

JANUARY 2012

Greetings from Uganda



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NEW YEAR, NEW LEAF

The New Year has arrived, and with it the hot, dry season. I'm getting used to the constant glisten of sweat and spray tan of red dust, but anxiously look forward to the next rainstorm for a good cool down.

I've started 2012 with new eyes on life and work. I think inching closer to my fellowship end date (July 3) has helped me enjoy the best parts of this experience and improve my work so that I leave at legacy I can be proud of in Uganda.

It's been fun to look back on how life here has changed in my year and a half in Kampala. Since June 2010, we've gained: Oreos, Cheetos, my three favorite coffee shops, the new sushi joint, Chef Boyardee, a mall near our office, cream cheese, Dinty Moore, Dr Pepper (sometimes) and Coke Zero (forever). Expatriate friends have come and gone; I've said goodbye to ten other IJM interns/fellows and now work with five more. It's so weird, but feels cool to reflect on the changes.

As I look back on 2011 specifically, I realize how I let the last few months of 2011 grow burdened with stress and apprehension. My confidence was low and I had serious cabin fever to get out of my day-to-day. After some holiday travels and the obligatory New Year's reflection, I feel infinitely better.

A burst of productivity and creativity has helped to finalize our main branding for our office's expansion and structural transformation project. (Structural transformation means we will work more directly with the public justice system itself – the police, local leaders, and courts – to improve systems that protect victims of property grabbing.) So, with that, I give you our new logo, project name, and slogan:



When I came to IJM, I had very rudimentary experience with design software, so learning it all for this project has been really interesting. I'll post more images of publications I help create on my blog as they happen.

We named the project after the empaanyi plant, which acts as a legal and cultural boundary marker for land in our project area. When a client sees this shrub lining her secured land, she knows she is protected and safe. The slogan "Our Land. Our Laws. Our Legacy." seeks to encourage the community and members of the public justice system to take ownership of the established land laws and leave a legacy of justice instead of abuse. I'm excited to see how we will get to use these elements in our work going forward.

CLIENT FOCUS

While the launch of this project has taken most of my time, I still thrive on the chances to develop relationships with IJM clients here. At the end of November, I spent time with a widow named Joyce who had lived through 12 years of unbelievable hardship – homelessness, death threats, family abandonment, and fear – but now lives peacefully and joyfully with land of her own. She has been unbelievably brave in her life, but shares her story with humility and grace. I can't wait to share her full story with everyone as soon as we can.

I reported back in September about visiting a client who was literally dying of AIDS before our eyes. It stands out as probably the most gut-wrenching thing I've ever seen. With IJM's intervention and heaps of prayers, however, this woman is now healthy again. IJM helped her start a small poultry project at her home, so she can gain sustainable income with less physical effort. I am so amazed at the transformation in her life and so thankful I've been here to see it!

When life and work get stressful, I can always look back on the real purpose of this work to find strength. In 2011, our amazing team helped rescue 181 victims of property grabbing and restore them to their rights. That's the largest number in the office's history and a huge win for the cause of justice.



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

My holidays last year were definitely an adjustment. Six months in, I was just adjusting to my job and new community. I pretty much laid low in Kampala and stared out at dreary rain on Christmas morning. Not very festive at all.

For Christmas this year, I flew to Istanbul, Turkey, to spend ten days exploring and hanging out with my brothers. It was exactly the kind of trip I needed: time with family, time to explore a new country, time to indulge in Western culture, and time to reflect on 2011. Turkey gave me room to unwind and refocus, and a chance to impress my brothers with my Uganda-made bargaining skills. Huge thanks go to my parents for sponsoring our adventure!

Thanks to everyone for the notes, cards and email sent over for Christmas! I read them Christmas morning in

our hostel room in Istanbul. I especially loved reading the notes from my going-away party on Christmas morning. That kind of thing is unbelievably encouraging while I'm so far gone. Y'all are the best!

I spent New Year's Eve with a random assortment of friends who stayed around Uganda. We loaded an old Youtube ball drop and rang in 2012 looking out at scattered fireworks over Kampala's hilly skyline. There may also have been a 3 AM Monopoly game. Not the most conventional NYE, but certainly one to remember.

I still feel like I'm missing out on a ton of "real life" by being here (seriously so many new babies), but I'm über thankful for the new experiences I get here. Maybe my life is a lot less traditional, but for now it's pretty perfect.

WISE WORDS

"I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love."
- Mother Teresa

"Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It's beyond me."
- Zora Neale Hurston

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."
- 2 Timothy 1:7



Have a great New Year,

Scott

PS: I'm once again helping to coordinate Uganda's portion of the IJM Global Prayer Gathering. If you're free April 13-15, I encourage you to check it out and support our work with prayer.

Prayer Requests:

1 Pray that I keep up this fresh outlook through 2012. It would be easy to mentally check out before I actually fly away, but I want to be fully present here until the very last moment. There's lots to learn and lots to see in Uganda, and I refuse to leave without those experiences.

2 I set January as the official start to my post-Uganda job search, so pray for me as I look out for that next opportunity. I would love to stay with IJM, but need to explore other options as well. With so many great organizations out there, I'll need divine wisdom to lay out a clear vision for my next step.

3 Pray for our expanded work here in Uganda. Our project area and our team have expanded and we are gearing up for a large public justice system reform project. Pray that I can help the team as much as possible while I'm here.