

“Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” —1 John 3:18

Dear Friends, Family and Supporters,

I have now been in Conakry, Guinea, West Africa, for about six weeks, and honestly, I hardly know where to begin. Everything is turned upside down when you emigrate—let alone to a place like this. So much changes at once: your home, your work, your friends, your connections, the culture around you. Everything is new, and almost everything you do is for the first time. There are also moments of doubt when you see the poverty around you, and the piles of rubbish scattered throughout the streets and along the beaches. So I realize that I am still very much in the middle of a transition.

And with that come emotions and feelings—they come and go, and that is normal. There is no way around them. At the same time, I want to remain steadfast; let me do the work I feel called to do. As Paul writes: “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58) The valuable experiences of the past help me to have patience and grace. At the same time, I already feel quite at home and am beginning to find my rhythm. Much of that is thanks to the team and the people surrounding me.

The Blomberg family from the United States, with their five children, have been here the longest. Lisa is the Country Director and Jonathan is the pilot. Then there is Ulrich, from whom I am taking over the role of Operations Manager; he will return to Switzerland at the end of July. Dorine, from Belgium, is spending a gap year with MAF. In the meantime, John and Tracey from England have arrived. John, among other things, has come to train me for my new role. We have also had two technicians from the United States and an engineer from Liberia here to carry out essential inspections.

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Operations team: fltr. Joel, Joseph, John, Christine and me.

In addition, we have a wonderful team of local staff. Christine coordinates bookings and check-in. Joel and Joseph assist with flight preparations at the airport. Finally, Margo and Maomy take care of administration and finances. The Blombergs themselves will soon be away on home assignment for two months, as it has already been two years since they were last home. And the comings and goings will continue for a while, as we currently need two pilots alternating in order to maintain operations until mid-July. By then, the rainy season will be in full swing, the flying programme will pause, and the aircraft will be sent to Liberia for its annual maintenance. For the time being, I am living in the MAF team house, not far from the office. Dorine, Ulrich, John, and Tracey are all staying there as well, which means there is always company and opportunities to do things together.

I am grateful that I have already had meaningful experiences outside of work. I met a Dutch missionary family while they were visiting Conakry, and enjoyed a beautiful hike to a viewpoint on the plateau at the base of the peninsula on which Conakry is built. I am gradually getting to know the city—its shops, markets, and even making my first trip to the barber. Small things, perhaps, but things that are part of building a life.

I am also thankful that I can use one of the MAF vehicles and have the confidence to face the traffic here. You really have to experience it to understand it! I am so grateful for the year and a half I spent driving in Sierra Leone. It was invaluable preparation for the work and life I now have here. Thank you for all your kind messages and support.

From the Home Support Team

The Home Support Team (TFT) continues to organize new initiatives to help ensure that Erik can continue his work in Guinea. Sustainable, recurring support remains especially important. We are therefore very grateful that several new monthly donors have joined us over the past months.

At the moment, we are organising several fundraising actions here in the Netherlands. For international supporters we point you towards: www.maf.nl/beerlage or give.maf.org (keyword Beerlage). To get in touch with the Home Support Team contact: tfterikbeerlagemaf@gmail.com

Praise and Prayer points

- For the next phase of this transition. Although I am beginning to find my feet, I pray for wisdom in all that lies ahead and that I may be a blessing where God has placed me.
- For MAF Guinea: for growth of the team and expansion of the network, that we may reach those who need our services most.
- I am thankful that this new chapter has begun so positively and that I have been given a strong start. I already feel at home among the team.



The Challenge for MAF Guinea

The MAF programme in Guinea is currently at a critical stage. MAF leadership has committed its support to the programme for the coming years, but much is needed to ensure its success. Agreements with the government need to be renewed and expanded, and the team itself needs to grow in order to increase impact. A larger team would allow the aircraft to operate more frequently and help more people. At the same time, every flight must be carefully weighed. Flying is expensive, and fuel costs are high. Almost all tickets are offered at heavily subsidized rates, but prices vary to ensure that those with the greatest ability to pay help carry the heavier burden.

A recent example illustrates this well. Last week we flew Pascale and his mother from Conakry to Nzérékoré. There, he will receive consultation and possibly surgery from an orthopaedic surgeon at an important medical clinic. The outcome will be life-changing and will shape the rest of his life. We would love to expand this kind of work, but that means we also need to sell other tickets at higher prices. Finding the right balance is a complex puzzle. I am thankful that my previous corporate career has equipped me to contribute in this area.

It is encouraging to see that many of our flights are filled with people who truly need them, and with aid workers serving development organisations throughout the country.



This newsletter is intended to keep you informed about Erik's journey and experiences. The newsletter is distributed by the Home Support Team in cooperation with MAF Netherlands. If you would like to subscribe to receive the newsletter or support Erik as a donor, you can sign up via the website www.maf.nl/beerlage. Changes (address, email, donation amount, etc.) can be submitted to adresemaf.nl or to MAF Netherlands, P.O. Box 7, 7390 AA Twello. Please mention that it concerns Erik.