

# A Letter from Michelle

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Dear Friends

It is hard to believe that I have been back in Zambia for three months. Life has been busy and Home assignment seems like a long time ago. Here are a few snapshots life at Mukinge since I returned.

## The new theatre.

One of the first things I noticed as I flew in to Mukinge back in September was the building site, you can't miss it, it is slap bang in the centre of the hospital and it's big! I was amazed at how much had been built while I was away and of course it has continued to grow, this week a crane has arrived to lift the roof trusses on to it.



## Graduation.

In October our Nurses Training College held its graduation. I was able to go and celebrate with our newly qualified nurses. It was a fun day made extra special as one of our graduates was a young lady, Esther, who I have known since she was a toddler. Most of these nurses will not return to Mukinge but will be posted to other hospitals and clinics around Zambia. We pray that they will leave us not only as competent nurses but that they will continue to grow in their faith and that this will show in their care and compassion for their patients.



## "Load shedding" (scheduled power cuts)

Parts of Zambia, especially in the south, have had poor rains in recent years resulting in drought and food shortages. Zambia get most of its electricity from hydro-power but at the moment the water in the dams is low and there is not enough power. As a result, we do not have electricity all day, currently it is off for up to 15 hours a day. Such long power cuts are challenging in the hospital as we can only afford to run our big generator for 3 hours a day. This combined with shortages of some drugs and supplies means we are doing less elective surgery. Despite this the hospital remains busy and there is no shortage of emergency surgery to do.

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## Rain

Having grown up in one of the wettest places in England you would think that I wouldn't get excited about rain, but I do! Every year around this time the rainy season starts and a dry and dusty land, that has not seen rain for 6 months, is transformed into a lush, green land. It feels like the rain wakes up a sleeping landscape and the change is dramatic: brown turns to green, flowers appear, mangoes fill the trees, flying ants hatch and fly out of the ground and frogs come out

to eat them. It's a noisy time of year with thunder storms, rain bouncing off tin roofs and a chorus of frogs and crickets in the evenings.

The rains bring seasonal conditions and problems to the hospital. With the rains come more mosquitos and more mosquitos means more malaria. We are already seeing an increase of children admitted with complicated malaria to the hospital. Rain means more snakes and an increase of snake bite cases coming to the hospital. One little boy was bitten on his arm causing so much swelling we thought he may lose his arm. Thankfully he survived with both arms although he has had a long stay in the hospital with lots of visits to theatre to dress and clean his arm and a big skin graft. Mangoes on the trees mean children climbing trees, falling out of them and breaking bones. It is not unusual to have 3 or 4 cases a day needing broken arms fixed in theatre.

## Bright Stars School

I was recently asked if I would teach the grade 2 class at this school about the heart. It was a fun time as we learnt about what our heart does and how we can keep it healthy. The children had some great questions about the heart for me to answer. I had taken my stethoscope with me and everyone got to listen to their own heart which seemed to be the highlight of the lesson.

Who knows maybe there is a future cardiologist in the class?



Christmas is fast approaching and we will be celebrating in the hospital on Christmas eve with a staff party. On Christmas day I will be together with friends here at Mukinge. I do hope that where ever you are celebrating Christmas this year you have a good time

*Happy Christmas*

Love

Michelle