

Mwandi OVC Project Newsletter



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Newsletter No:4 – January 2016

Hello Everyone!

First things first... I hope that you have all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year, and that as you read this newsletter you find yourself feeling refreshed and ready for all that 2016 will bring. I have been back in Australia for a month enjoying a much-needed holiday after a big year in Zambia. I've spent the bulk of my time reading, eating, playing cards with family and friends, eating, swimming in the ocean at the sunshine coasts ☺

2015 was a HUGE year of change for me personally, and for the Mwandi OVC Project... And it looks as though I'm going to do it all again in 2016! I left my job, my home, my family and my friends in January 2015 to follow my heart to Zambia and work alongside the team in Mwandi who I have known and loved since first visiting in 2007. It has been a challenging year, a wonderful year, a painful year at times, and a heart-filling year at other times. I've met people from all over Australia (and the occasional foreigner!) who have faithfully supported our work in Mwandi for many years... and others who only met our Project when I did my speaking tour in the Australian winter, but who have become huge contributors to the mission we are all on together.

In August 2015 I was doing a speaking gig at Balhannah Uniting Church in South Australia. I knew nobody in the room, but was surprised again by how 'at home' I felt among strangers. We had a common interest... the Mwandi UCZ OVC Project... and that made us feel like a family. A gregarious guy called Bruce asked me if he could introduce me to his son Jett. I later learned that Jett had been fundraising for the OVC for three years. At that point he'd done 3 big walks and raised close to \$5000 to go towards education sponsorship in Mwandi. 2015 was his biggest challenge... he was due to walk 60km (his longest ever walk in one stint) and had hopes of raising several more thousand dollars to keep around a dozen children sponsored in their schooling... And that's exactly what he did in November! Jett is 10 years old and is one of my heroes. He's been caring for the orphans and vulnerable children of Mwandi village since he was 7. What a champion.



Now let me take you to the other end of the spectrum. I also had the extreme privilege of meeting dozens of men and women in their 70s, 80s and 90s as I sat with fellowship groups around the country and talked about my work in Mwandi. They made me delicious sandwiches and too many cakes and slices! I was inspired by their capacity to think of others when many of them struggled to meet their own daily needs. Pensioners secretly plunged scrunched up twenty and fifty dollar notes into my hand and said "I know it's not much, but it's what I have and every little bit counts."

What I want to say in response is that it IS much! And that they were right... every scrunched up bill DOES count, both financially (towards the work of the Project) and also by raising my spirits and encouraging me in my work. You are much older than 10, but you are also my heroes.



And then in the middle of these extraordinary stories are the hundreds of others who host events and speak in their churches and community groups to raise support. To my friends at Oxley Uniting Church in QLD who organised an epic garage sale and raised thousands of dollars, I am humbled by each and every one of you. By chance I was speaking at a Uniting Church Women's conference in 2014. I happened to mention right at the end of my talk that I was planning to move to Mwandu in 2015. A stranger approached me after my session and asked for my details. She phoned me a few weeks later and asked if I could fly down to Sydney and speak in her church. Her name was Erica Harrison and along with her fellow congregation members at West Epping Uniting Church, she has been responsible for raising a huge percentage of my personal living stipend, plus several more thousand dollars towards other aspects of our work in Mwandu. Erica is like a mother to me. Strangers became family. Another hero added to my ever-growing list!

There are too many stories to mention individually. Please don't feel excluded if your efforts haven't been acknowledged here... There are just too many 'good news' stories to keep up with most of the time! I have close friends who have given thousands of dollars to make sure I can eat and have access to health care... most notably Karla and David Knott, and my Dad and step-mum, who would all be horrified to be mentioned but who deserve my eternal gratitude for their generosity. And to Port Lincoln Uniting Church and the Mwandu OVC Project Support Team down there... you are stalwarts!

All I can say to everyone is thank you. Thank you for your faith in this imperfect person, and thank you for reminding me that we exist together on this planet to do great things for humanity... and that when we work together, greatness is both nearer and more possible than we might ever have imagined.



That's a lot of personal news, so I should finish with Mwandu news!

*Unfortunately, there is still a lot to do to bring lasting change to our community in Mwandu. The beautiful work of our local staff continues, and our programs and projects are all still rolling on in their usual fashion. Our planning sessions for 2016 have mostly focused on increasing our presence in the village in an educational capacity. With the addition of Giblett as our full-time counsellor in 2015, we now have more resources and passion to devote to our work outside of the confines of the OVC Project precinct. It is our hope to throw a lot more energy in 2016 towards addressing the causes of poverty in Mwandu while continuing our efforts at lessening the impact of its symptoms. Our biggest challenge at present is the devastating drought, which continues to ravage the Western Province. We are thankful for the presence of World Renew in the Mwandu district, who are implementing an extensive drought relief, the current weather forecasts not looking good for the region. **Please pray for rain!***

Our farm is struggling at present to meet its costs and we would value your prayers and support as we implement changes to keep this wonderful part of our Project running. If you have a passion for farming we would love it if you could support this part of the Project financially. We are seeking funding (and have been seeking this funding for some time) for the purchase of new pigs to increase our breeding program. The farm has great potential to become a strong income-generating project for the OVC Project, but at present it is not playing this role. **Please pray for Thannie (Farm**

Page 2 of 4

Supervisor) and Edward (Project Administrator) as they implement changes and try to turn the farm around in 2016. We really do need the support of our international community in this area at present.

Pastor Mudenda (OVC Project Manager) will finish up his employment with the Project sometime in the first half of the year. He has been working for the Project since 2007 while also Pastoring his local church in Mwandu. His church has grown (which is wonderful!) and he can no longer split himself between both roles, so will be leaving to focus on his church. Pastor will stay on in 2016 for a few days a week in a mentoring role while we establish a new role to take his place. **A Deaconess in the United Church of Zambia will come on board** in the capacity of a Social Services Coordinator. Pastor's departure will leave a big hole in our team... He is much loved by our Staff, Volunteers and Children... we are confident that our new team member (when they arrive) will fit in well and we are hopeful that the presence of a Deaconess on our staff will continue to strengthen the important relationship we have with the UCZ congregation in Mwandu.

So there are more changes in the air for 2016!

I will be back in Mwandu in February to continue in my role as the International Volunteer. If you've been thinking of visiting us, maybe this is the year for it! I'd certainly love to hear from you if this is the case. Otherwise, I really do value the support you offer from afar, and can only encourage you to continue being part of our team.

Love and Blessings to you all from me as your year begins. We'll talk again soon...

Katie

If you would like to donate to the OVC Project through PayPal you can do that from our website (mwandiovc.com). Please leave us a note in PayPal if you would like your donation to go towards any specific area of need, otherwise we will put money where it is most urgently needed.

The project is seeking financial support for the following items:

- **Breeding pigs for the farm - \$3300**
- **Paint for maintenance at the International Volunteer's house - \$800**
- **Major service on the Ford – up to \$2000**
- **Tyres for the Ford - \$200**
- **Fuel - \$300/month**
- **Electricity for project - \$400/month**
- **Internet - \$230/month**
- **Feeding Assistant Tokens - \$600/month**
- **Insurance for the Project - \$3500/year**
- **College/University Support – please contact Sandra for general Education Financial needs**
- **The Price for the Feeding Program, as with the Kwacha crashing, food has gone up 40% and Electricity has gone up 300%**

We'd love you to be praying for us:

- *For the Zambian economy.*
- *For families suffering due to the drought. Please pray for World Renew as they implement a large-scale drought relief (food distribution) project in Mwandi and its surrounds. Please pray that those who need food are the recipients.*
- *For Pastor Mudenda as he lessens his workload at the Project and for the interview/selection process of the new Deaconess who will hopefully join us in February.*
- *For our continuing building projects.*
- *For the farm, and especially for Thannie (our farm manager) as he implements new strategies at the piggery.*
- *For Edward (Project Administrator) as his workload will inevitably increase during the transition from Pastor Mudenda to the new Deaconess*
- *For a continued sense of 'team' to be developed amongst staff at the project.*
- *For us (OVC Project staff and volunteers) to be a good reflection of the love and grace of Jesus to our children and the community.*



VOLUNTEERS SERVING CHILDREN AT
THE OVC CHRISTMAS PARTY – DECEMBER 2015



KATIE'S VISIT – WEST EPPING UC, SYDNEY – DECEMBER 2015



AUSTRALIAN ENQUIRIES

C/- Sandra Pugsley

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Nairne SA 5252 Australia

Mwandi Education Sponsorship Program

Mobile: 0400 881 942

Email: sandrapugsley@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRIES

C/- Fiona Dixon-Thompson

Email: uczovc@gmail.com

Mwandi OVC Project Support Team Inc

C/- Pt Lincoln Uniting Church

PO Box 191, Port Lincoln, SA. 5606

Phone: (08) 8684 2065

Web: www.mwandiovc.com

Email: mwandisupportteam@gmail.com

**Please make ALL Cheques Payable to
Mwandi OVC Project Support Team Inc**

Banking Details – for Direct Deposits

BSB: 035-067 ACCOUNT NO: 21 6770

Westpac Bank (Port Lincoln Branch)

46-48 Liverpool Street, Port Lincoln SA 5606

Account Name: Mwandi UCZ OVC Project

Account No: 015 0454 086 000

Branch No: 061 018

Swift Code: SCBLZMLX

BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS:

STANDARD CHARTER BANK

LIVINGSTONE BRANCH

MOSI-O-TUNYA ROAD

ZAMBIA, AFRICA