

Dear Church friends,

These last few months have been a busy time for me, both in and out of work. In late May I saw the culmination of the farm orphans project when we took 50 black hens which were on the point of lay to their new home. I visited again at the end of July and they look very well. Between them are producing 40 – 45 eggs a day which can easily be sold locally. Gladys is



The hens arrive at their new home

using a simple jar system to ensure everything runs smoothly. Each month the money from the eggs is put into the first jar until it reaches the amount needed for next months feed and medicines, then into the second jar to keep for savings / loan repayment and the 3rd jar will contain money to spend on food / clothing or education.

But as much as I have had successes there have been learning points too. For many

years I have been encouraging the group at Ipusukilo to bulk purchase so they can make their meagre incomes go further. At the end of last year I thought I had cracked it both economically and nutritionally when they began using soya chunks, which are cheap and nutritious. By March they were buying a sack of 30 packets almost every week, selling them to the group for cheaper than they could buy locally and still making a profit of about £1-50 on each sack. Over the months I had noticed attendance becoming a bit erratic, but I put it to the back of my mind, and 2 members began a tailoring programme, three days a week . Eventually I had to confront the fact that group numbers were diminishing and was told it was because of *ncongole* (credit). Although we had agreed the widows should never have more than 5 packs on credit (about £1.30p) some people had stopped attending because they could not afford to pay back what they owed, and others because they had decided cut their losses and move on. Some were also citing favouritism, (I had quietly given someone I suspected of having TB k20, 000 – about £3.00 - to go to the clinic) and others were feeling ostracised. All in all group morale had gone down, in part due to my new systems and a lack of openness in the group about their needs.

Another incident centred around a couple of bicycles. One of the ladies who was learning tailoring wanted me to buy them bikes. This would be a reasonable outlay and costs would be more than recovered by not having to pay bus fare for 2 people x 3 a week. I asked her to put it to the group and they were enthusiastic saying they could use the bikes to transport sick people to hospital and so on. Later that day I had an urgent message from the other tailoring student. She couldn't ride a bike, "that's ok, it will just take a couple of hours to learn" "no, I don't want to learn." One person had seen an opportunity to own a bike, and when it was clear that the bikes would be group property their enthusiasm tailed off. The next week they had to explain to the others why we were not buying bicycles after all. It is sometimes hard for us to get to grips with such thinking, it appears dishonest, or at the least opportunist, but in some ways it is part of the legacy we modernised countries have created in Africa. Not just through colonising and imposing our systems on other cultures, but after independence world wide banks encouraged African nations to take out big loans for development projects. These were made attractive, but often not properly thought through, (a bit like my soya chunks idea!) and followed by the recession where commodities

slumped, interest rates and costs rose dramatically. Developing countries found they were hopelessly spiralling into debt. In 20 years Zambia fell from being one of the richest nations in Africa to one of the poorest, and its inhabitants became to rely heavily on handouts. So much so that the handout mentality has become ingrained in some people, particularly amongst the poorer communities, and we from the developed world are often seen not for whom we are, but what can be got from us.

To me this begs the question “am I my brothers keeper?” and the answer is a heartfelt yes! ... and a resounding no! I cannot have a heart of stone and stand by in the midst of such



Play 4 All volunteers hard at work on a recent training day

obvious suffering, but I also owe it to the people who see my relative wealth as the answer to their needs to give them something more. The tools of recovery are not handouts or loans but self reliance and self esteem. This is why the Kamatipa playground project is so important to me. After start up costs I am hoping that the project will become self reliant and the community will proudly look after their unschooled children themselves, offering them through play and socialisation, better chances in life

than they otherwise would have had. This week sees another fun day before building starts; hopefully it will be completed before the rains come in late October. I am very thankful to the YMCA for their co-operation, and the core of volunteers for their willingness to work for their community, but much prayer is needed to turn our thinking around from “what have you brought me?” to “how can we make this happen”.

Items for praise

- The farm children now have a more secure income.
- That Violet, a friend, has finally got a teaching post starting this September.
- For the support that Adrian Hendy has given to staff and students in his four years at Mindolo, sadly he leaves his office as Chaplain at the end of August.
- For the most welcome visit from the Church of Scotland of Jenny Chinembiri and Elijah in July.

Items for Prayer

- The evangelism campaign in August being spearheaded in Northern Zambia by the Ministerial and Diaconal students from UCZ Theological College
- The success of Play 4 All building project, Ernest as project manager and the volunteers.
- The DOWIZA group at Ipusukilo that it would recover from the setbacks.
- For the financial position of the MEF institutions to improve.
- Zambian elections just set for 20th September, please pray for a peace at this time.

With every good wish to you all,

Jenny

Jenny Featherstone

email jenny.featherstone@gmail.com

skype jennyfeatherstone Zambia

Address Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation po box 21493 Kitwe Zambia