

January 2010: Report from Leonard Avaga of his visit to Kenya to assist the awareness campaign of the Thessalia Church.

IOM MEETING IN KENYA

Koguta Village is in Western Kenya 100km from Kisumu on Kisumu – Nairobi Highway.

All the tribes that live in Western Kenya believe in “False teeth” which they call “Plastic” or devil teeth.

In my 3 days survey I could note that the belief and its consequences are even more severe in Western Kenya compared to Ugandan.

For instance:-

- All homes we visited had all the children already subjected to I.O.M.
- Some parents took their babies for I.OM immediately after birth without any symptoms of illness.
- The traditional healers are many in number and we encountered a situation where some children were brought to them in our presence.
- Some herbalists continue taking out a tooth every time a child is sick until it is one year old.



On 16th January 2010 we went out for a door-to-door IOM surveillance with a group of five volunteers headed by the Pastor of the IOM awareness task force. This helped us to ascertain the exact nature and magnitude of the problem ahead of the large group meetings scheduled for 17th January 2010. It also helped me to develop an appropriate approach to use during the address.

On 17th January 2010 in the morning we visited the local Baptist Church. This was a venue of the first meeting. I realized that there was serious inadequacy of dental health services in that region, and consequently, the basic knowledge on oral health is so scanty. We had to share the basics like, functions of normal dentition, ill oral health and its

consequences, how to care for our teeth and keep them healthy, among others, before proceeding to introduce the major topics of the day which were:-

- ❖ Stages of tooth development and normal eruption.
- ❖ The dangers of the practice of IOM and its consequences.

The meeting was so interactive and interesting; both parties learnt a lot from each other. The first meeting was closed at 1:30p.m. Before closing some members offered themselves to volunteer as IOM watch dogs and report new cases to the pastor.

At 2:00p.m we arrived at the venue of the second meeting. This was the home of the government council representative for that constituency. It also proceeded the same way. Here we interacted with a number of public leaders, politicians and parents.

In both meetings, members accepted that IOM was a wrong practice and would be good to stop it. But they said that it covers a large region; therefore more work in form of seminars, workshops, and meetings needed to be done in different areas of the region.

I wish to thank Christian Relief Uganda and Dentaid for entrusting me with such a responsibility. It has given me an opportunity to begin developing career in a field I enjoy most, i.e. Dental Health education and promotion.