



25th Stirling (Dunblane) Boys' Brigade

Project Malawi 2016

Our Malawian Adventure

Introduction

In July 2016, a team of 23 from the 25th Stirling (Dunblane) Boys' Brigade travelled to Malawi. They stayed in the Likhubula area for 2 weeks and during their time there they repaired and renovated classrooms in two primary schools: Pasani and Nansato.

This was the culmination of a year of fundraising and hard work that involved all 16 boys and their families. They raised a phenomenal amount of money and exceeded the initial target 3 months early.

This document describes what the team accomplished within their fundraising efforts and within Malawi. It will contain all the financial details of the project as well as provide some learning points that can be used by future projects.



I, personally, would like to thank everyone who made this project possible. I have never experienced generosity the like of which we experienced during this project. The community of Dunblane took the project to their hearts as did the BB community nationally, internationally and within Dunblane. The families and officers of the company were very supportive of the project as we tried to walk the tightrope of involving the whole company without dominating the programme. I would also like to thank the families of the boys who took part. Their hard work, dedication, enthusiasm (and toleration of my control-freakery) made this project a joy to manage. It is definitely the most enjoyable and successful project I have ever been involved in. I would like to thank Paul, Vanda, Ian and Fraser for their tremendous amount of hard work during the fundraising and during the 3 weeks in Malawi. It was a huge amount of effort and responsibility but we worked well as a team. Finally, I would like to thank my long-suffering family. Often neglected and de-prioritised, they were my rock during the project. However, it was all Fiona's idea anyway.

Colin Anderson

Project Malawi Project Lead



The Beginning

The Idea



In 2014, a group of boys from the 3rd Kilsyth Boys' Brigade decided to raise money to help Mary's Meals. This project morphed into an excursion of a team led by Christine Johnstone to Malawi in conjunction with Classroom's For Malawi (CfM). This charity encourages groups of people in schools, youth organisations, churches or local authorities to raise money to either build or renovate classrooms. The premise of the charity is that the only sustainable route out of poverty for the people of Malawi is through improved education. The number of children attending schools within Malawi has risen exponentially mainly through the declaration of free primary education by the government and as a result of successful feeding programmes like Mary's Meals. The infrastructure in Malawi is drastically inadequate and most classrooms are dilapidated. They do not have appropriate lighting or ventilation, they are not secure, they do not have proper floors and lack and type of flood protection during the rainy season.

The boys from the 3rd Kilsyth had a very successful trip and repaired several classrooms in Kadete, Malawi. Dunblane as a community has a partnership with the Likhubula community in Malawi. This partnership was created in 2006 and has seen several successful projects benefit the community. A proposal was put in front of the leaders of the 25th Stirling (Dunblane) Boys' Brigade to link up these threads and create a project to set up a similar project to 3rd Kilsyth within the Likhubula community. As this proposal was being discussed, CfM were contacted about potential schools in the area and Christine was consulted on the process taken by 3rd Kilsyth.

The Application and Selection Process

It was decided that we would approach the senior boys in the company (S4's and up) to see what the level of interest would be. An information evening was held where parents and interested boys were invited to come and hear about our rough plans and what would be involved. We also gave details of what the application and selection process would be.



We created an application form that allowed the boys to state why they were applying and what they hoped to achieved. We then held a selection afternoon to test certain capabilities: commitment, teamwork, awareness and creativity. The afternoon consisted of several team exercises that were fun and challenging, discussions about "voluntourism" and an individual interview.

After a few discussions and several follow-up conversations with some of the applicants, all 16 boys were selected. It was felt by all concerned that the application and selection process was well worth the time to do. It created a certain amount of formality that reflected the

commitment the boys were going to sign up to. It also allowed the boys an opportunity to realise the commitment they were signing up for and a chance to opt out if required.

Planning

The evening after the selection afternoon, we held our planning meeting. All parents and boys were invited along to contribute ideas and prioritise efforts. The attendees were split into several groups and asked to consider ideas for events, things to sell, sponsor events and big ticket items that we should focus on. The teams were also asked to vote on a logo and motto design from the number that the boys had submitted.

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Learn to Build - Build to Learn

The evening was a great success and started the process of forming a great parental team. The ideas were noted and a draft number was put against each idea to figure out how much we could raise. We had an estimated cost of £2,300 per head for accommodation and travel. A target of £60,000 was then created that would allow £7,100 for any classroom repair. The line items that we originally estimated came up to £61,700.

This planning session was held at the end of the BB year so all the boys were told that there was a nominal target for them all to raise at least £500 on their own without any central organising.

Getting Ready

After the planning session was over, the organising could begin with several key items. Events were scheduled, rooms were booked and posters were created for a few events, the rules for the 100 club were agreed, the base was made for our Lego school, Lego mini figures were designed, whisky distillers were contacted and plans were firmed up ready for the beginning of the new session. All during this time, the boys were working hard either with sponsorship plans or working in gardens and doing odd jobs. By enrolment evening at the end of August we were ready for launch.



Fundraising

Monthly Meetings

The fundraising efforts were managed in monthly intervals. Monthly project meetings were scheduled where all parents and boys were invited. These meetings would review the progress of the fundraising efforts and plan for the next month coming. The total raised would be shared and we would observe progress against plan. These meetings were also a good opportunity to invite along some guests who had experience in either Malawi or Classrooms for Malawi. These meetings were well attended and served the purpose they were created for.



Super Teams

To avoid too much control freakery from a certain individual, said individual suggested that a number of Super Teams were created in November in order to spread the load. These teams focussed on Sales, Postering and Publicity, Cakes and Nibbles, Cocktails and Dreams and Car Washing. These super teams worked well and allowed parents to get stuck in to the job at hand. After the team had a few events under their belt, the parental machine got into full swing. We started to know who was good at what, everyone started looking for fundraising opportunities and volunteers were easy to get.

Challenges

We did face several key challenges though:

Car Washing - The monthly car washing required four squads to be mobilised over a weekend. It was hard work and was felt that the return gained did not reflect the effort.

Advance Ticket Sales - It was very hard to gauge ticket sales at each of our event as attendees would normally wait until the last few days to purchase a ticket.

Non-Project Family attendance at events - The main attendees at each event were the families of the team members. We struggled to sell tickets to other families within the company apart from a number of exceptions who we could rely on to attend.

Fundraising Performance

Group Activities

The individual sponsorships went very well. Although some boys did not do a major sporting sponsorship event, most did enough 'chore' type work to meet their £500 target. This line item worked against target for the full duration and performed above target. Although the

car washing was a pain, it did perform over budget as did the cake sales at canteen. The only group activity we failed to plan for the group sponsorship activity.



Events

We managed to run about half of the planned events in our original budget but the amount raised almost met the original target due to the success of the events we held. When we started to schedule the dates, we realised that we could not over populate the calendar with events. We tried to stick to one or two major events a month with a few minor ones depending on the opportunities that arose.



Sale Items

We didn't do very well at selling the original items that we identified. The only 2 items we progressed with were the football cards and the Christmas decorations – neither of them made their target

Big Ticket Items



This group contained the 100 Club, Donations, Funding and the Lego School. These items worked well and did not take a huge amount of effort. We were lucky to get some good funding donations.



Unplanned items

The unplanned items amounted to £28,000 of the total. These included several opportunistic ideas but also some ideas that really took off. The flamingos and the Lego men made £9500 and the Andy Murray raffle brought in over £2,000. The numerous Craft Fairs brought in £1,700 and the Soup and Sweets brought in £1,400 and raised awareness amongst (most of) the Churches in Dunblane.



Preparation

Safety

Safety was our key consideration in any trip planning work. We consulted with previous trips and with CfM to put together a risk assessment document. This document was shared with all team members and their families to ensure that everyone was happy with our planned approaches. We also appointed two of the leaders to prepare and assemble a comprehensive first aid kit that would hopefully allow us to treat most scenarios that arose. Any spare medical kit would be left in the communities. We also collated details of hospitals. Inoculations were administered by both the NHS (for the free inoculations) and by Gecko Travel who ran 3 mobile surgeries and were also available at Stirling University if anyone missed a date. Gecko Travel also administered the Malaria tablets and we ensured that these were rigorously taken every morning.

Equipment

We approached B&Q and Homebase to see if they could offer discounts on any DIY equipment. B&Q offered us a voucher and we bought most of the DIY equipment from them. We also purchased acrylic paint for the murals. These pieces of equipment, along with gifts and donations, were distributed amongst the boys who managed to pack all of it within their baggage allowance.



Preparation Meetings



We held three preparation meetings on the Fridays between the display and our departure. These featured a language lesson, some team-building exercises, some worry sharing and some spiritual and mental preparation. From feedback, these sessions could have started earlier and we should have focussed on more singing/dancing preparation so that we were more impressive at the welcomes.

Travel Preparation

The Responsible Safari Company (RSC) managed to apply for our Malawia visas in advance so that there was less delay in the airport. All parents signed a consent letter allowing their child to travel with us and copies of all important details with contact details were stored in a secure dropbox location that could be accessed by the communication contact in the UK and by us wherever we were. We also carried 2 copies of each consent form, each insurance certificate, passport details and the travel booking details.



The Trip

Travel

All the travel went very smoothly. After the security check at Edinburgh Airport, all the boys understood what was expected. We agreed rules around timings and meeting back and all the boys followed suit. The timings at each of the airports was good and all the flights passed without issue. We were met by RSC at the airport and they guided us through customs and baggage reclaim. No bags were lost (both ways)



Accommodation

Likhubula House was comfortable but basic. The boys occupied 2 dorms: one with 12 and one with 4. There was a larger group also at Likhubula House whilst we were there but we managed to agree a pattern of timings to ensure we both got meals and rooms when we needed them. Two leaders staying in a dorm adjacent to the boys and the other leaders stayed in chalets 5-minute walk down the hill. Toilet facilities were basic and the showers were cold. Despite this we did not have any hygiene issues. Bottled water was always available for the boys to use for teeth brushing and for drinking at meals.



The accommodation at Mvuu Camp was luxurious in comparison and was a welcomed treat for the boys (even with the wildlife in close proximity). Boys were in chalets of 4 and there was plenty of hot water.

The accommodation at Grace Bandawe in Blantyre was hostel like but we were only there for one evening prior to flying home.

Food

The food at Likhubula House was basic but surprisingly plentiful. Breakfast consisted of porridge, fruit salad, toast and sometimes eggs and/or sausage. We were given sandwiches for lunch and then dinner consisted of either chicken and rice, beef or pasta. No complaints were made and most boys ate everything in sight. We made a couple of trips to local shops so that they boys could also stock up on snacks although it was sometimes very difficult to find supplies.



We also went out for dinner twice during our stay in Likhubula. Once to a pizza place in Chitikale and once to Nancy's Dream Restaurant where we were treated to a Malawian meal and pizza.

We sponsored the celebration dinner at Pasani school and invited the village chiefs and parents committee. We also sponsored the lunch at Kapalamula Primary School on our way to Mvuu Camp (we avoided the mice-on-a-stick). Both of these sponsored meals were prepared by our hosts. The food at Mvuu camp was excellent as was the food at the restaurant in Blantyre where we met the Boys' Brigade.

The boys managed to survive on airplane food supplemented by snacks at the airport on the way home.

Logistics



Our two guides from RSC, Andrew and Chacko, managed all our logistics. We had two minibuses available to us which worked well with transport to the two schools. They were also able to offer transport to the Likhubula Committee members which saved then hiring a car. The minibuses were comfortable and well maintained. A trailer was also available but only required travelling to and from the airport.

Andrew and Chacko facilitated our work at the schools with the builders. They acted as interpreters and helped during the few disputes that we had. They also managed the staff at Likhubula House. They negotiated meal times and ensured that everything run like clockwork. We treated them as part of our staff and we planned the day's activities with them.

Andrew also took the lead when one of the boys need to visit hospital. Andrew suggested a hospital in Blantyre. The consultation went smoothly and was done and dusted within a morning.

I cannot compliment the staff from RSC enough for their professionalism and management through the planning and execution of the project. Everything was thought about and ran very smoothly. They formed part of our team and became our friends.

Welfare

Safety was our top priority and we ensured that any mishap was treated as soon as possible. We had a few trips that required wounds to be cleaned and dressed. Both of our guides were first aid trained and assisted where required.



We had one trip to hospital which went very smoothly.

We kept an eye on the boys' mental welfare very carefully given the change in culture and environment. Every evening we would have a meeting to discuss the matters of the day. The session was facilitated in such a way that all boys were asked to participate. Even the most introverted of boys were offering opinions and everyone enjoyed these discussions. I can honestly say that I have never experienced teenage boys express so many thoughts, feelings and opinions than I did during those sessions.

The Welcomes

The Welcomes at the two schools were mind-blowing. Nansato had a well-rehearsed programme. The boys were noticeably nervous at first by the amount of children there, the commotion they were creating (especially wearing kilts) and the sheer noise and excitement that we created. The boys did relax during the ceremony that Pasani had laid on for us and this set the tone for the interaction the boys were to have with the learners for the next 2 weeks. Both ceremonies were overwhelming. The outpouring of appreciation was clear for the boys. They were treated like heroes and this spurred them on to do a great job in the following weeks.



The Work

We split up into two groups with the intention of swapping over after every couple of days. After the first day, it was clear that the boys wanted to see the job through with boys schools and we stuck with the original groups. Both groups had a great mix of boys and the dynamics worked well at both schools.



The work was hard. Lime-washing is difficult and soul destroying. It required a lot of motivation to keep the boys going. The PVA paint we put on top of the lime wash was also tricky. Malawians like to thin down their paint as much as they can which means that getting a good coating of paint on the walls requires quite a bit of

skill. This skill is something that all of the group did not possess so we had to convince the builders to give us thicker paint. We also found that the paint went on better with a brush (especially on rougher walls) so we purchased some brushes in the market. The builders also improvised with sticks in order to give us more extension poles as step ladders were limited.



The blue gloss on the walls was a lot easier and went on in a satisfying way. The metal doors and windows were tough. The most paint that the builders had was the dark blue. We therefore thinned that down to use as undercoat. However, putting the gloss coat on top of a dark undercoat was very difficult – especially with the yellow top coat.



We did not manage to do as much with regards to the murals as we had originally expected. However, the alphabets and numbers that we managed to get up looked good and were well received by the teachers.

In total, we managed to complete the painting in 4 classrooms in Pasani and 6 in Nansato. Building work was still in progress. Drains and roof panels were still to be installed in Nansato. Doors, windows, drains and roof panels were to be installed in Pasani. All painting was also to be completed in all classrooms. At the end of the work, all 6 classrooms were completed in Nansato. In Pasani, we rebuilt 10 classrooms but the team also repainted the other 2 classrooms that did not require any structural work. We kept in touch with both schools through CfM and the Partnership and received word and photographs of the completed classrooms in September.



Experiences

As well as the painting, we tried to get the boys to experience as much of the local community as possible.

On the Saturday, we had lunch with 15 bursars that are funded by the Dunblane Likhubula partnership. They boys were scattered around and told to chat with their neighbour. This was an extremely worthwhile exercise which gave the boys a rich understanding of secondary school and also of family life in Likhubula.



We visited the market at Chitikale which provided the boys with an understanding of the types of food which were on offer.

We also went to a 2½ hour Church service where we experienced a wonderful service full of song and dance. We provided our own entertainment in the way of our BB band but I think the congregation were more impressed by our kilts and our dancing expertise.



We hiked up part of Mount Mulanje where we passed by several timber workers sawing trees. The scenery was excellent and a number of boys enjoyed the fresh water pools from the water that was running straight off the mountain.

We went down early in the morning to Nansato Primary School to observe the Mary's Meals distribution. It was a wet day at the end of term so not very busy but the boys got a sense of need for feeding programmes and the poverty of the families in the local area.



We played three football matches with minimal success but a lot of fun. The boys realised that football was a key passion of boys even if they struggled to find a good ball



We visited another primary school in Kapalamula where the boys were able to compare the work they had just finished with one that is desperately needing help. Their water pump was broken and the boys made us very proud by deciding to have a whip round to fix their pump.



The drive to Mvuu Camp exposed us to different communities in Malawi including urban areas in Blantyre and Muslim areas up towards the safari. It also exposed us to the worst 16km of road our rear ends have ever experienced.

Mvuu Camp was a spectacular place. We experienced jeep, boat and walking safaris as well as some well deserved rest. The animals were amazing and the staff were very friendly.



On our last night we met up with the Blantyre Boys' Brigade just as Andy Murray won Wimbledon. Again, it was a great experience for the boys to spend the evening conversing with a group of boys about similarities and differences



Presentations

Public Presentations

We held 2 public presentations in the Cathedral Hall and in St Blane's Church. Videos were created from a culmination of all the photographs and videos that were taken. These videos were split up into several sections. After each section, a few of the boys would offer their reflections



Specific Presentations

We have also been invited to a number of specific presentations. We attended a service at St Mary's Episcopalian Church, we presented to the Cathedral and St Blane's Guild, the Company section at Dunblane and Clackmannan, the Girls' Brigade, the Dunblane Rotary and Newton Primary School.

All of these presentations were well received and we hope this forms a basis of future support amongst the community.

Awards

The project was awarded the Youth Award at the AGM of the Scottish Malawi Partnership. Three boys attended the AGM and received the award.



Financial Summary

Summary

We owe a great deal of debt to Lyndsey Dolby who managed all the accounts and Gift Aid applications for us. Without Lyndsey, we would not have made the total we did.

In total, we raised £78,219.23. All this money was sent on project expenditure, travel and accommodation, Malawi expenses and monies for the repair work. We had a surplus of £6,568 at the end of the project and we donated this to CfM for them to use on other projects.

Income

We categorised the income into the following groups

	Original Budget	Monies Raised	Diff
Group Activities	21,000	15,205.72	-5784.28
Events	15200	13029.48	-2170.52
Sales	4500	1353.20	-3146.80
Big Ticket Items	21000	20674.75	-325.25
Unplanned Items		27956.08	27956.08
Total	61,700	78,219	16,529

Expenditure

Expenditure was split between fundraising or project expenses (£3558.38) and then trip expenses (£74660.85).

Details below

Fundraising/Project Expenses	Amount
Vouchers - prizes	100
Race Night Expenses	255
Smarties expenses	83.15
Whisky tasting expenses	503.2
T shirts	669.62
Burns expenses	276.06
Ginuary Expenses	130
Christmas cards	98.4
Raffle Tickets	66
Cocktails and Dreams	1376.95
Total	3558.38

Trip Expense	Amount	Details
Responsible Safari Company	24921	Accommodation, Meals, Transport
Flights	20904.34	All flights
Classrooms for Malawi	15000	Total cost of classroom repairs
Donation to CfM	6568	Donation for further CfM work
Pre-Trip expenses	5297.76	Medical kit, DIY kit, Gifts, Paints (also includes £3390.96 repayments for Hoodies, Kilts and Insurance)
Expenses in Malawi	1969.75	Dinners, guides, tips, lunches, carvings, brushes
Total	74660.85	

Feedback and Lessons Learned

Fundraising

What worked well?

- We worked well as a team
- Everyone got stuck in
- Varied amount of activities
- Everyone looked for opportunities
- The events were brilliant and fun
- The flamingos were great for publicity

What would you have done differently?

- Public car washes
- Fundraising over a longer time
- More sports based events
- More group sponsored events
- DYC under 18 events
- Raise the £500 individual target to maybe £750 or £1000
- Wish we could have got more people to come to the events
- Sometimes the calendar was manic and there was a lot going on

Team Preparation

What worked well?

- Good to hear about what was expected from us in Malawi
- Learned a lot about the country
- We all mixed together and bonded
- Session with Gary prepping from the mental side of things was good

What would you have done differently?

- Would have liked to start these sessions earlier
- Would have liked to have learned more Chichewa
- Would have been handy to learn about painting
- We should have learned better songs and practiced them more

Advice to Pass On

What advice would you give to the next project?

- Painting is dull but just get stuck into it
- Make the most of the interactions with the kids
- Fundraise over a longer period – maybe 2 years
- Don't worry about what clothes you take
- Take notes in your jotter every night as it all becomes a blur
- Don't worry about making a twit of yourself in front of the kids
- Keep Mr A happy by responding to emails and signing up for stuff
- Have loads of different fundraising ideas and keep thinking of how you can raise money
- Learn impressive songs and dances
- Get involved in loads of Malawi events and maybe even the Likhubula committee

What do you think the next project should do?

- Focus on the deprived schools
- Transform Pasani completely including teachers' rooms and toilets
- See if we can add new blocks of classrooms to Pasani
- Maybe look at Daytoney's school in Kapalamula
- Fix desks or maybe buy furniture
- Maybe involve the GB

