

From our water correspondent

A sharp shooting pain jolts me awake at three o'clock in the morning, my eyelids spring open and I hug my stomach; it's *Giardia*, I know it too well. Bleary-eyed, I grope around in the medicine box for Cnidazole, the cure. An hour later, I feel like someone has shoved their fist into me and ripped out my stomach.

I sleep a couple of hours until my alarm goes off at seven, get up and turn on BBC World. I sit on the terrace watching the birds have their breakfast and listen to the news. Mike Thompson is doing a special report on the troubles in Eastern Congo, one of the countries I cover. He has been to Pansi Hospital in Bukavu where 70 per cent of cases are of sexual violence. A woman, a mother of four is retelling her story. 'I come from Ninzi village where I was captured by Rwandan Hutu interahamwe; I am the only one of fifty people who escaped. Twenty members of my family were killed before my eyes. Nineteen soldiers raped me, they killed my two children in front of me, took the baby from my back and tied a rope around its neck and forced me to strangle my child. They tried to force my brother to rape me, but when he refused they chopped off his head. I escaped while fetching water, and managed to find a boy who helped me; he was very scared, as I was completely naked and nearly dead.' The reporter starts to talk, 'There were many things I could not report, cases of forced cannibalism which were so graphic they would upset the listeners.' One hundred thousand people have fled to camps outside Goma, with many similar tales. The elections were only months ago, elections that we all hoped would bring peace to the region. DRC is such a wealthy country, brimming with capable resilient people, again in disarray. Meanwhile our work must continue, for those brave enough to stay at home. I think about my partners there and wonder how many of their

friends and families are experiencing the same stories, just 200 miles away from where I am sitting.

I dress and go into Kigali to pick up our new generator shed. It's more like a cage with a roof. It is funny, the whole house has bars on it, and the first time I saw it I thought, 'how can I live in a prison where I have a key?' Now I don't see them any more as they are part of the view. At last the shed is to the correct specification. It has taken much to-ing and fro-ing and negotiations, with the 'fundi' trying to maximize his profits by reducing the number of bars.

By 12.30 I am sitting in the World Bank meeting room watching the others tucking into a delicious lunch, served by chefs in whites and hats. I chat with people from UNICEF, the World Bank, the Nile Basin project leader, Ministry of Water, SNV (a Netherlands-based, international development organization) DFID, Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, and the Ambassador of Belgium, before we settle down for the conference. This is a consultative meeting hosted by the World Bank for Central and East Africa, to review WATSAN work to date and to give comments and feedback on the current strategic direction, improving impact and management. We are video linked with Benin, Burkina Faso, DRC, Niger, Tunisia, Kenya, Senegal, France and Spain. We are watching a TV screen of a live link up with all these other engineers across the continent and world. In turn, each country presents its work and its priorities. The World Bank presents the business plan which includes monitoring, strengthening of domestic private-sector market-based finance, applying service-delivery models, providing stronger support and special help for certain countries like DRC.

They are empathic to the situation in DRC, and understand the challenges of

working in unstable environments. At the same time, there is a need, as with all emergency work to try to keep to the plan, in the face of all adversity.

Through follow-up meetings with our partners in the coming months we will look again at designing indicators and measuring impact in order to support this programme. So there will also be more focus on Water and Sanitation and the Millennium Development Goals, and achieving sustainability in fragile states.

Feeling like a fragile state myself, I head back to the office to revise our EU three-year proposal on Integrated Water Resource Management. On this subject, PROTOS is the pioneering NGO in Rwanda and a specialist worldwide. Our largest programme in Benin has been working for some years on this subject. Using the PHAST (participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation) methodology of community participation, with newly designed pictures relating to water resources, we have developed a tool to train communities to protect their environment and water resources, in conjunction with SNV (a Netherlands-based, international development organization). We are hoping, with two new partners to develop capacity and awareness on this subject in Rwanda, where, due to climate changes and poor management of the water catchment areas, the discharge from springs has reduced.

When I was young, I remember going to the pictures with my sister to see 'Flash Gordon's 21st century', and now here we are: *Giardia*, video conferences, human cannibalism and integrated water resource management. Every day is like living on an emotional bungee jump.

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