

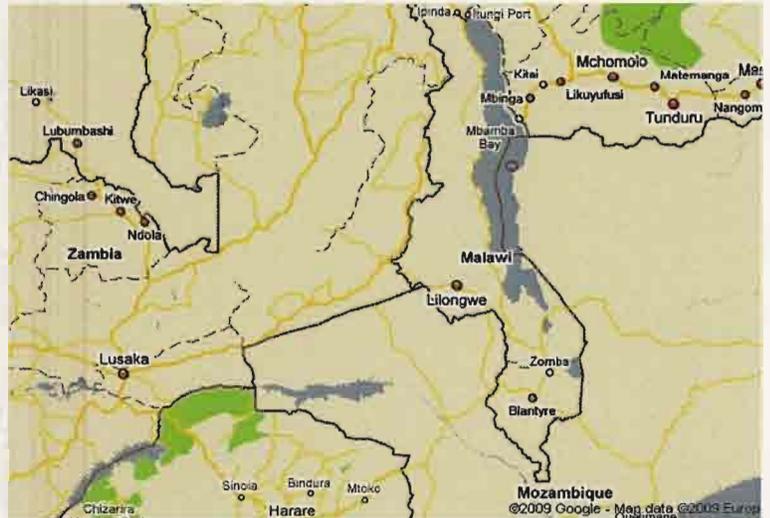
WHY WE CARE

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by Dr. Barbara Walls

Like most Americans I am geographically "challenged" so I have included a map of Malawi here for your review. If I should be asked why I am concerned about what happens in Malawi, Africa I would have no answer except to say that the child whom God used to change my life lives there.

Although LifeNets has several projects in Malawi, the primary focus of the **Love In Action Committee** is the Orphan Care Program and this program and its caregivers are the center of our fundraising activities.



The Orphan Care Program. The Orphan Care Program is carried out under the auspices of the Chizeni Health Clinic in Balaka, Malawi. The clinic, built in 2003, serves both the city and surrounding rural villages. The Orphan Care Program is operated by Dr. Sam Chilopora and his wife Ester, a registered nurse. Together they see 500⁺ patients each month as well as conduct weekly visits to women and children in nearby villages.

The Orphan Care Program provides food, medicine, mosquito nets, and clothes (during the cold season) for 220 children. Not all of the children served by the program are orphans – although most are – but all are desperately needy.

From January 15, 2009 to March 15, 2009 Ms. Christina Davis, a student at Seattle University visited Malawi to assess the vitality of the LifeNets scholarship program and to visit the Chizeni Clinic. This trip was undertaken as part of the International Development Internship Program at Seattle University in conjunction with LifeNets. As part of her fact-finding study she interviewed a sample of mothers of children served by the Orphan Care Program.



Histories of Children Served by the Orphan Care Program.

The following histories represent only a *sample* of the children served by the Orphan Care Program.

Matilda Fiati is the child whom God used to pique my interest in LifeNets. She came to the Chizeni Clinic at 2 years of age weighing only 8 pounds (or the weight of a newborn). Ms. Davis learned that she has both mother and father, but her father is disabled and cannot work. Her mother, like many of the women in this village, does "piece-work" which means she generally works on the agricultural plots of others to earn money. *There are no sources of employment or "jobs" in rural villages where the villagers can earn money.* Matilda's mother brings home about K500/week (USD \$3.37) which is higher than most. At some point, the mother had to choose between feeding her family or buying fertilizer to plant a crop. No fertilizer means there is little likelihood of a harvest.



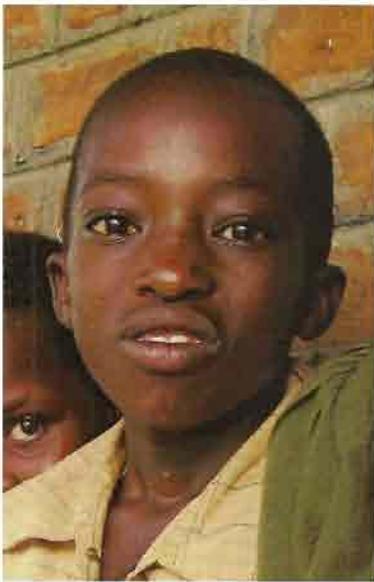
Odala Wemba is nearly one year of age and is being raised by her mother. Her father died recently from a brain injury. She is one of four children and she and her family have a meal of milled corn and water (sima) once a day. (Milled corn and water are the only ingredients in sima which makes up 95% of the family's diet.) Her mother earns about \$0.30 - \$0.60 per day.



Felix Time is seven years of age and has lost both parents to AIDS complications. The grandmother, who cares for Felix and his older brother, says that the main challenge of caring for the boys is starvation. She earns about K100/week (USD \$0.72) cultivating other people's gardens and sadly reports that, "there are days when we eat and days we don't."



Olivia Dickson is six years of age and has six brothers and sisters. Her father died suddenly of what is believed to be cerebral malaria. The family depends on corn for food, but her mother's crop yielded no harvest this year because she could not afford to buy fertilizer. With combined earnings, the family makes about K50/week (USD \$0.36) which allows them to share five cassava roots each week. *So Olivia and her mother and six siblings share 1.5 cassava roots every two days.*



Uriah Dickson (not related to Olivia) is 12 years of age and is an orphan. He has been "passed around" to many households and now lives with an old woman in the village who feels she cannot provide for him. Uriah started coming to LifeNets Chizeni Health Services when he was five to receive food a few times each month and clothes and blankets annually. He relies on LifeNets to survive.

Rahamani Rajab, another child cared for by the Orphan Care Program, is one year of age. His father died of HIV-like symptoms a year ago and Rahamani's mother earns money by drawing water for others and sometimes by selling firewood. When she can find work, she earns about K150/job (USD \$1.08).

The most amazing thing here is that the Chiloporas believe that some of the mothers interviewed might have inflated their incomes and how often they worked! Never-the-less, the histories somehow all seem surprisingly similar, each describes bare existence, only the names seem to change. What is clear is that many children would die without LifeNets assistance. Please go to www.kubik.org to see the blog by Ms. Christina Davis to read histories of other children served by the Orphan Care Program.

WANTED: A FEW ORDINARY PEOPLE

...To Help Do Extraordinary Things

I believe Americans know we live a blessed existence in this country – and I believe we are a generous people because of this knowledge. As a nation we comprise 5% of the world's population, but own 25% of the world's goods. This is blessed indeed.

A motto of the Marine Corps is "...a few good men," but I am looking for a few good women – or men – who are willing to help make a difference in the lives of those in need. Most of the world lives on \$300 a year – or less – which is what many spend in this country at the local coffee shop in a year. So what is proposed here is do-able, if we work together.

Funding Concerns for 2010. Funding concerns for 2010 seek to go beyond supporting the Orphan Care Program. For 2010 the Committee seeks to:

- Give support (in terms of animals and fertilizer) to the 120 care givers of the children in the Orphan Care Program, and
- Give support subsequently to others within the village.

The idea here is to give support to families so they can, in time, become more self-sufficient. Before you begin to think the task proposed is impossible, the following chart gives examples of costs in Malawi compared to costs in the United States:

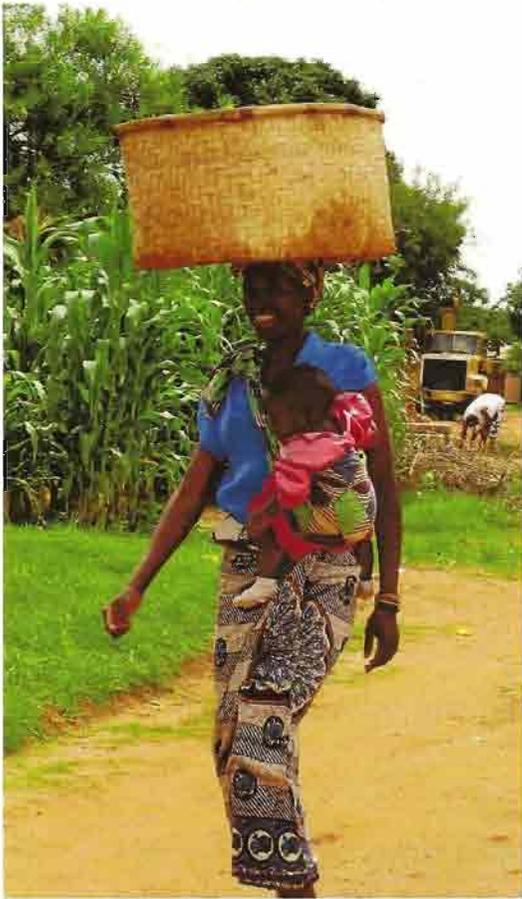
Costs in Malawi vs. Costs in the United States

Malawi Currency (Kwacha)*	USD (\$)	What This Amount Buys
\$ 500 K	\$ 3.50	Chickens
\$5,000 K	\$35.00	Goat (1)
\$9,000 K	\$64.00	Bag of fertilizer (1)

*There are approximately 148K per \$1.00 USD.

These costs would show that helping others in need is indeed do-able.

The irony for many of the caregivers in the Orphan Care Program is that although they work on the fields of others, they do not have the where-with-all to help feed themselves. **They are planting and harvesting food for others - that others may live - and they themselves are starving.**



Land apparently is available for families to plant crops, but seed and fertilizer are not. As a result, crops for 2009 have been consistently poor throughout the region because families do not have the money for fertilizer.

Specific fundraising goals for 2010 seek to:

- Secure funding for the Orphan Care Program,
- Provide chickens and goats (for food and fertilizer) to the 120 caregiver families over the course of the year,
- Develop a FINCA* - like program for seed and fertilizer so people do not have to decide between buying food to stay alive for the day at the expense of putting in a crop so they can eat tomorrow, and
- Buy an ARK (45 pairs of animals) for the village through the LifeNets Animal Project. (Every effort will be made to be sure these are clean animals.)

I leave you with the words of Dr. Chilopora. (As it was mentioned earlier, he operates the Chizeni Health Center and oversees the Orphan Care Program.) Dr. Chilopora states:

"GIVING is the greatest LOVE a man can show."

This, indeed, is the sum of the matter. *BEW*

* F.I.N.C.A. stands for Foundation for International Community Assistance and provides financial services to women (who are the lowest income earners) so they can feed and clothe and educate their children for a better future.