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Books, Bicycles And Banana Trucks: Adventures In Eritrea With VSO



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Synopsis

Books, Bicycles and Banana Trucks began with a blog, kept by Richard Bates, during his period as a volunteer worker for VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) in Eritrea. Now augmented with letters and journals, Richard gives an eyewitness account of a country where few foreigners are allowed. Since Independence in 1994, Eritrea's government has become increasingly isolated and oppressive. Yet this is not a bleak read. By working as an English methodologist for the Ministry of Education in the Gash Barka region, Richard saw life in all its fullness. Restriction and bureaucracy, shortages and suffering are not the only features of Eritrean life; Richard also sees humour, times of happiness and even occasional festivities. And the people he meets show extraordinary kindness to a stranger who entered their lives with blond hair, many pairs of shorts and a large repertoire of campfire songs. As a memoir of RichardÃ¢â ¬â„¢s time with VSO from 2006 to 2008, this canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t give you the full history of EritreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s struggles but I hope it gives a vivid picture of a country and its people in a moment in time, through the eyes of someone who cared enough to give up his job and his home to spend two years living and working among them.Royalties from sales of this book will be divided between VSO and the Eritrea Relief Association, a UK charity that has been working in Eritrea since 1976, with projects providing services for children with Down's Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorders and HIV/AIDS.

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