

SOCIAL ISSUES

CONTINUED

THE MILLENNIUM PROJECT

The Millennium Project is a staff initiative designed to assist children in developing countries. During the year, the project assisted children in China, Ghana, India, Moldova, Mozambique, Serbia and Sri Lanka.

We reported last year on the activities of our staff and specifically their success in building a new school in Mozambique. We indicated that we were now reflecting on the experiences and formulating guidelines for future similar projects. The organising staff have contributed the following thoughtful post-project evaluation.

"The school was constructed over a period of three months from May to July 2008. Although the project was completed on time and to budget, we have learned a host of lessons which will be applied to similar projects in the future. This was the first such ambitious project for the charity and the challenges included establishing a relationship with a project partner, coordinating the involvement of 43 Scott Wilson volunteers and working in a country where Portuguese is the national language.

The project has significantly increased the profile of the Millennium Project and has undoubtedly been fundamental in the huge increase in funds raised in the past year. This in turn means that we are able to fund further projects on this scale and makes it even more important that we apply the lessons learned from the Mozambique experience.

Managing the expectations and preparations of the volunteers was a real challenge and we have learned a lot about how to prepare people for their experience as a volunteer, how to cater for their needs during the project and how to manage ongoing involvement in a controlled way.

The logistics of the construction process provided some difficulties. Material deliveries were unreliable, which often resulted in idle periods for the volunteer labourers. In future we will arrange deliveries in advance to avoid this happening. We also would like to make use of Scott Wilson's engineering expertise in new projects, playing a part in designing as well as constructing the building.

Perhaps the most important lesson we have learned is that it is crucial to manage the expectations of the local community. Very clear communication is required to ensure that the recipients do not have inflated expectations from the charity and therefore avoid disappointment. Although we want to help as much as we possibly can, we have limited funds and our ethos is to spend these wisely, where maximum impact can be achieved. It is important to ensure that any facilities we provide are diligently maintained and looked after, to avoid unnecessary maintenance costs or, worse, equipment breaking and becoming disused."



