

Makelle Blind School

Newsletter Summer 2009

Firstly sincere apologies for this long overdue and abbreviated newsletter. I have been hoping for some photos of the school and waiting until Ivy and Mike returned with the latest news,

As you will know we have been concerned in the first instance with the health and welfare of the students at the school.

This has involved the provision of a new kitchen, shower block and most recently fitting clothes washing area with sinks, and the refurbishment of the toilets. On our last visit we took more musical instruments and set up a music room.

Water

We know from Mike and Ivy (two VSO volunteers who have been in Makelle and who have been heavily involved with the school) that the showers and toilets have had limited use because the water supply is inadequate and erratic. There is a water tank but it is very unstable and the new tank is not connected to the water supply.

The New Water Tanks



The water bore



This is even more frustrating because since 2005 there has been a bore pumping water on to the site but unconnected to the main water tanks.

Christmas 2008

We supported the celebration of Christmas at the school with a special meal and a prize giving for the children.



October 2009

Jan and I, together with Melanie and Pete and Liz, intend visiting during October and November, and sorting out the water supply is now a top priority for us. Seemingly the problem, as is often the case, is bureaucratic as the school is under educational control, and the water supply is in the control of the health department. Neither can agree who has the responsibility so nothing gets done.

We are meeting in Late August to prioritise our work in the school. Broadly speaking our concerns fall into three areas:

1 Quality of Living- Improving the site

- Water
- Playground
- Kitchen
- Resource room
- Equipment
- Recreational programme for week ends
- Links and partnerships

2 Health

- Diet
- Garden
- Eye checks and register of children
- Treatment

3 Quality of learning

- Visits with children to mainstream schools and classrooms
- Special needs co-ordinator at ZEB and REB
- Life skills and Technical training
- Older children and transition arrangements
- Quality of teaching for grades 1-3
- Resources

Advisory EducationalSupport

After visiting last October Jan started to investigate the education provision possibilities. This has resulted in an Advisory teacher for the visually impaired in the UK offering to go to the school during the UK holiday periods to assess the provision and make suggestions for improvement. We are hoping that she will be able to make an initial visit at Easter with Beth and Bryn. Our hope is that we might be able to fund some longer term educational support.

What has improved?

Children are more active and noisy. The buildings are more substantial. There is more equipment. All in all it is a happier place and the Children are a joy to be with.



Of course there is still so much we could do. This school is only the tip of the iceberg as only 1% of students with special educational needs receive any education in Ethiopia. But thanks to the support of so many people we can continue to make a small contribution that increasingly is being supported by the local community and authorities.

Sponsorship

Jan and I are running the Nottingham and the London half marathons in September and October. We would be grateful for any one who would like to sponsor us in aid of the school. We will put any money we raise to building a playground for the younger children at the school. If you do want to sponsor us can you reply by email to either ian_draper@hotmail.com or ian_draper@hotmail.com

Next Newsletter

Will be written as soon after our return in November and hopefully will be full of photos of the children and the progress at the school.
With very best wishes and thanks to you all.

Ian Draper
August 22 2009