

# HIGH FIVE CLUB

changing lives, £5 at a time

## Grootberg School Upliftment, Namibia

**Background:** Namibia is located in southern Africa, bordered the Atlantic Ocean to the west and sharing land boundaries with Zambia, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe & South Africa. The country was for many years known as the German South West Africa but later adopted the name Namibia after the Namib Desert. It is the second most sparsely populated country in the world after Mongolia.

The country's economy is built on tourism and the mining of precious stones and metals, and as such is now one of Africa's most developed and stable countries. It is, however, an inconvenient truth and harsh reality that around half the population still lives below the international poverty line of 50 pence a day. Coupled with this Namibians have suffered the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS with an estimated 1 in 7 living with the condition. Malaria, the single biggest killer in Namibia, is compounded by this epidemic due to concurrent HIV infections. As a result there are many AIDS and malaria orphans in the country.

**Grootberg Primary School:** Grootberg Primary School is located in the Kunene region, which lies within the greater area previously known as Damaraland. The environs of the school are very sparsely populated but it is a central point for the many different communities living in the region including the Herero speaking people. The school serves children from as far away as 100 km.



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The Namibian government built Grootberg School 12 years ago but as with most government built rural schools in the country there is a distinct lack of on-going maintenance and support provision. High Five Club co-founders Manny and Cheryl Mvula visited the school in April this year leading a group of UK students from Walton Girls' High School in Grantham on an educational field trip to Namibia. The group stayed at the school for 10 days and worked with teachers and pupils there to implement a range of much needed improvements to the school, including the provision of football, netball and volleyball pitches and the upgrading and painting of the youngest children's' classrooms to provide more vibrant and enriched learning environments.



Circa 15% of the children attending Grootberg School are orphaned as a result of both malaria and HIV. Many of these orphans have no family relatives and are hence taken in by other families in their community. This offers them a lifeline but as these families have their own children they have little or no means to provide adequately for these orphans.

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The school has 220 pupils between the ages of 6 and 15 years. 130 of these children are boarders due to the huge travel distances between their villages and the school. Facilities for the boarders are very run down and many of the children have no mattresses and sleep on the bare concrete floor with just a blanket.



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Basic food is provided to both the boarders and the day pupils through a government food scheme but each child has to provide their own plate and mug, as the school cannot afford to provide these.

Our daily 'development' meetings with the principal and the head teachers yielded some positive thoughts and ideas on how to develop the school so it can fully serve its purpose in both education and care for its pupils. In the prioritisation process one of the important developments highlighted was that of provision of plates and mugs for all children at the school. Clearly there was a common understanding that good nutrition and hygiene go hand in hand to enhance classroom concentration and attendance. Many children because they are eating out of their hands, off a plastic bag on the floor, or sharing a plate or mug with a child that does have, often suffer from chronic diarrhoea, which means they miss lessons and their education suffers. As we are all aware education is the key to communities such as these uplifting themselves out of the poverty trap.



It is for this reason that we as High Five Club members have proudly provided the school with tin plates and mugs for all 220 learners costing us just £360 in total to equip the school with these utensils. A colleague of ours from De Lisle Catholic Science College in Loughborough who was visiting the school last month delivered these to the school, and they were received with much joy from both the children and teachers alike.

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I am sure you will all agree and acknowledge that our support will go a long-long way to ensure that each and every child attending school at Grootberg will in the future eat & drink with respect.



We will keep you posted on future potential Grootberg projects that will give these young people a chance of an improved learning environment in the face of adversity. **If any of you know of any companies who may wish to get involved in providing beds and mattresses for the school do let us know.**

For further information on this initiative contact Dr Cheryl Mvula at [cdmvula@aol.com](mailto:cdmvula@aol.com)