



# MAMIE MARTIN FUND



## SUMMER 2012 NEWSLETTER

### FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN MALAWI

This issue of the Mamie Martin Fund Newsletter comes out at a potentially momentous time in the history of Malawi.

Malawi's Ministry of Education has revealed that the controversial quota system introduced by the late President Bingu wa Mutharika's government is likely to be abolished. The quota system was introduced between 2009-2010 amidst protests and concerns from various sectors of society including the clergy and human rights activists.

As I understand it, the system was created to "neutralise" a perceived geographical bias in educational opportunity and achievement: it was presumed that the reason that the Northern Region of Malawi had greater academic representation at tertiary level education was due to an "excess" of secondary school places. So a limit was placed on the number of pupils from each region who were "allowed" to go to Secondary school.

Some of our friends and some of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia's Secondary Schools, the ones we affectionately refer to as "our" schools, were directly affected by both the system and the protests. Indeed, in July 2011, there were violent, fatal, clashes between government "forces" and protesters very close to the Synod Offices in Mzuzu. The quota system and the response to the protests were among the issues raised by civil society activists in this year's petition to Mutharika, before his death. Aid money that was granted for antimalarial drugs was being diverted to other projects. The inevitable result was a higher than normal rate of illness among CCAP pupils during the malaria season.

In spite of last year's difficulties, when the 2012/2013 Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) exams started in June, 130,000 students from both government and private schools had registered for this year's examination. That figure is 30 percent higher than last year's 99,000 candidates. This must surely reflect the greater confidence now being felt by both Educators and their students in Malawi.

2011 was a year of uncertainty and financial stringency in all sectors of society but the effects were acutely suffered by our friends in education. The new President, Joyce Banda, is on record (see page 2) as a committed champion of girls' education. In an interview she gave in 2010, while she was Vice President, she recounted how her childhood friend could not afford to go to secondary school:

*"I made up my mind at that point, whatever would happen in my life, I would try to send girls to schools."*

So now we have a person in the highest position in Malawi whose aspirations for girls in education are matched by our own.

That is an excellent situation, but it doesn't mean we can relax our fundraising efforts. The Kwacha has been devalued but costs are rising. Please continue to give generously, gift-aid your donations and tell everyone you know that we need their help too.

**Thanks**

**Convenor – Willie Sinclair**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE, SUPPORT US, OR SIMPLY NEED MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT:**

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## Malawi's New President

Joyce Banda became the first female President of Malawi in April 2012 following the death of Bingu wa Mutharika. President Banda was born in 1950 and served as Vice President of Malawi from May 2009 until April this year when she became Malawi's 4<sup>th</sup> President. Her accession to the Presidency was hailed as "a triumph for democracy" and took place peacefully – one of her aims is to unite all Malawians and her Presidency is welcomed internationally as well as in Malawi.

Joyce takes on the role of President with many accolades to her name – she was listed in Forbes Magazine in 2011 as being the "third most powerful woman in Africa" and she founded the Joyce Banda Foundation which is a charitable foundation that assists Malawian children or orphans through education. Throughout her adult life President Banda has been involved in many grassroots projects with women, particularly those aiming to bring about changes in policy about education and also movements on peace, reproductive health and women's status in business and communities.

At the time of Joyce Banda taking on the presidency the Malawi press reported *"Banda gave an insight into her motivations in an interview last year, citing the example of a childhood friend in her ancestral village as one reason she had kept on campaigning. She told how her friend, much brighter than herself, was forced to leave school after one term because her family could not afford the \$12 fees.*

*"I went on to go to college and I became the vice-president of Malawi," Banda told the Global Post. "She is still where she was 30 years ago. The vicious cycle of poverty kept her there and took away her options. I made up my mind at that point, whatever would happen in my life, I would try to send girls to schools."*

## World Bank report

The World Bank issued a report in September 2011 which focuses on gender equality and is very clear in supporting the argument that investing in women is a sound strategy in economic terms. Development prospects would improve generally if women and girls were given access to all levels of education, if they possessed land rights, had more opportunities to enter to the job market and had more control over all aspects of their lives. The report notes that whilst "gender gaps in education have narrowed, girls from the poorest families are still less likely than boys to attend school and have the chance to enrol in secondary and tertiary education." In a comment in an article in The Guardian, Justin Yifu Lin, World Bank chief economist said "The main message (of the report) is that gender equality matters for development outcomes and development policy-making. Blocking women and girls from getting the skills and earnings to succeed in a globalised world is not only wrong but also economically harmful."

## School News

Falkirk High School is returning to Bandawe in September with a small party of pupils and staff. The theme is service, linked to the school motto of *Invicem Servite, Serve One Another*. Discussions are underway with BAGSS about joint activities and shared lessons and the group is also taking on some tasks for the Committee. The group hope to gather some information about present destinations of girls who have had fees assistance and also to discuss how best to support their partner school over malaria. ***FHS will be at the AGM in October with pictures and stories!***

Williamwood High School in East Renfrewshire is strengthening its links with Ekwendeni Girls Secondary School.



Paul Thole, MMF's Administrator in Malawi, visited Karonga in June this year and is pictured here with pupils who are MMF beneficiaries.

The link between Alva Academy and Karonga Girls Secondary School was hindered by the earthquake in Karonga and some communication difficulties. However, a new group has been formed in Alva and the school are hopeful of arranging a visit in 2013. They are also looking at ways of engaging the wider Alva community in the partnership.

The school at Elangeni is managed by CCAP and MMF supports some of the girls who attend the school. The picture on the right shows a group of girls together with their Headteacher and the MMF Administrator, Paul Thole – the picture was taken in March 2012.



The generosity of all donors to the Mamie Martin Fund continues to be immensely loyal and in addition to regular donations MMF received a legacy in the Autumn of 2011 from Elizabeth MacLaren who had been a longstanding supporter of MMF.

## **The Malawi Scotland Partnership gains strength**

The Scotland Malawi Partnership applied for funding from the Scottish Government for its sister organisation – the Malawi Scotland Partnership which is based in Lilongwe. The application was successful and will allow the Malawian partnership to strengthen its own presence and support the work of agencies in Malawi that have links with Scotland.

### **Fundraising**

On the MMF website [www.mamiemartin.org](http://www.mamiemartin.org) you will find information about fundraising through MMF Gift Cards.

You can raise funds for MMF each time you use the internet by using Everyclick – and conducting searches via <http://www.everyclick.com/mamiemartinfund>. The way this works is that Everyclick donates a percentage of 1p every time someone accesses the internet via the link above. So this does not cost you anything and funds are raised digitally!

Most donations are “gift aided” and this means that 25% of all “gift aided donations” are reclaimable from HMRC - so donations become even more generous!

### **Elvas and 500 Miles**

500 Miles remains pleased with Elvas saying that her results at the end of her first semester of her second year at TATCOT where she is training in orthotics and prosthetics were excellent. Exams for the final semester of her second year are at the end of July. Next year is the third and final year which Elvas will be studying at TATCOT and she will return there in October after a Summer break.

### **Dates for diaries ...**

The 2012 Mamie Martin Fund AGM will be held on Saturday October 27<sup>th</sup> 2012 from 12.30 until 16.00 at Ladywell Church Hall, Bannockburn.

The 2012 Blantyre Livingstonia Fellowship annual meeting will be held on Saturday October 20<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Edinburgh.

2013 marks the bicentennial of David Livingstone's birth. There are many events planned to take place during the year throughout Scotland to mark the occasion. Information on planned events will be detailed on the Scotland Malawi Partnership website [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org)

2013 is the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Mamie Martin Fund which was set up in 1993 by Margaret and John Sinclair in memory of Margaret's mother.

**Scottish Charity Number SC 0214843**

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