

The Banana Tree Project

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Account Name: *The Banana Tree Project*, Account Number: 000 297 00, Sort Code: 30 95 37

Bank: Lloyds TSB, 18 Week Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1RW, UK

Quarterly Newsletter: April 2009

April Visit

I have just returned from 10 days in Mwanza visiting all the orphanages and schools that the BTP works with. The school teachers and Headmasters all had plenty of positive comments to make about the students' progress and the children were very excited by the new resources provided by BTP supporters.

Primary Schools

There are 40 Fonelisco children being supported through Ilemela Primary School and another 26 Hands of Mercy children being supported through Buswelu Primary School. Class sizes remain large and school resources very limited, but success at primary school is essential for students to progress to secondary school. The BTP has replaced all worn out uniforms and shoes and provided exercise books and stationery for another year of study. There were plenty of smiley faces as the children trooped off to another day of school.



Secondary Schools

The teachers at Lake Secondary spoke enthusiastically about the progress of the 3 Form Three students from Fonelisco, Paulo, Daudi and Donald, and the students certainly seem to be enjoying their school. At Sunrise Secondary, the Headmaster and English teacher were also keen to express their admiration for the effort shown by the 21 Fonelisco students and Emma from Mt Zion. Indeed Maria Barnabas who entered Form One in January 2008 took the national Form Two exam in September and has subsequently been promoted to Form Three! Where problems exist it is largely down to difficulty with writing good English, as primary education is in Swahili and secondary only in English. The Hands of Mercy students are also progressing well at Nundu Secondary, Kangaye Secondary and Buswelu Secondary. Each of these schools is building new classrooms and the students seem to be getting a very good education, particularly at Buswelu Secondary where lessons were excellent.



School Meals: All 3 orphanages struggle to provide food every day. From January, the BTP funded school lunches for all primary and secondary children at Fonelisco. This system is working well and the children get a plate of rice and beans at 2pm every school day. However, this meal was the first food they got every day. The BTP has therefore started funding breakfasts at Sunrise and Lake. This consists of tea and chapattis at about 10am and should help the students focus on their studies. The Fonelisco primary school children have been receiving breakfasts since January.

Work Experience

The five Fonelisco students who completed vocational courses last year have been trying to find jobs since January. With very limited opportunities around, I have introduced the students to local businesses where they are now gaining work experience in return for wages to cover expenses. Jamila, who earned an A grade for cookery, has started working in the kitchen at a large hotel. Yakobo has started as an apprentice mechanic at Masumins Garage while Matendo and Dotto hope to start at Schumann's Garage soon. They will hopefully find it a lot easier to find employment having gained good references from local businesses.

Transport to School

I took the opportunity to walk to school with the Sunrise students to see whether they needed assistance with public transport. I met them at 6:30am



and we arrived at school in time for the 7.30am registration. I judged that this walk was reasonable and didn't warrant the large expenditure of paying for bus fares for 21 students every day. The Lake boys, however, have about 3 hours of walking every day along a dangerous road, and so I have created a fund with the Lake accountant that will cover the bus fare to and from school each day for the 3 boys.

Website

The BTP is developing a website to promote the work it does. This should be completed and online by July.

Thank you

Many thanks to everyone who has donated to, or helped raise funds for, the Banana Tree Project. It remains the case that over 100 children at orphanages in Mwanza would not be getting educated if it wasn't for donations to the charity. Please keep up the good work!

Ed Beavington