

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE JULY 2009 ZAMBIA TRIP

Abstract: This main goals of this trip were to facilitate new changes in Management at the orphanage, to induct the new ZOA Chairperson into his role, to check on (and accelerate where necessary) progress and expenditure of ZOA funds at the orphanage including grants from various sources, and to set goals for the 2010 trip(s) & a budget for the next financial year. These goals were fully achieved, plus a lot more that was not anticipated! ZOA should now have full confidence in the future of the orphanage following the significant achievements of this trip which are described below.

Group members

Mr Angus Kamandete Chuma (a Malawian assuming the new role of 'Managing Director' for the orphanage) was welcomed in Lusaka by a small contingent consisting of Mr John Talbot (new ZOA Chairperson), Mrs Emily Talbot (St George's teacher), Mr Simon Underhill (ex-volunteer teacher in Serenje 2003-5), Mr Mattia Rosati (former St George's student & participant in the 2008 Zambia trip) and Mr Kevin Gilbert ('Sponsor-Facilitator' for the Serenje Orphanages). All members of the group worked together as a team and each contributed significantly to the success of the visit and therefore no attempt has been made in this report to single out individual efforts.

1) transition to new orphanage Management

In Serenje, ***'Kamandete' was greatly assisted by the group*** in assuming his new role.



Mattia in Kamandete's new office at the orphanage. Furniture was purchased locally, as well as files and other essential stationery.

Very productive meetings were held with the Manager (Mr Alouis Mwansa), during which expenditure and salaries were carefully reviewed. ***A budget for the next year (1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010) was drawn up.*** In view of the present weakness of the Zambian Kwacha, it was found that ***€16,000*** could still sustain the orphanage's annual running costs. Indeed, this amount has already been transferred into the orphanage bank account by ZOA so that the running costs of the orphanage until 30 June 2010 are now in place.

Kamandete was then introduced to staff. Each staff member in turn then met privately with Kamandete and were advised of **significant pay-rises plus clear job descriptions** which they discussed with him.

Besides the new role of Managing Director, **the new key position of Matron was filled** after interviews. Her name is Mrs Chisenga. She lives close to the orphanage, is a mother with teenage children, has held responsible positions in the past, and is presently studying a relevant social work course through distance education.

2) Rectifying Social Welfare Department concerns

A recent Social Welfare inspection had raised several matters which required immediate attention. These matters included the necessity to provide **fire extinguishers** in the dormitories – two extinguishers have now been purchased from Lusaka. Other concerns were addressed and are described below:

More hygienic eating is now taking place after the replacement of old floor mats with **new locally-made tables and benches**.



Lunchtime in the dormitory lounge with the new tables in use

The **mosquito nets** also had to be washed and re-treated.



Mosquito nets drying at the Kasholela Guesthouse

It was a great opportunity to try out the **washing machine (shown below)** purchased using the **Ustinov Outreach Grant** of 2008. The Carers, who usually

wash everything by hand, were thus freed of this potentially hazardous task. Since it was 'National Youth Week', the local hospital were then able to treat the clean mosquito nets at no charge to us.



However, the low water pressure at the Guesthouse (water comes from an overhead tank) meant that the machine took hours to fill. It is hoped that the mains water pressure at the orphanage will allow for better operation. Orphanage staff were trained in the operation of the machine, the first of its kind in Serenje. ***Acceleration of construction work involving the canteen and laundry was achieved.*** These buildings are essential in ensuring that the next Social Welfare inspection in September 2009 will have a positive outcome.



Builder and workers next to the future laundry-canteen building

Another challenge facing the orphanage was the fact that its ***annual registration*** with the local Registrar's Office had not been carried out since 2004. This was rectified through the provision of the necessary annual reports and financial statements for the past 5 years, plus cumulative payments for the annual fees required. Fortunately, we managed to avoid a substantial fine for this negligence since the Accountant (Mr Elias Hara) and the Secretary (Mr Jimmy Nsama) had kept detailed records of the orphanage activities.

Social Welfare also expressed concern that the children did not have **storage lockers for their clothing**. Our group members designed simple lockers which are now being built by local carpenters – these (22 of them) will be completed by the start of the next school term in September. The **cleanliness of the dormitories and washrooms has also been improved** with the appointment of the Matron who has initiated new procedures and routines to be followed by the Carers.



A glimpse of the Girls' Dormitory – between each bunkbed, there is now a locker for clothing

3) Purchase of Sewing machines and clothing

Two 'treadle' Singer sewing machines were purchased in Lusaka using the funds donated by the St George's La Storta Junior School. Older children will be gradually trained on these machines so that they can make and repair uniforms and other clothing. Because of an unusually cold winter in Serenje, at the request of the Manager, funds from an anonymous donor at 'Ambrit International School' were used to **purchase urgently needed clothing for the orphanage children** from stores in Lusaka to supplement the 3 suitcases of donated clothing taken out by the Group which were also from another anonymous Ambrit parent donor.



The Matron and a Nightwatchman using the two sewing machines to make curtains out of surplus bedsheets.

4) Progress with the FAO Grant of 2007



Mr Kalunga of the District Agriculture Office points to the new furrow which will carry stream water through the orphanage land so that vegetables can be grown as well as a fish-farm pond established.

Kevin Gilbert collected the money for the grant from the FAO office in Lusaka, and was therefore able to facilitate swift progress on this grant. The furrow has now been dug and is in the process of being bricked. Water should be flowing soon.

UNWG Chicken-Run Grant of 2008 progress – This project has been hampered by FAO project delays (part of the original FAO project also had designated funds towards the chicken run). It is now ***a question of capital item priorities***. i.e. work on the chicken run is scheduled fourth on the list after (a) completion of the canteen-laundry buildings, (b) urgent fencing sections, (c) FAO furrow.

5) The Orphanage Truck

Mr Mwansa (the Board Chairperson of the orphanage) made the purchase just before the arrival of the group. A photo of the vehicle is shown below:



Only joking!



This is the vehicle – a Mitsubishi Canter 3.5tonne – very useful for transporting construction materials and children.

One negative outcome arising from the protracted purchase of the truck by Mr Mwansa (truck purchase was authorised by ZOA over a year ago!) was that the Zambian Kwacha devalued significantly over the past year and the cost of the truck was double of what it had been last July. Consequently, money designated for other capital works (the laundry & canteen construction, etc) was used on this item, now leaving these other projects starved of necessary funds. Consequently, the group has sent ***urgent requests to ZOA and SOA for additional replacement funds so that other vital capital works may be completed as originally scheduled.*** Learning from this, Kamandete is already maintaining running totals of expenditure on each separate capital item and understands the ***necessity to halt expenditure when they reach budget allocations***, as well as the need for capital projects to be ***completed within the expected time limits.*** ***A bicycle was also purchased for use by the Manager and Leading Hand*** – this is a cost-saving exercise since distances across to the town from the orphanage are significant and the presence of a bicycle will eliminate the temptation to use the truck for trivial errands.

6) The Australian Mechanics Workshop Initiative

An exciting opportunity has arisen in which a group of Australian mechanics have obtained the backing from the Australian automotive industry to establish a workshop in Serenje which will allow local servicing and repairs to vehicles instead of them having to be taken 500km to Lusaka. As a result of our discussions, it was decided that ***profits from this enterprise will be distributed equally between the two orphanages in Serenje*** – i.e. the 'Serenje Orphans School Home' and the 'HMP Chibobo Orphanage'. No capital investment is required of ZOA, beyond the present commitment to share the cost of training a local mechanic for the project and the hope that ZOA will also contribute 50% towards the training of a second mechanic (i.e. about €900 would be needed from ZOA). A land application has already been lodged (in a joint application by both orphanages) with the Serenje Council, and Kevin Gilbert has the task of obtaining a grant of about €50,000 for the construction of the building to house the workshop equipment already pledged by the Australians through their business connections.



The Australian mechanics instruct Kamandete how to carry out basic weekly maintenance checks on the new truck.

A 'Code of Use' for the truck has been prepared (e.g. one designated and qualified driver only), as well as a Maintenance Schedule and Logbook.

7) Goals for the 2010 Zambia Trip(s) including the Selection of a suitable site for the 'Community Childrens Playground' to be built by St George's participants.

Mr Karl Rogers (St George's teacher and a Staff Leader from the 2008 Zambia trip) has proposed this community playground project as a way of enhancing local goodwill towards the orphanage. After discussions with the Serenje District Council, it was decided ***that the best site available is that within a local community school*** which is very poorly equipped. The school management are delighted with the offer of the playground.



This is the site chosen for the Community Playground. It is within the local 'Handbar Kapotwe Community School' in Serenje where some 16 of our orphans attend their schooling.

In addition to the construction of the community playground, ***a list of other goals for the 2010 Zambia trip(s) have been drawn up*** and the process to select persons for next year's trip(s) can now commence. These goals include painting and decorating the dormitories, painting sections of wall fencing, planting trees and hedges along the fence line, evaluating and enhancing the educational opportunities of each child at the orphanage, ongoing monitoring and recording of the childrens' weight and growth, and the use of music and drama to enhance the self-esteem and communication of the children.

8) Promotion of a spirit of cooperation between the orphanages in Serenje.

Perhaps one of the most pleasing outcomes of the trip was the high degree of cooperation and goodwill that now exists between the 'Serenje Orphans School home' and the 'HMP Chibobo Orphanage'. A lot of this is due to the excellent rapport that has been struck up between the two dynamic young Managing Directors Staivous Mulumba and Kamandete Chuma. Two visits were made to Chibobo on this trip, the most memorable one being to view the **annual boys' football and girls' basketball challenge matches between the orphanages**.



The 'Abeauty Orphans Annual Challenge Trophies' won in 2009 by Chibobo. The late Abeauty Chibuye was a co-founder of the HMP Chibobo Orphanage

Another example of this wonderful spirit of cooperation has been demonstrated with an initiative by Kamandete and Staivous to organise with the local Social Welfare personnel a **staff training day during the most recent holidays for the Carers employed** by both orphanages. By doing this together, they have reduced costs and will satisfy another concern from the same Social Welfare authorities about the poor qualifications of the Carers in both orphanages since participants will also receive certificates for the training they will receive.



Mattia, Staivous, Kamandete & Simon – working together for the orphans



Another significant 'memorial' was also installed within the Dormitory Common Room at the Serenje Orphanage. It records the significant contributions made by the two schools (one Australian, one Italian) in building the orphanage dormitory block as well as dedicating the building to the memory of the late Headmaster of St George's, Mr Nicholas Johnson.

9) Ongoing maintenance of the dormitory block.

Perhaps the most disappointing observation of this visit was the unexpected deterioration of the dormitory block. Leaks in the metal roof had left large dark stains on various parts of the ceilings. Plumbing in the washrooms had come away from the walls, a toilet was unoperational due to a simple pipe breakage, parts of the ceiling were sagging, two doors were broken. All of these maintenance problems had arisen because cheap components were used during construction, or because of poor supervision of the tradesmen during construction. Even more disturbing was the obvious fact that the Manager had not been able to devote enough time to the orphanage in recent months and therefore simple repairs to these items had not been effected.

Our group immediately ***sealed the leaking roof sections and repainted*** the soiled ceiling sections. Repairing the remaining items however required the skills of expert tradesmen. Fortunately, we have now ***engaged a regular maintenance person***, Mr Lungu (who can turn his hand to plumbing, carpentry, welding, electricity, etc.) to effect the repairs and be on call to ensure that all future emergency and other repairs are immediately attended to. Indeed, he has already repaired the doors, fixed the plumbing, and will be repairing the ceiling sag during the next school holidays. His invaluable ongoing commitment has now been cemented by the provision of a surplus second-hand computer to him (donated by St George's) in exchange for his services which will not require future financial payment.

10) Connection of the site to the national electricity grid (ZESCO).

At present, the orphanage dormitory block is wired but not yet connected to the Zambia electricity grid operated by ZESCO. Each night, from about 7pm to 10pm, a diesel generator is being used to power the site. This is costing the orphanage about twice what it would have to pay for electricity from ZESCO. However, the capital cost for connecting the site to the grid is ZK19m (about €2,700). This is due to the need to provide a transformer so that future developments at the orphanage will not be restricted by our electricity connection. ***The visiting group held meetings with ZESCO in Lusaka and in Serenje to verify the enormous connection cost.***

Fortunately, a St George's alumni, Mr Ceaser Siwale, has been using his local connections and influence on our behalf, and there is now a strong possibility that the Zambia 'Rural Electrification Authority' (REA) may be able to meet part of our

ZESCO connection bill...a REA representative visited the site whilst we were there and has apparently supported our case...we wait now with baited breath! Whatever the outcome of the REA support, we will have to connect to ZESCO soon – once the bill is paid, connection will take several more weeks.

11) A Volunteer House for 'Gap Year' students from St George's

The group spent significant time trying to assist Kamandete to find a suitable house to rent. This was the result of a recommendation from ZAG that the new Managing Director should receive a housing allowance. At the same time, we were investigating the proposal by Mr Marco Gemelli (Assistant Head of 6th Form at St George's, and a Staff Leader from the 2006 and 2008 Zambia trips) that 'Gap Year' students from St George's spend part of their year (e.g. 2 months) at our Serenje orphanage. Eventually, we came up with the concept of a 'Volunteer House' which could achieve both objectives. Therefore, ***a large 4 bedroomed newly built house close to the orphanage has therefore been leased for 3 years by the orphanage*** at a fixed cost of ZK10.8m per year (equals about €1,500 per year). This house will provide permanent accommodation for the new Managing Director from 1 October 2009. Kamandete and wife-to-be will occupy one bedroom, whilst the other three rooms will be equipped to house up to 12 volunteers at a time (5 bunk-beds and one double bed). These volunteers could consist of 12 students and staff from St George's in July 2010 – it is estimated that a charge of ZK50,000 for each volunteer (as is the present cheapest cost at our usual Serenje Guesthouse) for the 2 weeks, will pay for most of the first year's lease (i.e. $12 \times \text{ZK}50,000 \times 14 / 7000 = \text{€}1200$). As far as Gap Year students are concerned, it is proposed to limit numbers to 3 maximum at any one time, for periods of no more than 2 months – this will allow a valuable experience for school leavers, with useful advantage to the orphanage children, as well as reasonable privacy in their own home for Kamandete and wife. It is also expected that Gap Year students will pay a small fee towards their accommodation (something like €50 per week) to help cover electricity and water costs.

It is hoped that Marco Gemelli and/or ZOA will submit an application to FSG for a once-off grant of the estimated €4000 to allow suitable local furniture to be purchased to equip this Volunteer House.



The nearly completed 'Volunteer House' located in a safe area near to the orphanage.

12) Updating the records of each child at the orphanage, enhancing their diet, and increasing numbers of children to be accommodated

The new budget described earlier, includes extra provision for including **more fruit in the childrens' meals**, the result of a ZOA/ZAG recommendation.

	Breakfast	LUNCH	Dinner
Monday	Tea with bread & butter	Chicken with Fish & Veg	Chicken with Eggs & Veg
Tuesday	Same with G/ma's	Nshima with beans & Veg	Chicken with eggs, potatoes & Veg
Wednesday	Tea with bread & butter	Nshima with Fish & Veg	Chicken with meat & Veg
Thursday	Same with milk	Chicken with Eggs & Veg	Chicken with beans & Veg
Friday	Tea with bread & butter	Rice with Chicken & Veg & Fruits	
	Fruits will be served in planned order		

The regular Menu on display now to ensure that a balanced diet is adhered to.

The **records of each child being cared for at the orphanage were updated on the computer database** held by the Managing Director. These records contain details of weight, height, vaccinations, HIV testing and educational progress. It is great to observe significant gains in weight and height by most children since they were last measured a year ago, but even more importantly, their general happiness was very obvious to all of us. Kamandete is very supportive of adding another two bunk-beds to the dormitories so that **we can take in a further 4 needy children**, making a total of 44 orphans under care. There is sufficient room in each dormitory, and we can reclaim 2 unused bunk-beds from Chobobo Orphanage so that set-up costs will be minimal.

13) Playing and interacting with the children

Group **members spent time with the children whenever possible**, whether it be on the football field with the boys, playing volleyball with the girls, or interacting on the playground. Getting to know each individual by name and nature is really important. Usually, the annual school trips allow significantly more interaction than is possible with such a small group like ours.



The glockenspiels and recorders donated by St George's proved to be a great success



Relaxing with the children on the porch in the warm afternoon sun is a memorable experience

12) Fencing and Environmental Enhancement

A major concern in recent months has been encroachment of neighbours on to our orphanage land, leading to disputes which have required Council mediation. Without clear demarcation with fencing, this will continue to be a problem, especially since illegal squatters are now making mudbricks and growing their own crops next to the stream and close to orphanage land. Their work is causing severe land degradation and also contaminating the stream water. Another concern is the number of persons who are taking short-cuts across orphanage land and passing very close to the dormitory buildings. Opportunist theft is therefore a constant worry to Management.

Our group investigated the cost of fencing the property using a combination of a brick wall and wire fencing. The latter is probably not practical, since it is well known that your wire fence can sometimes also be stolen! Added to this is the very high cost of fencing the entire perimeter of the orphanage site (about 800metres). So, we have come up with ***the idea to construct several key 'markers' built of local bricks and cement – these are essentially sections of wall placed strategically*** (e.g. in corners, or across illegal paths) to define the orphanage boundaries. Coupling this idea with 3 signs to be erected near the illegal paths and our own construction of 'legal' paths alongside our boundaries, will hopefully eliminate the threats explained above.



The builder making the first prototype 'wall marker' to define orphanage land

Once these key markers are in place, then ***the plan is to use the St George's Nomentana Junior School 'Eco Grant' to plant trees and/or bushes along the perimeter so that eventually there will be a natural hedge around the property.***

KG (10 Aug 2009)