

Project Luangwa

Class to Class



An introduction for Teachers



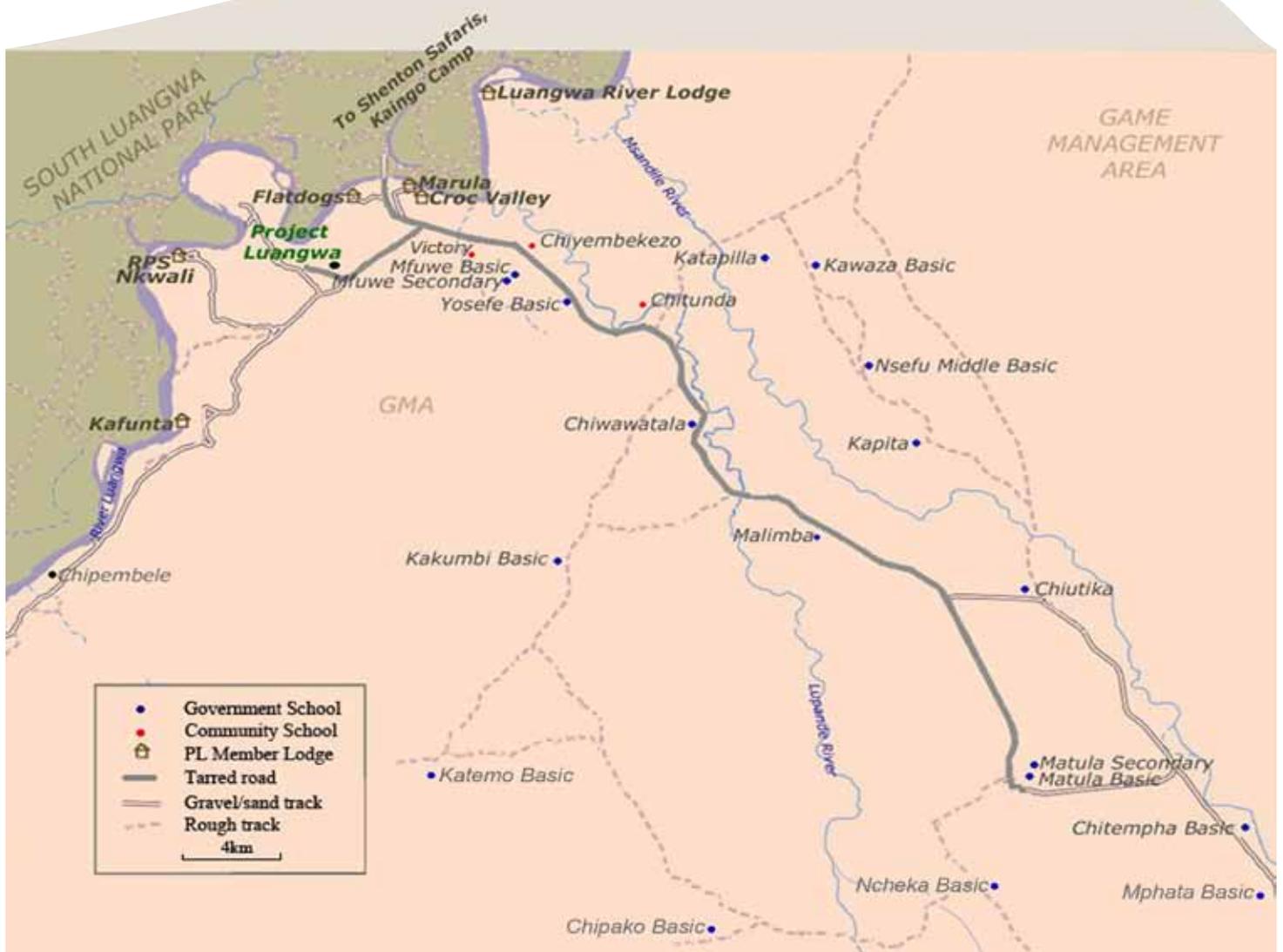
Where are we and where are the schools?

Zambia lies in Southern Africa and has borders with Namibia, Angola, DRC, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Project Luangwa is based in the Eastern Province of Zambia, in the beautiful Luangwa Valley close to the main gates of South Luangwa National Park.

The area between the airport and the Park is known generally as Mfuwe even though it is actually made up of a number of villages each with its own name. Spread over an area of about 600 square kilometres lie 20 Government and many Community Schools. It is communities and schools within this area that Project Luangwa aims to support.

Although distances are not vast the road conditions make travelling to the schools a lengthy process, taking many hours in the dry season and often an impossible task in the wet. In the more rural areas the tracks are only passable by 4-wheel drive and it is not unusual to be overtaken by people on foot.



It is important that you understand a little about the education system before considering twinning with a school in Zambia. Equally important is an understanding of the realities of everyday school life and why it is all so different from educating children in the Western World.



Education in Zambia

The education system in Zambia has some stark differences to the education systems as they are now taught in Europe and the United States. In Zambia Primary education does not start until a child is 7 years old. Although pre-school classes are becoming popular, places are hard to find and often require payment.

This primary education is free and continues until a child reaches the end of Grade 7. Schooling beyond this attracts a fee which is paid directly to the school.

Grades 8 and 9 are known as Junior Secondary and end with the child sitting for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). Some, but not all, Basic Schools teach to Grade 9 which is considered to be an adequate level for most children.

Children who gain a good pass in their Certificate of Primary Education are eligible to go on to Senior Secondary Education which covers Grades 10 to 12. At the end of this three years they sit the Zambian School Examination Certificate.

The academic year starts in January and is divided into three terms.

The Reality

For many years the Zambia Government has had little money to put towards its Education Program. whilst the District Education Boards do their best, they struggle with a budget that is inadequate to meet the needs of the growing population.

Most schools in rural areas of Zambia suffer from a shortage of classrooms. They are often in a poor state of repair and require considerable refurbishment.

In the Mfuwe area, near the SWouth Luangwa National Park, some schools receive support from Safari Lodges who raise money from their generous guests. However, with nearly twenty needy schools in the area, it is inevitable that the more remote ones have to go without. There are too few teachers and it is not unusual to find unqualified voluntary teachers working alongside Government trained and funded ones.

Children rarely do a full academic day. Whether it is a shortage of teachers or infrastructure some pupils will attend for a morning whilst others for an afternoon. Officially the morning lessons are academic whilst clubs and activities take place in the afternoon but this is by no means strictly adhered to. In spite of this many classes are still overcrowded and the Zambian government statistics state that just 57% of Zambian children attend school.



Community Schools

With help from outside sources some villages have been able to establish their own Community Schools. These often start with just one classroom in an open-sided thatched chitenge and a voluntary, unqualified teacher. As more help is sought and finances allow it will grow until it reaches the point where the Community will seek government recognition.

These community schools will only be supported by the Government once they have reached the minimum in infrastructure. This comprises: a block of 3 classrooms with at least 1 office; adequate long-drop toilets for girls, boys and staff; a borehole and hand pump; a 3 bedroom teacher's house and at least 20 desks per classroom.

It must also have adequate land for future development such as a sports field and room for a total of at least 5 classrooms. It should be approximately 5 km from the nearest school although density of population and obstacles such as rivers are taken into account.

Initially the support from the Government is in the form of supplying a qualified teacher. Usually these schools start as a pre-school class and then graduate to Grade 1 then 2.

Pupil Ages

Officially school starts for Zambian children at the age of 7 years when they enter Grade 1. Some lucky ones have had a head start having attended a community pre-school although it is becoming common for Government schools to start a pre-school class with a voluntary teacher. However children will often start at a later age too.

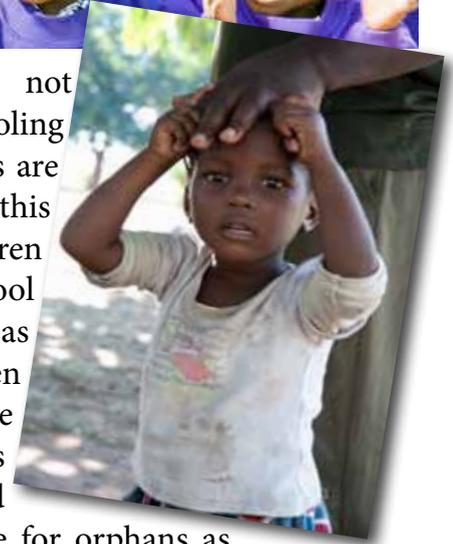
Many children do not continue their schooling after Grade 7 as fees are payable beyond this point. Often children do not attend school even to this level as families do not even have the funds for the basic informal costs of uniforms and books.

This is worse for orphans as the relatives who care for them may already be struggling to provide for their own children.

Some families, especially in rural areas, do not encourage their children to continue with their education once they can read and write. This popularly applies more to girls than boys. Grade 9 is considered to be a reasonable level of education by the Zambian Government.

As in many other parts of Africa, the students may well be older than in the same grades elsewhere in the World, so don't be surprised to find 16 or 17 year olds in Grades 7 or 8. This is due to their difficult home circumstances and often they must wait until the family can afford uniform and books before they can start their education.

Even then, they may miss a year or more due to financial problems, family illness or the need to work in the fields. Whatever the reason it results in classes with children of widely differing ages. But they never stop trying. Each child craves the chance of an education and realises that it is the only way out of their present circumstances. In spite of often having to walk long distances and a never-ending round of chores they are desperate to go to school and learn.



Teaching Methods

It is noticeable that in Zambia children are taught by rote far more than in the Western World where methods are more enlightened.

The blackboard remains the central focus and teachers tend to stand at the front of the class.

Language in School

Most people in Zambia speak English as it is the national language and taught in schools. However in rural areas villagers tend to use their own local language: in the Eastern Province it is Chinyanja or Nyanja.

To make a Zambian child's transition into school easier Grade 1 lessons are mostly taught in their local language using the Breakthrough to Literacy series (Longman) written in Chinyanja. Most young children speak some English and it is also taught at this level. From Grade 2 onwards the text books and lessons are in English although Chinyanja is taught as a subject.

Textbooks

Schools in Zambia, like many others across Southern Africa, use textbooks published by Longman Books and Katapila is no different. As they are researched and written in each specific country, they are authentic and relevant to the local people. Kataipila also use the Breakthrough to Literacy series written in Chinyanja, the local language.

Some of the subjects covered are: Creative and Technology studies, Integrated Science, English, Cinyanja, HIV/Aids, Maths and Social and Development studies. Information on the textbooks may be found on the Longman website. www.longmanafrika.co.za/zambia.asp?country=zambia

Textbooks and teaching aids are always in very short supply and often out of date. One school in the Mfuwe area has an average of one text book for every seven pupils. In Mfuwe Day High School (Secondary) only the teacher has a copy of the textbook; there are none for the children.

Standards

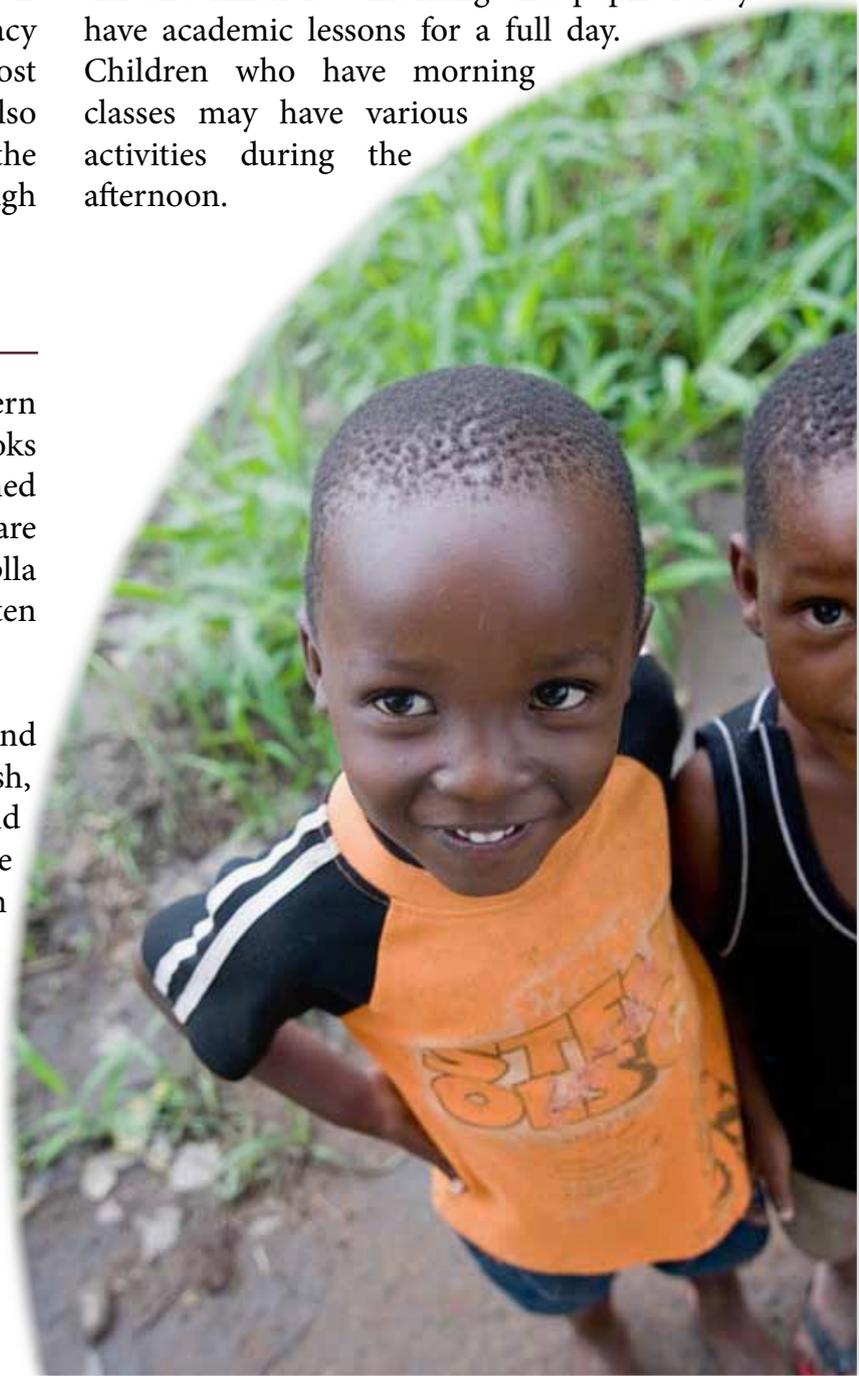
Written English can vary enormously in Zambia, even amongst the teachers. If you choose to twin with any of the schools you will have to be prepared for varying levels of ability.

The standard of written English amongst the pupils will also vary. We hope that one of the benefits of twinning classes and encouraging pen pals will be to improve their written English. However you will need to take into account the abilities of the teachers and not expect too much.

Timetables

Zambian schools differ in their daily timetable to English schools. Classes usually start at seven am and finish late morning and pupils rarely have academic lessons for a full day.

Children who have morning classes may have various activities during the afternoon.



School Activities

There are a variety of activities that take place during the afternoons. Monday is sports afternoon and the school has a cleared patch of ground to use as a sports field. Football, the national game, is as popular with girls as it is with boys. The Head, Mrs Mwale, says she would like the children to be able to play netball as well, but has no netballs or netball posts.



On Tuesday afternoons the children take part in Preventative Maintenance, which means generally tidying and sweeping areas around the school.

On Wednesdays the children have a choice of club activities: Chongololo², Choir, Red Cross, JETS³, Entertainment (dancing and plays) or the AIDS Action Club. Thursday afternoon is taken up with learning about agriculture and food production and is known as PU or Production Unit. Friday afternoon is free for the children and the teachers use the time to meet and discuss school issues.

A typical activities timetable may be:

Monday—Sports: Mostly football (soccer) - when the school has access to a ball. Football is as popular with girls as with boys and considered the National game. Most schools are keen to play netball and volley ball but very few have any equipment.

Tuesday—Preventative Maintenance (usually sweeping the school—there are no caretakers or cleaners.

Wednesday—Various Clubs; HIV Aids Awareness, Chongololo (Conservation), Choir etc

Thursday—Production Unit (growing food, gardening/farming—one school has a pig unit.

Friday—Occasionally sports although a teachers' meeting may be held instead.

The schedule and participation in these activities varies from school to school. Often this is due to the lack of equipment but may also be due to lethargy on behalf of the teachers or the lack of a teacher with sufficient knowledge.

Facilities

The schools in the Mfuwe area rarely have the luxury of computers or printers. Teachers do not have access to televisions or overhead projectors, in fact most schools do not even have electricity.

Everything is in short supply whether it be pens, pencils, felt tip markers or paper. Teaching aids are few and far between and teachers have to struggle on as best they can. Where there are posters on the classroom walls most will be hand made.

Orphans, Vulnerable children and Child Sponsorship

According to Zambian Government statistics 23% of the children in school are orphans. However this only partly reflects the actual percentage of orphans in Zambia's child population as it stands to reason that a orphan is less likely to be able to afford to attend.

In Zambia, as in other parts of Africa, orphans are usually taken in by the extended family. These uncles and aunts often struggle to feed their own children let alone provide them with school uniform and books. Unfortunately a child that is not in the immediate family will often be last in line when it comes to paying out for the extras, and consequently there are many orphans who miss out altogether when it comes to their education.

In Kakumbi Basic school, for example, there are 420 enrolled pupils, of these 159 (2010) are orphans or classed as vulnerable.

The term 'vulnerable' usually refers to children in extreme circumstances such as one or both parents too ill to work because of HIV/Aids or other diseases.

Project Luangwa operates a child sponsorship scheme for both orphan and vulnerable children. You can find out more on our website.



What To Expect

Twinning with a Zambian school will take hard work and patience. It is all about building a partnership and it is up to you to work as a team with the teachers in Mfuwe.

Be prepared for misunderstandings: this is a new concept for the majority of teachers here. They have no idea what to expect and will probably look to you for guidance and ideas. They will have plenty of enthusiasm but will probably lack your knowledge, experience and understanding of schemes such as this.

The teachers' experiences will be nothing like your own. You both come very diverse cultures and are most likely to have very different values.

Remember that you both come from, not just different cultures, but almost different worlds. Few homes or schools have electricity so there is no daily view of the outside world though television or the internet. There will be many challenges and surprises.

Be aware that death is not an unusual occurrence in many of these children's lives. They will talk about it with ease and expect them to mention a deceased parent in their initial letters.

Be prepared for delays: during the rainy season it can be difficult to reach some of the remote areas. The journey will entail detours to avoid flooded rivers and this will mean that Project Luangwa will not be visiting some schools as regularly as they would normally.

Remember that teachers in Mfuwe do not have access to the teaching aids that are taken for granted in the West and many schools do not even have electricity. Most do not have access to photocopiers or printers and will be unable to print anything that you send them. If you want to send something to be printed please get in touch with us at Project Luangwa first and I am sure that we will be able to work something out.

Be prepared to work at sustainability. It can be

difficult to maintain enthusiasm when the ‘post’ seems to take so long. Your patience will also be taxed by the teachers here—the majority are very keen but can often be slow. Sometimes this is due to inexperience and a lack of understanding so the more help that you can give the better.

Try to give the teachers in Mfuwe as much information about you, your class, the school and your environment as you can. Send them pictures to use in the posters they will make.

Be prepared for some tall tales from a few of the children. Many tend to exaggerate and feel that they have to make out that they have more than they actually have.

We advise that teachers who are unfamiliar with the Zambian education system take a little time to read about it here when planning to twin with a Zambian school. There is more information on our website and some short video clips about education.

It is not a good idea to give out your address to anyone here and Project Luangwa actively discourages it. Past experience has shown that you will get begging letters and this is something we discourage. Please send all correspondence through Project Luangwa—whatever you send we guarantee that it will get to the intended person or school.



Getting Started

1 *Getting in touch*

The first thing you need to do is email Project Luangwa with as many details about your school as you can. You will need to decide if you want to twin the whole school or just one class. We need to know if you are a Primary or Secondary School and the ages and grades of the children. Remember that we, as managers, are British and may not be familiar with the education system in your country so please be patient if we ask a lot of questions.

Matching a class of kids in the West with a class here is probably the most difficult part of the process. As previously explained the ages and grades will be extremely hard to match up and this may take a little time.

In your email try to indicate the type of school with which you wish to twin; I am not referring to Primary or Secondary but to infrastructure, facilities and teaching practices. Have a look through the schools on our website to give you some ideas.

We will then send back as much information as we can about the schools we think may best fit with your ideas. Be patient at this stage—we do not necessarily have all the information and enough photos on file and may have to visit the school. Our internet is slow and refuses to send large files so if you want many photos we will have to send everything on a DVD and it may take a couple of weeks in the post. We will be honest about the schools and their capabilities to enable you to choose one with whom you feel most comfortable.

2 *Introducing the concept*

You may have already introduced the Class to Class concept to your pupils; indeed they may even have helped to choose a partner school. If you haven't then now is the time to start.

To enable your pupils to get the most out of this

opportunity will require hard work and ingenuity. You can start by introducing them to Africa and then Zambia but how you do this may vary with the age of your pupils.

We already have a photographic PowerPoint presentation aimed at young children. It can be shown in one part (about an hour) or split into two or more lessons with some interaction and lessons between. It begins with geography and the wild animals found in South Luangwa and goes on to introduce the people and how they live as well as the schools. We are aiming to produce something for older children at a later date.

For Secondary School age students the twinning may turn into something quite different. They will have a greater understanding and more ability to be able to deal with the reality of life and everyday problems facing their peers here. You may need to think about the topics you want to cover. For example HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancy, parental death and poaching are common occurrences.

It is up to you how involved you and your students become. You may prefer to remain at the letter writing/pen-pal stage or you may wish your class to get far more involved. It is up to you, your pupils and your partners here in Zambia. Project Luangwa is here to help and act as a facilitator not dictate your course of action. However please remember that teachers in Zambia often have to stick to the Zambian curriculum and don't have quite the same freedom as teachers in the West.

3

Making a start

Perhaps the best way to start is by writing to the teacher. Explain what you would like to do and how you think the schools can help each other. Alternatively you can get all your students to write to pupils in the class in Mfuwe. Send the letters to us and we will deliver them to the teacher and pupils at your chosen school and help them write in return.

Project Luangwa will take photos of the children here to send back so it may be a good idea to get your pupils to send one of themselves along with their first letters.

Post

There are various systems for getting mail and other items to Mfuwe but which method you use may depend on your school's country of origin. Please contact us for advice before sending your letters.

At Project Luangwa we make no charge for acting as co-ordinator between schools, however as a charity we do ask you to pay all correspondence costs.

If you are in the UK letters and parcels may be sent via Mercury Mail in London. It is a system whereby we, as recipients, pay for the postage at this end. We can also send letters back by this system.

What does it cost?

It goes without saying that the schools in Mfuwe cannot afford to pay for international postage, writing paper or envelopes. We ask that their partner school in the West covers these costs as well as the full Mercury Mail costs incurred at this end. This, of course, varies depending on the number of children involved and the amount you send.

As a rough guide a 10 gm letter sent to Mfuwe costs \$3.19 (£2) and a small parcel of 500gm, \$11.70 (£7.63). Outgoing mail from Mfuwe to the UK is cheaper: 10gm letter— \$1.48 (97p) and a 500gm parcel, small parcel \$17.44 (£11.38). Full details will be sent once you have partnered with a school.



Ideas about incorporating Class to Class into lessons

Twinning with a foreign school can be incorporated into your lessons in many ways and will vary with your pupil's age and ability:

Geography—creating a sense of where you live and where your twinned school is situated at a level suited to your pupils. Secondary students may wish to look at why life is so hard in Zambia.

Environmental studies—looking at the impact of climate, tourism, Government aid, wild animals on crops, the difficulties of subsistence farming. This can be adapted to all grades and ages. Older students can be asked to come up with their solutions.

English language and the dying art of letter writing.

Introducing a new language—get your pupils to learn a few words of Chinyanja.

History—the impact of the British Empire and colonialism, how has this effected colonised African countries?

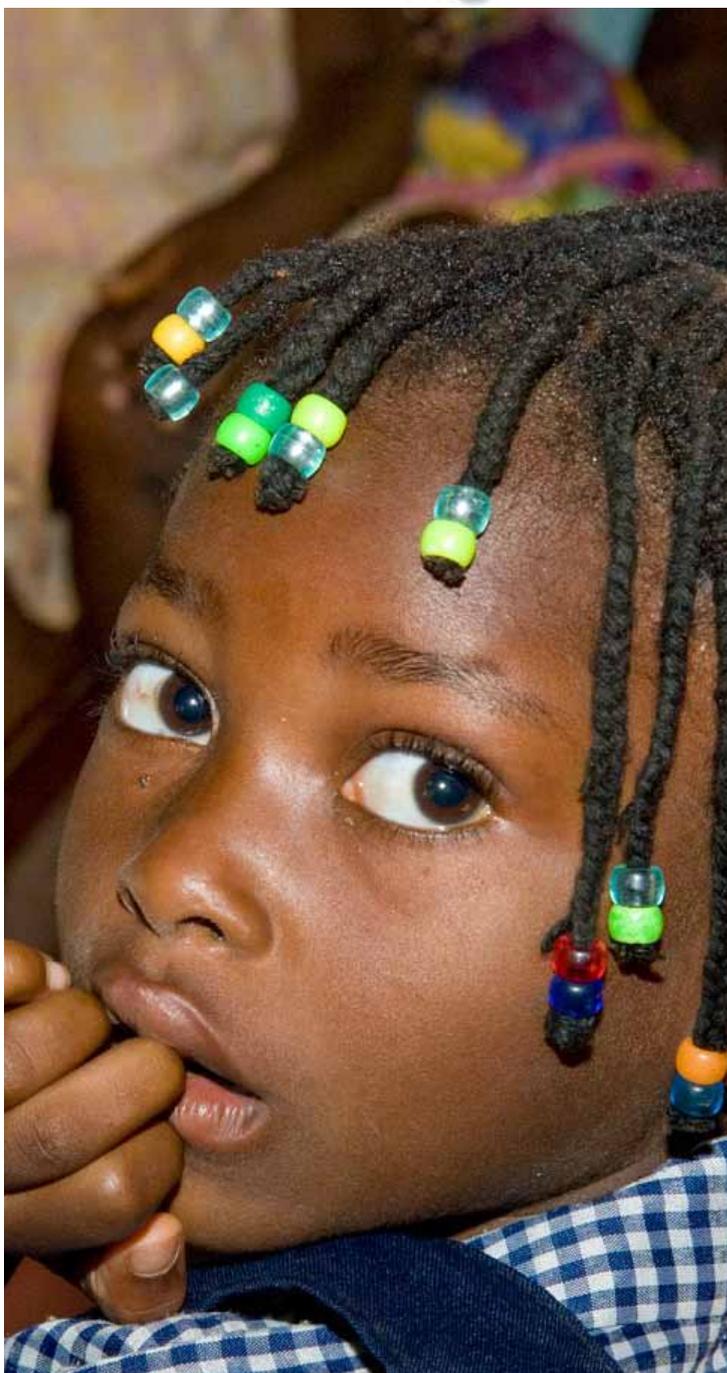
Biology and natural history—from studying the effect of animals on the local people to listening to the sounds of an elephant.

Cultural differences and social studies—how do beliefs in Zambia differ from the Western World.

For Project Luangwa one of the main aims of the exercise is to promote cultural understanding on both sides. The Western view of many countries is shaped by the media and so often this is uninformed and negative. We hope that children in the Luangwa Valley will start to feel part of a larger world and look beyond the boundaries of their village.

Many children here have never seen a map much less understand what it represents. We hope that class twinning will stimulate lessons on geography as well as improve their English writing skills.

Project Luangwa



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