**Things to Talk about in The Wooden Ox**

**By LeAnne Hardy**

*There are more questions here than can be satisfactorily answered in a one-hour discussion. Not all may be appropriate for the age level or spiritual maturity of your group.*

1. Contrast how the war affected Keri and Kurt before they were kidnapped and how it affected Mozambicans.

2. Why was the wooden ox important to Kurt? Do you think it was hard for him to give it away?

3. Why do you think the parents used code words like ‘the situation’ instead of talking openly about the war? Do you think Kurt and Keri would have been better off talking about what was happening, or would that have made them unnecessarily afraid?

4. Why didn’t Dad ‘save’ Pastor Makusa? What do you think he would have done if Commander Dube had threatened to leave Keri, Kurt or their mother behind?

5. Leila wanted to return to Lomweland. If her mother, Mamani Argentina, had the opportunity to go home, do you think she would go? Why or why not?

6. What did Keri think Mfana was like when she first met him? How did he change? How easy do you think it was for Mfana to go back to ‘normal’ life?

7. How did the following people show faith? Pastor Makusa, Kurt, Mom, Dad, Keri. When did each find faith the hardest? Why? Has there been a time when you found it hard to trust God?

8. God answered Keri’s prayer for Sarita with a ‘no.’ What if he had answered her prayer for Mfana the same way’? Why does God sometimes say ‘yes’ and sometimes say ‘no’?

9. If you were trying to decide whether or not to move to a country in civil war, you might make a list of ‘pros’ (reasons to do it) and ‘cons’ (reasons not to). What would you put in each column? Would you have made the same decision as the Andersons?

10. Kurt and Keri had the opportunity to see how others live as they observed the refugees on the coluna and distributed clothes to needy people. What experiences have you had that helped you to sympathize with hurting people?