

Project Number #MW96157

Project Name HOPE for AIDS Master Project – Malawi

Project

The overall HOPE for AIDS project in Malawi seeks to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of AIDS sufferers and their families, and to enable and educate the church and community in responding to the AIDS pandemic.

This 'master project' provides for the central shared resources across all the individual projects and the seed funding necessary for the rapid response to initiate and develop new projects.

Project Background

SIM's global program called 'HOPE for AIDS' has been established in many of the countries where SIM is working and HIV/AIDS is prevalent and has 4 elements based around the word HOPE.

In Malawi, where the AIDS rates are amongst the highest in the world, a committee was formed in 2002 with representatives from SIM and their partner church in Malawi, Africa Evangelical Church (AEC), in order to prepare a country specific strategy for each of these four elements and develop project proposals. Since the AEC is predominantly a rural based church, these AIDS interventions are designed to reach deep into the rural areas of Malawi.

HOPE for AIDS has been running for over 15 years and over that time there has been a significant change in the HIV situation in Malawi and around the world, the church has become fully engaged with home based care, orphan and prevention ministries and the project is now in the final stages of handing over the ministry fully into the hands of our partner church such that the project should be finally completed by end 2021.

Activities

Over the last 6 months all activities have been undertaken as planned. The project reached a major milestone in January when the HBC and OVC co-ordinators completed their employment with SIM, after 13 years working for the HOPE for AIDS projects, having facilitated the final hand-over of ministry fully into the hands of our partner church, AEC. We praise God for these amazing, faithful men who have contributed so much to the success of this project.

Project Closures & Renewals

The HBC and OVC projects were closed with all remaining funds being transferred into this master project which was updated and renewed on the SIM projects system in November. The updated master project now incorporates all the remaining activities relating to the completion of the transition of all HBC and OVC ministry into the AEC including the goat pass-on scheme. The new end date for this project is 31 Dec 2021.

HBC and OVC – Goat pass on

The AEC Projects Officer, Joseph Antonio, has continued to work half time for HOPE for AIDS over the last 6 months, funded through this project, to oversee the goat pass on scheme which is operating now in 10 of the 11 project locations. He made follow up visits to all locations during November & December to assess progress and work with committees to keep the vision strong and solve various issues relating to ensuring all goats are becoming pregnant, loss of a few goats due to theft, wild dog attack and sickness, and preparing the list of beneficiaries for the first pass back. Each location received their last allocation of monthly nutritional supplies for beneficiaries during these visits in Nov/Dec.

HBC Naotcha

The final HBC location was assessed to be not suitable for a goat pass-on scheme and following several meetings in January/February it was agreed that we would implement a small business revolving loan scheme instead which could have the same impact of empowering beneficiaries as well as church members and allow ministry to continue by making loans available to new beneficiaries where the need was identified. We enlisted the help of trainers from Vision Fund (World Vision's micro-loan program) to provide the initial training in March to add to our stewardship sessions but then put the follow up training, business planning and loan provision on hold in response to the COVID-19 situation recognising that we are working with a particularly vulnerable group of people.

In the last few months we have also held several discussions with volunteers and church leadership about constructing a dedicated small building for the soap IGA at Naotcha in order to make it more self-sustaining and two quotes were sourced. More work needs to be done to finalise plans which has also been put on hold now in response to the COVID-19 situation.

OVC Day Care Centres/Preschools

Prior to leaving employment in January, the OVC co-ordinator was able to support teacher trainings (funded under this project) alongside the AEC National Children's Co-ordinator for 9 AEC churches who have started day care centre/preschools to meet the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in their community. It is encouraging to see the church starting such ministries, without waiting for support from HOPE for AIDS, and mobilising local parents to enable a feeding program.

OVC Secondary School Students

There is a final cohort of 20 secondary school students being sponsored. Fee and exam payments were all made in January to cover the rest of the academic year although the impact of schools being closed as from 23 March due to COVID-19 remains to be seen. All students received a pair of shoes in November and school stationary in January.

It was encouraging that the OVC co-ordinator was able to attend the graduation ceremony on 16 October for one of the previously sponsored secondary school students who was selected to university and completed his Bachelor of Science with the University of Malawi. We understand he has been asked by one of the lecturers there to continue doing some work for him which may help him as he seeks full-time employment.

It was however disappointing that there was some mis-management of money at one location relating to payment of school fees. Consequently the local church has an outstanding debt with the school which needs to be settled and the AEC national leadership are working to resolve this issue. The headmaster has allowed the students to continue and covered their exam fees whilst waiting to receive payment.

COVID-19 Impact

The impact of the Corona virus in Malawi has been later than many other countries with the first confirmed cases at the beginning of April. SIM Malawi and HOPE for AIDS responded quickly such that all non-essential travel was stopped and trainings/meetings postponed before this time. Whilst follow up trips are postponed for the foreseeable future we will continue some follow up through phone to encourage our volunteers to take what they have learned relating to holistic pastoral care and put into practice in this new context. The SIM project co-ordinator and AEC Projects Officer worked on information sheets for COVID-19 prevention and care which have been circulated widely throughout the AEC including our HBC/OVC locations.

Christian Marriage & Family Life (CMFL) Evaluation

The Master project assisted with costs for the program evaluation visit in February to CMFL peer educators who were trained in 2019 in 3 districts and a visit to previously trained peer educators in the Lilongwe area in March. It was encouraging to hear that some of those trained as long ago as 2013 were still active in marriage & family ministries even up till now. (See story below)

Today for Tomorrow

The Master project continued to fund some Today for Tomorrow (T4T) program activities over the last 6 months including:

- Printing of the Year 2 curriculum – After final translation and proof reading, 1000 copies of the Year 2 curriculum were printed thanks to a special fundraising initiative by a church in Australia for this purpose (costs of Today for Tomorrow activities shared between this project and HOPE for AIDS Prevention project).
- Follow up & mentoring visits to T4T trainers/teachers & Area Council Children's Ministry Co-ordinators in Lilongwe in March (costs shared with Children's Capacity Building Project)

Hope for Life Gathering

The first international Hope for Life Global Gathering was held in Johannesburg from 28 Oct – 1 Nov. The project co-ordinator Jacky Hammond attended on behalf of SIM Malawi Hope for Life (previously HOPE for AIDS). She made some helpful connections with the SIM Zimbabwe project co-ordinator who may have some helpful experience to share on IGAs, goats and other initiatives that are relevant to Malawi, and was also able to reconnect with the SIM Today for Tomorrow Co-ordinator. She also had the opportunity to find out from others about available resources to empower the church to address issues of alcohol addiction which is one of the drivers for the spread of HIV and was particularly interested to hear of Project Exodus which could help empower the church in Malawi.

Vehicles

There are currently 3 project vehicles for HOPE for AIDS projects. 2 vehicles are running well in support of HBC and OVC operations whilst the 3rd vehicle had been off the road for several years having not found any interested buyers when trying to sell it a few years ago. In the last 6 months this vehicle has had major work undertaken in order to bring it back to a good running condition in preparation for making another attempt to sell it (it was felt we would be able to recoup more money if it was running than for parts.)

For the next 6 months

As the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold in Malawi we will be working with the church to disseminate accurate information relating to prevention and care, address the various myths that are circulating, give a solid biblical response to the pandemic, and help empower church members to protect the most vulnerable in their communities. Although we are not sure of the timescale due to COVID-19 travel and meeting restrictions, the next ministry actions we are planning will be:

- ❖ The AEC Projects Co-ordinator will continue to be supported in providing on-going monitoring of the 10 pastoral care ministries including goat pass-on – anticipated to at least end 2020. Whilst travel restrictions are in place the follow up can only be by phone
- ❖ The AEC Projects Co-ordinator will continue transition implementation at Naotcha HBC including the revolving loan scheme and a building to support the soap making ministry
- ❖ Disposal of 2 project vehicles
- ❖ Track the 20 secondary school students to assess impact of COVID-19 on their being able to take their final MSCE exams
- ❖ Consider further how to empower the church to address issues of alcohol addiction

Funds yet to be imported from closed HBC & OVC projects (MW96253 & MW96255) total \$31,975

Prayer requests –

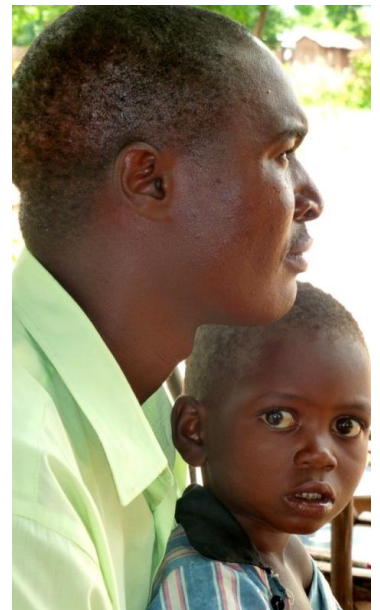
- Pray that God will have mercy on Malawi, especially the poor and vulnerable, and give them the strength to fight off the corona virus.
- Pray that our church volunteers will put into practice what they've learned about provision of holistic pastoral care to the vulnerable over the last 15 years in this new context
- Pray that the goats continue to thrive and multiply even without follow up visits!
- Pray that we can find buyers for 2 of the project vehicles

Stories:



Farewell Thomas & Gerald

After working together in HBC & OVC for 13 years it certainly felt like the “end of an era” when Thomas & Gerald left us at the end of January. It's been quite a journey over this time during which 11 churches have been mobilized with 250 volunteers continually growing in their capacity to give long term practical, emotional & spiritual support to >800 families, kids too numerous to count at the day care centres, and ~400 sponsored secondary school students. Their final legacy has been to empower the current ~600 beneficiaries & volunteers with goats to help them break the poverty cycle.



I love these pictures of them as they reflect how they always got alongside people and built gentle, genuine & loving relationships with volunteers and beneficiaries alike as they lived out their faith in word & deed. Like with little Lewis (pictured R with Gerald) who always ran out to meet Gerald every time he saw the car approaching! They always desired to keep the spiritual aspects of the program central and so do join us in praying that the volunteers will continue to do that and grow in their faith using the ‘Chakudya cha lero’ daily bible reading booklet which was given to each one during their December farewell meetings.

Now ministry continues fully in the hands of our partner church, Africa Evangelical Church, under the watchful eye of Joseph, the AEC Projects Officer. Joseph worked closely with Thomas and Gerald on the introduction of the goat pass-on scheme and continues to work with the final HBC location where, after various meetings, it was decided that, instead of goat pass-on, we would start a 'pass-on/revolving' micro-loan scheme which was more suited to their semi-urban environment. We are teaming up with facilitators who work with another micro-loan NGO to provide the training. (Pictured is Joseph, in red, mixing up the sessions at the first training in February with some outdoor activities.) The same vision of 'passing on', excellent stewardship and empowering on-going pastoral care ministry are still very much at the heart of this plan so please pray this will be taken to heart by each of the beneficiaries during the trainings.



Community mobilised to care for vulnerable children

It was a joy that before our OVC Co-ordinator completed his time with Hope for Life, he was able to share his expertise on Under-5 day care centres with our partner church through the provision of 3 preschool teacher training events attended by representatives of 9 different churches who had taken the initiative to start their own ministries. The final training was held at Dande & Bwangu where the already running 'Today for Tomorrow' program has been so impactful amongst the primary age group. The AEC National Children's Co-ordinator was co-facilitating the trainings and described this final training as 'the best so far' with the participants having been carefully hand-picked with strong support from the AEC headmaster of the primary school who wants to see the preschool work closely with the primary school and be included in the existing feeding program supported by Mary's Meals & World Food Program. It is awesome to see what can happen when the church can be part of mobilizing the whole community to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and the community values the ministry of the church. (Participants from Dande & Bwangu pictured)



First HOPE FOR LIFE Global Gathering By Jacky Hammond, SIM Malawi Hope for Life Project Co-ordinators

In October I had the privilege of being one of 34 delegates from over 10 countries at the first Hope for Life 'Global Gathering' held in Johannesburg. A highlight for me was my small group (pictured) that prayed together at various points throughout the week – representing ministry in India, Kenya, Burkina Faso (and obviously Malawi) in hospitals, with youth and in rural clinics. We shared and prayed over the struggles, joys, successes and failures with a focus on our faithful God who is bringing hope to many lives. It was also a great

time to meet again 'old friends' like Chris Maphosa from Zimbabwe (Today for Tomorrow), to learn new things including hearing more about the link between HIV and human trafficking and how SIM is responding, and I was greatly encouraged to find someone who could point me towards some excellent looking resources for mobilising the church to address issues of alcohol addiction which is an area that we are investigating as it is a major issue in Malawi and one of the under-lying drivers for the spread of HIV.