



Out of Africa ... **into Malta**

Powerpoint Presenter's Script

Slide 1: Out of Africa ... into Malta

Slide 2: Out of Africa ... into Malta is a very special mission project. It started just a couple of years ago, when the congregation of St. Andrew's Scots Church, Malta decided to see what could be done to help refugees from Africa begin to rebuild their lives, on the island which welcomed Paul when he was shipwrecked there on his final missionary journey almost 2,000 years ago. Between 2002 and 2010, over 14,000 refugees from across Africa had arrived on Malta – and many hundreds more had died in the attempt. It's easy to see why they arrived there.

Slide 3: This Google Satellite map shows Libya, Tunisia, Sicily and MALTA. It lies almost due north of Libya – where so many thousands of refugees prepare for their sea journey.

Slide 4: This is a NASA satellite image of a huge dust storm sweeping off the Sahara – you can just see Malta right underneath it. And that image begins to capture some of the hazards of what, for many, is a terrifying journey to freedom. Hundreds die each year in the Sahara. Hundreds more in the Mediterranean. **Out of Africa ... into Malta** is a mission, and a ministry, to those who survive. This is the story of just some of them.

Slide 5: Meet **Walter & Lillian Donmilic**. They're pictured just outside one of Malta's refugee open centres. This one is at Hal

Far – a dirty and dilapidated former military airfield and barracks complex. If you fly into Malta for a five-star vacation at one of the world's ten top-rated destinations of 2011, your aircraft will come in over this collection of second-hand army tents, and shipping containers converted for use as cabins. Just three miles away, and well out of sight, is the multi-million pound residential complex regularly hired by Hollywood stars like Tom Cruise and Angelina Jolie.

Slide 6: Walter & Lillian are from Nigeria. They're Christians, and they had to flee from persecution, when militants burned churches and homes. So their long journey north began almost two years ago and included a truck journey across the Sahara, which took all their savings. On at least three occasions, the drivers stopped beside small collections of skeletons and bodies, ordered everyone off, and demanded more money to finish the journey.

Slide 7: They reached Libya in early 2011 – and found themselves in the middle of a full-blown war. With thousands of other black Africans, they desperately sought escape to Europe. Col Gaddafi had employed black African mercenaries to attack the coastal towns where they were seeking a boat – so they couldn't trust either side in this war.

Slide 8: This is the boat that brought them to Malta in April 2011. It nearly didn't – it



was found drifting, out of fuel, dangerously overloaded, and leaking, by an armed Maltese patrol vessel. The soldiers on the quayside are waiting to escort all these Africans straight into detention.

Slide 9: This is where it happens. Hal Far Immigration Reception Centre. Walter and Lillian were lucky – as a couple, they were soon transferred to one of the refugee open centres. Others – particularly single men – can spend up to eighteen months in detention, behind bars.

Slide 10: This is Lyster Detention Centre, in a former Royal Navy barracks. When Rev. Doug McRoberts of St. Andrew's Scots Church visits here, he has to be escorted by armed guards through two sets of prison bars. And it took nearly two years to get permission to visit.

Slide 11: This is Kenneth. He's a Methodist, also from Nigeria, and he arrived on the same boat as Walter and Lillian. But he's a single man, he has no papers, and so he's still in detention. He'll be there for many more months while his eventual fate is decided. He knows he can't go home. His home in Nigeria is gone. But he's happy – his prayers were answered when Rev Doug brought him a Bible to replace the cherished King James one he lost in the desert.

Slide 12: Walter and Lillian, meanwhile, found St. Andrew's Scots Church reaching

out to them while they were sharing an old converted shipping container at Hal Far Tent Village with two other families. **Out of Africa ... into Malta** has given them a spiritual home. But it's given them so much more besides. We'll return to their story, with its astonishing twist, a little later.

Slide 13: So what is life like for those who come **Out of Africa ... into Malta**? Let's take a look inside some of the camps and refugee centres.

Slide 14: This is Hal Far Tent Village. Ex-army tents, on concrete bases. Unbearably hot in summer, miserably cold and damp in winter. It is home to hundreds of Africans. Following the war in Libya, it was completely full, sleeping over 20 to a tent.

Slide 15: And there are also cabins – converted old shipping containers, each sleeping three families, with internal dividers consisting of blankets and cardboard. Like ovens in Malta's high summer, and streaming with condensation in the winter, when temperatures inside the cabins can get as low as 9° Celsius. This is where many of the refugee children are housed.

Slide 16: This was the worst place – a rusty old airfield hangar, with 30 Swiss Red Cross tents erected inside. It kept the rain off – but it was impossibly warm in summer, and dark, dirty and depressing all year round. St. Andrew's Scots Church worked with



Malta Red Cross to try to make living conditions here at least bearable and offered prayers of thanks when it was finally closed a few months ago!

Slide 17: Not everywhere is so bad. This is Marsa Open Centre, in an old school building near Malta's shipbreaking yards. For the last two years, it's been run by a unique agency which includes an elder from St. Andrew's Scots Church on the board, and a Christian pastor from Ghana, Dr. Ahmed Bugri, as the centre's Director. And it's slowly being transformed.

Slide 18: Here's the kind of difference that's being made, the new room has emerged like a Phoenix from the ashes of a fire-damaged dormitory. With more help, so much more can be accomplished.

Slide 19: And Marsa is where **Out of Africa ... into Malta** teaches English. Volunteers from St. Andrew's Scots Church work with others to give refugees from North and Sub-Saharan Africa a much better chance of employment, and of integrating into Europe. This is the English class of 2011 celebrating at their graduation, the pictures tell their own story.

Slide 20: Hassan Ahmed from Somalia got his certificate – and got a job, driving one of Malta's new buses.

Slide 21: English also helps the refugees to tell their stories – stories we need to hear.

Ernest's story made headlines. He was one of 17 survivors from 31 who had set out from Libya in a small boat. 14 drowned.

Slide 22: He's found a welcome in Christ at St. Andrew's Scots Church. And, as part of **Out of Africa ... into Malta**, now he reaches out to others who have shared his journey from persecution, through danger, into an island which didn't exactly welcome them with open arms.

Slide 23: There are so many stories like Ernest's. Of men, women and children who didn't choose Malta. In the last 18 months, well over 2,500 more have arrived on this small island country. UNHCR figures confirm that, compared to the size of its population, Malta has the highest number of refugees *in the world!* That's one of the reasons why **Out of Africa ... into Malta** is so vital.

Slide 24: UNHCR also states that, in the last year alone, at least 1,500 people were lost on the last part of their journey to freedom. So Rev Doug McRoberts, along with Father Joe Cassar of the Jesuit Refugee Service, have led waterfront remembrance services for those who have lost husbands, wives, or children on the journey. **Out of Africa ... into Malta** is ministry and mission which seeks to heal wounds, to make broken lives whole again, and to love as Jesus loves.

Slide 25: So what difference can our prayers and our giving really make? Let's take



another look inside the camps and refugee centres.

Slide 26: In summer, the heat is overwhelming. The answer? Fans and coolboxes, with freezers supplying a twice-daily charge of cool bars. Last year, **Out of Africa ... into Malta** was able to equip every family cabin and Red Cross tent at Hal Far with the means to stay cooler. The treasurer of St. Andrew's Scots Church, Peter Lloyd, enjoys spending money like this – and he has some very happy customers!

Slide 27: The coolboxes have another benefit – all year round. They keep the food safe from rats, which chew through the tent fabric to get at the food. Baby Khafar reached Malta after two weeks drifting in a little boat, during which her mum could only feed her on toothpaste and seawater. She was very ill. But she continued to lose weight in her Red Cross tent, until they got their coolbox, and the food could stay fresh and clean. Now she's a healthy little girl!

Slide 28: Winter is a very different story. This is Marsa on a cold, wet night just before Christmas. With temperatures in single figures, no heating, and walls streaming with condensation, **Out of Africa ... into Malta**, in its biggest programme yet, was able to supply every single refugee here with a quilt. Hundreds were delivered – by the vanload – thanks to the generosity of churches throughout the Presbytery of Europe, who

made this their Mission Project of the year.

Slide 29: And this is Hal Far in winter. Children live in these cabins – and **Out of Africa ... into Malta** was able to provide every single little one with a snowsuit to keep them warm and dry. Some of these actually came from Inverness – an enterprising couple cleaned out Matalan's supply there in late November – and they were all delivered in time for Christmas!

Slide 30: But it isn't just about providing the basics of life. For the kids, having fun is so important. Their journeys to Malta are nothing to smile about. So we work with the Red Cross to bring the smiles back, turning a derelict corner of the hangar into a play area and a piece of wasteland into a centre of fun. This is Africa Children's Day in June last year.

Slide 31: And we work with the Jesuit Refugee Service, providing maternity support to the many young women who arrive pregnant. Our contribution is the provision of hospital maternity packs.

Slide 32: **Out of Africa ... into Malta** has grown tremendously over the last year, as the camps and detention centres filled to overflowing. With assistance from churches across Europe – particularly the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church, the two parent churches of St. Andrew's Scots Church, what had begun in a small way really took off.



Slide 33: We received 30,000 Euros in one year alone. An astonishing answer to prayer.

Slide 34: So far, this story has been about meeting acute and immediate needs of African families who have lost everything – including their option to return home. But as the mission project has grown, so has the vision. So **Out of Africa ... into Malta** is now looking at longer-term initiatives which will help take people out of the camps and refugee centres permanently. At the core of this vision is an effective way of multiplying the benefits of your giving.

Slide 35: Malta Microfinance is based on the same principles as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, founded by Nobel Peace Prizewinner Prof. Muhammad Yunus, **Malta Microfinance** aims to help lift people out of poverty. It's chaired by the Treasurer of St. Andrew's Scots Church, Peter Lloyd, and brings together senior members of Malta's refugee agencies, banking & finance and social care sectors, and of course the Church itself.

Slide 36: You can read more on the **Malta Microfinance** website. It's a key part of the developing mission of **Out Of Africa ... Into Malta** – a way of using gifts again and again, of building trust, and of rebuilding lives ... What's more, it also hopes to offer assistance to the poorest Maltese families – a sharing of opportunity and a real chance of achieving better integration among people from widely differing background



and experience, but whose problems are shared.

Slide 37: It's a huge target. As Rev Doug McRoberts says, "We're praying for a miracle here. But we're already seeing miracles happen."

Slide 38: Here's one. A picture that would have been impossible to imagine just a few years ago – that's Doug, with the Archbishop of Malta, Paul Cremona, and a young couple from Nigeria, Kingsley and Joy. It was taken just after a special service of thanksgiving at St. Andrew's Scots Church earlier this year, which marked the first year of **Out of Africa ... into Malta**. It's the first time the head of Malta's Roman Catholic Church has ever visited the Scots Church – and he led the prayers of thanksgiving. And Kingsley and Joy have so much to offer thanks for.

Slide 39: Their story is like Walter and Lillian's. It took them north through the Sahara, through Libya's war, and they got separated in Tripoli, at the hands of people traffickers. It was a particularly worrying time; many helpless women are seized there and taken off.

Slide 40: But thankfully they found each other again – and arrived in Malta in this boat in the middle of May last year. There were over 200 people on this tiny vessel, by the time they reached the island, they had run out of everything.



Slide 41: That's when their personal miracle began to come together. They were reunited with Walter and Lillian, but then came an astonishing answer to all their prayers. They were given a home! Jenny and her husband simply moved out of their house, into a new home – and offered it to these young Nigerians. As Easter approached, Kingsley, Walter and Joy were all celebrating getting real jobs – and Lillian was expecting her first baby.

Slide 42: *Out of Africa ... into Malta* has a simple vision. To help as many refugees as possible to rebuild their lives. To find hope, and healing, and happiness. To love as Jesus loves.

Slide 43: With your help, we can do this. The need is great, and stories like Kingsley and Joy's, and Walter and Lillian's keep happening. The war in Libya is over now – but the boats are still coming...

Slide 44: On Friday 13th January, 2012, the *Costa Concordia* was lost in the Mediterranean, in a tragic incident which attracted world headlines. Almost all the 4,252 people known to be on board were saved – 32 died or remain unaccounted for.



Slide 45: On that same day, there were three boats carrying African refugees from Libya towards Malta. Two were intercepted by Italian and Maltese armed patrol vessels. 140 people were saved, including 29 children, and a baby born on the boat. 68 of these are now in Malta. The third boat didn't make it. The morning after the *Concordia* went down, Maltese maritime radio picked up a distress call, warning of engine failure. Nothing more was heard, until the last week of January, when the first twelve bodies were washed ashore, including three children and a baby. Altogether, 55 were drowned. The story attracted no international news coverage whatsoever.

Slide 46: So that's *Out of Africa ... into Malta*. A real ministry and mission opportunity on the southern edge of Europe, where continents and cultures meet, often uneasily. Your support will transform lives out of all proportion to the cost of your giving. **Thank you.**



The Church of Scotland
World Mission Council



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