

KING GEORGE VI CENTRE

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NB New website: www.kinggeorge6.org

You Tube link for *Clearing up Bulawayo* cd: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zbci_t4ykvc

(The new Liyana website will have pages designed by each individual band member, they are great fun. All put together by Farai but not yet uploaded)

We seem to have achieved so much this term despite ongoing Zimbabwe difficulties. It's been a good term and we have all been so busy we haven't had too much time to dwell on all that is still not right with our country.

At least we do now have food in the shops but it is expensive and has to be paid for in USD or SA Rand. The exchange rate between the two currencies can range from 10 to 1 to 8 to 1 so our currency problems continue! One thing for sure, in Zimbabwe we can never afford to become complacent as we now have no diesel again and are struggling to pick up children and staff. Salaries for civil servants (teachers and our paramedic staff) are still not sorted out. Somehow the Minister of Education persuaded teachers to stay at work, despite their miserable salaries – I think largely by his own hard working example. We try to help out teachers with incentives when we can but everything now costs so much we have less and less for such 'luxuries'. Our salary bill alone each month is now around USD7,000! It's a worrying situation and still no real end in view. We tried to get our parents to pay something towards 'teachers' incentives' but very few were able to pay. If you are lucky enough to earn USD100 then paying even USD10 for one child's school fees is going to leave a hole in your income! An added problem is that it has now become too expensive for us to buy bulk food in Botswana as the customs duties are too high. This means trying to source in Bulawayo which is keeping Precious busy!

Our biggest headache this term has been vehicles. Two of our buses are now very old and we cannot get spares for them. We searched for a year before finally buying (in England!) a starter motor for the school bus. Now our little grey bus is off the road and unlikely to get back on. This is a reconstituted Japanese model so I guess we have been lucky that it has survived as long as it has.

Despite the ongoing financial problems we decided we should go ahead with some of our smaller plans from last term. Sonia sorted out the library and with a wonderful donation of books from Beit Trust this is now a useful facility. We put in an appeal to the Bulawayo public who brought in magazines, dictionaries and encyclopaedia. Its great to see the children hanging out in the library reading. We also completed the transformation of our old hydrotherapy pool room into an art classroom. This has become a great facility as it is big enough to hold loads of people so we use it for meetings and for combined lessons as well as art. The walls are covered in art pieces but the real beauty is the mural painted by four of our school leavers, its stunning and a real eye catcher. In fact it was so good we decided to paint a plain garage wall in our car park as well. This now welcomes all visitors to KGVI with some bright fun pictures and our motto – Never Give Up! We even managed to get a football field cleared with the help of 4 groundstaff suddenly sent by the Ministry of Education. We haven't had any ground staff for years and suddenly they send 4! Which is great except that the Ministry hasn't yet paid them and when they do it wont be sufficient so we will have to find a way to top them up as well! In the

meantime they are hard workers and are really getting our grounds back in order, the first time for years.

With all our rehabilitated facilities we have been able to get some of the clubs running. These were one of the requests from the deaf students in their questionnaires. We now have cookery, needlework, football, library, music, drama, dance and beauty clubs. Cosmetics, again donated by the Byo public, have given the girls a chance to experiment and we have had some very painted ladies coming out of the beauty club, including me! The little ones have not been neglected and we have some very cute little deaf dancers and a baby marimba group one of whom has to sit on a table in order to reach the bass marimba keys! So many of these new activities are organised by our school leavers: Prudence - music and choir, Marvelous – drama, Fibion & Tawanda – art, Fibion – marimba, Vusani – dance, Sonia – library.

Marvelous seems to have finally found a focus and is in the process of writing a very moving play entitled: *Its My Disability – Deal With It!* He arranged a special screening of the first act and had all the teachers' in tears. So far he has only let us see the first act. If the rest is as good we will consider putting it on at the Byo Theatre next term. He also arranged a drama workshop with 20 of his more talented students. We invited local actors and directors to take sessions and everyone really learnt a lot as well as enjoying themselves.

In fact this has been a term full of workshops. We started with two teachers' sign language workshops. Now all the teachers can use sign language which has increased their confidence in dealing with our deaf students. Our prefects attended a two day workshop on leadership while our therapy staff went to the Matopos for a 3 day team building and occupational therapy workshop. Since then they have also had a three day workshop on children's rehabilitation and a morning's training in speech therapy for deaf children.

In among all these workshops the children are working hard and we were really pleased with the O level results that finally came through 7 months after the exams were written! They were our best results ever with Goodwell and Honest getting all As and Bs and the others Bs and Cs. Our three private school boys continue to do well especially Goodwell who is coming top of the class in A level maths!

Of course it cannot all be good news and we have had a number of sick children especially with the cold weather. One of our girls had been coughing for some time and getting more and more depressed. We finally discovered that she was convinced she was HIV positive. When she tested negative she was so happy, but we still haven't found the cause of the coughing. We continue to struggle with all the social and economic problems faced by our children but with the help of all our kind supporters we have at least been able to provide bus fares, warm clothes and food.

Earlier in the term we joined other schools and organisations in a clean up Bulawayo morning organised by our new Minister of Education. Liyana was loaded on to a truck and entertained everyone while they swept and collected rubbish all over the city. Prudence wrote a special song for the occasion and Farai recorded it and after filming made a short cd of the whole event. Farai has taught himself so much since returning from America and can now edit a film and record songs and even put instrumental backing to Prudence's voice if the other band members are not around. We will be loading a couple of his short films onto YouTube and will let you know when this is done. It looks like this could be a useful career for Farai. In the meantime an ex management member of KGV in South Africa has arranged for Farai to undertake some training

down there for 3 weeks, ten days of which will be spent filming at the Grahamstown Arts Festival. Farai even managed to record a song for the Liyana film without us having to go to the local studio – a very useful accomplishment!

Our film is due to be shown at a theatre in Los Angeles at the end of August. There have been many traumas and dramas with the film and we are told it has totally changed its original focus. It is now a short documentary basically on Prudence with loads of music. It seems a pity after a year's filming that it is so reduced but who are we to query HBO! They are still hoping for an Oscar – we are more realistic!

Our busy term continued with our 52nd anniversary which we celebrated on 10th July. We have decided to make this an annual event as it gives us all something to think about and plan for. This year we had a Mr and Ms KGVI modelling competition and a drama competition, some music and dance and of course a lunch for the extended KGVI family. It was a good day and reminded me again of the wonderful spirit of co-operation at KGVI. To see our handsome, 'cool' deaf boys wheel out our beautiful girls in their wheelchairs brought lumps to many throats. Our kids are all so brave and so determined and no disability was going to stand in the way of their beauty on the stage. The drama was won by the Grade 4s who produced a very good play about not giving up and somewhere involved the motto – never trust a woman! Everyone enjoyed themselves and the meat and salads for lunch were also very much appreciated by everyone, so few people get to eat meat these days! As always the centre and school staff worked together as a hard working team, more co-operation!

We have as usual been so fortunate in our friends who have given us so much in both cash and kind. We are still here and managing to feed all our children thanks to the ongoing efforts of the JKZ committee, our friends in America and Father Cris who never forgets us. All our most needy children have warm jerseys from Germany and beautiful blue KGVI tracksuits from Femina Garments. The tracksuits have our Latin motto on them which we have recently discovered means, '*through trial to triumph*' – what could be more appropriate for KGVI. Once again we have to say thank you to everyone who has supported us through this term. I have mentioned a few but there are many others out there and we all want to say a HUGE thank you to you all. Our '*triumph*' is only possible through you!

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