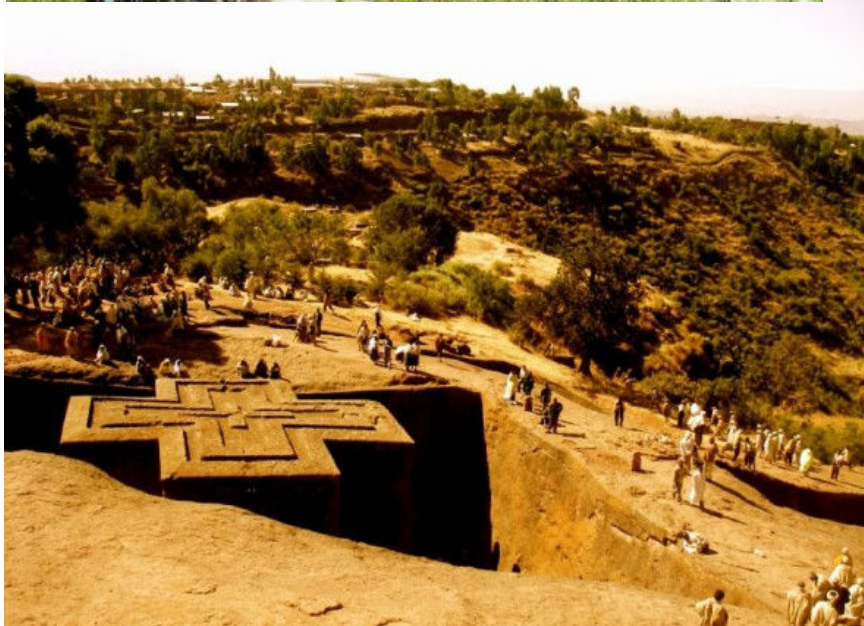
Unfortunately, this rich history is too often overshadowed by memories of the 1984 droughts and famines that killed 500,000 and inspired Bob Geldof's Band Aid. The Horn of Africa is a notoriously unstable part of the world and droughts continue to plague the country.

Ethiopia, however, serves as a sanctuary to hundreds of thousands of refugees, and NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) help to ease the humanitarian crises both in-country and in the volatile countries by which it is surrounded. As an IRC Programs Intern, I report to donors and government agencies and create communications materials on wide-ranging projects that directly benefit nearly 300,000 refugees and local community members. I went into my fellowship with the simple goal of better understanding the plights and flights of others, the underserved and under-reported, the hard-working and exploited, the unemployed and desperate for dignity. I brought hope and a desire for an intense learning experience, and IRC has delivered on every count.

Based in Addis, I spend a good deal of time wandering the safe streets, perusing the goods at Merkato (Africa's largest open-air market), and sampling Ethiopia's delicious cuisine. By far the best part of my job, however, is traveling to the field. Thus far, I have spent extensive time in two of the four refugee camps in which IRC Ethiopia operates, as well as in two drought-afflicted regions. Most challenging and rewarding is the range of people for whom we work. Planning for the university-educated, urban Eritrean refugees is a hugely different task than planning for the rural Sudanese refugees, differing still from the tribal Somali refugees. Listening to the varied trials and becoming attuned to the diverse needs of these populations has been unsettling, humbling, and eye-opening for their experiences, and gratifying for the work that IRC does.

I'm only six months in to my fellowship and I feel like I've grown years. By Ethiopia's calendar, it's the year 2000 and I'm a mere 18 years old; I don't feel that it's a stretch to say that I'll have evolved a full eight years by the time I return to the States and 2008!

See more of Sarah's photos on page 4.



Top right: a mother and son stand beside an IRC water project in eastern Ethiopia; right: a rock-hewn church in Lalibela



Above left: buildings sprinkled with bullet holes are common reminders of Angola's war-ravaged past in places such as the Bié province and Quibala, where the UNITA rebels once held a strategic stronghold; *above right:* school-children who received solar flashlights from Florence's distribution project; *below left:* children with children in the host community near Sherkole Refugee Camp in Ethiopia; *below right:* Ethiopia's Shimelba Camp at dawn



March 8: Marilyn Michelow and Katie White

• March 11: Laura Schroeder

March 17: Lindsey Locks

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

March 18: Becca Pass

March 19: Adam Herling

• March 24: Page Dykstra

• March 25: Amaka Megwalu