

DOWN to EARTH

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Passionate about latrines



Lizzy MacLennan spent 5 weeks in Malawi this summer, helping out with the PROMISE (Maternal, Newborn, Child Health) project.

They call Malawi the 'warm heart of Africa'. Having recently visited, I can attest to that! The weather was glorious, the people couldn't have been friendlier and, nestled between Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania, it is certainly in the heart of Africa.

Working in Africa was eye opening. Reading about power outages, corrupt officials and cultural differences is very different to experiencing them daily.



Liwonde National Park

Being there in person has given me a new respect and admiration for the people working in Africa long-term, like Paul and Helen Jones, and a renewed faith in the work that God is accomplishing through EI for the people of Malawi.

My Trip

I travelled to Malawi in early August, having only decided to go at all about a month previously. I am halfway through a degree in engineering. I had spent the last year (literally until five days before my flight) working for a prestigious Formula 1 team. I had never worked in Africa or been to Malawi before. You couldn't have called me well prepared!

First Impressions

My first impressions were coloured by the 11-hour overnight flight from Heathrow to Johannesburg and the insistence of the flight attendants to serve two meals in that time, the layover in South Africa and the two-hour flight to Blantyre. To paraphrase, I was exhausted. I arrived in Blantyre around midday, accompanied, thankfully, by all my luggage. It was hot, sunny and dusty.

On the drive from Blantyre to Zomba there was so much to see! There were people everywhere: people selling

anything from fruit and vegetables to live chickens, people carrying impossibly large items on their heads (the best I saw was four arm chairs, all at once), more people than I could count packed into the back of pick-up trucks, people herding goats, children waving at cars... It was buzzing.

Working on PROMISE

I was put to work on a project called PROMISE that aims to improve maternal, newborn and child health. My main task was to design waste-disposal structures for health centres, these were pit latrines, placenta pits and incinerators. Although not as glamorous as my previous job, I understood the importance of these facilities, particularly for women. The more I researched, the more I found myself getting surprisingly passionate about latrines. They are more technical than you might think!



An existing pit latrine in Bimbi

Being a little light on CAD (computed aided design) software, I went back to the actual drawing board and began

sketching. I made my first *faux pas* by suggesting that Malawian mothers be encouraged to eat their placentas. I thought this was a wonderful idea: most people cannot afford a protein-rich diet and live on *nsima* (maize meal porridge). The placenta would be free and nutritious and I wouldn't have to design pits for their disposal. Unfortunately this suggestion was met with screams of mock horror. I was called out as a cannibal and my colleagues made me promise never ever to eat a placenta. Oops.

Birth Preparedness Kits

Later on I helped compile and distribute Birth Preparedness Kits, a first for EI Malawi. These kits were given to expecting mothers with the intention that they would bring the kit from home to the health centre when they came to give birth. This is in line with the Malawian government recommendation that women should go to a hospital or health centre to give birth.

The kits were basic but mothers couldn't rely on health centres to have stock of these items. The kits contained: plastic washbasin, plastic sheet to cover bed, cloth to wrap baby in, face cloth, medical soap, two umbilical cord clamps, razor blade, two pairs of latex gloves and a pack of sanitary towels. The Birth Preparedness Kits give mothers control over scarce resources and make it more likely that there will be some of the required items at each birth.

As the only white person at the clinic, it was down to me to hand out the kits, but I didn't expect the gratitude of the women. As each name was called, a woman would approach me and kneel to receive the gift. Each mother thanked me



New mothers at Bimbi Health Centre

saying 'zikomo' and stood for a photo. It was only then that the significance of these kits really struck me: the women were receiving something for free that might save their lives. They had no alternative source of these items, no NHS to rely on, and they were being selected by name and personally entrusted with a valuable gift. I hope that the women felt God's love that day through those basic kits. I did.



Incinerator at Machinjiri Health Centre



Placenta pit at Namasalima Health Centre



The view from Mulanje

Final Thoughts

I had an amazing time in Malawi; I learnt so much about the people, the running of an NGO and about the love and trustworthiness of God. I would definitely recommend the experience.

Dave and Tricia Rollett plan to join the team in Iringa



Their story together started at their first day at All Nations Christian College, where they went to prepare for cross-cultural mission. Prior to All Nations, Dave had enjoyed working as a personal trainer, but had felt God's challenge was to 'train for Him' instead. Tricia had been working of a Christian charity campaigning on global poverty and had the desire to get involved in holistic mission first-hand.

They were married in 2012 and for the last three years have been based in Colchester, where Dave has been an Assistant Minister and Tricia has been mum to Titus.

They are excited to be working with EI and hope to contribute from their existing skills and training while continuing to grow and learn about serving cross-culturally in a rural development setting.

They plan to join the EI team in Iringa in the new year, working alongside local churches to help communities address the challenges they face, whether poor health, lack of water, deforestation or food insecurity. Their role will include encouraging, supporting and building the capacity of local staff, church and community groups.

They'll be assisting the running and monitoring of two new projects: a water, sanitation and hygiene project, and a 'Churches, Livelihoods and Environment' project which will help churches identify how best to serve their community and improve their environment and will provide training on tree nurseries, conservation agriculture, microfinance and fuel efficient stoves.

Dave is travelling to Tanzania from 18 to 29 October to visit the people and projects they are committing themselves to.

Please pray for Dave, Tricia and Titus as they are fundraising and making their preparations to go to Tanzania in 2017.

Josiah and Taryn Atkins



On 6 August, Josiah Atkins and Taryn Anquoe got married! Josiah is the son of Andy Atkins (formerly the International Director for EI) and his wife Judy (formerly his Personal Assistant). Congratulations to the happy couple!

Dates for your diary

Board Meeting: 30 September