

# A Letter from Michelle

Mukinge Hospital, PO Box 120092, Kasempa, Zambia  
Email: michelle.proctor@sim.org Mobile and WhatsApp: +260 977719486

Dear Friends,

I know I live in rural Africa when I receive the following message on our team WhatsApp group:

*There are a couple hippos wandering around the Mukinge compound. Just want people to be aware and vigilant, especially at early morning and evening. Management is asking that any sightings be reported.*

Maybe you are thinking “Ahh cute!” but hippos are far from cute, especially when they are out of the water. They are huge, the second largest land animal after elephants, weighing up to 9,000 pounds when fully grown and standing over 5 foot tall. They are aggressive and have sharp incisor teeth that grow up to 20 inches long. On land they can run up to 10mph. They are vegetarian and come out of the water at night to feed, eating about 88 pounds of food each night. As you can imagine a field of fresh maize is a big temptation, like an all you can eat buffet for hippos! After last year’s drought, it is especially hard to lose your harvest to a hippo. Thankfully although there has been some damage to crops no one has been hurt and the hippos have not been sighted in a few days.



*Hippos in the Lower Zambezi National Park and a hippo footprint near the river at Mukinge.*

We continue to have good rains and crops are growing well. If the rains stop in time for the maize to dry out (and the hippos stay away) people are hopeful for a good harvest.

My Home Assignment is fast approaching and in 5 weeks I will be back in the UK. There is lots to be done in the next few weeks: handing over my responsibilities to other people, getting my house ready for someone else to stay in, making plans for the next few months, packing and driving the 12 hours to Lusaka all need to be done before I board the plane on 6<sup>th</sup> April. For the first month I will be spending time with my sister in Cambridgeshire and then with my parents in Cumbria. Although it is always an adjustment leaving home in Zambia for home in England (and vice versa) I am looking forward to being back. Things I am looking forward to include seeing family and friends, visiting supporting churches, being by the sea, cool weather, supermarkets that are just around the corner, eating fish (and other things I can’t get here). There are also things I will miss from here: my friends and colleagues, caring for the children in the hospital, fresh local fruit, my neighbour Aquilla, sunshine every day, birdwatching in my garden and of course my cats!

To find out more about SIM visit <https://sim.co.uk/>

# A Letter from Michelle

Mukinge Hospital, PO Box 120092, Kasempa, Zambia  
Email: michelle.proctor@sim.org Mobile and WhatsApp: +260 977719486

Thank you to everyone who has already been in touch about meeting up, I'm looking forward to seeing as many of you as I can and will be in touch about dates when I know better when I will be in your area.

I mentioned missing my neighbour Aquilla, she is 10 and is a frequent visitor (alone or with friends) to my house sometimes to see me and sometimes to visit my cats. Recently she asked me to help her with her reading. I have loved reading with her and together we have enjoyed the adventures of Hairy MacLary from Donaldson's Dairy and the tiger that came to tea. She is curious about everything and has many questions that include:

Have you ever seen the sea or been to a beach?

What is a harbour?

Can you bake cakes? (This was a loaded question and resulted in me baking her birthday cake)

Are all black cats evil?

Can we grow mint?

Can you teach me to knit?

Can we google this author to see what she looks like?

There truly is never a dull moment when Aquilla is around.



*Aquilla (centre) with her birthday cake*

Thank you so much for continued interest and support in the work here at Mukinge.

Looking forward to seeing many of you soon

With love

Michelle