

News from FOCHTA

Fochta would like to thank all its supporters and to wish everyone health and peace for the coming year.

In spite of the adverse world-wide financial situation which might require us to trim some of our fringe programs, Fochta remains as committed as ever to providing for our main purpose, which is to fund secondary education to the neediest young people in the Thyolo district of Malawi.

The very nature of funding school bursaries implies a continual support for the full four years of secondary schooling.

Fochta shall continue to be positive, creative, and to feel constantly comforted by your kind and generous support.



Emma Makungwa – a typical Fochta

Eighteen year old Emma Makungwa has finished her secondary schooling, and is at present working in the Fochta office in Luchenza. When she and her younger sister were small girls her parents died within two years of each other, leaving the children in the care of their grandmother. Emma did well at primary school and was selected to progress to Chikolombe Community Day Secondary School. Grandmother, however, was destitute and after only two weeks grace period at school Emma was forced to leave, there being no money for fees or a uniform. Fochta stepped in and has been able to help Emma to finish her schooling – she was provided with shoes and a uniform and her school fees were paid, maize and fertilizer were supplied to the family and in her final year Fochta paid her exam fees. Emma still lives



with her grandmother who is now 71.

An update on some of Fochta's programmes.

Food Security.

With support from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, US \$8353 has been used to supply maize seed and fertilizer for home gardens for the 2007/2008 planting season. These were distributed to 122 student's households in 9 communities. Many families have one or more members who are HIV positive, and good nutrition is vitally important if anti-retroviral medicine is to be effective.

Pottery Classes.

Potting classes have been given to young people by grandmothers who have been participating in the Gogoz Programme

Computer Skills Training.

Seven student beneficiaries attended a short course on various aspects of computer skills, taught by Amadu Bwanali. Amadu is one of three Fochta beneficiaries now studying at university.

Student News

Secondary students have just finished their end-of-year exams. Fochta is encouraging students to make good use of their vacation time, by promoting sports fixtures, and by organizing the young people into groups to go into their communities to help with tending crops or with work in the homes of the elderly and infirm.

The amount of money needed to support a child at secondary school for one year depends on the type of school s/he attends. At a Community Day Secondary School the cost is US\$162, at a Boarding Secondary School it is US\$317, and at a National Secondary School US\$387. These amounts cover tuition and living expenses.

US\$1556 was spent in 2008 to provide school uniforms and shoes, with most uniforms being made by our own tailor, Isaac Mathiya.



Welding and Tailoring Courses

Seven post-secondary students have completed skills training courses, five in a one-year welding course, and two students in a six-month tailoring course. The courses were taught by our instructors Glyn Bwanali, Alick Magombo and Isaac Mathiya. These students have since been sent to a Government Institute for testing and certification.



Goats and bees provide an income for grandmothers.

Grannies (Gogoz) play a crucial role in the care and support of orphans and other vulnerable children. In the revolving goat scheme, grannies are given a goat to care for, and keep any kid which is born, before eventually returning the nanny goat to the central pool. Sourcing healthy goats in Thyolo district has been a time consuming problem for Fochta staff. Those goats offered for sale often tend to be un-fit. Healthy goats have now been sourced, and during 2009 it is hoped to add up to 60 new nanny goats to the current pool of 98. Added to the cost of each goat is the additional financial outlay for veterinary medicines and worming treatments. Grandmas are producing honey! Fochta has to date bought one bee hive at a cost of US\$35, with an additional cost of US \$70 for the honey extracting kit.

Rural Libraries

In April the *FOCHTA NANG'OMBE RURAL LIBRARY* was opened. The library was made possible by generous donations from Michele and Ed Harris and their friends in Canberra, Australia. The 6 X 8 metre building was built using sun-dried blocks produced by our student beneficiaries. The blocks are environment-friendly as no firing in a kiln is required, an important factor in Malawi where deforestation is taking its toll on the environment. This library is located in a remote corner of Thyolo District, so that students - who live within a radius of 2-hour walking distance from it - will be able to use the library.

Another rural library has recently been completed, at Mount View Community. It's construction has been made possible with donations from the staff union of the European Community in Strasbourg, from Dr & Mrs Ferrin in Singapore and from Erika Clusserath in Belgium.

Literacy Programme This will be conducted starting from the end of December, with the assistance from the university and tertiary students during their long vacation. Rural schools in Malawi suffer from a severe shortage of trained teachers - according to the Thyolo District Education Office the ratio of teachers to students is 101:1. Text books are few and the school libraries which do exist are seriously under resourced. It is hoped that this programme will help raise literacy standards among Fochta's beneficiaries. The programme will be conducted by Amadu Bwanali who has a certificate in Peer Education awarded by the Malawi National Youth Council, and by Charles Sokoso. Both Charles and Amadu were recipients of Fochta bursaries. Charles is now Fochta's Programme Officer, and Amadu studies at the Catholic University of Malawi.



Background information about Thyolo

Thyolo district is situated within the Shire Highlands 47km from Blantyre and it borders internationally with Mozambique to the south. It is one of four districts in the Shire Highlands education division. It has a total land area of 1715 square km and has three distinct land regions namely: Rift Valley scarp, hill zones and plains. The population density is about 268 persons per square kilometer, which is 2.5 times above the national average.

There are three major tribes in Thyolo i.e. Lomwe, Mang'anja and Yao. The people practice initiation ceremonies, which are normally conducted in the months of August and September. 93% of the population is living on agriculture whereas 22% of the total land is under estate farming mainly with tea cultivation. The average land holding of smallholder farmers is 0.6ha, which is lower than the national average.

About 3.2% of the people are self-employed in small and medium scale enterprises. The average income of MK1,123 per year (US\$7.9) is lower than the national average of MK1,260 (US\$8.8) and about 80% of this is used to buy food. (Thyolo District Assembly Office, November 2007)

Some facts and figures about Thyolo District

Population in Thyolo District is 500,000+- (Malawi: 13,603,181)

21% or more of the population have HIV/Aids (higher than the national average)

There are 36,200+- orphans

Life expectancy is 43 years

80% of income is spent on food

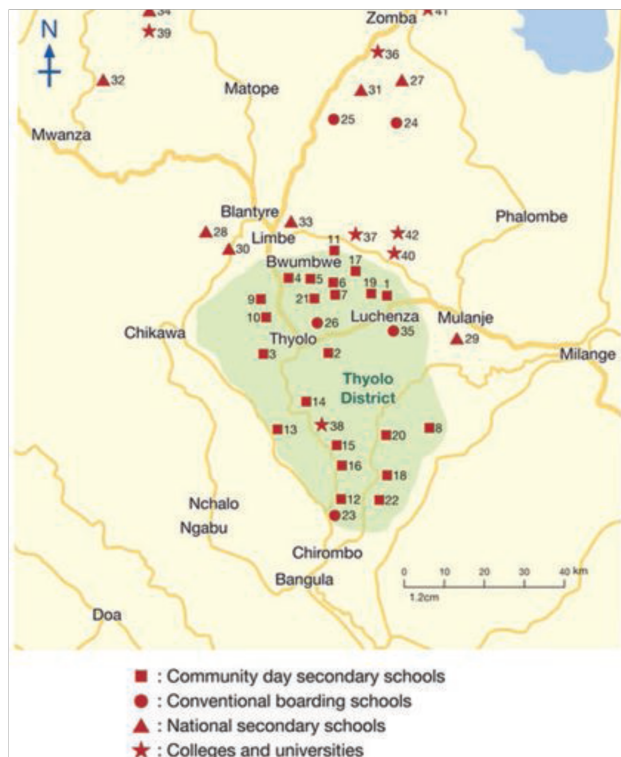
Female literacy level is 51%

Teacher to student ratio is 101:1

10,050+- students attend secondary school.

Most figures obtained from Thyolo District Assembly. District Education Plan, December

Where our students study



To find out more about FOCHTA's work in Malawi,
please visit:

www.fochta.org.au

or email:

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You can donate to FOCHTA online at:

www.fochta.org.au

or by issuing a cheque to:

FOCHTA Malawi Managed Fund

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P.O. Box. 1146 Newport Beach N.S.W. 2106

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