*Salut-malawi*



*Sanitary Aid and Ladies Underwear to Malawi*

*Malawi-Twin Newsletter No 75*

*March 2019*

Dear Friends,

We are the members of SALUT-Malawi, or Sanitary Aid & Ladies Underwear to Malawi. In case you missed our newsletters last year, we are the newest project of the ever-ambitious and ever-encouraging Malawi-Twin project of Corpus Christi. Just as the body of Christ is made up of many parts, each with its own purpose, so too the Malawi-Twin project provides a framework through which a variety of initiatives are implemented to support and improve the lives of our sisters and brothers in Malawi.

SALUT-Malawi’s specific aim is to provide underwear, soap and reusable sanitary pads to isolated rural villages where such commodities are in scarce supply. We have chosen this narrow focus because living without these basic commodities brings dire consequences for women and girls.

In many parts of rural Africa, a woman who is too poor to afford a bra is seen as an easy target for sexual violence – if there is no one to provide her with a bra, then there will be no one to stand up for her if she is assaulted. As for the lack of sanitary pads, for most girls this means that the start of puberty marks the end of their education. In these sparsely populated areas, a school located in a remote village must serve the needs of children from several surrounding communities. Students must walk several kilometres each day to attend class. For a menstruating teenaged girl with neither underwear nor pads, such a journey is extremely difficult, if not impossible. ***Maggie Nyoni***, one of Malawi-Twin’s Coordinators who has served as Headteacher in a number of remote secondary schools, explains that “village girls […] use torn pieces of old clothes as pads”. As a result, girls gradually disappear from the classrooms, their education and potential cruelly cut short.

***Father Denis Chitete***, a mainstay of Malawi-Twin in Karonga, describes education as the key to enabling families to break out of the cycle of poverty. Several academic studies have shown that female education has been one of the most powerful factors in alleviating poverty across the world. Literacy and numeracy empower women to better care for their children and earn an income that improves their families’ welfare. In this way, SALUT-Malawi’s simple aim complements perfectly the many education and female empowerment projects that Malawi-Twin makes possible.

*“Empowering the woman in the family means empowering the whole family because women take care of the children, women take care of their husbands.”*

**Father Denis Chitete, St Joseph the Worker Parish, Karonga**

Back in 2017, the people of Corpus Christi responded enthusiastically to our initial appeal. We also began working with Cheeky Wipes who gave us a 35% discount on their reusable cloth sanitary pads. In the end, we sent 16 cartons of ladies’ and children’s underwear, reusable nappies and soap, as well as 50 packs of 5 reusable sanitary pads each. The response from Malawi was so encouraging, Malawi-Twin decided to make SALUT-Malawi a *bona fide* part of their family.

Last year we reached out to schools in the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells area not only to collect donations but also to raise awareness among students of the circumstances faced by their peers in countries like Malawi. And lest you presume that being denied an education for want of items as basic as sanitary pads is limited to poor countries, we should point out that what is now being called “period poverty” is an issue that also affects girls from poor families in the U.K. The motivation behind SALUT-Malawi lies in what binds us together as women across borders and cultures. As topics such as menstruation and sexual violence become de-stigmatised, discussion is replacing taboos and identifying problems that have been hiding in plain sight. Now is the time for solidarity as we seek to address and remedy the failures of the past.

Four of the seven schools we contacted responded very generously. Our sincere thanks go to the teachers and students of **St Margaret Clitherow** **Catholic** **Primary School**, **Sevenoaks School**, **Bennett Memorial Diocesan School** and **Tonbridge Girls Grammar School**. Besides collecting dozens of boxes of underwear (including a high proportion for younger girls) and soap, they donated more than 40% of all the money we raised for the purchase of reusable sanitary pads. We are grateful to ***Reverend Rachael Knapp*** for allowing us to talk about our project to the Year 10 students of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School.

In 2018, we sent 28 cartons of underwear to **Chiringa** Parish*,* **St Joseph’s Secondary School** in **Karonga** Parish, **Changoima** Parish, **St Montford**Parish, and the **Good Shepherd Secondary School** in **Njuli** Parish. We also divided six cartons containing 216 packs of reusable sanitary pads and two cartons of panties in girls’ sizes between two secondary schools with large numbers of female students - **Golomoti** with 233 girls and **Mkomachi** with 171 girls.

*“Once again, thank you for improving our Malawi girls’ sanitation as well as class performance through reduced absenteeism.”*

**Maggie Nyoni, former Headteacher Golomoti Secondary School**

While excellent news, this is only a small start. Our 2018 efforts reached just over 18% of female students. And for 2019, Malawi-Twin has agreed to help two further secondary schools. This brings the total number of students supported to 11,000. So, it is time to roll up our sleeves for 2019! And you can help us by:

1. **Spring cleaning your underwear drawers –** gather up all those good quality bras, knickers and children’s underwear no longer worn and bring them to us. Nothing racy please!
2. **Donating new packs of underwear**, especially training bras and sturdy knickers for teenaged girls. Remember these need to withstand a lot of washing.
3. **Donating soap**. SOLID SOAP ONLY please. Liquid soap is of little use at the riverside.
4. **Contributing to the purchase of reusable sanitary pads**. Cheeky Wipes is continuing to sell us their pads for £2.66, compared to the usual retail price of nearly £5. If you are a Corpus Christi parishioner, could you please make any cheque donations payable to “Corpus Christi Church Tonbridge”, so we get the Gift Aid.
5. **Bringing your donations** **to one of our** **collection events**:

***6pm-8pm, Saturday 9 March 2019***

***1:30pm-3:30pm, Sunday 10 March 2019***

***6pm-8pm, Saturday 30 March 2019***

***1:30pm-3:30pm, Sunday 31 March 2019***

1. **Encouraging your workplace or your children’s school or nursery to get involved**. We will continue to work with local schools and nurseries to set up collection boxes for underwear and soap as well as donations for buying pads. We will also seek to engage with older students through presentations and discussion. Please contact us if you would like to organise a collection at work. We have ***flyers*** and a ***collection box poster*** that provides all the necessary information.

**We will be accepting donations until Easter.** If you would like to assist, donate or ask a question, please contact **Maria Neves** (**07503663734**) or **Jacqui Nunes** (**07914771357**).

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

*Claire Churchill, Alexandra Lopez, Maria Neves, Jacqueline Nunes and Angela Saltaren-Ghent*