



# MEL Newsletter

Early 2015

Dear All,

It's been a difficult few months for Malawi. The news has shown large scale flooding in January causing the displacement of 200,000 or more people. These were located in the south of the country so the areas where MEL works were fortunately left unaffected. Recent news has shown Malawi has the highest cost for mobile phone use in the world, coming in at a staggering 56.29% of average monthly earnings, this compared to Hong Kong at 0.18%. MEL, like much of the country, relies heavily on the mobile phone infrastructure to deliver communication to places where it would otherwise be unavailable.

This is usually a quiet time of year for the charity, but there's still been a fair amount of activity on various fronts.

## Sponsored Students

The late release of Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) results, the equivalent school leaver's qualification. Plus my unavoidable late arrival in Malawi, meant some of our sponsored students missed deadlines for entry to colleges and will have to enter in June.

This year:

- **Jessie Mphande** (pictured right) hopes to study at a Teacher Training College, having gained good passes at MSCE. She's a very highly motivated young woman, and it's so good to see her committed to following a career path: 'so many of my friends already have 2 children but I want to train, qualify and benefit Malawi before I marry and have children'. She's being sponsored through donations in memory of Jan Waite, a MEL supporter who sadly passed away recently.



- **Sekelani Saka's** (pictured left) sponsors are helping him follow a course in journalism. He's a very determined young man. While he will also have to wait until June to start, he is using the next few months to work voluntarily as a teaching assistant in Chasato Primary School.
  - **Brainmore Zimba** will be joining Sekelani and will be sponsored by another generous donor.
  - **Levison Kaunda** is also being sponsored through an electrician's course, giving him the qualification to work properly in a trade he's practised for some years having completed an apprenticeship.
- **Lettina and Jacqueline** continue to thrive at the specialist schools their sponsors enabled them to attend. Their worlds have opened up through the chance to have an education, and their families are proud of them. Lettina will be fitted with prosthetic eyes in May, thanks to the support of her sponsor.

## Ngala Clinic

Ngala Clinic has had more of our help, thanks to no-strings-attached donations. MEL has continued to improve the hygiene and standards of facilities such as the guardians' block (in much of Africa you bring a guardian with you when you enter hospital. They feed you, tend to you, do your washing and everything else the can...)



**Ted Crompton** spent 3 weeks in Ngala renovating the clinic's borehole so that they can finally have running water: he and his team moved 20 meters of debris accumulated over 10 years of neglect, but there's a way to go yet!

Ted will be back to help his team continue their labours! A note from Ted is included on the last page of this newsletter.

## The Big Give

With an enormous amount of effort from Sheila and Campbell McLelland **the Mtetezga School Project was accepted for the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2014!** Over the 3 days of the Challenge an amazing £1800 was donated online, of which £1500 was doubled. We know it was a large amount of work to get online to make donations before Big Give charity money ran out but persistence won the day for MEL. The current total is £3810 A huge THANK YOU and we hope you will continue to support MEL. Mtetezga School has already been informed that they will finally get adequate classroom facilities for their village children.

In addition to Mtetezga's classroom block, there will be other building projects in July and August, this year: we're just waiting to know the state of our funds, priorities here and what the high levels of inflation, a wildly fluctuating exchange rate, will do for our ability to continue improving this area's schools.

## In other News

Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup> - For those in the Huntingdon area, there'll be a quiz night at The Ferryboat Inn, Holywell. All profits will be generously donated to MEL.

It is likely that this year Cromwell Rotary Club will work with MEL to fund a project in one of the nearby villages... more in due course.

Thanks as always for all your support, and stay in touch,

Caroline

# A note from Ted:

## Three Weeks in Malawi

I am funding and working on a project to re-supply running water to the Health Clinic at Ngala in Malawi. It did have running water some 8 years ago but then its borehole pump was stolen and sadly no one thought to cover or protect the borehole. To put it into perspective a pump can cost perhaps £400, a borehole in Malawi can cost perhaps £5000 or more depending on depth. Over the years the uncapped borehole has been open to the elements, rain and sand; children, rocks, plastic bottles, bicycle parts, and also the odd tree branch.

I am here in Malawi because I lost my dear wife in December last year and I need a purpose and a meaning to my life. For some years I had cared for Wendy and then it ended suddenly and unexpectedly. Like many people in this situation I was lost. Wendy had been a nurse and importantly to her a childrens nurse. Wendy cared passionately about nursing and did fundraising and charity work to raise the standard and the facilities for children in hospital and clinics.

Through Caroline I learned about MEL and in particular about the Health Clinic at Ngala and so it seemed to me now was the time to try and help.

I had travelled to Africa before but only as a tourist. The experience physically working out here at the age of 65 came as something of a shock but I managed it. The blocked borehole has presented many challenges, some required the skills and tools I had in the UK which I brought with me ( I just happen to run a small borehole business there) but some of them were new. To help Caroline loaned me Moffatt, her right hand man and expert on building and with borehole experience as well. We recruited a team of four which grew to five and the hard work began. There is no quick and easy solution except to drill a new borehole. The work consisted of lowering tool on drainage rods and attempting to capture the various and most reluctant detritus and bring it to the surface. The tools were modified, a compressor was hired to clear sand at great expense but proved ineffective against everything else and so it was more hand tools and much trial and error. Finally on my last day we knew we had the right tools and we were making steady progress.

When I arrive the borehole was blocked some 6m below ground level. When I left we were down to 26m and the work can continue while I am back in the UK. I plan to be out again end June to hopefully inspect and finish to the job, or at this job. I think the work here goes on and on.

I have been privileged to meet and work with and get to know many wonderful people here in Malawi. Caroline has put up with me living in her house for three weeks, never having me before, and I owe her a huge thank you for her tolerance, patience and skill in guiding me through the difficulties of working in Malawi.

Ted Crampton

13th February 2015 .