

News from Malawi

We caught up with **Maaïke Bruynooghe**, Midwifery alumna, a year after we featured her work as the Update cover story in June 2014. She's been very busy since then with her projects and charity work in Malawi, which maintains some links with Oxford Brookes...

After completing the preceptorship year as a midwife at the Oxford University Hospital Trust and studying for a diploma in Tropical Nursing at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, I finally achieved my goal: I now work as a midwife for VSO in Malawi. This is a fantastic opportunity to combine all my plans. Whilst I am working with the Ministry of Health, the Kamuzu College of Nursing in Lilongwe, the Queen Elisabeth Hospital in Blantyre and Mzuzu University I can also further develop my own project here in Malawi. Kunyumba is a day care centre for vulnerable children, which was established in 2008. The priority is now to set up a follow on project: Kudimba, a stepping stone for vulnerable teenagers and young adults.

Kudimba is an organic fruit and vegetable garden in Senga Bay, following the principles of permaculture. Here, young people at risk can come to learn and develop. They are at risk due to a number of reasons: a disability, medical problems or coming from a difficult social background. The aim of the Kudimba project is to help older children, teenagers and young adults who cannot flourish without extra support, or who do not have the opportunity of education.

Young people are offered opportunities to work together, earn an income, and become self-sufficient. This helps to break the generational cycle of vulnerability, including psychiatric problems and disabilities. In particular, the project focuses on general and sexual health education



and support, family planning, and life skills. To support this healthcare work, Kudimba links with the newly-built maternity unit in the nearby town of Salima. It is towards this unit that the Oxford Brookes hospital uniform donation will go.

We have managed to collect approximately 300 student nurse uniforms from graduating Brookes students. The total weight exceeds by far what fitted into our own luggage. Through some connections and our financial contribution we have managed to link up with a charity container. The container has recently left the UK and will arrive in Malawi in July.

We have decided to open the doors of the Kudimba project sooner than planned. The age range of the children in the day care centre is wide. Our youngest child, Atupele

was one week old when she arrived here, an orphan, and our oldest member is Bia, 22. Because of this age gap there is now an urgent need for the follow on project. The first step is the renovation of an already existing small building and employing two new Malawian staff members. Even sooner, from July 2015 onwards, we will support some young people financially to embark on an internship to learn a skill, in collaboration with local craftsmen and businesses.

In the meantime the original project, Kunyumba, is expanding as well. The centre now provides day care for 33 children, and we have bought land to grow this, and make the centre accessible to even more children.

Another busy year ahead!

www.kudimba.org

Maaïke Bruynooghe



Photos by: Frédéric Mary