

Wow, what an incredible 4 weeks I have just spent in Malawi, a huge thank you to everyone who supported me through sponsorship, donations and babysitting opportunities!

The trip was wonderful; we spent the first 10 days in a small village called Mthuntama, and every morning experienced a new type of volunteering in a different place, from painting classrooms in the local secondary school to wearing scrubs and preparing Malaria test slides in the Hospital. Personally the activity that I found most rewarding was helping at the orphanage with the children less than 6 months old. I spent the majority of our free afternoons looking after babies as young as 8 days old with a couple of friends; it showed me how hard the women who work in the orphanage do so. A lot of the time I had a baby in each arm, one on my back and another toddler hanging onto my ankle, I loved it!



Holding hands with Jasper, part of our perpetual entourage in Mthuntama

After staying in Mthuntama we moved on to a small village about an hour and a half away to camp in a classroom for two nights and hand out clothes to the orphans living in the community. It was a very rewarding experience and we found out that we were the first foreigners that the majority of the villagers had ever seen



Lunch with the Vicar in Mthuntama - eggs and nsima.

When we left the village we travelled to a lodge on the edge of Lake Malawi, called Nkhotakota Pottery Lodge. There we had some relaxation time, the chance to swim in the lake and have hot showers. The lodge also offers the opportunity to make and paint your own pots, so we spent quite a lot of time throwing and decorating pottery in the workshops too.



A zebra, seen on safari

After four days at the lake, we drove upcountry to the Zambia-Malawi border and then into Zambia. We stayed at a place called Croc Valley Camp, next to the south Luangwa Game Reserve. Every morning we were woken at 5 am so that we could go on a game drive. On our first one we saw lions only a minute into the reserve and a leopard eating a baboon in a tree after about half an hour. The wildlife was amazing and we saw more endangered species than I have ever seen before, such as painted wild-dogs, buffalo and Honey eagles.



The newest addition to the baby room at the orphanage, Liness at 8-days old, asleep on my stomach.

At the end of our stay in Zambia we went back into Malawi and to the capital city, Lilongwe-where we stayed in a hotel for a night. In the morning everyone but my dad, a friend and I flew back to England. We stayed on for five extra days so that we could fit in some work experience with a local vet, paint murals in the secondary school and go back to the orphanage to spend some full days with the orphans again. The journey home was eventful too, on our flight from Addis Ababa to London; the Ethiopian Olympic running team were on our plane!



With Elizabeth one of the women who looks after the children at the orphanage

Overall my trip was a brilliant experience, and I had the most exciting and rewarding time in Africa. Thank you so much for supporting me, without your help it wouldn't have been possible.

Flora Laney-Hubbard