



Malawi Music Fund

Newsletter no. 2 November 2016



Welcome to the second newsletter of the Malawi Music Fund

It's been a busy and rewarding year in which we've continued to enjoy our workshop weeks with the children. As well as providing activities in music, art and sport, plus comfortable beds, nutritious food and mosquito nets, these residential weeks at Likhubula House also give much-needed respite time for the children's guardians. A few of our orphaned children have no adult to live with but have to fend for themselves, and for them Likhubula Children's Choir has become their family. All the children look forward to their times with us and our aim is that they go home healthier and happier.

The children continue to delight us and their audiences with their enthusiastic and polished singing, dancing and drumming. I often say that I would confidently put these children on a platform anywhere in the world!

We continue to provide secondary school bursaries for those who pass their primary school leaving exam and to explore ways and means of assisting those who've completed secondary school and now need to move on to some form of

further education.

Over the past year the Orkney community has been hugely supportive. Proceeds from fundraising activities plus donations from individuals and organisations from within Orkney and from further afield have all been gratefully received. Our funds are administered from Orkney and every penny raised contributes directly to the work in Malawi.

I'm looking forward to my next visit in December, a month which is not only one of the hottest of the year but also often one of the wettest. This year however, Malawi, like much of southern Africa, has suffered a drought which has led to crop failure and hunger in the villages. We hope to give the families Christmas gifts of essential provisions, and certainly the meals we provide for the children will be especially welcome this year.

Glenys

Dancing with maize

We enjoyed welcoming Mr and Mrs Jaap Offringa from the Netherlands-based charity Vrienden Voor Africa (Friends for Africa). They had heard about Likhubula Children's Choir and were interested to come to Likhubula House to meet us. We were happy to lay on an all-singing, all-dancing performance which delighted the visitors.

Afterwards, the children were invited outside where the Offringas' vehicle was opened up to reveal bags of maize – one

for each of the children. This caused great excitement, and after receiving their maize bags the children expressed their thanks in the usual way – by hoisting the bags on their heads and singing



Look—no hands!

dancing! It was our final day at Likhubula so, before they left, the children wrapped their maize bags in chitenjes so that they could carry them home safely – on their heads of course.



A musical 'thank you'

Agness's new wheels

One of our tutors, John Chigwetsa, is not only an excellent musician but also a former member of Malawi's national football team! John and his fellow tutors do great work in organising team sports which are always fiercely competitive. Sometimes the winners are rewarded by the tutors with a 100 kwacha or 200 kwacha note. (A 100 kwacha note is the equivalent of about 9 pence.)

In April, one of our boys told the children about Agness Chibalo, a disabled girl in his village. Agness was unable to go to school because her wheelchair needed new wheels and her family had no money for these. The children decided they would like to help Agness by saving their prize money and requesting donations from some of the adults. After a week they had raised 9,000 kwacha (about £8) – enough to buy new wheels for Agness's wheelchair.

Our houseparent Kingsley arranged for the children to visit Agness's Sunday School to meet Agness and see the result of the fundraising. In true Malawian fashion the children sang and danced for Agness and the church congregation. As a result – and an unexpected spin-off – the children were invited to perform at a local choir's CD launch and at the start

of the Mulanje Mountain Porters' Race. (More about the annual Porters' Race, a major event in the local calendar, in our next newsletter.)



Agness with her new wheels and some of the choir members

We were proud of the children who, although they have very little, were still able to think about someone else in need and act to help.

Performing for the guardians

Performances for the children's guardians are important occasions: the children are able to demonstrate new songs and dances and show their art and craft work. It's an opportunity for us to meet and encourage the guardians and for the guardians to raise any concerns they may have. The Choir's performance is often followed by a presentation of certificates to those who have reached the age of 16 and are 'graduating' from the Choir.

Some of our graduates continue to receive secondary school

bursaries and some have already completed secondary school. We invite them all to our performances and usually ask them to arrive the day before so that we can talk to each one and discuss their progress and ambitions.

We made a mask for the traditional Gule Wamkulu ('great dance')



Always keen to take part in the concert, our graduates have sometimes rehearsed and performed their own songs. So in December we plan to build on this enthusiasm by inviting them to join us for several days to form a Youth Choir. We hope this will prove to be an effective means of keeping in touch with these young people at a crucial stage in their lives.



Janet, one of our graduates (see facing page), can't resist joining in



The children's guardians enjoy post-concert drinks and doughnuts on the lawn

To

Khirisimi Yabwino
Happy Christmas



A donation of £ XXX.XX has been made
on your behalf to Malawi Music Fund,
transforming the lives
of Malawi's orphaned children.

From

Christmas Gift Voucher

Searching for a Christmas gift for the person who has everything? Why not give a Malawi Music Fund Gift voucher? Our vouchers are designed to be slipped inside a Christmas card and include a description of our activities. Whether you wish to give £5 or £50 your donation will be much appreciated and your recipient will know that the gift will help create some Christmas joy for children who have very little. To buy a gift voucher please contact Glenys.

News of our alumni

Veronica Lipulu and Mayeso Kachingwe (pictured right) are now in their second year at university studying, respectively, Animal Husbandry and Food Technology. I visited them in April when they enjoyed showing me round their campus in Lilongwe. They are enjoying their courses and continue to do well.

Janet Fabiano has completed a diploma in tourism and when she came to see us at Likhubula in April she was hoping for a job at Blantyre airport.

Alice Winiko and Victor Jerason have finished their tailoring courses at FOMO (Friends of Mulanje Orphans). We provided



Veronica leads choir graduates plus houseparent Eneles (6th from R) in rehearsing their song for the concert



them with bicycles for the duration of their courses as FOMO's training centre was too far for them to walk in the rainy season. We're now helping them to gain further experience and Eneles, our houseparent, is acting as mentor.

Sydney Manyowa and Henry Chimtengo have just started a 4-month welding course at Green Malata ('Green Roof'). Described as a Children's Entrepreneurial Village, Green Malata is funded from the Netherlands and directed by Margriet Sacranie, an inspirational Dutch lady.

Courses in hairdressing, bakery, tailoring, welding, carpentry, IT and agriculture are offered, all with the aim of enabling young people eventually to run their own small businesses.

Competition for places is high so we were delighted when the boys were accepted and I look forward to hearing how they're getting on in December.



Meet our staff

We interviewed two of our invaluable and long-standing Malawian staff - houseparent Kingsley Mmambo, and music tutor and administrator Margaret Kamkwamba.

Q: How long have you been involved with the Children's Choir?

K: Since August 2007 when I was aged 16. Twonge [Twonge Mzumara, former director of Likhubula House] asked if I would be interested in helping with the boys.

M: 9 years, from the time Glenys came to talk to us about starting a music project for orphans.

Q: Tell us about your background.

K: I was born in Mbewa village in the district of Mulanje. My parents were not educated. At that time you had to pay to go to primary school so they could not attend. My father worked as a guide on Mulanje Mountain and later as a carver. I was fortunate to be able to go to school, first to Nansato Primary then Chambe Secondary School. I am completing a diploma in electrical engineering at Blantyre Polytechnic and I was encouraged in my ambitions through being involved with the Children's Choir.

M: I was born in the township of Ndrande on the edge of Blantyre. I learnt music through singing in local choir groups and then I became assistant music director of Blantyre CCAP [Church of Central Africa Presbyterian] Synod. Through the Synod I was funded to attend university in South Africa where I studied for a degree in music. [Since we interviewed Margaret she has been appointed Music Director of Blantyre Synod, the first lay person and the first woman to be appointed to the post.]

Q: What are your duties as houseparent/music tutor?

K: I'm responsible for looking after the boys. I make sure they go to bed on time and are up in time for breakfast. Sometimes I take them for a run before



Margaret listens intently to the choir's performance

breakfast. I make sure everyone behaves well and I report anyone who is sick. I help with sports and other activities and I organise games after supper. I help with teaching the singing and dancing. I speak to the children's guardians if there are problems.

M: I teach music – *a capella* songs, gospel songs, local songs and tonic solfa. I also interview the children, look at their school reports, advise them and encourage them to work hard at school. I am also the administrator for the project. I make accommodation bookings, communicate with Glenys and with the houseparents and the other tutors and make sure the guardians are informed.

Q: What, in your view, are the benefits to the children?

K: There's a huge benefit. Being involved with the Choir changes their ideas about their future. They know they can have a bright future through education. They are given good beds and food and activities which make them forget about their problems at home. Last year, when the houses of some children collapsed during the floods, the families were given funds to help them. If Malawi Music Fund can continue, not only will it change the lives of those children, but also the community, even the country. Education will enable them to help others.

M: Firstly, they are given the opportunity to enjoy music and performing. Then they are provided with funds for secondary school. They can encourage and learn from each other and share experiences.

Q: What do you most enjoy and what do you personally bring to the project?

K: I love singing and dancing and working with the children. I enjoy inventing games and stories for them. I live near many of the children so I can understand their problems and encourage them. I want to help change their lives.

M: I enjoy teaching and singing with the children and I can bring musical skills in singing and reading music. I care about all the children, individually and personally.



Kingsley encourages some pre-performance bonding

Malawi Music Fund seeks to transform the lives of some of Malawi's most needy and vulnerable orphaned children. We are supported by donations from individuals, fundraising activities and grants from trusts and foundations. If you would be interested in helping us by funding a secondary school bursary or in any other way, please contact Glenys Hughes –

malawimusicfund@gmail.com; tel 01856 872952

Web www.malawimusicfund.org.uk.

Malawi Music Fund is a registered Scottish Charity, number SC045661.