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Honorary Chairman

Prof. dr. J.M. Schoffeleers s.m.m.

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- Prof. dr. R.M.A. Bedaux
Former curator of the National Museum of Ethnology
- Dr. E. Gomani
Director for Culture, Malawi Government
- Dr. I.L. Pfeijffer
Graecus, writer and literary criticist
- Mrs M. Sacranie
Netherlands Consul in Malawi
- Prof. dr. R. van der Ploeg
Member of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee

Ongoing Projects

- Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre
Founding and continued support
- Book and web publications
- Heritage conservation measures

Newsletter Mlambe Foundation Vol. 3 No. 1 – April 2008

Newsletters seem to be getting a habit of being overdue and we apologise for our late publication once again. Time flies and we are now in April 2008. A lot has happened since our last newsletter. The rains have come with a vengeance and most of January the work on the Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre was hampered by flooding. The heavy rains caused the almost finished roof of the meeting area to collapse and a tree to fall down which luckily did not do any damage. In the last months, however, we have seen an enormous progress.

Changes in the Board

Lilian Steffens, our treasurer, has resigned from the Board following CBF guidelines on board membership. We would like to thank her tremendously for all the hard work. In fact, without her effort and legal expertise there would have been no Mlambe Foundation. We are therefore very happy that she will continue to support the Foundation's work in Malawi by continuing to coordinate the finances in Malawi, organising the volunteers, and drafting legal documents and newsletters to name but a few of her activities.

At the same time we would like to welcome two new board members: Yvonne Lammers, who has recently obtained her PhD in Archaeology and has a lot of experience in archaeological education and outreach programmes, and Ben Bakker, retired entrepreneur with a long history of supporting Malawi. Yvonne will be acting treasurer. One of our continuing board members, Kim Spijker, shall be moving to Malawi on the 16th of May 2008, where she will be assisting in the implementation of Mlambe projects.

Projects – Tisunge!

Rainy Season set backs

As mentioned in our introduction the rains and flooding caused mayhem and a tree and the almost finished roof of the meeting area collapsed as the weight of the wet roof became too much for a poorly welded pool. The thatcher could hardly contain his tears when he saw the sorry sight. Currently the roof structure is back up again. Luckily no one was hurt. In addition, our 1972 electricity transformer blew in December. Luckily, Illovo Sugar Company could lend us one for the time being, but a more permanent solution still needs to be found.



Construction

The foundations for a staff house and a weaving area have been dug and we are now making pressed bricks of cement and sand. Gladly, we have been able to borrow a manual brick press for this purpose. This method of brick making is more environmental friendly, as fired bricks contribute to deforestation. We hope this building method can be an example to the communities around. We shall also start building the house for the maize mill which we hope will be operational by August of this year. Lastly, the Tisunge! logo is now showing on the exhibition building in the form of a mosaic. Marcel, Arnus and Kim (van Leeuwen) did a wonderful job.



Mlambe Foundation

Malawi Heritage Conservation through Education

The Arts & Craft Shop

The Arts & Craft Shop is open for customers. We now have sufficient stock and are buying more every week. The woven cloth is amazing! We now have table runners, chief chairs, table mats, rugs, pot holders and bags all of traditionally woven and naturally died local cotton. We also have a collection of many lovely hand-made curio's from Nsanje, including bags made out of palm leave and goat skin, drums, wooden spoons and dishes, stools and a large variety of baskets.

Weaving and spinning

Time has come to mention some of the weavers. One extremely successful team – calling themselves “the factory” – is formed by Mr. Losani and Mr. Nthalika from Kanzimbi. They cycle 40 km one way to the heritage centre to sell their cloth. From Kampomo, Mr. Bagili and Mr. Moresi, both school teachers, form another team of weavers and both their wives have now teamed up as well. And none of them are keeping the skill to themselves but are training others within their villages. We now have four or five teams from each of these villages weaving and dying cloth. Mr. Sabawo from Tomali is another who is constant in his delivery of ever more beautifully woven cloth. Indeed, this success is no surprise as on average the weavers are now earning \$15-20 a week in an area where most people are happy with \$1 a day!



Mr. Bagili and Mr. Moresi have been teaching spinning around the villages but the traditional spinning has not had such a great success. The main reason is that it is a tedious and extremely time consuming job where the result does not compare with the result of the weaving. Due to the time it takes to clean, gin, card and spin the cotton the cost becomes prohibitive. We, of course, hope that continuous practice will perfect the skill and reduce the time needed for spinning yarn. Natural dying is a great success though. At this moment some 10 different colours are produced from natural locally available sources. Most of them are colour fast but we are still struggling with one or two colours that keep running when the cloth is washed. With our incoming volunteers, we shall keep experimenting to get to perfection.



Trees

The first project we started was the tree planting by the football and netball teams of the surrounding villages last year along the banks of the Nkhombedzi river. Initially not as successful as we wished as only 5 of the 19 teams earned their uniforms by truly taking care of the planted trees. However, eight committed teams have presented themselves on their own accord and next week we hope to start the Tisunge! league! with WWF-the Netherlands sponsored uniforms. These 8 teams each planted a minimum of 350 indigenous trees and through the league the message of tree preservation can now be spread. Most definitely other teams will want to be part of this next year. For them, the village football committee has raised the minimum requirement to 500 trees!



A second project is the indigenous tree plantation at Singano for sustainable curio production and revenue in the long term future. Chief Singano has donated a plot of land to the Lower Shire Heritage Trust and the Trust has come to an agreement with the Community Based Organisation Chigoda to do the clearing, planting and taking care of the plantation. Fifty percent of the compensation Chigoda will receive for their work will be used to take care of the elderly, sick and orphans of the surrounding villages, the other fifty percent will be paid to the people who actually do the work. Currently 7000 trees have been planted.



Chigoda CBO and the tree planting equipment



Chigoda CBO and chief Singano at the tree plantation plot

Projects – Catholic University of Malawi

The books, particularly pertaining to Anthropology and Political Science that were collected last year in the Netherlands have now been handed over to the Catholic University of Malawi. On behalf of CUNIMA we wish to thank all the private donors as well as those involved in the collecting and shipping. The books are all the more needed as currently the University has received close to 50 applications for its Anthropology programme. With these numbers the sustainability of the programme is assured.

Publicity

Postbus 51

Menno Welling was interviewed by Annemiek Klijberg for Postbus 51 which was aired on Dutch public radio on the January 12. The interview is available at our website.

SABC

Africa Within, a lifestyle programme produced and broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC) sent a film crew to Lengwe National Park to film the projects run by Mlambe and the Lower Shire Heritage Trust. They spent a full day filming and interviewing Menno Welling at the different (cultural) sites: Tisunge!, Chifunda Lunda, Singano Village and the Traditional Village Evening at Ndakwera Village organised by Jambo Africa/Nyala Lodge. Four hours of footage was transformed into 20 minutes within the lifestyle programme and was viewed by people all over the Southern African region and beyond through satellite TV. The whole crew was thoroughly impressed and spent a lot of time at the Heritage Centre and the shop buying the woven cloth.

Ulendo Magazine

Ulendo, the in-flight magazine of Air Malawi, this year included a feature on Lengwe National Park including Tisunge!, as well as a separate review article.

International Workshop

Mike Gondwe, the education coordinator of Museums of Malawi, presented a paper co-authored with the Mlambe Foundation director at the 5th international Workshop on *Enhancing Change through Science Centres*, which was held February 25-28 in Johannesburg. The paper discussed the success of the reintroduction of ancient weaving technology at Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre. It was received with much appreciation by all delegates and with particular interest from the South Asian presence.



Africa Within film crew at work

Donations and Funding

In respect of donations 2007 ended and 2008 started extremely well. We received a private donation of EUR 15,000.00 partly earmarked for the tree plantation (we are basically covered for the next 5 years) and partly to be spent on other urgent needs of Tisunge! – Lower Shire Heritage Centre.

Through the efforts of Annemiek Klijberg the Stichting Grootste Familie van Nederland (a Dutch foundation linked to the TROS a Dutch broadcasting company) has made a very generous donation to be primarily put towards the building of a staff house.

ICCO/Impuls/s has pledged continuous support for further staff housing and the installation of a maize mill in order to make Tisunge! self supportive. First, though, we need to fill the gap in the budget.

Wonderful donations in kind have been made by Minkema College, Visio and Skynet. The container that is on its way to Malawi at this moment contains books, school desks, chairs, Braille machines, computers, paper etc.

In Malawi, Carlsberg Malawi Ltd/Southern Bottlers has donated twenty footballs for the football teams that planted trees (see also under the heading "Trees") and over 50,000 tubes for seedlings. Wonderful! Illovo Sugar Estate in Nchalo has assisted Tisunge! in many ways and we thank them for their continued support on the ground.

We have also received donations for our study fund which have been earmarked to assist individual students of the Catholic University of Malawi in the fields of history, anthropology and other relevant disciplines. On behalf of the students, we are truly grateful as through these donations those, who otherwise would have had to quite for financial reasons, are now able to continue with their education. This way, young talent is preserved for careers in the cultural heritage sector of Malawi. We would like to extend our support in this field and hereby make a call for further support.

We must also thank our regular donors, without their periodic donations Mlambe Foundation would be at a loss. Mlambe Foundation and its local partners are indeed grateful to all that donate and contribute to the projects. We feel we have achieved a lot in the two years since initiation. Our aim is sustainability of our projects, but that takes time. As we need reliable income in order to start hiring permanent Malawian staff.



CUNIMA Anthropology students at the graffiti covered rock art site of Mwalawolemba

Zikomo kwambiri

Lastly, we would like to thank Kim van Leeuwen. She arrived at the beginning of January and has done a tremendous amount of work. She has battled the rains, the lack of power and running water during the first 5 weeks down in Lengwe. Waded through water every morning to reach Tisunge! to be able to put Christmas, Denja en Brighton to work. She has organized the shop, supervised construction, helped with the mosaic, the tree plantation and the library, did all the administration, and a lot more. At the end of April, she will go back home after a well deserved holiday with her parents. We hope to see her again.

We also have to thank Hellen Zalira. Hellen is a Social Work student at the Catholic University of Malawi and recipient of a Mlambe scholarship, who has been helping us with the tree plantation project. We hope she will stay with us throughout the project.



Zikomo!