

	<p><b>Local Education and Medical Outreach Nampundwe TREE FOUNDATION</b> Promoting Health in Rural Zambia</p>	<p>Registered office contact: Hilary Saunders 19 Lascelles Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 6NF UK 07934 492643    01202 468333 <a href="mailto:thelemontreefoundation@yahoo.co.uk">thelemontreefoundation@yahoo.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.lemontreefoundation.co.uk">www.lemontreefoundation.co.uk</a> Secretary: 34 Henville Road, Charminster Bournemouth, Dorset UK BH8 8PE <b>Registered charity 1131852</b></p>
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January 2011 Newsletter

Hi Everyone!

Here's hoping that the New Year has found you healthy and happy. I returned from Zambia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2010, having spent 8 weeks there. The visit was long overdue! The first thing that hit me was the heat, being just before the rains, it reached 41°C, and very humid with it. This necessitated me taking up to 4 showers a night just to cool off! The usual stack of donations were taken to the government clinic in Nampundwe, and one of the nurses told me that they considered themselves 'very rich' compared to other clinics, due to our donations, which mainly come from surplus stock from UK hospitals. Mumbwa Health District board had certainly now noticed our contributions to the public health of the area, and our goal now is to register the clinic at Lisuku as a community resource.



Posters in Nampundwe—there has been a real demand for male circumcision since the findings last year that it may help reduce the incidence of HIV transmission



'Scotch cart' laden with hand made beds for Lisuku made by a local carpenter

Once I reached Lisuku and saw the finished clinic, I almost cried with happiness! The ladies looking after the place (Violet and Elizabeth) had planted many flowers and plants over the last year, and kept the place in pristine condition. Everyone who came there had their breath taken away by how beautiful it was. Local people also came to donate plants and trees, so there are now Moringa, Lemon, Frangipani, Avocado, Banana, Eucalyptus, Aloe Vera, Chick peas, Ground nuts, Mimosa, Melon, Aubergines and Jacaranda planted and flourishing (with the help of Pastor Andy's goat droppings!), to name just a few.



Labekah, me, Faith, Judith, Debalah, Purity and Violet on the steps of the clinic



Moringa—look how you've grown!

There were up to 30 patients a day coming to Lisuku and as usual, there were a great variation of different conditions from axe wounds to a 78 year-old's erectile dysfunction! So many memories to choose from- the ones that stood out were:

- A woman with sickle cell disease who was 16 weeks pregnant, unbooked, with an HB of 4!!! (goodness knows how she could stand, let alone walk)
- A little girl who fell 7 foot out of a tree whilst picking mangoes- with no ill effects
- A man with a 10cm long, 2cm wide infected gash on his hand from picking a spot. Lavender oil again worked wonders, healing this nasty wound within 1 week
- A man with cirrhosis of the liver who couldn't afford the bus fare to town for treatment
- An HIV positive woman who had been in hospital for 2 months with abdo pain; HB of 8-9, on ARV's. Treated with iron, moringa, multivits and laxatives, this lady was seen 3 times and improved so dramatically that the abdo pain was completely gone, HB went up to 10 (within 1 month) and she was a different person! We gave her beans and groundnuts to plant and food packages as she was a widow and had not enough money for a decent diet.



Lady with Sickle cell



Violet and Elizabeth washing at the stone table



Rain, rain and more rain!

When the rain came, it certainly did with a vengeance! The roads and tracks were completely awash and made life very difficult when trying to travel. 'Scotch carts' (ox carts) became the usual mode of travel to and from Lisuku clinic, but even they got stuck and took up to an hour to travel 5 kilometres. I had to buy all the necessary equipment to set up home in the bush-mattresses, beds, solar power, batteries, pots and pans etc, and get them transported via any means available. This meant from town, they had to go by wheelbarrow, truck, then scotch cart before they reached the clinic, and necessitated a lot of organisation! Oh how I wish we had transport there! One day, I waited 3 hours in the rain for the bus to leave Nampundwe. Living in Zambia certainly teaches you patience by the bucket load...

The Community Health Workers came to Nampundwe for 2 separate workshops and learnt about Nutrition, STI's, Women's Issues and Children Living with HIV. Although the groups were smaller this visit (8-12) because of the heavy rains, it was great to have an opportunity to meet with them again and give them donations of thermometers, gloves and 'Where there is no Doctor' books –invaluable tools when working in the bush so far from any medical help.



Hugs from Gertrude at the workshop



Oh the joys of Lusaka in the mud and rain!

It was great to be able to get away for 2 days to Livingstone with Nora-a friend from 6 years ago now. We stayed at Jollyboys again, who kindly upgraded me to an ensuite room as it was my 5<sup>th</sup> visit there! The highlight of the trip was a visit to Thorn Tree lodge to have a lion 'encounter'. Nora was not that enthralled when she learnt we could actually stroke the lions and walk for an hour through the bush with them! But it was an amazing experience for me- as anyone who knows me understands how much I love cats-big or small. It illustrates to me how much Zambia has to offer in so many ways.

This young lady was 17 months old and being rehabilitated to the wild. African lions have suffered a 70-80% population reduction in the last 30 years- so require an active stance to repopulate them into safe areas.



Notice the bored indifference of the lions to the embarrassment of being seen with the crazy lady in the even crazier hat...

The quietness and the immensity of the African bush meant I spent much time on my own at Lisuku-with the creepy crawlies for company, even getting stung by a scorpion (which wasn't THAT bad!). So I did miss family and friends back home very much, and managed to lose a stone in weight due to eating local diet and a few tummy bugs. I must say I wasn't that keen to return to the delightful December weather I'd heard about, though!

Lemon Tree Foundation had already seen the potential in the local Community Health Worker, Endson. For the last 2 years he has been invaluable at interpreting and running the clinics at Lisuku. We were so pleased to hear that he had won a scholarship to a nursing college in Lusaka, so we only had to pay half of the fees of 1.5 million kwacha (£200) per term. We have provided the necessary books, lab coat, accommodation and transport required for this 2 year diploma course, and wish him well in his studies. With his extended knowledge, he will be a real Godsend to the area.

The night before I left, we let off some Chinese lanterns and saw them float for miles and miles into infinity. Many locals came out of the bush to shake my hand and say goodbye on my last day at Lisuku. A group of 10 lads with their catapults even turned up. It was so lovely to feel valued. I was just feeling very sad about leaving when suddenly, Judith and her family all started screaming and shouting at me. A large chameleon was charging towards me and decided to climb up my trouser leg (good job I wasn't clad in a skirt). The locals are perennially terrified of lizards and chameleons, and were convinced this one ran to me because it knew I wouldn't try and kill it! It was quite happy to sit in my arms but I decided not to bring it back to UK!



Left: Little Judith and Labekah happy in the rain. Glad the clinic is on top of a hill!

Right: Endson not quite knowing how to treat the guy who is looking like a zombie!

I pray that 2011 provides the ability to continue to build on LTF achievements in Zambia. We desperately need a vehicle, a borehole, sponsorship for orphans and donations for medicines and education. We would love to start producing crops on the land that has been donated to us. PLEASE HELP!!!

Best regards Hilary