



Africa Update
31.03.07

Hi All,

I have some time today to do some more writing, so here goes.
I think I will tell you about how government departments work here even though it will probably mean that none of you will ever want to join me here after reading this.
Very few things here are simple and straight forward. For example, let's look at ONE of the procedures I need to do as a foreigner buying land here. Grrrr!

Amongst other procedures, I need to register myself officially with the government in order to proceed with this land purchase. My newly acquired attorney in Ndola has offered to do it for me for just under AUD \$1000 but I have been informed that the registration cost is actually about AUD \$90. So I have decided to do it myself with the assistance of the Bishop. Bishop Medson thinks that I should not go into Ndola alone to begin the registration process so he has decided to send his brother in law up from Lusaka to accompany me. His son in law, Mutale is to arrive by bus at lunch time on Thursday (22/03/07) with the intention of driving with me from Kitwe to Ndola (about a 50 minute drive away). After we have completed the preliminary registration requirements, Mutale will catch the bus back to Lusaka on that same afternoon. Since some of the paper work needs to go to Lusaka to be signed, Mutale will take the paperwork back with him to Lusaka and then post it back to me express post with the signatures. Too easy! I have now cancelled my previous scheduled meetings for Thursday and have reorganized them for Friday.

I wait most of Thursday at the hotel not wanting to be absent when Mutale arrives. Then we can head off to Ndola promptly. Time goes by ...1.00...2.00...3.00and then 5.00. Mutale finally arrives at 5.30 pm by which time the registrar's office in Ndola has closed. Mutale seems quite overwhelmed by the situation as he doesn't know Kitwe or Ndola well and he had been directed by the bishop to come up here from Lusaka without any advance notice. He has no money so I know that I will be putting him up for the night in a hotel and paying for his food and fares. I get him a room in the hotel where Medson had been previously staying and after giving him money for food and plenty of reassurance, I leave him for the night.

I pick up Mutale the next morning at 7.50 and we head off for Ndola. Mutale seems a lot more relaxed today. "What are we doing?" Mutale asks as we set off. As we chat, it becomes apparent that Mutale has no idea about what I need to do but he is happy enough to come along for the ride and will try and help this muzungu. Hmmm.



*Some of the Garneton stand garden showing some cleared land
beyond.*

We arrive in Ndola with the task of finding the registrar's office. After a few visits to wrong government buildings, we arrive at the right office. Mutale hangs back to let me do the talking as he is out of his depth with these procedures. Of course, I know what to do.....not! The official gives me the forms that need to be completed and signed in Lusaka and then advises me to return the following Thursday with the completed forms. In the meantime, the Ndola office also needs to process some information for me. After giving Mutale lunch, fare money, phone money, food money and express post money, Mutale sets off with the forms for Lusaka.

On the following Tuesday, the forms arrive back via express post ready for me to take to Ndola on Thursday. On Wednesday I go with one of the local pastors here into town to find a "justice of the peace" to sign one of the forms as well. The first two JPs we call upon are not available when we arrive at their offices, but we find a third one whom is known to the pastor. This man signs the forms with no monetary incentive from us. When you are unknown to them, they often charge you around AUD\$15 for the signature.

Thursday comes and I return to the registrar's office in Ndola. There, I am greeted with: "Sorry, but the information that the registrar is supposed to have gotten has not arrived yet. Try tomorrow....but ring first to see if it has arrived". I have this idea that while I am there I should show the official the forms sent back from Lusaka to check that they are O.K. "No" he says, "the information needs to be typed, not hand written". New forms will now have to go back to Lusaka with the information typed so that they can be

resigned and then sent back to me again. I am fairly calm about all this because I am experiencing this type of bureaucracy frequently and this is life in Zambia.

I decide to drop in on my attorney to touch base with her since I am in Ndola. She is in her office when I arrive. I let her know what has happened and she confirms that this sort of thing happens all the time. “Did they tell you that you need to submit two signed copies of each typed form?” she asks. “No”. “Well you do”. She has just saved me from a third document run to Lusaka.

I give Daphne (the attorney) the hand written versions of the forms so that she can check over what I have written. “You have been given the wrong forms” she says. I go back to the registrar’s office and ask for the correct forms. They looked surprised but hand me one set of the correct forms. I have to photocopy another set for myself. I duck back around to Daphne’s to confirm that these forms are finally the correct ones. They are.

Then I travel back to Kitwe to find a photocopy centre that can photocopy these A3 size forms. After trying about 6 photocopy places, I find a place that can do it. They are at lunch and will be back in an hour. I wait. When they return it is not quite an hour yet, so they literally lie around the office furniture until lunch hour is officially over. I and some other potential customers watch and wait. Finally, my copies are made in a few minutes. Tomorrow’s challenge will be to find a typist who can type information into the spaces of these official A3 sized forms. I have to use these original forms. They cannot be redone on a computer.



*How some of the land looks: the jungle part
(current owner taking me for a walk)*

Back at the hotel, I take a look at the new forms. There is some information required that I am not sure about. The last thing I want to do now is have the wrong information typed onto the forms, have them sent to Lusaka for signatures and then find out that they have been completed incorrectly. I know only too well what would happen then. I decide to ring Daphne to confirm what information is required. Her office is now closed for the day so I am resigned to ringing her first thing in the morning.

I ring Daphne at 8.50 am, Friday morning. “She’s on the road. Ring back after ten minutes”. I repeat this a few times. Finally Daphne rings me. She has arrived at the “High Court” and is about to go in. I quickly quiz Daphne about the required information. She begins to advise me. This leads to: “Did the registrar’s office also tell you that you would need to prepare this other ‘such and such’ document as well?” “No”. “Well you do. Do you know how to do it?” “No”. Daphne is feeling compassionate and offers to take over and complete the whole registration process for me at one third of her original asking price. Daphne is concerned that I am going to continue to go around in these bureaucratic circles. So am I. I am still trying to figure out how people type information into spaces on official A3 sized documents. “No problem” Daphne says, “we do it all the time”.

Daphne is back in the office at 12.00 pm. I travel back to Ndola and am very thankful to hand all the forms over. Daphne has a contact at the registrar’s office who will now get things moving. I’m feeling somewhat relieved at this point but it’s not over yet!



*One of the prizes at the end of these bureaucratic gymnastics:
Land for a children’s village*

not “The End!”
Mike