

Smile Malawi



NEWSLETTER MAY 2010

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 its doors in November 2006 and now gives a home to 23 children who were jointly identified by Malawi Social Services and Smile Malawi from the streets of Blantyre. The charity also helps the local community of Ndokota with a developing outreach programme, primarily targeting the village children and local school.

Smile Malawi founder Elspeth Baecke just spent four weeks with the children and was, once again, impressed with the efficient routine that the resident matron, Miriam, has set up. The 23 children are all happy, growing and doing well at the local village school.



It was a busy visit as it was harvest time and everyone joined in to cut down the maize and remove the kernels from the cobs. We grow and store enough maize on our land to feed the children all year.



Maize is used to make flour which is then cooked into a solid dough called nsima. This is the staple diet of Malawi and is supplemented with beans, fish, chicken, vegetables and fruit. The nsima is cooked over an open fire in our new outdoor kitchen which was recently built to give shelter during the rainy season. Here is one of our ladies stirring the dough in the huge pot.



The Centre employs 3 gardeners from the local village who grow all our vegetables. Each morning the cook goes to the garden to cut fresh greens as well as root vegetables such as sweet potatoes, cassava and carrots. The gardeners have also planted hundreds of flowering trees, fruit trees, shrubs and hedging plants which all grow very fast in the fertile ground. The children have learnt to make fresh juice from our guavas, paw-paws, strawberries and mangos. They also enjoyed baking cakes with Elspeth for Easter and loved the english recipes.



In between harvesting, the Centre's teacher and handy-man, Soza, found time to build a slide for the children and put up swings and a basket ball ring in a new play area.



The children loved the finished slide, which worked well and they had hours of fun and got very dirty!



The basket ball ring was an instant success and the older children had great fun showing off their skills straight away. The children play netball and football at school but have obviously seen basket ball at some time as they all knew how to play it.



It is now almost a year since 13 year old Elijah underwent life-saving surgery at the Maputo Heart Institute in Mozambique. Smile Malawi arranged this with the UK charity 'Chain of Hope' and he was operated on by Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub. He has to return to Maputo for a routine check up in May so arrangements were made for him to fly there with a young Malawian doctor who helps Smile Malawi. Elijah is now fit and well and joins in with football and all the children's games.



Elspeth soon noticed how expensive things have become in Malawi. Some of our staff were struggling so salaries were revised to give a minimum of MK10000 per month (£48). This gave the lower paid a rise of 30% and will now help them to buy essentials like fertiliser for crops, soap and sugar.

There are still hundreds of street children and village orphans who need help. 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.