

May 2017

Dear Friends,

We hope you had a good Easter break. Here the schools are on Easter holidays until 15<sup>th</sup> May. The rainy season is over and the days are getting shorter and cooler. A few weeks ago we had very high river levels at the lodge, with the water almost reaching Swallow, our riverside cottage. Now, every day, we see the water level dropping. This is the time of year that a visit to Victoria Falls means getting wetter than you could ever imagine!!



As you may know, we opened the new Tukongote Preschool on 21<sup>st</sup> March in an amazingly colourful ceremony full of joy, dancing and smiles. The children then had 3 weeks to use their new school before we closed for the holidays. They love the bright and spacious classrooms. Most of them live in traditional mud/thatch houses with the whole family in a small space. So the brightness and airiness of their new surroundings is something many are experiencing for the first time. The outdoor play areas are a big hit, especially the climbing frames. The children seem to have no fear at all.

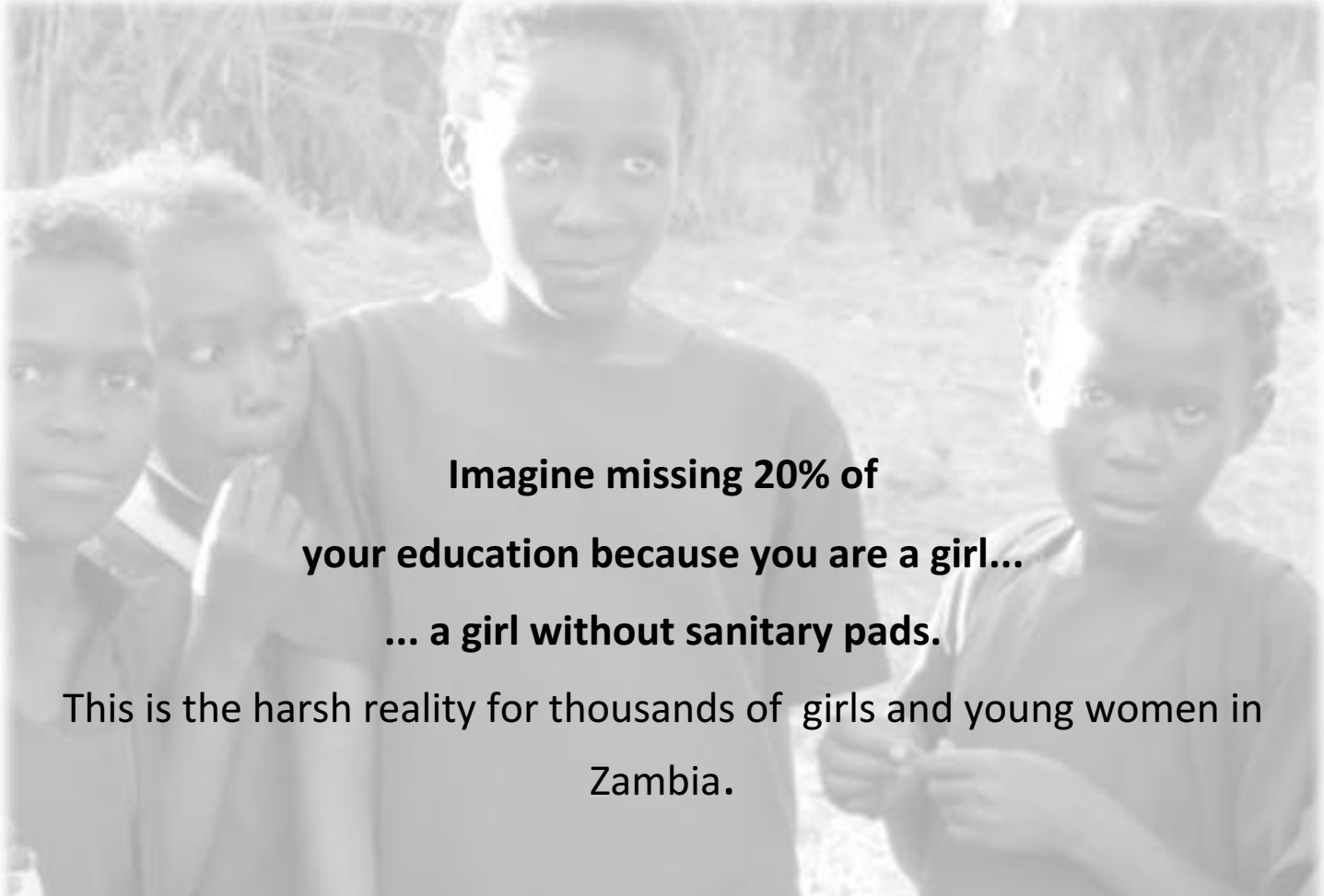
Thanks to guest donations we have so many great books, toys and craft resources in our new storeroom. The teachers are coming up with exciting lesson plans and creative, stimulating ways to teach the children. They are now grasping the concept of allowing the pupils to learn through play and exploration. The change in our teachers in the last year has been phenomenal. Well done to them all! They are all currently at teacher training college in town, starting their 2<sup>nd</sup> year.



We continue with our feeding program at mid-morning break and thanks to a very generous donation from a guest, we are able to supplement the daily porridge/rice with bananas and eggs several times a week. Linda, our cook, is very happy with her new kitchen and canteen area. She still cooks on firewood but with much better facilities and even a tap! At the old school she had to walk down to the river to fetch the water for cooking and cleaning. Because we are growing, we have employed Sophia to help Linda with her work, and Gift as our caretaker, whose wife is one of the teachers in Class One. This means we now have a staff of ten at Tukongote, all from the local villages. What a team!!

## Menstrual Health Project

As we briefly mentioned in the last newsletter, we want to introduce a programme to support girls to continue schooling during their monthly cycle. In partnership with Project Luangwa we will provide young girls with a kit of washable sanitary pads. We are now fundraising for this project and hope to be able to distribute to the first school during this term.



**Imagine missing 20% of  
your education because you are a girl...  
... a girl without sanitary pads.**

**This is the harsh reality for thousands of girls and young women in  
Zambia.**

Traditionally, girls just use rags which often leak, forcing them to remain home to escape shame and embarrassment. Partnering with the established Ufulu (Freedom) Pads Project from Eastern Zambia, we wish to provide girls with a locally made kit of reusable, washable, eco-friendly pads which will enable them to continue with their everyday life even during their monthly cycle.

A donation of just £20/\$25 will buy a pad kit, panties and fund an educational project to help girls understand what is happening to their bodies. This kit will last at least 2 years. So for less than £1/\$1.25 a month you can help a girl live life to her full potential and give her the freedom to continue learning.



## Secondary School Sponsorships

It is very difficult for children from the villages to continue their education after completing primary school. The first hurdle is the fact that there are no nearby secondary schools, meaning the children need accommodation away from home. That, coupled with the need to pay relatively high (by Zambian standards) school fees, the uniform, book requirements and transportation, means that many children are forced to stop their schooling. I will never forget a friend telling me how, when he was at school, he used to walk 15km each way while carrying his shoes. He said his shoes had to last for the full five years of high school and if he walked to school in them they would wear out too fast, so he only wore them in class, making the daily journey to learn barefoot.

We are currently supporting over a dozen students from our nearby villages with their secondary education. Some are living in town with relatives and attending day schools. But our preferred method is to pay for them to attend boarding school at Kazungula High. This is 40km from Waterberry. Providing them with board and lodging as well as their education means that they are safe and taken care of. There is no danger of them being forced to work in relatives' homes and they are given plenty of time to study.

It is the perfect solution for those with potential from our communities to complete their schooling. The termly fees are around £120 or \$150. This includes school fees, board and lodging. We are trying to match each student with a sponsor who will keep supporting them through the years.

This is Gift (top) and Josephine. They both started in Grade 8 at Kazungula High in January. Gift sat his Grade 7 exams a year early and passed with flying colours. His grandfather approached us explaining he wouldn't be able to afford to send Gift to school. In his sponsorship request letter Gift wrote, "I want to continue my education because it is the only way I can take care of myself, my family and support my community." Thanks to the Rowe family from Australia that stayed with us at the end of last year, Gift has the chance to fulfil his dream and reach his true potential. They have pledged to sponsor Gift through High School, hopefully opening doors to a brighter future for him and his family.

The Aronoff/Aspaturian family from the US that stayed with us last year went on our village tour and were taken with the fact that many children fail to finish school. They asked me to find a bright young girl from an underprivileged family who would struggle to complete her education whom they could sponsor. We asked the head teacher at the nearby Mandia Primary School to recommend any girls who had just completed Grade 7 with good results, but whose home circumstances would mean they would drop out of school.

Josephine passed top of her class with "1" (the top mark) in ALL subjects. Both her parents are sick and don't work. Nobody in her family has ever finished school and it looked like the same fate awaited her. The family live from subsistence farming and would never have been able to pay school fees.

Josephine absolutely loves school and, although shy, every time I've met her she has such a beautiful smile which lights up her eyes. Her entire family is thankful that she now has a chance to shine. She said, "I will work hard every day to make sure I use this opportunity I've been given. When I finish school I want to get a good job so that I can support my parents and my family."

If you think you could help a child like Gift or Josephine to complete their education, please email us at [kelly@waterberrylodge.com](mailto:kelly@waterberrylodge.com).

**"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." Malcolm X**



## Amazing support for Tukongote



During this last month we have had several supporters do things to raise money for Tukongote. Jan and Chris Allen cycled the Devon Coast to Coast Trail in the UK. Becky, Jeff and Elaine Mannering walked the Wirral Way, and Jackie Coroon and her friends held a bake sale at their library in Aberdeen. We are using these donations to buy new equipment for the preschools including toys, games, books and craft resources. We want to take this opportunity to thank these special people and EVERYONE who supports Tukongote in all the different ways. It's only thanks to you that we can continue with our work helping to improve the educational opportunities in our local communities.



Another great donation allowed us to buy the uniforms for the new preschool, and someone else gave us enough money to buy new school bags for all 75 pupils. The children are so proud of their new purple polo shirts. The baby class children are always pointing to them and telling me, "Uniform, uniform!!" As well as looking smart it gives the school and pupils an identity, and as with everything else in our rainbow school, it had to be colourful! On the last day at the old Tukongote we handed out the bags and shirts. There were lots of happy faces and thumbs up. One of the



biggest hits in the new school is the "pegs" for hanging up the bags. This is a totally new concept in Zambia although something that is commonplace in the west. We have put names alongside a picture so even those that can't read know exactly where their bag and coat live. Not only the children but the parents and teachers love this new concept.

We wish you all a happy and bright May and once again thank you on behalf of everyone at Tukongote for your continued support and interest in what we are doing here in our communities on the banks of the mighty Zambezi.



Best wishes and rainbow smiles

Kelly and Lynette

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P.S. Our PayPal account has now been formally recognised as a charity account, after a brief interruption because we are in Zambia! It's all up and running, and is a great way to donate. The e-mail address to send to is [community@waterberrylodge.com](mailto:community@waterberrylodge.com).

