

SHARING THE BURDEN

Today is a continent-wide public holiday, Africa Freedom Day. It was chosen by the African Union then (the OAU) as a celebration of the African people's determination to free themselves from colonialism and foreign exploitation.

Yesterday afternoon we set out for Sesheke. That is the District HQs which is about 70km upstream on the border with Namibia. As usual we were killing two birds with one stone but more about stones later

Our first concern was the father of the little baby girl, Liseli, whose mother had died in childbirth. He had phoned us to let us know she needed more milk formula. We agreed to meet him at the Social Welfare Office for the hand-over. We arrived to the family waiting for us. Liseli, is now no longer sickly, but a healthy, active little two month old baby. After giving the milk Liseli's asked if we could drop his son at Simungoma as he was being sent to the wife's family farm to bring back food that they needed. God's provision in all this was evident as we had been sent a gift for him which had arrived this week.

We also caught up with the District Social Welfare Officer, he would arrange the payment for some bags of maize purchased for Kandiana next week. The heavily-pregnant woman being held in prison had been released by the Magistrate and was back at home in Masese. This is near the Health Centre that we are working with an Irish Jesuit organization to rehabilitate. We were able to report that Mubita's mother too, is responding well to the monthly visits and treatment at the Psychiatric Wing at Livingstone Hospital. Ida reported too on the most recent baby to be put on formula as the mother has become psychotic and was refusing to feed the baby.

After some organizational teething troubles on the ground, work on the UCZ Sikuzu Community School has finally commenced. The Steering Committee is now in place and assuming its role to ensure effective and efficient use of resources, human and material in the construction process. Our suppliers had difficulties with a bearing on their truck and were reluctant to deliver to such a 'remote place'! After much negotiation and assurances that they would not get stuck in sand, they came to Mwandu earlier in the month to pick up the 200 pockets of cement they were to deliver to Sikuzu earlier but could not because of the truck difficulties. There were steel bars and concrete to move as well that we were storing for them.

The first tranche of funding came through the IPC in March and all the cement and materials were bought then and have now been delivered to Sikuzu. There will need to be another 3 deliveries to bring all the cement that has been ordered. The 704 pockets are enough for the slab and superstructure to ringbeam level. The other 286 bags will be ordered later for the floor screed and plastering.

As can be seen from the pictures, brick-moulding is progressing apace and work has now begun on foundation footing. 60 tonnes of stones are required for the concrete for the foundations, the slab and ringbeam and our nearest quarry is on the farside of of Sesheke. Hence our trip yesterday. The stones by themselves cost K8 142 000 (\$1800 or GBP1200) but the six trips to deliver them will cost much the same K8 051 400!

This morning we have just had a rather distressing visit from a teaching colleague, his nephew, one of our Grade 8 boys, went fishing on the river the day before yesterday in the afternoon to check the nets set earlier. The mukolo (dug-out canoe) he was in, was smashed by a hippo and he fell into the water. All that has been recovered is his jacket. The Uncle was asking if the Mission boat could be used to look for the body.....