

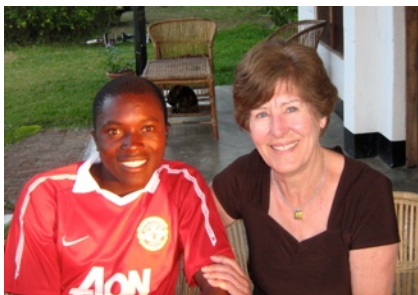
## Malawi Children's Village Sewing Project

### Nettie's report: Update 2011

**Wasi**, whose story has been written up in my reports over the years, came as a 16-year-old boy in rags to join our program in 2004. He picked scrap pieces of fabric off the floor to repair his shorts. His father had died and his mother was ill. The next year, while I was here, his mother passed away. Wasi at 17 was responsible for his grandmother and two siblings. We put him on our payroll, he was an excellent tailor. Being a teenager, he was a little naughty at times, but we allowed him to learn from his mistakes. The past few years, he was assistant manager for Ayami, a wonderful young man.

Wasi came to see me immediately when I arrived this year and said he wanted to go to South Africa. He had all the paperwork and pictures ready for his passport application. Just needed the money for the fees and to bring it to Blantyre office. I made sure that his grandmother approved of this.

There are jobs in the sewing factories in South Africa. Our workers can do well and send money home to their families. Wasi, now 23, has no wife or children and he loves soccer, so I told him to stick with that for a while before starting a family. He said: "Sure, sure my Mum, you taught me that." Wasi left for Durban at the end of July, joining Madi, another one of our workers, who left in March. Wasi called a few weeks later to tell us he had a job the day after he arrived, making worksuits at which our boys are expert. Before I left in September he had already sent money to his grandmother.



This year I was here for two and a half months (my 10th year). I needed

to come for a long time. The program has to be adjusted all the time to whatever situations we find ourselves in. I was scared going to Malawi this year as I knew that work we have done in recent years is no longer available, so I cannot guarantee employment. There is a constant fuel shortage, the country has no Forex (foreign exchange) to import the needed supplies and many factories are closing or cutting back. Work clothing is coming into the country at unbeatable prices. The business in work clothing and prison uniforms as we did in the past is pretty much at a standstill. We continue making school uniforms. This last year we were using our savings to pay the workers, as our income was not enough.

**AYAMI** is the full-time manager and teacher, a wonderful young man who learned everything on the job. The kids all respect him, he gives good advice and is a wonderful friend. I love his positive attitude and we are always making improvement. All through the year Ayami and I are in touch by e-mail and phone.

The workers who have been with us for a long time and the new trainees are part of “our family” and therefore we take care of them. They call me Mum Nettie and for me they are “my kids,” no matter what age they are.

So many of you have contributed to this program and in the past we have used your donations for our building, all the industrial equipment, bicycles, salaries, training, lunches and healthcare for our workers. So when Wasi came to me that first day, I immediately made the decision that this was the way to go: continue with a small staff of full-time employees, continue with the free training program and give everyone the opportunity to become self-sufficient. You make me the custodian of your goodwill and I am so happy to be able to tell the kids how so many wonderful people back in my countries care about helping them have a better life.



## SO THIS YEAR HERE ARE SOME STORIES OF WHAT YOU MADE POSSIBLE

**Wilson**, 21, has a wife and child. When I arrived his child was very ill and was rushed to the hospital, immediately put on quinine drip and now the child is OK, but Wilson had no money to pay for the treatment and have his child released. We paid the fees. Wilson already has a sewing machine that we bought him last year, so we decided to give him startup money to buy good used clothes that he can resell and adjust to fit his customers. He immediately built an elephant grass walled shop displaying his wares on wooden



sticks for hangers, sewing machine in the middle. He was so excited to start making a profit he bought firewood for his wife to sell on the side of the shop, so she can help out as well. This was so encouraging, so we extended a microloan to him in the form of fabric to make school uniforms. He got 10 yards of green fabric, because that is the school color in his area. A week later we visited him and he paid back the full loan for the 10 yards, in small bills as he had received it. I am so proud of him. We immediately gave him a loan for another 10 yards of fabric. With his profit he has started to build his own house, because he is still living in a small hut with his mother. He is an entrepreneur in the making!

**Hassam** 19, a more advanced trainee, brought in a pair of trousers, a complicated design, lots of pieces, top stitching and very detailed pockets. He looked at a sample in the market and copied it. The next week he brought in a fancy woman's dress. Ayami and I were so impressed, we called him our "young designer," so Ayami will concentrate on improving his sewing skills. Hassam has no parents and lives with his grandmother. We told him if he makes bricks we will help him build a house. When we visited him, he had already started making mud bricks, laying them in the sun to dry. By November the house was finished and the whole sewing group went on a Saturday to put the roof on.



### **Miriam, Shaybu and Shamira, a family story**

Shaybu is one of our young tailors. He is 19 now. Last year he came to ask me if he could join us. He wanted to learn how to sew, because there is nothing to do in his village. He had two years of secondary school, but had to drop out when his father passed away. He has a younger brother and sister, his mother has been ill and they live with his mother's sister Miriam, who was trained in our program last year. Miriam has three children and no support from her husband. Shaybu has been a great trainee, a nice young man and a good tailor. He wrote me a letter and it is so touching. It is addressed to Mum Nettie and, in a very sweet way, he asked me to take him to my family in the USA. Miriam tells me how the whole family relies on him and he is very responsible.

Ayami and I talked to him and decided that the best future for him, and to help his family, is to go and work as a tailor in South Africa. He immediately started the process of getting his passport. Since he was born in the village he does not have a birth certificate, so it ends up being a scrap of paper with the name of his village and a stamp from the Chief. For very little money it passes.

Miriam came to work one day and Shamira, Shaybu's



younger sister was with her. She had just come from the secondary school office, where they were told she cannot enroll in her second year because the school fees have not been paid. I am so troubled by this so I tell the family that Shamira has to come up with a plan to make some money and then I will give her a loan for the school fees. They came back in a couple of days to sign for the loan and she showed me a crochet hat she had made. Shamira said she will crochet hats and cushion covers to sell and pay back the loan. I am so impressed. Usually I have to come up with an idea, but this was totally original and all her own. So we paid the school fees and she received extra money to buy yarn and start her project. Within two weeks, she brought in some of her earnings to start paying back the loan. I know the student loan is too big to be paid back in full, but that is OK because we helped her with her education and that is so rewarding.

Miriam got plastic sheeting to repair the roof of their house and received a microloan for school uniform fabric. She also brought money back within two weeks and got more fabric so she and Shaybu were able to continue making school uniforms to sell. I am so proud of this family. By the end of November Shaybu has his passport and has left for South Africa.



**Juma** is a new trainee, again someone who came to us because he wants to learn. We teach them for free, but if they are not good enough we dismiss them after a month. Not everyone is made to be a tailor. We continue to accept new trainees throughout the year.

After three days Juma is making cellphone pouches and doing an excellent job. That brings a smile to the face of the teacher as well as the student.

**Robert**, 23, was with us for 6 years. He got a brand new sewing machine and decided for his loan he wanted a roll of a flower material, so he can make dresses, shirts and skirts. A week later we visited him unannounced. The sewing machine was on the porch and the clothing was hanging from the roof waving in the breeze, what a colorful sight. Instead of paying back the loan he used the money again to make fired bricks to sell and make a better profit. I support him in that because the loans are to give the families a better life. It is hard to make a living as just a tailor in the village. Robert has two wives and already three children. He has not followed our advice so life will continue to be a struggle with too many responsibilities.



**Wedjes** got a new sewing machine and stays on as a full-time tailor and is assistant manager, in charge when Ayami is not there. He also helps with teaching new trainees.

**Angela, Victoria** have sewing machines and microloans for school uniform fabrics. After selling these, Vicky used the money again to buy plastic roof sheeting, which she sold for a good profit.

**Selayu, big John and William** got passports and now have jobs in South Africa.

**Patrick** works as a housekeeper in the house where I stay while in Malawi. He always asks to borrow money, I sit down with him to discuss what can be done to earn more income. I set him up with a loan to buy rice, sugar, beans and peanuts to start a little shop in his village, which his wife can run. People buy small amounts at a time, like sugar, 2 tablespoons, that is put in a small triangle bag folded from newspaper. His 12 year-old-daughter goes into the village to sell at the homes. They sold a whole bag of rice in the first week. He told me, wait till you come back next year, I will do good and pay you back the loan. The next week his son became very ill and stayed in the hospital for several days. Yes there are always setbacks, but he had some extra money to get medical help and the child is OK.

Patrick's dad is the night watchman at the house, when I arrive he tries to tell me something and keeps repeating my name. I do not know what he means, then he brings his 6 months old grandchild and says "Nettie Jr." He named her after me; how cute is that. It is heartwarming that people who have so little have ways of expressing their gratitude.



When I ride my bicycle through the local village, all the kids wave hello and say "Azungu" (white man). A little boy comes running up: "Madam, madam, uniform." So cute, he has figured me out!

**NETTIE'S BARBERSHOP** Since I am always thinking of ways to make money for our program I came up with the idea of getting haircutting equipment and opening a barbershop. You need a place and electricity. I approach the management of MCV to see if they would allow this and they immediately react positively. They say it is always a hassle finding time to go get a haircut. We have so many people right there at MCV, about 300, all the employees and a whole secondary school with boys and girls all with short cropped hair, as is required. Ayami has to go to Lilongwe to buy the equipment. I joke that now we have to go to "barber college" to learn how to cut hair, but it turns out **Anak**, one of our more recent trainees, has worked as a barber. We got a screen made and bought a mirror and we were all set. How much fun we have with this, free haircuts for all in the sewing program, just to practice. Our first paying customers, three little girls, are the daughters of a security guard at MCV. We will not make much at 30 cents a haircut, but we will have some extra pocket money by the end of each month.



We help all our kids out when there are medical emergencies, and there have been a lot of problems this year. Two babies of our workers passed away before they were 6 months old. **Musa** had a terrible infection in his leg which took 3 months in and out of the hospital. Hassam was rushed to the hospital with an allergic reaction to mango.

**Little John**, 19, has been in the hospital since August. He was on blood transfusions for which we pay \$30 a pint. Since he did not improve, the family suspected witchcraft and took him to an



African doctor. Ayami is so responsible, not giving up took him to yet another hospital. In December, after many tests, we got a final diagnosis of tuberculosis. He is now receiving on-going treatment. His mother stays with him. In Malawi the family has to provide the meals while in the hospital. So far we have spent over \$500 of our fund for little John's care. The sewing group prepared the family's garden to plant maize, so the family will have food next year. So beautiful; we are truly a family.



I want to share a note from Tom and Frances Vitaglione. He is the president of the MCV board in the US. They spent a month at MCV and here is their observation and what I call a mini audit.

### NETTIE'S TAILORING, MICRO-LENDING, AND BARBERING

*Tom and I are very impressed and heartened by the steady, consistent efforts and results produced by Nettie Graulich. Not only does the tailoring shop turn out beautiful items year after year, but the tailoring students are bright, hard working, and grateful for all the care provided to them by Nettie.*

*Her new enterprise of tailoring shop side-door barbering will provide some additional money for needy students.*

*Her micro-lending program is yielding great results. We visited the beautiful new rental house, with electricity, built by her head teacher Ayami. He has paid back the loan and is building a second rental with proceeds from the first. Another graduate tailor has used his micro-loan to erect a grass-walled sewing shop at a trading center. He has paid back the loan and has orders for several school uniforms. We loved seeing his and Nettie's joy over his success.*

*Another graduate we visited has a shiny new sewing machine and was selling nice dresses and shirts he had expertly tailored. All of these people and others are moving toward self sufficiency .*

*We are moved to contribute to Nettie's micro-lending fund now, and happy to see what a great thing is happening.*



After 10 years our program is evolving into more than just a sewing project and, as I have been making all these decisions, I hope you feel good about the way I am using your donations. All these young men and women would probably be doing very little in their villages, but now they can support themselves and others. Your encouragement and help makes it all possible. Ayami says that your support is not just changing lives, it is saving lives and he is proud to be working in his community.

I appreciate your support of our program's growing commitment to "our kids" in Malawi. Tax deductible donations can be made out to FRIENDS OF MALAWI (a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization) and sent to my address.

Thanks for believing in me I will continue the best I can.

**Nettie Graulich**

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