

FOCHTA NEWS



Friends of Claude Ho in Thyolo Association P.O.Box 264, Luchenza, Malawi

September 2007

Four years on

FOCHTA has grown from the seed of an idea planted in 2003, and has germinated to become a thriving organisation recognized throughout Malawi's Thyolo district:



School friends

- at present 400 students are being supported in their secondary schooling
- several students are supported in

- tertiary institutions
- post-secondary vocational training programmes are being run
- issues of food security are being addressed
- grandmothers groups are active
- a library has been established and the construction of small rural branch libraries has begun
- widows and grandmothers receive micro loans
- vulnerable students receive extra help through counselling and special relief funds
- **FOCHTA has now been granted NGO status in Malawi.**

Emergency relief fund

This fund was set up to help students who are enduring extra hardship. These are some of the children who have been helped.



Alambeje with friends

Alambeje Daniel is seventeen and loves school. Her greatest challenge, apart from being an orphan, is that she is disabled and must use a wheelchair to get about. Her early years in secondary school were difficult as she had to rely on her brothers to push her to school and anywhere else she needed to be. She now attends, with a FOCHTA bursary, a boarding school in the district. She received a mosquito net and new blanket, as well as treatment for malaria at the local clinic.

Martha Mulore, her widowed mother and siblings exist by cultivating their vegetable garden. Before receiving fertilizer and seed from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, through FOCHTA, their garden produced a poor crop. This past year they have managed to harvest eleven sacks of maize. Martha was born with a withered leg and needs to use crutches to walk. The crutches rub under the arms, wearing out her blouses, which with FOCHTA's help are being replaced quite frequently. This destitute family had no extra cash for school supplies – pens and notebooks, nor for basic necessities such as soap or body lotion, which have been remedied also by FOCHTA.

Isaac Wilson had difficulty reading. The local clinic at the Thyolo hospital refers eye problems to the big Queen Elizabeth hospital in Blantyre. FOCHTA paid for Isaac to travel to hospital in Blantyre and to purchase the prescribed eye glasses, the cost of which would have been beyond Isaac's reach.

Fund raising

There are wonderful generous people the whole world over.

Amadea

Camozzi, a post-graduate student in Montreal, shaved her hair off and raised over C\$2000 to help FOCHTA fund school fees.



In Belgium, **Danielle Moucq** and her friends are busy organizing a picture sale event in September, then another event in December. This is their third year of fundraising for FOCHTA. They organized a highly successful movie show last year, with thanks to **Patrick Vandenbosch, Michele** and **Stephen Verhulst, Martine Parmantier, Patricia** and **Roland Stichelmans, Catherine Mollard la Bruyere, Harry de Landsheer, Jean Marie Steisel, John Martin** and **Lionel** – chocolate maker of Chocolaterie L10.

Mr Augusto Bonucci, who worked for the European Union in Human Resources, transferred to another position and asked his colleagues to donate to FOCHTA instead of giving him a farewell present.

The students and staff of **Mt. View Primary** and **Central High Schools in Malawi** donated two goats, several sacks of rice and clothing to FOCHTA students.

In Sydney, students of **Pittwater High School** gave a donation to FOCHTA. Their principal also invited Claude Ho to speak to students.

With the kind support of **Monsignor Tony Doherty, the Catholic communities of Rose Bay** and **Dover Heights in Sydney** donated generously.

Other donors in Sydney include: **Valerie Chu, Jeanie Tam, Ann Crawford,**

Changes to FOCHTA's food security programme



Students in their communal garden

During famine conditions which prevailed in Malawi throughout 2004/05, FOCHTA had run a school meals programme, whereby widows were given loans to cook lunches at schools attended by FOCHTA bursary students. This programme has ceased, one important reason being that lunch recipients felt uncomfortable knowing that while they were eating a good meal at school, their siblings would have been left at home without food.

A more sustainable food security programme is underway. Many orphaned children have been left small pieces of land by deceased parents, and with a supply of fertilizer, seed and hard work on the part of the students, these gardens become productive. FOCHTA has also rented several communal gardens,

with plans to rent 10 more in the coming year, all attached to schools the students attend, and worked by the students themselves.

There are plans for communal granaries to store food for the hunger times, and diversification of crops to suit changing rain patterns. Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture officers have advised students on best growing techniques. The Stephen Lewis Foundation of Canada has funded, through FOCHTA, this food security initiative.

Fatsileni Odilo is one of many who has benefited from the programme. She is without parents and looks after her younger sister Violet. In past years she could produce 100 kg of maize on the land left to her by her parents. With added fertilizer and seed she managed to produce 350 kg during the past year. She says, "When I was at school, and received food, all I could think about was my starving younger sister at home. I could hardly concentrate in class when thinking about her".

With food security programmes in place, the drop-out rate in local schools has decreased, as students are less likely to need to go out to find work instead of attending school.

Rural libraries



The brick press in action

The Library in FOCHTA's office in Luchenza is well-used, however many children live many hours walk from the town. Small libraries to be built of sun-dried brick and with thatched roofs will mean students and others living in the more distant communities will have easier access to books. Two brick presses have been bought from South Africa and the older students have been busy during the recent school vacation making bricks. The use of sun-dried rather than kiln-fired bricks is important for environmental reasons. The students are skilled up in the use of the brick presses and will be expert when the time comes to produce bricks for the planned new FOCHTA vocational

Diana Hanaor, the Hawkins family, Edward and Michele Harris, Robyn Lyall, Professor Max Irvine, Jeanette Rai, Judith Ford, W B and J M Conolly, William and Colleen Murphy, Barry Nolan, B M G Remond, Anthony Irwin, Maureen and Rob Brian, Marie Mance, Albert Mui, B B Prichard, Bob & Jenni Scobie, Peter Downie, Sam Crawford, Lin & Pat Coleman and Ian Maguire.

From Canberra, we have received donations from **Colin Sinclair, Jo and Jeremy Gillman Wells, Charles Ledger, and Mary and Terry Quinane.**

Other kind donors from Hong Kong are: **Betty Kwok and Lee Kwok-Fai, Betty Lee, Ruby Chan, Chow Lap Chung, Etta and Tammy Kwok, and Gwen Chan.**

We would also like to extend our thanks to **Mrs Miyoko Matsumoto** from Osaka and **Satoe Ideguchi** from Tokyo, Japan.

Fundraising events in Sydney included exhibitions at **Newport Artworks** (courtesy of **Gary Witton**) and **Icon Gallery** (courtesy of **Tom Boycott & Jessica Bakey**), a fun Sunday at the **Cricketer's Arms**, thanks to owner **Dom Juillet** and a book lovers event at which prize-winning author **Kate Grenville** spoke about her work and research.

On September 10th, **Grainger Quartet** gave a concert to a most appreciative audience, with all proceeds going to FOCHTA.

A note of thanks to Sydney architect **Cressida Beale**, who served so well as a Board Member of Fochta Malawi (Australia) Inc. Cressida now lives in Perth. We welcome Sydney engineer **Ruth Kestermann**, who will serve on our Board from September.

Over in Malawi, the probation period of FOCHTA's Executive Director Pius Mtiye ended in early July. FOCHTA decided to discontinue his employment due to differences in management styles. **Mr Cromwell Ngwalo**, with a background in education, has been appointed to this position.

training centre to be built on the outskirts of Luchenza. They are pleased to be actively involved in the building of the rural libraries and their own vocational training centre.

They have an active role in FOCHTA's management, advising the committee, working in the office during school holidays, and have recently alerted FOCHTA to the desperate need for school textbooks. Schools in the district are sadly under resourced and multiple copies of required texts have been added to the library in Luchenza.



Multiple copies of required texts have been added to the library.

Post-secondary students



Tailoring workshop

Amadu Bwanali started his first year at the Catholic University in July 2007, where he will be studying for a Bachelors degree in Education. FOCHTA sent both Amadu and Kondwani for a course in computer studies while they were waiting for the results of the tertiary entrance exams. Clara Lemani and Dyton Liphale are now half-way into their second year at Malawi University,

studying Science Education. Kondwani Birton is taking a Car Mechanics course, which will surely be an asset in the district where working on motorcars' engines can be a rather hit and miss affair.

In addition, five are taking courses at technical colleges: Charles Sokoso – Animal Health, Evance Nchingama – Medical Assistant, Gift Bokosi – Clinical Medicine, Waliyesa Malenga – Electrical Installation, Dines Kathumba – Diploma in Nursing.

Meanwhile, seven post-secondary students are now being trained in welding and tailoring at our Centre. They were all FOCHTA beneficiaries through their secondary schooling and were identified by Grassroots Committee members as being young people who would benefit from this type of training.

Vocational training centre



Architects without Frontiers exhibition

A model of the proposed Fochta Vocational Training Centre was exhibited at an Architects Without Frontiers function which was held at the Customs House in Sydney.

The project is one notch closer to reality with the recent purchase of land on which to build. The land is situated beside the main trunk road into Luchenza.

Stephen Lewis Foundation and FOCHTA

The Stephen Lewis Foundation of Canada is a major financial supporter of FOCHTA's programmes, and periodically sends a representative to ensure that all is going well.

Ms Jennifer Parsley visited in July and examined the welding and tailoring training projects, visited student beneficiaries at the Luchenza Community Day Secondary School and met with grandmothers groups.



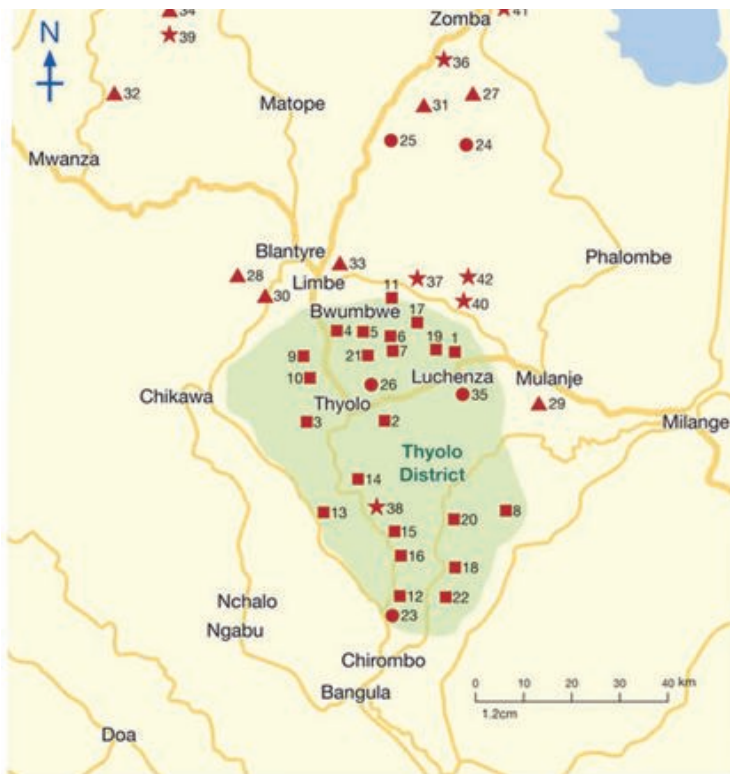
Grandmothers greeting Ms Jennifer Parsley

The Stephen Lewis Foundation and FOCHTA support grandmothers and see these brave ladies as being vitally important in HIV/Aids affected areas, where they are often the only adult left alive to care for numerous grandchildren. The grandmothers welcomed Jennifer with a dance, and showed her the products they are busy making – pottery, dresses, sweaters and wooden hoes. Another income generating venture is honey production and they proudly showed off their first bee hive.



Beehive – a grandmothers' initiative

Where our students study



- : Community day secondary schools
- : Conventional boarding schools
- ▲ : National secondary schools
- ★ : Colleges and universities



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

www.fochta.org.au

or email:

info@fochta.org.au

You can donate to FOCHTA online at:

www.fochta.org.au

or by issuing a cheque to:

FOCHTA Malawi Managed Fund

and sending it to:

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

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible to Australian residents