

Report on Zambia for the Sounds-Write website

May 2015

I have just returned from an amazing trip to Zambia. I was originally asked to go out to run a course at St Agatha's Catholic Primary School, in Mongu, in the Western Province. The school was established and is supported by the Catholic community. Caron Callaghan, who lives in Bletchley, Milton Keynes, works tirelessly to raise money in her diocese and at St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, where she works. They organise many fundraising activities, which help to provide resources for the school and sponsorship for children to attend. At the heart of the catholic community in Mongu are the Comboni Sisters, who support the many needy families in the area and can monitor and advise on how the money is spent.

The Sisters of the Holy Spirit, in the neighbouring diocese in Limulunga, heard about the course and asked if they too could have the training for their teachers at St Lawrence's Primary School and the nursery, which was established as a Feeding Programme but has evolved into provision of education for 3-5 year olds. Finally, the Comboni Sisters in Lusaka asked if we could fit them in too, so a third course was arranged at St Monica's Catholic Primary School in Lusaka.

All three courses were well attended, despite being in the Easter holidays. The teachers were very keen to learn and develop their skills. They really appreciated the opportunity to learn more about phonics and be given such a well sequenced and structured programme as Sounds-Write. I have no doubt that they will endeavour to put into practice, the methods they have learnt, despite the limitations of their working environment.

Lusaka



Emily Cunningham is a trainee teacher from Milton Keynes. She was a great help to me - organising the IT and helping to monitor the practice.

The teachers were from St Monica's, St Daniel's, St Francis' and the Women's Skills Centre.



Mongu



Many of the children live in these houses made out of reeds. Ikasaya lives with his grandmother in one room. They were sleeping on the floor. We bought them mattresses, but they were not going to take the plastic off, as the roof leaks. Ikasaya is being sponsored so that he can attend school.

Emily helps me demonstrate Lesson 1.



The teachers were from St Agatha's, Village of Hope and four were teachers of adults in the Mandanga Community.

Limulunga

Practising Lesson 11





The trainees are very proud of their certificates. There were teachers from the Project of Hope – the feeding programme, St Lawrence's, two from the Teacher Training College and 3 from St Benedict's in Mombo. They had walked for over two hours to reach the venue. They slept on the floor for two nights and had the two hour walk back, on the last day, in the 30 degree heat! That's dedication!

One of the classrooms at the Project of Hope. Over 30 children are taught in here!



Evidence of Unit 1! The other two classrooms can be seen in the background.

The hospitality we received in each location was wonderful. We took a laptop and small projector with us, which we left in Mongu for the new Women's Skills Centre to use in the future. There is always the problem of intermittent power when working in an African country, so I was prepared to deliver the course, without the aid of the PowerPoint, when necessary. I hadn't, however, anticipated the problem of teaching when it rained! The noise on the tin roof in Mongu was so great, we had to abandon the course for over two hours on two consecutive days, as communication was impossible! Despite the problems, the courses were a huge success and very much appreciated. It was a real privilege to meet such wonderful, dedicated people. I hope we have played just a small part in helping them provide the children with an education that will, hopefully, be their passport out of poverty.