



The last six months have seen some exciting developments for Egmont and our partners.

In September, as part of our annual process, we assessed 27 new project proposals from a combination of existing partners and organisations we have not worked with before. Following extensive review, we were delighted to agree to fund 16 new projects, three of which are led by new partners for Egmont.

Vision of Hope offers refuge and rehabilitation to girls living on the streets in Lusaka, Zambia, empowering them to claim their rights to education, health and protection, with a particular emphasis on HIV & AIDS prevention.

LICO (Life Concern Organisation) is based in the Rumphi District of northern Malawi, and is working to eliminate mother to children transmission of HIV, through a programme of education, encouraging testing and improving access to anti-retroviral drugs.

SAODI (Southern Africa Dialogue) establishes support networks and better access to treatment

for women and children affected by HIV & AIDS in Hatfield, a suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe.

These new partners are further evidence of the wide range of grassroots approaches on the ground in Africa that can prove effective in mitigating the impact of HIV & AIDS on children and their families.

This brings the total number of projects currently funded by Egmont to 22. Three snapshots of how the work of our partners is transforming people's lives are outlined in this short newsletter.

Attached to this newsletter is an invitation to our annual Egmont Trust Awards where we recognise the achievements of our partners over the past year. This has been brought forward for 2014 from May to Wednesday 19 March. We hope to see you there.

Thank you for all your support, which enables our partners to continue their life-changing work.

NOTES FROM MALAWI

In October 2013, Jane Baker and Colin Williams visited a number of our partners in Malawi. Here is a brief snapshot of their visit to Kwithu Women's Group.

Kwithu Women's Group is a community-based organization in Mzuzu, northern Malawi. It was founded in 2004 to create a loving, supportive environment for vulnerable children. Initially the group delivered meals to 20 children once a week. Today, they provide hot meals to over 200 children three times a week, early childhood education, after school tutoring and sports & community programmes on HIV & AIDS. They want to be able to provide a meal each day but this will only be possible with more funding.

We were introduced to Mercy, who kindly welcomed us into her home, where we also met her 13-year-old son Sam. Mercy told us that after discovering she was HIV+ she did not know how to tell her son, because of what it meant for their future. On top of that, she could not bring herself to tell Sam that she had passed the infection on to him at birth. The guilt she felt was overwhelming.

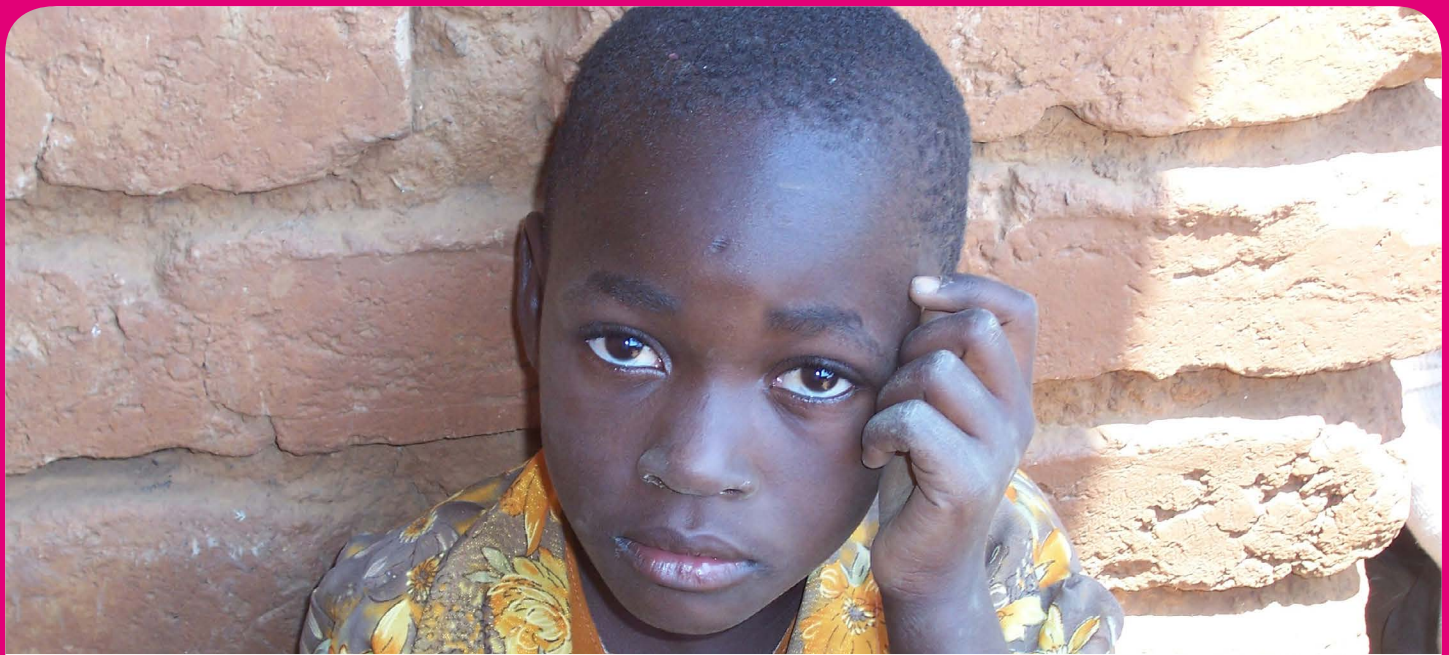
Rose, a volunteer counsellor working with Kwithu, visited Mercy to teach her about treatment and nutrition, and give reassurance that, provided Mercy and Sam took their medication and ate properly, they could live well. Rose is also HIV+ and full of energy and passion. Sam was also given counselling, and told us that he now understood the importance of taking medication and eating well every day. He was proud to tell us about the vegetable garden he tends at their home, growing beans and maize. Sam looked fit and well, and is enjoying school. In fact, he dashed off in the middle of our visit because he couldn't wait to get back to class!

Following treatment and feeling well again, Mercy subsequently joined the Action Group to help others, and two years later became their Chairperson.



Mercy, in her vegetable garden in Mzuzu

LATEST NEWS: According to the recently released UNAIDS report, there are now 25 million people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, a number that is growing due both to new infections (1.6 million in 2012) and people living longer because of treatment and care. However, as many of those infected do not know their status, only 32% of people infected with the virus in the region are receiving medication.



Jane and Colin also visited a **NASFAM** (National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi) project, based in Balaka in mid-Malawi. In 2009, with an Egmont grant of £23,764, NASFAM started a one-year adult literacy programme with government-approved teachers, which helped 43 women farmers learn to read, write and calculate.

As a result of the project, the women started to recognise the value of education, particularly in relation to their daughters. The gift of literacy also empowered the women as farmers. They were able to read fertiliser packets, send text messages and demand a higher price for their yield, rather than using middle-men as they had in the past. In turn, this meant the children in their care were better fed as there was more food, and better educated as there was more money for school fees and uniforms.

When that first programme ended, one of its star pupils, another Mercy, offered to continue teaching others in return for a nominal fee or some bars of soap. When potential new participants found it difficult to afford the fee, Mercy generously agreed to give her time for free to deliver the training, which she knew from her own experience to be so beneficial. In 2012, the number on the programme

doubled and another member, Joice, volunteered to become the second teacher. The group now has 116 members: 99 women and 17 men.

One village woman we met, Anne, told us how the programme had changed her life. Before she attended the classes, she could not afford to send her children to school. As a result of the programme, she learned the importance of educating her children and being able to help with homework. With their improved skills, the women were able to set up small businesses. Anne's children now all attend school. In addition, the women told us that many of them now owned mobile phones and that, while they went to classes, the men had started cooking meals for them!

With the empowerment of women through literacy, better access to suitable crops and livestock, as well as loans and the ability to manage their finances better, NASFAM's programme has facilitated an improvement in the balance of power between the sexes. The women we met were confident enough to speak out in the company of men and visitors, run their own businesses and take on leadership roles. It is amazing to see what a one-year grant from Egmont has achieved in four years – a remarkable testament to NASFAM and this group of women.

DO YOU FANCY A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE?

Egmont is organising its second fundraising walk in Zambia in September 2014. For further details about this week-long guided walk, please contact clare.evans@egmonttrust.org.

VOLUNTEERING NEWS

Trainee physiotherapist, Jess Jones, has recently returned from a summer working in a hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. While there, she spent ten days volunteering with Egmont partner, **Kimara Peer Educators**. Here are the highlights from her experience:

“As a trainee health care professional, I was interested to see how Egmont’s partners support people suffering from HIV & AIDS. On my first day I met all the members of the Kimara Peers team that help organise the work, and was given a tour of their facilities. It was clear that the staff are very proud of the service they provide for the people who visit them. After my tour, I was introduced to the groups that meet every Monday and Thursday to promote self-sustainability.

The groups act as ‘mini banks’. Everyone contributes a small sum so that members can ask to borrow money. This process is a real reflection of their lives, as everyone is dependent on their friends and family supporting them through difficult times. The groups are also important because the members learn from each other; general information is discussed, new skills are learnt and new friends are made. The groups also allow people to disclose their HIV status without being judged or condemned.

The short amount of time I spent with the team at Kimara Peers was incredibly humbling; their ability to show courage and determination while facing this debilitating disease is something I have immense respect for. Time and time again, the people supported by Kimara Peers emphasised that they simply could not imagine a life without that support.

To think that the team show such dedication and passion to their work, while also being HIV+ themselves in many cases, speaks volumes. I cannot express in words how much this visit has influenced me and I sincerely hope I will have the opportunity to return to see these amazing people again in the future.”

FUNDRAISING NEWS

On Thursday 7 November 2013, Egmont hosted a fundraising event with a difference – Pig Racing! Held at the Westminster Boating Base the entertaining evening featured the wacky Ady Byng and his fluffy mechanical pigs, taking part in unpredictable races. Alice Plunkett, from Channel 4 Racing, enthusiastically led guests through the evening.

Over 150 guests attended. We were delighted that the evening raised £37,500, which will all go directly to our partners in Africa.

Many thanks to everyone who came along and especially to all who contributed to the success of the evening, whether as sponsor, donor or volunteer.



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