

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT - Water

### We repaired 5 boreholes



With financial funding from Wilmslow Wells, we successfully repaired 5 broken boreholes out in the remote rural areas.



*It's estimated that about 14,000 people in these vulnerable areas were affected by the breakdown of these 5 pumps, so their repair has transformed whole communities.*

These five boreholes had been heavily used when working, but had been abandoned as the parts wore out - or in one case, were stolen, leaving thousands struggling to find clean water locally.

## Maize Feeding Programme 2015/16

We were concerned that we may not be able to locate enough maize for our next Food Programme—2015/16, but Gladson scoured the area and managed to buy 300 bags (15,000 kgs). Another 20 bags were added, together totalling 16 tonnes—the same amount we had last year initially— but we had hoped to increase our ability to help. We re-ratproofed our storeroom, bought new grain bags, sacks, and tarpaulins to dry the grain. Pieceworkers were brought in to handle the drying process and ladies winnowed the maize before carefully packing for storage till Christmas, when hunger increases even more.

## Elderlies' Luncheons

In these times of chronic food shortage, the vulnerable suffer the most, so our monthly luncheon for elderly folk is greatly anticipated, and a joy to engage in. Dozens of frail folk enjoy a good meal—those unable to finish it take it home in a bag, and there's also a social time of singing, prayer and dancing.

*Mosiwa has leprosy, but he and his wife thoroughly enjoy the food and social aspect of the meals. Years ago we built them a house which still protects them and the orphans in their care.*



## Children's Feeding Programmes

**Milk**—quantities are way down so we've pared down our issue lists focussing on the most vulnerable babies who cannot receive milk any other way—i.e. orphans, and those whose mothers are severely malnourished, AIDS-affected or have breast problems. We still transport milk over to Bwanali 3 times a week, (20+ babies) and feed 14 daily at our Centre, Mon-Saturday, giving enough for a Sunday feed as powdered formula. This is being trialled, and seems to be working well, but there are plenty more tiny infants in need.

*One of the babies on our Milk Programme is Stanley, now 7 months old, bright and alert, but weighs only 4.5kgs—not even the weight of a child half his age. He entered our Milk Programme 2 months ago—then weighing 1.5kgs, too weak to even open his eyes. As his 18 year-old mum couldn't breast feed, she had little alternative but to try to feed him with flour and water—then, desperate, she heard about our goats. Stanley is still showing signs of malnourishment (seriously underweight, and brown hair) but he's making good, steady progress, and thoroughly enjoying his regular goats milk!*



Stanley

**Likuni Phala**—Still hugely appreciated by this community, about 40 toddlers receive fortified porridge 3 times a week—at this period of acute hunger, this might be the only meal the child has that day. With our new processing facilities, we can now prepare the dry ingredients on-site, improving hygiene and saving time.

## Education

thank you sponsors!

We are still sponsoring 100 students in 3 local secondary schools. Term 3: (2014/15) fees were paid. Michesi Sec. might bring in compulsory boarding for girls which will probably triple the cost of education in that school, and change the shape of OHP's sponsorship. We currently support 40 children there, 12 will be leaving after their current exams, leaving 28, of which 12 are girls. We will commit to keeping those girls on, despite the inflated cost, but will carefully consider the replacement of the students who have come to the end of their education at this school, unless we can attract additional sponsorship.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT - Reforestation

Deforestation is a huge problem in Malawi, largely overlooked in the urgent rush to find food for today. However, it has widespread consequences, causing instability in the water cycle/climate and food resources.

The depletion of tree stock for firewood/charcoal and building is risking:

- **Hunger**—soil and humus erosion, by wind and water, resulting in soil infertility and poor crops
- **Poverty**—flooding which destroys homes, fields, increases water-borne disease
- **Health**—Less wood for cooking, heating water for bathing/laundry, sterilising babies' bottles etc.
- **Quality of life**—A family of 5 needs about 150 trees a year to provide cooking fuel. Women have to go further to collect it as nearby sources run out, leaving less time for work, social and family care. The weak, sick, frail and those living with disabilities are even less likely to thrive.
- **Economy**—If trees aren't planted, the wood stocks fail, losing the prime cooking fuel (*little alternative*), wood for building, and fuel to burn bricks for robust housing. Hugely inflated prices for wood that's left.

### The way forward .....

Overall, a vast problem—in a government document it's claimed the issue is unsolvable nationally so we are not equipped to impact this problem in a big way, but we *can* contribute at a local level by:-

- **Reducing wood amounts** required by promoting clay stoves that cut wood usage by two-thirds over traditional 3-brick fires.
- **Urgently planting trees.**



Traditional 3-brick fire

Clay stove

### We plan 3 phases:

1. **Family fuel-sufficiency**—to empower family units to become fuel-sufficient by planting a variety of trees for firewood/nutrition (moringa/fruit trees etc) on their own land. Tree seeds will be germinated in our Tree Nursery, in beds or planted in plastic tubes, and distributed as seedlings.
2. **Local/village planting of trees**—both firewood & fruit/moringa—managed by local committees
3. **Mountain**—distant planting for freely available firewood/nutrition

## Agriculture

### Replacement of crops in the communities

*After the cyclones and emergency aid, we're moving into the longer-term support. One of the most urgent needs is food production—huge quantities of maize were destroyed in the field by the storms and floods*

*We've bought and issued cassava cuttings (over 40,000 plants), vegetable seeds, and seed potatoes as a trial in a remote area.*

### Agriculture on our main site in Chiringa

- Moringa tree planting is still our main priority and has been extended. The leaves are processed into a nutritious powdered food supplement (see over).
- A plot has been prepared as a Tree Nursery for the Reforestation Programme, and compost made.
- Vegetables are still grown in our gardens for distribution — mustard, eggplants, tomatoes, and carrots.

### Makhonja—our second site

- Nearly all the site is now over to moringa in raised beds, and cassava for seed multiplication. We've also planted leguminous trees as green manure intermittently, and the thorn hedge around the periphery is now growing much more vigorously inside the temporary grass fencing.

**Training in conservation farming** continues—Dickson, the Malawian trainer of the international programme "Farming God's Way" comes to site several times a year to teach and encourage local subsistence farmers.



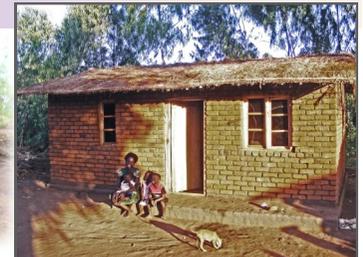
Mustard given out

## Building work

The storms brought down many houses—one of which was Susan's. She is AIDS-affected, with a husband with serious mental health issues, 3 small children and a bleak future. She works hard bringing down firewood from the mountain to sell to try to feed her family, but they're often hungry. She's delighted with her new house (with windows!) funded by FOMA



Susan's old house, destroyed by storms



Her new house

## ON SITE - Livestock

**Dairy Goats**—room for improvement! Milk quantities available for babies are currently very low, we're backing up with cows milk and formula for infants with no other milk resource. We need female goat kids to be born and grow up into prolific milkers to keep the herd viable, but some does are not coming into season, and others aren't becoming pregnant. No seasons—no mating—no kids—no milk. With breeding so erratic and unreliable, we don't have the luxury of spacing pregnancies to provide continuous milk flow. But in recent weeks, more does have been mated, and 3 female kids have been born.



**Rabbits**—Not as many kits as we'd hoped, but the "Rabbinga" Project is still progressing—a combination of rabbit breeding in the community for meat/income generation alongside moringa trees providing vegetable-based multi nutrients. Training in rabbit care and management is ongoing.

**Chickens**—we invited community farmers to have their chickens vaccinated against Newcastles disease. Sometimes chickens are their only asset!

## Building - moringa processing

We've nearly finished the interior of the Processing Unit—thank you I & J! The kitchen and field office were ready earlier, and now the back section (moringa processing) has been floored, plastered, and electrics fitted. Plumbing will be sorted next trip, along with developing our plans for harvesting "grey" water from the processes for irrigation and cleaning.



Loading the Dehydrator

We also managed to research and resolve some of the challenges. We built a dehydrator from plans found on the internet, to dry our moringa leaves. It's an odd shaped solar unit, with a perspex-topped sloped chamber, lined with black metal mesh which conducts heat from the sun up into the drying compartment lined with moringa-loaded mesh-covered shelves—initial trials look promising. Our new milling machine is fantastic—it not only grinds dried moringa leaves to a fine powder to be given as a food supplement, but also mills maize, soya, groundnuts, dried fish—all the ingredients we use in our fortified porridge for vulnerable toddlers, so we can now prepare it on site.



Milling dried moringa leaves

## Open Hands .....



We were able to give out lots of donated goodies—knitted blankets & jumpers, clothing, reading glasses, vegetable seeds, and were privileged to supply 2 wheelchairs, donated by Blantyre Rotary, via our friends Les & Kathie. Both went to local ladies with severe degrees a paralysis - these chairs will change their lives!



Lesta, delighted with her new wheelchair — before this, she could hardly leave her hut!



A slightly more unusual gift went out to a group of local lads—a football strip! Given to us a while ago, we were able to include it in our luggage this time—much to the delight of the dedicated local team. They had no kit so when they came along with their team coach/manager, they were thrilled and overwhelmed to see shirts, shorts, and socks!

## Special thanks!.....

to all our friends and supporters who empower us to help the most needy, but especially to DM for our wonderful new trike, I & J E for financing the moringa processing area, FOMA for funding the toilets, bridge and house, and WW providing for the borehole repair.



Our new trike!

So many others have contributed so faithfully and generously—thank you all!

## Help us help them

Donate monthly by **Standing Order**  
(Please ask for info)

If you're able to, please **PRAY** for the work of AID AFRICA

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Open Hand Projects is the local working title of **AID AFRICA**

and transforms thousands of lives in the remote rural areas of southern Malawi



Milling dried moringa leaves

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Pure and genuine religion... means caring for orphans and widows in their distress.

Jas 1:27

June 2015



# Aid Africa

the amazing work goes on

A report by Lynda Mills



Extreme weather formed the backdrop of this trip—violent rainstorms, flooding and cyclones in January battered vulnerable communities, causing widespread damage to housing, property and crops. News commentators claimed this to be the worst disaster in Malawi's history. Nationally, a month's rain fell in 24 hours, flooding was 2-3m deep in places and it's estimated over 200 lost their lives, with 200,000 displaced.

## A DISASTER unfolded ....

Around our Centre, about 1500 people became homeless, and many other domestic buildings fell—kitchens, toilets and livestock kholas, leaving impoverished families to find shelter in schools, churches and other public buildings. This was the "hunger period", but these extreme conditions caused even more distress as mud-brick kitchens collapsed and their contents — what little maize was left — swept away. As the disaster unfolded, our local staff were able to quickly assess, and put a significant relief operation into action—focusing on emergency food, shelter and water supply.

## Our main maize distribution

Our main Food Programme (25kgs maize, dried soya meals & soap) was successfully issued three times to 200 families, from Christmas to February. However, the situation with these vulnerable households was so dire, we responded to their pleas and managed to add a further distribution in March. Others were also in need, so we introduced 2 separate monthly distributions for another 100 families.



AIDS-affected and hungry, Lucy is thrilled to receive maize.

In total, we distributed more than 25 tonnes of maize, over 11,000 soya meals, 2000 bars of soap & 1250 mtrs of plastic sheeting from Christmas-March 2015.

## Sanitation



**Rebuilding Toilets**—The storms destroyed hundreds of toilets—we identified 50 vulnerable families and urgently began to rebuild. We employed building teams to dig new 3m pits, and surround them with bamboo-framed shelters covered with plastic sheeting and grass thatching. These simple shelters should be robust enough to last several years, or until the pit is full.

Privacy & dignity restored to 272 people while reducing health risks associated with poor sanitation



## Logistics/accessibility - rebuilding Namalamba Bridge

Extreme flooding destroyed dirt roads, hampering aid distribution and community rebuilding. Namalamba Bridge collapsed – it served 15 villages (about 7500 people) and had been the main route linking remote villages to tarmac roads and services. During the wet season many couldn't get to the Health Clinic, maternity facilities, school and local town for business, food & other basics. In the past, 5 people had lost their lives trying to cross the swollen river.

We were approached by Village Heads, asking if we could help rebuild the 8m bridge. Committed to work in partnership with local communities, we divided the resources needed—we would supply timber, cement, quarrystone, builders, plus our own motor-trike transport, while the villagers would provide poles, sand, rocks, & labour. One side pillar had partly survived, so we finished it, built its counterpart on the opposite bank, plus the central pillar—all made of granite stones cemented together over a 2m-deep rock foundation— topped with wooden poles & treated timbers.



Rebuilding this bridge was a significant project—involving the whole community—with long-term benefits for many thousands of villagers

