



Nicci Maxwell

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Location: Kisoro, Uganda



What I do: Providing paediatric and neonatal medical care to the community, and providing training, mentorship and support to local healthcare workers.

Dear family and friends,

Greetings from Kisoro! The rainy season has just begun and it's a joy to welcome back our regular thunderstorms, replacing weeks of dust and wind. After a season of harvest and then relative rest while the weather has been dry, people are now very busy again, digging and planting for the new season and the next harvest.

My return to Kisoro in early June also marked the start of something of a new season in my work here. My return coincided with a new agreement between CMS and the Diocese of Muhabura, designed to reduce my working hours a bit, especially at night. I'm now doing only one night per week (unless one of the clinical officers is on leave), which is wonderful. Of course I'm enjoying the calmer evenings and significantly better sleep, but I'm also loving the fact that I can be more productive during the days because I'm not always exhausted and sleep-deprived! My time at Potter's Village has been reduced a little, in line with the fact that the local team are really beginning to take responsibility for the medical centre and can handle most things that come their way both clinically and managerially. I'm delighted to be spending much less time seeing dozens of toddlers with "coughing and snot" and more time investing in the knowledge and skills development of various groups of healthcare staff. Something I love doing and which will also outlast my time here.

My time at the government hospital has increased to two days per week. One day is mainly clinical and spent seeing their challenging patients and supporting the staff with the care of these more difficult cases. The other day is mainly about more formalised teaching, especially (but not exclusively) for the staff dealing with newborn babies in the maternity unit. We are concentrating on the basics like resuscitation and keeping babies warm and fed, but it's wonderful when staff approach me to request a specific topic during teaching time because of a patient they have seen. I've also been invited to provide some teaching on neonatal care at the Catholic hospital, as they are hoping to improve their newborn care too. We are currently in negotiations for Potter's Medical Centre to host some postgraduate medical students from Kabale University for part of their neonatal training. So many opportunities to make Kisoro a safer place for babies, no matter where they



With my colleague Winnie, rocking our traditional outfits for Rachel's "gukwa". Apologies for the cut off head... that was the best photo of all the ones I have! That's what happens when all your friends are short... or you are unusually tall!

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



are born! Please pray for all this teaching activity – that I will prepare well and keep things interesting, that the initial enthusiasm from those wanting to learn will be maintained and that they will go away with useful skills and knowledge to really impact on the care of newborns both now and in the future.

If the past few weeks have had a theme, it's definitely "refugees". It is estimated that, since February, well over 35,000 people have fled over the border into this part of Uganda from fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Around half of these people are being accommodated in a refugee camp about five kilometres out of town where conditions are very difficult due to such high numbers of people. The rest of the refugees are living in the local community, where some can afford to rent property but others are literally camping wherever they can find a spot. The health status of many of the refugees, especially the children, is poor. Malnutrition, malaria and pneumonia are the most common conditions referred to hospital, although there

are a variety of less common conditions to keep us on our toes. Many of the sickest and most complicated patients end up at Potter's – a premature baby weighing just 750g (1lb 10oz), some of the most severely malnourished children I've ever seen and even a family of six, including malnourished 10-week-old twins whose mum is on treatment for brucellosis. Only refugees who are officially registered in the camp have their healthcare paid for, which leaves a lot of very sick people without the resources to access the care they need, let alone food and shelter. Please pray for the refugee situation – for a rapid resolution to the conflict that has caused the problem, for individual refugees whose lives are incredibly difficult and for all the agencies and individuals trying to help the thousands in the camp as well as outside it.

Life here isn't just about work and I have managed to have a quiet day and night away at Lake Mutanda and attend the "gukwa" (giveaway) party for my friend and hospital colleague, Rachel. A giveaway is a big celebration marking the handing over of a young woman to her husband-to-be and his family, which usually takes place in the few days before the wedding. We have also had several overseas visitors in recent weeks from the USA, Germany and Netherlands with more expected from the UK and USA in the coming days.

My last letter was written while I was still unwell after having had COVID-19 and I'm so thankful for all your prayers as I recovered. By the beginning of June I was feeling much better, but unfortunately the return to Kisoro was more difficult than I expected, possibly because of the altitude (nearly 6,000ft/2,000m) and I really struggled with chest pain and shortness of breath. Thankfully these seem to have finally disappeared and I'm feeling very nearly back to full strength. Please pray for the energy, stamina and strength to accomplish all the God has for me to do here.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Until next time, love to you all,

Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: Rachel's "gukwa" – the bride-to-be and her team of supporters; The dry season gives us some spectacular days and beautiful views; Two views from the refugee camp.



Going further with Church Mission Society

Africa Conference: Friday 7–Sunday 9 October – A weekend residential with opportunity to connect online. This year's theme is *Out of Africa: Learning together about mission*. Book your place now at churchmissionsociety.org/ac2022

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