

Africa Update
21.04.2007



Hi All,

I am squeezing this update into a very busy schedule. And since the pace may pick up again over the next few weeks, it is best that I write now.

I am becoming part of Zambian life here now as Australian life becomes more and more remote.

When I last wrote to you three weeks ago, I talked about my lack of progress with one of the registration processes for purchasing the land and how I had finally handed this task over to my attorney to complete. The first part of this process should have taken one week to complete. After waiting almost four weeks with regular check up phone calls from me to the attorney, the registration office finally advised the attorney that my paperwork had been lost somewhere between registration offices. Whilst I wanted the Ndola registration office to take responsibility for this loss, especially since I had paid a registration fee, none of the African's involved were particularly of like mind and so I accepted that we would have to start the process again and pay another fee. I'm learning that there is sometimes not much point in moralizing too much over these apparent injustices as this often achieves little here except to upset people including myself.

Anyway, in contrast to this, the second attempt took only a few days to achieve the initial part of this registration process and things now appear to be moving along well. Such is the unpredictable nature of life here.

Speaking of unpredictable developments, I'll now tell you of another, although this one was to my advantage. Ten days ago I received a phone call from the Zambian man who partly owns the Garneton land requesting that I attend the attorney's office for a meeting. Apparently an American co-owner was currently in Ndola and they wanted to discuss the sale. I traveled into Ndola last week for the meeting to find that the land owners were ready to sell the land to me then and there. Since I had previously had the money transferred across from Australia, this was handed over in exchange for the title. The contract of sale was then signed by all which made me the proud (or more correctly stunned) owner of this 16.5 acre stand of land in Garneton. As mentioned, the official government registration processes still need to be completed but these are now formalities, albeit long, drawn out ones. In the meantime, I have arranged for the now previous Zambian co-owner to remain living in the house until mid – June at which time I intend to take physical possession of the property. Hurray!

The original owners of the land (OMNI – Orphan Medical Network International) were very happy to sell the land to me because they knew of my intentions to develop a children’s village on it. They were also willing to give me a copy of the initial rough plans drawn for their own children’s village which they will be building on a newly acquired site in Ndola. OMNI is an American funded organisation. They also suggested that I visit another very successful established children’s village in Kitwe run by an Austrian funded organisation that has set up many children’s villages in Zambia. This organisation, called “S.O.S”, is a leader in these ventures and so I am keen to learn as much as possible from them.

S.O.S are open to other groups learning from them and copying some of their strategies. In their children’s villages, they set up multiple households each with 16 children and two house mothers. Each household is given its own budget to manage and be responsible and accountable for. Apparently this works very well and encourages initiative and enterprise in the house mothers. S.O.S. also setup onsite schooling for their children and accommodate private fee paying students as well. OMNI is adopting this model with some minor variations and S.O.S. has given them some of their building blueprints to work from. So between future visits to OMNI, S.O.S. and some other established children’s villages, I am confident about coming up with a good plan for the Garneton stand.



The local children posing.....



.....*playing*



.....and performing!

The main thing that I am particularly busy with at the moment is preparations for the upcoming “Women’s Arise! Conferences” to be held both here in Kitwe and Lusaka. On Tuesday, I am picking up the conference speakers from Ndola airport, four ladies from Liberty Christian Church in Australia; my first Aussie visitors! Then I will be assisting the Australian team with their busy schedule.

We have been running an advertising campaign here for the conferences over the last few weeks which has been very successful. We have over 1000 registrations for the Kitwe conference and we are expecting 500+ at the following Lusaka conference. Organising conferences of this magnitude has been a great deal of work, especially as we are also providing the lunches each day. Most of the people assisting with the preparations have never organized anything this big or with a budget of this size, so we are learning as we go. This has been interesting to say the least and sometimes quite challenging with the usual African frustrations. Need I say more?

After the three week Australian ministry tour has finished and the Australian team has returned to Australia, I will be traveling back to South Africa again whilst I await the issue of a two year work permit to replace my current three month visa. Then I’ll be back into Zambia to continue the work.

So with this schedule ahead of me, I may not be writing as frequently again over the next month or so, though I will try.

That’s it for now. All my love,
Mike



Avocados! – Some of the fruit of the land