

Diz Bostock
P.O. Box 20502
KIRWE, ZAMBIA
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Dear Gail & company at Mission World Aid,

At last I am making a start on this long overdue news. Life seems to have been one long round of work since I came back. It was wonderful having Sue & family here and also all the help she gave when the container arrived. The arrival was a mission in itself, all the excitement and the lorry getting bogged. The kids loved all this and the 40 ton crane swinging around. And the excitement of opening the doors, their eyes nearly popping out of their heads.

Eddie's skateboard is a wonderful success. Instead of going around the house on his bottom he sits on the end of the skateboard and steers himself with his hands, going round corners or into a room. He almost stands it on end to swing into a room or round a corner and the bicycles are the greatest source of joy – like morning-to night time at week ends. We fixed up the cycles for the boys & thought Eddie could join in with his box invalid chair, which he propels by hand. I looked out the window nearly had a heart attack, there was Eddie on a cross bar upside down, his disabled legs swinging out the side paddling like mad with his hands to race the others, his mate Wimpi was sitting on the carrier steering. As the drive is on a slope and quite long they were going at quite some speed. These kids have never had such fun.

Ben who is H.I.V. and not very strong has come on leaps and bounds. He had T.B in his head and his co-ordination was bad and his short-term memory also. He had to use the tricycle to get balanced and co-ordinated. Now he is on the pink cycle with all the gears and is doing wheelies and sharp braking, his balance is so good now, his muscles coming and even his memory has improved. Just this alone is a source of joy for me and worth all the efforts to get the container here and I can't thank you all enough.

The toys made Christmas and I hope you have seen the photos. It was like a walk to wonderland for the children. Can you imagine a child coming round a corner, having to live in crowded mud or shanty house with no luxuries, and finding a mountain of toys, father Christmas and his helpers (Kira & Taliah dressed up dishing out sweets, popcorn, balloons etc) and Father Christmas saying choose a toy. Most were so overwhelmed, Father Christmas and his helpers had to help them choose. Kira was so good for the Nativity. She played all the carols on a small child's keyboard. Taliah helped organise the shepherds & angels etc. It was a marvellous Christmas.

I have been busy getting all the orphans ready for school when out of the container came all the school shoes. There was a continuous flow of children coming for fitting out, 61 children in all.

Edith & I have started sorting all the plastic bags of clothes. My clinic was just a heap of clothes - we spent days sorting them into sizes and types, putting winter ones on one side.

It was a mammoth job getting lists from various churches & disabled of all the orphans & vulnerable kids. We clothed over 400 with two outfits plus all the kids here. This week winter has started so I have started handing out the winter clothes. Once again we have a flow of children. It is so good to see them come in their old worn clothes or their summer things and go away all snug & warm, especially the little ones.

I took stacks of the new woolly knitted jumpers to hand out to the Aids children - there are over 1000. I could not manage all but will take another load later. Also I will be going to the malnutrition ward at the hospital with a load now that winter has come. A couple of weeks ago a doctor and physios come from the U.K for updating on the handicapped. I handed out about 145 jerseys to them and still have lots left. I put them in bundles of ten in each size and hats and scarves in sizes so it makes it easier to give out. Haven't even started on the big bales of compressed clothes.

What is so nice is having met you all or most and seen what work you put into everything. I can as I unpack visualize you all sorting & packing (and wishing some days you were all here with me!!).

I set up one of the hospital beds, cleaned the screen up, bedside table, etc and my first corner is like a hospital. The bathroom is my pride & joy. Hot water shower at last!! Toilet, bath, sink, shower - what luxury. When I stand under the shower early morning I can see the sun coming up from the window and hear the birds waking, can you imagine what pleasure this is after a few years of bucket hot water, a great place to thank & praise God. Kira & Taliah used my big bowl & hot water and really had fun with that experience, isn't it amazing if everyone could learn to let 1st & 3rd worlds meet, the world would be such a wonderful world and both would enjoy the exchange of experiences.

Have most of the sewing machines out, have cleaned and serviced them, only one so far not working which only needs a new belt. Used some for making school uniforms, have material & sewing stuff all sorted and will soon start our craft lessons. Have been so busy on sorting & schooling have only just started having time for anything else.

Tomorrow we have a committee meeting to start a school here for disabled who are able to learn. Since I came back we have had built a 62 sq metres school room. At the moment it is filled with things from the container, I have them in order of what their use is. Some days I love the container and all it can do for the people here. Other days it all seems so daunting. But when you see what a difference it all makes to the lives of the children, when I hear the laughter in this home, kids who had nothing, laughing & being normal, confident, getting up to all the normal mischief. Eddie said to his mates at Easter, "Grandma will have something for us for Easter. I know 'cause she loves us". When they came home from their Sunday School, I had eggs & chocolate. He said "There you are I told you" what a reward, kids who had no hope a few years ago.

I thank you all. Eddie & Ben & baby Diana with me all nice & snug in bed with their warm pyjamas, and the others with carers all warm. You can go to sleep picturing them all snug & warm. Some sleep on mud floors but at least we know they have warm clothes this winter.

The organ is lovely, Kira played it, I am not very good, but get my hymn book out sometimes, and play with one hand, sing the hymns and pretend I am in St Paul's Cathedral

with organ in full swing. One of the handicap parents plays. We are very grateful for all the Christian C.Ds, books, etc.

There is so much to be thankful for and I thank God for all the people like you who care enough for the very poor to take the time and effort to help them. I am writing a thank you letter to all the ladies who knit the jumpers, scarves, hats & blankets in all the beautiful colours. Tomorrow I get a lift at 6.45am to town, so will post this as I don't know when I get to town again.

Hope all is well with you all

God bless

Sincerely

Diz B.