



**UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
PORT LINCOLN**



Newsletter No. 26

February to April 2006

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Dear Friends,

Can you believe that it's mid March already? How time flies ...

It's been raining quite a lot here in Mwandi and we have already reached the rainfall average for the year. The river is rising and it will be interesting to see how high it gets this year. The harvest of maize is looking promising for the community and shall start in the next few weeks.

A few animals that are enjoying the river are a hippo and baby that I saw the other morning just out the front of my house, and quite a few crocodiles floating up and down the river over the past few weeks, and they have been big crocs.

Mid Jan we had a visitor from the States come to look at the water project at the OVC, our friend Greg Jeane and the Livingstone Rotary Club had worked hard in sourcing the money for bore hole, water pump, tanks and fittings. We had a Sunday afternoon visit by 6 Rotarians from Livingstone and they were impressed with the Project. I hope that we are able to work together again on many other projects.

Jane and I had a great time in Ethiopia, we were only there for a week but it was wonderful to get away and not think about work. We visited a few very interesting cities and spent 4 days in Addis. We both enjoyed the history of the country and I just loved the scenery. It was great to catch up with Jane and it only seemed like yesterday that she left Mwandi. We get on so well and she is a good mate. I only hope we can go on more holidays in the future. I came back from my holiday refreshed and ready to get back into the full swing of things. I was lucky that Daran was here to keep everything up and running.

I'll fill you in on the Malawi trip next newsletter.

Even though we are a small village in the bush in Zambia things are always on the go. The OVC project recently received a 40 ft container full of dehydrated lentil food mix to add to the menu for the feeding program. The meals are high in protein and the children are enjoying the different taste and texture. The Mwandi UCZ mission received 4 Containers all up and the food has been distributed to many people in Mwandi and outlying villages. It has been a great relief for families and we hope that it may continue in the future.

My dear friend, Heath, the hospital lab technician, was married here in Mwandi the last week of Feb and it was an exquisite ceremony. The service was at the UCZ Church and the reception was at Simba House. There was a lot of dancing from a few tribes. The chief was the guest of honor at the wedding. This meant that if you walked in front of where the chief was seated you had to kneel down and clap to respect him. The food was good, the music was fun, it didn't rain and the couple was very cute. I managed to have a nice chat with the chief at the wedding as I had not seen him for a long time. He was very complimentary on how the OVC project is going.

We have quite a few visitors here at the moment from Australia – Bevan and Sandra Pugsley from Ungarra-South Australia and Chris Oliver and Nicole Robertson from Adelaide.

Sandra and Bevan came to Mwandí last year for a few months and they couldn't keep away from the place. Bevan has been hard at work on many different projects and Sandra has been doing many different things to help at the Drop in Centre.

Nicole is a professional singer and she will be working with the children at OVC, with the Church choir and at the school with the music classes. Chris is an actor and he will be working with the OVC feeding kids, Anti-Aids Club at the school, drama classes at the school and some odd jobs around the mission. Both Chris and Nicole will be spending time with the kids with sports. They are extremely talented, last night Nicole sang for us and she has an amazing voice.

The feeding program is going well and we now have 97 children registered on the program. (Six of these are under 1 year) Fruit has been added into the menu (when I can get the quantities in Livingstone). Over the past few weeks all the children have been going for the health checks at the hospital. We can only send over 5 children per day to be screened. So far we have a few that are HIV/AIDS positive and we need to take them to Livingstone to get the CD4 count done so we can get the children on ARV syrup/tablets.

Muziba Muziba is a changed child; I hope you all remember this little boy (I wrote about him last Newsletter). He was so weak that he couldn't even lift his leg up to get inside the Centre and I hadn't heard him speak for a few months. Well now he talks all the time and is running around playing soccer with the other boys. He is a changed child. It's just awesome to see this little boy having fun and able to enjoy eating a different, healthier diet. The children have been receiving milk three times a week and they love their milk. It's the only calcium in their diet and we feel that it is a very important part of their diet.

I am delighted with the way the community is responding to volunteer help with the feeding program. The Churches have been bringing firewood for the oven and ladies have been coming to clean the surrounds. Because of the rain the grass has been very high.

Our full time cook Martha is currently off work with maternity leave so Matilda is our head cook and we have Chuma as a helper. They are both very capable women and hard workers. Jessica the mother of our twins is always helping and she is great friends with the ladies.

Talking of the twins - the other day, Sitali the smallest twin walked for the first time at OVC, it was very cute and is growing each week. It was such a special moment for us all. It's so cool how all the kids have become a very close family and they all look out for each other.

We had to slaughter a cow for the feeding program last weekend and this as always proved to be an adventure.

Firstly the guy (who I am buying a cow from) has to take the cow to the police to prove that it's not stolen, then the vets have to stamp a paper to prove that it's not sick and then it's got to go back to the police to show them and then they come to us so we can see that it's all okay and then we can kill it. So we planned to kill the cow in the morning but this didn't happen until about 2pm in the afternoon.

On the same day as the cow slaughter, Keith Waddell the Scottish missionary rolled the 1-10 land rover. Luckily no one was seriously injured but the car was written off. A very bad situation for the Waddells, as they run Simba House and have to collect visitors, guests etc and now it's not possible. It brought back terrible memories of Elizabeth's car accident, but we are very thankful that the people in Keith's vehicle are now all okay, just bad memories. The accident happened about 10km from Mwandí. Good old Bevan was able to help them bring the vehicle back to Mwandí, even with the front and back axles broken.

We have recently planted some lawn and flowers at the front of the Drop In Centre for the children to play on. With this rain it has taken off really well and it will certainly brighten up the place instead of the sand that is seen everywhere.

When I was in Lusaka, on the way home from Malawi, I purchased some hula-hoops. Well, you can imagine they have been a huge success and the kids are forever playing with them. They will wear out in no time. I just love to see the kids get so excited and having fun.

This week we employed a full time Gardener/ Handyman at OVC. We have tomatoes planted and they are growing well, but insects ate our other vegetables. We want to grow many more vegetables. Because of the rain and insects nothing has been able to grow, but in the next few weeks we should be able to really get things into full swing. Mubita is the gardener's name. He has been slashing all week long. Mubita used to work for Jane's agriculture project and is a very cable worker. Over the weekend we shall start a nursery and we aim to grow onions, cabbages, tomatoes, peppers, beans, rape and Chinese cabbage. He will look after our fruit trees, which are doing very well. Some insects liked the taste of our citrus, but we caught them just in time and have managed to spray them and now they are coming along nicely.

Bevan is currently making a tank stand for our water tank for the garden program so we are able to store 5000ltrs of water. With water and manure we should be able to have a wonderful garden to sustain the feeding program and sales.

The pre-school has a new teacher called Giblet and he is doing well. There are 131 children at the pre-school each morning. Kalpelwa is the teacher helper. Both the men are very encouraging, and the kids are learning new things each and every day. Giblet is a local man trained in Lusaka at the National Pre-school Association. We hope and pray that he continues to teach the children and love them. He spends time teaching them correct behaviour and general health issues and other general information. Most of the pre-school children need a lot of guidance as they are orphans and don't have that parental guidance and teaching.

Vernon, our pre-school teacher of many years is now in Lusaka at Pre School College. He is doing well and is finding it all a challenge. We hope that he studies hard and is able to pass at the end of the course.

We have been receiving many books from friends all over the world. It is overwhelming. We have so many incredible books now and most afternoons in the week we have silent reading. Once we start Saturday feeding they will be able to spend more time reading.

Next week we are starting to make the cement blocks for the bakery at OVC. All the community will participate in the block making and we shall be able to start building the bakery beginning of April. We have an architect here at the moment in Mwandu and he has designed a very practical bakery for the community.

I was able to collect our Project mini bus while I was in Lusaka a few weeks ago and all that we are waiting for is to register it as a Zambian mini bus taxi and then we are able to start generating some income for the Project. We hope to do runs between Livingstone and Sesheke a few days a week and see how that goes. We shall also do runs from Mwandu to Sesheke.

Sandra has been helping me with Sunday school. Of course the kids think this is wonderful having more people around the place. We have some new faces each week and they seem to be picking up on the Australia accents okay. Nicole will spend time with the Sunday school children teaching them some new songs.

The Education Support aspect for the OVC Project just has been amazing this year. We have 66 students supported in Sesheke High School, 40 in evening classes at Mwandu and 270 in Mwandu Basic School grades 1-9. Your keenness with supporting the education program has just been so heartening and the Mwandu community really appreciates it. I have been receiving many notes of thanks from people in the community.

We have had some breakings in at the mission. The Bangladesh Nurses had their house broken into and the thieves took literally everything that they could fit on canoes. Three guys tried to break in here twice in one night, and the other day I had to go to court in Sesheke for that case. We are awaiting the hearing for the guy's term in a few weeks. Thank goodness I have a watchman at my house and the dogs. We had more people trying to break into the OVC Solar panels so now we have razor wire in place. We have 4 watchman employed for the Project and the local police have said that they will run a security course in the next few weeks for these watchman.

I would appreciate prayer for the following:

- Children and adults who are living with HIV/AIDS
- Rains to continue
- OVC Project – Those funds keep coming so we achieve to support the children
- All visitors that come to the Mission
- Safe travelling – Driving Mwandi to Livingstone
- My health to remain good
- All the staff to remain positive at work here on the Mission
- Keith and other passengers in the accident

If any people are coming to Mwandi this year here is a **list of items we would really appreciate** if you could bring:

Soccer Balls,
powder paint (different colors),
general stationery,
construction paper,

latex gloves (med size),
basketballs,
kids' toys,
board games.

puzzles for the kids,
volleyballs,
toothpaste,

Any of these items would be greatly appreciated.

Again, I thank you for the love and support you all offer me personally and for the Project. Without your support these children would not be able to attend school or eat lunch each day and just be able to be free to play sports and with toys. Some days I look at where we are now with the Project, and it humbles me. Knowing that the children are receiving support from all our programs their hope for the future is bright. I thank God for guiding me and being there with me each and every minute of the day.

Please all take care

Lots of Love

Fred (Fiona).



HEATH'S WEDDING



CHILDREN WITH HULA-HOOPS



LADIES CLEARING SURROUNDS

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