

The 2012 CDL visit to Zambia

Overview by the Founder of the orphanage, Kevin Gilbert

This was the 2nd visit by CDL students to the orphanage supported by ZOA, and the 5th such trip with which I have been associated. These 14 students were exemplary in terms of their commitment, hard work, and self-motivation. Prior to the trip, they raised funds, which allowed us to make a significant impact in the short time we were at the orphanage. Socially, they were also a great team who supported each other fully. So too were my two experienced and dedicated staff colleagues, Nicky Gilbert and Ryan Blyth, without whom this visit would not have been so wonderfully successful.

With such a dynamic group, much was accomplished during our short time in Serenje. Here is a summary of our achievements, which will then be followed by a more personal account by each participant.

- a) A clothing inventory was carried out, and then **every child was outfitted with new school shoes and a basic set of new clothing** purchased from local stores.
- b) The children were exposed to **a concentrated educational program** over the 2 weeks. This was continued by our St George's (Rome) ZOA partners for a further 2 weeks after we departed, and the 2012/13 orphanage budget now includes increased on-going educational support for the children, also supported through the 2011 Ustinov Foundation Grant. A short video of how this grant is being utilized has been put together by Ryan Blyth: [2012 CDL Trip Video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT-Bi5tTx3I \)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT-Bi5tTx3I)
- c) The **playground equipment** was repaired and enhanced (a see-saw was constructed).
- d) Over **50 fruit trees were purchased and planted** on the site. Perimeter fencing will be supported by the planting of a hedge/trees during the rainy season.
- e) The **new older Girls' dormitory building was painted**, inside and out. Decorations of the sick-bay will now be done by the St George's team, and funds have been left to equip the room with standard medicines and furniture.
- f) The **health and educational records for each child were updated** after each child was weighed and measured.
- g) **Priorities at the orphanage were established** for the next 15 months. In summary, the orphanage capacity will remain in the short-term at 44 children with **no further major constructions**. The newly completed buildings will provide separate dormitories for the older boys and girls, a sick-bay, a store-room, and a skills area (likely to be suitable for wood-work and metal-work). The **focus for the next year must be on education** and specifically, acquisition of English by the children. **Capital expenses** will be limited to repairs to the older dormitory roofing, building a chicken-run, improvements to the site's drainage system, completing the perimeter fencing and front gate, and beautification of the site.

h) A **Board of Management meeting** was held at which 3 of our students participated. Their presence impressed the members who adopted a recommendation that future Board meetings also include representatives from the older orphans themselves. From this meeting, various factors emerged which were then used to **establish the 2012-13 budget for the running of the orphanage**. Significant increases in the educational and clothing allowances for the children and in staff salaries (accompanied by clear individual targets) were approved after consultation with our St George's ZOA partner school. Kenneth Malilo was appointed as the **Assistant Managing Director**, with a job description focusing strongly on improving procedures at the orphanage in its next phase of **consolidation** after a very rapid and successful building program by Kamandete Chuma, the dynamic Managing Director. In order to protect all older girls from possible abuse in the homes of guardians, the decision was taken to allow these **adolescent girls to remain on-site on week-ends under the care of a House Mother**. At the meeting, a request was made for **hot water geysers** to be installed so that the children may wash comfortably during the cold winter months – the CDL students immediately took up a collection from their spending money (totaling US\$520) towards this project. Successful application for an ECIS Outreach Grant was made to supplement this amount. The geysers were installed before the winter of 2013.