



# F.O.M. NEWSLETTER



Number 13

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October 2009

## F. O. M. GRANTS REPORT

The following grants have been awarded by *Friends Of Malawi* since the previous newsletter went to print.

### PLWHA BAKERY PROJECT

(\$550) (Report by Rebecca Ament)

The Bakery Project for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) has developed successfully. With tremendous financial assistance from Friends Of Malawi, a mud oven and bakery shop were built in Masenjere, Nsanje, and the small baking business has begun. I feel that the entire process of planning the Income Generating Activity (IGA), writing the grant proposal, budgeting, etc., has been an interesting learning experience for me, as well as the members of the PLWHA.

The project began as a series of meetings, at which the PLWHA group, the local Community Based Organization (CBO) director, Mr. Jeke, and I discussed ideas and plans for the IGA. Once we agreed on baking, we continued to meet in order to develop a grant proposal and budget. After the proposal was submitted, we had two business trainings with the group. One of these was for the entire group's general understanding of small business. The next training was intended to educate the Treasurer and Secretary of PLWHA about accounting and budgeting.

I was very impressed with the group's enthusiasm for the project. The CBO director, the PLWHA Treasurer and the Secretary immediately started planning on how to handle the grant money according to the budget. First, some funds were used to build the mud oven. The Village Headman, Mulembwe, generously donated bricks for both the oven and the bakery. Next, the bakery shop was built. During this time, I kept the money at my house. (This was decided by the group as the most secure place.) Transactions were recorded by the Treasurer.

In March, the bakery building was completed. Money was then used to buy ingredients and tools for baking. A woman from a nearby village who also bakes in a mud oven agreed to teach our group how to bake. On April 7, the PLWHA held the Bakery Opening Day ceremony that was attended by several local chiefs, teachers, health center workers and other community members.

Since the opening day, the business has gone smoothly. Group members meet regularly at the oven and prepare and bake buns which they sell for 15 Kwacha each at the market. Two local secondary schools buy buns everyday for their teachers' tea time. Beside everyday business, sometimes special orders are received. PLWHA members now have incomes and skills to improve their quality of life. PHOTOS page 4

**GRANTS REPORT CONTINUED  
REFORESTATION PROJECT (\$500)**

Deforestation on the Zomba Plateau is a major problem, partly because of corruption among forest staff. The Equal Opportunities Watch recruited and trained six volunteers to assist in conducting 15 activities to sensitize communities about the effects of environmental degradation and to monitor destruction of the forest.

Community members planted 50 seedlings and established Friends of Zomba Plateau committees to ensure protection of the plateau from destruction.

Eight women and four men were trained on alternative business ventures so that they would no longer need to rely on the charcoal business.

Two men, caught cutting trees for fuel, were brought before the village chief and fined a goat each.

**LINYANGWA AQUACULTURE CLUB  
(PCV George Po) (\$269)**

The Linyangwa Aquaculture Club has completed a functional fishpond, despite underestimating the amount of time and work involved. (Photos page 4)

Fingerlings were purchased from the Kasungu Prison which has a very vibrant agricultural demonstration area. Fish are fed with maize bran collected from each member's household. Each member is responsible for feeding the fish in 3-day shifts. They are confident the project will be a success and they express a sense of pride in its completion in spite of skeptics in the community.

**NATURAL MEDICINE  
WORKSHOP (\$581)**

Elaine Lo reports that the Natural Medicine Workshop was a success. It was implemented on the last week of March and the first week of April. Two sessions were held for 80 people from 10 different community-based organizations (CBOs) and HIV/AIDS support groups.

A trainer from Action for Natural Medicine (ANAMED) taught the first session.

Topics covered included: treatments for common illnesses, immunity-boosting plants, locally available medicinal plants, and income-generating products made from plants. Herbal tea was incorporated instead of the usual sodas during tea breaks.

CBOs agreed to collaborate and start natural products together. Crucial plants were provided by Lo. Artemisia, moringa, datura stramonium, aloe vera, ginger, garlic and neem will be used to start businesses selling medicinal plants and natural products.

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**FOM ENCOURAGES  
CURRENT PEACE  
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TO APPLY FOR  
GRANTS. Application  
forms are available at  
[FOMgrants@yahoo.com](mailto:FOMgrants@yahoo.com)**

**NEW COUNTRY DIRECTOR**

FOM wishes to welcome the new Peace Corps Malawi, Country Director, Victor Barbiero. Dr. Barbiero began his duties in February 2009, after a distinguished career in teaching and public service with USAID in Washington, East Africa and India. He was a Fulbright Scholar from 1979-1981 in Liberia and a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1973-1975 in Ethiopia. He holds a Doctorate in Pathobiology and a Masters of Health Sciences focusing on Famine Ecology.



Dr. Barbiero with Editor Beth Evans

**NEWS!**

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**You can locate the group by  
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lawi (FOM)" on  
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**IN MEMORIAM**

We have received news that Al Peloski who served in the 1964 group of Peace Corps Volunteers has passed away in South Africa. He had lived in Johannesburg and Cape Town for about 12 years teaching workshops and working as an alternative healer with traumatized children.

## MALAWI RPCV MARCHES IN INAUGURAL PARADE By Jake Farnum

With the amount of junk mail I receive, I thought it was a joke! It was an email from the National Peace Corps Association saying that I had been chosen to participate in the Inaugural Parade. Weeks earlier I had scrambled to meet the deadline, with a window period of a mere 24 hours, to submit my name for consideration. Little did I know that of 2,000+ entries, I was one of the 200 to carry a flag representing countries where Peace Corps Volunteers had served.

I quickly booked plane tickets for my girlfriend and me, and searched my friends on Facebook for anyone living in the D.C. area with an available couch. I had heard projected attendance would reach 3 to 4 million, and I worried that we'd be there, but homeless. Hotels rooms had been booked months in advance, long before my 3-week notice.

After informing my professors of my good fortune and upcoming absence from classes, word got out to the local media. I was thrilled to talk about Peace Corps and my experiences in Malawi on several television stations, for newspaper articles, and in radio interviews.

Although I had been to D.C. several times before, the energy of this historic moment was building as the departure day grew nearer. To ensure we didn't miss our flight, we left the Sunday prior, only to be stuck in LaGuardia airport due to heavy snow. We arrived later than expected.

Washington D.C. was chilly! Fortunately we were well prepared. I was scheduled to board the bus at Pentagon City at 7:00 AM, while Abby joined millions of others in the sea of people. I arrived around 6:00 AM, alone in the dark street waiting and

looking for a Peace Corps sign at the designated meeting place. A man approached and introduced himself as an RPCV from S. America. Soon more people joined the crowd, waiting for the busses to arrive, then we left for security checks before going to the National Mall.

The crowds were ridiculous, as our viewpoint from a chartered bus allowed us to see over the crowds spanning from the Washington Monument to the Capitol Building. By 10:00AM, droves of people were crossing the Memorial Bridge, even though they would be too far to make out even the top of the Capitol and would have to watch the Inauguration via a jumbo-tron.

The busses dropped us off at a waiting area equipped with large tents where everyone could warm up and watch the swearing in ceremony on TV. Soon we were given our flag to carry, mine being the mighty flag of the warm heart of Africa, Malawi. It was a huge responsibility—representing not only the people of Malawi, but the thousands of Peace Corps Volunteers who served there. In the time before we assembled for the parade, we chatted amongst each other, sharing stories of our Peace Corps years.

It was time for us to go. The parade had been delayed a few minutes because of the hospitalization of Senator Ted Kennedy and others. We were in the second block of five, wedged between two marching bands. The flags whipped in the cold breeze as we stood there, a bright array of colors. By 4:00 PM, we had moved

into place and turned the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue. I had positioned myself two from the left side, about halfway back, knowing that we would be passing close to the viewing stand. The crowds lining the streets would cheer as we passed, occasionally someone yelling, "Hey, that's my country," and waving frantically to the RPCV carrying their nation's flag. Others would say, "Thank you for your service" and "good job." It was an amazing feeling, being recognized as having done a good job. Even while walking, I thought of the kids in my village who had died needlessly of malaria, and the AIDS victims, and how all this was for them. After returning from my Peace Corps service, I was surprised to hear from so many people who thought Peace Corps was no longer around, yet to hear the crowds here in support of Peace Corps.

The highlight of the parade was passing in front of the newly elected President Obama and family. We had been warned by security officials that any sudden movements could be taken as an aggressive threat. The bright floodlights sectioned off the area, a boundary of sorts. As the front row of the flag holders passed and waved, I turned to see President Obama and Vice President Biden less than 10 feet away. I offered them a smile and a wave before proceeding to the parade exit. It was all so overwhelming to be in the presence of such inspirational and influential people.

Jake Farnum served in Chulu Village from 2001-2004 with the Environmental group. Currently he is pursuing an M.S. in Entomology at the Univ. of Arkansas. His girlfriend Abby Fanepluw of Yap Island also attended.

## F.O.M. GRANT PROJECTS PHOTOS

Prison official counting fingerlings.



Releasing newly bought fingerlings into the pond.



## BAKERY PROJECT



# URANIUM BEING MINED IN MALAWI

After much fighting and consternation, Paladin Africa, a subsidiary of Paladin Energy Australia, is inaugurating a 220-million uranium mining project at Kayelekera in the Karonga District. At the peak of the fighting against their coming, Paladin signed an agreement with the government and the civil society that provided for some social responsibility projects to communities of Karonga. It also allowed the civil society to monitor environmental issues surrounding the mining operations.

Following the agreement, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Mzuzu Diocese came up with a project aimed at advocating for safe and regulated mining at Kayelekera. Also included was the ability of stakeholders to meet with mining officials.

In early April, the prominent Karonga chiefs asked the CCJP to get the Kayelekera Uranium officials to explain why they appeared to have backtracked on their promises and social responsibility obligations. Paramount Chief Kyungu and Chief Karonga said that it was sad that Paladin officials were not attending meetings of stakeholders that were convened as a way of discussing issues involving mining and the community. They observed that it was worthless to discuss some issues without officials from Kayelekera or Paladin, who are crucial in giving out explanations from both stakeholders and the communities. Kyungu said that it was imperative that Paladin respect the obligations. "This CCJP project is commendable as it was designed to ensure that the welfare of people out there is not negatively affected by the mining activities," he said. He continued to say that everyone knows that the civil society only gave up their campaign against mining of uranium at Kayelekera after Paladin made the obligations now being monitored.

Paladin Country Manager Neville Hauxham said that they would honor all their pledges. He also quashed as speculation, reports that local people from around Kayelekera were drinking uranium polluted water. He said that it was not true that Paladin was backtracking on its social obligations.

On April 17, 2009, it was reported that over 150 million US dollars in export earnings will be generated each year. It is expected that the mine will produce about 1,500 tons of natural uranium oxide which is used to manufacture fuel for nuclear power stations. It will contribute 10 percent of the gross national product and 20 percent of export earnings. Currently, agriculture, especially tobacco, accounts for about 70 percent of foreign exchange earnings.

President Mutharika has noted that Malawi also has bauxite, emeralds and traces of diamonds that could be developed by the mining industry. Apparently there are huge bauxite deposits on Mulanje Mountain and serious attempts to mine it have not been made..

Paladin owns 85 percent of the mine and the Malawi government owns the other 15 percent. There is a 10 year agreement between Malawi and Paladin.

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## NEW NIOBIUM MINE

Australia-based Globe Metals and Mining Limited expects an annual revenue of \$152.5 million from activities at the Kanyika Niobium Project in Mzimba. The estimated life of the mine is 20 years and it will be the second largest mining project in Malawi. Niobium is the largest deposit, but tantalum, zircon, and uranium are secondary minerals at the site. Globe's planned production is expected to start in 2012, and will establish the company as the world's fourth largest producer of ferroniobium. Niobium is a rare ductile transition metal that is used in steel production, super alloy production, and in super conducting magnets.

## **MALAWI APPLES ON THE MARKET** (Excerpts from article by Francis Tayanjah-Phiri)

People in Usowoya and Mphompha in the Rumpi district are growing apples and pineapples in the rocky terrain in an attempt to diversify crops. Malawians and expatriates are amazed to find that these juicy apples are not imported from South Africa, but are grown in Malawi.

In 1983, Golden Mlowka Chirwa's father, Friday Chirwa, came home to Mphompha from Namibia with three apples. Golden tasted them and asked questions. His father told him that in Namibia, the apples grow in areas with the same climate as the Mphompha hills.

From the three apples, nine seeds were extracted and sowed, but only three germinated. Those that did germinate failed to bear fruit so Chirwa contacted Agriculture Offices. Officials took Chirwa and some friends on a study tour to the Lunyangwa Research Station in Mzuzu in 1998.

They received training in orchard management, budding and grafting, pest and disease control, and apple production. When they returned home, the European Union funded Proscarp program gave them seeds for starting their own orchard as a club. Then they decided to teach others interested in growing pineapples.

Proscarp later became Fidp and gave the farmers assistance in the form of tools, implements and seed

rootstocks from Ntcheu.

The group has 18 members, eight of whom are women. In addition to the group's communal demonstration orchard, each member has an orchard. Each member has about 4,000 apple trees and they still are planting to ensure maximum revenue in the future.

From 9,000 improved breed of rootstock, group members are planting for themselves and also assisting other groups and individuals.

Plants that were grown in 1998 had their first harvest in 2000, and the yield has improved every year. However, because of the bad terrain and extremely poor roads, transportation issues continue to be a problem for marketing the fruit.

One tree can produce over 400 apples, but to make sure that fruit are of good quality, trees are thinned to produce 200 of the best tasting apples.

During the second phase of the Fidp initiative, there are plans to maximize apple production and to have a cold room for storage to keep fruit ready for market. It is possible that farmers also could have facilities for packing the fruit like exporters of countries like South Africa do.

## **MULUZI FAILS A COME BACK**

Former President Bakili Muluzi, tried during his second term to get the constitution changed to allow him a third term. At that time, he lost. Before the May elections this year, he tried to get on the ballot saying that he had been out of office for a term and therefore, he should be eligible to run for President again.

In March, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) rejected Muluzi's UDF Party's nomination to join the May 19th Presidential race. This prompted him to hire a group of lawyers and challenge the MEC. On April 7, 2009, the Constitutional Court sitting in Blantyre threw out Muluzi's application to contest the May 19th General Elections on grounds that he filed it wrongly. The Court backed the MEC.

Law suits have been filed against Muluzi for corruption during his terms as President. The courts have impounded Muluzi's house, cars, and other assets and even took away his passport to prevent his leaving the country. However, in July his passport was returned so that he could go to England for medical treatment.

In May, Bingu wa Mutharika was reelected Malawi's President with 63% of the ballots and a party majority in Parliament.

# U.S. PLEDGES 100 WATER PUMPS FOR SCHOOLS

U.S. Ambassador to Malawi, Peter Bodde, announced that 100 play water pumps will be donated to primary schools to provide safe drinking water to children. He said that safe water is a basic human need whose lack, coupled with lack of good sanitation and hygiene education, presents an obstacle to progress in the developing world. "Without clean water children miss school because of sickness, people suffering from HIV and AIDS cannot take their medications and farmers cannot make a living," said Bodde.

The 100 play pumps will be donated to schools in Malawi with assistance from the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development, Play Pumps Water For All, Africare, and Water Wells for Africa.

Minister Sidik Mia thanked the United States Government and said, "My ministry will do

everything possible to ensure these facilities do not turn into white elephants over time."

The play pumps donation was made through Play Pumps Water For All, an organization that received a \$10 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide 650 water pumps across several African countries. Play Pumps For All entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development to supply the 100 water pumps for primary schools to be selected by the ministry.

Nearly a billion people worldwide have no access to safe drinking water and one child dies every 15 seconds from water-related diseases which are the leading causes for death of under-five children.

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**We have created a Connected Peace Corps page for FOM through NPCA at**  
**<http://community.peacecorps.org/group/friendsofmalawi>**  
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**\$**

***!ZIKOMO, THANKS, YEW!***

**Friends Of Malawi wishes to thank members and donors for their support.**

**Membership funds go to support the small grant programs and the *Friends Of Malawi Newsletter.***

**To donate & become a member contact FOM Treasurer, Lance Cole 7940 SW 11th Ave, Portland OR 97219.**

**!!**

**PLEASE SEND ADDRESS**

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and

**[President@FriendsOfMalawi.org](mailto:President@FriendsOfMalawi.org)**

**!!**

## **DOCTORS IN MALAWI ARE SCARCE**

(Excerpts from *NATION on Sunday* article by Bright Sonani)

According to a report of the world Economic Intelligence Unit (ICU), Malawi has the worst doctor-population ratio in the world. More than 50,000 Malawians rely on a single doctor. However, this is an improvement from a ratio of one to 60,000 in the past. The government is trying to improve the situation by retaining those who are trained locally but do not remain in active services, and retaining those who in the past would go to other countries for better opportunities. There are plans to build a new campus of the College of Medicine in Lilongwe. Currently there is only one College of Medicine and the intake of students has been about 15, but now is increased to about 60 per intake.

The Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC) national coordinator, Mavuto Bamusi believes that the ratio indicates inadequate attention to the right to health. “What all this means is that one doctor will have so many patients to see [it will lead] to scanty attention. The likely effect is that the hospitals incur serious errors that may lead to further harm or even death of the patient,” he said.

The World Health Organization has recommended that Malawi budget K2,380 (US\$17) per person instead of the current K1,680 (US\$12).

There is a plan to improve the welfare and remuneration of medical staff, including doctors as a means of retaining them after graduation from college. In some district hospitals because only 20% of their time is spent seeing patients, another change that could be significant is taking away managerial tasks from doctors, but still letting them have the benefits such as opportunities to go for higher education and car loans.

**\$**

## **HALTING NURSING BRAIN DRAIN**

After Independence in 1964, President Hastings Banda, a physician trained in England and the United States, maintained a high level of training for nurses that included teaching all classes in English. By the 1990s and the AIDS epidemic, along with government cuts in spending, many nurses left the country. In 2001, 111 nurses left Malawi—the equivalent of two years of Malawi’s entire nursing graduates.

At least for now, Malawi is halting the crippling loss of nurses to other countries lured by higher wages and better working conditions. The Ministry of Health applied for nearly \$160 million in international funds for a six-year initiative. Most funding has come from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom. The solution is to expand educational opportunities for nurses at all levels, and by keeping them out of poverty by paying a modest amount of more money. The pay-off is that just six nurses left in the first half of 2008 and enrollment in nursing schools is up 50%.

Success in one area has led to an acute problem in rural areas where the majority of the people live but where nurses do not want to work. As more international aid organizations and universities set up health programs in Malawi, they are hiring the nurses (all of whom have been trained at taxpayer expense) away from publicly funded hospitals and clinics.

at Malawi .

# CONNECTED: NEW WEBSITES OPEN NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACE CORPS COMMUNITY

By Sandra Lauffer

How can Peace Corps Volunteers stay in touch and engaged, not only with their fellow Volunteers, but with others who share their ideals, once they leave active service as Volunteers? And, how can they continue to bring their experience and creativity to bear on rural development? Two new websites recently inaugurated by the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) offer new means to those ends.

*Peace Corps Connect* ([www.peacecorpsconnect.org](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org)) is a new website, powered by the NPCA, to make it easy for anyone who wants to build and rebuild connections to Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and others who are interested in promoting international understanding and sustainable development. *Peace Corps Connect* features news of interest to RPCVs, e.g., the appointment of Aaron Williams as the new Director of the Peace Corps. One component of Peace Corps Connect is a social networking website, *Connected Peace Corps*, which enables members of the Peace Corps community to connect with each other by establishing groups around shared interests. For example, you could join the Friends Of Malawi group, or the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Maryland group, and receive notices of projects or social activities, contribute to dialogues around issues of concern, build support for a project you wish to pursue, or share photos of your country of service.

The new *Africa Rural Connect* (ARC) website ([www.AfricaRuralConnect.org](http://www.AfricaRuralConnect.org)) a sister site of *Peace Corps Connect*, is more specifically focused on Sub-Saharan Africa. NPCA created ARC as a social action network to generate “innovative, implementable ideas for agricultural development rooted in the reality of rural African farmers.” Through ARC, NPCA is linking serving PCVs, RPCVs, their friends and colleagues in the African Diaspora and in African Studies and agricultural academic programs, to ensure that the real needs and concerns of rural African farmers are addressed through solutions rooted in experience and ongoing communications with Africa’s rural poor.

From now until November, ARC is holding a monthly competition and is awarding small grants for the best ideas and most creative plans for improving the lives of Africa’s poorest populations. The **grand prize of \$20,000**, to be awarded in November, will support the implementation of the best project plan. If you visit the ARC website, you can see the ideas being proposed, offer suggestions for improvement., give your favorite idea your endorsement, or get together with your friends and colleagues to come up with your own winning idea!

## ZOMBA PLATEAU

In the little river  
under the melting diamond  
of the morning star,  
we swim and sway.

Then dawn flings the night  
behind its shoulders  
and the moon reluctantly gives way.

## MOUNT MALAWI

To a clash of cymbals and roll of drums  
the sun comes up like thunder  
over Mozambique across the plains.

The mountains belong to the Raingod Mbona  
and the baobab tree is His also.  
We will dance all night to the gossiping drums  
of Mbona the raingiver,  
who quenches the fiery red thirst of the sun.

**FOM Newsletter**  
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### In the Village

In the village in the village in the village  
life repeats itself, life repeats itself.  
There is sunlight, there is darkness. The dark  
repeats itself, the light repeats itself.  
Yet life is never dull. It pats the drumhide  
of the night and is satisfied.  
It listens for footfalls when the dogs bark  
in the village in the village in the village.

In the village in the village in the village  
life repeats itself, life undoes itself  
and then does itself up in the same guise.  
We are careful not to fail to repeat  
the same salutations, the same farewells  
our parents and our parents' parents use.  
They are wise, we are small and the day is long.  
Death comes but once but when it comes to life  
no one would be unwilling to repeat  
in the village in the village in the village.

### Those Village Drums

Anyone can follow on down  
the hollow rattle and tattle  
of the village drums.

Tak-tak on skin stretched hot on the rim  
of a hollow log,  
thumb to palm to finger-slap  
tapping a tightened cap of hide.  
Rata-tat-tat!

Though night blows deep and wide,  
listening lifts a rhythmic foot,  
and no one ever gets lost,  
no one is ever alone.  
So long as the hands thump and pound  
the sound will dance us home.

Poems in this issue are by permission of Andrew H. Oerke  
from his book African Stilt dancer (Swan Books, ISBN: 0-  
7734-3119-5). Andrew served as Peace Corps Deputy Di-  
rector and then P.C. Director in Blantyre, Malawi, 1968-71.