



MEL Newsletter

Summer 2016

Dear supporters,

While you were sweltering in Europe's heatwave, here in Malawi, we were enjoying what passes for winter. Cool evenings and mornings, with temperatures rising up to the middle 20s by lunchtime – much easier to work! It will start warming up now though.

Building Projects

This summer MEL has still strived to work and support many schools with their infrastructure.



Ngala FP and Mtupe

Our summer schedule of building work is almost complete, with Ngala FP School setting a new trend of semi-detached teachers' houses. This is partly funded by specific donors and the remainder coming from general MEL fundraising. Mtupe School has gained a new double classroom block: it's in an area where rice cultivation has expanded recently, thereby increasing the school population and the need for more classrooms. These are just 2 of the 4 classes learning under trees before our arrival.

Mtetezga (Completion)

Our third building project this year was the completion of Mtetezga's classroom block. This is in a particularly remote location, meaning Moffat has to travel one day just to reach the school. The community is a very strong one so all has gone well. You can see the old 'classrooms' alongside our new pair. Breezeblock windows to be completed shortly.



Boreholes and wells



This year has also seen us break new ground (in both senses of the phrase!). Working together with Micro Well to start two borehole and crop cultivation projects. In the last month Kasweswe village and Chitedze village have each gained a borehole with AfriDev pump. Micro Well funded the drilling (£2300 per borehole). MEL, through raffling a rare military watch belonging to my father, funded the two pumps (£460 each) and the concrete 'aprons' (+/-£100 each) that surround the pump.



The journey to Water

To really understand the massive difference these pumps have made to the lives of people in these pilot villages, we need to live a day in the life of one of the village women: the working day is always long and hard, but this year's meagre rainy season has meant that hand-dug wells, rivers have long dried up by June. She must therefore wake at about 3am to join the procession to the nearest muddy puddle or trickle in a stream.



After about an hour's walk, she'll reach the source where she'll join a queue to fill buckets. The puddle empties quickly, so she may well have a wait of some hours until she has enough for the daily needs. She and her family will have the risk of disease from these muddy puddles. Streams and puddles are used by animals as well, plus the risk of meeting wild animals along the way. Then there's the hour's walk back to her village, with a day's chores ahead of her. 10 villages are in a similar predicament with nothing capable of providing enough water for the villagers to drink.

Not surprisingly this drought has meant a shortage of food: the price of 50kgs of maize has rocketed from about £5 to £18 when available. Other food is also in short supply. Kasweswe and Chitedze villages now have safe and plentiful water. Freeing up the women's time and energy. Also providing this water means that the communities can grow a second food crop immediately, not having to wait for the unpredictable arrival of the rains (perhaps early December). MEL has with the remainder of the watch raffle funds extended managed loans to these pilot villages so that they have the money to buy seeds and fertiliser.



Kasweswe and Chitedze villages were chosen as pilots for very special reasons. Juisa in Kasweswe village already grew a diverse range of vegetables - when he could find enough water! He has the knowledge and skills to pass on this diversity to other villages in time. Chitedze village has Royle, an educated ex-primary teacher who unites his community. He has already shown initiative and reliability in leading his fellow villagers. Donors also funded his participation in a beekeeping course so that his community can start this venture. He has skills and experience to

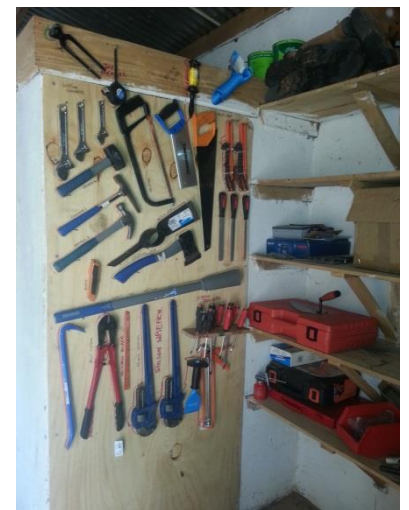
exchange with the Kasweswe village and others.

Juisa's villagers have cultivated a sizeable plot around their new pump, with about twelve different varieties of vegetables in the seedling stage. These can be seen in the picture (above and left) around the new pump in the background.

Now we are hoping (when funds allow) to extend this project this to other villages with pitiful access to water! Gangala is the next village on the list.

Fundraising will take off when I return, but if you would like to donate now, please contribute via our BT [MyDonate](#) account linked from our [Website](#) (www.malawieducationlink.co.uk) and put 'Gangala' in the personalised message box, so that we can spend it in the way you intended. We'll get the Gift Aid automatically on your donation, too.

The remaining funds from the watch raffle are funding a borehole maintenance programme. We already have the data on villages whose boreholes and pumps need maintenance. Likuchi village have a Community Based Organisation (CBO - the local equivalent of a district council) but NO funds at their disposal. This CBO will encourage those identified villages to apply for our help. MEL has found Arthur who will do the repairs and maintenance.





The villagers are required to meet 50% of the cost. This will encourage responsible use of the pumps and early reporting of problems before the damage is exacerbated. Rotary clubs in Holt and Lilongwe have generously provided the tools via Trade Aid that Arthur will use for this purpose: we're very grateful for this essential assistance.

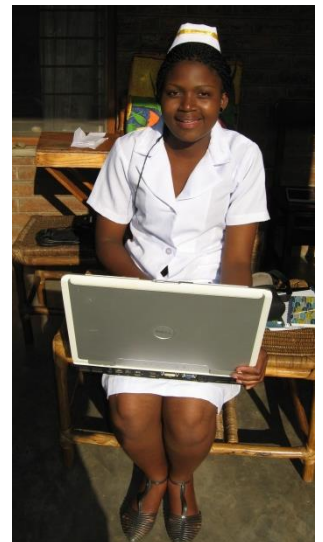
Sponsorship

Our sponsorships continue with your support. Anyone who would like to help sponsor someone's education please email me directly at c.a.hansford@gmail.com.

Letina Khonje, our blind 8-year-old, continues to thrive in Nkhotakota Special School, now even able to go and fetch water from the distant borehole in her village, such is her improved confidence. Mphatso and Jessie have just graduated from Nkhata Bay Secondary School. Both will do voluntary work until they can apply for college places. Jess' sponsorship through Teacher Training College is guaranteed, but Mphatso needs funding to pursue the course he wants in Clinical Medicine, specialising in HIV/AIDs. If you can help, please get in touch!

Maggret Mudyayaye (pictured) is revelling in her nursing course, thanks to generous sponsorship. Her gratitude is in every text she sends me! Other 'sponsees' are awaiting exam results to see if they merit further sponsorship. We have many deserving students.

We're also continuing to support albinos, with 14 on our 'books' now. Thanks, probably, to our 'sensitisation campaign' in the community, there have been none of the attacks you may have read about, in our area. Hospitals and clinics are unable to provide any of the more advanced treatment needed by albinos with skin lesions of various types, but by providing sun creams, hats, sunglasses, and protective clothing, if applicable, we're seeing babies & young children with fewer worrying skin blemishes; just the education of parents is helping here. We're able to do this because of continued donations, for which, many thanks.



Optimistic reporting

You may have heard several news items about Malawi in recent weeks – all of them negative; I've complained to the BBC about the imbalance in their reporting! All of them, sadly, are true, but I hope you'll see from this newsletter that Malawians fervently want to improve their living conditions, their education, their country. Your support, through MEL and Micro Well makes this possible.

Many thanks for your on-going support and interest... we couldn't do all this without you!

Caroline

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