



CRWRC

CHRISTIAN REFORMED
WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

Living Justice, Loving Mercy

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Praise God for:

- 24 volunteer caregivers who are bringing health and hope to chronically ill patients in Malawi
- Our new malaria coordinator, Chipiliro, who started in January
- A new CRWRC staff person, Istifanus Gimba, who will take over our work with HIV/AIDS prevention in Mozambique

Please pray for:

- The home-based care program as we prepare to train 18 new volunteer caregivers in April
- Istifanus and his wife Esther as they settle into Mozambique and begin language learning
- Us as we prepare to leave Malawi at the end of June. We have many projects to wrap up and we want to finish well

Grabowski News from Malawi and Mozambique

February 2009

Bringing health and hope to chronically-ill patients in Malawi

No one I know enjoys being sick. Phil, Cara and I recently experienced colds and an ear infection. We were congested, tired and miserable for a few days.

At the same time, we were blessed. We had the luxury of



Rose (left), a volunteer care-giver, and Esther (center), our home-based care coordinator, prepare to clean the sore on Mr. Ling'wame's foot.

taking paid time off work. We had a vehicle to drive to the doctor and health insurance to pay for medical care and medicine. We could buy healthy food and rest in comfortable beds. We had people around us who were happy to care for us.

This is not the case for everyone. Imagine falling sick in a rural Malawian village. It is difficult to rest because you need to haul water and firewood and farm your garden. The nearest health clinic is far away and you have little money for a bus ride. If you manage to save enough money to travel to the clinic there may be no doctor and very little medicine. You may be told to go to a pharmacy and purchase medicine but you have no money to travel to the phar-

macy or buy the medicine. It is difficult for your body to recover because you are malnourished. Imagine your family and friends are afraid to take care of you, afraid to touch you for fear of catching HIV and AIDS.

Sadly, this is the situation for many AIDS patients in Malawi. This is the reason we started our home-based care program.

We train local volunteers to act as caregivers. These caregivers go door to door, identifying chronically ill patients in need of assistance. They provide basic medical care and medications. In some cases they assist with transportation, food, household chores and referrals to local clinics. They teach families how to care for the patients safely. They also provide companionship and spiritual support.

We currently have 24 volunteer caregivers reaching out to 309 patients, 226 of which are HIV positive. Others suffer from cancer, tuberculosis and other diseases.

Rose Khoromana is one of our volunteer caregivers. Every week Rose visits ten patients in Mzembera Village. One of her patients is Mr. Martin Ling'wame. Mr. Ling'wame complained of a large sore on his foot. Rose cleaned and bandaged the sore. She asked Esther, our coordinator, to visit. They decided the sore was serious and beyond the scope of the local clinic. They referred Mr.

Ling'wame to a larger hospital in the nearest town. He was diagnosed with cancer and told to return regularly for treatment. He worried he wouldn't be able to afford the bus fare but Esther and Rose helped him request travel assistance from the hospital. Now he is receiving the care he needs. Rose regularly visits him to encourage him to continue the treatments and to assist with other needs.

Sarah Gray and her daughter Zion are also Rose's patients. Last fall Sarah became ill. Her husband left her and her three children. Later she found out that she and her youngest daughter are HIV positive.

Rose visits them to help Sarah and Zion fight off the common illnesses that accompany an immune system weakened by AIDS. When we visited Sarah she was suffering from shingles. Rose helps Sarah around the house. She also provides social and spiritual support for Sarah as she struggles to care for her three young children. (continued on page 2)



Rose (left), a volunteer care-giver, and Esther (right), our home-based care coordinator, sit with Sarah and her daughter Zion, both patients in our home-based care program.

Continued from page 1: Bringing health and hope...

Mr. Ling'wame, Sarah and Zione have also benefitted from gifts of food that Rose has distributed as part of our program.

Rose is just one of 24 dedicated volunteers who give their time to bring health and hope to chronically-ill patients in Malawi. Mr. Ling'wame, Sarah and Zione are just three of 309 patients who benefit from their care. We plan to train 18 more volunteer caregivers in April. There are many more patients in need of support.



Thank you for making this program possible through your support. Please keep our volunteers and patients in your prayers.

Please note our new e-mail addresses:
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Future Plans

As many of you know, Phil is planning to pursue a master's degree with Michigan State University, studying agriculture, natural resource management and community development. This means we will soon complete our time with CRWRC in Malawi and Mozambique. We plan to be in the US in July and August to visit with you, our partners in community development work. We are excited to share with you what God is accomplishing here through your support. We are so grateful for the support you have given us over the past five and a half years. It will be difficult to leave Malawi and Mozambique, but we are excited about the opportunity to equip ourselves to be better development workers in the future.

The all-purpose, Malawian chitenje

If there is one essential item in the Malawian woman's wardrobe it is the chitenje, a large rectangle of brightly colored cloth.



Cara catches a nap wrapped in coworker Lucy's chitenje.

The chitenje is used as a skirt, an apron, a shawl and a head wrap. It is used to carry babies, wrap bundles and secure loose items. Rolled into a donut it cushions heavy items such as buckets of water that are carried on the head. It can be sat on, folded into a diaper, used as a blanket or towel, and cut up to make other items of clothing. Matching chitenjes are used as uniforms for choirs and other clubs.

Chitenjes are even used for advertizing and political campaigns. With presidential elections approaching in May, there are many new chitenjes around town. Dyed in party colors, they display the portraits and slogans of the presidential candidates.



Many community meetings conclude with dancing. Here the women display a variety of chitenjes.

In our own home we use chitenjes for curtains, tablecloths, wrapping paper and picnic blankets.

During a recent village visit, our coworker, Lucy Kamphonje, offered Cara a nap wrapped in her chitenje. As you can tell by the picture, Cara didn't turn down her offer!