

# Humanitarian Aid Visit to Blantyre By Glasgow City Council ICT

August 31<sup>st</sup> to September 16<sup>th</sup> 2007

## Project Outline

On August 31<sup>st</sup> 2007, a party of GCC employees from Corporate ICT and Education Services ICT together with a group from City Building, left Glasgow for Blantyre, Malawi, in south east Africa. They would work on several projects simultaneously for the next fortnight, returning on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September.

This was the result of some 2 years planning by the Lord Provost International Office and the Malawian Education and Health Ministries. In 2006 a team of ICT staff successfully installed computing equipment in various health/education sites in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. As a result, further support for Education in Blantyre was identified, and this subsequent programme of work agreed.

The projects were to:

- Supply and install "recycled" PCs and printers (formerly GCC stock, now replaced by a more current specification) at 4 Education Training Centres in Blantyre
- Training for over 50 teachers and 8 technical staff
- Supply and install PCs and printers at the extension to Chikwawa District Hospital administration block and the new stand-alone clinic to treat HIV/AIDS patients, completed by our City Building colleagues, with a little help from the ICT staff, during the same time period
- Supply PCs to College of Health Sciences and College of Medicine, which have close links with Chikwawa District Hospital.

Work started on the projects on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September and continued on each of the following 13 days, culminating with the installation of equipment at the new clinic and offices on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September.

## Background

Most Malawians rely on subsistence farming and over half the population lives below the poverty line. Life expectancy for men and women is 40 years, and 15% of the rural population/ 32% of the urban population are living with aids. The literacy rate is only 58% and improving health and education are objectives for the Malawian government. Although primary education is available to all, free of charge, many cannot afford the uniform required, or are unable to travel to school. Teachers are scarce, the situation made worse by the high number of AIDS related deaths.



Education is prized by Malawians; a primary leaving certificate is mandatory for most jobs. At the time of the project, the certificate exams were being held. The project team was informed that of the 50,000 pupils sitting the exam, only 5,000 can be offered a place at state secondary schools.

Education in Malawi is provided by the state and privately, for those who can afford the fees. Many private schools can provide classes in computer technology. Some state schools have computing courses, but no equipment.



## Impact

Blantyre state schools are divided into 4 administrative zones, and this project supplied a fully equipped computer training centre for each zone. It is hoped that the new training centres will enable many teachers in the state sector to become computer literate and to pass these skills on to their pupils. In this way, the teachers and young people have been given an opportunity to compete with the more affluent schools, and therefore the potential to raise academic achievement and quality of life.

## Preparation

Since 2005, a small number of ICT volunteers have met at a warehouse every Tuesday evening to “recycle” computers which have been replaced as part of the Council’s desktop refresh policy.

The computers go through a 4 step process before shipment:

- check suitability of physical condition
- wipe clean of data
- build to a specification agreed with Microsoft
- test, asset track and pack for shipping.

Some 165 PCs, printers and networking hardware were prepared in this way and consigned to the shipment which departed in May, together with training material for basic computing skills and the key Microsoft applications: Word, Excel and Powerpoint. The team also travelled with toolkits and training software in their suitcases.

## Installations

The ICT Team comprised: Libby Carey, Hilary Wood, Heather McDonald, Maria Quintas Zon, Sammy Birnie and Mike Simpson from Corporate ICT and Julie Dalzell from Education Services IT.

The team worked to the following schedule:

1. Site visit to each training centre
2. Arrange classroom layout and install power and networking connections
3. Deliver, unpack and install PCs and printers
4. Test equipment and load training material
5. Train teachers at each of 4 sites
6. Train technicians for each site



The Education Division Manager, Sister Eunice Dambo, took the team to visit each of the training centres identified for each zone: Zingwangwa, Bangwe, South Lunzu and Ndirande. Each training centre had been built to the same physical specification, with a large lockable classroom with an office and storage at one end. The training centres are located in 4 schools and the pupils took a very active and noisy interest in the visits and installations. At each site we received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from the senior education staff.

Locally made tables had been ordered, and each training centre was to have increased its supply of power to accommodate the new equipment. However, not all the tables had been delivered on time, and some power was lacking. In addition, Blantyre was having a power sharing regime so we had to “order” power for the days we were conducting the installations and training. Eventually all power and furniture requirements were completed to enable the training to be completed.

Although the consignments arrived in good time at Malawi’s capital Lilongwe, negotiation was required before the consignments were eventually released by the authorities and could be delivered to site.

The equipment arrived in very good condition with few damaged PCs (2 PCs were broken) parts though one or two items need to be replaced from the spare parts also shipped across. Each training centre was fitted with 33 PCs, monitors and mice, two networked printers and a PC and printer for each office. A comprehensive assortment of spare equipment and training material was also supplied.

## Additional Installations

On completion of the builds at Chikwawa Hospital, 8 PCs and three printers were installed in the offices and consultation rooms, again providing Windows 2000 with MS Office.

PCs and printers were also supplied to the College of Health Sciences and the College of Medicine, to be installed by their own staff.

## Training

Training was provided to between 10 and 17 teachers at each of the 4 training centres. None of the teachers had seen or used a computer before and the training was very much “back to basics”. The training was conducted over two consecutive days at each site and covered the following topics:

- Parts of the PC; logging On and Off; Windows desktop; files and folders;
- Accessories: notepad, calculator, paint
- Printing
- Introduction to Word, Excel and how to use the Training Notes and Exercises



The teachers were avid learners and most coped well with the new topics. They were able to think of ways to utilise the new technology and were reluctant to take breaks. The head teachers were also delighted with the centres, some joining the training sessions as time allowed.

## Capacity

Spare equipment was provided to the Educational Divisional Manager for distribution to the Training Centres as required.

Eight technicians, who will be responsible for supporting the new centres, were trained in the installation, configuration, support and maintenance tasks, including support of the training material. Although the technicians are allocated to specific schools, they can provide a service to any of the sites if necessary.

## Handover

After the final day's training the project team were invited to the official handover of the training centres to the Education Division in Blantyre. Around one hundred head teachers and teachers, some of whom had been course participants, were present, together with Malawi Television who had conducted some filming during one of the training sessions. The representative for the Ministry of Education expressed her delight and gratitude for the donation. She also commended those responsible for the centres to seek Internet access, a suggestion which was received enthusiastically by the teaching staff present.

Each centre has planned scheduled time for the teaching staff to use the facilities, and a regular report will be provided to the Lord Provost's Office on the use of the resources over the year.



At Chikwawa District Hospital, the Malawian Minister for Health and senior hospital officials gratefully acknowledged the donation from Glasgow City Council, from the office of the Lord Provost and the staff who travelled to Malawi, whose time and skills made the entire project possible.

