

Smile Malawi



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Smile Malawi was registered as a charitable trust in England and Wales in October 2004. The main objective of the charity is to provide a home for street children from the city of Blantyre in southern Malawi, with educational and recreational facilities. The charity also aims to help the local community of Ndokota by building a nursery school and health centre for the benefit of the village children and families. The charity was registered in Malawi as an NGO in April 2006.

The first building of the Smile Malawi Childrens' Centre was started In May 2005. The work was carried out by local craftsmen under the management of Malawian trustee Glad Munthali and his nephew Charles Mwasinga, who organised all the construction work. This had to pause once the rains started in November but it was already just habitable and almost complete.



The rain was cause for celebration though as the country had suffered a long drought resulting in severe food shortages. Smile Malawi took 30 Tonnes of maize to the local village of Ndokota to help the people through the worst period of the famine in January 2006.



Smile Malawi Founder Elspeth Baecke returned to Ndokota in late January to check on progress and was relieved to be greeted by all the village children who had become her friends during previous visits. While she was there the office of the President approved the name of Smile Malawi and then, in April 2006, the charity was registered as a member of the Council of NGOs (non-government organisations) in Malawi. This gave the final green light for her to offer a home to the first street children.

Earlier this month Elspeth returned again to Malawi to meet with Glad and Charles, make final arrangements with the Government and agree the carers needed for the children. The Board of Trustees had also agreed to appoint Charles to a permanent position of employment with Smile Malawi. Prior to this, Charles had carried out all the work as a volunteer. He will now manage the construction of any further buildings, liaise with local Social Services and employ the remaining staff that are required.



The rooms are nearly ready and all that remains is to wait for the installation of the mains electricity supply. The Electricity Company of Malawi (ESCOM) visited the site in July and was sure that it can meet the deadline. The target for completion is September.

There are approximately 3500 children living on the streets of Blantyre. Some of these receive support in a small number of daytime drop-in Centres but many survive with no help at all. Children like 5 year old William, who met Elspeth one evening last year. The street children are extremely vulnerable to abuse and even death so, when he disappeared in December, she was very worried.

But a kind family had actually taken him into their home to live with their family and Elspeth was invited to visit him to see how well he is. She was delighted and relieved to see him so happy!



But there are many more children still out there sleeping in doorways and begging for food. The local Director of Social Services met with Elspeth and agreed how the first ten of these children will be identified and invited to live at the Smile Malawi Centre in Ndokota. They will attempt to find the legal guardians first to ensure that the children could not be re-integrated into their extended family units. But many of these children have no family at all and it is these that need the first help.



Just before her return to the UK Elspeth held a tea party for 50 of the village children and they thoroughly enjoyed their bottles of fruit juice and plates of biscuits. The house was at last full of the happy laughter of children. A glimpse of the future no doubt!

We still need help to ensure that we have sufficient committed monthly income for the running costs of the Centre, providing the right care and security for the children. If you can spare just a small amount each month, please contact us for a donation form to complete. Alternatively, you can donate to the charity via the website.

Smile Malawi is a registered charity in England & Wales number 1106225 and a member of the Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA) registration number C 296/2006.

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