



Zambia Immersion Project **Christmas Newsletter**



What is the Zambian Immersion Project?

Our school's Zambia Immersion Project is now in its 17th year. From its inauguration in 2003 our International Social Justice project has been a core principle underlying our school ethos as a faith-based community. The Zambia Immersion Project has in a crucial way improved the living conditions and education for local communities in Livingstone. The project reminds us of the ongoing need for assistance in Zambia, of our continued need to reach out to those marginalised and to help those less well off than ourselves. The project helps build transformational leadership in our students by nurturing a small seed to plant and continue to grow now and for many years to come after life in the Abbey.



Some key goals achieved:

- *Teachers' salaries in Linda and Libuyu community schools have been paid by the project each year.*
- *The educational fees, books, uniforms and all educational requirements have been provided for the children in Lubasi and Lushomo children's homes.*
- *Ngwenya and Libuyu plots have had irrigation installed and money provided for livestock to help create self-sufficiency in the communities.*
- *Support in setting up and continuing to fund a Literacy Centre for adults.*
- *Continued development of self-sufficient projects for locals including the planting of their own crops and selling of them in local markets to rearing of chickens to sell eggs and chickens. The goal is to have a lasting impact in promoting the opportunity for self-sustainability amongst the locals.*

Let's hear from Past Team Members



I travelled to Zambia as part of the Immersion Team in 2007. As a Geography teacher and someone who loves to travel, my initial motivation was to see a new country and culture. I also wanted to experience life in a Less Economically Developed Country, something I continually taught about, but had never experienced.

Over the last thirteen years a number of things have stayed with me about my time in Africa. A major highlight for me was Mosi oa Tunya - Victoria Falls - where the Zambezi River tumbles 354 feet from the Batoka Plateau into the gorge below. The falls' name in English means 'the smoke that thunders', and it truly lives up to that description. The roar of the water could be heard for miles around, while the spray hung in the air like a thick, low lying cloud. Standing opposite the waterfall we had to shout just to be heard by the person beside us. We visited the falls at night, during a full moon, to see an extremely rare sight in nature, a lunar rainbow, small, completely circular and nocturnal, it was well worth the late night!

The other thing I fondly remember is the people of Zambia. They were naturally friendly and wondered why we had come to their country. Their broad smiles and firm handshakes were so spontaneous and genuine you were immediately put at ease in their presence. They were extremely proud of their country and it is no surprise, as Zambia really is a beautiful part of the world. When I

told one Zambian how impressed I was with Victoria Falls, his reply humbled me. "It does not belong to Zambians," he said, "it belongs to the whole world!"

If you ask me "Is the Zambian Immersion Project worthwhile?, Does it do any good?", my answer is a resounding "Yes!". The Islamic scholar Ibn Battuta once declared, "Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." The experience our students gain from immersion cannot be measured. Each and every one returned from Africa changed, with a new perspective. Most have continued to champion our work and some have even returned to Zambia of their own accord. They continue to tell the Zambian story and to raise funds for people living in dire circumstances. Immersion, hopefully, leaves them with a lifelong appreciation of how lucky we are and a desire to aid those in need. For Zambians, our visits bring hope that they are not forgotten. For a few short weeks, our students bring joy and a sense of wonder. I recall from my own experience the disbelief of average Zambians that "these rich people" give up their time and money to come to their country. For me, this alone makes Immersion worthwhile. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, I'll get the opportunity to visit this special place again.

Rory McMahon (2007 Team Member)



Past Pupil Team Member



My time in Zambia felt like the quickest 18 days of my life. Over the course of the project we taught in primary schools, helped out in the local medical clinics, played with the children in the orphanage and talked to local elders in the community.

For me, some of the best moments were talking to the elders and getting an insight into how they lived compared to us. Their attitude was what stuck with me and their happiness, despite most living in absolute poverty. They offered to share everything including food and water with us even though they couldn't afford to do it. The majority of the team wanted to do the clinics everyday because of how much time you got to spend talking to the locals.

I also loved teaching in the local school especially as the children were so eager to learn but also loved having a bit of craic. I'll never forget the chaos we caused by showing them the balloons for first time or when we gave them colouring pencils on our last day. As a team we decided to fund an adult school for locals to learn how to read which would allow them to get jobs and provide for their children instead of the children having to work and miss school.

I still think about how much of a difference this made for their lives and how it will change the cycle of children missing school to help feed their family. The importance of our project to Zambia is massive and the inability to travel this year will be felt massively by the communities the Abbey support out there. All the team agreed when we came back the project wasn't just life changing for us but also for the hundreds of locals that rely on our continued support.

Sean Campbell (2018-2019 Team Member)



A Word from St. Francis Daycare, Livingstone

Impact of Covid 19 in Livingstone

The virus with regards to numbers with Covid-19 has not been too bad in comparison to other countries with 357 deaths in Zambia. However, it has had a severe economic cost and it has fallen into a debt crisis. With regards to Livingstone, the local economy relies heavily on tourism with Victoria Falls and this has completely stopped. Most parents have lost their source of income in the schools which we support. The livelihood in homes where our learners come from is not conducive



in the sense that there is no food, no money, no job for their guardians/parents. Many students come to school on an empty stomach walking up to an hour to attend school, an ever-increasing situation. Our schools are having challenges in getting hand washing soap and sanitizers to contain the virus. We hope in the new year to increase the resources of the feeding program to provide pupils with a meal each day, when at school, combatting the increasing problem of poverty.

Progress since 2019 Visit to Zambia

It was emphasised on your last visit the necessity of increasing one to one support if possible, for students who were struggling, this had worked well when used by the Abbey students for Literacy and Numeracy lessons. This was introduced when resources allow and has really developed the children's confidence and skills. The extension of the toilets for staff and pupils sponsored by the Abbey has helped to improve the hygiene levels for everyone which has been especially important in providing the universal human right of sanitation in keeping with the United Nations General Assembly. Two students; Emmanuel and Cippa from Linda Community School, are now being sponsored after being selected by the team following the home visits, to provide structures and financial support for their schooling, food and clothing.

2021 Zambia Team

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we had to suspend the selection of the team which was due to be announced at the end of March 2020 and the decision was made we will not now be travelling as intended in March 2021. Our thanks to all those who applied for their enthusiasm last year in their own individual fundraising efforts with their friends and families. Thirteen students have continued to volunteer their time to help raise funds and awareness of the project for the next year.



Christmas raffle

In August 2020, vital funds were sent to continue to provide food supplies, education to the children of Livingstone, medical supplies and cover the costs of the teachers and students we support there. We look forward to having the opportunity to travel soon and in the meantime relish in the continued fundraising efforts which we know make such a vital difference. It is our aim to continue supporting and encouraging independence and self-sufficiency in the communes of Livingstone by assisting communities to look after their future and we plan to send further funds in January 2021, more crucial now than ever. The country has captured many hearts over the years of this project and we want to continue this in the future.



We are launching a Christmas raffle in line with the Christmas Newsletter to help us continue to raise funds to drip feed into our team in St. Francis Daycare and with the help of Sr Mary Courtney and the team on the ground in Livingstone we know this money will go to where it is needed.

Thankyou

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to both our school and local community in supporting the work with this project and the ongoing encouragement. We wish you a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year from the bottom of our hearts. Without you, the project would not be possible. A very special thank you from our friends in Livingstone and throughout Zambia for your kindness, generosity and love in making their lives so much better.

