

Manx Linksa series in which Cheryl Cousins from the One World Centre talks to local people, who have lived or worked in the developing world, about remarkable people they have met!

Ronaldsday have reported that last year was the wettest on record, and, as the rain still lashes down, it's difficult to imagine what it must be like to live in a place where clean fresh water is *not* in abundance! But for the last twelve years Derek Hayes of Baldrine has had first hand experience and knows only too well what water deprivation and lack of clean water really can mean.

In interviewing people for these articles I am always surprised at the "chance" connections that seem to turn somebody's very ordinary life around. Derek had been a hotelier on Queens Promenade Douglas, he sold up and through his work with FGBMFI he taught business skills to support local church groups in the Ukraine and Siberia. A chance contact invited him to work in Malawi but it was an invitation Derek turned down, aware that he was unable to speak the language... 5 years later however he did go out to Malawi, with a group of 10 other volunteers, this time at the invitation of a local pastor. Working with the charitable organisation Habitat the group were helping the community to create a borehole for fresh water. Another chance meeting with the local part-time taxi driver, Charles, lifted the language barrier for Derek and they became friends. Six months later Derek returned to Malawi and working with Charles formed a partnership which has developed over the last twelve years.

Charles Julius Banda was the son of the first black couple to be married in the white community church. Charles' Father was the warden at the church, and when his parents died the Rev. Passo ensured Charles received education and he became a Fireman and local taxi driver. Derek is now the chairman and co founder of the Malawi Freshwater Project, a Manx registered charity, and Charles, taking early retirement from the Fire service is an Executive Director.

Derek understood that access to clean water was a priority. He recognised that constant illness and disease caused by unclean drinking water breaks down the immune system, and makes children vulnerable to infection. Safe and reliable water supplies in local communities free women to spend less time collecting water and more time learning through community programmes, growing food, earning money or caring for their children. It is estimated that African women and children spend 40 billion hours hauling water every year. Over 6000 people die every week across the world as a result of disease caused by drinking unclean water. The *majority* of the population in the world do not have access to clean drinking water.

A local Board of Trustees was created to apply for international grant funding and part of Charles' work is to coordinate the requests of the local people with the funding agencies. Charles' life has changed dramatically. Married with 5 children of his own, he also has responsibility of 6 children from other family members who have died from HIV Aids. His wife works in their shamba, meets with village groups educating the women in basic

literacy, health and hygiene awareness and working in a women's cooperative to make clothing. Charles himself covers an area the size of Ireland with over half a million people; he is respected and admired and is able to interact with the different tribal people. Working through the village chiefs he helps them identify the need within their own village for pit latrines and access to fresh water. He coordinates visits with funding agencies, and with a team of 6 people he oversees the installation of bore holes up to 42 meters deep using a second-hand motorised drilling rig bought in South Africa. The success of the project has been recognised and Charles has been invited to speak to government departments regarding these projects, and to visit America to see new developments in water technology.

The vision of the Malawi Mission Project has more depth than just the installation of bore holes. It has a clear understanding that development work is not just about giving handouts but is about empowering people to help themselves. With the installation of each pump there is a five day community training programme. The village chief nominates 10 men, women and young people, who are prepared to train to become the voluntary maintenance team.

The main focus of the work of the Malawi mission has been the water project that Charles oversees. His reliability and commitment has left Derek free to concentrate upon extending his own vision of sustainable development. He has designed and overseen the building of an education centre where local people receive training to train others in basic skills like plumbing, computer work, typing and joinery. The centre has a paying hostel for aid workers, NGO's and field workers, that aims to become self funding in a couple of years.

HIV and Aids in the community has had a devastating sociological impact. In some villages 2 out of 3 people are HIV positive. 74 heads of families had died over a 3 month period. Relatives are struggling to accommodate their newly extended families, illness and disease are rife. Derek has worked with three villages stricken by aids in helping them to form a cooperative. Assisted by the installation of fresh water the women of the community have now absorbed 360 children who have lost their parents through HIV and Aids. The project has given the community fruit trees and when they mature the children will have a more nutritious diet and any surplus fruit will be sold at the local market. The proceeds of the sale of the surplus fruit will go into the cooperative bank to fund the children through education after the age of 9.

The partnership of the Malawi Mission Projects is focused upon empowerment, continuity and sustainability, it seeks to be a capacity builder to help others to help themselves. Charles received the benefit of education and was given the opportunity to grow to his full potential. The faith placed in him and his ability, has enabled countless others to raise their heads above the shackles of poverty and disease.

If you would like more information about the work of the Malawi Mission Projects contact Derek Hayes on 862345 or email: malawiderek@onetel.com