



# Tukongote

Most lodges or camps across Africa support education, health or conservation. As such, your visit has impact far beyond what you might realise. To demonstrate, we look at the Tukongote Community Projects in Livingstone, supported by Waterberry Zambezi Lodge, where volunteer **Catalina Prior** spent a month working.

**A**rmed with a suitcase full of paper plates and a head full of craft ideas, I was welcomed to Tukongote Preschool by Kelly, the community project leader, who showed us volunteers around. In each of the three classrooms we were met by 25 smiley little faces and two teachers who exchanged warm-hearted introductions and became increasingly excited as Kelly explained that we would be working there for a month.

Leaving the comfort of Kelly's side to enter our individual classrooms, any nerves I had quickly dissipated as I found myself with 25 five-year-old children hanging from my arms and legs all wanting to give a very enthusiastic hello.

As the days went by, my previous worries were replaced by a constant state of excitement. Every day I turned up with a carrier bag full of various craft equipment – paper plates, feathers, paint – and every night was spent with the other volunteers chatting about what had happened at school that day while we sat on the floor cutting out shapes and prepping for the following day's lessons.

Each day became increasingly rewarding as the progress in the children's learning became more and more visible; at such a young age so much can change and

develop so quickly, and it was amazing to see the difference in the children's abilities in such a short time.

At the same time, all of us were able to forge great friendships with the teachers; I think it was a learning curve for both groups as us volunteers had so much to learn about teaching children but we also came with a lot of ideas to show the teachers. Working in harmony with them as friends made everything so much more productive and worthwhile as we were able to overcome any challenges together.

Thinking back to it now, Tukongote Preschool must be one of the happiest places I have ever been. It is clear how much the children love going to school and how much the teachers love teaching them. However, the fun does not end at midday when the pre-schoolers go home. In the afternoons there are older children who attend the Study Centre at Tukongote for extra lessons outside of their normal school hours. We were determined to make it fun for them too, so we put on talent competitions and a sports day in between science and maths classes.

It is incredible to see the number of people that Waterberry has been able to help through their work at Tukongote Community Projects. They have established a happy environment for young children to learn during the day, older children

### Class act

In what must be the most colourful school in Zambia, classrooms and the library are also used by older children and adults for extra tuition after hours

to expand on their learning in the afternoon, and created teaching jobs for people in the surrounding areas. I am so proud to be able to say that I have worked at such a magical place and am ever grateful for the lessons that it taught me.

While the goodbyes at the end of the month came with floods of tears, the memories will always bring a smile to my face.



### About Tukongote

Waterberry Zambezi Lodge founded Tukongote Community Projects in 2009 to improve the educational opportunities in nearby villages. They began with one preschool class and now support over 400 children in three preschools and one primary school. The Tukongote Adult Skills Centre, to help adults with reading, writing and maths, was launched this year, and 25 local teachers and support staff are employed from the community. In one of their most astonishing achievements, they have built up a library of 27,000 books, donated by Books2Africa. For more information visit [www.waterberrylodge.com/community](http://www.waterberrylodge.com/community)