

Chester World Development Forum

Minutes of Forum meeting held on Tuesday 3rd November 2020 via Zoom



Hosted by Gill Miller, chaired by Terry Green

Prior to the Forum's "Business-by-Zoom" Meeting we welcomed Stephen Maund who will be giving us an update on his work in Malawi with the Capacity Foundation.

We were very pleased to welcome Stephen back to the Forum to give us an update on his work in Malawi.

He began by posing the question with reference to international aid – “Why do we keep doing this?” Even with all the money raised over many years through events like Comic Relief, many countries remain in great need. Some, including Stephen, now seriously question the effectiveness of international aid and its limitations are increasingly accepted – see “Dead Aid – why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa” by Dambisa Moyo and “The old idea of aid is dead” by Sabrina Dhowre Elba.

Capacity Foundation is a different way of helping people out of poverty and has been running for many years now.

The Foundation works in Malenga Mzoma region in Malawi. In terms of its economy, the sources of income in the region are as follows:

	Number of families
Fishing - 24.5 %	980
Farm job - 21.7 %	870
Production/crops- 14.7 %	590
Support from other- 12.6 %	500
Trade/business - 9.2 %	370
Part-time job - 8.9 %	360
Other - 8.4 %	340

There are 4,000 families and 20,000 people in the region.

Public services in the region are very limited because Malawi simply hasn't got the capacity to support these. By comparing the figures of the UK economy with that of Malawi, it is easy to see why.

Malawi economy - £ 4.2 billion (nine zeroes)

UK economy - £2 trillion (twelve zeroes!)

If your tax-base is small, so is your public spending. In fact in rural areas in Malawi hardly anybody pays any tax at all

In terms of public spending:

In Malawi - public spending per head is £250 compared with **£12,500 per head in the UK**

In Malawi – 40,000 people per doctor compared with **400 per head in the UK**

Where does that leave the community?

- It's dependent on its government's meagre resources
- It has to waiting in line for charities to plug the gaps
- Aid often funds big projects like airport refurbishment, highway improvement, computers for education offices, motorcycles for outreach workers. No projects are directed comprehensively toward the alleviation of poverty at the grass roots

The Capacity Foundation has enabled the community to take responsibility for its own development by increasing the size of the local economy. Their aim is to be self sufficient in 5 – 10 years time.

Malenga Mzoma’s solutions:

1. Identify community priorities from within - income, education, clean water, secure food, health
2. Stimulate the local economy to create opportunities and wealth - make stepped loans available, train and mentor –and don’t foreclose
3. Create a community fund from business profits - pay for projects that would otherwise be provided by international aid

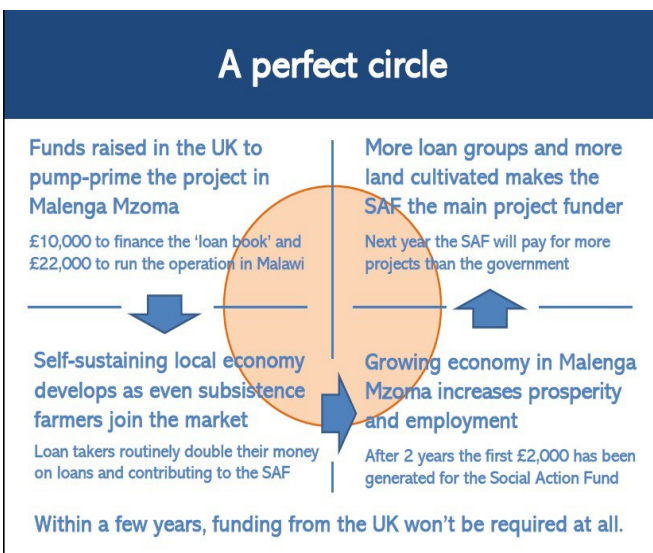
After just two years, the first projects paid for by the community fund are about to start with works aimed at securing water supplies.



Business skills training



Adult literacy classes



Farming improvement

Within a few years funding from the UK won't be required at all. That's the challenge!
So far the project is proving to be successful

Re: Farming Improvement Programme:

A quarter of families depend on subsistence farming – they grow their own food and there's nothing left over. One-in-eight people eat only once a day, mainly cassava. The FIP has

developed 5 demonstration fields to spread the best local farming practice. The programme is overseen by a retired Government agricultural advisor.



Before

Bokashi (biofertiliser) is made from local resources and a tiller is hired out to break hard ground. The aim is to improve diet and variety and to generate surplus for farmers to earn some extra income.



After

Re: The Capacity Academy:

A condition of receiving a business microloan is the ability to read and write so adult literacy and numeracy classes have been set up. There are 8 classes made up of men and women, young and old. The 200th student will graduate this year. The graduation certificates are endorsed by the Malawi Government.



Lessons, both inside



and outside ...

Re: The Loan Programme:

Loan candidates are given character references by community leaders and are then required to complete a business skills and marketing course. Loan takers are formed into groups of up to 15. Business plans are drawn up and approved before a loan, ranging from £65 to £500+ is granted. Loans are taken to build or expand an existing business. Each group is jointly and severally responsible. A levy of 25% is added to each loan sum to contribute to the Foundation's overheads and the Social Action Fund. Loans are repaid over 10 months. There are penalties for non-attendance but no foreclosure. The next "business" challenge is to encourage people to diversify (too many tomatoes).

Community Funded Projects:

£2,000 has been generated to repair 4 bridges and culverts. Projects are nominated by the village heads and the work is overseen by the Area Development Committee with work being completed by local craftsman.



Culvert: ... before



... after

This year trading centres have been quiet because of Covid so loan repayments have been extended.

For further information – www.capacityfoundation.org
“Ending aid dependency by releasing community potential”

Questions:

Where does the funding come from? Half from personal donations and half from profits of own company. Fundraising has inevitably been different this year. The gap between money raised in the UK and money generated by the local economy will be narrowed and an exit strategy will be possible.

Ref to Dambisa Moyo? Quite controversial views. She believes Africa should be open to foreign investment rather than aid. Stephen commented that that approach can bring another set of problems not least because the investor country has too much control on what the investment is spent on. But he does believe that now is the time to wean ourselves away from international aid - especially now it is linked to the Foreign Office.

Does Malawi have a stable government? Yes – they’ve just had an election and there’s been a peaceful transition.

Will the Foundation move to another area? Yes once it is clear that the community is self sufficient.

Forum Agenda:

- 1 Welcome :
Present: TG, GM, AM, DW, TW, BP, RJ, VJ, AMcQ, LC, BD
- Apologies
- 2 Forum Chair Terry Green to report on key issues covered in the Committee's recent Zoom sessions
 - **Monday 13th October**
 - **Monday 2nd November:** Mention new leaflet. Available now

Fratelli Tutti.
- 3 Finance update:
- 4 Further CWDF event, Zoom based:
 - **Tuesday 12th January** – Speaker Ciara Hogan (details below)
 - **Others?**
- 5 CWDF Diary: Version of 28 October was circulated – relevant dates extracted and shown below. Any additions from members “around the screens”?
BD: global Justice Now – discussion on trade agreements. No health and safety.
Must try and raise awareness. Campaign – need to sign up for
TG: will get details of 9th Dec from CFoP
- 6 AOB/ closing remarks

Sat 28th Nov – Sustainable Christmas: Virtual Eco Fair

Friends of the Earth and Eco Communities' Winter Fair is usually face to face but like the Virtual Eco Fair held in June they are taking this event on line. For more information and to be involved [CLICK HERE](#)
Or email: helenchesterfoe@hotmail.com

Wed 16th Dec – Stories, Poems, and Music for Advent and Christmas

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm St Mary's Without-the-Walls *Overleigh Road, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HL*

'Do you want to hold him for a moment?' Trevor Dennis will introduce and read seven of his published stories and poems on the themes of Advent and Christmas, while Brian and Claire Heald from Wesley Church will provide some wonderful music.

Unless more severe Covid restrictions are imposed, about 100 people will be able to attend. You will need to reserve a place by emailing Trevor on trevordennis11@gmail.com with your name(s) and phone number, or by ringing him on 01244 638441. Christian Aid envelopes will be put out on the socially distanced seats. Should Covid make it impossible for so many to meet in the church, we still plan to go ahead on Zoom.

Tues 12th Jan - CWDF Forum-by-Zoom

Speaker Ciara Hogan, on her work as Community Participation Coordinator for CAFOD – the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. Ciara's responsibilities cover the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury, (extending from Birkenhead in the north down to Telford in the south) fostering the work of local groups. Zoom joining details to be supplied nearer the date.