

# Longwe Liklik

## Mission News from the Sprau Family

October 2020

Dear friends,

We hope this newsletter finds you physically and emotionally well. How has 2020 been treating you so far? Sometimes when we look back on our PNG journey, we feel like it has only just begun and then we suddenly realize that we have now been here for nine months already. So many things have happened this year that time just seemed to fly by (except maybe those veery looong weeks in lockdown here in Ukarumpa in March and April). When we attended prefield training at Kangaroo Ground, VIC, in 2018, one of our educators told us to 'get comfortable being uncomfortable'. We think it is fair to say that, whilst his advice holds true, no one expected a pandemic to be part of the equation!



### What's new?

Last time we wrote to you, the SIL administration here in Ukarumpa was just starting to look at implementing new strategies of how to run business here in a new, but sustainable fashion. We had severely reduced staff numbers, as many people had left for their respective home countries, and no one knew how things would shape up. Matters became even more challenging, when the other two doctors here decided in June to leave on a well deserved furlough, after years in the field and a year or so shouldering the medical work as the only doctors on centre. This meant that Patrick became the only medical doctor on centre and since then has been on duty all day, every day. On top of that, the previous clinic manager had just retired and the new manager never had time to get her feet on the ground, before she too had to leave for home. To fill the gap, the other physiotherapist in the clinic stepped up to be clinic manager and Anke took over as the only physiotherapist 'on the floor'. In a nutshell, we suddenly had severely depleted staff numbers and anticipated serious shortages regarding supplies and support in the face of a pandemic of a scale that none of us had faced before. For good reason, there was significant concern that we wouldn't be able to stem the tide of patients heavily afflicted by Covid-19 and on top of that, we didn't have anything to

battle this disease with. We knew that, in a country with limited medical resources, people who wouldn't make it through a Covid infection on their own wouldn't make it with our help either. A grim outlook...

Fast forward four months and where are we at? Some things are the same: we still don't know when this pandemic is going to end and we are none the wiser on how we are going to deal with it if it hits PNG in full force. We are still down to one doctor and there is no medium term solution to this. But some things that we feared might happen never did: we never ran out of supplies or medication; staff numbers never dropped to the level that we couldn't keep the clinic open; and most

importantly, Covid-19 never came to Ukarumpa. (At least not in a way that is glaringly obvious. We know it has made its way into the Highlands, but for some reason it just doesn't seem to impact PNG in the way that it has other countries.)

And then, finally, some things have changed for the better: for starters, we have been able to get doctors from other mission organisations on centre every once in a while to fill in, so that Patrick can take a few days off every six weeks or so. Also, we have been able to sort all sorts of problems out in ways that we did not think possible before. For example, we were able to send a patient to Kundiawa

Hospital, which is half a day's journey away, to get surgery done. In the past this surgery would have had to happen in Australia, but as it turns out, when it comes to the crunch, there are alternatives in country! Also, we were able to care for severely ill patients, whom in the past we would have medevaced, with good outcomes. And we got help in so many unexpected ways: a ventilator has been donated and has been organised to be sent to us by some of our supporters. Colleagues from all sorts of medical fields have been able to give advice on how to set fractures, treat nasty infections, diagnose and treat eye conditions and deal with surgical and skin problems. Anke has branched out into running a fracture clinic for all PNG patients, which takes a big load off the nurses and Patrick's shoulders, as fractures make up a major portion of all presentations to the clinic.

And last, but not least, we are now able to bring staff back to Ukarumpa. It still is a dicey operation and sometimes people get turned away at the airport (some have tried four times to board without success!), but on Independence Day (16 Sept.), for the first time in half a year or so, the first handful of missionaries came back on centre. And now the second lot is already in Ukarumpa in two weeks' quarantine, soon to be cleared to resume their work. So by and large, no need for doom



and gloom, but rather reasons to be grateful that we remain operational, even in times like these.

### What else has happened?

School resumed for the boys in August. Due to reduced staff numbers and of course due to the pandemic, not everything is like it used to be, but overall, it is a lot better than home schooling, as far as we are concerned!

Patrick's application for dual citizenship has been approved, as has his application for Australian citizenship. Due to the current situation, rules have been relaxed considerably about deadlines, and the requirement to be in country when becoming an Australian citizen have been waived.

This means that it should be

possible for Patrick to become Australian via online ceremony later this year. Only one more document needs picking up by one of Patrick's friends and then we are good to go!

Finally, we were able to take short breaks, once in Lae and then more recently in Alexishafen, where we attended a Lutheran retreat. It was lovely to take a breather, snorkel in the ocean and make new friends. It was a good reminder too that, in the best possible way, we are all in this together!

### And where to now?

We are now almost halfway through our originally envisioned two-year term in PNG. We would like to follow through with this as planned, but the pandemic has affected our finances and understandably some of our supporters are no longer able to financially partner with us. (Writing this serves as an excellent opportunity to thank all our previous, current and future supporters for all you have done for us! Without you, we wouldn't be able to do what we do!) In a nutshell, finances are becoming tight and even though we will still be able to hold out for a while at the current level, without new donations coming in, we will not be able to see the full two years through. So if you feel like getting involved financially or would like to increase your contribution, please do drop us a line or use the contact sheet at the bottom of the newsletter. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.





**Madang, Pearl of the Pacific!**



**Relaxing at the waterfront**

## Praise & Prayer

If you would like to join us in prayer, here are a few topics dear to us.

Please praise for:

- Being able to provide good medical care in Ukarumpa, despite the pandemic;
- An opportunity for rest at the coast;
- Good energy levels despite the pressures;
- A strong medical team to work with.

Please pray for:

- Emotional and physical endurance in these difficult times;
- Ongoing stable chains of supplies for the clinic;
- More medical personnel being able to return to bolster our ranks;
- Clarity regarding our financial situation;
- Peace in our communities and home countries.

May God bless you all in these turbulent times.

Yours in Christ,

Anke, Patrick, Jeremy and Benjamin

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Cheques can be made out to Wycliffe Australia, with a note 'for the ministry of A & P Sprau' and sent to Wycliffe Australia, 70 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097.

Support through website: [www.wycliffe.org.au/member/patrick-anke/](http://www.wycliffe.org.au/member/patrick-anke/)