

Dear Friends Near and Far,

It is high time for another report from Kaseye. As always, much has happened, and much is happening as I am writing these lines. One thing is unequivocally true in this part of the world: Nothing is written in stone; life is fluid in the rainy season even more so than in the dry season.

First, let us thank you for the many messages of concern we received after it became known in the larger world that Southern Malawi was inundated by water in the aftermath of the cyclone that hit Madagascar. Here in the far North of Malawi, the weather patterns were as usual in the rainy season: heavy downpours are alternating with sunshine, sometimes quite unexpectedly.

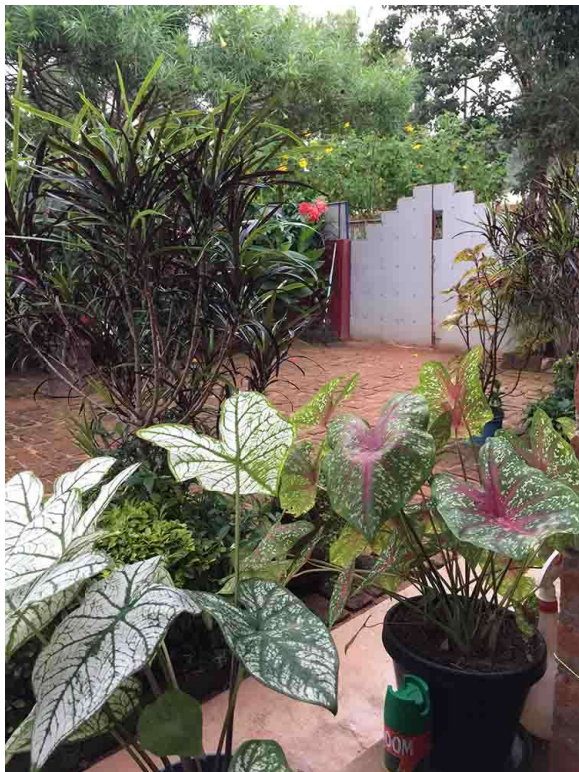
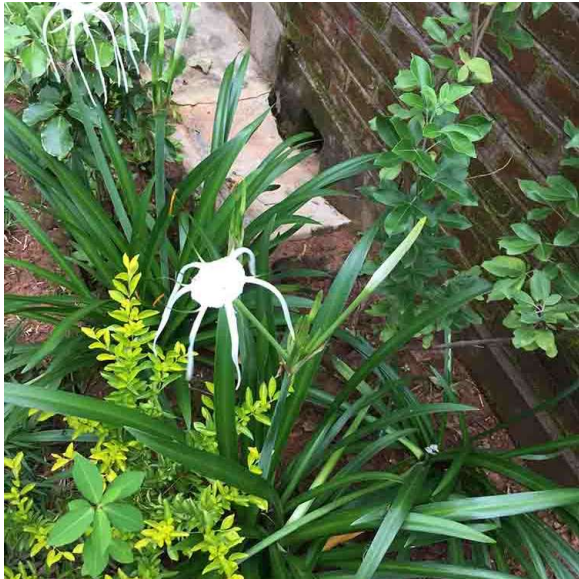
Following, I am going to convey to you some thoughts on pictures randomly collected by Lotte, our newly-found AA Austria friend and helper in all matters related to housekeeping, and Thomas who is wearing a stunning selection of hats here in Kaseye.



The sunflowers are smiling at us from every field. They are by no means meant as decoration. Many farmers plant sunflower seeds in between maize (corn) seeds for protection of the maize from the ubiquitous weeds. At the same time, the mature sunflower seeds are coveted for cooking oil. To me, sunflowers always awaken a lovely and, at the same time, sad memory: the reception hall where we celebrated my mother's memorial was lit up with fifty cheerful faces of twinkling sunflowers.



Lotte, our newly-found AA friend, Thomas and I doing e-mail at *Aunt Jane's Restaurant*, our improvised Internet Café in Chitipa, right after the 7 o'clock church service. Doing e-mails is an extended social event, lasting from breakfast until well after lunch. Cut off from the world in Kaseye, we are catching up once or twice a week with relatives, friends and potential donors over bread and tea for breakfast and the traditional rice and chicken (eggs for vegetarians!) served with mustard leaves for lunch. Imagine, our tireless efforts to "find" funds for the many renovation projects are bearing fruits: we had two foundation representatives in Kaseye. Doug Funk from the Solon Foundation came two weeks ago and shared with us the good news that our grant for the renovation of a dilapidated primary school building into Kaseye's Communication Center had been approved. Today a representative from the Beit Trust came one day delayed because of very poor driving conditions. We are hopeful that the grant for the Waiting Mothers' House will be favorably considered by the Beit Trust.



These pictures show my little Kaseye paradise, pampered by our gardener John and me, and much enjoyed by all Old Mill dwellers. Most plants have been donated by local people, foremost Maria, our friend in Chisansu. Some I spotted around the houses and huts in the greater Kaseye area and then asked John or Ally, our first Lusubilo friend from way back (2007), to beg for a sample. Gardening is an uplifting, soulful endeavor in Africa where everything vigorously sprouts and grows, even after merciless cutting. Every plant has the right to grow and prosper. Little ones are “smuggled” into the pot of well-established plants until they can leave their foster home, strong enough to stretch their tender roots into the sandy ground.



One of a couple of ancient chairs - maybe dating back to colonial times - our newly established AA group in Chitipa is using for its weekly meeting. The room looks accordingly. Thanks to a generous donation from our Austrian and Swiss AA friends, AA Chitipa is able to paint the room and buy five plastic chairs for the members of the fledgling group. Clement is the rock of AA Chitipa/Kaseye; without his steadfast support, we doubt it would be possible to slowly but surely spread the good news of AA among the people of Chitipa and surrounding areas that are suffering from alcohol addiction.



Dr. Claudia and Joshua, our Tanzanian INTERPLAST volunteer, are at work in our dental clinic, unofficially opened for two weeks by Dr. Claudia, yet another INTERPLAST volunteer. Dr. Claudia is performing procedures unheard of in this corner of the world: fillings, root canals and extractions of stumps left behind after attaching the culprit to a door handle and failing to radically pull it out. Some wrecks may have been abandoned by a dentist, either a real dentist with an education spanning from mere observation of a practitioner to three years of university or a natural healer practicing his magic in a faraway hut in the mountains.



These pictures show the reality of the current state of the hospital. The structure on the right picture are the remains of a former carpentry shop entrusted to Thomas for transformation into a shelter for family members of patients. Supervision is still woefully missing. Following up on poor organization, lack of regular cleaning and preventive measures to avoid damage is a foreign concept that we foreigners are trying to improve on, one step at a time. Construction of new facilities is one thing but changing the work attitude of the people who are employed by the hospital and those who come to the hospital with all kinds of medical issues is quite another thing. This morning we discussed the problem of our patients' refusal to be catheterized or to wear briefs when they are suffering from diarrhea. The management staff thinks the hospital just has to deal with all the soiled linen ... and the family members (guardians) have to clean up the mess as they have been doing for years. This in a private hospital that supposedly provides better services than the government hospitals – an assumption far away from the current reality! At night, for instance, the hospital attendants on duty are mostly sleeping while the guardians are doing their best to assist the patients. In a hospital that posts "Infection Control" at every wall and bleaches floors day in and day out, it is unbelievable that family members without any experience in patient care are expected to clean up after their sick loved-ones suffering from AIDS, dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, whooping cough, etc. Change has to come rather sooner than later, even in a country where change comes slowly, at times very slowly!



Dr. Werner and his team as well as other helpers are pictured, surrounded by the lush green of our garden during a break from their demanding work at Chitipa District Hospital. Top row from right to left: Toni, AA volunteer and Jack of all Trades; Jasmina, INTERPLAST nurse; Thomas; Dr. Claudia, INTERPLAST dentist; Joshua, INTERPLAST volunteer; Yours Truly; and Lotte, AA Volunteer and steadfast supporter in all matters of housekeeping, with Yodel, the world traveler. Middle row from right to left: Dina, INTERPLAST Anesthesiologist; Dr. Werner, Team leader and goiter specialist; Vanessa, INTERPLAST nurse. Front row: Regina, INTERPLAST nurse

The same motley crowd as in picture above, crammed into a Nissan Hardbody 1998, a reject from the Malawi Government, for several years without odometer reading capacity, on the way to Karonga, the destination of our Sunday outing.





Do you have a clue what this is? A gaping key hole eagerly awaiting the lock that has been missing for years. No effort on our part to locate the lock that just fits has been successful, neither in Malawi nor in Tanzania. Marti, our Dayton friend and last resort in these kinds of tricky situations, is again saving our day. The lock will, if all goes as optimistically planned, arrive in May with our student group from Dayton. Then, the newly restored cabinet will finally serve its purpose, namely deter prowling hospital staff in search of very useful but sparse hospital supplies.



Hospital beds dating back to 1972 piled up in the Laundry area where they are being restored to their former glory by the painter contracted by CABC since the beginning of our involvement in the renovation of Kaseye Hospital. Our motto is 'Make things, no matter how old and tattered, look like new or as close to new as possible!'



This is the striking view out of our dining/living room window that makes me want to come back to Kaseye even in the rainy season! When in my very old days, I will be tied to my home or bed, I will remember and dream about the daily afternoon rains. At times angry and violent (pictures 15. and 17.), at other times gentle and sweet (picture 10), they are swiftly retreating after soaking men, beast and nature. When night is falling around half past five, the sky is robed in splendid hues of red, orange, yellow, dark blue and a mysterious black. Truly a picture drawn by our divine creator!