

Project #MW96255 - AEC Orphan Care Program – Malawi

Vision of the projects

To equip the Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) in Malawi to show God's love by meeting the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of orphans & vulnerable children, and support their extended families, through a program of community visiting, secondary school scholarships and establishment of an income generating scheme in order to allow the program to work towards becoming self-sustaining and an associated under 5's day care centre. The aim was to start 5 programs (and day care centres) in 5 different locations over a 5 year period which was completed. A continuation of the project was approved in Jan 2017 to maintain operations in the different locations but with an intentional move towards more self-sustainable operations by end 2018.

Project background

As the AIDS pandemic spreads across Malawi, so many children are being orphaned that the traditional mechanisms within the community to care for these children are being stretch to breaking point. SIM together with the AEC made a strategy to start an orphan care program in 2002 but the necessary personnel and funding has only become available such that a start could be made in October 06 with the employment of the AEC OVC co-ordinator. A pilot OVC program was launched at Chilumba in July 07 followed by 4 additional programs established over the period 2008-2010.

Progress

Refresher trainings – refresher trainings were completed at all 5 centres.

Transition Planning – Following on from the project evaluations at end 2017 we have continued to work on a suitable transition plan including discussions regarding the AEC proposed employment of a full time AEC Project Officer. Jacky was invited to be part of the AEC interview panel in August and the preferred candidate accepted the post and will start on 9 October. HOPE for AIDS will provide funding support for this post (through the Master Project) to the end of 2018 so that the Projects Officer is able to spend approx 50% time working on mainstreaming HOPE for AIDS related projects including Home Based Care.

Blanket Distribution – 50 blankets were procured & distributed across the 5 locations for needy families.

Muyaya OVC – it has been encouraging to receive a report that over the last 6 months, the small IGA at shop at Muyaya has completed 2 cycles of buying & selling goods resulting in a profit of MK20,000 whilst maintaining the MK75,000 initial seed capital provided by this project. This profit has been used to support their own OVC preschool operations.

Phingo OVC – the roof of the Day Care Centre (DCC) has now been replaced with the church raising the funds for 10 sheets and HOPE for AIDS covering the remaining 12 sheets, nail, timber & labour costs. This is the first time the local church has raised funds towards the iron sheets which is a positive development (pictured below). It was also encouraging that when the DCC teacher found full time employment, the church organised themselves that he would provide 2 weeks training to a successor. This is another first in our experience and shows the church commitment to their ministry.



Gerald, our OVC co-ordinator, loading the blankets for delivery

Ngabu OVC – as part of their on-going partnership with PODECOM, Ngabu OVC received materials needed to render and paint their DCC (pictured below).

Chilumba OVC – the project at Chilumba has been chosen in the past as one of the best centres to receive UNICEF assistance and this has happened again whereby the local volunteers are making bricks & sand such that UNICEF will send their builders & additional materials in order to construct a good quality toilet block for the DCC.

Jacob Saikolo update (student at University of Malawi): Jacob has returned to university which re-opened in late July.

Forgotten Voices - Three AEC churches (Chilomoni, Chikwawa, Naotcha) have now received support directly from Forgotten Voices although it appears to have been used to provide a one-off assistance direct to selected beneficiaries rather than as seed funding for on-going self sustaining ministry. It is hoped that the new AEC Projects Officer may be able to resume discussions with Forgotten Voices about a national level project for on-going OVC support.

Future Plans for the coming 6 months

Provide roofing plastic to beneficiaries prior to the rainy season & school shoes to secondary school scholarship students.

To work with the new AEC Projects Officer on implementation of the transition plan.

To plan operations so that they will continue smoothly during the Hammond's Home Assignment (Nov 2017- Jun/Jul 2018).

Stories: Orphan Care – Taking Pride In Their Ministries

The last few months have given us more encouraging examples of how the churches value, takes ownership for, invest their own resources in, & are proud of their orphan care ministries.

At Phingo they rebuilt their small day care centre (top right) which had been damaged by floods), mobilizing the resources for the bricks & even half the iron sheets for the roof so this time HOPE for AIDS provided matching funds rather than the whole roof. Also, when their main day care centre teacher found work at a local sugar growing co-op, the church organized a 2 week training themselves in order for him to pass on his expertise to others in the church – this is the first time we've seen this.

At Ngabu, they painted the day care centre themselves (middle right) without input from us & now also have play equipment from UNICEF.

At Chilumba (bottom right), they are mobilizing bricks & sand after which the UNICEF funded builder will come & build a new toilet block to improve health & sanitation.

At all the refresher trainings over the last few months the volunteers were commended for their faithfulness in visiting and advocacy in keeping kids, especially girls, in school which has been shown to reduce the likelihood of early marriages.



Secondary School Scholarships – A Grateful heart and Long term dividends!

Ernest reminds me of the one leper who came back to Jesus to say thank you. He was one of the beneficiaries of the Orphan Care program (OVC) from the rural village of Phingo in Malawi and every time he has seen our OVC co-ordinator he always thanks him for something. Even now, two years after graduating from secondary school he still seeks out Gerald to thank him for something new which has happened because he was part of the program! Ernest has a heart overflowing with gratitude to God because not only did he receive the

scholarship but he then got his first job working for a small NGO tutoring girls to help them return to school, and then landed a job at the local Illovo sugar manufacturer and is in charge of controlling the water through the irrigation systems. He has gone from strength to strength and of course being employed means he can be the breadwinner for his family and help his siblings finish their schooling. One scholarship was a great investment which continues to pay dividends in terms of practical help but also bringing glory to God for many years!



Ernest at the controls of the water irrigation system

Prayer requests –

For good working relationships with the new AEC Projects Officer and the AEC National Children's Co-ordinator as we work towards mainstreaming.

For OVC operations to continue smoothly while Hammonds are on home assignment.

For volunteers to receive the transition plan positively and maintain a ministry heart.