



GIRLS ON THE MOVE

ATSIKANA PA ULEENDO

News

Spring 2008

www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com

Atsikana Pa Ulendo (APU) is a Malawi/Canada organization dedicated to helping young Malawian women achieve self-sufficiency through education.

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APU Is Officially Launched / Lighting A Candle From Canada To Malawi

by Memory Chazeza Mdyetseni

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT8i8IVlkKs>

On March 22nd that's when we had the official launch of APU. On this day we invited a lot of people. The expected number of people was 500 and was composed of chiefs that helped us to acquire the place, the head of institutions and different organizations around the APU school were also invited. All of the students and their parents were invited. The APU Board of Trustees and their families, teachers and their families, and all of the labourers. The whole family of APU was there. We did this so that they would know about APU. We wanted to let them know that we exist in the same area. For example we invited the head of police because as a school we will need their support. We invited the head of the health center at Nsalu because he will be of service to us in future. We also invited people from surrounding schools because we have just started and we will be relying upon our friends for books and equipment which we are lacking. We thought it wise to include them. This will help us to work together with the community.



Girls on the Move



Christie and Memory raise the flags

It was a great day. There were so many things happening on this day. First we started with the official cutting of the ribbon by Christie and myself. After that we had a tour of the classrooms, the hostel (we went into each room the shower room and toilettes), the cafeteria and the staff house. Then we went to raise the flags of Malawi and Canada. I was raising the Canadian Flag and Christie raised the Malawian flag. That was very important to me. That was when I really realized that

With Education Comes Transformation

by Christie Johnson

The pictures on the right were taken during the interview process in December 2007 after each of these girls was interviewed as part of the selection process for APU. Of the 365 girls who sat for the entrance exam, 80 were selected to form our first class of APU students. The girls whose photographs are featured in this article were amongst the successful applicants. These incredibly privileged girls started their classes at APU on Jan 14th 2008. Just three months later, these girls have made great strides in their academic progress, their physical health as well as their self confidence and self esteem. Memory has personally taken the most downtrodden of these girls under her wing and is working with them at night, encouraging them, listening to their problems, and giving them the strength and courage that they need to succeed.

Before coming to APU, these girls, having completed their primary schooling (free in Malawi), had no hope to continue their schooling, as they come from families who simply could not (or in some cases would not) afford to pay the high school fees at their nearby government secondary schools. Many of them were already being pressured by their families to get married as their upkeep was too much of a burden for their guardians to afford.

“Life has meaning. But to these girls, with everything they are going through, it reaches a point whereby they feel that life is meaningless looking at the hardship they are going through. They don’t care anymore. At the same time, these are girls of potential, because I feel like all human beings are the same and I still go back to what I said that given potential, they can improve. You don’t choose which family you are born into in this world. When these girls first came to their interviews, you could tell that they felt as if they cannot change and that what they are is what they deserve out of life. They feel as if receiving an education is an impossible thing. They felt miserable and were at a point during the interview that they were crying for themselves. And only this first term from their faces, you can tell that they have got hope. That they are on the move and they are moving towards a better life.”

- Quote from Memory



Valentina Phiri, Christina Nsakwiye,
Alefa Majomeka, Cecilia Mathews,
Maureen Jossam & Victoria Kutuntu
Before and After Photos

These girls were living in conditions of extreme poverty and neglect, sleeping on straw mats on hard soil floors with only a thin cloth to cover them, drinking unsafe water from open wells, eating food with little nutritional value, working long hours in the family fields and gardens, and in some cases even being encouraged to prostitute themselves for the little income it would bring in. Their future almost certainly included early marriage, a high likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS, bearing many children in quick succession with almost no chance of educating them or providing for their basic health needs.

With the opening of APU, the future of these young women has changed completely. Living at APU under the care of the Memory and her staff of highly qualified teachers (all have B.Ed. degrees from Malawian universities), these girls are being told that they can change their lives if they work hard. They now have a woman role model to look up to. Someone who is telling them that they have potential, that they have worth and that their future is bright. They are eating a diet of beans, eggs, beef (twice a week), rice, nsima (thick maize porridge) and locally grown vegetables and greens. The water they are drinking comes from a borehole well and is chemically treated and filtered. The girls sleep on foam mattresses (plasticized for ease of cleaning) on bunk beds. Each girl has been provided with a mosquito net to protect her from malaria.

Academics At APU

by Christie Johnson

A typical school day at APU begins at 7:30 and ends at 3:30. APU has 4 teachers including Memory, who are teaching a total of 12 subjects. These subjects include Biology, Physical Science, Math, Social Studies, English, Chichewa, Agriculture, Geography, History, Life Skills, Physical Education and Bible Knowledge. School clubs run from 4:00 to 5:00 every Friday and include a Wildlife Club, Science and Technology Club, Debate and Writing Club. From 6:00 to 8:00 each evening the girls all go into the classroom and study by the light of kerosene lamps (we hope to have electricity by the end of this school year). This coming term APU girls will be heading out into the local



community of Nsalu to engage in Community Service such as tutoring primary school children, cleaning of the local market, and helping the sick and weak (carrying water, harvesting food, gardening). The girls

will also begin to participate in 'Village Service' activities at the APU school and construction site such as weeding, watering the garden, slashing of grasses (hand mowing), and transferring of bricks from one location to another. Both *Community Service* and

Village Service are ideas that are not usually practiced by school children in Malawi. APU hopes to model the ethic of service both to the students as well as to the larger community. We want these girls to realize that it doesn't take money to make a difference in this world and that they have skills that can benefit their community.

Cont'd from page 1

my dream has come true. Looking at the girls in the background singing 'Young Women We' it was really something. I was thinking in my mind that this was lighting a candle. Christie has come all the way from Canada to Malawi to APU to light this candle. To me, this day of the launch was really the start of everything. This was an assurance to me that this was really something. When we were raising the flags that was the most highlight to me.

After that we went and took our seats. The girls and their parents had prepared activities. The second speech was from the Traditional Authority, then a speech from the chairman of the PTA. This is one of the parents of the girls of APU. Then after that I did my speech and finally Christie did her speech. It was really colourful. At first when Christie told me about this idea of an official launch to me I was figuring a small thing but after sitting down with my fellow teachers I knew it would be a big thing. The excitement in the girls that APU is really taking them on the move to a better future was really tangible at that time. Since we started our preparations I personally have been looking forward to this day. Upon seeing Christie coming from Canada I plus my friends were very excited that the Launch would really happen.

Above all, I'd like to thank each and every person who has given an ear to listen to Christie what she has been sharing about Malawi, about girls in rural areas, and about how they suffer to get an education. And not only giving your ear to what she has been saying but I'd also like to thank those who have extended their help towards this project of improving girl child education. You never know how much you have done to the lives of these girls and to the nation as a whole. I know that almost maybe the whole world including Canada knows how AIDS has devastated Malawi. And the only weapon to defeat AIDS is through education. And this is education to the girls because girls are the ones who are easily taken. Because of poverty, they don't really care about their lives, provided

someone has given them a little something. Even for a meal they are ready to give up their lives. But with educated girls, it's hard for a girl to be taken by a man because a girl knows that she can sustain herself. She can manage to get her basic needs by herself.

For example, I myself am one of the people who would have died a long time ago. Because of the family I was coming from I was lacking many things in my life. For example food itself was a problem. While I'm suffering for food, some rich men could come and try to win me and if I was very weak enough and had no purpose with my life I was going to give up and go for what I was lacking. But because I was strong enough to say no to them that is the reason why I survived. And I know that there are so many girls out there who are willing to change their

destination but it's hard at the same time if there is no one to help them. For example, I would give my example. Myself I was a girl with potential, and without anyone coming along to help, really I was heading for disaster. Because for how long was I going to be strong after many problems coming one after another. A hope came when Christie came to see me and realized my potential. It took her to help me. Christie is helping me, I am helping the girls. Christie on her own cannot do this big job. It is huge. She needs other people who will believe what she has to share. That is when we can be able to help these girls.

Personally I have got hope that one day Malawi is going to be a better country when more girls are given the same chance I had to achieve their dream. I'm a role model to these girls to the extent that just looking at what I've achieved all the girls they feel they have the potential to do something in life. I could read that in their eyes after the launch on March 22nd. That these



Haywood Hostel Dedication Plaque



Christie and the Chiefs who helped obtain the property



Christie and Memory cut the ribbon

girls they've taken the responsibility not only waiting to finish their school before they start sharing their knowledge but to start sharing the things they've just learned with their families and communities. So believe me or not, that the light which has shone on the launch, stretching all the way from Canada to Malawi has now extended to the 80 families. This is a huge impact in my country because I'm looking at 80 as a big number. And more especially I think of the villages they are coming from. With 80 girls you never know how many people are being touched. I bet thousands and thousands of people already they are able to see this light. I should end with this quote from mother Theresa, and I quote, "We cannot do great things on this earth. We can only do small things with great love."

Construction Progress Report

by Henry Mdyetseni

PHASE I IS COMPLETE

- First Classroom Block (containing three classrooms)
- First Girls Hostel (containing 6 large rooms, a shower room and a toilette room)
- Septic Tanks with capacity for 400 people
- First Teachers Houses (2 houses semi-detached)
- Temporary Canteen
- 1 Shallow Borehole Well
- 10 Temporary Pit Latrine Toilets



First Class Block



Semi-detached Staff Houses

PHASE 2 HAS BEGUN

- Second Classroom Block
- Second Girls Hostel
- Second Teachers House
- Cafeteria (to be used as an eating and assembly hall)
- Water Project (well, pump, water tower and tank) -

dependent on funding

• Connection to the electrical grid - dependent on funding



Girls Hostel

Chifundo Petro's Story

by Christie and Memory

It was by accident that Chifundo was chosen from all of the girls to lead the videographer into her village on the day prior to the APU Launch. We wanted to include some footage from the girl's homes in the video that was being produced about the Launch, and Chifundo's village happened to be the closest one to the school. What Memory and I found when we arrived was a shock to both of us. Neither of us expected to find such extreme poverty. Here is a small glimpse into Chifundo's life prior to her selection to APU.

Chifundo lives with her elderly grandparents who are also supporting her three brothers and sister. Her first born brother quit school because he had no one to pay his school fees. Chifundo is the second oldest child in the family. Her mother passed away when the family was very young and although her father is alive, he refuses to take care of the children. The grandparents have a small garden which is not large enough to sustain the family. The family does not have a toilet (they use the bushes), the bathing room is thatched but is very old with many openings so that showering during the day is impossible. She sleeps in a small house (one room made of soil with a thatch roof) with her sister. This small house has now fallen

down, so during this school holiday Chifundo will have to sleep with her brother, his wife and their small baby in their small one-room soil house. When we toured Chifundo's village there was no evidence of stored food (maize flour, beans) which means that the likelihood that this family will experience

famine is extremely high this year. No one in Chifundo's village expected her to be successful in her application to APU and it was clear from the response of her family that Chifundo has become a local celebrity in her community. She was incredibly happy to show us around her village and showed no signs of shame or embarrassment about her living conditions. Rather, she was bursting with pride that we were there to greet her grandparents and siblings. Right now, there is a great feeling of hope and excitement in Chifundo's village despite the poverty.



Chifundo Petro Before (above) & After (left)



Chifundo with her cousins (above) and her grannies (right)



Be A Part Of This Dream And Light Your Own Candle

How you can help



Sponsor A Girl
Please consider taking on the full (\$1000/year for 4 years) or partial (whatever you are able to give for as long as you are able to give it) sponsorship of one of our girls. Currently, we are still searching for sponsors for 25 of our first 80 girls.

Join Our Brick By Brick Fundraising Club by donating towards the construction of our Phase 2 Projects.
2nd Classroom Block
2nd Hostel
2nd Teachers House
Cafeteria



Hold Your Own Fundraiser for APU!

- See our website for examples of how schools, Rotary Clubs, Churches and youth groups are raising money to support our Girls On The Move.
- Hold a fun run or walk and ask for pledges
- Hold a car wash or bake sale.
- Sell paper bricks at your school for 5 cents a brick and watch our walls grow!
- Ask you family, group of friends or classroom to gather together to sponsor a girl. Remember that this is a team effort. You do not need to do it alone!

Ask me to come and speak to your club, church, school, class or youth group!
I would love to come and share the most recent stories, pictures and video clips from APU in Malawi. If I can't make it, there is a growing team of volunteers that know this story very well and could come and present on my behalf. Please contact me at cjohnson@pearsoncollege.ca or (250) 391-0348.



Check out our video on YouTube! Search under "Malawi Girls on the Move"

An Educational Sponsor can change a girl's life forever!

For only \$85.00 per month
\$1000 per year
Or \$4000 for all 4 years of Secondary Education

Sponsor a girl for all 4 years of her Secondary Schooling and receive a hand-made Malawian Girl Child Doll
This doll will represent the commitment that you have made to improving the lives of girls and women in Malawi. Your doll will be given the name of the girl whose education is being funded by your scholarship.



Your yearly scholarship of **\$1000** will pay for one girls' room, board, tuition, textbook fees, school uniform, and examination fees. Of this scholarship, approximately **1/3** of this scholarship will be put into future construction projects so that the school will be able to grow with each intake of new students. Your scholarship will not only cover the cost of educating your sponsored girl but it will pave the way for more girls to follow in her footsteps!



Malawi

The Republic of Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) is located in southeastern Africa. It is bordered by Zambia to the northwest, Tanzania to the north and Mozambique, which surrounds it on the east, south and west and is separated from Malawi by the Lake Malawi (also Lake Nyasa). The origin of the name Malawi remains unclear; it is held to be either derived from that of southern tribes, or noting the "glitter of the sun rising across the lake" (as seen in its flag). Malawi is one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most densely populated countries with a democratic system of government.

