



**UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
PORT LINCOLN**



*Newsletter No. 25
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Dear Friends,

I hope that you had a wonderful Christmas with your family and friends.

It's sad to say that Christmas day just passes you by here in Mwandi with that sense of Non-Christmas spirit and loneliness - even with people around. It's very strange, you walk around saying to yourself is it really Christmas Day the jolliest day of the year??? Nah couldn't be..

The day before Christmas the power was cut and we lost our mobile phone connection through a very bad electrical storm. Apparently the cables were cut with lightning so we thought there would be no phoning home for Christmas. But around 16hrs, Christmas afternoon I was able to pick up MTC - Namibian Mobile phone coverage and ring my family at 1am Australian time. It was very nice to be able to speak to my family. The phone service is still not working; let's hope it works before New Years.

The past month has gone very fast, but we have accomplished many things on the OVC project.

World AIDS Day was a very busy day. In the morning we all blew up balloons; did face painting for the children and made signs for the march from the Mwandi Market to the Basic School. After an early lunch, we gave the children from the feeding program balloons and colorful signs to walk with. Many people from the community gathered at 1300 hrs and people sang and marched to the school where everyone gathered for poems, dramas, singing and tug of war games. It was a real community turnout. The ladies from our Social Support group performed a wonderful drama on how Orphans are treated by guardians in Mwandi, and how we are trying to improve that treatment. The film guys that were here thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon activities as there was so much color and action.

Esther and Darran left during December for greener pastures down in South Africa. I've got this feeling they may be back to visit Mwandi in the future. The children miss them both, as do I.

We have another Australian here at the moment for 5 weeks. Roanna Wood is from Melbourne and she is helping me with the running of the OVC project. She is currently teaching some of our Sesheke high school kids the keyboard of a computer as they are so keen to learn computer. It was a real blessing to have Roanna here for Christmas.

Dan and Paula's group of 8 volunteers were here last week and managed to do a lot of work around the hospital and did some more **painting at the OVC on the fence**. We are trying to **preserve the steel posts** and painting them will keep it protected.

We currently have **60 kids on the feeding program** and this week we started giving the children a cup of milk after their meal. Man they were so excited you should have seen their faces when they received the milk. It was like they just got a pot of gold.
All the children have put on weight in the month and they are looking well.

We had a **Christmas party for the children on the feeding program** the Friday before Christmas and the children loved it. We had Chicken, Rice and Vegetables. A Christmas choc cake, games, lollies, presents and dance competition. The children each received a t-shirt and a mozzie net and a small present for Christmas and they really didn't know what to think when they got their present. They had never received a present before so this was a whole new thing. The noise in the Drop in Centre was so loud when we said they could open their presents. The smiles on those kids' faces. It was certainly worth the 3 hours it took me to purchase those t-shirts. Now they have a uniform to wear to lunch each day and boy they look smart.

Our storeroom is nearly complete and this time next week, we shall start purchasing cement so we can start making the **blocks for the bakery**. Because of the weather, construction has slowed down as we have received a lot of rain over the past few weeks. But the guys are finishing the floor today and then we need doors and windows and our storeroom is completed. I hope to purchase the cement in the new week and then the Churches of Mwandi will start building blocks. Very exciting!!

We received some donations for small projects so we were able to build a **small verandah on the front of the Drop in Centre** and it is a real blessing at least the children can wait for feeding under the verandah without getting soaked through or burnt to chips. Even with the washing of their hands with the feeding program the children can wash their hands in the tubs under the shelter. We are very thankful for this new addition.

Under construction is our one-person shower cubicle. Today we had a new boy start on the feeding program and he was wearing a old jacket that by the looks of it he had slept in it on the ground for a month and he had no shoes, pants all ripped and he stunk. He said he hasn't had soap for over a month. So the new shower cubical will be good. At least children that don't have soap can come and bath and feel better about themselves.

His situation is common. He lives with his stepmother and in this culture many woman do not accept the responsibility of the stepchild. The husband's other wife or girlfriend's children really suffer if they have lost their mother and have to live with the father's new family. This child probably sleeps on the mud floor, does a lot of work for the family just because he is not the wife's child and the father cannot do anything. Some men do take a stand and stick up for the children but a few do.

We have started to grow our own vegetables for the OVC project. We have cabbage, tomatoes and onions planted. In the nursery we have some rape, cabbage and onion. We hope that in a few months we have a nice vegetable garden to sustain the feeding program and to generate some income for the project.

The **fruit trees are growing well** and love all the rain. I swear they seem to have new shoots each day.

It is currently school holidays and the kids shall return to school on the 9th Jan here in Zambia. We have had many activities at the OVC over the holidays for the kids. Playground has been open for long periods, video shows for the kids, library, volleyball and HIV/Aids education. The students from Sesheke have been very instrumental in supervising these activities and have done a great job. I am proud of their dedication and motivation for their future and their education. I am happy to think that these kids will be the future Zambia. We would love to purchase some more **HIV/AIDS Education videos from Lusaka**. They cost **\$10 each** if anyone was interested in helping with the HIV/Aids education for our community.

It would be good if people could send over **some Children's Christian videos - PAL**. During the holidays the kids have really enjoyed watching Christian videos, but we only have 3 and it would be really good to have some on **Easter, Christmas and the Life of Jesus and some Old Testament**.

Rainbow Pre-school starts in a few weeks' as does the new Pre-school teacher. Vernon our faithful untrained teacher of many years has been lucky enough to receive some sponsorship to attend Pre-School College in Lusaka. He is so excited and certainly deserves to go and get his certificate. Interviews for the new pre-school teacher are underway.

A few weeks ago we received some boxes of books for our **Library**, and we are expecting 7 more to arrive any day. We thank you so much for all those who have sent and brought books to Mwandu for our Library. The kids really enjoy looking and reading through the books. They are such an important part of their education.

We are wishing to **repair the floor of the drop in centre** before the commencement of pre-school. TO do this we need to plaster over the holes and paint the floor. We **need \$250** to do the job nicely. It would be wonderful if someone could help with this small project soon.

A few weeks ago we had a terrible theft to the OVC project. One of our solar panels was stolen from the tower, which holds the 4 solar panels for the water pump, in the middle of the night. All the electrical wires were cut so we could not have the remaining panels send power to the pump. Our night watchman was beaten so bad that he had to be sent to Livingstone Hospital straight away with the threat of internal bleeding. He was held up by gunpoint, two men held him and the others took the panels. They cut through two fences and managed to bend 2" steel strapping away from the panel. It was just awful and very scary to think that people in Mwandu are prepared to beat and maybe kill some one just for beer money for Christmas. (This is what everyone said) One of the electricians from the village and me managed to get the wiring to work so the other panels would still run water for the Drop in Centre and we welded more steel straps around the remaining panels.

The watchman is back from Livingstone and doing okay. I have given them walkie-talkies to communicate with other hospital watchman and loud whistles. I now have a watchman placed at my house for security procedures. The only thing is we now don't have 4 panels to run the pump to its full capacity, but thank goodness no one died and that we still have running water for the project.

There are always bad eggs in all towns, and the Kuta called a community meeting to try to find the bad eggs who stole our panel. The Police are still looking into things, but nothing as yet. I just hope and pray they find the persons.

We want to purchase a spotlight to be placed on the outside wall of the closest staff house to the tank and panels - approx 20 mtrs away and this would keep the tank and pump in the light all night. **The light is about \$60.** It would be great if someone could help with this ask.

To a positive note:

I have been working on the school support for 2006 and thanks to all of you and other who are supporting children in **2006 we will be sending 25 new kids to Sesheke High school, 25 new Evening Classes students and 100 more Mwandi Basic school students(grade 1-9).** I am so excited about this, the more students we can get to school and the more we can keep in school the better off the village will be, now and for the future. Thanks so much for all the hard work people are doing to get the school support program working for the children of Mwandi.

I have 5 ladies hard at work in the community with their treadle sewing machines making school uniforms and tomorrow I am going to town to purchase schoolbooks.

At the time of writing this - this weekend is New Years and I hope and pray that you all have a safe one. Not sure what I am doing yet. But one thing I know that 2006 is going to be a great year for the OVC of Mwandi. At least they have something to look forward to.

It's been a wonderful year, very busy, a lot of hard work and emotional work but we have started to support the OVC of Mwandi. Our hopes and dreams are coming true and to see the smiles of these kids' faces makes all the hard work worth it all. To see what these kids go through when visiting them is terrible, but to see them playing and learning is fantastic. **So thank you for all your love and support, without that we could not be here supporting the children.**

Please continue to pray for ongoing funds so we can do the small & large projects we need to do to make life for these kids a bit easier. **Please continue to pray for my health.**

I look forward to seeing some of you here in Mwandi in 2006 for a short or long term visit.

May God Bless you all.

Love

Fiona (Fred)

PS AN URGENT REQUEST FROM FIONA has just been received (18/1/2006) -
Requiring Baby Formula and Full Cream Powdered or Long Life Milk.
We will be send them in the Container which is being shipped to Zambia within 2 weeks.
Money Donations for purchase of milk can be sent to Support Team in Port Lincoln
Or arrange to have milk delivered to Fiona's Support Team - see addresses below.

FIONA / MWANDI Support Team, PMB 58, Port Lincoln, South Australia, 5607.
SUPPORT TEAM Email Address: robwater@bigpond.com.au

FIONA's Email Address: redfred1972@yahoo.com

MWANDI OVC Email Address: mwandiovc@yahoo.com