



A Place of Refuge and Hope

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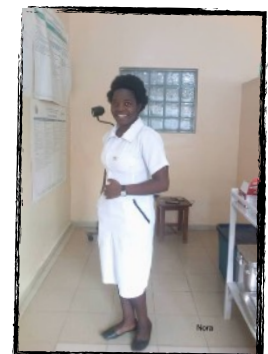
EDUCATION -THE #1 POVERTY BUSTER

It was just a little over a month ago that, thanks to your generous donations, we were able to step into another level of service to the children of Malawi. We are all now the proud sponsors of two full elementary schools (grades 1-8), helping to bring nearly 400 children to a place that most of their peers will never have the opportunity to reach. Only 30% of children in Malawi even begin school and only 35% of those continue through 8th grade. Even for those attending school, the results are not encouraging. Malawi is ranked the weakest for its performance in English reading and second weakest for mathematics against other southern African countries. 83% of first grade students are unable to read a single syllable and 92% fail to read a single word. In first grade, the average teacher to student ratio is 1:130, but due to the lack of education funding from the government, a classroom is often packed with 200-300 children because of a huge classroom shortage. In good weather, many classes meet outside, but you can imagine the decreased level of learning that happens as a result!

The antidote is smaller classes, ample learning materials and, above all, motivated teachers. You have provided all of these with your support: Miqlat school classes average 20 students each; every child has a full set of textbooks (versus the few per classroom in government schools); and Miqlat teachers are well supported and well trained by our experienced staff.



For the vast majority of Malawian children, the situation only gets worse as they attempt to access higher education. Entrance to quality high schools is competitive and expensive. Those with a weak educational foundation from elementary school struggle to get in the game and, in the past, despite providing weekend tutoring at the Centers, very few of our kids have been able to pass the high school exit exam. Even fewer have successfully met the entry requirements for college (currently two young men are enrolled in courses in the medical field and three other kids have graduated from nursing college and teacher training). As a child of poverty, the impediments to being able to access the path to a better future are sizable and often disheartening.



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It's nearly "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!"

. . . An opportunity to bless those you love with a very special gift that you know will make them smile.

Would you consider putting a smile on your sponsored child's face with a gift of a sleeping mat and some special school supplies? Most of the children live in mud huts with mud floors. They cannot afford real beds or even mattresses so they rely on woven mats to give them a clean, insulated place to sleep. A new fresh one would be a huge blessing! We would also love to encourage interest in education by providing a gift of some school supplies beyond the usual composition books and pens they get routinely through your sponsorship money. . . A little something to spice up their school lives a bit! Thanks for adding \$15 or whatever you can to your November donation if possible so we can purchase the gifts in time. Please indicate the amount and what it is for.



One of the most inspiring conversations I've had recently was with Alexander Mpemba, a technical college student from Thuchila Hope Center. He has been studying electrical installation at one of the best vocational schools in the area. As part of that education, he has been working as an intern for the past 6 months with the National Electricity Supply Company. They were so impressed with his skill, integrity and hard-working spirit that they wanted to hire him before he even finished school! He politely turned them down, but they insisted on saving a place for him. He was astounded at the honor because it happened, not because he knew someone or bribed someone, but simply because he is who he is. I'm not sure if the magnitude of this story translates well in your context, but in a country overrun by corruption and graft, this indeed is an uncommon situation and a message that will bring hope to his Miqlat brothers and sisters. So often, they are discouraged by all the obstacles they face in trying to make a better life for themselves. They struggle to believe that their hard work can actually make a difference. Thank you Alexander for being such a great inspiration to your Miqlat family!

We're very excited to dream about the educational future of our Miqlat kids. Already, our first eighth grade class, most of whom have been through three years at our school, achieved a 95% pass rate on their standardized exit exam versus the average 50% pass rate up until now. We're extremely hopeful about the possibilities for those who are able to be with us throughout their elementary school career!



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