



# Linking schools, counting cabbages and changing the world

## Thirty schools

In summer 2007, I spent four weeks in Zambia visiting schools, meeting with staff and students, collecting information and taking photographs. The project, run by a London-based charity called African Revival ([www.africanrevival.org](http://www.africanrevival.org)), aims to link 30 schools in Hertfordshire in England with 30 schools in Kalomo in Zambia. My job was to create a profile for each of the Zambian schools so that information could be used by each of the corresponding English schools.

The idea is that the staff and students in schools in the UK-Zambia link project will share ideas and experiences. There is also scope in the long-term for teacher exchange visits through sponsorship from the Department for International



Ruth Mollart went to Uganda in 2004 with Soapbox Trust. In 2006 she participated in a Christian education and outreach project in Durban (see: 'Soul Action in South Africa', *ACT Now*, Spring 2007). In 2007 Ruth visited Zambia with African Revival.

Before completing a PGCE at Leeds University, Ruth was a youth worker for St Matthew's Church and Alcester Deanery in the Midlands. She has an MA in Theology from Ripon and York St John and currently works at Goffs School in Hertfordshire as an English, drama and media teacher.

Development (DfID). And, of course, it would be great if the UK schools could fundraise for their Zambian partner schools.

What follows are edited extracts from my diary ...

### Thursday 26 July 2007

Today has been an interesting day. We left at 7.30am and visited six rural government schools. The infrastructure, number of students and resources varied dramatically. The highlight of the day for me was visiting Zyangale. There we met the headteacher and deputy. As we toured the campus some girls sang a song of protection over us, they then sang about meeting God as we are. The headteacher explained that about 60 of the students are boarders. When we saw the girls' accommodation we were shocked. Thirty girls slept in a tiny house; there were no mattresses and just a few blankets. I reflected on how beautiful and cheerful the singers of the songs of praise and protection had been. I would never have guessed the poverty and discomfort they endured day by day. I hope that when Zyangale is linked with a school in Hertfordshire, funds raised by students in England will help to provide, amongst other things, mattresses for the Zambian students.

None of the Zambian schools I visited had anywhere near enough desks. The ratios of pupils per desk varied between schools, but not one of the schools had even half the number of desks required. But furniture is not the only thing in short supply. There are not enough teachers to go round either. Lack of government funds for education means many schools are forced to find money elsewhere. I was told that often the head of a village taxes the local community to raise extra

funds to cover the wages of extra teachers. This tax also comes into play when there's a specific need at a school, for example a new bore hole or additional pit latrines. Money is collected from the villagers and pooled. If there's not enough money to finish, then work stops until more funds are raised. If people cannot give money they give time. Every single school we visited had a building project 'underway' – some had been going for months, others for years!

Zambian headteachers and teachers are keen to share their resources and ideas with teachers from the UK. All stated in our discussions that they thought their school would benefit a great deal from the project. Whilst I agree with this wholeheartedly, I just wonder if pupils, parents and staff in UK schools realise how much we have to learn from Zambians.

When we arrived back at the farm, about 6.30pm, we got out of the pick-up and helped the others pick and pack cabbages for market tomorrow. That was an experience. I can honestly say that was the first time I have ever counted 150 cabbages in the dark!

### *Friday 27 July 2007*

Today we visited the school here on the farm. There's a compound at the back where most of the workers live, and the school has three teachers. We met the children in Grades 1 and 2 and led some games which went down well (although I think some things got lost in translation).

The farm is the base for African Revival in Kalomo District. Around 250 workers live on the farm.

### *Thirty girls slept in a tiny house; there were no mattresses and just a few blankets*



Travel in rural Zambia is not always straightforward

African Revival is committed to making life better for them all; 30 per cent of the profits from the farm go into the development of the area. As well as the school there is a pre-school, a women's community group, micro-finance projects and adult education classes.

This evening I taught the adult education class. I drove the pick-up over a very rickety bridge up to the school. It was pitch black, and the only light around was from small fires and a single bulb that runs off a battery pack. The adult students were ace, and we got through several different ways of starting a sentence. Bruce, the class' regular teacher, translated everything I said into Tonga and explained what was going on. I had a really good time and it was refreshing to be with keen learners. Bruce told me he finished Grade 12 but had to save for three years to pick up his certificate because fees were payable before the certificate was released. I think the fees were about £40.

### *Monday 30 July 2007*

We took a trip up to Namwianga to see a big rural health centre in Kalomo. It's impressive, and there are loads of Zambian healthcare workers who have been trained there. There are also three people from the farm who have taken training there, to be able to manage the health post here at the farm. Namwianga also send workers once a month to do a baby clinic and check the health of the under-fives in the compound.

On the way back we visited Kineton School, although the holidays have started. When we arrived we gave books, pencils and other materials to the teachers. They were delighted with these resources and told us the children are very excited about exchanging letters, ideas and experiences

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with their UK partner school. Kineton School is quite literally a small mud shack with a thatched roof and a blackboard inside. They have so little! Although the schools linking programme is not just about UK schools raising funds, it will be so good for them!

We also visited the high school in Kalomo. There are around 1,250 students. Of these, around 950 are boarders. The school has classroom blocks and limited equipment, but looks like a good place to study. We were shown around the girls dorm, and from what we saw, there is very little space and quite poor sanitation: just eight showers for 450 girls! However, the students do get fed – we were shown into the kitchen where ‘saap’ (a lentilly porridge) is prepared. There were loads of cabbages in the kitchen too. This made me think of school dinners back in the UK. Mmm!

*Tuesday 31 July 2007*

We met the main man for building inspections. He came to assess the school that is being built on the farm, and also the school that African Revival are building at Bowood.

Being here just makes me think what a difference ‘serving’ makes to *me*, whereas the actual aim is to make a difference to the people around me. That’s not to say there’s not a work going on for the people here, it’s just that I can clearly see my part in the picture. Or, at least, what I think is my part in the picture: I’m only a little wheel in the scheme of things. I wonder: are there any other little wheels out there? Wheels that are ready to turn, to be changed from the inside out? To do their bit – which is not ‘their bit’ really, but someone else’s! Does that make sense?! And another question: do



Children sing and dance together

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our wheels grow, or do they just become smoother?

I would love to bring groups of young people from the UK to Zambia. The problem is, I can think of so many people who it would benefit. So very many! Maybe some of them would come, and would help to make a difference in God’s world.

### **An invitation to all**

Are you keen to play a part in changing the world and, in the process, being personally transformed? If so, you can become a world-changer just by doing what you can. Are you ready to give up some of your comforts and possessions in order to help others who have so much less? Are you – and your school – ready to engage in a journey that will probably change the way you see the world? I’m hoping that there will be others with me when I next return to Zambia. If you feel called to change someone else’s life and to have your life changed by them in return, then this could be for you. If you feel God calling you to do something challenging and sacrificial, why not prayerfully consider getting involved in African Revival? Something’s got to change. Will you?

■ Ruth Mollart

### **Contact information**

Anyone interested in schools linking should email Amy Tew, the African Revival schools worker based at Goffs School, at [ate@goffs.herts.sch.uk](mailto:ate@goffs.herts.sch.uk) or use the contact page on the African Revival website [www.africanrevival.org](http://www.africanrevival.org)

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