Giakonda Solar Schools visit to Zambia Spring 2018

Between 27th February and 17th March, we installed solar power at three schools in Siavonga District; Syakalinda, Manchamvwa Lakeshore Primary School and Munyama Primary School. Each installation consisted of two 320W solar panels, two 220Amh batteries, the necessary cables and connectors, a fuse box and fuses, a solar controller and battery gauge. This powers laptops, LED strip lights, a router and the Raspberry Pi computer. The Raspberry PI computer is a wireless hotspot from which laptops, tablets or smart phones can access the offline learning resources of RACHEL.

We held three teacher training days at Siavonga High School (on Solar Installation, Code club and Programming and Networking and Network Maintenance) and two training sessions with SHS pupils where they learnt about Scratch and Python Programming.

We spent several days working on the computer network at Siavonga Primary School. The server software had been infected with viruses and accidentally overwritten. We cleaned up the system and managed to install a trial version of the server software which enables it to communicate with the client terminals. When the system was originally installed, the school was not given a backup of the software or a licence key. Without these our solution will only enable use for 180 days. We will continue to work on a solution in UK We solved a problem with the Synology server at Matuwa School which may have been caused by moving the equipment.

We took part in International Women's Day and Youth Day Activities. For the latter, we supported two pupils from Siavonga High School who were doing a presentation about Raspberry Pi and RACHEL for the attending dignitaries. We were delighted to see them do this confidently. As a result of this Howard was invited to attend the Engineering Institute of Zambia conference.

We were pleased to have met the DEBS of Siavonga, Monze and Chilanga Districts and to have been able to demonstrate the Raspberry Pi and RACHEL. We left a Raspberry Pi server with each of them and all have reported back on how extensive and how useful its resources are. We have approached the Minister for General Education with the aim of working with Zambian schools on a more official footing.

We delivered a training session in Monze and visited a rural school to advise on installing solar panels there.

While in Monze, we met a beekeeping trainer who will provide training for us in Siavonga. Four schools are interested in getting involved with the project, as well as Daughters of Naomi (a widows group).

We also held training days in Chilanga which were well received and well attended.