



## Rob Poole

Exercise, Nutrition &  
Health

My journey to the Republic of Malawi started on August 24th. We boarded the plane from London Heathrow and set off on our twenty four hour long journey to the mystery of what was to come in Africa. When we eventually arrived at Chileka International Airport in Blantyre, Malawi, the realisation of what was to come started to sink in.

We were finally in Africa. Waiting at the airport for our transport to arrive we were able to view our first sights of the country, from rundown buildings made from the simplest of materials, to pot holed roads and children playing without shoes. The wakeup call of why we were here really set deep; to share our experiences and skills with the people of Malawi.

During my first few days I saw many beautiful things. Hundreds of happy, smiling children, women carrying small children on their backs as they shop, small communities working together and the work of previous volunteers in schools and the community.

The real spirit of working together as a community was quite astounding; men and women of different ethnicities and religious beliefs working together in complete harmony.

In addition to teaching in schools, which had an unbelievably positive effect on me, we were lucky enough to work on some larger projects, and also venture out into the community to work on large scale development projects, as well as joining in games at the local community centre, where the help of volunteers has been crucial in the building of the centre.

One of the proudest moments of my life so far fell in the last week of my stay in Malawi when we finally finished a library project which we had started in the first week of our trip. We had to first organise into categories, then catalogue five thousand books and other reading materials into an excel based database. Once this mammoth task was completed we cleaned and re-decorated the library, and then finally re-shelved all of the books in an appropriate order. The community, the children, the teachers and the parents from Mbame School will be forever grateful; more importantly, I feel honoured and touched to have been part of such an inspirational and challenging project which will play such an important part in thousands of children's lives.

Another notable moment for me, which I shall never forget, was helping the community out by repairing boreholes. For those who don't know, boreholes supply fresh, clean water from the watershed to thousands of people in the most remote areas where clean water is not a commodity. In some of the most rural communities where their boreholes were broken, families have had to travel mile upon mile for years to get clean, safe water.

Through fundraising we were able to provide the necessary money to purchase the parts required to repair several boreholes. With these repairs came something far more inspiring, the feeling of providing the most simple of resources to the people of Malawi and seeing just how much this meant to them.

During my time in Malawi I was lucky enough not only to be volunteering with an amazing group of Coventry University students, I was blessed with the honour of being a part of something far greater- the chance to teach local children and see the enjoyment every individual gets from life.

Words cannot describe how much DASH to Malawi 2014 meant to me, and how much of a positive impact this will have on my future career in education.

