



MEL Newsletter

Summer 2014

Dear All,

It's been a particularly successful 3 months for MEL, all the more gratifying because we had our first teams of volunteers out here since 2012, courtesy of St Catherine's School, Twickenham and True Adventure (www.true-adventure.co.uk). Funds for our projects have come from a variety of sources and varying amounts but special thanks are due to:

- St Catherine's School, Twickenham
 - True Adventure
 - Malmesbury School and Rosemary Mobley
 - Brenda Foster and the community of Little Staughton
 - Campbell and Sheila McLelland
 - Yvonne Perry & Rob Goodwin
 - Di Robinson & Jan Waite
 - Swallowtail Federation of Schools on the occasion of Mary Blackie's retirement
- ...and those generous souls who donate, each month, directly into our account.

Some of these funds come with suggested purposes attached: they must be spent 'to benefit as many people as possible' or 'to improve teaching and learning conditions', but the majority is left to the discretion of Malawi Education Link.

St Catherine's School, with True Adventure, worked in Luluzi and Kasitu School. Together we renovated and painted classrooms and a teacher's house. Pit latrines were built in Kasitu School for pupils and in Luluzi School for teachers; neither had permanent latrines prior to this.

Malmesbury School's additional contribution meant we were able to build an extra 2 latrines for Kasitu School previously making do with 2 for 1038 pupils! They now have 7.



Moffat Banda, our building foreman, was kept busy supervising this and various other projects:

- Chaboli School, in a very remote location, had been largely funded by Di and Jan but its distance from Ngala and a misunderstanding with the builders meant that plastering and flooring had not been completed. That's now done.



- Khuyu School's teacher's house has been given a tin roof, the community having made the bricks, found the sand, and supplied the water. MEL will also provide doors and window panes before the end of August.
- Kaweluwelu School classroom block is now completed. Again, the community provided bricks, sand and water.



Exchange rates have plummeted, with a stronger kwacha – great for Malawi but problematic for our projects! Revisiting remaining funds revealed that we could also:

- Put a tin roof on a community-built teacher's house in Luluzi.
- Make small donations to Village Head(wo)men supporting orphans and impoverished elderly in their communities: these are usually given in the form of food and clothing, learning resources.
- Support other small community groups bettering the communities in which they live.
- Continue to sponsor disadvantaged pupils in special and secondary schools. Thanks to John's generosity, Jacqueline has had her hearing restored and is receiving an education in Bandawe School for the Hearing Impaired, and Bob's ongoing generosity means Lettina continues to thrive in Nkhotakota School for the Blind... just 2 of the success stories.
- Renovate Ngala Clinic: I was distributing baby and maternity items donated by the Stonemans' kind knitters and St Catherine's School when the appalling state of the clinic became obvious; how do you deliver babies when the only light is a low energy bulb on the wall in the far side of the delivery room?

With no government maintenance programme, the clinic motorbike was on the point of permanent breakdown; broken locks on most doors meant that clinic security and patient privacy were severely compromised. Additionally, large numbers of bats had colonised the roof spaces, rotting the ceilings with their guano and causing all manner of health hazards. All that has been rectified using funds donated by Malmesbury School.



- Malawi Education Link regularly does more than building projects. We have been supporting triplets born to a woman who gave birth along the road to the clinic and then bled to death before she could reach help. Amazingly, the triplets survived. Brenda's, Yvonne's and Rob's donations have provided the grandparents and father with formula milk, cereal. Clothing donated by Yvonne and the Stonemans' knitters and Brenda has clothed the triplets. (**Stop press:** I've just been told that these triplets have been taken to an orphanage in Blantyre, taking strain off elderly grandparents and father who already have other children to care for).



- The Swallowtail Federation of Schools has donated a bicycle ambulance as a retirement present for Mary Blackie, to be kept in the area where this family lives. It will transport the sick in Chigumukire village area more comfortably and reliably than a wheelbarrow or bicycle pillion currently used. A primary teacher there recently died of cerebral malaria because there was no transport to take him to the nearest clinic 10kms away.

All this achieved with just over £11,000, this year! As most of you know, we're a very small charity, but with no overheads, careful fund management and all donations going directly to the beneficiaries, we manage to achieve a lot. All the villagers, most of whom live below the poverty line, send grateful greetings to you for all you do to raise the funds we use.

Thanks,

Caroline

A Message from Sheila Campbell

Sheila has asked me to tell you the following: "MEL is a Big Give registered charity. To find out more, enter biggive.org.uk and go to alphabetical list of charities. Click on MEL and you will find our profile. Click on projects and you will find 'Build Mtetzga a Primary School'. Big Give operates an annual Christmas Challenge whereby donations made online are doubled. MEL has submitted Mtetzga school. If accepted we shall need your help. We are Sheila and Campbell McLelland working with MEL since 2003 when we went as group leaders to Ngala. Seeing what Caroline and the students from Hinchbrooke School were achieving, committed us to MEL. With Caroline's retirement from teaching, MEL must find other sources of funding. We are exploring online funding with the help of Big Give to augment numbers of donors. Do take a look at the Mtetzga school project on biggive.org.uk Please send comments/ideas to cam.sheila@tiscali.co.uk or call 01778570130".

Please don't forget to use The Giving Machine (www.thegivingmachine.co.uk), as well: for all you internet shoppers, it gives us fund and costs you nothing!