

# Chitipi School, Malawi... ...needs your support!

## A 'slum' School

Situated on the outskirts of Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi, Chitipi School does its best to educate 900 primary aged students. Boys and girls from the surrounding slums walk to the School every day to take advantage of Malawi's policy of providing free education for all children between the ages of six and twelve years old. For these children, primary school is the only chance they have of learning the skills they need if they are to have any opportunity of escaping the Aids-stricken slums.



## Malawi: The warm heart of Africa

Latest United Nations figures show that Malawi is home to a population of 15.5million, half of whom are under the age of fourteen. Consequently, children over the age of twelve commonly have to take over family, household and work responsibilities. This, coupled with the fact that they would have to pay for secondary education, highlights the importance of each child's place in a primary school. Malawi ranks 167/177 in the world poverty ratings. No surprise then, that so highly do they value their chance to education, most of the children at Chitipi primary school make their daily walk – up to three miles each way - with no shoes on their feet.



### **Lessons in the mud**

Unfortunately the infrastructure of Chitipi School has not been able to keep up with the high demand for a primary school education. This means that the School is now unable to accommodate two full classes of 60 students. Rather than turn these children away, a practical solution has been put in place. 120 children have their lessons outside every day. The trees in the ground serve two purposes: they are a convenient place to lean a blackboard and they provide much-needed shade in temperatures reaching up to 40 degrees. However, the trees do little to protect these children during the five months of the rainy season. As a result, 120 children spend their school days sat in the dust when it is dry, sat in the mud when it is wet and at home when it is actually raining because there is simply not enough space in the existing school buildings for these pupils to seek shelter from the African elements.

### **Building blocks for the future**

The Chitipi School building project is the only chance this school will have to extend its facilities. The School cannot even afford to buy additional text books (it makes do with two dozen dating back to 1966), let alone spend money on facilities. The project will see two new classrooms added on to one of the existing blocks. Both classrooms will be connected to the electricity supply and will be fitted out with essential teaching aids, including desks, chairs, shelving and a blackboard. Ongoing maintenance costs and electricity bills will be funded out of the

Government's education budget, which cannot stretch to capital investment like the building work for at least another 10 years.

The existing partnership between the Rotary Club of Northampton Becket ("Becket Rotary Club") and the Rotary Club of Lilongwe will be utilised to full advantage. The former will provide fundraising support, expertise and practical help, whilst the latter will provide local knowledge and logistical expertise, such as architects and construction experts.

The two new classroom blocks will, in themselves, be of immeasurable benefit to the School but the project goes deeper than just a building. It is hoped that this particular project will develop into an ongoing relationship, to help better the school and the lives of the children who attend it. Local trades-people and labour will be drafted in to help with the project and materials will be locally sourced. A tool chest will be built up here in the UK over the coming months, which will then be shipped out and left behind for the workers who help on the project. The Project will give a unique opportunity for basic level building skills to be passed on to unskilled workers and will help the local economy in both the short and long term.

In addition, the Project aims to provide the School with a running water supply, rather than the well that it currently uses. A sinker bore hole will be dug and a tower will be built in the School grounds with a water storage tank at the top. It will be fitted with a windmill and solar panels to generate electricity to pump the water and gravity feed the School with water. Access to running water will have a huge impact on the School, the students and the staff who work there.

### **A £17,400 project**

The estimated cost of providing potentially thousands of children with a much better learning environment at Chitipi School is **just £17,400**. £15,000 will cover all of the material costs and local labour costs needed to build the two new classrooms. A local contractor will be drafted in to fit the School's running water supply, which is estimated to cost a total of £2,400.

Architect's plans and drawings, as well as obtaining the necessary permissions, will all be provided by the Rotary Club of Lilongwe free of charge. Any costs incurred by the Becket Club Rotarians, including travel and accommodation, will all be paid for at the individual's expense.

Ideally, the building work will start at the beginning of April 2012, the end of the rainy season, and will take six weeks to complete.

### **We need your help!**

On a recent trip to Malawi, to see other aid projects supported by Becket Rotary Club, Terry and Diane Atkinson were so moved by the sight of 120 shoeless children having their lessons under a tree that they felt compelled to help.

***"We have the skills, the enthusiasm and the necessary knowledge to put a plan in place and build two classrooms for Chitipi School. We now need the funds to action it!"***

All of the money raised will be channelled through Becket Rotary Club, who are kick-starting the fundraising drive with a BBQ. In addition, they will be applying to Rotary International for a grant, seeking support from local businesses and grant-making trusts and holding a number of fundraising activities throughout the next year.

To find out more about this important Project or to learn how you can get involved, please contact Terry Atkinson, on 07801 183585 or email Diane Atkinson at [diane@terryanddiane.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:diane@terryanddiane.freeserve.co.uk).

***"Please help us to bring this dream alive."***

Thank you.



*The Rotary Club of Northampton Becket Trust Fund is a Registered Charity under Charity Number 1027352*

