

*"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."*

Phillipians 2:1-4

Every morning, I walk down the "mbala mbala", the big dirt road that takes me into town, where I find my motorcycle taxis. Every morning, I pass the same vendors of peanuts, sugar, salt, tea, and coffee, all wrapped in little plastic bags costing no more than about 5 cents. These vendors don't often sell in quantities larger than this because most can't afford more than 5 cents worth of sugar at a time.

Through these trips, I have come to know Ariel, who will be having a baby any day now, because I often buy peanuts from her. Three of her children are registered for sponsorship through World Vision although none of have found sponsors yet. When the World Vision International Leadership team came about a month ago, we asked if Ariel would open her home to one of the US executives named David for one night. World Vision believes in the importance of even the top leadership fully comprehending the day to day challenges that Gemena community members face. The local office in DR Congo wanted the US office to "live it".

When I asked Ariel how it went, she laughed as she told us how David pounded "mpondu" (cassava leaves) with her and her neighbors. Usually this work is left only for the women, so to see a big white American man accomplishing this task was a memory she won't soon forget. David also carried water on his head from the river to the house, and he slept on a bed made of bamboo. I asked if he was afraid during the night and she answered with a resounding, "Yes! He thought that lions would come attack him!" We both roared at that, knowing there are a grand total of zero lions in this entire region.

Ariel was honored to host a visitor from the US in her home. But more importantly, she was able to build a connection with World Vision to not only learn about their programs, but get to know the kind of people that want to help her community. It is not often in Gemena that executives of large international non-governmental organizations humble themselves enough to sleep on dirt floors and sit on low wooden stools to labor alongside the women.

But this is the example World Vision is setting, and this is the beginning of a deep and committed relationship to these people.

Hope can be found in the smallest of things, even in a sleepover in a mud home under African stars.