



Dear Kumbali-Friends!

Preamble

Malawi in March was unusually cold this year. The rainy season was still in full swing, and the temperatures dropped with every downpour - the sunny days could be counted.

The country had not yet recovered from the cholera epidemic when tropical cyclone "Freddy" devastated the south on 12th of March 2023. As reported by the local media, President Chakwera had implemented emergency aid for the affected families with donations from worldwide organizations.

Activities during my trip from 9th of March to 2nd of April 2023

On March 9th, 2023 I started with full luggage from Stuttgart with stopovers in Frankfurt and Addis Ababa and landed happily on March 10th, 2023 around 1:00 p. m. in Lilongwe. Our coordinator Saili picked me up with his family - wife Cathy and children Tamani, Takondwa, Yamin, Lemekeza and niece Angela.

The Malawi team immediately thanked us for our tireless commitment and sincerely wishes further successful cooperation.

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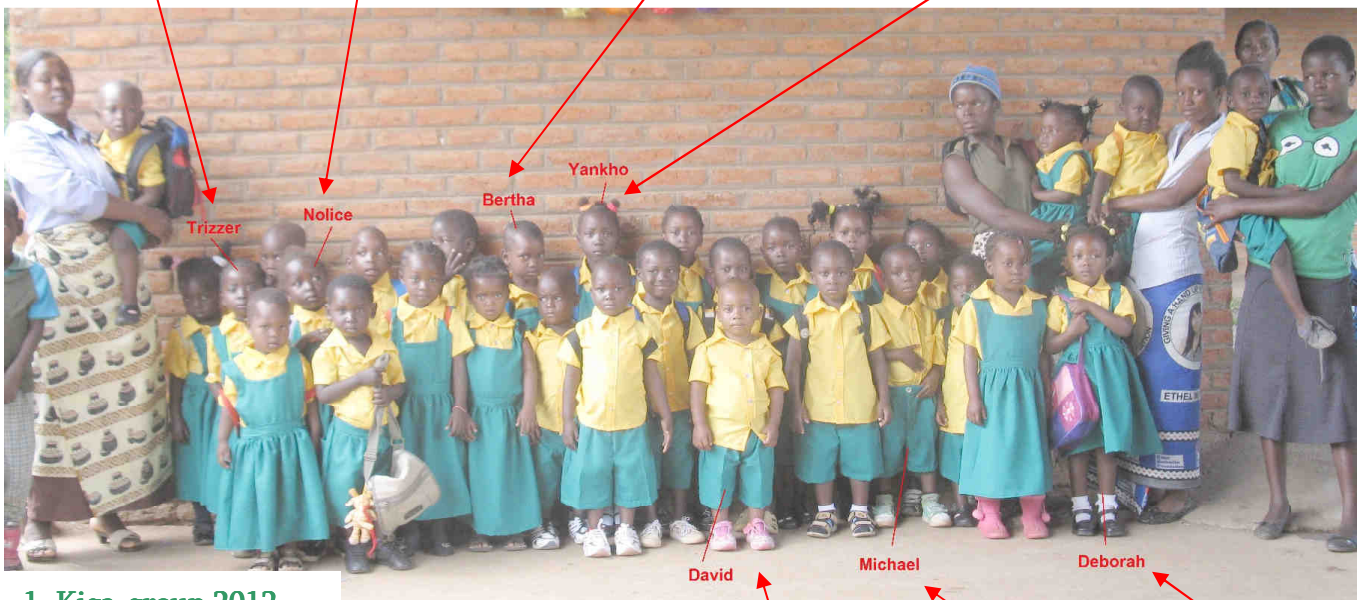


Our scholarship holders

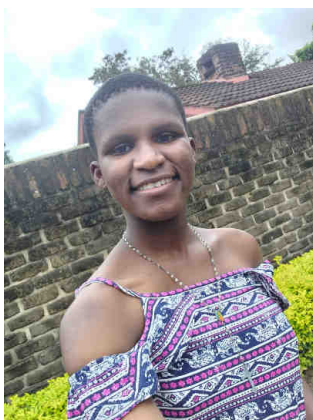
"Children become people"



Given



1. Kiga-group 2012



Alinafe



Cynthia



We have been supporting former children in secondary school since 2022 (we reported). On the first weekend I met almost all the young people - the parents were there too. We talked about the current progress. Most have a good average, but some need to "step up a gear" to meet the performance goal. The parents assured their full support; Esther also agreed to give private tuition if necessary. As agreed, the parents will continue to send the learning results to our association in the future.



Kumbali Kindergarten

The joy was huge when I gave the children the painted gym bags I had brought with me from the children's church in Beinstein. Everyone wanted to be the very first immediately and in general. A short video was recorded of each child. We had so much fun.



Of course we also had a little surprise in mind. We made sun shields together with the parents, which will soon be handed over to the children here in Beinstein (Germany).

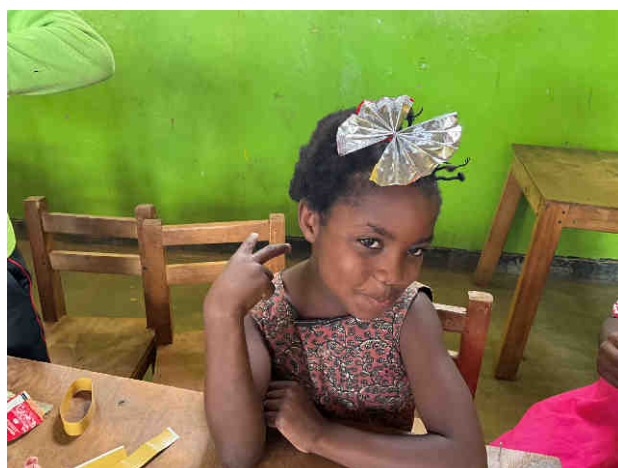


Waliranji Projekt

Here, too, the days were full and flew by. I had thought about some activities and realized them. With class 8 we painted the two kindergarten rooms together with letters and numbers.



In class 7 we made little dolls. Andy - our club member - had given me Granny's discarded handkerchiefs and cotton wool for this purpose.



Creativity was also in demand in class 6. With the help of handicraft sheets (gift from the Grübel printing company, Weinstadt) we conjured up beautiful garlands. And how amazed the children were when I told them something about upcycling. How quickly an old bag of crisps became an enchanting headdress.

Solar cooker training

How I kept my fingers crossed that at least one day the sun shines all day, because you need a sunny day to cook with the solar cooker. My fingers crossed were successful and McDonald, our solar cooker instructor, was ready and brought the solar cooker from Lilongwe to Waliranji in the morning.

Cooking with solar energy (we reported) - the novelty moved into Waliranji - will hopefully be actively used in the future. On this test cooking day there were "only" hard-boiled - but freshly laid - chicken eggs 😊



Trip to Mchinji

Our kindergarten is not yet supplied with electricity. Brenda and I drove to Mchinji to ESCOM (Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi Limited) for registration. The registration went without any problems; unfortunately it can take up to a year until we are connected to the power grid.

Kitchen project

In the new kitchen we will cook with gas. Moreover, the kitchen will be built according to standard norms; a sink with drain is also integrated. For this I met with a local very competent plumber. In the existing pipe from our solar pump, he will install a branch to the kitchen and a drain. We will receive the cost estimate shortly.

A four-burner gas stove can be bought in Lilongwe; I am in contact with the seller.

Saili and I checked out bottle size and delivery possibilities from various gas suppliers in Lilongwe. The kitchen can be operated very well with two or three 45 kg gas bottles.

As soon as all cost estimates are available, Michael Strohn will present the kitchen project.

This is how is currently cooked:



New school books

In Germany, we order books online or go to our favorite bookstore and shop there. In Malawi you have to adapt a bit ☺ - but that's also the interesting and exciting thing about traveling abroad.

Another day was planned to go to Lilongwe with Brenda and buy school books. There is a huge covered market where you can buy anything, really anything. As a result, you meet a lot of people and it is so crowded that you can hardly breathe. I was keen to take some photos but I just kept holding my backpack with both hands the whole time and secured our money. I didn't feel threatened in any way, but you can find little thugs everywhere and I wanted to play it safe.

After two hours of discussion and selection, the sale was sealed. A new textbook costs between two and three Euros. The seller was overjoyed and so were we. With your donations, the continued operation of the school in Waliranji can be maintained.



Agriculture

In Malawi, maize is the basic food.

Nsima is made from maize meal and served with a variety of vegetables which are grown locally, such as tomatoes, pumpkin leaves, beans, sweet potatoes, etc. and/or an egg and potatoes. I'm always being asked which grain is growing in Germany and how we use it.

Last year I collected different types of grain from our fields and compiled a small catalogue:

Wheat, barley, rye, spelt, oats.

The teaching team listened with interest and asked many questions.

They will use the catalogue in class.



Time to say „Goodbye“

Another trimester came to an end;
many parents came to receive certificates.
I also said goodbye to the children,
teachers, parents and friends
with a small tear in my eye -
to another meeting next year.

Natural Resources College (NRC) Lilongwe

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) is located approximately 15 km outside Lilongwe. I had reserved one day for a young student, her name is Elluby.

A little story behind:

At the end of last year I got a phone call from Frank, a guy living in Leipzig, a German town. He found our contacts through internet.

He told me he supports a young girl in Malawi since many years and would like to visit his godchild one day. I suggested he can fly with me in March, but he refused because he can't get organized until then. He asked, if I could manage to meet Elluby.

And sure enough, I called and set up a meeting at her university.

I was blown away by Elluby and the entire campus - equipped with the finest laboratories, library, conference rooms, cafeteria and huge agricultural demonstration areas.

It is a privilege for Elluby to study here - she sends a big thank you to her godfather Frank.



Landscape

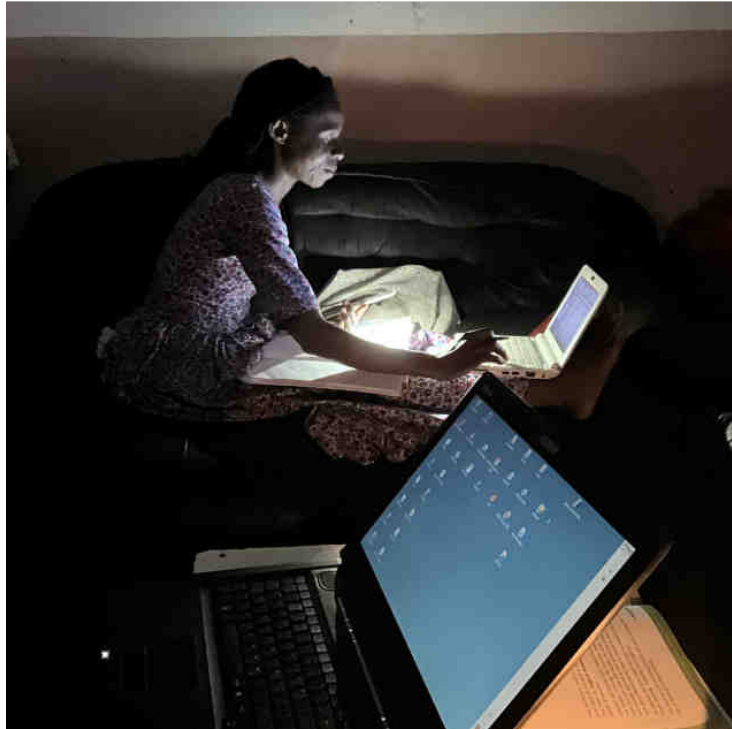
HOW and WHERE do I live - how do you have to imagine that?

Our teacher Esther has a small room and spoils her guests. She lives for rent, of course without electricity and running water. The water she brings daily in a large bowl on her head from the nearby well. A few houses in the area have electricity, we can charge our mobile phones and laptops there if necessary - because of course office work also has to be done.

Sun rise is at 6 a. m. and sun set at 6 p. m. First Esther cleans her house; if necessary she washes some clothes und boils water for the morning coffee or tea.

I sleep in a small tent that is simply placed on a mattress. A bed is not necessary and also no mosquito net.

Toilet and shower are outside - very basic but clean.



Esther lives with her twin brothers, Rodgers and Famous. Of course, at the beginning there is always a lot of laughter, because I find it difficult to tell them apart. Sometimes Rodgers bakes mandazi - just heavenly! A very dear family, I feel very comfortable there and the house is always open to other visitors.



Church

On Friday evenings, the church choir rehearses for the Sunday service.

Esther has a beautiful voice and is the lead singer in the gospel choir. I have known the choir for many years now and am always involved right away. We sing and dance together and it is really a fantastic experience.



A breakdown ...

had to happen to us too. We ran out of fuel in the middle of Lilongwe town. Thank God there was a petrol station within reach. I marched off with a 5 liter water bottle. When I came back, Saili had already cut up a small plastic bottle so we could use the top part as a funnel.

It was a totally funny situation and we laughed a lot. Improvisation is the A and O in an African country ☺. Also, I didn't even know there was a warning triangle in the car.



Last of all ...

I also saw Mwayi (pronounced: Maya) again. She proudly shows her "arithmetic machine". She is now in class 2 and has very good grades.



2016 and today 2023

Grit Wagner-Strohn