

Smile Malawi



NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2009

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.

Christmas week 2009 started with shocking news as our head guard at the Children's Centre was attacked by thieves while on duty one night and was badly injured by a blow to the head with an axe. He was taken to the Government hospital initially as the private hospital we use in emergencies could not cope with such an injury. He was X-rayed, diagnosed as OK, patched up and sent home. Unfortunately, the wound was infected and he became very ill so we rushed him back to the private hospital where he stayed all over Christmas! Here he is on Christmas Day, looking much recovered! We are reviewing our security arrangements following this incident but it has shaken us all badly.



With Nkwhani on the road to recovery, the children and staff could relax and plan the much awaited Christmas party for the village children. This year, 674 children congregated on the football pitch next to the Children's Centre, all with their own mugs and plates, which were soon filled with biscuits and squash. It doesn't sound much but these children never taste such things normally so it was a real treat for them.



But there was more to come as we had managed to buy chickens again to give out to the families before they went home. This year a kind supporter funded the purchase of 125 chickens.

We were expecting more children than last year though, so the birds were prepared in advance and cut in half so that there were 250 to distribute. No family went home empty-handed and everyone agreed they would rather have half a chicken than none at all!



As you can see, the chickens were previously wrapped and packed in sacks ready for distribution by our staff to the lines of children. Malawi culture is deeply respectful and it is quite normal for children to kneel down in front of an adult, as this little girl above is doing as she receives her gift.



We are only allowed to import second hand clothes into Malawi, duty free. So this Christmas we sent a large quantity of donated sports wear and clothes for our own children and staff instead of the 'shoe boxes' we usually send. Here are some of our ladies looking smart in their new tops from England.



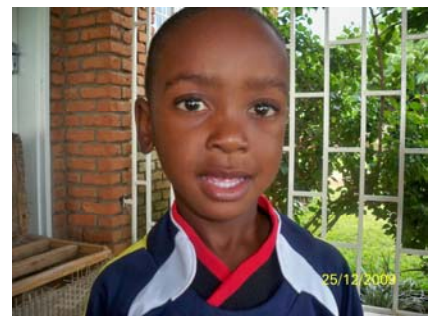
Unfortunately, the shoe boxes caused problems with customs staff last year so we decided that we would not send them anymore. The children did not really notice as they were so pleased with their 'new' clothes and track suits.



There was also a bag of old footballs amongst the packages which got through customs with no problem so the older boys are organising to get them inflated as soon as they can.



Finally, remember 4 year old Tom, our new little boy who wouldn't smile in September and had large bags under his eyes? Well, here he is now looking happy and healthy in his new kit too.



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.