

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 in November 2006 and now gives a home to 34 children who were jointly identified by Malawi Social Services and Smile Malawi from the streets of Blantyre and the local village. The charity also helps the local community of Ndokota with a developing outreach programme, primarily targeting the children and local school.

Smile Malawi founder Elspeth Baecke has just returned from her routine visit to Malawi, where she had an unexpectedly busy trip. Within 2 days of her arrival, 12 year old Natasha was taken ill with meningitis and was urgently admitted to hospital. Natasha was very poorly for a week but then picked up and was discharged after 8 days. She is much better now, as you can see below, but she has to stay at home for the next few weeks.



It was very fortunate that Elspeth was there as our Matron, Miriam, had to stay in the hospital, leaving Elspeth to run the orphanage. The food for the other children had to be organised and money had to be found for all the shopping, bills and workers, as well as the hospital treatment. Elspeth soon realised that Miriam needs someone she can rely on to deputise for her, should something like this ever happen again. So an assistant matron was recruited to start in December.



Modesta, above, will stay at the orphanage during the week and take over when necessary, also giving Miriam the possibility of having some time off occasionally! We also have to think about future hospital bills as the odds are that this could happen again. Fortunately, students at Vandyke School in Leighton Buzzard will be holding their annual 'Smile Week' soon

and the money raised will be used for Natasha's bill, which was over £1200.



The other children were back at school and Elspeth had raised funding to pay for all the school uniforms, fees, shoes and books needed. Thanks to everyone who helped – if you would still like to contribute please visit www.justgiving.com/schoolfund.



Caroline and George started secondary school and had to have pink shirts and navy skirts/trousers. Elspeth couldn't find pink so she took white shirts and a tin of pink dye and they had great fun dying them on the open fire in the outside kitchen. Brian also passed his final year of primary school and started at the same school as Funny, so we now have 6 children at 4 different secondary schools. It's a complicated system in Malawi and most children do not have the opportunity to continue their education. Most secondary schools are private and parents cannot afford the fees.

Our small pig farm is beginning to earn money and Elspeth found a buyer for some of the adult pigs. We managed to slaughter 3 and sell them to a sausage manufacturer in Blantyre. The breeding programme has also been successful and we now have 18 new piglets, born in August. These will be kept and fattened for sale next year. The children are learning how to look

after them and will help with the business operation in the future.



It was Mother's Day and a holiday in Malawi on 15 October so the children made cakes and gave Miriam a restful day. It was so good that she was home with Natasha and everyone had a wonderful day.



Finally, the local tailor came to make school uniforms and new dresses for the children. The girls all looked stunning in their 'national wear', which cost just £8 each! Elspeth's friend Chris had joined her out there and treated all the girls who didn't have an outfit already. Elspeth has fabric for sale if anyone would like to buy some.



We still need more regular funding. 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.