

February 16, 2024

Rotary Club of Claremont

## Francis Limbe, Humanitarian Mission to Uganda and South Sudan



**John Tulac** introduced the speaker, one of our own, **Francis Limbe**. John said there is only one way to describe Francis: He's a humanitarian, which, he said, is a synonym for Rotarian. Francis is particularly noted for his work in South Sudan, and he recently brought a peace initiative in a Ugandan Refugee camp for South Sudanese to our club's attention, which we then supported. Anxious to bring Francis to the front of the room, John wrapped up by sharing that Francis is married and has four children.

Francis' first slide referred to his non-profit organization, BC Global. Francis is the founder and CEO of BC Global, USA.

Francis said that he has traveled a lot over a 30-year period, and he still finds it exciting. He began the trip in India last November 14. While he was greeted and received excellent treatment upon arrival in India, he said there is one thing he didn't like, the airport. At first he thought his baggage had been lost. After it was found, he was charged \$250 at security and then had to tip someone who had carried his bag outside. Francis said if you go to India, be prepared to pay a lot of tips. A number of us chimed in to say it sounded just like a typical airport.

Francis met with a number of government officials in Delhi to explore the market for agricultural machines and tools.

On November 19 Francis traveled to Juba, South Sudan to begin work on his vision for the trip. He started his discussion by sharing the BCG mission for the Refugee Camps in Uganda.

*Building peace between the host community and the refugees from South Sudan.*

He provided an overview of the situation in Uganda. There are approximately 2 million South Sudan refugees, most of them women and children, in Uganda. BC Global is providing support in the Yangani Cluster, Zone 5 district, the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement and Yumbe District. The refugees face daunting challenges including scarcity of resources (e.g. water, food, wood for fires to cook food, medicine), a high dropout rate for school age children, increasing numbers of HIV cases, and cramped living spaces. Sadly, the refugees are limited to the area of the refugee camp because the host community is hostile to them.

Francis noted that even though many in the refugee settlements were born, grew up and got married there (the camp was formed in 1983!), they still consider South Sudan home.

Francis said that while the grant money our club provided the people by way of BC Global was limited, it represented two months of expenses. He said that the people in the camp wanted to show how happy and excited they were about the assistance our club has provided them and that they wanted us to dance with them. Francis showed a video of the assembly dancing and asked us to stand and dance. As an aside, they say America's Got Talent, but while the spirit of the club was more than evident, not that much talent was demonstrated!



The dancing on the video occurred during a gala that was designed to bring the refugees and the local Ugandans together in a peaceful fashion. The gala also included soccer matches where the two groups were co-mingled on the teams. One very special part of the video was that it started off by showing a banner that called out the Rotary Club of Claremont.



One video showed Francis in a room with sacks of food that were the result of one of the agricultural projects BC Global is supporting in Uganda. Francis asked how much a hectare (a hectare is about 2.5 acres) of land cost and was told it was the equivalent of \$50. Francis personally gave them \$200 to further expand the project.

Francis' trip continued on to South Sudan where the BC Global mission began:

*Clean water, education, agriculture as well as peace building*

Francis began his comments about South Sudan by showing the results of a survey of three villages to show population growth. It showed that the number of children is increasing. He said this is a positive sign.

Scarcity of clean water was the next topic. In Nyuwa and surrounding villages they need four bore holes with solar power for the pumps. Francis showed a video of a discussion between him and the project manager for the water project. The current issues include a lack of clean water for the hospital, the great distance people have to travel to get natural (e.g. springs, rivers) water for their families, and the locations of this natural water often contain malaria causing

parasites. The person speaking on the video said that he thanks God and donors (e.g. BC Global/Claremont Rotary Club).

Francis ended with a discussion about the need to furnish the first secondary school in Jebel Ladu Payam in Juba County, South Sudan. Currently there is only one primary and no secondary school in this village. Children must travel about five miles from the village to attend a secondary school; this is far enough away that they have to make arrangements with family and or friends for the children to stay there during the school week. Some of the children end up in abusive situations where they are staying. That and having to be away from families leads to a high drop-out rate. The new school has been built, but the challenge now is to furnish the school and provide supplies and educational materials.

Francis thanked the club for allowing him to speak on behalf of the people in Uganda and South Sudan. This was followed by a Q and A session.

**Frank Hungerford** asked where BC Global gets its primary funding. Francis said it was from people from whom they request funds!

**Mike DeWees** asked what is needed for the school, if there is water and it has been built. Francis said there is no water; they are using a water trap. The school was built using rocks from the local area.

**Chris Hayes-Shaner** asked where the refugees come from. South Sudanese have been populating the camp for decades due to the violent 22 year war in South Sudan.

**Mike DeWees** asked how long the Ugandan refugee camps have existed. Francis said since 1983!

**Cameron Troxell** asked how much it would cost for the water bore holes with a solar pump. Francis said, "something like \$60,000."

**President Nona** returned and said that we can find out more about what our club is doing with these projects by talking to both John Tulac and Francis. We hope to submit a proposal for a Global Grant for a project Francis is developing. She noted that what we have been able to do in support of the projects Francis talked about are illustrations of "what Rotary does."