

## **To all Friends of Orphan Care and Social Rehabilitation in Lilongwe (and Mzuzu, Karonga), Malawi**

### **August 2006 Update**

There's much good news to share and give thanks for, as well as new opportunities and concerns to pray for, and it's super also to have up-to-date photos to include, so we're sending this letter to everyone who has contributed to and/or prayed for Orphan Care over the last six years. Warm greetings to each of you.

**First, the local harvest** (in April) has been very good this year. "We harvested eighty-nine 50kg bags from three plots, however the consumption is very high, at least four bags every week. You can see the harvest will not take us to the end of the year. We had hoped that, with these good harvests, the number of children coming for meals would reduce, but our expectations were not correct and we are feeding close to three hundred children every day (*pictures 1,2,3*). The support from the Lord is still sought as we trust He is the One who provides all for the orphans."

\*\* Do note this is the picture local to Lilongwe. As always in recent years, Malawi's harvest varies wildly from area to area. At Nambuma, only 30 miles north-west of Lilongwe, "very few people have harvested... The Government had subsidised fertiliser, but because of poor rains..."

**Secondly** at OCSR, "we have recently embarked on supporting the youth (i.e. older orphan siblings) through a selected group, giving the latter instruction in counselling and peer support in the community, to be the light bearer to other Area 25 youth. The response so far is good. They have started their own vege garden to raise funds for the maintenance of their group, i.e. producing items for sale rather than consumption at the Centre (*picture 4*). Similarly we are training a selection of women to be light bearers among fellow women. The essence of this approach is that the programme of support should be carried by the community itself, and we provide back-up where needed. In this way we believe the community will own the programme and will follow through to a continuous implementation."

**Thirdly**, "we have just graduated thirty-eight women, the majority widows, and two youth, who have been training as dress designers and tailors for six months (*picture 5*). Their performance has been very good, and the graduation ceremony went well. The idea is to empower them with hands-on skills to help them care for their households. However they are lacking markets and contracts. We still intend that each one should have her own sewing machine... (Yet) they fail to get loans to start small-scale businesses because of being widows and having no collateral, or (sometimes) they are told it is because their husband may have died of AIDS, so they will be dying soon, and therefore the loan would be money thrown into a deep ocean. The most hurting thing is that the widows have not tested positive, and all this discrimination is based on rumour and stereotyping..."

*Postscript: In September 2006 another thirty ladies were enrolled for the next dressmaking-sewing-tailoring class of sixth months' duration.*

\*\* Be in touch, please, if you have a redundant sewing machine we could send out...

So, **fourthly**, "we are offering them training in mushroom cultivation. The first step is to produce the medium for the spores - old maize stalks chopped and washed by hand and laid out to dry (*picture 6*), then (after more handwashing) packed in plastic bags (*picture 7*) with a small quantity of spore introduced, and left to germinate and grow for six weeks in the specially constructed barn (*picture 8*). It's the oyster mushroom type, bought at good prices by hotels and supermarkets, so once the scheme is up and running production should be 20kg a week, raising about Kw 8,000 (£30) after a lot of work! To help initiate the project, the Mphandes were fortunate to recruit Mr S Manyera (*picture 9, all three of them*), a local plant pathologist and mushroom growing expert."

*Postscript: In second week of September 2006 the first mushrooms were to be harvested.*

\*\* How does one take a meaningful photo of multiple wedding dresses? Eighteen months ago, following up a suggestion from Jenny Mphande, Sheila Deacon in Hartlepool made a wonderful collection of dresses for us - ultimately over 30 were sent out, so now the Mphandes' daughter Febbie runs a hire scheme, raising funds for the Centre (every bride in Africa wants her once-in-a-lifetime day in white). Be in touch, please, if you can find more such dresses we could send...

Cynthia Feather now has no less than thirty-two individuals and churches sponsoring the secondary school education of thirty-eight older orphans, praise be! Yet she and I are conscious that ongoing giving for the daily running of the Centre (feeding so many children, let alone ministering to their social, emotional and spiritual needs) is not as big and regular as it was, and needs to grow vitally. So we rejoice in a new Friend joining us - Peter Robinson in Zimbabwe (yes!), along with other contacts of his. Several of the above quotes are from him, along with all the enclosed photos save one. Of the Mphandes' daily running of the Centre, Peter writes, "Crosby's practical engineer's savvy is evident in the way he's built up and operates an organisation with virtually no overheads, the resources all going to meet the needs of the orphans... There are some individuals in the US and UK who send periodic amounts which meet a large proportion of this cost, but on an unpredictable basis. In addition to Crosby and his wife shouldering the responsibility of administering OCSR without remuneration, they often end up having to meet shortfalls on the basic budget from their own personal earnings..."

**Thank you for your support in the past and the present. Please will you consider prayerfully again what future support you may be able to give?**

Peace to you and yours,

Cynthia Feather <> (Halifax), Malcolm Smith <> (Northallerton)