

Cameroon II Travelogue

Thursday - December 27, 2007 – We have an exciting first day with my trip to HUP emergency room. I received Fast Track treatment of a cut over my left eye and we left expecting that Marti would have to drive me to JFK. Turned out that I made it to the bus and we arrived at JFK around 2000 for our 2045 flight and ended up boarding along with the other passengers.

I am returning to Cameroon for implementation of our Engineers without Borders water supply project in the villages of Kob and Tudig. Godlove (our US contact with MQLIF [Meta Quality of Life], the on-the-ground NGO, Non-governmental Organization), Sarah, Hong, Vince and I had visited the previous June on an assessment trip. This trip Tony Sauder is the technical advisor; Sarah and Hong are the team leaders and there are eleven other students: Matt, Jay, Haresh, Michael, Davesh, George, Greg, Nicolas, Bevi, Allie, and Christina.



Since June, we have all worked hard developing the design, raising money, preparing a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between EWB, Penn, MQLIF, and KobCUD (Kob Cultural Development Association), and arranging for this trip.

We take off at 2111 and head for Zurich where we have three hour layover. As we left Zurich, the view of the Alps was spectacular. We have a stop in Yaounde

(the capital) and touch down in Douala at 2033 pm on Friday – 8 minutes late. All bags made it although it took a while. Gilbert (an attorney and Godlove's brother-in-law) arrived just as one the security folks started to give me a hard time.

The currency exchange in the black market was 675000 cfa for \$1500 or 450 cfa/\$ - the exchange is like a scene from *Casablanca* - a much better rate than for the bank transfer (430). The ride to Buea (I rode with Gilbert – the others are in a van) took the usual 2-3 hours with several security checkpoint stops and the stop at the bakery along the way. We stayed again at OIC Pavilion. Gilbert made arrangements to have a great meal waiting for us when we arrived (0100).

Saturday – December 29 – Up at 0645 after going to sleep about 0230. Bright sunny day; awoke to noise from the market which was just below my window. I seem to have slept through my alarm which was set for 0630. George and I wait outside for the others and see lots of the local version of the barn swallow hawking for insects.



On the long ride in the cramped van from Buea, I bought a cell phone in Bamenda which Roland had arranged through his brother. We are traveling with Roland Fobang who is an elected official – Assistant Mayor and also the Interim

Director of MQLIF. He is responsible for the on-the-ground arrangements.

We arrived in Kob after dark, brought our stuff into the house, and had dinner about 2100 or 2200, followed by speeches. The local folks seem to be getting organized. It was good to see Timothy, Thomas Samba (KobCUDA Treasurer), Samuel Akah (KobCUDA President), Rahel (Godlove's sister) and other friends from last time.

Sunday – December 30 – Good night's sleep. We have very cold showers this morning before breakfast. We are to leave at 0900 but I suspect we'll be late. We are staying in one quite large building with a large meeting room. The women are sleeping 2 and 3 in two different rooms. Tony and I share a room; the guys are sleeping 3 and 3; George is in the room with Alpha and the other George (the drivers – Rahel's sons); Matt slept in the single room.

Church lasted until 1230. Very long even by Kob standards – the service included a baptism, confirmation, and Holy Communion. We were part of the announcements and I spoke briefly. After church there are meetings with the local



dignitaries and the technicians (craftsmen) working on the project. We learn that the money transfer from the US to MQLIF is taking longer than expected. Our hosts are

frequently discussing things privately – we suspect it has to do with money and with the MOU.

After lunch we visited Wumzang and Chusum (the two springs we will develop as water supplies) along with the technicians. They have already been at work: Under the MOU, the village, through KobCUDA, is providing labor – they



worked on quite a bit of the pipeline trench (perhaps 10 or 20%) but there is more to do and it is not deep enough. They have also carried sand (up hill from the stream where it is gathered) and stone to the sites of the spring boxes and storage tanks. We made a design change or two. The big storage tank (20 cu m) at Chusum will most likely be circular in cross-section. We will place it back up at its original location and add a break-pressure tank at approx 1300 m. We are also considering spring protection at Chusum above the current location. Tony figures it may be easier to protect. Tomorrow we will dig and see if we

encounter water at a reasonable depth for spring development.

Return in time for dinner and an organizational meeting. Tomorrow will be a busy day – departure at 0800. While the others work, Haresh, Michael and I will go into Mbengwi with Mayor Fobang, and Thomas Samba to purchase materials.

Monday - December 31 – Awake at 0515 to learn that we'll be leaving early on what turned out to be a frustrating day. We (Matt came instead of Michael, Haresh, Thomas, Timothy and I) drive to Mbengwi with Alpha as driver. We are trying to get there by 7 to meet Henry. We assume Henry is the one who owns the hardware store in Mbengwi Park and that he'll only be open a short while because it is New Year's Eve. Turns out the Henry we are meeting is Rahel's husband, the Treasurer of MQLIF. After trading Alpha for Henry we proceed to Mayor Fobang's house. Then we head for Bamenda; had breakfast (omelet with ham; bread and jam, coffee) followed by a day of walking and price-shopping for materials (of course, the price goes up when people see us). No one place has everything we need and so we ended up making multiple trips. Money is still an issue: Roland said MQLIF was advanced some money by the bank for these initial purchases. Our hope was that this would have been done before our arrival. Everything costs more than expected and we bought some things not on the original list. Also, I bought more minutes for phone as we used up lots of time trying to reach people in Kob but they probably had no service. Haresh knows all about my phone as he has a similar Nokia – it's a good thing because I'm having trouble figuring it out and the instruction manual is in Portuguese as the phone was manufactured in Brazil.

We finally settled on a particular store for the pipe and most of the tools. But it still took a long time. Timothy and Thomas went shopping in different directions – we're still waiting for Thomas. Timothy and Henry then went for provisions. When we're all finally assembled we'll get transportation for our materials. And, Henry's car needed some brake work. At long last, we have a late lunch (cabbage stew with beef; yams on the side), we find a driver and vehicle, and then we move out of Bamenda. We get to Mbengwi in time to order cement and re-bar which, believe it or not, will be delivered New Year's Day at 8 am !!! Back to Kob, we see that the materials are delivered to the storehouse KobCUDA has set up in Mr. Akah's house.

The house we live in is unusual. It has a very large meeting room. Our hosts partially subdivided that room, adding 3 bedrooms for Rahel and any other staff staying over night; George; and Matt. Leading from the main room is a center hall off of which are 8 rooms – one is used as a kitchen and one for the security guard. There is a bathroom which connects to the bedrooms used by the women (Sarah/Hong in one and Allie/Bevi/Christina in the other). So the men have to walk through their rooms to get to the bathroom. Off the center hall and next to the bathroom is a cold-water shower. Tony and I share one of the bedrooms and the guys are buddied up mainly in the other bedrooms along the center hall. The floor is concrete, the walls plain with 1 ceiling light in each room. The generator works better than the one we had last June although current fluctuations wreck Marti's digital camera.

After a few days, I move to the room that the guard had been occupying. And a toilet is put into the shower. We then have two bathrooms – one for the men and the other

for the women - and each has a toilet and shower.

Rahel does the breakfast cooking. She was also here today – New Year's Eve – and she was a key figure in the evening entertainment which consisted of lots of singing and dancing. She taught the group two songs to sing New Year's Day in church. Get to sleep about 0130.

Tuesday - January 1, 2008 – Up at 0630. I hope I get a nap later in the day. Kob looks different in the dry season. There has been no appreciable rain for about 8 weeks and so the lushness of the vegetation is gone. It is still fairly green on the lower slopes but the upper ones are brown. People are burning the grass fields to encourage new growth when the rain starts again. As a consequence, it is dusty, especially the dirt roads, the worst being a stretch between Bamenda and Mbengwi. It is not as bad between Mbengwi and Kob but it is definitely noticeable. There is a dew each morning so it is not bone dry. It is cool in the mornings – probably in the 50's but hot in the afternoons – high 80's. It is somewhat humid but not oppressive.

We have a uniformed harmonica playing security guard (Stanley) who is provided either by the village or by MQLIF. He is a plumber by trade (he installed the extra toilet) who also works for MQLIF. He is older than either Amos or Elvis (our security guards in June).

Today was church at 9 – we arrived at 950 but the service didn't start until 10. During the service we sang the two songs in Meta that Rahel had taught us the previous night. We were weak on the second one and the entire congregation joined in to help us. Lunch was jama jama (a green vegetable casserole-type dish resembling chopped

spinach), fruit, cassava, sweet potatoes, cocoyam (taro or some other closely related tuber); breakfast had been bread with jam and PB; an egg dish with greens and veggies; (weak) coffee. Mayor Fobang divided us into three groups so each would experience a different New Year's Day celebration.

After lunch Alpha drove my group to Mayor Fobang's home where we had snacks. Roland's wife had prepared an elaborate spread but, unfortunately, we had



only enough time for peanuts, popcorn with pretzel-like things in it, fruit juice and from there we drove to Godlove's uncle's house and met a large group of folks; walked to the home of the main administrator (Senior District Officer, SDO, of Momo). He is a francophone appointed by the President of Cameroon. He was unavailable to meet us – apparently still sleeping after last night's activities. The security guards who told us that he was unavailable did not realize that Allie, a Canadian, is fluent in French. Since the car had returned to Kob to collect one of the other groups who were going to Rahel's home in Mbengwi (the third group went with Thomas Samba to Acha'a to visit the hospital and then to Thomas' for dinner), we walked and walked – eventually making it to the market (Mbengwi Park where we had purchased the cement and rebar the day before). We went to the Galaxy Bar which features pamplemousse

(lightly carbonated grapefruit juice) on tap. We visited the Galaxy on the evening of our arrival. In addition to the pamplemousse at the bar, we ate grilled pieces of spicy beef on a stick and cow intestine (served with a very hot green pepper sauce). Both were actually very good. We then walked more and visited the commandant of the local police (one of the reasons for trying to visit the SDO was to officially notify authorities of our arrival – apparently they were miffed that that had not been done immediately upon arrival).

Then we walked over to Rahel's house and joined Tony's group at the party already in progress. They had had dinner – pot luck with lots of family members bringing dishes, beer, etc. Every where we went,



people seemed to be surprised that none of us were drinking – of course, the students had signed a pledge to refrain while on the trip and neither Tony nor I drink. Our hosts sang two songs and in turn we sang a response (with help and direction) to them and then we sang our two songs from church – again needing help on one. Lots of clapping and a line dance - we joined in. My group left first – returned to the house just before 7 pm. Soon, the Samba Thomas group arrived. Tony's group returned about 8.

For dinner we have PB&J and hunks of pineapple. Each group had a good time

during the day. We have our team meeting. Tony takes the technical lead; he keeps referring to himself as my assistant, but he is clearly the technical chief of the team.

Two women came to the house and each gave an African name to one member of our team. This also happened the previous evening and so by the time we leave we should all have African names which are chosen to be the name of a deceased family member so that the name and the memories of that person live on.

Wednesday – January 2 – At 630, I am the first one of our team awake. Of course, Rahel and her group are up before any of us. Slept very well last night – although we have been eating quite a bit, we have also been walking a lot, especially up and down hills. Breakfast was called corn porridge but it is more like a soup; served with excellent little home-made donuts (no holes).

Today turned out to be very busy – in my case, traveling between Chusum and Wumzang and the storehouse. My phone is very frustrating and I rarely have service – I'm asking Alpha to buy an Orange (the competing cell phone carrier – like AT&T versus Verizon) sim card tomorrow. Hopefully, that will solve the issue.

The spring at Wumzang was completely dug out today and a concrete floor placed. The concrete turns out to be browner than the gray color we are used to seeing. Tony will check it out with his finger nail tomorrow. Felix is an extraordinarily good mason and the local technician who will be in overall charge of the work after we leave. There is no locally available gravel and so we make the aggregate manually by breaking up rocks.

Chusum – only digging today. The effort to find water at a reasonable depth above the current spring location failed. We are back at the original site, digging it out and then encountering a monster rock which will take 2-3 hours to remove tomorrow.



Lunch was at Felix's house with Mr. Akah, Roland Fobang and the Lord Mayor. We had chicken, a hot cabbage based dish, yams, plantains, and cocoyams. Thomas Samba is in charge of local arrangements for food.

Dinner – I showered and did not eat as I was still full from lunch which was not until 230 or so.

Emmanuel is the storehouse manager – he has set up a system for signing a ledger whenever materials are removed. We fixed it so that Matt Owens can sign materials out from the storehouse – saving me the trip back down the hill. It might have been better to have the storehouse at Felix's which was closer to the springs. As it turned out any unused material went to his storage area at the end of each day – so that by the time we left there was a reasonable supply of materials there.

While buying the cement, Alpha had car trouble. It turns out that one of the brakes keeps over-tightening and must be loosened repeatedly using a spanner.

Timothy's (who we have learned is Godlove's brother-in-law) role in the church is more significant than I had remembered. He is a lay reader, their equivalent of a chalcist, and translates (on the fly) the sermon and the readings into Meta. He also makes the announcements in both languages (I thought when we were before here that Alex did this).

Some of us washed our clothes at a standpipe using a bar of laundry soap and they should be dry by tomorrow afternoon. Rahel just announced that someone in the village will do laundry for us. We agreed but said that the gang should do their own underclothes – same rules as in June – and no more than two outfits at a time.

Played a version of the "Newlywed Game" called the "Buddy Game" – just like camp, we use the buddy system for keeping track of everywhere. Questions were asked to see how well you know your buddy. Greg did his chicken dance (a great impersonation) after Christina's rooster story – when she was six, she let all of the chickens loose at her grandparent's farm in Sicily and has disliked roosters ever since.

Thursday – January 3 – The drying clothes were brought inside last night and Stanley and I took them back outside in the morning. Breakfast was PB&J, coffee/tea. We have another nice day. There were a few sprinkles yesterday afternoon and during the afternoon of the 31st. It even thundered yesterday afternoon; but no real rain at all since we arrived.

Tony has been my roommate. But today, I am moving into the spare bedroom which had been used by Stanley with the mattress on the floor. That will be better for my back – also, Tony snores.

Work on Chusum is proceeding slowly. It took all day to deal with the rock. Trying to get to the point where we can construct spring protection with enough gradient to push the water through the culvert. This has proved very difficult and I think Tony wishes he had gone with Vince's recommendation to simply use the existing spring as it was.

Work on Wumzang is moving along nicely. The brown concrete seems OK although maybe a bit soft. The masons are doing a great job and have finished at least one course of the collection box wall. The



storage tank site is dug out with a fairly level floor. Tomorrow we'll put sand in to level it.

The GPS team and I spent much of the day locating important sites – especially the break-pressure (bp) tank. We have it located about 55 m above the low point (the stream where it crosses near the church), and 20 m above the clinic. This is OK but near the minimum acceptable. We want enough of an elevation difference between the break pressure tank and the clinic to provide sufficient pressure there but not too much elevation difference between the break pressure tank and the low point or else the plastic pipe will burst. We went with Timothy, walked off the Wumzang line, and located standpipes.

Lunch was rice with a spicy red sauce and fish (fried pretty dry) and papaya. We had lunch again at Felix'. His last name is Fonso and he is the nephew of the MP. Lunch about 3 when we got word that the Lord Mayor wanted us to go to Acha'a – actually to a village called Tugi to attend a major death celebration of a person who died many years ago.



There were many dance troupes and although we arrived late we still got to witness several dance companies and we joined in with them. We met a group of six of the local fons (chiefs) – we clapped many more times than three – I guess the number of claps increases in proportion to the number of fons. We had pictures taken with the fons. Left about dark which is close to 7; official sunset is 615 or so and the official dawn is almost exactly twelve hours later. Dinner was PB&J and pineapple.

Friday – January 4 – Breakfast this morning was an Irish potato, pepper and cabbage stew-like, spicy mixture that was called a porridge and it was quite good; plus papaya and coffee/tea.

I worked with the GPS crew until 1120 or so. We double checked the low point, clinic, bp elevations with the hand level and are as certain as we can be that the clinic-bp elevation difference is 18-20 m and that the

low point-by elevation difference is 52-60m. Both of these are near the limits but acceptable. We went back to the house to do calculations and some mapping. The others worked at the springs until about 1 pm. We quit early because today was market day; it comes to Nyen (a neighboring village) every 8 days.

Lunch today was yams, cocoyams, cassava and green casserole and papaya. After lunch, I acted as money changer in preparation for market day. Since the rate I got in Douala was 450 cfa/dollar, the best system was to take a \$20, give a 10,000 cfa note and ask for 1000 cfa in change. Mayor Fobang arranged for smaller currency and coins at the market.

The market was fun, but my only purchases



were a Cameroon soccer jersey and shorts – I hope they fit someone at home. We left the market and headed to Kenny Tendo's house. He lives in Skippack, PA, and was in Cameroon for the holidays. His house (actually, his brother's – a man named Ebony or Ben) was even nicer than Gilbert's house in Buea. Ben ended up being the real host – he is 61 and lives in the house since his retirement. He is a real character who loves to tell stories. He told all about how the practice of arranged marriages works in Cameroon. The house was filled with much West Africana art, statues, carvings, etc.

On the way to Ben's house, we stopped at the Mbengwi market to get fitted for traditional Cameroonian clothes. After returning, Thomas Samba came to speak with Tony and me; later, Tony and I met with Sarah and Hong. One issue seems to be the communications between MQLIF and KobCUDA. We'll make sure there is a community meeting Sunday – it was on our original schedule that we made but it seems that it hasn't been arranged. I'll prod Mayor Fobang in the morning about that.

Sarah and Hong are very effective and self-motivated team leaders. They called the meeting with Tony and I – we'll try to repeat that every night. The team has bonded together very nicely. They work hard and are having a good time. Tony is an excellent field engineer with lots of experience – don't know what I would've done without him.

Saturday – January 5 – Time is going fast. This is another early start since we will be quitting early as we'll have dinner in Mbengwi at the Lord Mayor's house. Every time we have to move the entire group it requires at least two vehicles or at least two round trips, so logistics are a problem with a group this large.

Spoke with Mayor Fobang and he thought that the community meeting should be after church. I then spoke with Timothy and Thomas who concurred and said they would help spread the word. I asked Timothy about my sketch and he provided some of the names. He also suggested that we not include Eghem, that the end of the pipe beyond Isaiah should simply be a pipe end with no standpipes beyond Isaiah's house, and that there should only be one standpipe (at the end) on the short Wumzang line.

In our discussions later, Sarah and Hong questioned the wisdom of dropping the standpipes beyond Isaiah's house. We'll have to decide what to do before Sunday's meeting.

Worked at Wumzang today – two students mixed mortar for Felix who is working on the mortar spring box. The rest worked on the base of the storage tank. This required some additional digging as the base will be almost 3 m square; also, we needed some more leveling. We strung out and marked a square – a good exercise in applied geometry. My notebook served as a t-square to set the corners and then we double checked that the two diagonals were equal and all sides the correct length. Then we filled in the base with stone which took a lot of work – on Monday we'll finish filling in the cracks with smaller stone and then Felix will cover it all with mortar. After it sets, he'll build the foundation and then the tank on top of that.

Lunch (2 pm) includes fish, ripe plantains, orange, and a jama jama concoction. Quite good – everyone was starved. Now we are getting ready for dinner at Lord Mayor's house. There is to be dancing afterwards.

The evening's program was quite an event. We went to Mbengwi in 3 carloads – Alpha made a return trip in the red car. We first went to the Mbengwi Council Building where we met in the Lord Mayor's office and discussed local politics, etc. Then we went to the Abi Fall – waterfall about 200 m high (much higher than Niagara) which they plan to develop for hydroelectricity.

Then to the Lord Mayor's house for a feast mostly prepared by Jacob Akumcha. Mayor Fobang introduced us all to the hosts and he remembered everyone's name – very

impressive! He received an ovation from the group. Dinner included fruits: watermelon, pineapple, papaya; rice with a spicy red sauce; chicken; hot pot with all sorts of vegetables – Irish potatoes, yams, cocoyams, carrots; jama jama-type green vegetable; a cabbage salad with tomato slices and hard boiled egg slices; wheat bread. In honor of my advanced age, I am served the chicken gizzards. Everything was quite good but I ate too much. Finally, we end up at the Galaxy Bar for an evening of dancing. We spent about 2 hours there. In Africa, it is acceptable for 2 men to dance together.

Sunday – January 6 – Today is church and a community meeting afterwards. Both go well. Tony and I both spoke – he gave an overview of the goals of EWB; I basically gave a good-bye speech. After the service, the students put on a health education skit



which was well received and very funny. I then outlined the project and sketched a schematic on the chalk board. The Kob Presbyterian Church Youth group did a dance which was great and Nicolas gave them a bag of bite-sized chocolate bars. Then we had Q&A and got concurrence on our design; the GPS team will have to do some more mapping.

Met with Thomas and Samuel Akah and later with Thomas in pm to discuss Wednesday's meeting which will begin at 1

pm meaning we can only work 8-11 am on that day. That leaves us with just two full working days because Tuesday the plan is to go to Mbengwi to pick up the clothes.

Monday – January 7 – Slept very well last night – needed it. Up at 630; got rolling about 830; send Alpha to Bamenda for valves, etc; went with GPS team to storehouse to measure pipe diameters and to pick up some stuff. We carried pipes and rebar up to Chusum. Discussed plan for tanks and went back to Plan A with a single tank serving both break pressure and storage functions. Went with Timothy and GPS team to check out standpipe (SP) 8 and 9 and decide SP9 is at too high an elevation to be served by Chusum. We'll check out SP8 tonight. Then we went to the area that we hope to serve by extending the Palace line from Wumzang. This line will serve three standpipes. Tonight we'll check the impact this has on Wumzang storage. Next, we worked at Wumzang on the diversion works to divert storm water around the spring.

Breakfast was PB sandwiches; also egg sandwiches. Lunch was a yam, sweet potato and cocoyam porridge; oranges. Dinner was an Irish potato porridge and watermelon. We also ate some biscuits (cookies) from the little store and some fruit that someone brought from the bush: bananas, passion fruit, and avocado. Everyone seems tired and lethargic; maybe accumulated aches and pains; maybe yesterday's soccer game against the locals;



maybe because it is almost time to leave.

Tuesday – January 8 – We've been very busy the last few days – our design is modified each evening and we have meetings to discuss the modifications and then we work all day because our time is so limited. Last night we discussed the impact of the 3 new standpipes we added on the Wumzang line. We decided to make the storage tank bigger and to provide valves on both lines below the palace to make sure that the fon has enough water during droughts and during days when there is an activity at the Palace. If the water flow at the spring goes as low as last June there will probably be shortages and KobCUDA will have to consider developing one of the higher springs at Efug.

Up early this morning (about 5 am), showered and now waiting for others to wake up. Some minor ailments this trip: a scratchy throat which has disappeared; only one immodium; cramps from overeating; several bites on my fingers which are itchy – one became quite swollen although After Bite helps. No serious health issues with team – a few bangs, cuts, etc., but nothing serious. Now I have a bit of a dry cough.

Once again, we have been received warmly and made to feel part of the family. Some students would have preferred individual home stays in smaller groups but that would

significantly increase logistics and made oversight much more complex.

Mayor Fobang told me last night that local transportation is more costly than anticipated. He has taken from other areas of the budget but feels that by the time we pay for Limbe and travel, he will have used the entire \$4500 – he wanted to know if he could tap into the reserve and I told him that, as long as he has receipts for the \$4500, it would be OK to use the reserve. Since we have not yet tapped all the initial transferred amount for materials, my plan is to not leave any of the extra we brought with us. We'll have him send receipts for the first installment and then invoices for the next installments.

The mornings are hazy and chilly – a bit more today than most. Part of the haze is due to a dusty wind that blows from the north in January called the harmattan.

This was a busy day. The GPS/mapping team needed to clarify some issues from yesterday. We stopped briefly at Wumzang and then went to Chusum where things are starting to move – working on spring box and distribution tank. We were about half done pouring a large batch of concrete for the distribution tank when an august group



of visitors arrived. The District Officer (DO), Police Commissioner, Assistant DO, Company Commander, and head of CID

(state-level security). They were dressed in their office clothes and not at all appropriately dressed for the woods. We met with this delegation for about 30 minutes. The DO invited us to breakfast on Thursday morning – I explained that our Thursday schedule was already tight and he said he would make sure that our van was here early enough to leave by 730 am – we'll see. Then resumed with the concrete and it started to pour – there was a severe thunderstorm in the middle of the dry season – actually not totally unexpected because the region does receive some January rain.

We also spent some time listing topics for discussion tomorrow. One is whether or not the Wumzang line should be brought all the way to the lowest spot where they are already connected to an alternate system which leaks – too much pressure? A break pressure tank is definitely needed to take Wumzang water to this spot – we'll have to check if needed for other locations on this line. It turns out that the elevation drop along the Wumzang line is such that a break pressure tank is needed in any event.

Breakfast this morning was sliced bread and a spicy cabbage/veggie cooked red sauce goulash which most people ate as a sandwich; pineapple. Lunch again at Felix' and we had rice with a few vegetables in it and the red pepper sauce which everyone loves; bananas. We had biscuits (cookies like the plain Girl Scout cookies). When we hid for shelter from the rain on a porch, I brought out the last of the trail mix and we finished it – 4 pounds in little over a week.

For dinner we had a cabbage tray with a sweet dressing, spaghetti, and corn muffins. Tonight, Thomas Samba wants to teach us a dance and maybe a song to perform tomorrow. I received a preliminary outline

of receipts – including a few questionable items – otherwise looks OK. I haven't seen any real receipts yet; we definitely exceeded the budget on our living expenses. What Roland gave me totals 2,772,300. At an exchange rate of 430, our wired amount would be 2,365,000 – about 400,000 cfa ~ \$900 over budget.

Wednesday – January 9 - Stay up late and awake early (~5 am) with preparation for today's activities. This morning is cooler than most. Breakfast was the cabbage carrot porridge mix in red sauce, coffee, and papaya. Today is a short work day. We quit at 11 and rush to get ready; lunch was bananas, papaya, and an Irish potato porridge. We arrive at the Palace 15 minutes late but are still the first ones there. Everyone is trying to complete their tasks in the next few minutes. Those of us who bought traditional West African clothes and bags are wearing them. It's now 1:40 and barely anyone has arrived, certainly none of the dignitaries.



Naturally the program got off to a late start. The KobCUDA/MQLIF tension became clearer today. We started off meeting with local leaders but only the KobCUDA folks were there at first. They voiced concerns about the lack of transparency in MQLIF dealings with the money. Later Roland arrived and so did the Lord Mayor. There

was a lot of posturing but no real solution. I kicked off the formal meeting with a list of our concerns which I later wrote up as a document which was sent to Mr. Akah.

During the session, the students ran 6 focus groups – there seemed to be much discussion in them. Then we went from the Palace down to the MP's area where there were several traditional dance companies. As usual, we joined in.

I received my Meta name today from the first wife of the late Chief. She named me after the chief, Foncho. May-kum-yeh (my name is) Foncho Yoh-nay. Lots of cheers at that because the fon's name is a powerful one. Many speeches – I gave a farewell speech. Then we received gifts – I received another (but different) bag, a wood carving of a girl child carrying water and one of her younger siblings for her mother. It was given to me by Roland Fobang with the declaration that water in Africa is also about emancipating young women from the chore of carrying water. I also received a basket from the woman who named me. She gave it to me, bowed down and gave the chief clap (3 claps when entering the presence of a chief – which we did in June when we met the Nyen chief and this trip when we met the group of chiefs at the death celebration in Acha'a Tugi.)

We then went to the MP's house for dinner – chicken, fish, beans, rice dish with some kind of meat in it; watermelon, yams and cassava; pamplemousse to drink.

Thursday – January 10 – Up about 4 am after having a hard time getting to sleep – the gang was very noisy. There's been talk of a third visit for a project inauguration; not sure when that might be. Hungry this morning: no more personal stash of food and breakfast is at least 3 hours away.

Knock on wood, but the trip has been remarkably free of illness/injury. Fifteen people-fifteen days (so far) and my encounter with the bus door was the worst mishap.

Friday – January 11 – Yesterday was a busy one and we were very late at every turn. The van came about 7:20 and it was 8 am by the time we moved. So we didn't get to the house of the SDO until 9. The DO (head of Mbengwi sub-division) was there as were the security and immigration chiefs, the Lord Mayor, and, of course, Mayor Fobang. We have a very good breakfast with strong coffee. Highlight was a ritual performed by the Fon of Mbengwi during which Tony and I were given names and a special hat which endowed us with special



powers. I am called jamg – the axe - which can solve difficult problems like a strong axe can break through a knotty log; Tony is the walking stick (nband) to lead the way. [Later, Godlove told me that the red feathers in our hats denoted that we were on

a mission for the fon.] We went to Bamenda and shopped until 2 pm or so.

We met up with 2 representatives of Rotary International and had an excellent lunch at the restaurant owned by one of them. Lunch was whole grilled fish; fried ripe plantains, and fries. We left Bamenda much later than planned – about 4 pm rather than noon. The ride to Limbe was long and cramped for everyone. We arrived about 11:30 pm at a very nice hotel on the beach in the midst of the Victoria Botanical Garden.



Ate dinner (grilled whole fish, excellent fries, and a vegetable salad) about 1 am. I remained up until almost 3 am, taking care of another money exchange (this time at 440/dollar), reviewing the stack of receipts that Roland gave me yesterday and getting my stuff organized for our last day in Cameroon.

Woke up about 7 and took the first hot shower in 2 weeks – this is a nice hotel. I have a TV with CNN International and learned about the death of Sir Edmund Hillary. At breakfast it became obvious that most of the gang had stayed up all night. Light breakfast – crepe, baguette, jam, butter, coffee and some papaya.

Drove from hotel (Roland gave me receipt for 198,000 cfa including dinner and breakfast) to Seme Beach (admission



28,500 cfa). This is a very nice beach with a hotel, bar, restaurant, and changing room. We heard the beach was guarded but there is no one on duty. It is a wide, flat sandy beach. Relatively calm today and a breezy relief from hot, humid Limbe. The beach and lunch will be the only activities today.

We've seen some typical shrimp boats and some of the more traditional dugout boats. The group is walking up the beach leaving me on guard duty. Last night we saw Amos and today Elvis has come with us to the beach. They were our security guards last June and it is good to see them.

Back to the hotel; showered and got organized and went to restaurant for third round of grilled fish in 24 hours. It was served with very hot pepper sauce and a plantain. Hong's came with cassava so I gave her half of my plantain in exchange for half of her cassava. It took just about 2 hours to get to the airport. After unloading the van, we headed in and the line for Swiss Air was huge and stationary. Roland found a fellow who moved us to the front and we got to the (air conditioned) waiting room about 8:30 with boarding at 9:10.

Make a short stop in Equatorial Guinea at Malabo on an island in the Gulf of Guinea. Tony says that Malabo is the capital of Equatorial Guinea. It is raining in Zurich and chilly this morning. We have a 2-3

hour lay-over. We have to go through security again – the contrast between Zurich and Douala could not be starker (and the temperature difference is marked also.) A more thorough inspection was done in less time.

Overall impressions this time in Cameroon are pretty much related to dry vs wet seasons. There was dust everywhere and that accentuated the negatives, especially in built-up areas. The people were just as friendly and welcoming as before; but, maybe because money is involved now, or maybe because I have a bit more experience here, local politics and divisiveness are more apparent. Fresh fruit was also less readily available – certainly no mangoes. The drivers were just as wild and crazy as they were in June.

I bought 4 more soccer outfits at Douala airport for \$50 which works out to about 5500 cfa which is not too bad since there was a money exchange involved (although indirectly) and it was at the airport – it cost 3500 at the Tad Market in Nyen.

The plane ride has many open seats so I am by myself. There is some traffic but we should leave close to schedule. Off at 10:15. The ride was bumpy at first but then smooth. We are expected to arrive a tad late but nearly on schedule. We had very good food on all 4 legs of the trip, including a rich (Swiss) chocolate chip ice cream snack mid-way in both directions.

P.S. – Our friends in Kob and Tudig continue to make progress on the project. Felix takes pictures with his camera and they are e-mailed to us by Mayor Fobang. The large circular tank is complete but not the roof. We are sending (late August, 2008) additional funds for more cement and other construction materials.