



CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION – MALAWI

March 2020



It is said in Wisconsin that there are two seasons - winter and construction. In Malawi we have the dry season and the rainy season. There isn't a winter by midwestern standards, so our construction season is year-round. The Lutheran Mobile Clinic has been taking advantage of the year-round season to begin the renovation of a couple of our clinic buildings.

In Malawi, wind and rain create a serious environmental challenge. Water damage to the inside and outside buildings is common and soil erosion is a real problem. Windstorms can cause the lightweight iron roof sheets typically used here to be blown off. In fact we have lost a roof or two over the years.

Our clinic buildings are getting a bit old and have suffered from the effects of wind and rain. They need a little TLC. Each clinic has two rooms, one large room where patients are seen at separate stations, vaccines are given, and medicines are dispensed. Everything happens for all to see. The second room, is much smaller and is used primarily for ante natal examinations. The buildings at Msambo, Suzi and Thunga also double as church buildings on Sundays.

On inspection, it was clear that they hadn't been painted for a while, plaster work was cracked and chipped, a number of drainage channels had eroded and begun to break up, floors had pot holes, steps were falling apart – one site had tree roots growing through the steps, the buildings were often dark inside due to inadequate lighting, wooden doors and frames and windows were starting to rot, and brick walls had cracked as had the brick pilasters that support the roof trusses- most likely due to wind shaking the roof. Roofs had leaks as well.

In late 2018, we began the planning process for renovating the buildings at Mwalaulomwe and Msambo Villages. We didn't just show up with a contractor and start work. Instead we began a consensus building exercise working with congregation members, staff, and local Village Chiefs and Headmen to agree on the problems with the existing building, what repairs are needed, what features we should add to the buildings, and how we would fund construction.

Apart from the issues identified by the inspection, everyone agreed that there should be better lighting, a small lab for testing and a procedure room for IV's or dealing with wounds. The big issue that was brought up by the Village Elders was privacy. The same concern was raised in our clinic effectiveness study. All consultations were performed out in the open, so if a patient came with a somewhat personal complaint, people milling around inside the building could easily overhear the consultation. As a result, we added small private consulting rooms to the design.

Our friends at Tredo and Associates in Milwaukee helped us by providing floor plans as we gradually worked our way toward a layout that everyone agreed on. We then produced cost estimates and negotiated cost sharing arrangements with the Village Chiefs at each location. At Mwalaulomwe where the project was a renovation, the Villagers gathered sand. At Msambo people provided sand and bricks.

In the spring of 2019 we completed the renovation at Mwalaulomwe, we repainted inside and out, laid a new concrete floor over the old (badly potholed) floor, repaired drainage, added a ramp to ease access for the elderly, created private consulting rooms and built an addition that has an examination room, a small laboratory and a procedure room. We also replaced a number of iron roof sheets with clear plastic roof sheets to allow more light into the building.

At Msambo, we all agreed that it was better to rebuild. The building will have similar features to the building at Mwalaulomwe. It took us some time and patience working with the local member of parliament and other officials to have bricks and sand delivered, but construction is now under way and we plan to be operating in the new structure by Easter.

We will begin the planning process for clinics at Suzi and Thunga later this year. With God's blessings and your prayers and support, renovations should be completed in 2021.

Gary Evans, Clinic Administrator