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Subject: November update

Dear all

Greetings from Blantyre, where it's still hot and sunny. The rains started, then stopped and people are getting nervous about their crops. The 'big rain' still has to fall!

We see so many good things here. Christian messages are everywhere – on the back of minibuses, on the walls of government buildings, in the major newspapers. A radio can often be heard in the background on the wards – usually tuned to a Christian radio station. Prayer with patients is welcomed – in fact sometimes we have to ask for the prayers to be done more quietly so that we can hear what we're doing on the ward-round! Neil spent a fruitful week in Uganda with the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building – a group of 9 Irish and 4 African universities trying to work together in a long-term partnership to do effective research. It was great to meet colleagues, share ideas and see the plans move forward.

But some of what we see is truly terrible. For example, at the hospital we see about 10 young girls each week who need assessment and treatment after rape. Before the coming of drugs to prevent the transmission of HIV after sexual assault, child abuse was a problem that was not talked about or acknowledged. As anti-retroviral drugs became available, the extent of the problem (especially in the cities) has been revealed. Now carers and victims are prepared to speak out, because they know they can be helped. Another example – we visited friends from Embangweni and discovered they had a 6 year old child living with them. She was a member of their extended family. Our friends had rescued her from a witchcraft 'training school' which she had been sent to. Please pray that the church in Malawi would be the salt (preserving the good) and light (showing up the bad) that Christ calls her to be.

Sometimes the bad and good come together. This month, as many of you know, a friend (Kistone) from Ekwendeni (a sister hospital to Embangweni) had a car accident and broke his neck. He is now paralysed from the mid-chest down, and was transferred down to Blantyre for ongoing treatment. It seems a tragedy, but we are humbled by his faith and that of his wife (Vesta). As she says 'We are just trusting God – what else can we do?' Kistone is now in Malawi's only rehab centre, a mile or so from our house.

Other than occasional tummy bugs, we're all well. Christmas preparations are underway. The kids finish term this week, and the carol concerts seem very early! They have both settled well in school, and have enjoyed their first term in Malawi. Thanks again to all of you who pray for us – some ideas below:

- Give thanks for the arrival of a new (to us!) 4WD vehicle (see below – on a visit to Mulanje)
- Thanks too for answered prayer re: Sara's mum – her shoulder op went well and she's now back at home.
- Thanks for the trips to Mulanje every fortnight which have been going very well.
- Pray for Kistone and Vesta coming to terms with the new direction their life has taken.
- Pray for Neil making preparations for next years teaching – several significant changes are planned. Pray these will be appropriate.
- For good sustained rain that will allow a good harvest

Best wishes,

Neil and Sara

