



EDITOR'S CHATTER

Our December Newsletter is almost entirely given over to a commentary on the Trustees' recent visit to Zambia.

Many of you will have read the Facebook posts by our Chairman, Ian Parker, on the visit. The intention of this Newsletter is to give a fuller picture of the Trustees' journeys in and around Lusaka and the impact it had on them.

We will report on the second part of the Trustees' journey, in particular their visits to the schools we support in the Eastern Province of Zambia, in the next Newsletter.

On our [website news events page](#) you can find links to the photo galleries containing all Ian's posts from Zambia in addition to all the other Literacy in a Box activity that has been going on over the last few months.

We continue to be overwhelmed by the support we are receiving from Schools, something that was picked up in by a three page article in the recent RIBI (Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland) Youth Service Newsletter. You can read the article via [this link](#).

The remainder of this Newsletter reflects Ian's thoughts and feelings in his own words.

I hope you enjoy the read.

OUR SENSES AWAKENED

When I was a child my Granny often said to me 'Ian what the eyes do not see, the heart cannot feel'. It was her way to try to help me from not worrying about things in life that were outside my 'sphere of involvement'. It has served me well, as I moved through life, but every now and again something crops up outside of this 'sphere' which makes me feel that an involvement is necessary and action is needed.

Having seen, in 2004, the lack of educational resources available for the Zulu children in South Africa, the education of children desperate to improve themselves and their communities became a cause for me. It would have been so easy for it to be an 'out of sight and out of mind' situation to which I could have turned a 'blind eye' but my Rotary Club did something and with the prompting of Operation Sunshine, Literacy Boxes were created by Roborough Rotary Club.

The video on the homepage of our website 'shows' the work of the Literacy in a Box Trust, but although our eyes are seeing the footage and we hear the commentary - is our heart feeling the reality? I have a good imagination and thought I was - that is until this trip to Zambia, when my eyes were really opened and my heart really did feel!!!! All senses were awakened as all of us on the trip were moved by the real situation in Zambia.

SO WHAT TRIGGERED OUR SENSES



We embraced and cuddled the children who, through singing, dancing and poetry, made us feel welcome. We asked 'How are you' and, as their little leathery fingers wrapped round ours, their affectionate smiley faces lit up as they replied 'I'm fine'.



We saw, first hand, the classrooms in poor repair; the overcrowding and lack of teaching resources.



At 40c and above, we really felt the heat - the countryside was also showing the effects of prolonged drought.

Being at the end of the Zambian winter, the permanent dust thrown up from the roads got in our eyes, up our noses and penetrated our clothes. Think of the children who walk many miles each way, each day on these baking hot roads - just to attend their school!!!



Wood and charcoal are the only fuels for cooking and in the rural areas, the smell was forever in the air. Deforestation, due to the felling of trees with no replacements being planted, is a major environmental issue.

THE JOURNEY IN AND AROUND LUSAKA

On arrival at Lusaka, we were met by our hosts Peter Phiri and Grace Lutanda.

Peter used to work in Lusaka Customs, clearing, among others, the Operation Sunshine containers, as they brought clothing, food, tools etc for the rural communities in Zambia. Inspired by these acts of love coming from England, he left his job, trained to be a Minister and now runs the Divine Care Foundation, caring for street orphans in Lusaka. Monica's Academy was his home, but is now his school for orphans.

Grace is one of four 'NASAD ladies' in Zambia. NASAD, the National Agency for Social Advancement is a Zambian Charity and was founded by Kathy Harding in 1991 with the aim of encouraging communities to be self sustaining. Grace and Dorothy work in the environs of Lusaka; Kathy has a focus in St. Stephens, Lusaka and Kachele about 90 kms out of Lusaka, while Florence is up in the bush in Msoro, in the Eastern Province

After a quick freshen up we were off to visit an urban Community School, a suburban Community School and a Special Community School

DAVID LIVINGSTONE COMMUNITY SCHOOL



All the emotions were unleashed as we were greeted with singing and saw, first hand, the

abject poverty of the community and the run down school.



MANACA COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Here we experienced the 'big walk' to school. Schools are usually in the centre of their community but the size of the community often requires that pupils walk many miles to school. Our vehicle kept grounding out - so we joined the pupils on their trek to school in the 40 degree heat!

MULELE SPECIAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Here both teachers and the street orphan pupils have a disability. We took this photo (which features Trustee Geoff Lucock at the back) outside, as the cramped classroom

(which is barely the size of a single garage in the UK - but still had to hold 40 pupils packed in like sardines) was too dark for photos.

Three types of school exist in Zambia, Community, Government and Private.

Community schools are by definition, supported by their community and those agencies, charities and individuals who wish to help. They are self-sufficient and often they cannot afford to pay their teachers, many of whom work on a 'volunteer' basis for years on end, such is the importance of education to all concerned.

Government schools on the other hand have the fabric of school and teachers supplied by the Government, but very often the money runs out and the equipment and teaching resources needed by pupil and teacher alike are none existent.

Private schools are the same as in the UK where fees support the total running of the school.

Whatever school is available, **education for Primary pupils in Zambia is offered 'free'** but, by the time the compulsory uniform is purchased, there is a cost. Add to this that most Primary schools, whether Government or Community, have no issue of educational materials - which then need to be purchased - and it can be seen that education is far from free. This is a major contributor to the fact that less than 75% of pupils in rural community schools complete their Primary education.

Transfer to Secondary school always involves fees and these costs are one of the reasons why many pupils who do

complete their Primary Education, do not transfer to Secondary School.

KATEMWA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

With less than a hundred pupils on its roll this school in Chongwe is a happy 'family' community led by an inspirational lady, Janet.



She has four elements to managing the school - education, spirituality, self-sufficiency and health. She follows the national leads on education and religion and the NASAD aim of self-sufficiency, but it is her health programme which is remarkable. In a country greatly affected by AIDS, **none of her children are HIV positive or an orphan.** This is such a positive indicator of the need for education and the success that can come from its application.

LIBALA BASIC SCHOOL

In Lusaka, we saw Government School buildings that would not be out of place in the UK and looking at the well dressed pupils, one could think that all was well, but the RotaKids of Libala Basic, seen here,



with Andrea Parker, still have to pay for their books, pencils etc. to ensure that they have any school materials to work with. Many families can afford to do so, but the school has received help for those who cannot afford to pay for them in form of Literacy Boxes donated by Bourne End Rotary Club and taken to the school in 2012 by the visiting Wye Valley School Interact Club, as part of their Zambia Project.

NATEMWA LEARNING CENTRE, KACHELE

This is the Kachele (fig) tree, under which the pupils of Kathy Harding's Natemwa Learning Centre are having a lesson.



They always had lessons here in the dry season, while the classrooms were being built, but they struggled in the wet season. Now they have well equipped buildings and as the community continues to develop, there have been year on year improvements in the educational outcomes of the pupils - another indicator that when children receive regular support by way of Literacy Boxes, they will do well. Sadly, Kathy was unable to be our guide the day we visited Natemwa, as she was still nursing a broken foot, but we had a delightful lunch and informative chats about her work and the future direction of NASAD.

ST STEPHENS AGAPE

Our first example of a school charging pupils was in the first school ever to receive a Literacy Box in Lusaka, St. Stephens Agape Community School. Despite abject poverty, they charge 10 kwacha (just £1.25) a term

which enables the school to give a small contribution to support the volunteer teachers, who otherwise have no income.



Parents pay the fees readily as they value education so highly and it also gives them some rights to hold the school accountable for educational returns on their investment, so ensuring standards are as high as funding allows. Here pupils are getting ready for the new term as, with parents, they reflect on last term's assessment with 'their teacher'

MONICA'S ACADEMY

Another example of fee-paying was at Peter Phiri's Monica's Academy - a delightful school converted from Peter's own home!!



The children were well dressed and a delight, BUT what was fascinating was the business model for the school. Monica's Academy was set up as an orphanage for the street children, but it is also a school open to fee paying children and it is this funding that pays for the education of ALL the children. This simple funding model brings together children from the social extremes of Zambia

with the benefit that it enables all children to understand each others way of life, leading to less 'social division' as they grow up.



Enterprise is fundamental to Peter, but Peter's sister, Josephine and her 'girls' also have a business outlook. They make garments for sale to help fund schools in the Divine Care Foundation. Here Jenny Lucock chats to some of the "girls". We were measured for size and a week later, on our departure, we were presented with the most wonderful tailored gifts - Zambian style.

CHAINDA CENTRE

Our final visit in Lusaka was to a community school at the Chainda Centre, run by Dorothy and accessed, as with many schools in Lusaka, up a narrow dust track. Inside we had our final welcome in song before departing Lusaka for Mfuwe.



Dorothy is another of the NASAD ladies to have made a massive improvement in their community school and this one boasts a library well stocked with text books relevant to the Zambian Primary curriculum. As with all the schools we visited, 'used' Literacy

Boxes were in evidence and as here in the library, their main function is 'rat-proof' storage for the school. We found food, books, clothing and sports equipment in Literacy Boxes dating back to 2007!!



AND FINALLY

The whole experience of Zambia has left a big impact. We all feel humbled by the Zambian peoples' cheerfulness and dignity in the face of extreme hardship. We are in awe of how strong is the wish to have an education and the value they place on it. We were left choked as they gave us food, which meant that the schoolchildren we were visiting that day did not eat. As a Trust we feel very strongly that we must honour their wish to be educated, not just tomorrow, but the day after and the day after that. We are pledged to send Literacy Boxes to 'our schools' with a regularity which ensures they have a continuous supply of the day to day necessities of education. **Where we have done this, pupils have moved on to Secondary School and this in a country where less than 75% of children in rural communities complete Primary education!!**

In total we visited 12 of the schools in and around Lusaka that receive our Literacy Boxes but Grace is in touch with many more through her Good Shepherd Ministry. It really is impossible to calculate how many Literacy Boxes are needed to give current recipients continuity but that is our aim; suffice to say that we must significantly increase what we are doing to have a chance of achieving our aim.

FACEBOOK ROUNDUP

Do have a look at our Facebook page www.facebook.com/literacyinabox to find out about all the other Literacy in activity that has been going on over the last few months. You don't need to be a Facebook user to see our content.

You can also access all of our Facebook postings very easily from our website News Events page

www.literacyboxtrust.org.uk/news.html

There are a few December postings which aren't yet on our News Events page. One particular posting we would ask you to have a look at is a [photo album featuring some letters from pupils at Mykhanya Community School to the pupils at Penryn College](#) who raised the money to send them 10 boxes.

If you're not already a Facebook fan then please become one and if you're not a Facebook user just bookmark our page www.facebook.com/literacyinabox and make regular returns.

THE LAST WORDS

Since our last newsletter in August we have packed and dispatched 45 boxes to Zambia bringing our total for this year to over 150. Many of the boxes have gone to the people and schools featured in this Newsletter:-

5 for Grace at Good Shepherd Ministries

5 for Peter Phiri and the various schools he supports

2 for Manaca Community school (page 3)

2 for David Livingstone Community School (page 3)

2 for Katemwa Community School (page 4)

5 for Dorothy at the Chainda Centre (page 5) and

10 for Kathy and the Natemwa Learning Centre (page 5)

Thank you all so much for your support which has made all this possible. I hope this Newsletter has helped you 'feel' the tangible needs of the children of Zambia. It is not the heart-wrenching need of people caught up in a disaster, but it is a real and long-term need as they struggle to survive and grow in their communities and prepare for the world outside.

**They deserve our support
just as much.**

**Please help us to make
the childrens' dreams
come true.**

Operation Sunshine has a container going to Zambia from Tavistock on 1st February next year so, this Christmas, do spare a thought for the Zambia children you have read about and help us to send as many boxes as possible.



**A very happy Christmas to you all from
everyone at Literacy in a Box.**