

# A wonderful welcome at Mongo school

The Connor team received a wonderful welcome (right and below) when they visited Mongo School. As it was the school holidays we had anticipated meeting the principal, perhaps a couple of teachers, and Bishop Hilary had promised some of the pupils might even be 'mobilised.'



What we had not expected was the sea of colour, movement and music that greeted us at the end of the dusty road from Yei. It was a spectacle that proved, if ever there was a doubt, that the people of Mongo were enormously grateful for Connor's support.



Bishop Hilary, CMSI associate John Spens and Archdeacon Stephen Forde joined this joyous caterpillar as it wound its way to the front of the wonderful new school, built with donations of more than £100,000 by people here in Connor Diocese.

There were words of welcome, followed by a tour of the large, bright classrooms, where new desks stood in proud rows and blackboards gave a hint of the lessons that take place within the walls. (Photo of David Cromie in classroom below right)



Then it was a short walk with more music to the shade of the mango trees, where pupils used to have their lessons. Perfect on a dry day, but in the rainy season lessons were cancelled, and when the mangos ripen they fall from the laden branches posing a not insubstantial risk to anyone shading below.



Among the guests on this special day was William Turumanya, (pictured right with CMSI associate John Spens) the young man who built the school. Three years ago his business employed 20 people, now he has 50 builders. The success of his work in Mongo has greatly boosted his reputation.

The singing and dancing continues as Archdeacon Forde is introduced to the important people of Mongo, school principal Eva Lily Henry, the Archdeacon of Mongo, the Ven Stanley Soroba, and the Boma tribal chief.

Finally everyone takes a seat in the shade, and Archdeacon of Mongo welcomes us. "We are very happy for the wonderful thing that God has done between the community of Mongo and Connor Diocese," he says. "We continue to pray for this spirit of assistance for the poor people of Mongo."



He went on: "We are not going to forget the people of Connor because what has happened in our diocese has not happened in the history of Mongo. We cannot help ourselves because of our desperate situation. You have given us a place we can come to get



knowledge. We believe that in the future our children will be better people for this."

Santo Ali of Mongo PTA outlined the challenges still facing Mongo School, including lack of trained teachers, lack of text books and high drop-out rates, and a young pupil in faltering English thanked Connor Diocese for 'building us a school like this.'

Local pastor the Rev Jackson Duku said the people of Mongo were 100 per cent happy with what Connor had done, but appealed for continuing support. "Our teachers need trained. We need chairs and technology for the school office," he said, adding: "Educate me and I will not forget."

Village elder Cypres Yata greeted the visitors with a song of thanks. Indicating the clearing below the trees, he said: "We thank you for this was once our class and when the mangoes fell they fell on our children. We now wipe the tears from our eyes. The mangoes do not fall on our exercise books, the rain does not fall on us and there is no longer noise from outside and we thank you for that."



There is a break for more singing. The choirs perform a dance. Their song, in English, includes the words: "We pray for you. Thank you for building our school."

Introducing the team to the people of Mongo, Bishop Hilary explained that a second Connor team would visit Yei in July. He likened Archdeacon Forde to John the Baptist, coming to prepare the road for Bishop Alan Abernethy to open the new school.

In response Archdeacon Forde (right) brought greetings to the children of Mongo from Connor Diocese. He recalled how he had stood in the mango tree class three years ago. "I had a dream. What if the people of Connor could build a school in Mongo. In the strength of the Lord the dream has come true," he said. "I have more dreams. One is that Mongo school will be the best in Yei County. Another is that you children will have dreams, so that when you are learning in the classrooms you will dream of becoming teachers, engineers, farmers who grow crops or pastors in the church."



The speeches lasted two hours. Everyone listened attentively. The school pupils behaved impeccably and did Mongo proud.

Before leaving for the bumpy ride back to Yei, the team was served a meal of locally grown produce, including goat, chicken, cassava, rice, beans and peanuts. (Right – David Cromie tucks in). And to quench the thirst, bottles of soda including Coca Cola and Fanta though how these arrived in Mongo is a mystery!

The visit to ‘Connor’s’ school was certainly a highlight.

