



The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Making a difference in rural Namibia

NEWSLETTER

No: 12

April 2011

Serious flooding in Namibia

Although not widely reported in the world press, Namibia has suffered the worst period of flooding for some years due to a heavy and prolonged rainy season. Although mainly affecting the north and north east of the country, Linda and Roger were able to see for themselves during their recent visit the problems this is causing with rivers in full flood and roads becoming muddy quagmires with ruts and potholes. In Windhoek, the capital, the sluice gates to the Avis dam have been opened sending torrents of water down streams that are usually a mere trickle and closing many roads.



Lorries trying to cross what was a small stream in Windhoek. (Photo Mariette Strauss, ATI).

Below is an abridged version of a statement made by President Hifikepunye Pohamba on 29 March 2011.

‘Our country is, once again, experiencing devastating floods. Namibia has been badly affected, particularly the northern part of our country. My Government is concerned about the destructive impact of these forces of nature which has devastated many communities. This natural disaster has had a negative affect on economic activities. Floods especially in the northern parts of our country have caused destruction to homes, schools, clinics, health centres and economic infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Our people in northern areas are facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions and this could be the worst such flood disaster in recorded history.

As a result, the survival of a large percentage of our population in Namibia is under serious threat. In Oshakati alone, more than five thousand citizens are in relocation centers and there have been sixty-two fatalities. More people are being relocated on a daily basis. My Cabinet colleagues and I have discussed the prevailing situation in depth and have consulted with various experts and other stakeholders. After these consultations, I have come to the conclusion, together with my cabinet colleagues, that I declare a 'state of emergency' in the north and north-eastern parts of our country.

The severe flood situation in the northern, and to a lesser extent north-eastern parts of our country, has had a negative effect on agriculture and agricultural production. Wide spread crop losses are expected. This will impact negatively on those communities who depend heavily on subsistence farming. As a result, large quantities of cereal will have to be sourced in order to prevent widespread hunger.

Another contributing factor to the decline in crop production is the heavy and continuous rains received since last year. This has resulted in water logging and leaching which led to poor germination and stunted growth of the maize, mahangu and other crops. Many fields, especially in the Caprivi, Omusati, Oshana and Oshana Regions are submerged.

In addition to the expected heavy losses in crop production, livestock losses are also expected given the fact that grazing areas are flooded. Where grazing is still available, it is in a very poor state as a result of excessive water. This will not be conducive to sustain livestock farming in these areas.

A large number of students have also been adversely affected by the floods. For example, two hundred and forty-seven schools are closed and more than one hundred thousand students are affected. I am also concerned about health services to our people. About twenty-two clinics are either under water or they are completely surrounded by water. In addition, twenty-five clinics can only be accessed by four-wheel drive vehicles.

I am further informed that more floodwaters have come from Angola in recent days. In addition, more rain has been received in the North and the forecast indicates that the rain may still continue for some time to come. This state of affairs is likely to aggravate the already desperate situation.

It is generally accepted that floods are one of the most destructive natural disasters known to humankind. In most cases, it causes loss of human lives and destruction of infrastructure. It is for this reason that Government resources alone cannot cope with the situation. I therefore, have no option but to call on all our people to work together, to act only in the national interest and to offer assistance to their fellow citizens where it is needed. I also call on the international community to assist our Government in this present crisis situation and its aftermath such as in the rehabilitation of infrastructure destroyed by the floods. In this regard, I must single out roads, bridges, schools and health facilities as toping the priority list.

Our citizens, development cooperation partners and other stakeholders are invited to work closely with the Office of the Prime Minister as the central coordinating unit of the Government for disaster management. It is necessary that Government acts immediately and that the necessary steps are taken urgently to avert a crisis which could grow out of all proportions.

It is in this connection that Cabinet has mandated the Office of the Prime Minister together with the Secretary to Cabinet who is the Chairperson at the technical level, to ensure that everything is put in place to address the situation. Thirty million Namibia Dollars (£2,857,000) has been authorized to immediately attend to this emergency situation.'

Our current project

As most of you are aware our current project is to provide kitchen and canteen facilities for the Omuhaturua Primary School Hostel in order that the children's meals are cooked and eaten in a hygienic environment. During their recent visit, Roger and Linda held two meetings with Komeho their ngo partner, and the quantity surveyor. At the last meeting, a number of changes were requested to gain value for money especially due to rising costs of raw materials and transport. Revised estimates have now been received, which come within our budget and we have given the go-ahead to proceed. The kitchen will be constructed using a technique known as 'Ecobuild'. This is an exciting new concept which is environmentally friendly and also ploughs money back into the local economy. Instead of using conventional bricks the walls are constructed of tightly packed sandbags within a timber frame. The walls are then lined with small mesh chicken wire and then screed over with cement. The sandbags are filled by local labour using sand from the village locality. *

* Please note that all trips are privately financed and none of the Foundations funds are used for this purpose.

Both the South African and Namibian governments have approved this construction technique. Building should start in May 2011 with completion in the following October. An add-on to the project was the construction of a perimeter fence around the hostel. This is proving too costly to fund, bearing in mind that the money could be better spent in relieving poverty elsewhere. Therefore, Komeho, will now approach the regional Ministry of Education to find ways and means to provide it.



Domestic animals roaming around the area where the children's meals are cooked.



Building being constructed in South Africa using the 'Ecobuild' concept.

Fundraising

Christmas Day sponsored walk.

In February, Roger attended St Mary's Junior School in Colchester to be presented with a cheque for £122.50 by six year old Mary Richardson. Before opening her presents on Christmas Day, Mary undertook a sponsored walk with her family from West Mersea Yacht club to Cudmore Grove at East Mersea, a distance of around six miles. Well done Mary, your donation was greatly appreciated from one so young.



Roger with Mary Richardson

Coffee morning and Cakes

Claire Bentley of Colchester organised a coffee morning at her home and then followed it up with a cake stall at her daughters school and raised £166. Many thanks Claire for your support.

Indian hots up fundraising

What has now become an annual event in the Catherine Bullen Foundation's fundraising calendar took place on Sunday 27 February, when friends, family and supporters sat down to a charity lunch at Titash Indian Restaurant in the High Street, West Mersea. After an excellent meal provided by Dilwar and his staff, the packed restaurant were updated by Roger Bullen on the past years events which have led to the Foundation's current project, the construction of a canteen and kitchen for the Omuhaturua Primary School hostel being fully funded.



Linda and Dilwar from the Titash Indian Restaurant.

Marathons

A chance meeting between Graham and Celia Strange, trustees of the Catherine Bullen Foundation and Scott Tatum, a student and Sports Supervisor at the University of Essex studying Sport Management resulted in a team of five runners from the University running for the Foundation in the Colchester Half Marathon on 27 March 2011 under the collective name of 'The Human Performance Unit'. As well as clocking up the miles during training they also built up their stamina working out at the new Evolve Gym at the university and having their progress monitored by the Human Performance Unit. Scott Tatum commented 'we were impressed by the work being carried out by the Foundation in Namibia making a difference to rural communities with health and educational projects, and that every penny raised by us will go to these. We plan to support them in further sport related events during the coming year.'



Scott Tatum and Craig Warriner after completing the Colchester Half Marathon

Scott and Craig will be running the Halstead Marathon on 8 May 2011 in support of the Foundation and Scott will be taking part in the Half Iron Man Marathon later in the year.

Paris Marathon – 10 April 2011

Jeremy Parker an Orthopaedic Consultant at Colchester General Hospital pounded the streets of Paris on Sunday 10 April for the Foundation, completing the marathon in 4 hrs 33 mins. Well done Jeremy.



Jeremy Parker after completing the Colchester Half Marathon.

London to Paris Bike ride – 21st to 25th September 2011

Orthopaedic Consultant, Jeremy Stanton has decided its time to step up his fitness, and what better way to do it, than to ride from London to Paris on a bike and at the same time raise money for the Foundation. He will be accompanied by his friend Robert Thompson who is also supporting us. Details of how you can sponsor these two gentleman will follow in the next newsletter and on our website.

Yards Sales

Due to work commitments, we are unable to undertake car boots sales, so as previously reported we are having Yard sales at 15 Colchester Rd, West Mersea on Saturdays when the weather is good and we are not doing shop collections. First one was held on Saturday 9 April and £168.55 was raised. Thanks to everyone who donated items.



First yard sale of the season

International School of Paris

The school is currently busy fundraising for their next visit to the Omuhaturua Primary School from 2 July to 11 July 2011. They are planning to paint and tile, three classrooms, purchase books for the library and metal trunks for personal belongings for the children that stay in the hostel. They have so far raised approximately £8,000 towards this work. Roger and Linda will be visiting the International School in May to update them on the Foundation's projects.

Shop Collections

We are again undertaking a number of shop collections throughout the spring and summer, with our first one on Easter Saturday at the West Mersea Co-op. (See forthcoming events). If you can give a few hours of your time on a Saturdays to help us with these, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Donations

We have continued to receive individual donations for which we are extremely grateful. Each donation receives an acknowledgement of thanks from the Foundation and through this newsletter we would like to thank you again for your continued support.

Linda and Roger's visit to Namibia – March 2011

Linda and Roger returned to Namibia last month with Linda again carrying out voluntary work in the clinic. We planned to take another nurse with us, Natalie Thompson, who is a serving army nurse. However, due to the developing situation in Libya, her leave was

cancelled at the last moment and she couldn't come. This time we flew with *Air Namibia* from Frankfurt as they very generously donated us the flights and upgraded us to Business class on the outward journey and Premier class on the return leg. Our grateful thanks to the airline. The following are extracts from our travelog which we hope you will find of interest.

Saturday 5 March

Left our hotel in Windhoek at 09.25 and met Mrs Kasuto at Komeho's office to pick up our food from the fridge. Drove to Gobabis under cloudy skies and occasional rain showers. Did the remainder of our shopping and had lunch. Arrived at the clinic at 16.30. Everybody waiting for us and pleased to see us. The 'Bullen Park' has been enlarged and looks good. Angeline the nurse has put red sheets and pillows on our bed in celebration of our 40th (Ruby) wedding anniversary. Weather at Otjimanangombe is the same as Gobabis, wet and windy.



The enlarged 'Bullen Park'

Sunday 6 March

Rained most of the night, but dry in the morning. Left the clinic at just after 10.00 and took Angelina's daughter and grandson back home to her village. Then made our way to Helene de Kok's farm. Had only driven that way once before and was all very confusing but in the end we were on the right road/track. This time we met her husband, son and his girlfriend. Rained on and off all day. Nice lunch of barbecued chicken and homemade bread. Linda took some samples of San crafts to show the Art Café at Mersea. Saw a video of the school that she is involved in. Got back to the clinic okay, but the gravel roads are getting bad in places due to the rain. Settled down for the evening with a glass of wine and the rain beating on the roof. After about an hour after going to sleep, headlights appeared at the clinic compound gate. A pick-up truck had brought a girl to the clinic who was 8 weeks pregnant and losing the baby. She was made comfortable in the clinic for the night.

Monday 7 March

Woke up at 06.15, to the sound of rain which quickly cleared away. A pick-up being used as a make shift ambulance arrived to take the pregnant girl to hospital. Our ambulance was being serviced and repairs made to the differential. Angeline, the clinic nurse went with the ambulance to Gobabis, leaving Linda in charge. I went to see Steve Kavari, the headmaster to brief him on developments. Made arrangements for the presentation of wind up torches to the hostel children which had been donated by the International School of Paris. During the afternoon, Mrs Bussell from the Regional Health Authority arrived with her team to carry out the annual clinic audit. Linda saw 23 patients including a San lady who was very angry as she had hoped to get a lift to Gobabis with the ambulance but arrived too late. She needed to get there to sign the papers to release the body of her two year old daughter who had recently died. Angeline and John, the driver, returned from Gobabis and advised that the road was not good due to more rain. Was asked to drop two patients back into the village as it was

threatening rain and the sky was full of thunder and lightning. Arrived back at the clinic just as the rain started and this ended up as a terrific thunderstorm which lasted well into the night.

Tuesday 8 March

Got ready for the Outreach visit into the bush. Left at around 09.00 and went to Ondimba, a San settlement that we had previously visited three years ago. Nothing much had changed. Linda and Angeline carried out some vaccinations and distributed medication. Also handed out blankets knitted by the West Mersea ladies to mothers, children and the elderly.



Part of the San settlement at Ondimba.



The eldest resident of the settlement receives a blanket. She lives in a shelter made of scrap metal sheets.

Visited a couple more settlements before returning to Otjimanangombe. Lots of water on the road and tracks to the settlements. During the evening we went for a walk around the school and saw Steve to make arrangements to vaccinate two classes from the school tomorrow.

Wednesday 9 March

Torrential rain all night but cleared away after sunrise. Asked to go and see 'Follow' who looks after the boys in the hostel and cooks the meals. He was not well and was refusing to come to the clinic. This had happened previously when we were not there and he ended up in

hospital. Went over and persuaded him to come. Diagnosed with tonsillitis, so he spent the day in the clinic resting. At around 13.00, sixty-two children arrived for polio and diphtheria vaccinations.



The school children receiving their diphtheria vaccination.

Sylvester from Komeho and Barbara Scharfbillig arrived at the clinic during the afternoon. Barbara is from Sunni E.V., a German charity working on improvements to the school hostel at Eiseb who we hope to work with in the future. Had a good chat and showed her around the clinic and hostel. Electricity went off in the early afternoon and the generator clicked in. Unfortunately, two hours later it tripped out and would not work again and so we had no electricity until around 20.00. Generator did not work again for the rest of our stay.

Thursday 10 March

Today is cattle market day, when local subsistence farmers bring in their cattle to sell to the big commercial farms or meat producers. During the morning we presented the children who stay in the hostel with wind up torches donated by the International School of Paris. Joseph, Komeho's driver and Barbara arrived back from Eiseb and swapped vehicles as the Hilux we are using is required up north. We now have a rather battered Isuzu pick-up that has 270,000 kms on the clock until tomorrow when we should get a Nissan double cab. Went to the cattle market after lunch with lots of farmers bringing in their cattle trussed up in the back of pick ups. Each pick up backs up to the pens and the cows are unceremoniously pulled off on to the ground and untied. Various stalls around the field selling food, beer and fruit. Halfway through the afternoon there was a storm to soak everyone which reminded us of Mersea car boot sales! Received a message that the Nissan had broken down, so left with the Isuzu.



The children receiving their torches.

Friday 11 March

During the morning, Linda and Angeline went over to the school to carry out health checks on two classes.



Linda carrying out health checks at the school.

At around lunchtime we had a visit from Dr Malik, a GP from Manchester and his son Arif. He has a part share in a farm in Namibia and is planning to carry out voluntary work in the country when he retires. We showed them around the clinic and they were very impressed. We will meet them again when we stay at the farm for the weekend prior to returning home. Towards the end of the day, the children who stay in the hostel started to make the long journey home for the weekend. Some of them were lucky enough to get a lift in a cattle truck.



The school bus – Omhaturua style!

Monday 14 March 2011

Patients started to arrive at the clinic at just after 08.00, and soon after we received a phone call that a woman staying at Getrudes, the clinic cleaner's homestead had started to give birth. Took Gertrude and Angeline, the nurse to assist and a baby boy was born within 30 mins. Later the mother and baby were brought to the clinic to check them over and they both stayed in the clinic for the day for mum to recuperate. The baby was named Wesley after Roger's dad.



Crista Uaendere and baby Wesley resting in the clinic.

Joseph and Bethel from Komeho arrived to take us to inspect the goats that had been donated at Voormansput. Left the clinic to find the San and the goats which are now deep in the bush. They had left their previous area as it was subject to livestock theft and the water facilities were overcrowded. The San had dug a waterhole in the new location. We counted 69 goats which consisted of 52 females of which 27 were pregnant and 17 males. Joseph and Bethel vaccinated them all. The San advised they were moving a short distance to another location which provided a better waterhole. They were advised to build a shelter for the baby goats when they are born as the winter nights get very cold.



Goats in their kraal at their new location.

Tuesday 15 March 2011

No electricity this morning, but came on at about 08.00. Today the doctor, dentist and optician are coming and they arrived at 11.00. Total of 73 patients seen between them and then left at 13.30 for the next clinic.



Linda with the doctor and patient.

Wednesday 16 March

The Hilux double cab was returned to us yesterday, so this morning we are off to visit Eiseb which is about 160 kms further into the bush. Road to Eiseb was in reasonable condition and before going to the school we called in at the clinic but the nurse was on an outreach visit. Then went over to the school to meet the headmaster Mr Hange and the school secretary who had contacted us on Facebook. She gave us a tour of the school and hostel. The hostel is in the same terrible condition as our visit a year ago. Discovered that both the girls and boys dormitories are overcrowded with pupils sleeping two to a bed or on the floor. Suni E.V. the German charity will be there in a few days to decorate them and repair the roofs as well as re-siting the waste water holes. So much needs doing here and we will be liaising with all stakeholders to formulate a plan to upgrade facilities and alleviate overcrowding. Very upsetting to see these conditions.



The boy's dormitory where 52 children sleep each night, some on the floor.

On our return to Otjimanagombe we went to see Steve Kavari to see if he would release some secondhand bunk beds he had in store to Eiseb. This he agreed if they could arrange transport to collect.

Thursday 17 March

Today we left the clinic to return to Windhoek. Stopped of in Gobabis for lunch and to visit the hospital pharmacy to drop off a requisition from the clinic and the say hello to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Ikandi. While we were there we bumped into the Hospital director who remembered us from the clinic opening. He is leaving and introduced us to his successor. Managed to get the Hilux cleaned at the ambulance station to get all the mud off from the gravel roads. We are now on tarmac for the rest of our journey. John turned up with our ambulance which was covered in mud. Arrived in Windhoek to be greeted by a violent thunderstorm. Some roads are closed due to the dam sluices being opened. That evening went out to dinner with Komeho and to avoid a detour we went through the water without any problems.

Friday 18 March

On our arrival in Namibia on 4 March, we attended a meeting at Komeho's office with the quantity surveyor to discuss our current Kitchen/canteen project. This meeting was adjourned and today we are reconvening. Because of rising costs, various options were discussed and it was agreed that revised estimates should be submitted. (For the updated situation see pages 2 and 3).

After the meeting we drove to Omaha Guest Farm where we spent the weekend before flying back to the UK via Frankfurt.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 23 April 2011

Shop collection – Mersea Co-op

Friday 29 April 2011

Muffin stall at the Royal Wedding Street party, the MICA, West Mersea

Saturday 30 April 2011

Shop collection – Clacton Co-op

Monday 2 May 2011

Fundraising stall at Lions Fun day, Lower Castle Park, Colchester. This will be a china breaking stall, so any unwanted crockery would be gratefully received.

Saturday 28 May/Sunday 29 May 2011

Homemade cake stall at the Mersea Island Food and Leisure Fair.

Any cake contributions gratefully accepted.

Saturday 11 June 2011

Shop collection – Stanway Co-op, Colchester

Saturday 25 June 2011

Shop collection – Abbots Rd Co-op, Colchester

Saturday 2 July 2011

‘Savouries and Cakes Morning’ at 10 Cross Lane, West Mersea – invitation only

Saturday 30 July 2011

Shop collection – Brightlingsea Co-op

Saturday 27 August 2011

Shop collection – Frinton Co-op

Saturday 24 September 2011

Shop collection – Tesco Store, The Hythe, Colchester

Saturday 12 November 2011- provisional

Grand Ceilidh – details to follow

Saturday 10 December 2011

Shop collection – Tesco Store, High Woods, Colchester

If you would like to help at any of the above or organise an event in support of the Foundation, please let us know. We will add events to our list on the website and the next newsletter.

Make a difference!

The Catherine Bullen Foundation is working with local communities to help build and nurture a new life for the people in rural Namibia. Because we are a small charity, our overheads are small and are personally covered by the trustees, so that every single penny donated to us goes to the intended project, with spending strictly monitored by the UK trustees and their ngo partner in Namibia. All visits to Namibia are self-financed and no charitable funds are used for this purpose. Please help us make a difference by making a donation, either on line at www.namibia-aid.org.uk or sending it to the address below.

How to contact us

By Email: info@namibia-aid.org.uk

By Post: The Catherine Bullen Foundation
Pear Tree Cottage
15 Colchester Road
West Mersea
Colchester
Essex
CO5 8RS
United Kingdom

By phone: 01206 383368 (inside UK) or 0044 1206 383368 (from outside UK)

Mobile: 07771 630928
07733 140748