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F. O. M. GRANTS REPORT

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

SUCCESS PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL TOILETS

Peace Corps Volunteer David Jochowitz and local builders completed six new, sanitary pit latrines within three weeks of receiving FOM funds. The project started on August 24th, 2009 with a local contractor digging five 3.5 meter deep pits at Success Private Primary School's main site in Kapiri, Mchinji.

The head builder, Jacob Chakana and two assistants began work on September 2nd. Within two days the foundations were laid and thick trees were used to cover the pits and stabilize the floor. The entire school mobilized to help. Students and teachers used their free time to purchase and carry the roofing materials and cement from the local trading center back to the school.

By Friday the 11th, the builders had completed the structures for the girls' toilets and the two-door toilets for boys. Roofing began the following day and was completed on Monday. The next day builders began and completed construction of the structure for the final boys'

single-door toilet using a previously-dug pit. Although not included in the original budget, it was decided to whitewash the walls to make the campus look brighter and more complete.

For privacy, the girls' toilets stand alone, away from the boys' toilets. For further privacy at all of the toilets, thick, strong grass fences were built around them. Eventually, these will be replaced with permanent brick structures.

OFFICE-MEETING HALL

Simon Mulole reported that there were conflicts of leadership and problems with demarcation of boundaries. Group unity was destroyed when bricks contributed by 11 villages were taken by one headman who utilized the resources to build a Child Care Center for children from the age of three to five. Therefore, all materials for the hall had to be bought. Simon reported that the walls have been completed, roofing materials are ready and a toilet has been dug.

Future plans are to generate money from pig rearing to pay for iron sheets and other materials necessary to complete the building.

GRANTS REPORT CONTINUED

The following grants have been awarded, but end result reports have not been received.

PEDAL-POWERED WHEAT THRESHER & WINNOWER

(Chilakonde Circle \$309)

This project is designed to utilize critical thinking and teach carpentry and metal-working skills to help farmers realize that simple labor-saving tools can be used to make their work easier and more efficient. Tools will be made from locally available supplies and materials. This is intended to utilize problem solving and research. A tool will be designed, made and implemented and then evaluated for usefulness, durability and efficiency. The project will be led by 61 year old, PCV, Jim Hemminger. Jim is an experienced farmer, contractor, carpenter, and metal worker. McFarlen Nyirenda, Agriculture Extension Development Officer also will work with the project. Among other qualifications, he has completed Peace Corps In-Service training for counterparts.

NETS FOR TREES

(PCV Tenley Schofield, \$555)

The goal of this project is to provide vulnerable populations in Mimosa Village, Mulanje District, with bednets and insecticidal treatment tablets in exchange for tree-planting. While free mosquito nets are supposed to be provided to new mothers, the local health center does not have them available. Tenley's counterpart, Collin Makhuva, Forestry Extension Officer, has 18 years of working in forestry management.

CHAIANI ORPHAN SUPPORT GROUP—FRUIT FARMING

This project will propagate and grow assorted fruits as an initiative for improving nutrition and income-generating to support the 22 orphans currently being looked after by the community.

HIV PREVENTION

The Badilika Foundation and the Blantyre City Assembly will work for HIV prevention and economic empowerment through education with the commercial sex workers.

EARTHQUAKE HITS KARONGA

After earlier December earthquakes of 4.8 and 5.9, a massive 6.2 quake hit the Karonga District displacing nearly 300,000 people on December 20th.

Three people have been killed, about 300 injured, with 171 who were rushed to Karonga District Hospital for treatment. Six were evacuated to Mzuzu for more extensive medical treatment.

Around one o'clock in the morning, a government school dormitory crumbled and fell on sleeping students injuring dozens of them. All people were advised not to enter buildings. A government spokesman said that 48,000 tents would be needed to provide shelter for all who need it. Hygiene and medical supplies are needed.

The District of Karonga lies on the path of the Great Rift Valley fault line although it has been stable for some time.

IN MEMORIAM

The daughter of *Phillip H. Anderson* reported that he passed away in November at his home in Palmdale, California.

FOM reports the death of *Dr. Mary Catherine Copley*. She was a PCV at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre beginning in 1971. She worked in the areas of obstetrics and gynecology. She was an avid lover of Malawi and the African people. She told her friends many stories about her service in the Peace Corps.

Gary Nelson, son of *Gordon Nelson*, has notified FOM that his dad passed away on November 29, 2009, after a long illness. Gordon was one of the first people to volunteer for the Peace Corps, and he was the deputy director of the Peace Corps-Malawi from 1962 -1964 with the first group of PCVs to serve in Nyasaland/Malawi. He was one of the first Americans in Malawi to learn about the assassination of President Kennedy and to inform Volunteers. In the early 70's, Gordon joined Fannie Mae and was vice president of corporate affairs until 1978. He ran the Washington office of Farm/Water Alliance, a lobbying group that helped secure passage of Federal rights legislation in the early 1980s. In 2001 he wrote "The Lobbyist," a book about early water-rights lobbyist in the West, George H. Maxwell. Gordon is survived by his wife, Ruth, son Gary, daughter Rita, grandsons and two great-grandchildren.

Advancing Girls' Education in Africa (AGE Africa) By Sarah Lance

AGE Africa is a US-based, non-profit organization that provides secondary school scholarships, mentoring, and leadership training to girls from rural communities in Malawi. It was started nearly five years ago by Xanthe S. Ackerman who worked for CARE Malawi as a project evaluator. Xanthe wrote "What It's Like to Live On \$1 a Day" for the *Christian Science Monitor* (July 2005).

The writer portrayed life in the Bowa village and focused on a local woman and her daughter who was unable to attend school due to financial constraints. Readers spontaneously sent funds to help the girl. Working with a Malawian colleague and women from Bowa village, Xanthe returned to the area and created the AGE Africa scholarship fund. The first year, AGE Africa sponsored all 8 girls in the village who were eligible to attend secondary school. The girls would not have been able to continue school after 8th grade because school fees often are more than the annual average earnings.

Those girls have shown their dedication by pursuing their education despite tremendous pressure to leave school and get married. Their families have shown that they also value girls' education, and they have made great sacrifices to support their daughters so far. AGE Africa now provides secondary school scholarships for seventeen girls, mostly from the southern region. AGE partnerships with three boarding schools. By

providing material and moral support as well, AGE Africa gives scholars in Malawi the chance to be the first girls in their villages to graduate from secondary school. The organization is expanding and will add two more scholars.

In January 2009, Ben Chambers, a former PCV in Malawi became the AGE Africa Program Director. Ben selects academically focused girls who have been accepted to secondary school, but whose families do not have the financial means to pay for their education. AGE Africa seeks to support girls from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds by fully covering all costs associated with their education. Ben and the AGE Africa team also want to ensure that local partnerships are built by hiring Malawian staff as it grows. Soon Ben will be hiring a Malawian Program Assistant, who he hopes to train to replace him some day.

This past year, five volunteer graduate students from the Fletcher School at Tufts University went to Malawi to assess the program, develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, and provide baseline information for the growing emphasis on career development. Today, a comprehensive mentoring aimed at providing guidance and counseling to scholars is being designed. Regular mentoring visits cover topics such as money management, study skills,

decision-making, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, and the importance of girls' education.

This past summer, AGE Africa brought outstanding scholar Idah Savala to the US for two months. She was provided with a scholarship from Phillips Exeter Academy to attend their six week summer session. Idah's extraordinary story was highlighted in the *Christian Science Monitor* article (August 23, 2009), "A girl's journey: From dollar-a-day Malawi to elite US prep school." Idah also was featured on the CBS Morning Show.

To learn more about AGE Africa, visit www.ageafrica.org.

MADONNA TO BUILD GIRLS' SECONDARY SCHOOL

In late October, Madonna and her four children returned to Malawi and, with her daughter Lourdes, planted a moringa tree and broke ground for a new five million dollar school for girls. Called Raising Malawi Academy, it will provide education for 500 girls. The school is expected to be open in 2011 and will incorporate "Spirituality For Kids" (SFK) principles to ensure that children are spiritually empowered to get out of their vulnerable backgrounds and excel in life.

Two students per district from Nsanje to Chitipa will be selected with the aim of having an alumna in every community within 10 years.

F.O.M. GRANT PROJECT PHOTOS



PEACE CORPS FUNDING

There will be a \$60 million increase in the 2010 fiscal budget for the Peace Corps. This is the largest single-year increase in the 49 year history of the Peace Corps!

Soccer News

On January 11, Malawi made its first appearance in twenty-six years at the African Nations Cup and stunned World Cup qualifiers Algeria 3-0 in their opening Group A match.

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR GRAIN BAGS

Chemicals & Marketing Limited (CML) has asked the Malawi government for authorization to market grain bags whose use will require no chemicals to protect the contents from weevils. These plastic bags already are in use in Rwanda, Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria. According to the company, about 40 percent of maize harvested in Malawi is damaged by weevils. This new technology can save money and harvests.

CHICHEWA/CHINANJA/ ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Dr. Stephen Paas of The Netherlands has published the first edition of 730 pages of a dictionary designed to bridge the gap of communication between speakers of Chichewa/Chinanja and speakers of English.

Through *Stichting Hart voor Malawi– Foundation Heart for Malawi*, a primary goal is to distribute the dictionary freely to Form 3 and Form 4 pupils of secondary schools in Malawi and other Chichewa/Chinanja speaking regions in Central Africa.

Free distribution to the students is being enabled through direct financial support by a number of sponsors. Part of the project has to be financed through the selling of books, so readers are invited to buy the dictionary for themselves and/or others. The dictionary is available at retail prices in any bookshop in Malawi and Zambia. Buyers of 1-9 copies are referred to *Kachere Publishers* PO Box 1037, Zomba, Malawi. Buyers of 10 or more copies can buy directly from *Foundation Heart for Malawi* at a special price of MK 1200 per copy. The price goes down to MK 1000 for 50 or more copies.

In the USA, the dictionary may be ordered by e-mailing to: s.paas@kpnplanet.nl.

Indicate the number you wish to purchase with the physical mailing address. You will be informed of the amount due (price+postage/transport). After payment *AG Press* will release/send the book.

THANKS FOR BOOKS

Last year, Art and Lois Rankin organized the shipment of a container of books for secondary schools in Malawi. PCV teacher, Brian Roligs sent a packet of 25 “Letters of Appreciation” that were written by his students in Form 3 at Matenje Secondary School in Salima.

The following are excerpts from several of the letters that FOM has received. (*Note: spelling and punctuation as in the letters.*)

“At first, I didn’t know where the books in our library come from, but when I realized that is a Friends of Malawi who bring books in our library I was very happy because our library was without enough books because of that many students failed to pass exams because of shortage of books to read or to study.” (Razack)

Razack continues, “The books that were donated are very helpful in our library because the preparation of exams depends upon the books which are at school and now we are able to pass exams because of the books that we have.

As you know, nowadays everything depends on qualifications that particular person has. So I always concentrate on education because my career aim

will not be fulfilled unless I have a good education. I would like to be a pilot when I finish school, but for this to happen I have to work hard so that my ambition will be satisfied.

I want to encourage you, this Friends of Malawi to continue the good job that you are doing in our school and your assistance will be still highly appreciated.”

“...I want to encourage you to proceed to donate books here at Matenje CDSS and other schools because it helps all Malawians to have wisdom and good teacher qualifications and doctors....” (Patrick)

“The books that you donated to my school are important, and they are helping us in different ways because at first we had few books for us to borrow in the library.” (Beatrice)

“These books help us to know more about the world and also to pass M.S.C.E. examinations. Continue to help us with many books in our country so that Malawi develops its education.” (Stephano)

“I am writing to thank you for helping us with many books. In our library the books are helpful because we borrow books and read them for a week, then we return it. We also have girls study club which assists girls in having enough time for reading. I think with these books I will be a lawyer because I can have information from these books. So I thank you, Friends of Malawi, for a wonderful job you have done for our school.” (Amos)

“You have done a thing that has never been done before and now we are studying many books....because of these books other students are transferring from other schools.” (Dyson)

“In Salima district, Matenje has the best library where lots of different books are common, so the students use them correctly. As one of the students I want to thank you for a nice job you have done because every student of Matenje Secondary School is over the moon.” (Kapatuka)

ADELA AND AMINA, 2007

Interview of Village Women by Dana Reitman

Dana Reitman lived in Zomba, Malawi, when her husband, Roger, had a Fulbright grant to teach at Chancellor College for the 1993-94 school year. They returned to Malawi in 2003-04, and lived outside Namadzi. Dana returned by herself for 8 weeks in 2005 and again in 2007.

Adela's relatives told me that she was 101 years old, but when I asked her if she knew John Chilembwe she told me that her mother was pregnant with her when the uprising began; when it ended she was born, which would make her about 92. Adela is Yao, Muslim, and of a certain generation; she has similar scarification for beautifying that I had seen on other women in the area—the same three vertical parallel lines between her cheekbones and ears.

She told me, "My parents came from Mulanje. They did not come from Portugal, they were always in Malawi. I was born in U. Village, which is beyond Six Miles, toward the mountains."

I told her about the very intelligent 16 year old girl I recently met who didn't know Malawi's history. The only thing she knew about John Chilembwe was: "He is on the money," but she did not know why. Adela replied, "I try to teach my family what I know of Malawi's history, but when I try to talk to the young people they say 'Those are past things, we don't want to know those things, and they mean nothing to us'. They are not interested."

Adela told me that she has never been visited by an *mzungu*. She and her daughter Amina agreed that they had never seen any *azungu* in the village, even though Amina's son-in-law works at a local estate.

Adela said, "The children these days are a big problem. The children of our time did not trouble anyone. The children of our times used to listen, but the children now talk back to us saying 'What are you telling us? That is old stuff. None of this applies to us. Our times are different!'"

My translator, Davis, asked if there were any stories they wanted to share with me. Adela started: "When I was young, a man would send someone else to ask about you. They did not come by themselves, and they certainly did not propose sex like they do now. The emissary would tell your parents 'There is someone interested in a young woman here.' Or his parents would come and say, 'Our young man has seen a hen and now he is giving us problems at home.' Then the girl's parents would call all of their girls and say, 'Which one of these is she?' The man's parents would say, 'From what he has told us we think it is this one,' and they would point to the girl. The girls' parents would ask the boy's parents to leave and then they would ask the girl, 'Do you love this young man?' If she said yes then they sent a message back and the boy would come with his uncle, and he would propose to the girl; then they would get married. If not, they sent nothing and everyone would understand that she was not interested. Did we force someone to marry? No."

Amina: "When I was a girl, I just stayed in the village. There was a certain man who said he had seen me and he kept sending another man to say, 'There is a man in Blantyre who wants to marry you.' I ran away the first time. I ran away the second time and even the third time. I stayed with my friends on the other side of the village. Finally I gave in, but he was what he was. I had children by him and so did many other women in the village. Two children with this one, two children with that one. He was a big womanizer. He had children all around!"

Adela added: "When I was young, there was no such thing as a 'boyfriend' or a 'girlfriend.' Now if you see that a girl is pregnant and you ask her about it, ask her why she has gotten pregnant, she will be defiant and tell you, 'This is not your business, I don't want to hear anything you have to say.' In the old days children were the fruits of a marriage." "I had eleven children. Seven of them have died. The second year, three died. The last two died in the third year. None of them died as babies; they were all grown. We do not know what they died from. We think Satan played a part in it."

Amina told me that Adela suffered a stroke several years ago and that was why she had to move around a bit. She still was having trouble with her leg. Both of them looked much younger than their ages, and Adela

Continued on next page.

especially seemed in very good shape for a 92 year old woman. As we talked, she sat in the sun. She used one maize cob to push the dried kernels of maize off the other cobs. The crops were good this year and most of the work I have been seeing in the village has something to do with the maize.

I noticed a cord around Amina's neck and asked her what was on it, mentioning that I had photographed babies wearing similar cords. She pulled the end out of her blouse and showed me that it was metal charms that were letters. It spelled *tulo*. "Tulo means sleep. This necklace reminds me that any time I could go to sleep and not wake up. I like that it reminds me my life might end any time. It reminds me to appreciate the time I have now. Those charms you see babies wearing? They are to guard the baby's head. You know how a baby has a soft spot on top of its head?" I have a hard head, I don't need that charm," she laughed.

Adela continued: "I loved my husband very much. In our days even if a girl came to chat with us I would not be jealous because he was a good husband. I miss him even now. He passed away a long time ago though.

When I asked what he died from, Amina answered, "By the time he had died he had left my mother (Adela). My father was the *mfumu* and he was fighting with his relatives over control of the village. His nephew wanted to be *mfumu*. After he left my mother, he married a woman from Ntcheu. She went home to visit someone who was sick. While she was gone my father's nephew come into his house in the night and killed him. There was no knife or any blood. He just propped him up and left him as though he was still alive. People wondered the next day 'Where is the *mfumu*? They opened his door, which was not locked, and found him dead."

I asked Amina and Adela how they knew this to be true. Amina said, "We know because his nephew once asked him to go with him to find traditional medicine. When they got out in the bush, his nephew beat him very badly and left him for dead. But he survived."

I then asked why his family did not help him. "My father was the only one left. This all happened in a village where none of his family lived—we were all here." I asked why could he not have come back here. "He had left my mother; he could not come back here," Amina answered.

The original village was at Makoka, but the government came and said they wanted that land to build the research station, so they moved. "Have you ever heard of N.?" Amina asked. "That was my father." I said no, I had not. "He was killed in 1972. His nephew became *mfumu* then; now he has passed away as well. He was a big man; he was frightening. I know people in the village heard him kill my father, but they did nothing.

"I know all this because I was the one who took care of my father [any time] he was ill. I was told he was dead and I went to his funeral. I asked if he had been ill, and why hadn't anyone called me to tell me to come take care of him. Someone pulled me aside and told me the truth. There were no spells or medicine involved. The nephew was a hard-hearted man; he was simply a murderer."

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## GOOD NEWS!

The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) for 2009, using data from the years 2005 and 2006, states that life expectancy in Malawi has risen from 39 years in 2004, to 52 years.

Reasons for this improvement were not specified, but health experts attribute the change to better nutrition and more access to HIV and AIDS treatment.

Mabvuto Bamusi, executive director of the Human Rights Consultative Committee said, "Malawi's improvement on the HDI shows that there is impact in terms of government policies such as putting in place measures for ensuring equity in distribution of social services."

The report reflects development from 2005 to 2006, "and this report does not reflect the economic miracle Malawi has experienced so far," said Richard Dictus, United Nations resident coordinator.

**FOM Newsletter**  
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### **“Upside-down Tree,” The Baobab**

It can suck in its bark to hollow a cave,  
and sunshine smears butter for fifty feet  
on its big fat baked-potato skin.

When leaves peel in the dry season, its legs  
and arms would look the same as if x-ray eyes  
could see the bottom as well as the top.  
With branches swirling like the limbs of figure  
skaters, maybe its roots are radial also.

Here’s a combination water tank  
and fruit tree in arid regions of Africa  
when you are in need of moisture and food.  
Its hippo-thick hide founds a neighborhood  
physical and spiritual bank  
where moisture hides its treasure from the sun;  
where bodies deposit their shadows at noon,  
withdrawing them with interest before dusk  
and where the Rain God Mbona brews the storm.

Dawn beams its lantern across the baobab’s  
upside-down wisdom-tooth watchtower, against which  
the locomotive past, and the future form  
of the always tardy Ilala Steamer,  
are both measured and found equally wanting.  
This tree was born in the same year as Christ,  
here where the Sapient Blues Band did its first gig.

Poetry in this issue used 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 Director and then P.C. Director in Blantyre, Malawi, 1968-71.