



News on

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Three New Nursery Schools in the Mwaya Area

CPAR (Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief), a Canadian NGO, is promoting nursery school education in the area, and three nursery schools have started around Mwaya. Currently, two of the nursery schools are based in private houses and one in a church, and each school has about 45 children aged between two and five years. The teachers are unpaid and untrained volunteers who are trying their best with no resources. RIPPLE Africa has provided blackboards, and pays for tea and sugar for the children. It is hoped that these children will learn the basics (numbers, the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year, etc.) which will give them a head start when they reach primary school. We would like to recruit some overseas volunteers who will be able to help train the teachers and teach the children, and provide additional resource materials. We really need to raise some additional sponsorship to pay the wages of the six volunteer teachers at these three nursery schools at a rate of £15 a month each (totalling £90 per month for all six teachers).



Under 5s Clinic and Nursery School at Kachere



The Under 5s Clinic and Nursery School building at Kachere, which has been funded by a previous volunteer, Karen, is now operational, and Mary Gondwe is doing an excellent job teaching the children. The level of education of the five year olds is far better than the children in Standard 1 at Mwaya primary school. The wages for Mary and her assistant (also called Mary!) are being paid by Karen as well.



Primary School Teacher Training



We were very lucky to have a volunteer from Germany, Ulrike, who is a trained primary school teacher. She initiated a twice-weekly teacher training programme for the five primary school teachers and six trainee teachers. She tried to encourage the teachers to make education fun and interesting. She strongly believed that the children needed a good start by learning the basics thoroughly. Without a good grounding in maths and English, the less able children always struggle to keep up especially with the large class sizes.

Primary School End-of-Term Prize-Giving Ceremony



On our visit in July, there was a prize-giving ceremony organised by Timothy, the headmaster, and his fellow teachers. The students were given small prizes and certificates, donated by Akeley Wood School, Buckingham, and Josca's Preparatory School, Abingdon, to celebrate their achievements.

Secondary School Sponsorship Programme



RIPPLE Africa sponsors the top 10 to 15 students from Standard 8 to attend secondary school. Some of our previous volunteers are individually sponsoring certain students to go to expensive (by Malawian standards) private boarding secondary schools. Although this is an excellent opportunity, we are finding that volunteers are being pestered to sponsor individuals, and this is creating a certain amount of jealousy. We would like to promote sponsorship to top schools, like Viphya for boys and Tukombo for girls, but on the basis of achievement. Depending on the amount of money we raise for the secondary school sponsorship fund, we would like to send the top one, two or three students to these schools. Therefore, we are looking for sponsors to pay all or part of these fees which work out at a total of £350 per year per student for four years.

New Community Library



The local people of Mwaya have been very lucky because three girls from Stowe School in England have raised the money to build a community library close to the primary school. The three girls, Georgina, Christina and Leila, visited Malawi in July to see Mwaya for themselves and experience life there. They were involved in cataloguing some of the books, teaching some of the students, and even tried their hand at plastering the walls at the library. This project was made possible when the three girls won the Myles Henry award in a close contest. This award is given annually by the Myles Henry family to 6th form students at Stowe School.

Quite by accident, one of our current volunteers, Donncha, is a librarian in Dublin, Eire. Together with Mr Longwe, the appointed librarian, he is now in charge of setting up the library system and will be responsible for opening the library which we hope will happen in October.





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EDUCATION & HEALTH — September 2005



Donations from 'Down Under'

Mwaya is such a special place that, once you have been there, you will never forget it. Louise, an Australian, visited Mwaya as a tourist in 1996 and, about two years ago, decided to help the local children at Mwaya primary school. She organised an appeal to raise donations of books, games, writing materials, football boots, sports clothing, etc., from individuals and businesses in and around their area. But it didn't stop there. Lou and her parents, John and Chris, also wanted to be at Mwaya when the shipment of 120 boxes arrived so that they could be a part of organising with the school how the donated goods could be used and distributed. Their visit coincided with our trip in August, and we all had enormous fun opening the crates and sorting through the items. A huge THANK YOU to Lou, John and Chris, and everyone involved in the appeal, together with all those who donated goods and money.



Paul and Amy's Sponsored Cycle Ride to Land's End, Cornwall, and Leg Wax !!



Some of our volunteers really come up with some great ideas for fundraising. Paul and Amy decided to do a sponsored bicycle ride from Sheffield to Land's End, a distance of 408 miles. On the surface, this seems a normal fundraising activity but Paul decided to do something a little different - he also waxed his legs! They raised about £2000 in total to go towards the cost of rebuilding the double classroom block at Mwaya primary school.



Kachere Health Centre



Kachere Health Centre has been limping along without a permanent nurse/midwife for over 12 months. We reported the much publicised shortage of nurses and doctors in Malawi in our last Newsletter and, although RIPPLE Africa renovated the nurse's house, a permanent nurse still has not been found.

The volunteers who have given their services to the clinic in various capacities have greatly assisted Mathias, the medical officer. We have been really lucky to have had two trained Dutch nurses, Anneke and Elly, who really got stuck in from Day One. They worked tirelessly on projects like training TBAs (Traditional Birthing Assistants). Many expectant mothers are unable to come to the health centre to have their babies, and the village TBAs are vital to assist with local births.

The New Experimental Veggie Garden

In our last Newsletter, we reported that we were about to build this vegetable garden. The garden is located adjacent to Mwaya Beach on land where really nothing would grow, and our aim was to prove to the local community that we could grow good, healthy vegetables in this environment. Force, the environmental project manager, and his team of workers have worked miracles. We now have 97 beds of lush vegetables, including carrots, potatoes, peppers, aubergines (eggplants), cucumbers, beans, maize, chillies, peas, water melons, pumpkins, etc., etc. This garden is really an experimental vegetable garden, and we are not using any form of chemical pesticides or fertilisers; instead we are intercropping and using natural plants like marigolds to keep pests away. The water is pumped from our well by treadle pump, and the beds are all watered using watering cans so it is very 'low tech' which can be replicated locally. The village chiefs and the community cannot believe what has been achieved, and they are very excited about the prospect of being taught how to grow vegetables themselves.



To show how this garden has positively affected the community, we were delighted to see that six small vegetable gardens have been started by local people since this project started. These gardens are close to the dambo and Hanock, one of the very keen nursery staff, has helped the owners get them under way.

We have been so impressed by Hanock's enthusiasm and by his own private vegetable garden that RIPPLE Africa is funding the initial stages of a large vegetable growing project which Hanock and some colleagues will develop as their own business.

Progress With the Tree Nursery

With the help of the local community, RIPPLE Africa planted out a total of 9,000 trees comprising natural hardwoods and quick-growing trees for firewood during the last rainy season. This year, we are hoping to plant out between 30,000 to 50,000 trees. Our initial aim is to plant out a large quantity of quick growing sindilera (*toona ciliata*) trees. These trees grow very quickly and, within five years, will be producing wood that can be harvested for firewood. We aim to plant out a large number of wood lots with sindilera which have the benefit of fast growth but do not destroy the soil like many quick-growing trees, such as gmelina and blue gums.

We have bought a number of trees from the Forestry Department and are providing this wood for people who wish to burn their bricks for house building. The bye laws which were set up last December to prevent the felling of hardwood trees and burning the bush do seem to be working and there have been very few incidents. This dry season in September/October will be a telling time as most of Africa seems to be set alight with the resulting destruction of small trees and young grasses. The ongoing environmental education of the local people seems to be making its point, and certainly the older generation are very aware of the huge destruction of their environment. Malawi has lost 20-30% of its forests in the last 10 years - that is why this environmental project is vital.

Our hope is to influence many other communities with our projects at Mwaya, and we have already organised a meeting with 46 chiefs on 8 September to make them aware of what we're doing and what they need to do with their communities to manage the problems. This will cover an area of 25 km by 15 km.



The Mbaula (Wood Burning Cooker) Project



Two Geography graduate volunteers from England, Nyika and Emily, who originally came out to Mwaya to teach, undertook a really worthwhile and exciting project. They set about carrying out a complete census of the Mwaya area which is split up into three chiefs' areas: Chibako, Chalemba and Mphero. They carried out their survey in record time with the help of Joey Banda, who is the RIPPLE Africa projects coordinator. The aim of the survey was to establish the number of cooking fires in the area, together with other interesting statistical data, like the population age groups and genders. They came up with some interesting statistics:

Gender ratio: 55% female, 45% male.
 Age ratio: 44% under 15 years old, 56% over 15 years old.
 Population: There are 1436 people in the three chiefs' areas.
 Cooking fires: There are a total of 302 cooking fires.

Everybody cooks on open log fires which consume huge quantities of firewood, and this has been one of the main causes of the destruction of the forest. Emily and Nyika, with help from Force and local tinsmiths, organised the design and manufacture of a suitable mbaula (wood burning cooker) that could be distributed to replace all the local open cooking fires. These cookers burn about 20% of the fuel that a conventional open fire uses and are extremely efficient for cooking. In tests, a large pan of cold water can boil in 10 minutes.

It is in everybody's interests for the local community to use these mbaulas as, collectively, it will drastically reduce the amount of cooking firewood required. The mbaulas cost about £4 to make and are sold to the community for the equivalent of 25p. So far, about 100 have been made and distributed to the community. Joey Banda is in charge of making sure this project succeeds and that everybody in the local area will be using this method of cooking in the near future.



Bulls and Ox Carts



RIPPLE Africa now has four bulls and one ox cart in operation. The ox cart is being used for moving soil, manure, seedlings, and timber. This project is still in its infancy but, if it proves successful, we would like to expand this sustainable method of transport. The first two bulls, named Gin and Tonic, have already been castrated and are about to start training to pull the ox cart. The other two bulls, named Rum and Coke, have been trained and are successfully pulling the ox cart, but they will shortly be castrated.

New Thatching Project



Ever since we have been coming to Mwaya, we have always been astounded at the incredibly poor standard of thatching all over Malawi, bearing in mind that, in the rainy season in our area, we receive about 1m 20cm of rain. The roofs of the local houses have a very low pitch and are thatched by placing grass on the roof beams, followed by a thin layer of black plastic to keep the rain out, and then more grass is placed on top of the plastic sheeting. This method is very rarely successful, and most roofs leak like a sieve and need to be replaced every year.



We have tried to discover why this poor thatching is the standard in Malawi when, in other parts of the world, people can construct thatched buildings that keep the water out and will last five to 10 years. There are two main problems; firstly, nobody knows how to thatch properly, and, secondly, the grass is very poor because of regular bush burning.

RIPPLE Africa's idea is to train local people how to build the right roofs and thatch properly. During the next rainy season, we are also going to plant good thatching grass in certain areas to be used by the local people to thatch their own homes.

The first thatching project has been to construct a thatched roof for the bulls' khola (enclosure). In the short term, we also plan to thatch a local house, and then possibly thatch the new classroom block that RIPPLE Africa will be building in 2006. Although proper thatching is time-consuming, it may well be the only option for people who aspire to a corrugated iron roof but will never be able to afford one.



Cassava Chips and Fruit Drying

Several of our volunteers, namely Anneke, Elly, Diana, and Kerry, became involved with the women's groups to start a cassava chip and fruit drying business. This has been slow to get going, but there really is commercial promise with the cassava chip business which is now being run by Joey Banda, who was a cook for a while in South Africa. These cassava chips are first boiled, sliced, then fried in oil and flavoured with salt, pepper and chilli powder. Joey and the ladies have now perfected a product that is really delicious when sipping a cold 'Green' or Kuche Kuche beer. The cassava chips are bagged and labelled, and are sold in quantities of 50 to 100 to local Lodges. It is a commercial business where the ladies can make a profit and likewise the Lodges can also make a profit, so it is in everybody's interests to promote these delicious snacks. The fruit drying has had varying levels of success as there is probably a limited market. However, some sun dried bananas and sun dried tomatoes have been sold through Caroline at the Soft Sand Café at Kande Beach, and we will be developing more efficient ways of drying larger quantities and providing consistent standards in the future.



North Mazembe Women's Group



As promised, RIPPLE Africa purchased a treadle sewing machine for the North Mazembe Women's Group in February. Unfortunately, it turned out that nobody knew how to operate it so it has been used as a table in Selina's house! But Geoff's daughter, Jane, who is keen on sewing, decided to train the ladies in the art of using a treadle sewing machine. It took Jane a little while to learn how to work the treadle machine since she's used to an electric sewing machine! Also, it became apparent that the machine needed immediate repairs before she could attempt to do any work on it.



Once the machine was in full working order, the ladies were shown how to operate the treadle and the following day, Jane, with the help of the ladies, cut out and made a child's dress from a pattern that was given to her by Petra, Christian's wife. Hopefully, we will have some more volunteers in the future who are keen on sewing and who can help this group to produce some commercially viable clothing.

The New Kitchen is Open at Mwaya

Work is continuing at the Lodge and, in August, we were able to move out of the temporary kitchen into the new one. We now have a fabulous storeroom with cupboards and shelves, and a really efficient Dover stove which uses very small amounts of firewood.





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MWAYA BEACH — September 2005



Wonderful Hot Showers

For a long time, we have been wanting to replace the old donkey boiler for heating the water for the showers, and we're pleased to announce that a new geyser (also known as the Mwaya rocket!) has been installed. The water is heated using an mbaula and a minimum amount of firewood, and the water is piping hot within 30 minutes and comes out at tremendous pressure. Bliss!



New Dining Area



The new covered dining and meeting area, which replaces the old bar, is nearly finished and looks wonderful. The new decking should be completed within the next month.



New Staff Ablution Block

The new staff washroom block, which also incorporates two large sinks for laundry, is nearly completed.





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MWAYA BEACH — September 2005

RIPPLE Africa Staff

RIPPLE Africa is employing over 60 full-time staff on all of the projects it is undertaking. Maxwell is settling in well to his role as Manager of the Lodge and is continually learning new skills. Force, the environmental project manager, has achieved outstanding results with the various environmental projects. Frank, the master builder, has taken on a very important role of managing different building projects, not only at the Lodge but also the library, at the primary school and at the Kachere Health Centre. Geoffrey is still working as hard as ever with his happy band of carpenters. Joey Banda, who was taken on to be a coordinator for the various volunteer projects, has proved to be a great asset when communicating with the local community.



We are really lucky to have such wonderful people working for RIPPLE Africa, and they are the ones who are making so much happen.



Volunteers



We have continued to have some brilliant volunteers, and it is really rewarding to receive emails and letters from them after their return saying how much they enjoyed their time at Mwaya. The website is being found by more people now, and we are receiving lots of enquiries for our volunteer placements.



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FUNDING REQUIRED FOR FUTURE PROJECTS — September 2005



Mbaula (Wood Burning Cooker) Project

RIPPLE Africa's aim is to reduce the destruction of the trees in our area and gradually expand this project into neighbouring areas. We want to make these metal mbaulas available to replace all existing cooking fires. These cookers use only 20% of the wood used for conventional cooking fires and only cost £4 each to make.

Our aim is to supply 1000 units in our local area (5 mbaulas will only cost £20)

Total Cost — £4000



Nursery School Teachers' Salaries

Three Nursery Schools have started at Mwaya. There are two unpaid Malawian teachers at each school. This education is vital to give children a head start at Mwaya Primary school. RIPPLE Africa would like to pay on-going salaries to these teachers. Their salaries per month would equate to £15 per month per person.

Our aim is to raise £90 per month (try sponsoring just one teacher for £15 per month)

Total Cost per year — £180 per teacher or £1080 in total



Toilet required for Kachere Nursery School

One of RIPPLE Africa's volunteers paid for and organised the building of a Nursery School and Under 5s Clinic, but there is no toilet for the children. RIPPLE Africa would like to build a suitable toilet and washing facilities.

Our aim is to build these facilities urgently

Total Cost — £150



Hanock's Dambo Vegetable Garden Project

Hanock, a worker in our experimental vegetable garden, has shown so much enthusiasm and has helped local people to create their own gardens. RIPPLE Africa is going to fund the setting up of a large vegetable growing project which will be owned and run as a private business to supply vegetables to the local community.

Our aim is to fund Hanock and 3 staff to develop a large vegetable garden which will be run and funded by themselves within 6 months

Total Cost — £700



Selected Secondary School Sponsorship Programme for Top Students

RIPPLE Africa already sponsors between 10 and 15 students each year to go on to local secondary schools. However, there are some outstanding students who we believe would really benefit from a better education at a more expensive boarding school. The current costs per year for these schools is about £350. Once the student has been selected, these fees will need to be paid for 4 years. We would like to make this privilege available for up to three of the top students who leave Mwaya primary school each year. This programme will also motivate students to work hard at their studies.

Our aim is to send up to three of the best students from Mwaya primary school to top boarding schools. The cost for this is £350 per year for 4 years per student (making a total of £1400)

Total Cost — £350 per student per term (£1400 per student over 4 years)



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