

From Sleights to the Other Side of the World

BUILDING A SCHOOL IN ZAMBIA – WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM SOME FRIENDS

In early 2016 Joanne Gillette (Thirlaway), whose father Noel still lives in Sleights, went to Zambia with her husband John for what she thought was four weeks as a volunteer teacher. Five years later, they have built a school, established another, begun three women's empowerment groups and helped hundreds of children.

On their return from Zambia they recognised the need to try to do more to assist the communities they had worked with in Livingstone. They soon found the most efficient way to do that was to set up a charity, and the Zambezi Sunrise Trust was established in May 2016. It soon earned Registered Charity status (No. 1169587) and has gone from strength to strength. Their first fundraising event (a dress sale) was held by another Sleights' former resident, Rachel Stack (Crusher) whose family is still in the village.

Rachel who now lives in Cork, Ireland organised an impromptu Zumba class at one of the events!



The Zambezi Sunrise Trust's flagship project has been the building of a school for over 500 children most of whom, if the school did not exist, would have little prospect of attending school. 70% of the children have lost at least one parent. At the time that they became involved the children were in hugely overcrowded and temporary accommodation, with the threat of closure in a cholera



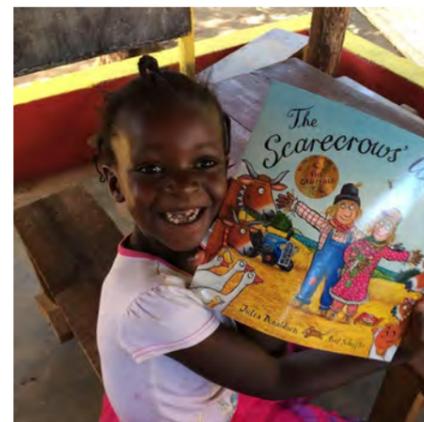
outbreak because of inadequate toilet facilities. Four years later the charity has built seven classrooms, two toilet blocks (with shower for girls), kitchen structure, library room and office, as well as installing a borehole and pump. Classroom openings have seen visits by the U.K. High Commissioner and his Deputy, and last year a classroom was opened by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Baroness Scotland. The next stage is to expand the number of classrooms to give all the children the chance of obtaining a secondary education – many previously did not have the chance once they had left the school.

Three other schools are supported. One, a pre-school, was established with the help of the charity. Another has received hundreds of textbooks as a result of a school twinning we set up with a school in County Durham. All three have benefitted from books, computers, whiteboards or other teaching aids.



Women's craft groups have also been established, and ordinarily make items for sale to volunteers and tourists. Their range of bags, aprons, head bands, mats and baskets have proved very popular. Their skills improved so rapidly that one group was asked to make 670 delegate bags for the Commonwealth Law Conference which was held in Livingstone in 2019. With the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, however, their normal market has disappeared but one group has been able to turn its new found skills to producing 2500 face masks for front line workers, as well as for teachers at one of the schools the charity supports.

All of this has been done in just four years, but Zambezi Sunrise Trust has been very fortunate in attracting support from a variety of sources. Whilst donations have come from individuals from at least 26 countries, much of the support has come from nearer to home – including Whitby. The Monks Haven café held a memorable fundraising dinner night, and Richardson & Smith Estate Agents have supported the charity (partner Robert Smith is a trustee). Further afield, they have linked five schools in County Durham and Northumberland with schools in



Pictured left & above: Some happy children after receiving donations from our UK supporters.



Zambia with which they enjoy active letter exchanges and for whom they have fundraised. A regular (in normal times!) programme of talks is given to W.I.s, U3A's and other organisations which have been supportive. If anyone would like to arrange a talk to a group (including via Zoom), or would like any other information about the charity, they can contact it at johncgillette@hotmail.com / joannethirlaway@hotmail.com.

You can see more about the Zambezi Sunrise Trust on their website www.zambezisunrisetrust.co.uk or Facebook page [Zambezi Sunrise](https://www.facebook.com/Zambezi-Sunrise). Donations can be made at: www.goldengiving.com/secure/donation/zambezi-sunrise-trust.

