

News from the Centre

From the editorial team

As summer draws to a close in Europe, it's still the cold season in Malawi. For the people who depend on the land for their livelihood, it is a relatively tranquil period, with the harvest in and still some time before the new planting season starts. Anxiety at the start of the year about food shortages is for the moment forgotten; in fact the harvest this year has been the best for a number of years. In large measure thanks to the help from its donors and supporters, the Centre has been able to provide extra food assistance to combat the worst cases of hunger.

In contrast to the season-dependant rhythm that governs the subsistence farmer's working life, our Centre employees are as ever hard at work each day, in the clinic and also in the nursery school and the vocational training courses which have restarted. In this newsletter Jacqueline tells us more about the employees who keep the Centre ticking over. We trust that you will find our latest Malawi news interesting and informative.

Working for Eva Demaya

By Jacqueline

The Eva Demaya Centre, with its various healthcare services and other projects, is a major employer in Northern Malawi, offering full-time work to over 60 people and part-time employment to a further 20 people each year. And it's not only doctors, nursing staff, midwives, nursery school teachers and vocational training instructors whom we employ, but also the many workers who help maintain the buildings and those who grow the crops of those employees who live at the Centre.

When people are taken on to work at the Centre, for most of them it's their first-ever paid employment and their first-ever source of regular income. It's tremendously encouraging to see how these employees not only earn their bread through the work the Eva Demaya Centre offers them but also how in the course of time they develop both professionally and personally. It happens often that Centre employees later obtain regular work elsewhere as a direct result of the valuable job experience they have built up working with us.

Towera Mfuné is the longest-serving employee at Eva Demaya, with 15 years' service. She began in 2002 as a 21-year-old housekeeper in the Centre's guesthouse. She learned her trade on the job and she also discovered what it meant to be in regular employment.



For some fellow-employees, who like Towera were in a regular job for the first time, the responsibility was too much – they were unable to handle the routine and discipline of a five-day working week. But Towera managed to adapt without difficulty and also takes great pleasure and pride in her work.



Towera is now responsible for the entire domestic service work at the centre, together with her three colleagues. She makes sure that the offices are cleaned, that all necessary household supplies are available, that meals are prepared for the children at the nursery and for the vocational training students, and that visitors staying at the Centre lack for nothing (anyone who has visited our centre can testify to this!)



I work a lot with Towera and together we have been through many ups and downs. In the time that she has been at the Centre, Towera has brought four daughters into the world; Vivianne, 15, Abigail, 10 and Suzie, 9 and a baby girl born prematurely in 2005 who did not survive. The family lives in a staff house at the Centre and we have seen all three girls growing up. They all attend the local school and Towera has done everything in her power to ensure they get a good education. She has had to care for the girls as a single parent, after divorcing her violently abusive husband following years of domestic unhappiness. Earlier this year the husband died at a relatively young age.



For a single working mother, family is all-important. Towera's parents, brothers and sisters all live near the Centre and live from subsistence farming, which in Malawi can mean a precarious existence. They grow their own food and if they are lucky enough to have a good harvest, any surplus food is sold. Towera is the only family member who has a regular job. She is often called on by her family members to help them out and we do our best to support her in her role of provider to her family. We fervently hope that her

smiling face will be around at the Centre to welcome both colleagues and visitors for many years to come!

Our other employees

By Jacqueline



For day-to-day organisation of the Centre's work, tasks are divided into various services, such as general administration, maintenance of buildings and terrain and domestic services. All activities that have to do with purchasing and transport of the goods and materials we need and proper storage of these in our store-rooms (including our supply of medicines) have to be carried out by ourselves and demand a great deal of attention, given that we operate in a remote area where the roads are rough and untarred.



These various services together guarantee the efficient operation of the Centre and support for the five major

projects which the Centre carries out for the benefit of the local population: healthcare, orphan care, community assistance, sport and cultural exchange. For each of the supported services we have a sector head who directs the work of those involved in the service. These sector heads work closely with the management team which in its turn is responsible for the efficient day-to-day functioning of the Centre and its attendant financial responsibilities.

Vocational training

By Jacqueline

This year we continue our tradition of offering vocational training to ten young people. Four young women are being trained as tailors/dressmakers and six young men are following training courses in tin-smithing, carpentry and bicycle repair.

The students stay for six months at the Centre and learn a trade that will allow them to provide for themselves. In addition to vocation-specific learning, they are also given lessons in more general subjects such as personal healthcare and elementary business management and administration.



This is now the 12th successive year that we have been offering such courses. In total, 120 of these vulnerable young people have already had a chance to further their personal development thanks to a training course that offers them the prospect of economic independence within their own communities. The extra benefit of the training courses is that the village communities are then served by the new skills which the young trainees bring to their localities. This aspect of the Eva Demaya Centre's work is greatly valued both by the beneficiaries and by their community.



A good harvest

By Jacqueline

Luckily, this year has seen a good maize harvest in Malawi. In our own area too, people now have enough food. This good harvest comes as an enormous relief after a succession of poor harvests, especially last year. It is easy to see from people's appearances that they now have enough to eat and all this makes working and living in the area a lot easier! However, for longer-term improvements in the food situation, what is really needed is major structural agricultural reform driven by government; but this will take time. As a Centre we encourage local people to introduce irrigation schemes into their farming practices. To this end we are working closely with a number of organisations which emphasise the irrigation agriculture approach.

Thank you!

By Jacqueline

On behalf of our more than 60 centre employees, I would like here to offer my sincere thanks for all the help we receive from you. It is encouraging to see how Eva Demaya is able to improve the lives of many here in such a clear and direct manner.

Our employees are able to care for themselves and their families: their children attend school, and in times of poor harvests they still have enough to eat. They can come to our clinic whenever there are health problems and many of our former employees have now found useful work in the towns. Through the work opportunities provided by the Centre, the lives of many people have been changed for the better.