

Smile Malawi



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Smile Malawi was registered as a charity in England and Wales in 2004 and as an NGO in Malawi in June 2006. The main objective is to provide a home for vulnerable street children. The first Smile Malawi Children's Centre opened its doors in November 2006 and now gives a home to 23 children who were jointly identified by Malawi Social Services and Smile Malawi from the streets of Blantyre. The charity also helps the local community of Ndokota with a developing outreach programme, primarily targeting the village children and local school.

Smile Malawi founder Elspeth Baecke writes, 'Last year I said that our top priority was to offer a home to more children and in September 08 we bought more beds and equipment for up to 20 children. I am very happy to report this year that we now have 23 children, the latest one arriving just last week, while I was in Malawi. His name is Tom and he is 4 years old. He was rather shy of me but I managed to sneak a photo!'



Tom does have a mother but she is a widow and is homeless. She lives on the streets in Blantyre and is unable to look after Tom anymore. He was soon happily playing with the other children and he will now have the chance of education and a future. Elspeth was pleased to see that the other 'new' children, who came in September and December 08, are all now very settled and are progressing well at the local Machemba school. Here they all are setting off one morning. They start getting washed and dressed at 0330 in the morning and are all ready by 0600!



Elspeth was accompanied this trip by her son Gavin and his girlfriend Natasha and the children adored having them there to play with. The party all visited the school to see the new desks that the Lancashire Area Committee of the Co-operative Group in UK had provided through Smile Malawi earlier this year and to find out

in what other ways the charity can help the school in the future.



The head-teacher showed the visitors round and humbly asked for more desks and more young people to come to help as the school is so short of teachers. Most classes have up to 80 children and most still sit on the floor!



Our children were all very excited on 29 August as they were invited to attend the wedding of Smile Malawi Project Manager Charles in Blantyre. Charles runs everything in Malawi and is loved by all the children very much. It was a wonderful day and the girls particularly enjoyed dressing up and putting ribbons in their hair!



The outing was such a success and the children so well behaved that Elspeth decided to treat them to another bus trip on the following weekend. This time they all went to Liwonde National Park to take a boat safari on the Shire river and see the

hippos and elephants up close. The children had never been on such a trip and had never seen any of the animals before so it was very thrilling for them!



One of the most rewarding parts of the trip for Elspeth was to see Elijah again after his heart surgery in June this year. He is now completely better and was running around playing football with his friends. Here he is, fifth from the left, with the other boys.



As always, the trip went too fast but it ended on a high note when little Tom arrived, even if he wouldn't smile for the camera! The children are all now one big happy family and the house is always filled with laughter and singing!



There are still hundreds of street children who need help. If you would like to be part of the future development of the project or the running of the Centre, please visit our website or send a cheque to Smile Malawi at the address below.