

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011

Dear Friends

Elizabeth recently had the pleasure of having her nephew Jack Lahy, from Australia coming to visit her in Lukulu. Jack is happy to share some of the experience of his stay.



Having just spent 10 days in Lukulu I now have the difficult task of condensing all of my fascinating and diverse experiences into a short letter.

My first encounter with the Lukulu community actually occurred in Lusaka. Sister Elizabeth had organised for us to be given a tour around the University of Zambia by one of her former students, Brighton, whom she had tutored in Lukulu. However, after arriving and meeting Brighton, the tour turned out to be a reunion of sorts, as word had spread that Sister Elizabeth had arrived. Soon we had a number of guides as Brighton was joined by Kenneth, Francis and Robert (all from Lukulu). Despite coming from humble backgrounds these boys had worked very hard to be rewarded with the opportunity to study at university. They all took immense pride in showing Sister Elizabeth and I around the campus and it was no doubt very encouraging for Sister Elizabeth to see these boys so excited about the transition into university life.



As we were driving into Lukulu my first thoughts were -if this place is anything like the road I have just been on for the past 4 hours, then this is going to be a very rough time. However, the destination definitely made the journey worth it. In contrast to the main road leading into Lukulu (a 200km track interspersed with craters (I was assured that this was an improvement compared to previous years) Lukulu is a beautiful village perched on the eastern banks of the Zambezi river.

During my time in Lukulu I had the opportunity to get a first-hand insight into Lukulu life as well as all of the work carried out by Sister Elizabeth and Sister Pat for the community.

I visited three sites where schools were being built and bores were being drilled to provide education and clean water for the villages. I also came away impressed with Sister Elizabeth's patience and diplomacy skills in getting schools built despite everybody operating on Zambia time.

I was given a tour of how the HEPS (High Energy Protein Supplement) is made within the Sancta Maria mission by local women to provide extra nourishment for the needy.

One afternoon, in true local fashion, I was taken out on a dugout canoe onto the Zambezi. We travelled over to the western side and further up which allowed me to see the reliance the locals have on the river (in the form of transport, trade, fishing and bathing).



Apart from the impressive natural surroundings, it will be the people who will shape my lasting impression of Lukulu. Whilst I could provide numerous examples of the friendliness and warmth shown by all whom I met in Lukulu, three stick in my mind.

Firstly, after attending my first mass at Sancta Maria Church I was warmly greeted outside by the entire congregation. Despite being very shy towards me and speaking very little English, they all crowded around to shake my hand and say hello.

Secondly, any encounter I had with the children always brought a smile to my face. I was a source of curiosity and amusement for any children at the school sites and we would suddenly have a small crowd of children around the car trying to have a look at the strange visitor and have a laugh at my appearance. On the occasions when I would go for a run in the morning I would often look back to see a stream of children laughing and running after me, often shouting "who are you racing?!"

Finally, any time I met somebody, or even passed by somebody, they would ask "hi, how are you?" I was told that the standard response was "fine thanks, how are you?" and so I would reply with this. However, I soon realised that these greetings could quickly lead to a circular conversation when they would then respond "fine thanks, how are you?" It became even more amusing when a number of children would all expect an individual "fine thanks, how are you?" greeting, or whilst out in a canoe or boat on the river you had to shout it back to people on the riverbank.

While Lukulu may not be the number one tourist destination in Zambia, for a true, welcoming Zambian experience it surely cannot be beaten.

Jack