



The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Making a difference in rural Namibia

NEWSLETTER

No: 15

May 2012

Chronic overcrowding prompts new project

Having completed the kitchen and covered seating area at Omuhaturua Primary School Hostel in October 2011, Linda and Roger were invited to see the conditions at another hostel at Eiseb Primary School, which is some 167 kms deeper into the bush near the border with Botswana. So during their visit in March 2012, accompanied by a regional counsellor, an official from the Regional Ministry of Education and a representative from Komeho, the Foundation's ngo partner, they travelled deep into the bush to visit the Hostel, where they saw for themselves the chronic overcrowding in the hostel dormitories. Roger commented 'it was very upsetting to see how the children slept, for instance, the girls dormitory accommodates sixty-six pupils with twelve bunk beds, most of which are broken. Those without beds sleep on the floor. The same goes for the forty boys who have eight bunk beds and again the majority sleep on the floor. There are also no showers and the children wash by pouring buckets of water over each other'.

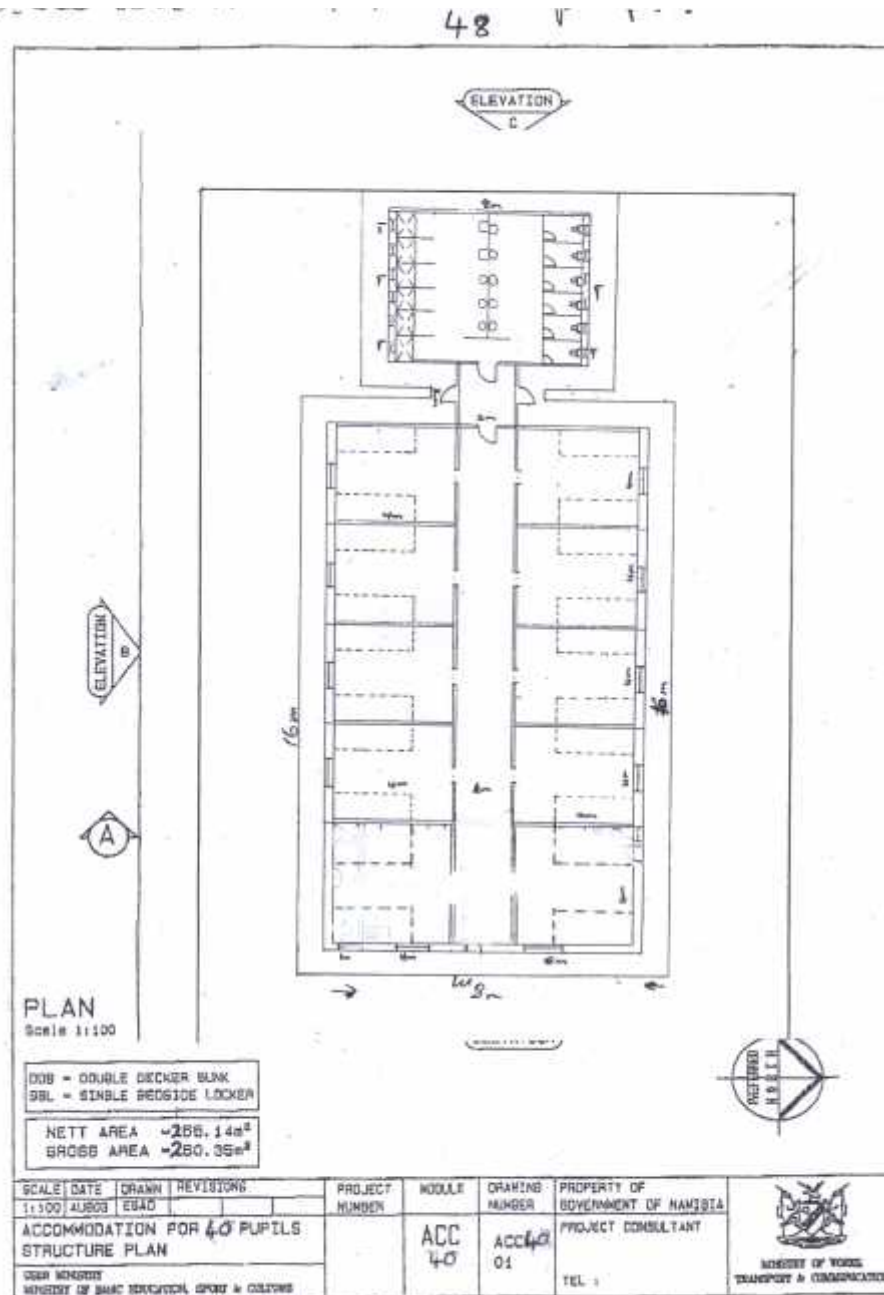


This is the girls dormitory with the majority of the girls sleeping on the floor with broken beds against the wall. Even with new beds there is not enough room to accommodate them.

A subsequent meeting with the Regional Director of Education established the project and its priorities as follows:

1. Construction of a third dormitory with showers and additional toilets.
2. Purchase of 53 bunk beds and 106 sets of bedding (mattresses, blankets and pillows)
3. Tiling of existing dormitory floors.
4. Purchase of trunks for personal items.
5. Construction of a kitchen and shaded eating area.

The Ministry of Works for the Omaheke region have standard plans and costings for hostel dormitories. Phase 1, the construction of a third dormitory, showers and additional toilets will cost £92,000 of which £25,000 has already been raised by the Foundation which is actively seeking grants and donations for the balance.



Plan of the new dormitory for Eiseb Primary School Hostel (Ministry of Works)

MARCH TRIP 2012

WORKING WITH THE BULLENS AND BECOMING THE 'SISTER' IN OJTIMANANGOMBE

In March 2012, Linda and Roger returned to the village of Otjimanangombe in the Omaheke province accompanied by an army nurse, Natalie Thompson. This is the first time the Foundation has taken a volunteer on a trip with them, and below is her account.

My name is Natalie Thompson aged 25. I am a registered adult nurse, and at the time of travelling with Roger and Linda Bullen I was working as a military nurse. I was the first privileged volunteer to travel over to Namibia and work with the Catherine Bullen Foundation. I could write a book on my experience in just two weeks with the Bullen family; however I will control myself and keep it as short as possible.

I made contact with Roger and Linda two years ago through contact with a family friend of theirs. I enquired about going over to Namibia to help nurse in a clinic for a couple of weeks. Having worked in Africa before, I was aware of some of the challenges faced within the healthcare system. This would be my first trip to Namibia. Due to unforeseen circumstances I could not travel with them in 2011, but eventually got there in March 2012 for two weeks. I was kept up to date about the charity and kept in regular contact with Roger by email for almost two years.

I flew out to Namibia and was met by Roger and Linda at the airport at Windhoek. From there we went to a lodge called the Olive Grove before travelling up to Ojtimanangombe the next day where the clinic is situated. The following two weeks was crammed with nursing as a volunteer in clinics, schools and outreach projects. On outreach we took a 4 x 4 and drove out into 'the bush' whereby we would assess the healthcare needs of families and treat as best as we could from the back of a vehicle.



Myself and a San child during our Outreach trip, wrapped in a blanket knitted by ladies from West Mersea

Back in the clinic we were very busy on Mondays with a constant flow of clients ranging from all ages and presenting with a wide variety of primary health care issues. The HIV expert Julia worked hard and I got the opportunity to shadow some of her work. We had one doctor's visit for two hours in duration which happens once monthly. He could only assess and treat the more complex cases. Alongside with the doctor there is a dentist and ophthalmic doctor, again whom I spent some time with. I was working as an intensive care nurse in the military so my experiences in Namibia tested many other clinical skills I hadn't used in years as well as testing my language skills. I'm from the North East of England, so you can only imagine the issues the local Namibian population had understanding my version of the English language!

I attended meetings with Roger and Linda to discuss their future plans for the charity, monitor their current project and building networks to attempt to get some help to fund their projects. Whilst the Catherine Bullen Foundation has achieved so much in just eight years,

they are none the less a small charity run by Roger and Linda who have full time jobs in the UK devoting a large proportion of their spare time to their Foundation.

I was lucky to have a bed for the two weeks as the school secretary was kind enough to offer me her little house which was very comfortable. I ate all my meals with Roger and Linda and they involved me in all their charities activities. Not only did I get exposure to nursing in Africa but I learnt a lot about running a charity and the amount of organisation and dedication required to make it a success. The Bullens add their own personal touch to their Foundation which is evident in the village of Ojtimanangombe as many villagers are thankful and treat Linda and Roger as family. In fact they are actually referred to as 'mom' and 'dad' by some of the locals, even by people older than themselves. By the end of the two weeks I became 'sister Natalie.'

This year it was the celebration of Independence Day in Namibia whilst we were there and the Bullens organised a football and netball tournament for both the school at Ojtimanangombe and local villages. The tournaments were really competitive and there were cups provided for the winners.



One of the school teams playing in the football tournament

We also celebrated the day with a disco for the hostel children where we could have hosted the 'Namibia's got talent' contest. They all had moves like Jagger and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



Children at the hostel enjoying the Independence Day disco

Roger and Linda have funded a clinic, hostel, beds, mattresses, and kitchen and water tanks in one of the most rural parts of Namibia. Their next project will be even further afield where often enough they struggle to get healthcare staff as the area is so remote. Therefore the Catherine Bullen Foundation is supporting improvement in areas where most other charities fail to get to and the government struggle to get staff to.



The next project for the Catherine Bullen Foundation is to provide beds for these hostel children. I'm sure you would agree it is necessary

Whilst in Namibia it wasn't all work. We managed to attend a birthday party of Barbara Scharfbillig an aid worker with the German charity Suni E.V who was working with a group of volunteers on a project in Gobabis, three hours away from the village. The party was thrown by her and the San people, who are some of the most poverty stricken people in Namibia. They held a barbeque and performed their traditional dancing for the volunteers who had built their village a school. It was interesting seeing the contrast of cultures of people living in the same society.



San children performing traditional dances.

One of the most remarkable things about the Catherine Bullen Foundation is that it would not have been started was it not for the tragedy that struck the Bullen family a decade ago. Roger and Linda would not have visited Africa, but they would have listened to their daughter Catherine's version of it. The Catherine Bullen Foundation is the silver lining for so many Namibians out in remote areas. It's the health care system for a village, it's the possibility of

a bed for over 100 children, it's a shower for the children and a meal cooked in a proper kitchen with a water source. All of these things which to most of us are taken for granted.

From the two weeks I spent in Namibia I gained such valuable experiences which will further me in my personal and professional life. I would like to thank Roger and Linda for opening up this experience and hope with time the Foundation may have the capacity to take out more volunteers.



Myself on the right with Roger and Linda Bullen

Goat Project

On the way back from the trip to Eiseb, a visit was made to the latest San family to receive goats as a result of the Foundation's 'Gift a Goat' campaign. Following a drive, deep into the bush, Roger, Linda and their party arrived at a San encampment and were able to see for themselves the goats and hand out some knitted blankets to the children produced by the ladies from West Mersea.



Some of the goats donated to the family.



The San family with blankets and hats knitted by ladies in West Mersea. The gentleman behind Roger is the Regional Councillor and he committed to donating a ram to the family so that they could breed the goats.

Independence Day Football Tournament

Wednesday 21 March was Namibian Independence Day and with the Olympics in mind. Roger and Linda suggested a football and netball tournament. Two competitions were held, one between the schools football and netball teams, and the other a football tournament between the surrounding villages. Cups were purchased privately by Roger and Linda in the UK and were keenly fought over.



Presentation of the cup to the winning team.

Images from Otjimanangombe



Nurses Angelina Kambato, Linda Bullen and Natalie Thompson at Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare clinic.



Patients waiting to see either the doctor, dentist or optician on their monthly visit.



Undertaking an outreach visit into the bush.



Health checks on the school children at Omuhaturua Primary School.

Fundraising

Car Boot Sales

Due to record rainfall in April and early May, our local car boot sale venue at West Mersea is waterlogged and our trailer stacked full of items to sell remains in the garage. We are hoping for better things in June.

Indian Lunch

The Indian Lunch held on 26 February 2012 at Titash Indian Restaurant in West Mersea has now become an annual event and tickets are eagerly snapped up as soon as they come on sale. This year we managed to squeeze in a record eighty people to enjoy the marvellously prepared lunch. A total of £1,067 was raised including proceeds from the raffle.



Some of the guests at the Indian Lunch.

West Mersea Lions

On Friday 3 February 2012, the West Mersea Lions Club held their annual awards night when they distributed funds that they have raised throughout the previous year. We were lucky enough to be presented with a cheque for £500 towards our current project.

Tollesbury Luncheon Club

Each month a lunch is held to raise money for a nominated charity and on 17 March 2012, it was held for the Foundation and we received a donation of £80.

Shop Collections

We again this year carrying out a number of shop collections. The first was held at West Mersea Co-op on Easter Saturday followed by Clacton Co-op on May Bank Holiday Saturday and a total of £344 raised.

Plant Stall

On Saturday 19 May, Foundation volunteers, Christine and Mike Robson and friends manned a plant stall in West Mersea with all the plants being grown by themselves. The stall raised £90 towards Project Funds.



Christine Robson on the left manning her plant stall.

Schools

A number of schools in the area have pledged support for the Foundation for the coming year. In most cases Roger has attended an assembly at each school and given a presentation on the charity's projects. It is planned to use the monies raised to purchase beds for the children at Eiseb Primary School Hostel. We are extremely thankful for the support we are receiving from the following schools.

St Mary's Junior School, Colchester

Copdock Primary School – who had a table top sale and raised £65.

Great Bentley Primary School

Mersea Island School

Laver Primary School

Thomas Lord Audley School, Colchester

Colchester County High School for Girls

TC Education Services – have donated money for goats

International School of Windhoek

Donations

We have continued to receive individual donations, both large and small, for which we are extremely grateful. Each donation receives an acknowledgement of thanks from the Foundation and through this newsletter we would like to thank you again for your continued support.

Sportathon 2012

As it is the year of the Olympics, and more importantly the 10th anniversary of Catherine's death, the Foundation felt that it should do something special. We are inviting people to clock up miles and gain sponsorship in whichever way they choose. We would like to hear from schools, organisations and individuals who would like to take part. The target is to cover the distance between London and the Namibian capital, Windhoek, a distance of 5,219 miles. It is intended to run this up to the end of the year. If you can help to organise a sponsored event or would like to take part as an individual, please get in touch.

So far the following events have, or will be taking place

Jessica Radford – sponsored swim

The first Sportathon event was organised by Jessica, aged 8, a pupil of Great Bentley Primary School, when as part of her Year 4 project last term, she and her class were asked to think of ways they could make a positive change in the lives of other people. Jessica straight away decided she wanted to help the Foundation as they help improve lives of children in rural Namibia. She wrote a letter to Great Bentley Country Park who agreed to let her have a lane in their pool. It was then full steam ahead to recruit swimmers and obtain sponsors. The result was that on Sunday 11 March, she and her friends swam 920 lengths, the equivalent of 9 miles and raised £384 for the Foundation. Jessica herself swam 105 lengths and raised £210. So well done Jessica.



Jessica, aged 8 yrs at the start of her sponsored swim.

National Ironman Triathlon

We are pleased to be able to announce that two of our supporters Craig Warringer and Scott Tatum have entered the National Ironman Triathlon on 21/22 July at Bolton in Lancashire, to raise funds for the Foundation. This consists of 112 mile cycle ride, 2.5 mile swim and a 26 mile marathon.



Scott Tatum and Craig Warringer.

Other events that have been registered so far are:

Sponsored swim by Carol Finlay

Sponsored swim by Charlotte Brown

Skydiving by two Colchester General Hospital staff

Sponsored swim by Clarice House ladies

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 2 June/Sunday 3 June 2012

Mersea Food and Leisure Festival

Home Made Cake Stall – we hope you will be able to support us by baking a cake

Monday 4 June 2012

Muffin Stall at West Mersea Jubilee Street Party

Tuesday 5 June 2012

China smashing stall at the Jubilee Fete, Legion Field, West Mersea.

Friday 22 June 2012

Coffee morning at Barclays Bank, West Mersea

10.00 am – 12 noon. Barclays will double every £100 raised.

Saturday 23 June/Sunday 24 June 2012

Stall at Bures Festival

Saturday 30 June 2012

Shop Collection – Abbots Road, Fiveways, Colchester

Saturday 14 July 2012

Shop Collection – Co-op Supermarket, Stanway, Colchester

Saturday 21 July/Sunday 22 July 2012

Scott Tatum and Craig Warringer taking part in the UK Ironman Marathon

Saturday 28 July 2012

Shop Collection – Co-op Brightlingsea

Saturday 18 August 2012

Shop Collection – Co-op Frinton

Saturday 24 November 2012

Christmas Ceilidh at the Colchester County High School for Girls. Further details to follow.

If you would like to help at any of the above or organise an event in support of the Foundation, please let us know. We will add events to our list on the website and in the next newsletter.

Make a difference!

The Catherine Bullen Foundation is working with local communities to help build and nurture a new life for the people in rural Namibia. Because we are a small charity, our overheads are small and are personally covered by the trustees, so that every single penny donated to us goes to the intended project, with spending strictly monitored by the UK trustees and their ngo partner in Namibia. All visits to Namibia are self-financed and no charitable funds are used for this purpose. Please help us make a difference by making a donation, either on line at www.namibia-aid.org.uk or sending it to the address below.

How to contact us

By Email: info@namibia-aid.org.uk

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Donation/Gift Aid Declaration

(The Catherine Bullen Foundation – Registered Charity No. 1110516)

Details of donor

Title.....

Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....
.....
.....

Post Code.....

Signature.....

Date.....

I want the charity to treat

**the enclosed donation of £..... as a Gift Aid donation*

**the donation(s) of £..... which I made on/..../..... as (a) Gift Aid donation(s)*

**delete as appropriate*

You must pay an amount of Income and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year. (currently 25p for each £1 you give).

