

Welcome to the 2011 Nchima Trust Newsletter

Firstly thank you to all of those who have made donations during these difficult times. Nevertheless we have had a good year and continued to provide support at grass roots level in Malawi.

Life remains challenging for many Malawians, particularly due to the effects of HIV and AIDS which continues to result in a high level of orphans (>1 million) and the resulting pressures on siblings, extended families and especially grand parents. In addition to this the political situation remains uncertain.

This Newsletter contains excerpts from a report made following a visit to Malawi by a Board member, but also contains the story of Frank Mkumba, one of our beneficiaries. We hope that this puts into context the incredible barriers our students face. Frank's is not an untypical account

In summary, Nchima Trust (NT) is in very good shape and its funds are spent wisely and importantly, with those who need and deserve it most. The results are very encouraging particularly in the form of graduates and trainees who are very bright and determined. Furthermore, NT continues to retain its very strong reputation of direct and appropriate support. Donors and supporters can remain confident that funds are very well spent.

Chinyama Village. This is a very rural area which has set up the Mangame Community based

Organisation (CBO). NT also supports some school children at the local school and the

headmaster has done a very good job of making improvements to the school performance – the Chinyama school is ranked 8th in the area out of 50 which is a huge improvement over time.

We visited the building (left) which was initially constructed for the CBO and found it in a state of disrepair.

However, with 3 members of the village enrolled for a year at DAPP Vocational Training College in Mikalongwe we are hoping that they will return and construct something a little more robust. 2 of the students are studying bricklaying and one carpentry. They will not complete their courses until the middle of 2012 and so we

shall have to await the results of our investment, but look forward to progress thereafter. It is clear however from our visit to the village that there is an imperative and a certain energy committed to making improvements.

Having been to Chinyama Village we made our way to see the students at DAPP Vocational College where we met Phillip, Wellington (both left) and Rachael (below). Phillip and Wellington are training to be bricklayers and Rachael a carpenter.

The college is very well run and was in fact built by students and former students under supervision from the staff.

NT pays the student's fee and toolkit which is provided upon graduation. Our volunteer also routinely monitors progress and results .

We also visited several secondary schools where NT pays the fees for usually up to 10 pupils. During these visits we meet some of the teaching staff and the sponsored pupils

themselves. Fees are paid into a school bank account and we also look at the results of the NT pupils as well as the school as a whole. Only Primary school education is free in Malawi and therefore a secondary school education is very much valued by Malawians. This is a view reinforced in the excellent book about a Malawian called 'The Boy who Harnessed the Wind' by William Kamkwamba.

One of our schools has been particularly successful with improving the results of their girls. This has been with significant support from Sibford School in Oxfordshire, who have funded a kitchen and dining room for the school. For 3 months of the year prior to final exams, NT provides maize for the school to feed the children lunch. This is unusual in Malawi as most children return home for lunch. Once at home the girls are often asked to help with household and farming duties which means they miss the rest of the school day and do not have the opportunity to do their homework. The kitchen at the Ntambanyama School means that during the intensive revision period all children can stay at school having eaten. The outcome has been that all final year pupils passed their School Certificate and that the school has moved from 12th to 3rd in the Region (out of 50). The results for the girls has been particularly spectacular.

NT continues to run the Nchima Trust Centre which hosts the card makers (see www.nchimatrust.org shop for details) and various

other activities including carpentry classes, literacy classes etc. We are forging closer working relationships with the local Anglican Church to maximise the potential of our infrastructure and this year we had the privilege of a visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury, seen here inspecting cards at the Nchima Trust Centre - he didn't buy any!

However, we are trying to involve the local community more and more in the hope that we can offer opportunities for women and young people in particular to develop themselves. We have 3 hectares of land where we practice conservation farming techniques.

One of the most rewarding elements of the visit this year are the signs of involvement and interest from existing and past beneficiaries of NT. By way of example, 2 of our agricultural graduates (Stephen and Harry) have helped on a regular basis mentor the 2 farm workers at the NT Centre. They have made their way to Thyolo at weekends and helped with implementing modern techniques, harvesting and coaching.

Others such as Frank Mkumba and Kidney Mbeko have helped with the selection of students and collaboration agreements respectively. Frank has supported our volunteers in Malawi with all sorts of advice and support and is very committed. His 'story' is attached to the end of this report.

Part of the visit was taken up talking to past and existing University students who have received support for fees and pocket money from NT. They are clearly an optimistic, highly intelligent group of people who will lead Malawi through to progressive improvement if they are allowed to. It was an enlightening experience to debate the future with these young people and NT and its supporters can be proud of them. They have all had challenging lives and their determination shines through.

Kidney Mbeko - a Law student at Chancellor College, sponsored by NT. Due to political disturbances, Chancellor College was closed for most of the year and our students have therefore had to take time off, look for temporary work etc. Fortunately, Kidney was able to come with to Chinyama village to see what we are doing there and to hear how the people are responding to their challenges. Here he is with some of the children from the village.

Finally, we have had some changes at Board level and indeed on the ground in Malawi. As you may know we attempt to minimise our expenditure on anything other than beneficiaries or projects and to do that we call upon the time and energy of our volunteer(s) in Malawi. They are not paid and given

significant responsibility. For the past 3 years this role has been taken on by Jeannette Heikens, a lady with a passion for the job who has developed the work on the ground into an impressive operation with robust systems and feedback. We are indebted to Jeannette for her time and energy over the past few years. She has handed on to Jeannie Phillips to whom we give a warm welcome. Jeannie will be supported by Robin Broadhead from time to time. We are pleased to have Robin's support as he established the Medical School in Blantyre and knows many of the students we have sponsored over the years.

Sue McAlpine resigned earlier this year due to pressure of work and we thank her for her invaluable work.

Sadly, as many of you will know, Ann Scarborough died after a brief illness in April of this year. She dedicated many years of her life to NT both in Malawi and upon her return to the UK and is dearly missed.