



# SaltMalawi

## Newsletter

A Christian project saving lives in Malawi  
Supporting the work of Julian & Caroline Lott

May 2016

On behalf of SaltMalawi Trustees, welcome to the May 2016 edition of our newsletter. Julian and Caroline's report gives an informative overview of the work and how the network of village churches has been used effectively in delivering food aid and other vital support to the most needy in these challenging times. They could not have achieved this, or be planning for it all to begin again in a couple of months' time, without your ongoing and prayerful support.

Julian reminds us that we are not an NGO but rather a relatively small organisation with limited people resources on the ground whose main task is to build the church in very challenging environments and to train and equip leaders in those village churches to ensure sustainability of life-changing service to their communities. Some village churches are within easy reach of one another, others are more widely spread and not easy to reach. All are hungry for sound Christian teaching, not just at Sunday services, but also for mid-week teaching too. In addition, there are regular calls for the team to visit new villages. For example - recently, while visiting and baptising a dear, elderly and sick house-bound lady, the team received an urgent call to



### **Every Grain of Maize is Precious if you are Hungry**

visit a new village where a grandmother was struggling to care for 15 grand-children - all orphaned in the last 12 months! Yet they are already busy 5 days a week - all the leaders are thinly spread.

We know the team needs strengthening and many of us have been praying for years for the Lord to call at least another couple to work alongside Julian and Caroline to help ease the load, build the local leadership and equip them to carry the work forward in the long term. I want to share with all supporters of this work, for prayer, some potential real progress in that direction. A UK based couple are now exploring a sense of calling to work in Malawi alongside the Lotts. I want to invite you to join with us in prayer that the way forward will open clearly before them (Red Sea comes to mind) and all the pieces of the jig-saw drop into place. Please watch this space for further news!

But perhaps it is also timely to remind our subscribers and supporting churches that some great contributions have been made to this work over the years by individuals, couples and groups making

planned short-term visits to bring their skills and giftings to Julian, Caroline and the team to be used in whatever way they deem to be most helpful. One thing all who have participated in this way have reported without fail is that the experience has been life-changing! Please feel free to contact me or any of our trustees via our website [www.saltmalawi.org](http://www.saltmalawi.org) if you would like more information about serving in this way.

Brian Donner – Chair SaltMalawi Trustees



**Buying Maize at the Church in Tsumba**

Julian writes:-

Thank you everyone for continuing to think of us, and for your financial and prayerful support for what we do. We know that many of you have been very concerned about the hunger that has been affecting our area of Malawi. In this newsletter we shall share some of the steps we have taken over the past six months to help some of the more in need. We are pleased to report that the immediate risk of famine has now been lifted for the time being locally. At the present time maize is drying in many fields and generally it is true to say that people can find food. Some have begun

harvesting. However, it is likely that the hunger will return early this year. The rains were extremely poor this year and for everyone there will either be a much reduced harvest, or for some no harvest at all.



As we have previously reported we managed to buy over 35 tons of maize this time last year. The majority was treated against weevil attack and stored on our farm. The remainder was stored in 3 other villages in readiness for the time of widespread hunger - which began in October. We ran a programme of giving food aid through our existing churches in those villages - which programme also served other village communities. We refer to these groups who visit the needy and deliver aid as "Mercy Groups". Largely these groups began work in October/November and have only just finished helping their beneficiaries in the last 3 weeks. More than 200 families received monthly visits throughout this period receiving food, prayer, encouragement from God's Word and friendship. It is impossible to know just how many people actually received food aid as we learned that many of those who received food then shared that help with members of their wider families.

In two areas we ran small programmes for children who had been suffering from malnutrition. This work began as early as July and has continued as occasion required until last month. We have continued with our normal plan of giving farming work to local people on the farm where we stay. The number employed on a part time basis has increased from 10 to 20 as we have tried to help provide food and cash in return for their labours. Even now 18 people find work with us.

Finally, in our area, we sold back to the village communities a portion of the food that we had bought from them, at a price that was about 2/3 rds of the then asking price for maize in their villages, that is where it was available. This distribution helped over 500 families find food at a time when they could not find maize for sale, or if someone had food for sale the price was too high for the majority to afford to buy enough to help them keep hunger at bay. The village chiefs have been so pleased with this latter help that we have been asked to do the same again this year. We have heard from the locals too saying how important that step of

selling fairly was for them to have survived the hunger when their own relatives refused to help! Local chiefs are encouraging their farmers to sell to us as we offer better prices than the traders, but also because the food will find its way back to their community in one form or another.



Our church leaders explain that people are harvesting early this year because thieves are raiding their fields. So this week we have begun this year's programme of buying food in two villages. Our area is higher and colder than other parts of the district so we will be buying maize later this month. Obviously it is more sensible for us to buy food in now while it is available. Last year we topped up the maize we had bought by buying processed maize from a trading company in Lilongwe in order to give help to wider groups within the Lilongwe and Dedza areas. This was a very much more

expensive option, but at least we found food! In all about a further 400 families received help at critical times and survived that hunger season. This year is probably going to be far worse. I hope that we can buy perhaps 40-50 metric tons of maize here but that will depend upon availability, of course. We are restricted as to what we can do in helping the communities by the limited amount of local man power that is available to us - but we will do what we can. We are still in the process of planning this year's programme with our church leaders and we will keep you informed.

It sounds strange to read that we can buy food from local farmers in a time of hunger. Oddly enough this next 2 months is the major time in the year when subsistence farmers can find cash - unfortunately by the sale of food that they will need later in the year. The farmers sell their food in order to pay for clothes, and buy essentials such as salt, cooking oil, sugar and oil for their lamps, etc. Those who have nothing to sell go without. The farmers then hope to buy food later in the year when piece work becomes available - but unless the food has been bought by people who will keep it in the locality (e.g. us!) that might be a major problem this year. Last year there were traders from all over Malawi who came to our area to buy food. If the same were to happen again there will undoubtedly be a major shortage later this year for our villages. Last week I met a government official who works with disaster management within the country. He reported the official position which is that this year over half the population of the country will need food aid in order to survive the coming hunger

period! The same predicament is faced by our neighbouring countries too, so the relief which in previous years has been bought in Zambia or Zimbabwe will not be available this time around.

For prayer, I would also mention another likely problem that we could find this year - with water supply. The low rainfall, for a second consecutive year, has meant that the rivers are low and the water table is much lower than usual. Already some communities are finding water more difficult to obtain than normal - Lilongwe water board has introduced rationing already which will last for 12 months. We anticipate that other areas will follow their example. In rural areas where people rely on rivers, boreholes and shallow wells there is unlikely to be a fall back situation - so if people can't find water in the usual places they will struggle. We have been rationing our own water supply for the past 2 months in the hope that we might make it stretch over the bulk of the months until we next get rain in December. We have even followed the example of the Malawians living on the farm and taken to using a compost toilet instead of using water to flush the western style toilet we have used to date!

We finish by passing on to you the thanks of many in Malawi for the help they received from you in the last 12 months.

*Zikomo kwambiri*

(Thank you) (very much)

You can email Julian & Caroline at - [lottsinmalawi@gmail.com](mailto:lottsinmalawi@gmail.com)

Financial gifts can be made via - SaltMalawi Ltd Charitable Trust, Featherbridge, Ford Lane, Langley, Stratford upon Avon CV37 0HN Email – [treasurer@saltmalawi.org](mailto:treasurer@saltmalawi.org)

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