



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2011

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 27 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 has just returned from Malawi and is at last able to report that the charity's new vehicle has been cleared through customs. You may know that, after she purchased it in the UK and shipped it out to Malawi in late 2009, it has been stuck in the customs warehouse for 16 frustrating months after the import laws changed and it was deemed subject to massive import and customs duty.



Our Malawian trustees and Elspeth have battled with the Malawian authorities but to no avail. Although it was very expensive, Elspeth decided it had to be cleared as decent transport is essential if we are to develop our tourist plans in Malawi. It is also needed for the running of the Centre as we are over 3 miles from a main road down a very bumpy dirt track. We now have plans to hire the car out when not in use and we feel sure it was worth getting it cleared.



The highlight of the trip though was when the children welcomed the first other English trustee to visit the Centre since it opened. Jane Hill, who is Elspeth's cousin, stayed for a week and was very impressed by the children, the staff and the home. Jane visited Malawi in 2006 during construction of the Centre and ran the London Marathon that year to fund installation of electricity to the Centre. She also raised the funds for the

construction of the matron's house and guest house. She thought it a beautiful place to stay and the children were delightful and a credit to the matron.



It was a busy week and she was amazed at the village community and the children's school where they were warmly welcomed by the hundreds of children. Elspeth had received a letter from the Headmaster in January asking for help with footballs and netballs. The school was reduced to 1 ball to share around 1600 children. They presented 5 footballs and 2 netballs to the Headmaster, amidst huge cheering from the children.



The staff were also thrilled to hear that we have arranged for another teacher from UK to go to help at the school for 3 weeks in June as part of her training.

A visit was then made to Grace, who was our first child to go to secondary school in September 2010. Grace won one of the few places at a Government



boarding school. Elspeth was impressed by the school and Grace is thriving there, as you can see from the photo with Miriam.

We have 2 new children since the last newsletter. This is 14 year old Jaqueline, who was destitute after her mother's death and trying to work as a servant to keep herself. She is now happy and settled and back at school.



And this is 5 year old Madalitso, meaning Blessings, who has a mother but she lives in desperate circumstances and could no longer take care of her daughter. She has fitted in really well with the other little girls and is a real pleasure.



Finally, several staff and committee meetings were held during the visit and one item discussed was the plight of the village orphans. We have not been able to help the village chief fund her orphan centre but it was resolved that we would conduct further research into the children's circumstances and possibly offer 4 places at the Centre to the most vulnerable. We can easily accommodate more small children and Miriam is very happy to welcome them. ***There are still hundreds of street children and village orphans who need help. If you would like to help with the running costs of the Children's Centre, please visit our website or send a cheque to Smile Malawi at the address below.***