

## Visit to Zambia

On Sunday February 13<sup>th</sup> Roy and Ann Greenhalgh and Doug and Peggy Collett set off from Cromhall, overloaded with suitcases full of equipment for the two community schools, which ClinC supports in Zambia.

We flew overnight from Heathrow to Lusaka and landed around 6.30am. Apart from a rest that afternoon, we were 'on the go' for most of the weeks stay.

ClinC supports two schools in two of the three poorest townships. Chazanga school still uses the church for lessons but a new two-classroom school had been built at Chipata. This was to be officially opened the following Tuesday. As the funding for the school had been through ClinC, trustees of the charity had been invited to attend.

It seemed a good opportunity to find out the answers to many of the questions that had been voiced during meetings and to meet those involved in the project. Although ClinC receives monthly reports, there is nothing like talking face to face to find out problems, what is going well etc and observing the school, the children and their situation. It also encourages those involved in the project knowing that people from the UK have taken the trouble to visit them.

All the children from the two schools, some of the parents and Mother's Union members attended the official opening. These all sat out in the hot sun but luckily the dignitaries (which included us!) were in the shade under the overhang of the school roof and supplied with bottles of water. During proceedings there were various speeches, but the highlight for the children was the fertility dance performed by youngsters from Chazanga School. The children all clapped and cheered as this very explicit dance proceeded. – Very little was left to the imagination! We were also entertained by the usual African style singing.

Whilst in Zambia we met with the teachers and learnt that they teach from Monday to Thursday, most taking one grade in the morning and another in the afternoon. Fridays are reserved for play (using outdoor equipment provided by ClinC), sport, counselling by the teachers and feeding. The facilities are very basic. A few children are lucky enough to be able to sit at desks but most manage with a church pew or wooden bench. Other than the new classrooms, all rooms were very dark and gloomy. I didn't even realize that there was anything on the wall of one classroom until I saw the photo taken by flash. They have few books or learning aids but are taught from the blackboard and chanting. However the teachers have achieved what I consider miracles with few facilities and children who had no hope of an education.

We were delighted to learn that the teachers had paid for two pupils to sit the Grade 8 exam. The teachers and their helpers are paid very little so this showed a real commitment to helping the children's education. Both children passed so are entitled to attend a government secondary school. Neither child was expecting to take up a place due to lack of the funds to buy a uniform, tuition

fees and books. However the four of us decided to sponsor them and they are now attending a local government school. There are a number of children who will sit the Grade 8 exam next year. Many of those will be unable to continue with education without sponsorship. Could you help?

The teachers had fun trying out and playing with the equipment/ number games etc that we had taken out. Unfortunately we weren't there long enough to see the children using them.

We saw the supplementary feeding at both schools on the Friday. We were told that the food, be it only a dish of soya or maize based porridge, to the children was a great treat and not to be missed if at all possible. It was good to see the older children carrying the food to the younger ones who sat on the floor and waited to receive their portion. It took a cook stirring the porridge with a long pole in a very large vat over a charcoal fire to feed 170+ children at Chipata and the same for the 80+ at Chazanga.

Whilst in Zambia we also visited one of the poorer family homes in the township of Chipata, a church and home in the third very poor area, a church service and a Christian choral event on the Sunday, listened to a variety of choirs and visited a school where parents are able to pay for their children to attend school.

Overall we were very reassured to see that the money raised by ClinC had been put to good use and was making a difference to children who otherwise would receive no education. The teachers, project managers and caregivers are all very committed to the project and seek to ensure a successful future.

We were looked after, fed very well and received a warm welcome wherever we went. Although many Zambians have very little they all have a smile and seem content with their lot. Perhaps they, not us, have got it right?