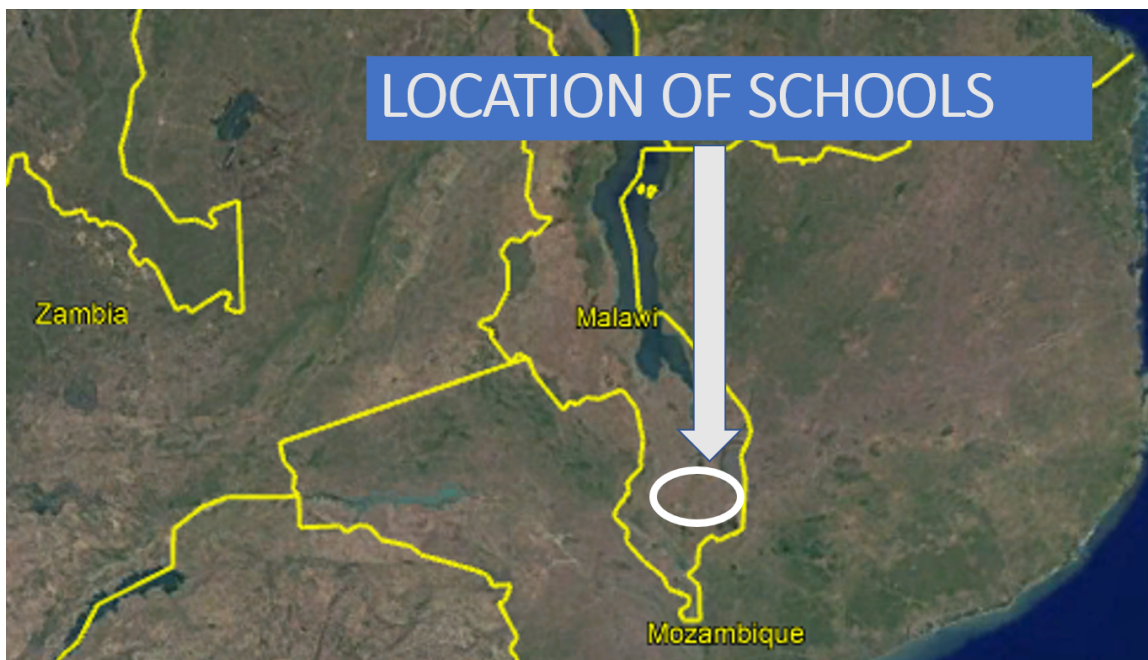




## ROTARY GLOBAL GRANT - 2022

ADOLORATA HIGH SCHOOL – KANKHOMBA PRIMARY SCHOOL

MALAWI, AFRICA



### EXPERIENCE IN MALAWI, AFRICA

Malawi, Africa regularly ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world. According to recent IMF data, its per capita GDP is the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in the world (\$342 per capita). Notwithstanding its economic challenges, Malawi is known as the “Warm Heart of Africa.”

Inspired by his family’s relationship with Fr. Philip Mbeta, a Malawian priest who completed his PhD in organizational business at Illinois Benedictine University, Joliet Rotarian John Spesia and his family have spearheaded efforts to improve the lives and educational opportunities for children and villagers in rural Malawi, Africa since 2011. The Spesia Family has founded a non-profit – “Warm Heart Ministries” – to encourage investment in education in Malawi and fund operations at a Montessori-inspired school and community centre near Thyolo, Malawi. In addition, the Spesia family partnered with Joliet Rotary Past-President Mike Murray in 2015 and arranged for Fr. Elizeo Ntalika (a Malawian priest who grew up near Thyolo, Malawi) to obtain a master’s degree in

business administration from Lewis University. This allowed Fr. Elizeo to return to Malawi and implement his much-needed business skills.

Using matching grants from the Rotary Foundation, over the course of the last ten years, the Joliet Rotary Club and its partners have made more than \$250,000 in improvements to school facilities, construction of clean water sources and the creation of vocational opportunities for villagers in southern Malawi. In its most recently completed Global Grant (2019-2020), renovations and vocational training were completed at two rural Primary Schools in the Thyolo region of Malawi. A story in *The Nation* newspaper in Malawi highlighted the Rotary Clubs' efforts as follows:

## Rotary Club renovates classrooms, teachers' houses

JONATHAN PASUNGWI  
STAFF REPORTER

Rotary Club of Limbe on Friday handed over 34 classrooms and four teachers' houses it renovated at Nansato and Thyolo Catholic primary schools.

The club also donated 100 desks to each of the schools and pledged to buy bicycles for all female students who will be selected to Thyolo Secondary School to ease their mobility challenges.

The club renovated 17 classrooms and two houses at each school, replaced all windows made from concrete blocks with glasses valued at K66 million with support from the Rotary Club of Joliet in Illinois, United States of America.

In an interview, Nansato Primary School head teacher Gertrude Namanja said the school has been a death-trap as learners, especially girls, faint due to lack of ventilation in classrooms.



PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN PASUNGWI

Nda: One of our focus areas is education

She said the school, which was in a dilapidated state, has been a major contributing factor to learners' dropout rate in the area.

On his part, Thyolo Catholic School head teacher Rodgers Chimwaza echoed Namanja's sentiments that ventilation was the major challenge.

He commended the club for the gesture, saying the school, which was established in 1948, was in a dilapidated state.

In an interview, Rotary Club of Limbe president Bernard Nda said one of the club's focus areas is education.

He said the club is committed to promoting education and ensuring that they get employed.

"It has been a rotary idea from way back to promote basic education. Having noted all the problems at the two schools, Rotary Club of Limbe saw it fit to help," said Nda. ■

With the knowledge gained from building numerous successful projects in Malawi, Fr. Philip (now a member of the Limbe Malawi Rotary Club) and Fr. Elizeo have identified two new opportunities to improve the lives of students in rural Thyolo, Malawi at the Kankhomba Primary School (**2,265** students in grades 1-8) and the Adolorata High School (**704** students).

## CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION IN MALAWI

Most villagers in rural Malawi, including in Thyolo, survive from subsistence

farming. A staggering 14% of females and 8% of males have never attended school. The Thyolo District in rural Malawi – where Joliet Rotary has focused its efforts – has a literacy rate of just 60% and a poverty rate of 69%. Malawi also has low high school participation rates (41% - Girls; 44% - Boys). In Malawi, 57% of students do not complete primary school and 80% more males than females have completed secondary school or gone beyond secondary school.

### **RENOVATION, TRAINING, DESKS AND BOOKS**

Beginning in December 2020, Fr. Philip and Fr. Elizeo began collecting data from the Adolorata High School and Kankhomba Grade School. They met with school administrators, teachers, and students, and inspected the facilities at each school. School administrators, teachers, and students identified dilapidated facilities, lack of equipment and textbooks, and inadequate teacher housing (and thus an inadequate number of teachers). In addition, school administrators indicated that drop-out rates were high and passage rates on national college entrance exams were unacceptably low. Administrators and teachers at both schools indicated that training on best-practices and continuing-education programs would be helpful to improve their performance. Administrators also believed that training on the importance of annual maintenance would improve their ability to sustain the improvements.

All of the stakeholders believed that by restoring the dilapidated existing school facilities and teacher housing, the Schools will increase student attendance, decrease drop-out rates, facilitate learning, attract more qualified teaching staff, improve existing teaching staff, and increase performance on nationalexams. All were also in agreement that by providing teacher training, desks for the students, and proper textbooks, the educational experience of students would be greatly enhanced.

A devastated economy, including staggering inflation, and abject poverty have hindered the ability of Malawians to fund essential improvements to existing dilapidated school structures and have also resulted in a lack of essential textbooks. In addition, to attract teachers the Adolorata High School and Kankhomba Grade School must provide them housing. However, the existing teacher-housing is in woefully bad condition and has resulted in an inability to attract qualified teachers. Moreover, the lack of public



transportation in rural Malawi results in long commuting distance for students who can walk as far as 10 km each way to school. Studies by World Bicycle Relief have shown that the long commutes result in substantially higher drop-out rates, particularly for female students.

Dilapidated School Building at Kankhomba Primary School:



### **PROVIDING BICYCLES AT ADOLARATA HIGH SCHOOL**

Through a partnership with World Bicycle Relief (WBR), a non-profit associated with SRAM Corporation, which is one of the world's largest manufacturers of bicycle components, the Joliet Rotary Club has established a program to provide bicycles to students at the Adolarata High School. SRAM, which has its headquarters in the Fulton Market District in Chicago, has designed a bicycle specifically for use in developing countries and has operations in nearby Blantyre, Malawi.

In 2019, WBR implemented an extensive program and established a Bicycle Service Committee at the Adolorata High School to determine which students are most in need of transportation. As part of its program, WBR also trained local bicycle mechanics and provided a local parts inventory for bicycle repairs. Students who receive





a bicycle sign a “study to own” contract that allows them to keep the bicycle so long as they are fulfilling academic requirements – and upon graduation the bike becomes the property of the student. WBR and Joliet Rotary have already provided and distributed 70 bicycles – 70% of them to female students – at the Adolorata High School. The distribution of bicycles is shown below:



However, more of the 700+ students would greatly benefit from having transportation to school. The 2021 Grant will supplement the existing program with an additional 30 bicycles, 70% of which will be distributed to female students.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE 2021 GRANT PROJECT**

The 2021 Grant Project has three main objectives: (1) increase graduation rates of students; (2) improve passage rates of students taking the national college examination; and (3) improve best practices for teachers and administrators, thus improving the quality of education.

The renovations that will be done to the Adolorata High School and Kankhomba Grade School are similar to the renovations to classrooms previously improved by the Joliet Rotary Club and its partners, as shown below:



The existing school facilities at Adolorata and Kankhomba have not been renovated and remain in a dilapidated condition. To cure this problem and continue its efforts to establish a continuum of outstanding facilities in Thyolo, the Joliet Rotary Club and the Limbe, Malawi Rotary Club are supporting this new Grant Project.

### **PROJECT COST - \$140,706**

Adolorata High School:	\$40,766
Kankhomba Grade School:	\$88,128
Textbooks	\$5,000
Teacher Training	\$1,200
Bicycles (30)	\$5,612

### **FUNDING THE PROJECT**

The Grant Project is eligible for approximately \$22,000 in funding from the Rotary Foundation and we are hopeful to secure an additional \$40,000 in contributions from Rotarians and Rotary Clubs.

In addition, Warm Heart Ministries and the Murray-Geary “Bada” Foundation announced a \$1 for \$1 match of up to \$50,000 in private contributions to complete the Project.

