

## Week ending 8.5.10

Saturday morning was the 'clean-up after camping' time when I had to wash the kit that had got doused in dust on trek. After a week away I had to renege on my rugby commitment to take the family to a works social outing – the first one on offer to us. As Saturday was 'workers day' it was a bank holiday and traditionally workers meet for picnics; we met the college staff at the beach at Sanyang. The male staff (and one female lecturer) had arrived on one of the college buses before we arrived; I had hoped some families would be present for the children to play with but it was not to be. They had arrived with a number of 'breakfast' sandwiches around noon, we were an hour later. The culture clash showed as I went for a swim, played with the kids, went bird spotting; my colleagues remained in the shade of the banta-bar reading, playing scrabble, talking and contemplating(I guess). When we were considering making excuses to leave around 4.30, lunch arrived in another bus, containing mainly women lecturers. We ate and when we did prepare to leave before the sun set we were given foil trays containing a further meal(we kept that for Sunday dinner). Sunday's domestic duties included more fruit tree lopping –the lemons are past their best – and I got to play beach touch rugby for only the second time since February.

My dispute with Nuha could have been worse on Monday morning; I asked for direction on what he wanted from his conference before I risked my professional reputation, he interpreted this as me pulling out of the role he had asked another volunteer, Amy, to ask me to complete, moreover, he couldn't provide an answer about expectations, as a consequence I suggested there would be experienced volunteers who would see his lack of management as a reason to avoid attending. I requested a meeting to resolve matters through the week which he couldn't entertain as he was due up-country; as I had been the previous week, and hence unable to previously confirm or reject my support of an aimless conference. Analysing my frustration it is the role of the Education Programme Manager that disappoints; he holds the key to so much, his country needs a better education system which could lift it from its knees if he believed in what he was doing and was more enthusiastic. He has, however, admitted to another veteran that he considers his role 'just a job' and his interest is only being on the NGO(non-governmental organisation) gravy train. Infuriating, when he is paid 3 times as much as the professional volunteers working for him. Needless to say I haven't been asked to complete his appraisal – maybe next year?

The students were pleased to see me again at the college; it was good to teach and feel that I was into the swing of things now the term is up and running (3 weeks to start). I visited a school to complete observations of student teachers where no other lecturer had attended this academic year; they are supposed to be visited each term but as the school is placed some distance from population centres they have been overlooked. I wonder if I have been newly allocated to the school as the way to ensure observations happen; fellow Gambian lecturers won't bother. I also got to coach some school children with rugby development; they were present at the start of my senior coaching session on Tuesday evening.

On reflection the week has been as uneventful, but unpredictable, as a week in Africa can be; it is pleasant to appreciate just how much I take for granted at home in Fajara compared to the up-country treks. A shower with flowing water, electricity when the sun has gone down, a gas stove to boil water for a cup of tea, a bed off the floor and tarmacked roads are a luxury really. Can you imagine offering that in an election manifesto?