



THE AFRICA HOUSE

www.theafricahouse.com

A View of a School in Zambia

As you sit in a warm, dry and fully functioning classroom listening to a fully trained teacher, who you might like or dislike, spare a thought for your fellow pupils in Africa. Things are a little different for them.

Imagine sitting in this classroom...



The original Malimba School Classroom

This used to be home for Malimba School, close to the South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. The floor was your desk and to keep you “warm” and cosy you shared this space with up to 30 of these friends!



Some of your 30 classmates!

Malimba is a rural village within the Mfuwe area on the edge of South Luangwa National Park in Eastern Zambia. There were, until recently, no schools in this area and children were having to walk up to 6km a day to attend classes – and even then often there were no places available for them when they got there.

So, in mid 2001 the community decided to start a school and with no outside assistance or funds they built a mud and thatch classroom and the school was opened! For many children this was the first time they had the opportunity to attend classes and learn their 'A,B,Cs'. The teachers were dedicated volunteers but not formally qualified at that stage.

Very soon they outgrew their small 'classroom' as nearly 100 children would regularly attend these basic lessons! The children had no desks, chairs, pens or paper; they sat on bricks and took turns writing with chalk on a homemade blackboard. And their teachers were all enthusiastic volunteers!

It soon became clear to the community leaders that they needed help to make their dream of education for their children the Malimba Community School Fund was created. This is a Fund run and organised by our "neighbourly " supplier Tribal Textiles who are situated close to the school.

The local community made over 20,000 mud bricks by hand, and with the limited funds available timber, basic roofing material and cement were purchased and transported to the village; a local builder hired and soon a large class-room was constructed, and desks and chairs for 45 pupils were purchased.



The first permanent classroom completed in 2005.

The school was again quickly oversubscribed and classes are run throughout the day with grades 1-3 in the morning and 4-5 in the afternoon.

The next big project provided water for the school and neighbouring villages. This was completed in 2004 and the water-well with hand-pump was generously donated and installed by Rural Water Supply Eastern Province -KFW/DWA Project. Without this vital input no further progress on the development of the school would have been possible. The main project in 2005 was to build a house for the teachers - and this is now complete! The school was very fortunate in securing the financial support of the Zambian National Aids Network who donated substantial funds to build the government specification classroom block.



New classroom and office block finished in 2006

This block has now been built and has 3 classrooms and a teacher's office; it goes a very long way to providing the much needed extra space and facilities for the children. The current focus is on continuing to better equip the classrooms.

The Fund run by Tribal Textiles also supports the volunteer teachers in their quest to gain a formal teaching qualification and return to the area to continue the education of the Malimba Community School children. The school now has 4 fully trained teachers, including their head master, and 5 volunteer teachers who are still hoping to gain their qualification.

The first step for offering a better life for the next generation is the opportunity of a good education. The Malimba community rely mostly on subsistence farming and many families simply do not have the resources to formally educate their children. The voluntary efforts of Malimba residents together with assistance from their supporters is helping to give children access to that vital first step.

The school now has 160 pupils - all eager to learn. The children range in ages from as young as 5 up to 17 years of age. As many as 38% of these children are orphans and have no chance for a better future without the start in life that Malimba Community School can offer. The school project is run by a small committee made up of local parents wanting the best for their children. The fund has received donations in cash and kind from many generous patrons and the school would not be where it is today without this support.

So, a little different to your local school? The fragile existence of Malimba School is testament to the determination of local parents and the community to make something happen. Without this work there would be no school and youngsters would be subject to no chance of reading and writing.

Hazel and I first visited Malimba "school" when it was the shelter seen in our first picture above. We sat on the ground with 30 enthusiastic children and listened to a teacher giving a lesson on sex education!

This example just shows how easy our lives are compared to those living in Africa. Aren't we all fortunate?

Jonathan Knocker May 2012

Like to support Malimba Community School? Read more about the school and one of it's patrons at the www.makemesmile.org a UK registered charity.