

## Home for AIDS Orphans

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Home for AIDS Orphans was initially established as the United Church of Zambia Mission Partners Mwandu by Dan and Paula Van Zyl in 2005. In 2015 they became a registered Zambian Not for Profit Organization (NGO) and began operating as Home for AIDS Orphans.

Dan grew up in Mwandu, where his father was a trader and he became very involved with refugee projects through the UN during the various uprisings in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Paula was born and raised in California, but grew to love Africa, during her many years of traveling through the area. They met while Paula was in Africa on an animal conservation project and Dan was working for the UN. They both decided to return to the village of Dan's roots, Mwandu, and open the area up to volunteers to help the poverty-stricken people in the village, as well as giving visitors an opportunity to learn about life in a rural African village. They are passionate about their work and have already helped tremendously in many people's lives. Sadly, Dan passed away in February 2019 and is buried in Mwandu. Dan's memory continues to live on thru Paula along with their working partner, Matt who has become integral to the work effort within the community in which they serve.

Paula has a constant battle on her hands raising funds to keep the projects going. In October 2020 Paula and her daughter Amelia saw it was time for an American corporation to be formed to assist Home For Aids Orphans survive especially during the covid-19 pandemic with no volunteers coming in, no money was coming in. Compass Zambia was formed and is a non-profit 501 c-3 Charity registered in California. This allows Americans to donate and get a tax credit. There is an easy to use "donate button" on the website [compasszambia.com](http://compasszambia.com) Home For Aids Orphans works directly with the local people and listens to what they want and what they need, not what someone wants to give them. The foundational belief is to help them to help themselves.

Volunteers come from all over the world ranging in age from 7 to 75 years old and are accommodated in en-suite fully tiled rooms with beds, pillows, bottom fitted sheets, full electric power, fans, mosquito nets, flushing toilets and hot and cold showers, as of July 2021 there is a dorm room that sleeps 10 and a smaller dorm with 4 beds a 6 bed dorm, a smaller room with 2 comfortable beds, in addition there are also large canvas safari tents with beds, mattresses and fitted bottom sheets. There is also a large volunteer kitchen as well as outside showers that have been completely refurbished are fully tiled with hot and cold water. The entire property is shaded by large trees, lovely bushes and flowers with a 6-foot brick wall that completely surrounds the property and provides privacy as well as security.

Paula lives on the property with Matt, who has taken over as Project Supervisor. Matt Burditt, a former volunteer, came back to stay in 2007 and is from the UK. Mwandu is a very safe secure village full of culture and rich in tradition, it is not a tourist destination but a real African village, the people are friendly and appreciate all that is done to help them.

## **Mwandu Village**

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Mwandu means a place of "plenty fish"

Mwandu is a village located between Livingstone and Sesheke and is home to the Barotse Royal Establishment and Chief Inyambo Yeta IV. The village has little tourist infrastructure yet has much to offer tourists who are seeking an authentic African experience.

Mwandu was designated a "District" of its own in 2014. With this came district employees and a greater Government involvement in the village as well as an increase in the population. Mwandu has grown and now has internet access as well as a larger shopping area, this has been a boost for the village. Although Zambia has 73 tribes there is no tribal fighting and everyone gets along, Mwandu now enjoys this tribal diversity. The Lozi tribe, the predominate tribe, in Western Province still maintain their traditions and culture, everyone is very respectful of others tribal heritage.

The village itself is quiet, except for the bustling market in the main street. The market offers anything from brightly colored materials to fresh produce and fish. Take time to stroll through and meet some of the locals who are always eager to assist. Mwandu gives one insight into the workings of a modern-day African village. Villagers can be seen collecting water in all sorts of containers from the borehole in town. A bell rings four times a day when the chief is in residence. Once in the morning to announce the start of a new day, twice in the afternoon to indicate the start and end of lunchtime, and at 2100hrs in the evening to indicate that noise should be kept to a minimum.

Mwandu is renowned for fishing as it is not heavily fished by tourists nor heavily netted by locals. It is therefore a part of the river that still provides excellent catches. Most visitors to the Zambezi come for the really big trophy tiger fish. These fish gather in the area over the winter months when the flood waters from the surrounding floodplains are receding. As the waters recede baitfish are forced back into the channels where the big tigers lie in wait. The river bottom is sandy and the river is not too deep, making it a good destination for fly-fishing. Here you will also find good stocks of Nembwe, which can be caught either on fly or lure.

Mwandu is a relatively rural village in the South-Western corner of Zambia which has a catchment area of approximately 33,000 individuals, with about 8,000 living in Mwandu.