

Travel report Malawi October 2025

First of all: The country seems even more chaotic than usual this time – the election has really thrown everything into disarray. Just two weeks ago, Peter Mutharika, who was president a few years ago (succeeding his brother) and was voted out in disgrace at the time, was re-elected and is now the great hope. The last few days before the election must have been tantamount to a complete boycott – petrol, cement and staple foods were artificially withheld to convince the last undecided voters that things cannot go on like this. The day after, everything was available again. Unfortunately, this did not last – now there are major fuel problems again. The country has an enormous foreign exchange deficit, and the artificial exchange rate of €1/2000 MKW is being maintained – but on the black market, you can get up to 4500 MKW for the euro. All imported goods are calculated according to black market prices – accordingly, it is no longer feasible for the average Malawian. Petrol, which was around 1500 MKW/litre three years ago, is now 3500 MKW/litre. Even average earners and the middle class are now feeling the effects of inflation.

Transport costs have risen enormously. Across the entire field of development aid, there are insurmountable restrictions due to the loss of USAID and other American support. Overall, the mood is not good, with little hope for improvement. The elections also delayed the start of the school year – we noticed this at almost all schools. Routines had not yet resumed and not all schools were open.

Day 1, 9 October

We arrived in Blantyre at noon on 9 October and drove directly from the airport to Liwiro. Liwiro means 'Run' – the school's motto is 'Speeding towards Excellence'.

Our visit there was unannounced. On site, we met the new CCAP project manager, Steve Mkathiwa. It was already a little late for regular classes, but some students were still on the premises. Headteacher Witness Malekano (the headmaster since the beginning) seems to be doing a very dedicated job: the school looks well-kept and tidy, even though no one was expecting our visit – even the toilets were in immaculate condition.

We were able to attend a short demonstration lesson in the chemistry lab. During the conversation afterwards, the chemistry teacher shared a nice quote: 'Money is not to keep but to serve.'

He also expressed his gratitude for the beautiful laboratory and for everything we have done for the school.

Since the electricity has still not been connected, other classrooms – such as the computer lab – remain out of service. They have installed burglar bars on the 'critical' rooms themselves – especially those facing the street.

There have been two robberies – in one of them, the headmaster's car was badly damaged and virtually gutted. He has not been able to afford the repairs yet. It is jacked up in front of his house, next to a small solar panel that at least provides the teachers' house with light. In the second robbery, the thieves tried to steal the pump, but they were just able to save it.

This is incredibly important because otherwise the toilets would stop working.

The girls' dormitory is in good condition and is occupied by 69 students; the capacity is 80. Water runs everywhere, albeit with low pressure.

The lack of electricity remains a noticeable challenge.

The school garden is well maintained in the shadier areas, while the areas exposed to the sun are dried out – as is the case everywhere in Malawi, which is currently suffering from a heatwave. There is still a lot to do, and the extent to which we get involved here depends on the final settlement with CCAP.

Enrollment

Form 1 = 120

Form 2 = 95 (including 69 girls in the hostel)

14 teachers (8 of whom are women) plus 3 interns

4 of whom live on the premises (4 teachers' houses)

No matron yet – will only move in once there is electricity

Afternoon classes for pupils who want to continue their education but have not been selected for secondary school – voluntary measure - 111 participants

They do not have a library yet either – the Land Foundation will donate a few books, but none for actual teaching .

The school is currently in the process of qualifying as a national examination centre – would be a privilege – has many requirements

Possible new projects for the coming year/years BUT ONLY IF ALL OUTSTANDING WILL BE SOLVED - does not look very promising right now

Liwiwo:

- CCAP is currently investigating whether biogas could be used instead of wood fire for the school kitchen
- Wall around the girls' dormitory
- Wall in front of the teachers' houses
- 'Alternative pit latrines' (we have these at all schools) in case there are problems with the water
- Library
- Pin-walls, otherwise the walls will break down quickly
- Safety fence to the main road (due to accident risk and dust)
- Garden needs more support
- Danger during the rainy season – lots of red earth on the grounds -> mud
- Gravel for the car park
- Paths to the hostel must be gravelled
- Possibly a concrete walkway to the girls' hostel
- Bicycle racks
- Incinerator for sanitary pads

We are staying with Nick Gaunt, our building contractor, for the next two nights.

Day 2, 10 October

we had a short meeting in the morning at the CCAP Synod with Steve and accountant Elot. I emphasized once again what we value in our collaboration.

Problems can only be solved and made transparent if they are discussed, and if they are presented to us in a clear manner, they will be met with much more understanding than if they are glossed over.

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday evening, 14 October.

Steve also promises to focus more on the electricity problem and to put pressure on Escom within the scope of his possibilities.

Ora Project in Chikwawa

We drove about an hour from Blantyre to the Shire River Delta to visit the project that we support together with the German organisation ORA.

There we met two representatives (chairman Joshua Malunga and German Milenga) of the organization Community Forum – CoFo for short – who showed us some of their projects. These included a solar-powered computer room (insulated single-room solution from the Italian organization Sustain for Life) for children with learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments and mild intellectual disabilities – in other words, for children who would otherwise receive little support in mainstream schools. This program is for 6-26 year olds, who are taught in two shifts.

Evening courses for teacher training are also held here.

Afterwards, we visited the school where the teaching program supported by ORA, the BMZ and ourselves is being implemented. The primary school has classes from grades 1 to 8. In motivation classes, grades 3, 4 and 5 are supported after regular lessons. There, children who are unable to keep up in normal lessons (underperforming students), now in their second cohort of 100 children, receive additional lessons using teaching methods other than pure frontal teaching. Teachers (five in total) are also trained in this approach. Employees of this program receive a small allowance.

The actual evaluation of the program is scheduled to take place between January and March 2026, but it is already clear that the pupils participating in it are making significant progress in their performance. The first cohort raised the class average significantly.

The hope is that the program will continue after that. CoFo believes/hopes in it even without BMZ assistance – this program has also been implemented at 12 other schools with slightly less big cohorts.

Classes for adult literacy are also offered from 2 to 3 p.m. and from 3 to 4 p.m. – three-quarters of the parents can now read.

The school's pass rate has already risen significantly.

Possible new project for us:

The Mantchombe School, where the program is running, is located in a densely populated part of Chikwawa. Like so many schools in Malawi, it has too few staff and too few buildings. With 864 pupils, there are only eight classrooms and one teacher's house available, and many classes are held under trees. At least they currently have 19 teachers (13 women/6 men).

To ensure orderly teaching, eight additional classrooms and a few extra teacher's houses would be necessary. The grounds have sufficient space, and there is a teacher training college nearby.

The school actually has a well-equipped school kitchen (based on the Mary's Meals model), which was used by the World Food Programme until three years ago, when they suddenly withdrew. Since then, the kitchen has remained cold. Perhaps Mary's Meals could be approached.

As we look at the kitchen, we come across another wonderful CoFo project – a group of women are sitting on the smooth cement floor discussing something. I sit down with them and find out what it's all about. It's the Women's Support Group (three men are also allowed to join). All of them are HIV-positive and help each other both mentally medically and through a sophisticated microcredit system in which they lend each other money and advise each other.

The CoFo staff are also helping here. You can become a member for 1,000 MKW – I am donating 10,000 (equivalent to €5).

Quote from the school's head teacher Luke Katema: CoFo is the backbone of the area.

Overall, the Community Forum made a very good impression. They contribute to community development with several initiatives. On their own premises, they showed us a place where they want to erect a building to house computers and serve as a kind of 'e-mail café'. When I told them about the Leos' idea of 'liberating education', they reacted enthusiastically and would be very happy if we would consider them for future projects. I have already passed on the contact details to Matthias Scharpf, who will check in the coming weeks whether this location is suitable. The location is centrally located, easily accessible by bus and situated in a densely populated area – ideal for an online university or learning platform. The site belongs to CoFo themselves and already has an office and a training room for teachers, so new rooms could be easily added. In addition, the organization has experience with small solar systems for individual rooms – a big advantage for the planned use of computers.

Day 3, 11 October

On 11 October, we set off very early for Nkuyu Primary School.

In Nkuyu, we are always welcomed with lots of singing and dancing – the best show of all the schools.

We had supported this school a few years ago with additional classrooms and teachers' houses, and the year before last, a solar power system was added. This time, it was time to inaugurate the new community centre. This includes a small tailor's shop (where I bought two skirts), a computer room - We had also provided some computers here. - and a hairdressing salon (where Affonso gets his hair cut). The building looks very nice and was immediately connected to the solar power system.

It is intended to generate money for the maintenance of the solar system.

As in many schools in Malawi, there are staffing difficulties: teachers and headteachers are frequently transferred, their successors arrive late, and transition periods are often chaotic. This year, it was also noticeable that the schools had only opened two weeks earlier – the start of the school year had been postponed due to the elections in the country.

The school garden is also currently lying fallow – partly due to the extreme heat – but we are promised that work will resume soon.

Enrollment

500

Currently 12 teachers – 5 female / 7 male

Five teachers can live on the premises. Of course, given the remoteness of the location, there are still far too few teachers' houses.

Unfortunately, the pass rate is slightly lower than last year – allegedly also due to poor student attendance – which may also be the fault of the teachers – at one point there were only seven of them – but this is now set to improve – big promise.

Of course, there are numerous other projects here as well, but I would recommend taking a break first and waiting to see how the school deals with what it already has.

We are moving into an AirBnB around the corner from Janet for 3 nights.

Day 4, 12 October

On 12 October, we travelled to **Ndalapa, also known as Arazhul Primary School**.

Last year, we had installed a solar power system there and built two teachers' houses, which were still being completed. I brought two computers from Germany - added with monitors and keyboards bought here in Malawi, as well as various small items such as pens, bags and other gifts.

Four people had been trained to maintain the solar power system.

They have had electricity since April.

Since then, evening classes have been offered, especially for Standard 8, and this has already improved their pass rates.

Since then, the community has taken much more interest in the school. Now the schoolyard is lit up in the evenings, where before there was only pitch darkness.

This has naturally made it easier to recruit teachers, and attendance has improved significantly overall - also thanks to the electricity in the teachers' houses.

The chief speaks of finally 'arriving in the modern age', which they always hear about in the village, of course, but felt excluded from - but thanks to us ...

We visited the new teachers' houses. They have become slightly larger than originally planned, which has led to a slight increase in cost. However, inflation and the drastic price increases for cement and other building materials weigh even more heavily

Therefore, we will probably slightly exceed the budget at this point. Optionally, ceilings could be installed, which would improve the indoor climate, but would involve high additional costs - I would like to refrain from doing so for the time being.

However, in order to ensure that work continues swiftly, I have paid for the windows for both houses on site.

The school is situated in beautiful countryside and offered us an impressive backdrop with the surrounding hills. The pupils have a football team, which they proudly showed us. In the summer, they were visited by two Arazhul fans from Germany - a father and son - who made them various promises, including the promise of more computers and footballs.

Unfortunately, despite several attempts at repair (which we also supported), the well appears to be permanently broken - it will now have to be examined by a specialist.

Enrollment

503 students G 242 B 261 Teachers 13 8 M 5 F

In the evening, Esther, our former scholarship holder, came to Janet's to see me. As we had rented a spacious Airbnb only 200 meters from Janet's house, Esther was able to stay there, and we took the opportunity to have a long chat. Like many young people in Malawi, even those with good university degrees, Esther simply cannot find work. This leads to great despair. She has three children, her husband is a trained plumber but earns very little. Esther is now trying to keep her family afloat by trading clothes.

Her latest idea initially left me speechless: she wants to take a two- or three-year contract as a field worker in Israel. Later, I revised my concerns somewhat after learning that there are official agreements between the Malawian and Israeli governments to provide workers. I don't know how good the conditions actually are, but those who have returned report that they earned good money and were able to build something for themselves in their own country afterwards.

Day 5, 13 October

We set off for Mdeka very early. Four school visits were on the agenda for the day

Our first stop was Mpalapata Primary School. Last year, we wired all the classrooms and offices there. Now the lights are finally on and the computers can be used – they even have a teacher who can properly teach IT. The government's program, which began last year with the excavation of the foundations for a new classroom block, has now reached the stage where a roof is already in place, but completion is still a long way off.

There are still a few minor jobs that could be done: doors are missing on the small storage rooms, especially on the room where the electrical system is located. The blackboards and classrooms need to be repainted to cover the laid cables, and the roofs should also be painted to prevent rust. A cost estimate will be prepared for this work. The good news is that there currently seem to be enough teachers on site – a rarity.

Enrollment

423 pupils – but the number is still rising

Many teachers: 8 women and 5 men

(our sponsored assistant teacher from last year has found a job)

Secondly, we visited Ndege Primary School, one of our former favorite projects under the very committed headmaster Nyomboti, who has since moved to Christian Liebig Secondary School (CLSS). His last project at Ndege was the construction of new toilets for teachers, boys and girls. Unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated significantly since his departure. Despite prior notice, the new headmaster was not present. The deputy headmaster, DH Elton Kantwela, whom I know from before, was friendly but visibly overwhelmed. The school garden was a sorry sight – I was disappointed and annoyed by this and spoke openly about it.

I was told that the garden is not a community project for the village, but rather the responsibility of the school, and that due to the delayed start of the school year, they had already harvested one crop this year and were in the process of replanting the field.

I am expecting photos as proof of this by November. There was also a broken tap in the schoolyard, but repairs had already been organized – I was given a firm assurance of this as well. At least the computers are connected and in use, and the toilets, including the teachers' toilet, were clean.

However, Mr Nyomboti promised me on the phone this week that he would provide further advice and support.

The third stop was Muonekera Primary School. Last year, we had the solar-powered water pump repaired here – we were not aware that this system supplies not only the school's drinking fountain, but also five other taps in the village. It was originally installed by a water aid organization, which apparently does not feel responsible for its maintenance. In addition, we had replaced all the classroom doors, as some of the old doors were half rotten. We were pleased to see that the school management had taken the initiative to install a small solar system from 'Sunny Money' – or a similar organization – which provides light in the rooms and charges devices. This could be expanded further.

At the moment, for example, the water pump only has a daylight system – no battery.

Enrollment

1123 pupils (approx. 50/50)

but only 11 teachers – they would need 24 Teachers to run smoothly – which is why the classes are so large here too – they actually have enough classrooms

Teachers' houses: 4 proper houses and 2 student rooms

Nevertheless, a reasonable pass rate

but also offer extra courses

For proper electricity – the mast runs across the site, – they would need a transformer, which is far too expensive – unfortunately, the nearest one is too far away – they have not yet received any computers from us.

Urgently needed – some rooms need new plaster – but blackboard paint would be very important.

Possible new project: another double teacher's house – with a local contractor (not Nick Gaunt because of lower budget).

The fourth and final visit of the day was to Christian Liebig Secondary School (CLSS). We had completed several projects there last year:

The laboratory was completely renovated due to termite infestation.

Unfortunately, the water supply in the laboratory is not yet working – the plumber will have to come back.

A computer room was set up (the equipment came from another organization) and fans were installed. Last year, we also donated an overhead projector.

It looks really good. There is also a new teacher who seems to be able to teach IT properly.

The library was equipped with a donation from Germany – about a third of the donation is still outstanding. (Partnership school) and we were also given several boxes of books by the Landi Foundation.

In addition, the house donated by Ivan Chevillotte is almost complete; a teacher will be moving in there in the next few weeks. The house has turned out to be extremely charming, albeit a little simpler than Ivan had originally planned. The lush mango tree directly in front of the house belongs to the property, and the well with a treadle pump is 20 meters away from the house.

As part of this project, a workshop was also built on the school grounds where carpentry lessons can be held. The workshop is beautiful, spacious and very bright (transparent sheets in the ceiling and light-colored paint). There are two lockable smaller rooms – one for tools and the other to be converted into a small bathroom.

I paid for the large entrance gate on site – we have just fitted it in.

After the grand opening, the students gave a short demonstration: they repaired a broken table in record time.

Over the course of the year, we had repeatedly wondered about the difficult communication with the director of the CLSS. It now seems clear why: the man is apparently seriously ill – possibly with Parkinson's disease – and will probably be replaced soon.

The CLSS pass rate has risen dramatically – the school is now number 10 in the national rankings – which is a huge achievement, even before the computer room has been completed and the library expanded. This achievement is entirely down to the teachers.

We were asked to give the teachers a one-off gift this time, which we did – €500 per person was distributed as a performance bonus to a total of 40 teachers and staff at the school (the best teacher in terms of pass rate received around €50, while the gardener received perhaps €4). This gift was gratefully accepted and, for the first time at the school, we were treated to some really good food :-)

There was a small celebration with music and poems, and the atmosphere in the girls' dormitory was also warm and friendly.

We had brought gifts with us, which the students were delighted to receive – it was a wonderful moment.

The matron has everything well under control and the hostel looks well maintained.

However, the mirrors in the washrooms are completely fogged up – they could do with replacing them – a small investment with a big impact!

Enrollment

Stud 348 G176 B 172 Teachers 23 16 M 7 F

In the late afternoon, another meeting took place with CCAP. Those responsible acknowledged that there had been misunderstandings and inconsistencies in the past, but emphasized their shared desire to continue the school as a showcase project. We will certainly have to bite the bullet in some areas, but overall it remains a wonderful project that we want to bring to a successful conclusion. The new project manager is making a great effort.

Day 6, 14 October

marked the start of a kind of mini weekend for us. We drove towards the lake, a long journey of several hours. On the way, we stopped briefly at Liwonde Wildlife Park and watched elephants and some springboks. Most of the other animals were resting in the shade of the bushes in the midday heat. In the late afternoon, we reached the lake, where we were greeted by a spectacular sunset. We moved into Janet's Cosy Cottage, where we were to spend the next two nights.

We meet a young woman named Carolin Zulu (an acquaintance of Dr. Chisomo Tumen on the side of the road in Mangochi, who could perhaps support our team with her expertise – she is very likable and seems very intelligent and eloquent –(short video)

For the same purpose, but also without any commitments, we also met a young woman named Beatrice Kavuli in Blantyre who could support us. In fact, she has already been involved in a few CLF things – She has helped Janet out from time to time and has also done other projects with her.

Day 7, 15 October

On the seventh day of our trip, which was a public holiday – Mother's Day in Malawi – we were so exhausted that we hardly left the house. We only managed a short walk on the beach. The day was spent resting before the next stage of the trip.

But we did get a little work done

Affonso had to sort through hundreds of photos – do a bit of home office work – and when it got dark, we tried to take photos of young people with yellow reflectors on the street to illustrate how invisible people

are on the roadside at night. Our idea is to launch a project to distribute reflectors to pedestrians in rural areas of Malawi to save lives.

Day 8, 16 October

we visited Mtakatika Secondary School, in particular the girls' dormitory, which we had supported several times in recent years. In recent years, the dormitory has been extensively renovated and expanded with several new rooms. In addition, electrical cables have been laid, and last year the entire sanitary area was refurbished.

It was a joy to see: the showers work, the rooms are lit, the toilets have doors and are painted in cheerful colors. There are washbasins inside and a tap outside next to the wash tubs. All the beds, which were previously wobbly and unstable, have been reinforced with sturdy boards to ensure a safe night's sleep.

At present, relatively few girls live there. Many families simply cannot afford the small subsidy that has to be paid for accommodation in the dormitory. We had brought two computers with us, but they could not yet be put into operation because a program was missing.

Here, too, the political situation has left its mark: the elections brought the country to a standstill for a time, the school principal has since retired, and his successor has not yet taken office. The deputy principal seems overwhelmed.

We gave gifts to the girls – clothes, donations, a suitcase – and the school received a box of pens and other small gifts. The two best students in the second year received Buffalo bicycles and reflector vests as a reward.

The deputy head informs us that a delegation from the MOE has noted three issues and requested improvements

1. A wall at the front of the hostel was criticized by the school inspectorate; however, we do not see any urgent need for immediate action here. I would not necessarily support this, but a KV will be issued nonetheless.

2. As in the Liwiro Girls' Hostel, for hygiene reasons there should definitely be an incinerator for sanitary pads – we would need to see the KV for this. I would be in favor of supporting this.

3. In future, the hostel will no longer be allowed to have its own account – the authorities want to know exactly what comes in and goes out – it is to be settled via the general school account.

That's fine in itself – Robson thinks it wouldn't be a major problem from his point of view – it was and is the same at CLSS. However, in future, large sums would no longer be transferred to the account, but to the account managed by Robson, and then accessed as needed and transferred to the school account.

A nice possible follow-up project at this school would be to set up a combined lunch/ library and study room. A large room is already available, but it is in poor condition. Renovation, larger windows and some shelves and benches could create a versatile space here.

A cost estimate will be requested.

Enrollment

at Hostel 34, currently rising

Students 210 B 102 / G 108

Teachers 11 9 M / 3 F

From Mtakataka, we travelled to Lilongwe with Janet's brother Prince and arrived after dark. He then returned the rental car to Lilongwe the next day.

Day 9, 17.October

DZALEKA At 7:30 a.m., we were picked up by Welthungerhilfe. Our first visit was to the organization There Is Hope (TIH). The workshops there have developed impressively over the last two years. The proportion of girls has increased significantly, as has the proportion of refugees participating in the courses.

We visited several departments: the tailoring, bricklaying and plumbing workshops, and the solar technology, electrical and carpentry areas. Everywhere we went, there was a buzz of activity and a palpably positive atmosphere. We also took a look at the small library, where there is a desire for support in setting up an e-book library, as many specialist books are not available and the team is therefore trying to make as many materials as possible available in digital form.

Afterwards, we visited the very atmospheric Kibébé workshop, which supplies our sanitary pad project and also manufactures various home accessories. I bought a picnic blanket made of denim patchwork for myself and a very cool cooking apron for Affonso's daughter.

We also visited the nursery – a childcare facility for young mothers who can leave their children there while they attend school. We had supported this facility with €10,000. The headmistress, a friendly and dedicated woman from the Congo, is a certified caregiver and lovingly looks after the babies.

After these visits, we drove to the Welthungerhilfe office on the grounds of the Dzaleka refugee camp. The project manager gave us a detailed report on the challenges there: the camp was originally planned for 10,000 people, but now around 58,000 live there. There is no sewage system, the mountains of rubbish are overwhelming, and the water supply is precarious. Welthungerhilfe is working to achieve the World Health Organisation's goal of providing around 20 liters of water per person per day. Current consumption is 19 liters. But every time they are close to achieving this goal, hundreds of new refugees arrive.

The withdrawal of the USA from development aid is clearly noticeable, but the team continues to work with great dedication. Many volunteers are working tirelessly. I was deeply moved – you can feel that the staff are really doing their best despite the difficult circumstances.

While Affonso walked through the camp with an escort to film and take photos – without me, as a white person always attracts unnecessary attention in such situations – I spoke to L'Or, one of our students for whom we are trying to find a place at university. This is very difficult for refugees in Malawi. Their grades are not high enough for public universities, and private universities are expensive. L'Or finally decided to study social work and community development, which the Welthungerhilfe representative also considers a good choice. With her background, she would have a good chance of working for an organization later on – perhaps even internationally. Her greatest wish is to leave the camp and Malawi.

L'Or came here alone at the age of 16; that was ten years ago. Today, she shares a narrow strip of mattress with two other young women in a hut belonging to a Congolese refugee woman. We were allowed to visit this modest place, were welcomed warmly and allowed to take photos. Despite the cramped conditions and simplicity, the room was astonishingly clean and tidy – cleaner than many houses I have seen in Malawian villages.

In the afternoon, we drove with Welthungerhilfe staff to Brian's house, where his daughter and her husband surprised me with a birthday dinner – a heartfelt gesture that made me very happy.

Day 10, 18 October

We were invited to lunch by Father Manolo Hernández from the **Catholic Diocese in Lilongwe**. An intense conversation developed about faith, charity and the work of Jesus, which touched me deeply. Father Manolo

showed us a video about the various activities of his organization: caring for the elderly, programs to protect albinos, agricultural projects, a bakery, schools and health initiatives.

Matthias Scharpf and the young priest candidate Precious, whom I already knew from Munich, and two other Malawian seminarians were also present on this occasion. We gave Father Manolo a mobile phone and a computer for a girl who is supported by the Benga scholarship program.

Afterwards, we met a young student, Laurent Gwaza, 27 years old, Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management. He was supported by the Benga scholarship project in his final year of study so that he could complete his degree. He lives with his single mother and four siblings – a bright and committed young man who I think we will hear more about in the future.

Later in the afternoon, we met with Auxiliary Bishop Vincent of the Archdiocese for a chat over tea.

Matthias Scharpf and Dr Chisomo Tomeo were also present. We discussed the possibility of Dr Chisomo training employees of the diocese's own clinics to conduct their own health workshops in schools – including education about reusable hygiene products.

This round of talks left me with a very positive impression. All those involved are driven by genuine charity and energy and are visibly striving to change things for the better. I could well imagine working more closely with them in the future.

In the evening, we spent our last evening with Brian's family – a lovely, peaceful end to our trip.

Day 11, 19 October

On 19 October, we boarded our flight back to Germany. After around 27 hours – mostly without sleep – we arrived back home. As it turned out later, both Affonso and I had come down with an upset stomach, probably as a result of the food we had eaten during the last few days of our trip.