

# Feeding programmes

While always keen to empower self-sustainability—not dependency—we recognise however, that this is not always possible, due to age, frailty or extreme circumstances.

## Elderlies luncheons

We held our first Elderlies Luncheon, not only to feed 30 frail—and often neglected—vulnerables but to honour them in this self-absorbed society that struggles to meet even basic needs.



It was a special event, a fitting celebration of age, though not without its poignant moments as the reality of the hunger amongst this group was clearly and painfully revealed. Our guests were presented with what was probably the best meal they'd had in years. After initial wariness about this unusual occasion, they relaxed, sang and some even managed to dance a bit. They chatted happily with old friends they'd lost contact with over the years as they became frailer, and less able to travel.

We sent them home with a bundle of food—collectively, these 30 folk, with no income, are responsible for 40 orphans. The participants left full and happy, and many in the local community were freshly envisioned to value and honour these disrespected, often neglected folk. We plan that this will become a monthly event.

## Hunger Response Packs

HRPs of maize, beans, oil & soya meals for October & November were issued as a stop-gap before the main Food Programme begins in December. The scheme continues on with maize-only “tokens” for 75 families a month not on the FP list.

## Goats Milk & Likuni Phala Programmes



Our milk programme continues to nourish orphaned and AIDS-affected babies on daily basis from our Centre and 3 times a week at Bwanali Village. The babies on the programme are thriving—gaining weight and looking well, despite the poverty at home, but our goats can only give so much milk. Earlier in the year we moved older babies (12m+) off the milk programme to make way for more vulnerable younger ones.

However, these “moved on” toddlers were sinking back into malnutrition with so little food at home, so we started a Likuni Phala Programme. It's a maize-based porridge, fortified with soya, dried fish and groundnuts or oil. Now these youngsters get a nutritious bowlful three times a week, with extra available to help with weaning the younger ones and feeding equally hungry siblings.

## Food Programme - our main maize distribution

Back in April this year we bought in 15 tonnes of maize to be given to the most vulnerable—along with pigeon peas, soya and soap—during the “hunger period” beginning at Christmas. Last year we fed 145 ultra-vulnerable families, this year we've managed to increase recipient numbers to 175 family units, so will probably feed about 750 people (including children) one meal a day for 3 months. This will be the only meal many will eat during this time.

# On our sites

## Building



Kids Unit completed

Providing a secure base from which to serve the community, our building programme is nearing completion. The security wall is finished and mostly capped with glass as, sadly, security is becoming an increasing problem.

We pointed the exterior of the Processing Unit for weather protection during the upcoming rains, and the Kids' Unit (goats) is in use with the first 4 kids thoroughly enjoying their new home. Work continued to extend the agri/rabbit

office, water trench & pump house, along with general building maintenance.

The saga of connecting the Training Hall to electricity droned on—these electrical components were fitted and connection applied for years ago, but with much pushing—and no bribes—Escom eventually connected us! We are still aiming to gradually equip the site with solar power but it's a slow, expensive job.

## Agriculture

Our second site is dedicated to agriculture - growing crops for seed multiplication (cassava, sweet potato), and moringa trees inter-planted with soya to re-energise the soil. It's also the demo plot for our conservation farming programme, seed beds, and for growing leguminous trees for animal fodder and composting. But it's had a hard time this year—first devastated by floods, then scorched during the dry season when we were unable to irrigate adequately.

However, there's a water pipe under this land and rather tongue-in-cheek we applied to make a connection for irrigation purposes. Surprisingly permission was granted, and, reassured others further down the line would not be detrimentally affected, we fitted a tap within the boundary of our very dry field, and also dug a trench to a roadside outer corner and erected another tap for the local community. For the first time ever they have tapped water nearby!



**Training**—Dickson, “Farming God's Way” Malawian trainer came onto site and presented a 2 day Training Course on conservation farming techniques. We invited only those most interested in this form of farming, 84 people signed in, enjoying both the Course and the lunches provided!

## Moringa



Moringa leaves are packed with nutrients so we're processing them into a food supplement for the malnourished. Unfortunately, we lost hundreds of seedlings on one site in the floods earlier this year, then much of the crop on the other with irrigation problems in the dry season. However, we dried and powdered the leaves we harvested, and, trusting that floods will not hit us again, we'll plant several thousand more trees over the next few months.

## Water

Once again our water supply dwindled to nothing, our tanks dry. However, we've laid a new pipe network so water can be circulated round the site by a solar-powered pump, to improve availability and pressure when the water's flowing.

## Houses for the frail

During September & October, we built 3 houses for vulnerable families, and replaced roofs for others before the imminent arrival of the annual rains.



Sanderson and his wife Besta (above), elderly and hungry, along with the 2 orphans in their care, were living in this collapsing borrowed house. Inside was almost empty, we found only a few belongings, but no food, furniture, sleeping mats nor blankets.

Mosiwa, elderly, AIDS-affected, and living with leprosy, along with his wife and their 2 orphans had lost their home in the rains 2 years ago, and were forced to live apart because of dangerously decrepit housing.

The 3rd house was for Amos, elderly, blind & AIDS-affected.

All are now safe and secure in their new homes.

## Education

The beginning of the academic year 2013/14 seemed chaotic in the schools, but thanks to our UK sponsors, we were able to increase the number of students on our programme to 101. We have paid their fees, exam costs, and supplied each with a new school uniform.

## Transport

Fuel is rising in price, making everything else more expensive, but at least it is available. Our elderly 4x4 has been serviced, had major repairs, new tyres and has passed its COF (MOT) so will hopefully keep us going for a while. However, it will soon need replacing, and we're realising we need to carry more people and goods as the workload increases, so perhaps we should consider a minibus too!

The motorbike, kindly donated by Rotary earlier this year is great, and we've enabled staff to gain their provisional licences—rare in the rural areas of Malawi!

## Film in the community ...

We had amazing opportunities to take out a remarkable film, based on the life of Jesus, into remote communities, armed with a bed-sheet screen, projector, laptop, generator and speakers.

Many hundreds came to watch - lives were changed .....

## And finally ....

We happily responded to those who wanted to help themselves by supplying small business grants to empower villagers to trade in fish, cooking oil, rice and paraffin.

In addition to our regular projects, we gave out emergency food & supplies, reading specs, clothing, blankets, seeds, funded healthcare/transport, and chicken vaccination.

All is overseen by trusted friends and we'll return in February.

## Help us help them

Donate monthly by Standing Order

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# Aid Africa

the amazing work goes on

Winter 2013/14 by Lynda Mills

Malawi, during our Sept-Nov trip, was hot—sometimes over 100 deg in the shade and as the rains approached, increasingly humid and uncomfortable. Electricity supply was frustratingly unreliable, endangering our vital goats' milk and vet drugs as our refrigeration failed - how we need to increase our solar strength! However, it was another good—if tough—trip, lots of positive progress and encouragement despite the inevitable difficulties and disappointments of this heavily impoverished area.



The work is flourishing, but also the responsibilities and pressures...

## Our community

Hunger and water supply, as ever, are the urgent challenges.

Following floods earlier this year when so much of the maize crop was destroyed, availability is decreasing while prices soar. We bought maize in April at K88/kg, which was more than twice the price of the previous year, but now the cost is K130/kg. Because of this grave situation, we brought in new feeding programmes to help those most at risk—many hadn't eaten for days.....

We repaired 3 boreholes while we were there, and a further 3 as we left with help from Wilmslow Wells—clean, safe, local water has been restored to thousands. Partnering with other NGO's we've continued to improve the community water system, but it's a slow job fastidiously weaving between indolence and corruption!

## Chickens

Last trip, earlier in the year, we arranged to supply "Yankho" members (our AIDS support group) with funds for five community kholas and chickens.

This is a "pass-on" plan, with eggs being shared and chicks passed on to other vulnerables in the group to start their own flock.



Yankho kholas Esther with the first chicks of the project!



John & Lydia in Bilisoni

## Rabbits



Community kholo prototype - sturdy, but we'll experiment with bamboo for economy

We're still pressing in on the rabbit project as future "fast food". One of the challenges is the community kholo (housing) design - must be comfortable, strong enough to withstand extreme weather, dogs, and other predators, but economical to build. Easy manure collection is also a priority, as composting is a key factor of our agri-strategy. The first 3-hutch rabbitries have been built for orphan-supporting vulnerable families, each receiving 2 females and a male. In time, this group of just three rabbits will provide meat each week to improve the diet of these protein-deficient families, and also stock for breeding, to pass on, or sell.