



The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Making a difference in rural Namibia

NEWSLETTER

No: 53

Winter 2024

Drought in Namibia

Namibia is facing its most severe drought in 100 years exacerbated by El Niño, which led the Government to declare a state of emergency on 22 May 2024. Unlike previous droughts, this one has impacted all 14 regions of the country – all classified as IPC Phase 3 (crisis) – with 1.2 million people, or 40% of the population, facing acute food insecurity (IPC phase 3 and above) and requiring urgent support to reduce food gaps and protect livelihoods. This number is expected to increase to 1.4 million people between July and September 2024. Additionally, 7 out of 14 Regions are experiencing IPC phase 4 (emergency) conditions, with the number of people classified as IPC Phase 4 set to double between July and September 2024. According to a crop assessment carried out in April 2024, many households in the major communal crop producing regions, where marginalized communities are primarily resettled, were already then reported to have depleted their previous season's food stock. The compounding effect of escalating food and commodity prices are affecting access to food for marginalized communities. The National Strategic Food Reserves are critically low, with 84% of all silos empty, heightening concerns about food security in the face of the El Niño. The most vulnerable populations, including pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children, are disproportionately affected by this decline in food security, jeopardizing their nutritional health and overall well-being. The situation is likely to deteriorate if there is a delay in response, and if communities adopt extreme coping strategies like reducing or missing meals or consuming low-nutrient food. In addition, nutrition indicators in Namibia are worsening, with the deaths of children under 5 reported in some regions. Stunting stands at 24% while wasting is at 6% in Namibia.

CERF-funded assistance

In response to the crisis, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$3 million from CERF's Rapid Response window for the immediate commencement of life-saving activities to address the most critical and urgent needs of people in Kavango East, Kavango West and Omaheke regions in Namibia, the districts hit hardest by the drought. This allocation acts as a catalyst for coordinated action between Government agencies and humanitarian actors. In addition, the allocation is expected to help mobilize additional resources for the drought response, sending a strong signal about the severity of needs faced by communities in Namibia. This CERF allocation enables UN agencies and partners to provide emergency, life-saving assistance to over 153,000 drought-affected people in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Nutrition, Protection (including from Gender-Based Violence) and Food Security sectors.

(Source: United Nations CERF report)

During our recent visit, we witnessed the effect of the drought, especially on the landscape which was parched and dry. During our ten weeks stay we only saw rain in the last two weeks, but not substantive enough to make a difference.

Elections

On Wednesday 27 November, Namibia held its elections for the position of president and to provide members for the National Assembly. About 1.4 million registered to vote and there was a large turnout especially as it was a public holiday. Due to logistical problems, many voters queued for hours in the hot sun, and some gave up and went home. A friend of ours joined a queue at 09.00 and finally cast her vote at 21.00. Because of the problems, voting was extended to two further days on Friday 29 November and Saturday 30 November. The result was that the ruling party SWAPO won the election, and their presidential candidate Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah will become Namibia's first woman president when she takes office in March 2025.



Queues at Polling Stations in Windhoek. The one on the left is outside the Independence Museum

The Foundation's Projects

We returned from Namibia on Friday 29 November having spent the previous ten weeks there. After leaving the capital, the first four weeks were spent in the Omaheke Region at the Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic and the second four weeks in the north in the Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic. While at the former we visited the three school that the Foundation supports.

Omuhaturaa Primary School and Hostel

We currently do not have any projects at the school, but we were briefed by Sylvia Kavari, the Principal regarding a problem they have with the hostel toilets. Except for the flush toilets provided by the Foundation in 2019, the pupils use 'drop' toilets, and these have now been condemned by the Health Authorities as unhygienic and they have now been cordoned off. The plan is to build a block of flush

toilets, and the Foundation has intimated that it will make a contribution to the cost once this has been finalised.

On Saturday 12 October, the school hosted a choir competition, the venue being the school hall which was built by the Foundation and opened in 2023. Five schools attended with their choirs, and each had to sing three songs. The three judges came from the University of Arts and Music in Windhoek, and they listened to three songs each sung by the choirs, one was one that the judges had written, another was a traditional song and the third was the choirs own choice. The event started at 16.00 and finally finished at 21.00 and competition was fierce, the winner being the host school. The Foundation sponsored the event by providing the trophies for the first three places and it was good to see the hall utilised in such a joyous way.

One of the teachers, Edward, the school choir master expressed a wish for an electric organ, as it happened our friends Martin and Sue Lay, had an organ that belonged to Martin's late brother, and they were more than pleased to donate it to the school. Her Excellency, Linda Scott, the Namibian High Commissioner was approached whether any of her staff could take it with them when they returned to Namibia for Christmas. The answer was 'yes' and the organ has now arrived in Namibia and is being held in the British High Commissioner's residence where we will pick it up when we return next February. Our grateful thanks to Sue and Martin.



An organ for Edward

Donkerbos Primary School and Hostel

On Wednesday 9 October we drove two hours on gravel roads to the school at Donkerbos. Patience, the Principal was pleased to see us, and we had photos taken by a wall that had been painted with various road safety symbols and the words of the Namibia and African Union anthems. After a brief chat in her office, she got the children with the new school uniforms that the Foundation had donated to line up for us looking very smart.

Pat Findlay, one of our supporters, who had worked with Catherine and Linda at Colchester hospital is sponsoring two children at the school and they came and saw us to give us thank you cards for Pat.



Left: The children lining up wearing their new school uniforms: Right: The two children sponsored by Pat Findlay.

We then went over to the hostel dormitories, where we had a big surprise. Patience has commissioned an artist from Gobabis to paint our portraits on the end walls of each dormitory. We were now immortalised in the middle of the Kalahari. The school had commissioned a song which the children sang praising our determination to get things done. At the end of the song, we went to the school hall and saw the children being served lunch and eating with their new spoons provided by the Foundation. While the children ate, we talked with Patience about what the Foundation could do for the school. Firstly, a new industrial electrical cooking pot for the kitchen to replace a broken gas one. This would mean that all the food would be cooked in the kitchen, as due to the broken pot, some food was cooked outside on a fire, which is very unhealthy for the cooks. Secondly to provide around four or five tables for the hall as there were about 20 pupils sitting on the floor. We also discussed the provision of computers for the school. These items would be the Foundation's 2025 project for the school. With this our visit to the school came to an end and we had a final photo taken at the school gate.



The children enjoying lunch, eating with their new spoons.

We then went with Shorty, a school board member and a San community worker to the community office, where we agreed to buy paint for the interior, a table and two chairs to provide an area for the San women to make their jewellery.



Left: Immortalised in the Kalahari! Right: Beside the entrance to the school.

Eiseb Primary School and Hostel

On Wednesday 16 October, we had another two hour journey on gravel roads to the school. On arrival we had a short meeting with Mr Marenga, the Principal who told us about his problem with the borehole which needs drilling out and re-lining, so at the moment he has no water for toilets and showers. He was going to see the Director of Education tomorrow in Gobabis to try and speed things up. The lack of water also affected the school garden irrigation system that was provided by the Foundation which meant that it has had to be turned off until the water is available again. Before we went to the hostel we found Angel, the pupil who Yvonne Corby, one of Linda's swimming friends is sponsoring and took photos of her and her brother.

We then went and looked round the hostel and the dormitory that the Foundation had built. All was well except there was no water for toilets and showers. Next, we inspected the water tower which Komeho had built to replace the one that collapsed earlier in the year. The Foundation had made a contribution to the cost, and we were pleased to see that a good job had been done. As at Donkerbos, we watched the children being served their lunch. After a discussion with the Hostel supervisor, it was agreed that the Foundation would provide approximately 350 spoons, 130 metal plates, paint and tiles for the inside of the kitchen, kitchen staff uniforms and possibly repair the cold room mechanism once a survey had been carried out. These items would be the Foundation's 2025 project for the school.



The water tower on the right which was constructed by Komeho and partly funded by the Foundation

Good Hope Primary School and Hostel

On Thursday 10 October, we visited Good Hope Primary School, which is 45 mins from the clinic. This is the school that our partner St Mary's Secondary School for Girls in Colchester is supporting. We met Teacher Zebby who took us on a tour of the gardens and pointed out that they are running behind with irrigation system due to a shortage of pipe joints which were on order. He assured us that everything would be in place when we visited next year. We then took photos of the various classes beside their particular vegetable plots. Later we discussed the computer quotation for the equipment that St Mary's are currently fundraising for. Finally, Zebby asked us if the Foundation would consider funding 15 San children for an end of term coach trip to the coast, who otherwise would not have been able to go. We agreed to do this, and you can imagine the excitement of the children seeing the sea and desert for the first time, all who had never been outside their village.



San children on the dunes by the coast in their traditional dress

Gobabis Hospital

During one of our weekend stays in Gobabis, the regional capital of the Omaheke region we visited the hospital and donated knitted items from the ladies of West Mersea and the local community to the babies in the premature baby unit and also to the young patients in the paediatric ward



A mother in the Premature Baby Unit looking pleased with her babies knitted hat and blanket.



The mothers and young children in the Paediatric ward with their blankets.

The Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic, Oshivelo

The clinic was opened on 16 July 2014, so this year it celebrated its tenth anniversary. During our last visit we said we should have a party which we had on Saturday 2 November. Guests included the Regional Director of Health, the Senior Medical Officer for the District and Mrs Nelago Kasuto and her husband together with past and current staff. I welcomed everybody and Mrs Kasuto said a short prayer followed by my speech which was off the cuff and became emotional at one point. This was followed by a speech by Nurse Tjima on behalf of the clinic staff. Finally the Director and the Senior Medical Officer made a short speech where it was repeated that the ambulance would be permanently based at the clinic. The food and drink was then served and also the cutting of a celebratory cake. This was no doubt a unique occasion and probably does not happen in other clinics.

Wednesday 13 November proved to be a red letter day when the refurbished ambulance funded by the Foundation finally arrived much to the delight of the staff and patients alike. It was soon utilised and went out twice that day taking patients from the clinic to the hospital in Gobabis.



Roger and Linda welcoming the ambulance and inspecting the fully equipped interior.

Vasdraai Vocational Training Centre

Komeho Namibia Development Agency has been the Foundation's Namibian partner NGO since 2003. It established a training institution to train youth from marginalised communities such as the San, Ovahimba, Ovaturie and Ovazemba people living with disability, employed youth and young women. Komeho Namibia has been operating for the past 20 years in rural development aspects of which empowerment through training was one of the successful methods.

The Training Centre is situated at Vasdraai Resettlement Farm, about 61 km south-east of Gobabis in the Kalahari Constituency of the greater Omaheke Region. The construction of the Training Centre was financed by the Japanese Embassy at a cost of N\$1,200,000. The Centre consists of a training hall, a resource/library room and dormitories capable of accommodating 40 trainees at any given time and is

solar powered. It offers a National Vocational Certificate in Horticulture and Crop Husbandry NQF Level 2.

The Training Centre is financed through a grant from the National Training Authority and one of the stipulations of the grant is that the Centre should have a tractor as a training aid. The Foundation was approached by Komeho requesting assistance to purchase a tractor. As one of the aims of the Foundation is education, we consulted the trustees and it was agreed that the Foundation could help with the purchase of a tractor. We in turn approached ATI our travel agent in Namibia, who have a charitable fund (Future Namibia Fund/Africa Tourist Info) and they agreed to donate N\$50,000 towards it. So with the Foundation's and Komeho's contribution of N\$50,000, enough money was raised to purchase a tractor and the students will commence their training early next year. The Foundation and Komeho would like to say a big thank you to ATI for its support.



The tractor that Komeho are purchasing for Vasdraai.

The Foundations Projects so far identified for 2025

Omuhatuurua Primary School and hostel

A contribution towards the construction of a toilet block to replace condemned 'drop' toilets.

A possible contribution toward the repair of the solar powered school borehole which was recently struck by lightning. It serves the school, the hostel and the clinic

Donkerbos Primary School and Hostel

The purchase of an industrial electrical cooking pot

The purchase of four tables and benches for the dining hall

The provision of computers, a printer and wifi to teach pupils computer skills

Donkerbos San Community Office

The purchase of paint for internal decoration.

The purchase of a table and chairs to accommodate the ladies making jewellery.

Eiseb Primary School and Hostel

The purchase of 350 spoons and 130 plates for the dining hall

The purchase of washable paint, to paint the interior of the kitchen

The purchase of tiles for the kitchen behind the gas ranges

The Provision of uniforms for the hostel staff

Funding the repair of the Cold room subject to price.

Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic

The provision of a specialist bed and mattress for the Delivery room for the ladies to give birth on.

The Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic

Nurses' accommodation: Resolving maintenance issues.

Donations and Fundraising

A Little Bit of Soap

On Friday 13 September, a full house at the MICA was treated to a unique event entitled 'A Little Bit of Soap' with the audience questioning its meaning which was revealed later in the presentation.

Last November Chrissie and Colin Westgate joined us on a trip in Namibia visiting the Foundation's projects as well as experiencing the country's wildlife and landscapes. Chrissie was particularly interested in the San bushman and their traditional way of life.

This trip provided the photographic content for the presentation and Chrissie with the assistance of Colin really brought them to life. However, it was Chrissie's narrative which seemed to come straight from the heart that brought a special meaning to the images, particularly when she described with some emotion witnessing the struggle for life of a new born baby in the clinic at Otjimanagombe funded by the Foundation which unfortunately ended with its death despite the efforts of the nurses

The presentation then moved on to Eiseb Primary School and Hostel where the Foundation had built a kitchen, covered dining area and a dormitory with toilets and showers. In the dormitory, Chrissie came across a pupil called Angel whose parents were so poor they could not provide her with soap. Later it was revealed that a sponsor had been found for Angel, and she would get her little bit of soap. Hence the title of the talk.

The audience were then introduced to a San bushman settlement at Tsumkwe where they demonstrated the art of fire making, setting traps and describing the medicinal properties of plants.

The photographic element of the presentation was brought to close with shots of the wildlife in the Chobe National Park in Botswana including lions, elephants and hippos. Roger and Linda then advised the audience that since 2003, three quarters of a million pounds had been raised for the Foundation's projects and then went on to list the large number of projects that this money had funded.

Special guests for the evening, were Her Excellency, the Namibian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Ms Linda Scott and Second Secretary Mr Michael Naruseb. Entertainment during the interval

and at the end of the evening was provided by the fabulous Ukulele band 'Strungout'. A total of £1,720 was raised and the Foundation would like to thank everyone who attend and those individuals and local businesses that donated raffle prizes.



A packed audience enthralled by Chrissie Westgate's presentation

Mersea Island Lights Up - Homemade Cake Stall

This was held on Saturday 7 December with the plan to have stalls in the MICA hall and outside plus a fair in the library car park. However, Storm Darragh had other ideas with gale force winds and rain which curtailed all the outside activities. Luckily, our cake stall was inside in the MICA hall which was well attended and by 17.00 we had sold out of cakes, and we raised £438.40. A big thank you to all our cake makers.

On the same day we had a shop collection at the West Mersea Co-op and raised £114.58. Many thanks to our volunteers, Steve, Teresa, Eilish, Shirley and Sandra who covered both events.

Jo Bell Fundraiser

Jo Bell was one of Catherine's classmates at the Colchester County High School for Girls and she has written a song for Christmas which has been released as a CD single. She will be bringing some over to the UK with her when she comes over on 18th December, but they are available for pre-order or download now, with the profits from the GoFundMe and from sales of the single in both formats, up to 1st March 2025, going to YES Colchester and Tendring, Dungarvan Community First Responders, and The Catherine Bullen Foundation.

She would be enormously appreciative of anything you could do to help me promote the song. She's planning on getting it across to local radio stations and newspapers, both in Co. Waterford and in Essex, as well as pushing it on Facebook - Annie / Jo Bell Writer, Instagram - @jobell6, and TikTok @jo.bell.writer .



Volunteers Teresa and Steve with our homemade scrumptious cakes.

Shop collections

Since the last newsletter, we have carried out the following shop collections:

Brightlingsea Co-op - £222.12
 Woodbridge Co-op - £173.28
 West Mersea Co-op - £114.58

Other Events

Our sales and publicity stall attended the following events

Five Parishes Show - £119
 Lions Summer Show - £133

Indian Fundraising Lunch

Titash Indian Restaurant, West Mersea

Provisional date: Sunday 8 June 2025

Tickets: £25

Forthcoming Events

We have the following events scheduled for next year for which we are awaiting confirmation. We welcome volunteers to help at these events, so if you can be of assistance, please get in touch.

Saturday 3 May

West Mersea Co-op Supermarket

Saturday 24 May

Halstead Co-op Supermarket

Monday 26 May

Hospital Fete, Castle Park – Sales and Publicity stall

Saturday 7 June

Felixstowe Co-op Supermarket

Saturday 14 June

Frinton Triangle

Sunday 22 June

Waldegraves car boot sale – car parking and sales stall

Saturday 28 June/Sunday 29 June

Colchester Food and Drink Festival, Castle Park – Homemade cakes stall

Saturday 5 July

Stanway Co-op Supermarket (Pear Tree Business Park)

Saturday 26 July

Manningtree Co-op Supermarket

Saturday 9 August

Brightlingsea Sainsburys Supermarket

Sunday 24 August

Clacton Car Show – Publicity and sales stall

Saturday 30 August

Woodbridge Co-op Supermarket

Saturday 6 December

West Mersea Lights up – Homemade cake stall

Saturday 13 December

West Mersea Co-op Supermarket.

Saturday 20 December

West Mersea Tesco

Donations

It would be very much appreciated, if you feel you could support us with a donation for our projects in Namibia. As we are a UK charity working overseas, we are not eligible for any British Government grants.

It can be made online on our website www.namibia-aid.org.uk through 'justgiving' or 'Paypal'.

By sending a cheque made out to the Foundation to 15 Colchester Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, CO5 8RS

Or you can donate by bank transfer to:

Account Name: The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Sort Code: 20-22-67

Account No: 53717690

Regular giving

Some of our donors have made a more formal arrangement by setting up a standing order to donate a regular monthly or yearly sum. For which we are extremely grateful. If you would like to support us in this way, please use the above banking details so that you can set it up.

Presentations

The Foundation is pleased to give presentations to groups and clubs on its work during the day or evenings.

Make a difference!

The Catherine Bullen Foundation is working with local communities to help build and nurture a new life for the people in rural Namibia. Because we are a small charity, our overheads are small and are personally covered by the trustees, so that every single penny donated to us goes to the intended project, with spending strictly monitored by the UK trustees and their ngo partner in Namibia. All visits to Namibia are self-financed and no charitable funds are used for this purpose. Please help us make a difference by making a donation, either online at www.namibia-aid.org.uk or sending it to the address on the next page.

How to contact us

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Roger and Linda Bullen
and
the Catherine Bullen Foundation
wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy 2025.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported the Foundation in the
past year with their time and donations.

A special thank you to those who donate regularly each month, it is
really appreciated.

You have all made a huge difference to the lives of so many
in Namibia

Donation/Gift Aid Declaration

(The Catherine Bullen Foundation – Registered Charity No. 1110516)

Details of donor

Title..... Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code.....

Signature.....

Date.....

I want the charity to treat

*the enclosed donation of £..... as a Gift Aid donation

*the donation(s) of £..... which I made on / / as (a) Gift Aid donation(s)

**delete as appropriate*

**You must pay an amount of Income and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year.
(currently 25p for each £1 you give).**