

## Tabora, Tanzania

Nancy Lands Dead Center - in Tabora I've been in Tabora for a few days now. This is really my first serious trip into the field with my new job. It has been really interesting. I just feel that warm, fuzzy good thing you get when you really know you're in Africa. My first morning here I jumped out of bed to throw on some power walking clothes to see the sunrise. It was 6:30 when I hit the pavement. Me and EVERY SINGLE STUDENT in Tabora. That is no small number let me tell you! This little metropolis of 200,000 citizens surely has more schools per square kilometer than I've ever seen. There is one of the few National Teacher Training Colleges here. Then of course there are a gazillion primary and secondary schools each with their own uniforms—partial to the school that sports the wild purple pants and ties but a close runner up are the students wearing the bright orange pants making them look vaguely like the prisoners who often work on roadside projects. Then there is the Shule ya Furaha—the Happiness School. There is a large school for Deaf Education and Audiology but I haven't seen anyone signing yet. Then there is a special school for Physical Education. Also the Public Service College is here and those students have some very smart uniforms which make them resemble flight attendants. Can you imagine telling college students they have to wear uniforms?? And of course there are schools for Catholics and Muslims and Baptists and Mormons. At any rate, it was a gorgeous sunrise and soon after 7 AM the streets started to clear except for the latecomers who were really hustling.

There is a great sense of industry in this town. Sure, there is some sitting around and thinking and visiting but generally, all look very much engaged in some form of business. I am taking serious advantage of the used clothing & shops. In Dar, these tree bazaars are really pretty picked over and certainly it is very limited in things in my size. But here there are lots of great deals in my size. The clothes tree bazaars are very specialized. One sells nothing but socks while another one sports only pillow cases—I recognized Luke's old blue fish style pillow cases! I am hitting the ladies' dresses and blouses trees. The dresses hang from some rather clever form fitting hangars accentuating just how large the dress can be stretched to cover the ever cherished African wowowo. (FYI-If you have a kind of normal sized butt it is called a tako. But if you possess a truly amazing sized butt then you joyfully refer to it (as does everyone else) as a wowowo.) Well there are plenty of dresses swinging from the trees for those of us with just takos. I'm grateful. Got a cute GAP number and one from Abercrombie and Fitch. May need to get a new suitcase from the guy who sells them!! Not to be confused by the guys who specialize in sacks, backpacks and purses. For newer items such as bras and panties, they are carried on big pieces of cardboard on many young men's backs. Much more the traveling salesman thing. I'm enjoying walking everywhere. I anticipated doing a lot of walking so I decided to pack my leg weights so I could turn it into some real exercise. They had to go into my hand luggage and caused quite a stir during airport security. When I explained what I did with them, they were incredulous and then they just figured to chalk it up to one more weird thing that Mzungus do! I'm really getting to know Tabora but can't quite get out of my Croc Dundee mode where I feel like I need to greet everyone. However, it seems like when I don't, they greet me. I've gotten some very well worn &quot;Good mornings&quot; in the afternoon and some very crisp &quot;Good evenings&quot; at just the right time. I'm using all my Kiswahili but there are some local terms that I'm not getting that cause one and all to shake with laughter at me. Walking has its dangers but not the usual ones. This is a city of bicycles. There are THOUSANDS of them. It's quite flat and there are bike fundis on every corner so it sure makes a lot of sense. It is certain that one smart entrepreneur must have procured about 5,000 bikes with a distinctly British look and smart little wire mesh baskets on the front of them. These go the fastest and are definitely the latest arrivals. Most of the bikes are doing full service with two passengers. Ladies sit in the back side-saddle if they are not riding themselves. Lots of women bikers which is unusual for Tanzania. I have been offered many &quot;liftis&quot; from local Taborites but have declined this mode of travel certain that I'd fall right off.

For internet access I make my way to the Internet Café currently housed in a shipping container claiming it has AC which I'm unable to vouch for. There are three functioning machines. The one I'm using today makes me grateful to Miss Shellhammer, my typing teacher in 11th grade as it has only letters on the z, q and v. The rest have simply been worn off. An hour of access costs under a dollar so it is a nice way to catch up. The Asian Tanzanian running the place is a vision of contradiction. She is heavily veiled over her hair and shoulders, wears tight fitting jeans and is a real computer-savvy nerd with thick glasses and helpful demeanor. During my walks I have to smile at the signs. For example, wouldn't you hurry to have a table made at &quot;Smack Down Carpenters&quot;? Or get your hair cut at Shuk Smart Cutz, H. Hair Cut, or the Las Vegas Grocery Store with Barber Shop and Hair Saloon (sic)? Talk about one stop shopping. I was not just a little concerned when I passed the carpentry establishment fully staffed by blind people. I guess since Tanzania is short on power tools it's probably safer but still their saws must be sharp! They are conveniently located just about 100 meters from the hospital! Notably, the coffin maker is even closer, just across the street.

So I guess I've covered most everything but my job! I'm here trying to get the final approvals on the Zonal Blood Transfusion Center (ZBTC) and to verify the full delivery and the putting together of the office furnishings. This is part of our blood safety program and our goal is to have a safe supply of blood that can be sent out to local hospitals and to offer testing and counseling to those who want it. The centers are really quite something. Nothing in all of town looks as nice. Very tastefully designed by our excellent team of architects with simple lines and a lovely open courtyard. Lots of fresh air so that you don't get that terrible hospital smell. However, this one has a fatal flaw which means I can't take the official handover from the construction contractor. The lab has a large cold room in it to store the blood and it is not working. Without a functioning cold room (commonly referred to as the &quot;heart of the centre&quot;) we can't be in business. (Speaking of cold rooms, recently I was touring the operational ZBTC in Dar Es Salaam and the ZBTC manager proudly led me into their cold room which was stacked EVERYWHERE with bags of blood. He kind of got me in the corner to admire it all and said with a huge smile on his

face, &ldquo;We are very rich!&rdquo; I almost threw up. Guess I&rsquo;ll stick to set up, not operations!) My colleagues at site are the architect in charge of the project, Kaisi Kalambo, who is a Tanzanian who has trained in Europe and traveled widely in the US. Kaisi is really quite a hoot but he is a complete Loud Mouth Lime! He makes my dad and husband put together seem meek. His job is to monitor the progress of the work of the construction contractor, Nandhra Construction, which is owned by Iqbal Singh, a Tanzanian Sikh with Punjab roots. Iqbal is a thoughtful guy who says some very interesting things. On a recent trip I was reading an historical fiction on Tanzanian history. He took a look at the book and passed it back to me saying, &ldquo;Isn&rsquo;t it funny that someone can end up dead just outside your house and while it happened just hours ago, no one really can figure out how it happened?&rdquo; He is currently reading a book called &ldquo;100 Ways to Live to be 100&rdquo;. I think he will probably turn 100 before he is done with it. Then there are engineers (electrical, refrigeration, mechanical), site managers, numerous skilled and unskilled workers on the site who depending on the moods of Kaisi and Iqbal might warrant an invite to join us for dinner after work. These events often involve a bottle of scotch and various other drinks (I stick to beer!) and they tend to soothe the wounds that have been created during the day while Kaisi goes around screaming about how the quality of the work sucks and asking at the top of his frustrated lungs how can work be done in such an unprofessional manner. And poor Iqbal goes back and forth from saying Kaisi has unreasonable expectations to berating his crew and promising to fix what has not been deemed to be up to par. It&rsquo;s definitely not anything you&rsquo;d see being taught in any management or business school I know! I&rsquo;m still trying to figure out how to deal with it. On the one hand I&rsquo;m very uncomfortable with Kaisi&rsquo;s methods but at the end of the day he is getting the American taxpayer the best product available in Tanzania. The Viasi Vikubwa (Big Potatoes-Kaisi and Iqbal) left two days ago and I have stuck behind with the furniture people. My predecessor comes from the same management school as Kaisi so these guys are used to being yelled at. Well, on my own time I&rsquo;m not going to do any yelling. So I spoke to their boss in Dar and asked him to remind these guys that while I will not resort to yelling, I won&rsquo;t sign off on their work until it is completed to meet my high expectations. This seems to be working well and we have some fun, mostly laughing at my Kiswahili and testing the lab stools&mdash;we have to make them go up and down and twirl them around while they are still covered in plastic which makes them very slick and well it ends up being just some good, clean fun! In the transport here some things were damaged which since the Ministry of Health takes care of the furniture guys really aren&rsquo;t responsible for. We have come up with some creative solutions for fixing what has been damaged and my vocabulary is exploding. I walk through the hospital several times a day to just kind of get a feel for it. It is pretty run down but seems to work pretty efficiently. Yesterday I arrived on my way to the ZBTC and a police pick up truck pulled up with two guys in back and they jumped out to pull a guy out who was looking very stiff and carried him in their arms to a gurney about 20 meters away. Makes me wonder what happened. Today there was a whole crew of prisoners on clean up duty there shackled together in pairs. I wasn&rsquo;t quite sure of greeting protocol for those with a record so I just smiled at them rather than exchanging the usual pleasantries.

I&rsquo;m staying at by far the finest hotel in town&mdash;The Orion Tabora Hotel. This is an old colonial hotel and the likes of Stanley and Livingston have both put their heads down here! There has been a very early start to rainy season so everything is beautiful and green but there are mosquitoes everywhere. Now that I&rsquo;m pretty much alone, I&rsquo;ve been enjoying room service menu consisting mostly of Indian cuisine, and catching up on my reading and Animal Planet&mdash;the only channel I get that I can bear to watch. If I see one more kitten rescue I may come unglued. How come cats get into so much life threatening danger!? There are all sorts of animals around the hotel in various enclosures from parrots, lovebirds, turtles (giant ones and some the size of a ping pong ball), small antelope, ducks, chickens and cats&mdash;the latter not in enclosures and most likely to end up in an upcoming episode. So tomorrow, mungu akipenda (God willing) I will return home to Dar via Kigoma. My hope is that there is no rain so that the dirt runway will still function. It has been closed several times in the last month so I&rsquo;m really keeping my fingers crossed. I know this is more than anyone wants to know but you know how I am.