



Visit to Zambia September 2023

Purposes of visit were:

1. To oversee solar power installation at Sinandambwe and Kabuyu Primary Schools.
2. To supply these schools with computers, monitors and offline learning resources.
3. To take part in two-day conference on Physical Computing in Kafue.
4. To liaise with District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) on future needs.
5. To look for ways to support livelihoods.

On our first day, we met with Miombo Beekeeping Cooperative. This group of women is rearing bees on a plot of land owned by one of the members. One hive successfully produced 30 jars of honey earlier this year. The local Department of Agriculture has put aside enough frames for up to 100 hives as and when the group can buy the top bar hives. The plan is to work alongside other groups to market and sell the honey. The women have requested prices from a local carpenter. Following a visit to Siavonga High School later in the week, we suggested that pupils doing carpentry there could make the top bar hives. The school approved of the idea and are going to quote a price for the work.

We met DEBS to discuss our present program and the future needs of the district. She offered us the use of the official Land Cruiser for the difficult journey to Sinandambwe. We were introduced to the District Commissioner (senior government official in the area) and to His Highness Chief Simamba.

The trip to Sinandambwe Primary School involved dusty bumpy roads and stony gullies. On our arrival we were surprised to see Muhunya Solar already hard at work running cables and fixing sockets. The installation of 6 solar panels and batteries took two days and Macloud Mwiinga from Kabuyu visited the school on Friday to familiarise staff with how to maintain the solar set up and use the Raspberry Pi400 computers.

The installation of 4 solar panels and batteries at Kabuyu Primary School proceeded well to the delight of the head teacher. These two installations were funded by a generous legacy from Lesley Walsh and a small grant for Kabuyu from the Oakdale Trust.

We visited Siavonga Primary School to see Richard Mabunde who recently took over as Head. We looked round the computer room which was in an unsatisfactory state with no sign of some of the equipment we had previously supplied. We were shown the Special Needs classes which were very much in need of colourful resources. We suggested that the pupils might occasionally use the Resource Centre to access the RACHEL learning materials. Whilst there, I was interviewed by Shepande Mukwengu of ZANIS (Zambian Information News Agency) who wanted to know all about our projects in Siavonga and other parts of Zambia.

The owner of Siavonga Newsday Online, Snike Mzulah, also met up with us to discuss Giakonda Solar Schools and help us to publish our projects.

We also met with Pellger Hamoonga, chair of Siavonga Nutrition Group, and talked about business ideas for rural women such as preserving produce or setting up a tailoring workshop. We took some textile samples to see if we can help womens' groups by selling them in UK.

The DEBS had suggested we visit Manchamvwa Lakeshore School where the new Head teacher had found some problems. We used the official speedboat to do this, and were accompanied by the District Standards Officer, Liaison Officer and the Education Standards Officer for Open and Distance Learning. We had installed solar panels in this school in 2018 with the help of teachers and the local community. It was disappointing to find that the batteries had been discharged and were useless. The Raspberry Pi RACHEL server was extremely dusty and failed to start. The panels were disconnected but were functioning. The school had failed to look after things.

(On a brighter note, we were able to clean the Raspberry Pi and get it working via a Power bank.)

We continued to Munyama School where an identical system had been installed on the same day. The battery indicator showed that the system was still healthy and the school was powering a laptop, printer and TV. The Raspberry Pi was also still in use. The District Standards Officer could see the importance of correct maintenance of solar and computer equipment.

While my companion Donna took the opportunity of a trip to Livingstone to see Victoria Falls and go on Safari, I went to Kafue to meet up with the Giakonda Team who were delivering training in Physical Computing at a two day conference there. The event was organised in conjunction with Aaron Chansa of National Action for Quality Education in Zambia (NAQEZ). The conference was well attended and training was delivered admirably by Francis Kanene, MacLoud Mwiinga and Farai Kanzangarare. Bridget Muyuni organised the important details such as drinks and lunch. By the second day, everyone was confidently programming their kits and collaborating with each other to complete a range of experiments using LED lights, motion sensors, buzzers and the like. We celebrated with certificates and group photos.

It was so good to see the confidence with which the Giakonda Team are carrying on the legacy of training left by our founder, Howard Kirkman.

Photos of Activities Miombo Beekeeping Cooperative



Meeting local officials



Sinandambwe Primary School



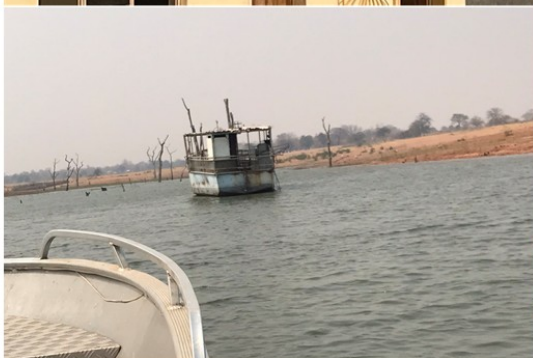
Kabuyu Primary School



Siavonga Primary School



Manchamvwa Lakeshore Primary School



Munyama Primary / Secondary School



Physical Computing Conference Kafue

