

Smile Malawi



NEWSLETTER MAY 2008

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 Childrens' Centre opened its doors in November 2006 and gave a home to 11 children who were jointly identified by Malawi Social Services and Smile Malawi from the streets of Blantyre. This increased to 12 in September when Peter joined them. The charity also helps the local community of Ndokota with a developing outreach programme.

The first 12 children have now made the Centre into a home and they are all healthy and happy. They were thrilled to welcome the Smile Malawi founder Elspeth Baecke for her visit in April.



Elspeth runs Smile Malawi in her free time in UK and has local staff in Malawi to manage the Centre and take care of the children. The children attend the local Machedembe village school, where they are all doing very well. The four youngest ones also started school in January and love it!



As part of outreach support, Smile Malawi recently repaired the borehole at the school after receiving a plea from the Headmaster. The borehole is essential for clean water for the children and the surrounding villagers. Elspeth was invited to a school assembly during her trip when she met with the staff and many of the children.



Elspeth sat at the front with her Malawian colleagues and the 26 staff.

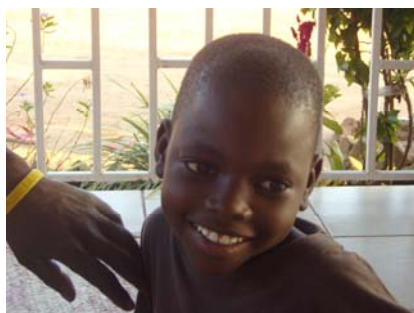
And these are the 1600 faces that greeted her, all sitting quietly in the hot sun on the school football pitch.



The children come from 7 surrounding villages and classes vary from 50 to 120 pupils! After official speeches, Elspeth presented the school with a new football kit, amid cheers and applause from the children. They all turned out on the following Saturday to watch the team play in the local league. Unfortunately they lost!



The highlight of Elspeth's trip though was when she found 10 year old Alfred wandering the streets of Blantyre one afternoon and stopped to find out his story. He had been left alone on the streets when his mother had died and was making a 'living' doing odd jobs around the town.



After checking out a few details, he was invited to join the children at the Centre and, although apprehensive at

first, he settled overnight and even started school within 4 days. He is so happy and never stops laughing and smiling! Smile Malawi now has approval to accept more children like Alfred and hopes to buy more beds to accommodate a further 8 very soon.



Football turned out to be a theme throughout Elspeth's visit and here she is presenting new balls to young men from the village team whose pitch is next to the Centre. They were very happy as a ball costs a month's salary! The boys had earlier helped assemble a game of table soccer for the children, who soon learnt how to play.



On the last day the Smile Malawi family all gathered for a staff briefing and photo call in the late afternoon sun



If you would like to help towards the running costs of the Centre or for future development of the project, please visit our website or send a cheque to the address below.