

A letter from Michelle

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Dear Friends

Happy New Year from Mukinge!

For the past 3 months I have been starting my working day on "Paeds 1", one of our 2 children's wards. Here the day begins with a worship and prayer as the parents, children and staff sing a chorus or hymn together then pray. To say I am enjoying working on Paeds 1 would be putting it mildly! I have loved being back on the ward, working with the nurses and caring for the children. I have also had the opportunity to work alongside one of our clinical officers as she learns more about paediatrics. It brings much joy to see children get well and go home again. Some of our patients can be with us for a long time particularly those with malnutrition. We get to know them and their carers and see them transform from lethargic, sick, malnourished children to happy, healthier children who laugh and play and are gaining weight. Discharge day is always a reason to celebrate for these families!



Discharge Day!

Of course, not everyday is a happy one and not everyone gets better. Today was one such day...

Bill (name changed) has been on the ward since October he is HIV positive and came to us with severe malnutrition, he is 2 years old and weighs just 6kg (13 lbs). Despite antiretroviral drugs and all the nutritional support we can give, he has not gained weight and over the last week has been deteriorating. This morning we talked with his Mum and Grandma and explained that we did not think he had long to live and that there was nothing, except keeping him comfortable, we could do. Knowing this they chose to take Bill home to spend his last days with family. Our hospital chaplain was present and he prayed with the family. It brought a lump to my throat and tears to my eyes when his grandma thanked us for all we had done. Sometimes our best is just not enough and these are hard days.

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Sometimes however we are surprised, as I was in the case of Fred (name changed), aged 12. I first met Fred on Christmas day, he had been admitted the day before with a severe case of malaria. When I saw him on Christmas morning, he was unconscious and non-responsive to pain, his breathing was laboured and he had had several seizures overnight. I knew that his prognosis was poor. I talked with his family about his condition and reassured them that we would do our best but that he was not likely to live and if he did, he could well have suffered brain damage. I prayed with the family at his bed side and left them with a heavy heart. One week later I had the joy of discharging Fred from the ward very much alive and well with no complications from the malaria!

Once again it is time for my Home Assignment - where did the last 3 years go to?

I am very much looking forward to being in the UK from 6th April to 8th September.

So, what is Home Assignment all about you may be wondering? It includes the following:

- Time spent with my sending/supporting churches
- Rest and refreshment
- Debrief Process at SIM headquarters in Suffolk
- Further training if needed
- Personal deputation and Support-raising.

I am starting to plan out what my time in the UK will look like. If you would like to get together when I am home then please let me know so I can plan ahead.

Thank you for your continued interest and support in the work here at Mukinge

Love

Michelle