



One of the stunning scenes from the South West Coast Path; below: Sianyoolo community members, Zambia



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Walk the talk

Salvationists Alison Rader Campbell and Ian Campbell told **Laura Booth** about their forthcoming book, *Walking with Communities*, an innovative experiential memoir that uses a four-week walk around the south-west of the United Kingdom to capture a 30-year pilgrimage of global and local health and healing.

In June 2018, husband and wife Ian Campbell and Alison Rader Campbell left their home in Woking, in the south-east of England, and drove to Somerset in the south-west so Ian could walk the 630-mile South West Coast Path.

The trail, which hugs the stunningly rugged coastlines of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Dorset, was originally used by coastguards walking from lighthouse to lighthouse in search of smugglers.

On average, the demanding trail takes 52 days to complete but Ian wanted to get things done far more quickly. Cheered on by a group of virtual WhatsApp supporters, with Alison's on-the-ground logistical support and boosted by the companionship of fellow path walkers, friends and relatives who joined for parts of the journey, Ian completed the walk in 28 days.

He admits that the walk was physically arduous and tiring: 'I had assumed it would be pretty straightforward but hard, but it was exceptionally difficult physically.'

'By the time I had finished the first week I was feeling a bit whacked out, but by this point I had quite a following – people from the corps (church), friends globally, supporters on the WhatsApp group. I thought "I have to finish this!".'

'I had a 12-mile deviation on the



second last day, and so I ended up having to walk 29 miles. It just about killed me!'

Ian's goal in undertaking the walk began as wanting to take on a physical challenge, then it became a fundraiser for Arukah Network and his own organisation, Affirm Facilitators. However, in doing the walk it became clear that there were parallels between his daily experiences and encounters, and the community conversations that he and Alison had been part of around the world for many years. Before the start and certainly by the end of Ian's

epic adventure, he knew he needed to write a book to share what he had learned and to help others to understand the importance of walking alongside people.

The Campbells come with a broad range of international experiences. Australian Ian is a medical doctor and served as The Salvation Army's medical advisor and health programme consultant at International Headquarters (IHQ) in London from 1990 to 2007. Alison, who is from the USA, is a community development consultant, having served in Zambia and on the International Programme Facilitation team at IHQ. Today, Ian and Alison are independent facilitators in community health, development and mission.

From a village in China overcoming drug addiction, a community in Kenya

'It is essential that we cross our own fear barriers and step into the spaces where people need to sense and see and feel the gospel'



Members of the Sianyoolo community in Zambia, whose story began the community conversations approach: (clockwise from top left) Chief Sinadambwe; Norah Choonde, who helped to raise Langson's children after his death; community members in fellowship; Langson's father, Petro Chipiluka

DAY 8

8 June 2018
Padstow to Newquay

Today the theme is 'youth, future and faith'. The 'youth' in the photo is a surf lifeguard, working in Cornwall in the UK summer, and in Australia during the UK winter. His deepest memory is about a boy who was swept out in a rip current, just near his part-time coffee stand on the beach. He was part of the team that responded. They were an incredible team, from watchers, to rescue boat people, to swimmers and resuscitators. But the boy did not survive. This experience motivates him. He loves his work and is on alert all the time for the call.

Eswatini comes to mind

Encounters on the South West Coast Path bring to mind youth leaders of Eswatini.

Clockwise from left: Diary entries and photos document encounters on day eight of the walk; Ian takes a break during day three of the walk; Ian talks to a family that he meets on the path from Padstow to Newquay



▶▶ responding to HIV, relational health and healing complementing family life in Denmark or building community trust in London – as facilitators they have accompanied, listened to and learned from communities all around the world and have witnessed the amazing capacity of them to deal with crisis and conflict.

Their journey started in Zambia in 1987. Ian was the Chief Medical Officer at The Salvation Army's Chikankata Mission Hospital in the Southern Province.

In the book, they share: 'A local headman invited the hospital's home care team to visit his home. The

headman's son, Langson, had killed himself. He had set his house alight when he was on his own, living with Aids, and separated from family and community because of his illness. It is not that everybody knew what he had, but they were afraid, because they did not really know what was going on. They called Langson's illness "this new disease".

'They knew of others who looked the same, they kept silent. Isolation and stigma were the results. Langson could not sustain his life any more. The headman felt a deep burden, so he asked the team [from Chikankata] to come for a serious community

conversation. Many other headmen and members were there for a three-hour reflection. Ian was there observing and documenting the facilitated conversation. This was the first HIV-related community counselling experience.'

Community members in Sianyoolo and other villages realised they needed to take action to prevent the spread of HIV and Aids and could not wait for a national response, and the community health team realised that health interventions in hospital settings were not enough.

'Instead, sensitive strategic questions would place the person living with HIV, with their family and their neighbourhood, at the centre of the response. This was a critical shift of mentality and focus, and would take many communities forward into becoming authors of their own HIV prevention and care,' Alison and Ian continue.

The approach worked, and within three years Zambia's national policy on HIV and Aids had changed.

When Ian was appointed to IHQ in 1990, an opportunity to transfer learning was seized. It was not long before many community-driven, grace-based responses to health and social issues were seen around the world, inspired by the response in Sianyoolo.

Ian explains: 'Initially the team facilitated in critical health issues such as HIV or addiction, but this extended to family violence, or anything critically important to family and neighbourhood life that was producing conflict and stigma, discrimination and separation.

'Out of this came a crisper, sustained realisation of what The Salvation Army really looks like, of what it can be.'

Alison adds: 'At the beginning we were being asked to visit for health but, over time, the invitations from the territories changed because mission outcomes were becoming visible.

People were coming into faith, people were feeling they could be part of church.'

'Integrated mission' is at the heart of their work. This Salvation Army term emerged in the early 1990s.

'Integrated mission has to do with us integrating in the lives of the people around us, not waiting for people to integrate into us,' explains Alison.

'For me it is a central meaning of Salvation Army mission, that we are visible and available in the places where people live so that they can see a sign of hope in their neighbourhood. It is essential that we cross our own fear barriers and step into the spaces where people need to sense and see and feel the gospel.'

Ian adds: 'And if there's one thing that we certainly learnt during this period, it is that a pattern of response can be observed in conflicted communities around the world, whether rich, poor, east, west, north, south, there's a

resonance in the response because you see people express their strength when given the space to do so.'

In 2012, following requests to document the accumulating global experience, Ian and Alison revisited 39 communities in 20 countries. From Thailand to Rwanda, India to Ukraine, they met with local people to continue community conversations, to thank them, to learn about their continuing journey and to encourage the neighbourhoods to take steps into their future.

The conversations provoked a need to review, name and share more widely what had been learned. 'We had a body of material that was starting to crystallise into what looked like a book, but it wasn't digestible,' says Ian.

Walking the walk

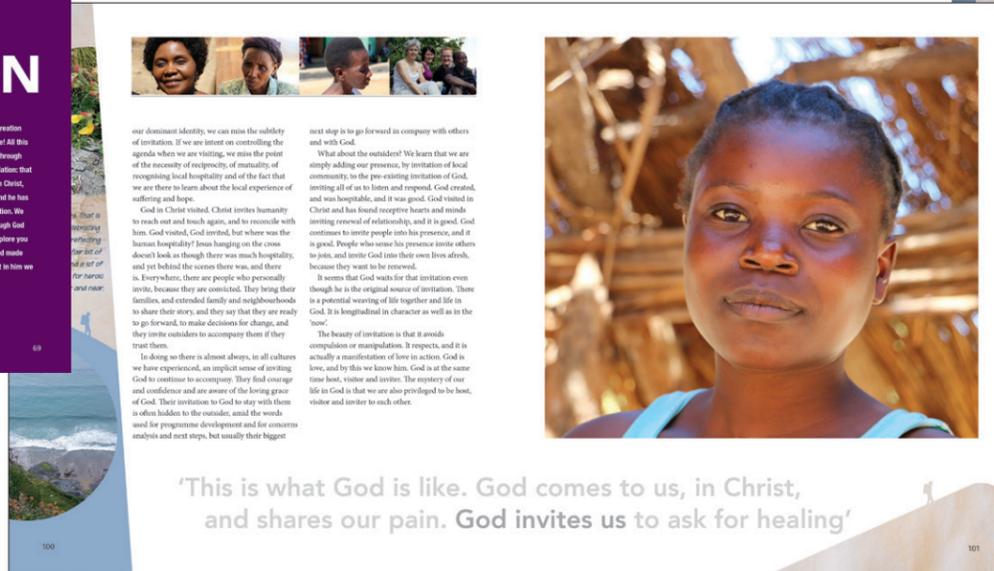
'I thought he just wanted an outdoor adventure experience,' recalls Alison. 'Ian had been talking about doing this

'At the end of Ian's epic adventure he knew he needed to write a book to share what he had learned and to help others to understand the importance of walking alongside people'



Left: Chapter five is themed 'Reconciliation' with Rwanda in mind; below: analysis in chapter seven considers the invitation to join in the journey of HIV-affected life in Zambia

Right: Diary entries and photos document encounters on day two of the walk



Above: (clockwise from top left) authors Alison Rader Campbell, Ian Campbell and Robin Rader

'For me it is a central meaning of Salvation Army mission, that we are visible and available in the places where people live so that they can see a sign of hope in their neighbourhood'

▶▶ coast path walk for a while and one day I looked at him and said, "Well, you're not getting any younger. If you're going to do it, you'd better do it!"

'Ian makes connections where most people don't, and so he connected the walk, which is already a marathon experience, with this question of a book.'

'We had to match the way we had learned with the way we were going to do the book, it had to be synchronous,' shares Ian, 'and so that's why the South West Coast Path was seen as an environment in which the

memory would come, the connections would crystallise and we'd be able to find words for the things that we had learned. We needed to concentrate the learning and put it into words based on fresh story.'

Through immersing in the stories of others on the South West Coast Path, Ian was able to recall stories from the past 30 years and link encounters on the path to community conversations in every region of the world, finding common threads.

'For example, the common thread might be "reconciliation",' explains

Ian. 'Reconciliation in the case of someone facing conflict in a Cornish town, perhaps over immigration, and the reconciliation in Rwanda following the genocide in 1994.'

Ian found a rhythm of waking up at 5 am, reading reports from global community visits, walking for three hours before pausing for breakfast. He would then continue walking, now with a recorder, to dictate thoughts that would become a template for the chapters and would be transcribed by Robin Rader, a co-author of the book. She is also Alison's sister and was part of the Zambian team.

'I'm pretty sure that if I'd sat down at my desk and had started typing, I wouldn't have got the same material!' adds Ian.

Through the walk, 24 chapters were birthed, each one focusing on a different community story, seamlessly intertwined with experiences and encounters on the South West Coast Path. The interrelatedness of the themes and local stories encourages deeper consideration and reflection, and each chapter concludes with questions that take the reader forward to living out what has been learnt.

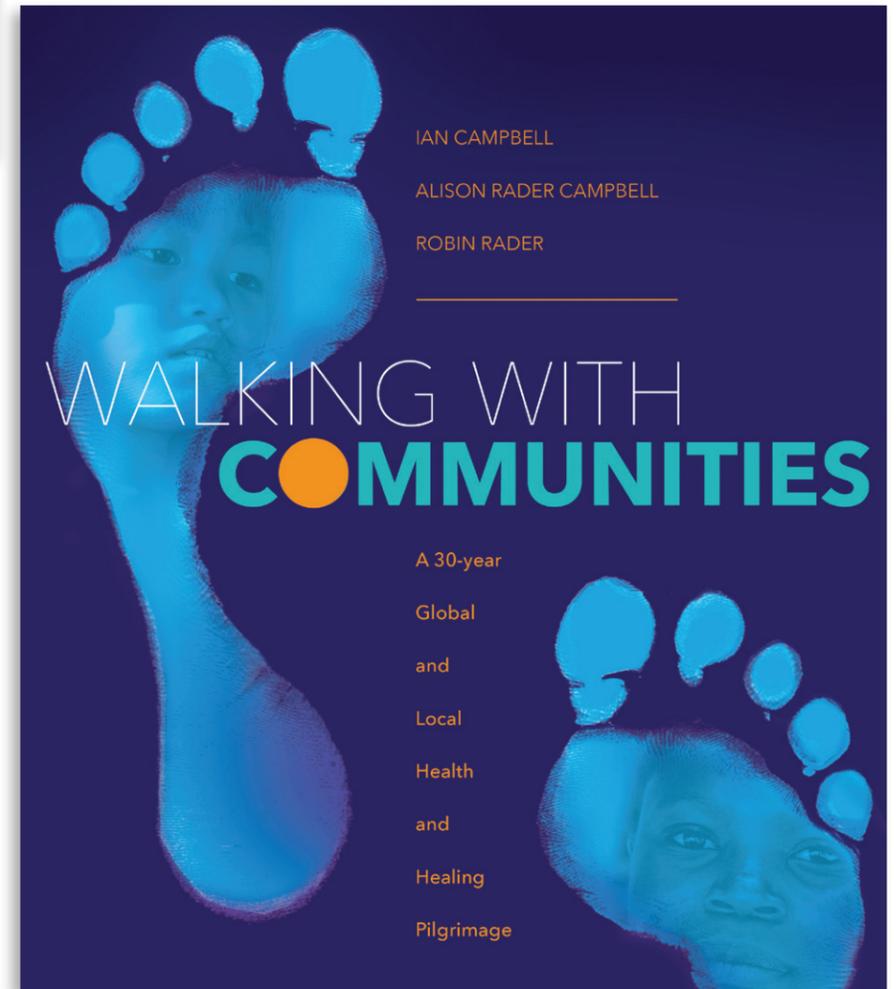
Walking with Communities will be attractive and useful to those already in community development and mission work, and anyone with a heart for real encounter with people and the healing presence of God in their neighbourhood community story. Fascinating photos

and beautiful illustrations by Berni Georges lead the reader through the narrative.

Ian and Alison conclude: 'The stories of local communities which have sustained their action and hope despite enormous obstacles are the roots of experience, and the learning that has emerged is due to their effort. We need to honour them, and a way to do so is to share particular examples and to listen carefully to the main theme that emerges from each of the stories. We have tried to listen well. We are different and better today only because we have walked with communities worldwide and have been awakened all the time to God's healing grace. We hope this book will help do the same for its readers.'

Each chapter is intended to stand alone, and they can be read and acted on in any order. In the same way that the South West Coast Path can be walked over time by choosing the parts that appeal the most, so the book can be read and its lessons absorbed one chapter at a time. 'But,' conclude Ian and Alison, 'why not come along for the whole journey?'

Laura Booth has been working with Ian and Alison on the *Walking with Communities* book. She is Publications and Literary Editor at The Salvation Army's International Headquarters in London, UK



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