

Smile Malawi



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2013

Smile Malawi was registered as a charity in England and Wales in 2004 and as an NGO in Malawi in June 2006. The main objective is to provide a home for vulnerable street children. The first Smile Malawi Children's Centre opened in November 2006 and now gives a home to 34 children who were jointly identified by Malawi Social Services and Smile Malawi from the streets of Blantyre and the local village. The charity also helps the local community of Ndokota with a developing outreach programme, primarily targeting the children and local school.

Smile Malawi founder Elspeth Baecke is in Malawi for an extended visit this year so she has sent us an interim newsletter. Elspeth arrived in Malawi on 2 March with her daughter-in-law Natasha, who joined her for a surprise visit, which the children loved.



When she went home, the President of Malawi, Joyce Banda, was also leaving on the same plane. There was a ceremony at the airport and the children were thrilled to see the ladies dancing and get a glimpse of their leader.



The weeks have flown and children's illnesses have occupied a lot of Elspeth's time but that is to be expected with so many children in one place. Firstly Caroline caught a stomach bug and ended up so dehydrated that she collapsed and had to be rushed to hospital. That sounds simple enough but it was late evening and involved Elspeth driving her, with the matron and a guard, up a long and very dark country road to meet the Smile Malawi driver and get her to the town. She had to stay in the hospital on a drip for 3 days so the Matron stayed with her and Elspeth went home at 2am to take over.

Caroline is fine now but then Elijah came home from school for Easter and complained that he was losing his vision in one eye. Elspeth was immediately concerned and emailed the Heart Institute in Maputo, where he

is still seen as an outpatient after his heart surgery in 2009. The doctor there thought it could be connected to his heart and so arrangements had to be made to send him there urgently.



Fortunately, we now have access to the internet at the orphanage and so Elspeth was able to book his trip online and he left on 3 April. After initial tests at the hospital it was discovered that his heart is fine but he had a mass on his brain that was growing and would have killed him. He has received intensive treatment in Maputo and is responding well. He is coming back to Malawi on 24 April to complete the 6 month course of drugs at home. Once again, Dr Beatriz at the Maputo Heart Institute has saved Elijah's life and we are all very grateful to her for her wonderful care.



On a more cheerful note, Elspeth was thrilled to be able to take delivery of the Smile Malawi signs that she had ordered from a local pottery in October 2012. They are made of clay tiles and hand painted before being fired and glazed. Dedza Pottery is famous for its beautiful hand painted pots and crockery but they also make wonderful pictures and signs all from tiles.

As usual, Elspeth has organised lots of maintenance work at the orphanage as well as completing the last jobs on the new boys' house. The house needed

to have ceilings installed and then the boys helped paint all the internal walls and windows. There was some timber left over that had been used for the access system so Elspeth got the carpenter to make up three small roof trusses and is having a car port built to protect our decent vehicle from the sun. There was a very basic shelter before but it collapsed one night in high winds and dented the bonnet and nearly broke the windscreen. It was made of local timber poles that had been attacked by termites so the new one is made from bricks.



The other exciting thing to happen is that we have agreed to take another child from Social Services in Blantyre. She is 6 years old and is an orphan with no home. Elspeth collected Mphatso, which means Gift, on 19 April and she fitted in with the other children immediately. 8 year old Elizabeth looked after her and the two of them are now firm friends.



Our sincere thanks go to everyone who helped our appeal for funds for Elijah's travel to Maputo – see www.justgiving.com/elijahstravel. We still need more regular funding. If you would like to help with the running costs of the Children's Centre, please visit our website or send a cheque to Smile Malawi at the address below.