

# Welcome to Africa Unplugged

Promoting greater awareness and understanding through communication and education



JUNE 2010 UK NEWSLETTER

## THE CHIMWEMWE UMBRELLA

Welcome to the new set up in Malawi.

In recent months a up Malawi has had to face more than its fair share of challenges but is now looking to the future with renewed confidence. The new name – chimwemwe means 'happy' in Chichewa – is not just a make over. The CBO (Community based Organisation) will register with the District Commissioner as a fully independent organisation formed by local people to promote and support grass roots community projects in the four zones of it's catchment area namely Kalambe, Market (town), Chindoza and Phiri.

As managing director Mr Happy Ngwira is still very much in charge ably supported by a group of trustees led by Traditional Authority Chief Mkumbira. It is sad to report that Jomo, Frighton and most recently Eliums have all left to pursue other opportunities but we wish them every good fortune. Miss Tryness is still on board working tirelessly in the Childrens Shelter and new team members include Thomas and Fanny who are both teachers at Siliva nursery school. Another member who we hope you will soon

get to know is Robert Phiri, the young and resourceful secretary of the U14s football league.

We will work closely with the new organisation to identify projects which we can support, and will not hesitate to promote their activities through our newsletter and web site. However, the new set up also means that we can now search out new opportunities to interact directly with local communities further afield.



Shenelle with Tom in Siliva Village

## FANTASTIC!

WOW! What a breathtaking place. That was Shenelle's reaction when she arrived in Nkhata Bay early in March. An Australian volunteer, Shenelle stayed a month and was a tremendous help all round.

Apart from spending time with the children, with Happy, Frighton and Tryness, Shenelle met the trustees at the local Victims Support

Unit which is particularly concerned with gender based violence and human rights. Visits to a number of local schools followed, including our friends at Kunyaanja, the adult learning centre and the disability group. Working closely with Happy she helped organise the quiz competition mentioned elsewhere in this issue.

Shenelle's last comment – 'it was a fantastic experience.'

# CHILDREN'S SHELTER

On three afternoons a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) up to 30 children attend for an eclectic mix of fun and lessons. We specially support the teaching of the Chichewa language and the history and culture of its people.

We sponsor this project by paying the ground rent, supplying teaching materials, supporting the teaching and support staff and, when we can, ensuring that the children get a square meal. Volunteers are encouraged to attend as long as local people are also present. The feedback we get is always genuinely heart warming.



*Lessons with Miss Tryness*



*Learning about gender-based violence which sometimes seems so endemic in Africa*



*Clearly a very 'happy' place to be*

## RAFFLE HAS MIXED FORTUNE

We are delighted to report that our first official raffle raised almost £500 towards sponsorship of the Children's Shelter. The draw took place at the offices of the Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations in Huntingdon on Wednesday 10th March.

Sincere thanks to everyone who took part, but a special mention to all helpers and ticket sellers including Alice, Chris, Helen, Lindsey, Mandy, Marilyn, Martin, Michael, Phil, Shirley, Tom and young Sam.

Unfortunately, the prize distribution was not handled well and we failed to take proper account of the challenge posed by prize distribution outside our local area. Many prize winners lived in London and beyond; we

even had one lucky winner who lived in Cyprus. Sincere apologies to any one who may have been aggrieved but a valuable lesson has been learnt.



*Fright and Miss Tryness and the children from the shelter*

# A FUNNY TRIP TO MZUZU

Back in February we sponsored a 'fun' day for the Children's Shelter. They decided to visit the Rafiki village in Mzuzu. The Rafiki Foundation is an American missionary organisation helping orphans and widows in a number of African countries.

For many days beforehand the children could hardly contain their excitement. Many had never been on a coach before or experienced the sights and sounds of a large city like Mzuzu.

The day was filled with games and quizzes, with the children acting in short dramas and each vying with another to tell interesting stories in verse. Then followed a friendly football match with aup in blue and Rafiki in red. The game was well contested but the home team eventually won 2-1.

Happy, Frighton and Eliums where all there to thank Rafiki for their warm hospitality.



*Lots of excitement as the children start their 'funny' trip*



*Eliums with Happy right at the back escorting the children to Mzuzu*



*Children enjoying the ubiquitous Cola*



*Look what we have for dinner*

## A VERY FESTIVE OCCASION

It now seems a very long time ago but last December we sponsored parties for the children in celebration of the festive season at 5 of the nursery schools that we been supporting during 2009. The excited children eagerly took part in a celebratory day of songs, poems and drama. Of course, the day included the best square meal we could muster and lots to drink.

Special thanks to volunteers Alex and Lister who helped with the organisation. Around 180 children took part and the gifts included soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and, of course, lollipops (sweets). The schools which took part: Nkhata Bay, Siliva, CCAP, the Children's Shelter and Salawe.

# EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT COMBINED

What better way to engage children in the serious business of learning and, at the same time, help them to enjoy themselves than the stimulus of a quiz. Every few months Happy does the rounds of all the nursery schools we support to organise regular competitions. He says 'it is wonderful and fun to work with children'.

Over the past couple of years Siliva nursery (the Tigers) have usually beaten the arch

rivals CCAP but just recently they were overthrown 16 points to 15. Happy called it 'hammering'. 69 children took part in this particular quiz. Happy reported that 'the best scorer was Vilet Mlori a young girl with dreads going out with 10 points.

We are pleased to say that we have been able to sponsor many such competitions – the shopping list this

time included chalk, exercise books, small Vaseline bottles, tooth brushes, biscuits, bubble gum, sweets and crayons.



CCAP v Siliva Tigers



*his picture speaks for itself*

## MANDASI BAKING

Ever heard of it. The adult learning club in Siliva is looking for a small amount of sponsorship to allow them to set up an income generating activity. Mandasi baking produces a donut-like food which is commonly sold throughout Malawi at markets and bus stops earning the vendor much needed extra

income. The main ingredients of mandasi are flour, baking powder, salt, sugar and eggs.

The club itself is still going strong and is well attended with meetings taking place 3 or 4 times a week. In addition to classes in basic reading and writing skills, their syllabus also includes a range of 'life skills' subjects such as HIV/AIDS awareness, counselling in relation to gender-based violence, nutrition and general sanitation.



## DIGNITY AND PURPOSE

The Siliva disability group continues to meet twice weekly and their IGA is gradually gaining strength. They have already knitted and sold a small number of baby sweaters. Shown below are a few members of the group in another photograph kindly supplied by Shenelle following her visit last March.



As a small charity it is not possible for us to recruit volunteers directly but we are always delighted to introduce suitable persons to our friends in Malawi. We cannot, of course, accept any liability for any loss or inconvenience that may unfortunately arise but then we don't make any charges either. Volunteers make all their own travel and accommodation arrangements and visit entirely at their own expense. However, once a volunteer arrives in Nkhata Bay the team do all they can to make them welcome.



*with friends in Siliva village*



*Shenelle pounding cassava*

Intrepid travellers Lucy and Henry finally made it to Nkhata Bay at the beginning of June via the Middle East and Ethiopia, and goodness knows where else. They have been a tremendous help to our friends at Africa Unplugged and we hope to feature them in our next issue.



## APOLOGY

Apologies to all our members and friends that we did not manage to produce a newsletter for April. A combination of unusual circumstances plus some health problems put us off track. However, this issue puts us firmly back on course. We hope you enjoy it. Please remember, we would be delighted to receive feedback and any suggestions on content would also be very welcome.

*'Making a difference together'*

# In Brief

Many congratulations to member Lindsey on the birth of baby Noah Oliver. We send our best wishes to all the family.

Subscriptions for 2010/11 are now due. If you pay by standing order then no action is required. Otherwise, please pay any subscriptions due as soon as possible. We are pleased to say that this is the fourth consecutive year in which we have held the subscription at £60 p.a. (or £5 per month).

For members and friends wondering where founder Chris is, we can report that after returning from his adventures in the far east, he has been working in France. He should be home by the end of July. An event is promised so keep an eye out for the sponsorship form – he plans a haircut.

In our next issue we will feature the U14s football tournament that we have sponsored over recent weeks. It should reach the finals by the end of July. So far over 500 children have taken part. Our taster shows Chihame who beat Msani on penalties to reach the semi finals. Happy can be seen far left kneeling.



If you would like to know more about any of the projects that we have mentioned or you would like to help in any way please contact:

[info@africaunplugged.org.uk](mailto:info@africaunplugged.org.uk)

Any donations would be very welcome.

Contacts:

Chris Ashton  
Founder and Field Director  
(00 44) 01480 455908  
[chris@africaunplugged.org.uk](mailto:chris@africaunplugged.org.uk)

Africa Unplugged,  
1 Skeggles Close,  
Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire  
PE29 6SN



*Printed on paper sourced from sustainable managed forests*

