GREETINGS FROM THE AFRICAN RAINBOW TEAM!

Have arrived safely at Quelimane to be met by Sr. Isidine and the opportunity of a restaurant meal—it's been a humbling journey, the mothers with babies singing and dancing in jubilation. Sr. Baptista from the Ministry of Health is patient, professional and understanding, his English improves by the day and around the campfire at night we drink 'Rhenoster' coffee and listen to 60's music—Pierre in the 34 yr old Land Rover malaria wagon, growls thru' the soft sand as we make our way to rural villages—all part of the one net-one life campaign—at Chupanga on the southern bank of the Zambezi we visit Mary Livingston's grave—the wife of the great Victorian missionary explorer died here and was buried under a giant baobab tree. It was malaria that killed her and so we think this a fitting place to distribute nets to mums with babies. The once desecrated mission church is in service again and the ringing bells echo across the vast Zambezi flood plain—across the river we take the dirt track to Morrumbala, this morning the village elders welcome the mothers with babies to our camp—Sr. Baptista conducts the malaria talk up, the villagers are amazed by these adventurers who sleep in tents and cook on an open fire—the elders sign the scroll of peace and goodwill we are carrying across Africa, they smile for a picture, now dressed in USAID/African Rainbow t-shirts! The women chant and waive their nets—from Quelimane we'll take the coastal road to Pebane and beyond—to date we've distributed 846 nets at 12 villages/community centers, many more will follow as we continue with the journey north to meet the dhow at Pemba—the One Net-One Life campaign is proving a great success thanks to all your support.

AFRICAN RAINBOW EXPEDITION REACHES PEMBA

The USAID sponsored convoy, in support of malaria prevention rolls slowly into town. To the west of the road, surrounded by mangrove swamps and giant grey baobabs, lies Africa's largest natural bay. Its waters glittering like a shining jewel in the early morning light. Somewhat worn-out by their long journey up the coast from Durban, South Africa, the African Rainbow Expedition has reached Puma, the colourful capital of Mozambique far north Cabo Delgado province, where we pick up the story in Kingsley Holgate's words…

I wouldn't have missed this journey for anything. It's been a fascinating odyssey. The beauty of the palm-fronted coast, the colourful and friendly village people, the adventure of pulling and pushing our expedition vehicles across deep, wide rivers, the campfires at night and the fulfillment of saving lives through our One Net – One Live campaign.

We bounce along goat tracks, the elephant grass taller than the Land Rovers, our objective is always clear. It's to distribute mosquito nets to mothers with babies in isolated, rural villages. One can see the appreciation in their faces. Expedition member, Sr. Baptista from the Mozambican Ministry of Health, hands out pamphlets

and conducts entertaining anti-malarial talk-ups. Local chiefs and community leaders always attend. There's singing, dancing and the beating of hand-carved rawhide drums, bicycle races for the young men, nets for the mums and USAID branded t-shirts and anti-malarial products for the village elders.

Pierre, a South African volunteer, carries two tons of insecticide impregnated nets in his thirty-four year old forward control Land Rover, which we've nicknamed Mzee Kobe, meaning the old tortoise in Swahili. On the side of the truck is painted a large Anopheles mosquito against a big red cross with the words One Net – One Life.

USAID report-back forms are filled out giving details of each village, GPS co-ordinates, population size, high moderate or low malaria risk details, name of community leader and the nearest clinic or hospital. The official African Rainbow Expedition ink stamp comes down with a bang, the elders carefully endorse the scroll of Peace & Goodwill we're carrying across Africa. Mothers shout in jubilation as they wave their PSI supplied mosquito nets in the air. Music blares from the Land Rover's horn speaker, chickens scurry across the track as we head north.

Breakfast is leftover stew and stale Portuguese bread toasted on the coals. Coffee laced with condense milk is drunk from dented enamel mugs. We buy bananas and pawpaws at roadside markets and fill our water containers at the village pump. It's not always easy, ironically, one of the team is down with malaria and I've got a septic tropical ulcer that's gone right through to the bone. Last night a thundering downpour caught us unawares as we camped on the banks of the Rio Lurio. But our spirits are certainly not dampened as from Pemba Bay we prepare to launch the "Spirit of Adventure", a traditional Swahili sailing dhow that will support our One Net – One Life campaign up the East coast of Africa to the border with Somalia. Sponsors and media are flying in for the launch. There's an exciting buzz! Today we use the Land Rovers to pull the mast up. It's full moon and the Swahili crew work throughout the night stitching the lateen rigged sail. The hardwood planks are caulked with cotton waste soaked in palm nut oil. The hull is waterproofed with shark fat oil and as is the Swahili custom, hand carved eyes known as "Macho's" decorated with the crescent and the star, will be attached to either side of the bow to ward off danger. The south-east monsoon winds known here as the Kusi are picking up daily and soon and we'll be on our way. See you at the launch. Thanks for your support for the One Net – One Life project.

USAID SAVING LIVES THROUGH ADVENTURE

"Aah she is dancing," says Fai Chababe with a broad grin as he looks up at the twisting groaning mast lashed to the masthead with orange red coconut fiber rope. With both hands on the tiller Captain Simba squints into the sun as he guides 'Amina – The Spirit of Adventure' down another massive swell. Sailing up the East Coast of Africa in an Arab Dhow loaded with mosquito nets for mothers with babies and backed by a Land Rover support team the expedition is called African Rainbow; we pick up the story in Kingsley's words... *"Our fight against malaria is turning out to*

be a challenging adventure but not without the occasional obstacle. Whilst camped in the bush up north towards the Rovuma river the Land Rover nicknamed 'Stanley' would run for 3 seconds and then stop dead - it must be the immobilize we thought. We change batteries get hold of Land Rover South Africa on the Motorola HF Radio, they are incredibly supportive and even give us a secret code from the UK with which to bypass the system – Still nothing, we aren't going anywhere from the middle of nowhere!

One would expect a rogue hippo to go for the inflatable Yamaha powered boats as we distribute nets to remote rural villages. One expects the fear of unexploded landmines and the hassle of bridges that were washed away in the last rainy season. In the Dhow we've learnt to handle the strong winds and rough seas when the Kusi trade wind blows wild. BUT who would expect the expedition to be brought to a complete standstill by a small fury long tailed rodent. The blighter had crawled in behind the Landy dashboard and having merrily eaten its way through a fistful of wiring had even made a little nest of the pieces. Hours turned into days as Ross worked his way through a labyrinth of chomped wires –"Okay turn the key" – Nothing! "Did you here that shouts Gill" as a rustling noise comes from the back of the Land Rover – "the little shit's got into the food box he has obviously come off the Dhow in one of your bags," and then as Ross joins the last two pieces of rat eaten wire there's a spark, the dash board lights come on and Halala!, there's that comforting familiar roar of a TD5 Land Rover engine.

Its dark, we squeeeeze the last few drops of Captain Morgan from the bottle and celebrate by throwing a 'road runner' chicken on the coals. Gill is over her malaria now and tomorrow the Landies will cross the Rovuma on the ferry built by the Catholic Fathers from Mtwara. It runs either side of the high tide and sometimes not at all. On the incoming tide with the US AID flag In Support of Malaria Prevention flying from her rigging; the 'Spirit of Adventure' will sail to the mouth of the Rovuma. Here in the far North of Mozambique's wild Cabo Delgado province the infant mortality rate from malaria is sky high. USAID thanks to your support for the One Net – One Life campaign the African Rainbow Expedition continues to make a difference. We'll keep you posted!!!

INTERVIEW BY HF RADIO - 2247KMS FROM DURBAN

— Malaria 6 to Malaria 1 … do you copy ... over?

"Receiving you … go ahead … over!" came a faint reply from a lone Arab dhow loaded with mosquito nets sailing on the south east monsoon. And so, amidst occasional static and break-up we're able to bring you the latest on the African Rainbow Expedition in Kingsley Holgate's words …

— How's your "One Net - One Life" journey going?

" … At times its tough and the Kusi trade wind blow up a storm. We threw coins into the deep to propitiate the spirits as we rounded "Ponta do Diabo" – Devils Point. Using the "Amina – The Spirit of Adventure" as the mother ship, we off-load nets onto the Yamaha-powered inflatable boats that take us through the mangroves to

inaccessible rural villages where there are no health services. There is no doubt that we are saving lives and it's a great adventure ...!"

— Tell me about your team King …?

" … On the Dhow there is capable Captain Simba who unfortunately snores like a lion … Mohammed the brave has body which belongs on the cover of Men's Health – it's nothing for him to climb to the top of the 45 foot mast with a knife in his mouth to cut jammed rigging in a storm … Zacharia, the ship's carpenter caulks the planks as we go … Fai Chababe, the interpreter, trades for fish and supplies … Sufo, Juma and Jojo Sulimane are master mariners. Swahili is the language of the Dhow and our days begin with "Salaams!" all round! Also, an old friend, Charles Gornal-Jones from Pemba with his French girlfriend Valerie de Rouge, have jumped on board to help - it's a great combination. Its incredibly physical work - the wind is our only engine! Johnny Clegg plays from two, wooden, box speakers and everyone hauls on the ropes! I couldn't survive without the crew! They are the expedition…!"

— What are you guys eating …?

" … Fish and more bloody fish! Charles is a demon with prawns and giant, red mud crabs – we sit crossed-legged on the deck and eat with our fingers! Its fish with rice, fish with maize meal, fish with village bread and by way of change – calamari, crayfish and octopus! Fresh water is a problem and sometimes we'll spend an entire day hauling containers by rubber duck from a village well. We finished the last of the Captain Morgan – it just doesn't keep …!"

— And … any magic moments?

" … Rolling out a bed roll, sleeping on deck under the stars, the creaking and groaning of the hand-built Dhow, schools of dolphins, the occasional whale, the freedom, wind blowing through the beard, sitting, legs dangling from the bowsprit as "Amina - The Spirit of Adventure" – her giant lateen rigged sail pregnant with the Kusi trade wind, ploughs through the swell, the appreciation of the mothers as they receive their mosquito nets and always, there's the adventure, not knowing what the next day will bring! …"

— Any hassles …?

" … Well it seems as if sometimes one has to risk lives to save lives – We rolled one of the Landys but she's back on her wheels and she's fine – Three of the expedition members including myself have been down with malaria already – Tropical ulcers are the order of the day – There are days when the sailing is a bit scary and then of course, Bruce getting knifed trying to save an outboard engine, he's recovering well and we're missing him and of course, expecting to join us again soon…..! Apart from that, it's a great adventure and entirely worthwhile …!"

— Anything strange?

"Yes! One village was being terrorized by a human lion….. Yes!! A human that has been turned into a lion by a witch doctor and had become a hired killer. They say it is not uncommon here and that the most painful part is the growing of the tail. Recently one of these wizards was caught by the villagers and they drove a sharpened stick right through him. Witchcraft and superstition is rife here and an old man tells me that in this area, sometimes the big baboon that walks alone, rape women. Here people, they tell me, can also turn into elephant and hyenas….!"

— Anything wonderful?

“Yes, at the end of the day, it’s the incredible appreciation by the village people for what we are doing. They dance and sing and make up songs about fighting malaria….. It’s wonderful!”

— How’s the Land Rover party getting along …?

“ … Relying on GPS and HF Radio, we only see them every few days. They follow goat tracks and sometimes there are no bridges! Mashes - that’s Gill my wife, is in charge, she drives the USAID branded Land Rover nick-named “Livingstone” while Dane Hewitt drives “Stanley”, the other Landy! Yesterday, we joined forces with Colin Fitzgerald’s team from 4x4 Mega World in South Africa in an exciting exercise. Using their massive inflatable pontoon we floated one of the Landys across the crocodile-infested, Munuwayo River! Over thirty years ago, during the Portuguese days, dug-outs were lashed together to do this crossing but since then, no vehicle has made it across! The villagers couldn’t believe their eyes! And as the wind increased, I had visions of having to explain to the sponsors why a Land Rover of mosquito nets had fallen into the drink! Fortunately we made it! The Land Rover party is doing a great job of the “One Net – One Life” campaign …!”

— And finally Kingsley; - are you getting enough support …?

“ … Here, the statistics are shocking, every minute of every day and night; a baby dies from the blood sucking bite of the deadly female Anopheles mosquito! Whilst our slogan is “One Net – One Life” it could also read: “One Net Saves Many Lives” - as very often, a mother with several children will share the net. This campaign would not be possible without the support from USAID who clearly demonstrate their care for the people of this continent! We’re getting great exposure through the BBC, the Voice of America, the SABC - Into Africa Service and the South African media at large but at times I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem! Getting to a village where not a single mother has a mosquito net and the lack of knowledge … all the death … and when you think that all it takes to save lives is the educated use of a net! Tomorrow we head North for Mocímboa da Praia and then onto the Rovuma River – the boundary between Northern Mozambique and Southern Tanzania. The wind is in our sails – thanks USAID for all your support … We couldn’t do it without you.…!”

Squelch, Squelch, over and out from the African Rainbow Team …… talk again next week.