

Welcome to the Fall 2020 Makupo Development Group News Update.
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Moni Abwenzi Updates. Thanks again for all your support!



Moni Abwenzi

October 2020



Staff and volunteers at the Health Centre

Dear Friends of Makupo Development Group,

It has been a bittersweet year. Let's begin with the sweet.

On the heels of fraudulent presidential elections in Malawi in 2019, Malawians doggedly took to the media, the courts, and the streets and, lo and behold, new elections were held in June 2020! They were deemed free and fair and a new government is now in place. Much of the world could learn from Malawians' commitment to democracy!

On the bitter side, Malawians, like the rest of the world, had to mobilize quickly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They went into lockdown and, while that certainly came at a great cost for many, the pandemic is largely under control in Malawi.

So what does all of this mean for the Makupo Development Group? Ten years ago, in response to a request from the women of Makupo Village, Makupo Development Group committed to building a health clinic with the strict understanding that the government would eventually take it over and run it. The Chilanga Health Centre is now a burgeoning local health centre run by Malawian staff and volunteers, serving a population of over 13 000 people for front line health care including everything from mother and child health care and family planning to treating malaria, HIV testing, screening for cervical cancer and providing palliative care.

However, despite significant moves in the right direction, the government has yet to provide the promised budgets and personnel. The new parliament has just started sitting, and we have been informed by our government contacts that the clinic should start receiving government funding and staffing once the budget has been passed.

We do not know how long this process will take. In the meantime, MDG has kept up support as much as possible. A key element of that support has been connected with Vanier College's annual Malawi Nursing Exchange which sees several graduating nursing students travel to Malawi each year for their final nursing internship. While the student exchange itself could not take place in 2020 because of COVID, the students' fundraising efforts allowed for certain aspects of the exchange to go ahead. The money raised by the students was used to airlift to Malawi \$30,000 in medications donated by Canadian pharmaceutical companies, purchase personal protective equipment for the staff at the Health Centre and provide workshops in the villages on how to prevent the spread of the virus. Makupo Village, where the students are hosted annually, received handwashing stations and soap for every household.



Makupo villagers with handwashing stations

This has provided important help in the fight against COVID and in keeping the clinic funded until the government takes over. However, the clinic's coffers have emptied and we are in immediate need of money to ensure an operating budget. MDG has set a fundraising goal of \$35,000 to ensure stable funding for staff, medications and other supplies for one year. It is our sincere hope, and belief, that within the next year, the Chilanga Health Centre will be a fully integrated and funded health facility under Malawi's public health system. That has always been the goal.

To walk away from the clinic now would be to guarantee its demise. This would be a real tragedy. It is such a vibrant and critical part of the local landscape now, run by a skeleton staff that has shown unbelievable levels of commitment and caring, and supported by countless volunteers who have embraced the clinic as their own and helped it to survive during its difficult infancy. We are as committed as ever to seeing this health centre become a full-fledged Malawian institution. It's just going to take a little more time. So once again, we are calling on you to help us keep it running until the long and complex process of full government accreditation finally bears fruit.

Here is how you can donate:

E-transfer: hicksm@vaniercollege.qc.ca

Personal cheque: Makupo Development Group, 160 Hébert, St-Laurent, QC H4N 2K5

PayPal: Visit our website at www.makupo.org and follow the DONATE links.

We issue tax receipts for donations of \$20 or more. Please provide us with your full mailing address.

Thank you once again for your vital support.