

November 16

Endings and moving on

I write this entry in a journal lying on my belly on our living room floor, at peace after finishing in the office for today—and basically finishing for the year!

This week we had end of year parties for the two high schools where we work. We have recovered enough loan payments to cover all the loan money that was lent out, plus some interest (not all, due to some defaulted loans). Not perfect, but not bad! A big improvement from last year, and an encouraging sign that this microfinance for youth thing really could work.

Things finished on a bittersweet note though. We watched last minute payments come in, and saw the proud faces of students with successful businesses receiving T-shirts and certificates. Then we were reminded of the devilish selfishness and sensitive feelings lurking around us. At one school, the chicken meat ran short and one teacher felt so humiliated he threatened to quit and go home. At another school I received a half-hour talking to from a teacher about how we had offended the principal by not consulting him on future plans for the project at his school. What a sinking gut feeling, to realize for all our good intentions we still offend. We will never be perfectly culturally literate, and we will never live up to people's requests of us.

But we are smoothing things over as best we can. I am seeing more and more the need for “non-violent communication”, a training course our U.S. director Lynn glows over. In a country where everyone has years of calluses and scars from wounds in the racial and economic power struggles, you can never be too well-trained in careful communication.

But for now our sights are on the U.S. We're loading a suitcase with gifts and just a bit of work (not too much; this is a vacation!) We'll have a [phone number](#) you can reach us at in the US, and we look forward to a whirlwind of seeing friends and family.

By January 12th we'll be on our way back to South Africa, and from there, to who knows where. We haven't yet found a new home, so in January we'll have just two weeks to find a new home, pack up, and move. Should make for busy times, trying to start our school year of Microfinance as well.

We've been working too many hours lately, partly because Adam has been searching high and low for a car to buy (and we bought a lovely Opal Kadette TODAY!) We agreed to split one forty-hour a week position, but lately it's been about 30 hours for each of us, plus Betsy putting in over forty hours a week herself! Next year we're putting high priority on making processes smoother (not passing things between three sets of hands and lips will help), and delegating to our staff.

But even with a bit of overtime, life is peaceful. This week we found time to make homemade pizza, go to a circus in town, have dinner with Bible study friends, and go swimming at a nearby resort. Last Saturday we finally went to a game park last week and felt like tourists. Adam stood on our car to take pictures of rhinos while the kids watched from inside the car and I cooked steak over a fire. These memories are priceless.