

## Dave and Helen Lyth's letter to their family shortly after arrival

4<sup>th</sup> Sept 09

Dear Family

Greetings from Kagando. We arrived this time last week to a good welcome, especially from Frank the medical director and chief surgeon. Unfortunately he left that night for two weeks to attend a fistula working group in Tanzania. The two German doctors and occupational therapist (recently come) are also very welcoming.

This place is overwhelming on many accounts; The number of friendly faces is just amazing, especially as we engage with everyone we can to practice Lukonzo with.

The beauty and hugeness of the mountains. There is a 4,000 ft mountain opposite rising steeply from just a mile away, and others visible nearby going up to 10,000ft within a few miles. It is like being in the lake district multiplied times 4.

For Dave the quantity, variety and severity of cases on the wards: the surgical ward rounds (have done 3 so far) take 2 1/2 hours. There are 45-50 patients, and you may see of any age, diagnosis, urgency, or severity all next to each other. You have no warning of what's next! I have done 2 operations only so far, trying to keep my hours down to 2 a day, so we can do language study.

I am sure I will be equally overwhelmed by the mass of children when school opens next week.

This week we have been in the guest house as the house we are moving to was occupied. However we are able to move tomorrow. But it has been good being here and not having to worry about the logistics of running a house. We will look forward to having control of the menu. The main ingredient of every meal is a very large portion of some kind of carbohydrate and few bits of meat and 'gravy'. They finally believe us when we say we don't want a cooked lunch.

One answer to prayer has been the provision of a good language helper. We are using the method we used to learn Arabic; namely getting a few sentences/questions taped, practising them and then going out and trying to use them with as many people as possible. There is no shortage of people around who are willing to hear our stumbling attempts and give us a reply. The great way about learning this way is that you also learn so much culture along the way, not to mention meeting interesting people, and see interesting sights. One older gentleman we met sitting on a door step turned out to be the mayor for Kagando. It's all very hard work, especially with work distractions, and we find that most of the words sound pretty much the same!

Last Saturday we climbed one of the foothills of the huge mountain range. From the guest house we can see the gleaming roof of a school perched 1000 ft up above us, so that was our goal. We picked up some delightful helpful young boys who were our guides. It is amazing to us to see how they cultivate these very steep slopes with no terracing. When we arrived at the school we discovered there was also a church up there where a 'practice' for the next day's worship was going on. So we sat and listened to the drums and singing.

We have been out walking every evening for an hour. All the hills are crisscrossed with footpaths and nobody seems to mind that you walk past their house or through their fields. We expected to be mobbed by children as we walked but mostly they are content to shout greetings from afar.

The one difficulty of the week has been a misunderstanding with one of the junior surgeons. Dave was told by Frank that the junior doctor was very good and reliable, but failed to tell Dave that the rota was about to change. When Dave discovered this and that the next junior doctor was not so good, he went to the acting head of medical services and asked if it was possible for the change of these two men to be delayed by ten days for Dave to find his feet with a reliable junior and until Frank got back. Michael the acting head agreed this was a reasonable request and talked to the two men. However what nobody anticipated was that the one who was asked to delay starting on surgery has taken complete offense and has not been seen on the ward or it seems anywhere for the last two days. So please pray for a good resolution to this. Later; the matter has now been resolved by personal reconciliation. It

has been quite a learning experience on the sensitivity of these doctors, some of whom have elevated opinions of themselves.

I met with the headmaster of the school. We have agreed that for the first month I will observe a range of classes to familiarize myself with the curriculum and teaching methods. Then we will discuss how I can best be used to help the children with learning difficulties. I was encouraged that he asked that I would do training with the teachers about how to work with these children.

We hear that post is quite reliable here. So you could try sending letters to Kagando Hospital, Private Bag, Kasese, Uganda. We will also try sending and see how long it takes. Parcels also arrive, but take increasing length of time to arrive in proportion to their weight (eg 10 kg takes 6 months)

Lots of Love

Helen/Mum and Dave/Dad