



PHUNZIRA

AREAS FOR VOLUNTEER WORK

About Phunzira:

Our charity is called Phunzira which means 'Learning' in Chichewa, the national language of Malawi. Phunzira is a UK registered charity that functions solely in the north of Malawi, one of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and its emphasis is on moving away from the wide reliance on aid and handouts towards providing sustainable forms of development that can be managed by local communities.

It is currently fundraising to establish a self-sustainable education centre in Ruarwe, a small fishing village in the north of Malawi, that remains isolated from development and lacking in basic infrastructure due to its extremely remote location. The centre aims to act as a healthy learning environment for students from nearby schools as well as members of the local community, who will be able to access it free-of-charge. It is called Nyumba ya Masambiro (NYM), which means 'Home of Learning' in Chitumbuka - the local language used in Ruarwe and its surrounding areas.

Since August 2009 Phunzira has received the kind support of the local community and village headmen in the Ruarwe zone, and has been working in cooperation with the District Assembly and relevant Member of Parliament for the Nkhata-Bay North region. In August 2010 a trust was established and has since been fully registered in Malawi. For the purpose of fulfilling its objectives, the centre has chosen to focus on carrying out its initiatives in four main target areas: Ruarwe, Khondowe, Bunga and Banda.

Construction of NYM was completed in 2011 but remains ongoing in terms of future projects at the centre. It is predicted that it will take between 2 - 5 years from the start of construction in order to achieve full financial self-sustainability: during this time period all aspects relating to ownership of the centre (staff, management, trustee members etc.) will be passed in full to representatives of the local community.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

Before applying, volunteers should recognise that Ruarwe is a very small, quiet and remote location. Currently, internet connection is unavailable and mobile phone reception can only be found in one place (approximately 15 minutes walk from NYM). At present there is no power or electricity running in the village or at the lodge, and there are no roads in or out of the area (all travelling takes place by foot or boat). There are of course many benefits of volunteering in such a tranquil and isolated setting, but volunteers should be aware of the possible restrictions with communication before committing.

Volunteer Opportunities:

There are five main areas in which volunteers can participate:

1. Construction (*skilled or unskilled*)
2. Academic tutorials (*skilled*)
3. Life skills workshops (*skilled*)
4. Youth-orientated initiatives (*skilled or unskilled*)
5. Health Initiatives (*skilled*)

1. Construction (*from July 2010 onwards*)

The construction phase of NYM is now complete and a large part of the labour force consisted of unskilled members of the community from in and around Ruarwe that were trained in rammed earth building techniques.

The centre is a simple structure with no plumbing. There is a large library, a life skills room, two teaching rooms and a youth centre, and solar energy will be present in 2012.

Our future construction projects include compost toilets, 3 laboratories and volunteer accommodation. We are looking for a small but selective team of qualified engineers builders and carpenters who have good communication skills in order to take charge of smaller groups and direct construction work. Those without specific skills that want to get involved in the building process are also most welcome.

All of our construction projects will be used as an opportunity to invite members of nearby communities to view and partake in the process, in order to provide a practical demonstration on how to build with cheap and easily accessible materials. Any volunteers that wish to take part in our construction projects should get in touch with Rosa (rosa@phunzira.org).

2. Academic tutorials (*from Jan 2012 onwards*)

NYM will provide activity-based tutorials in some of the subjects covered in the Malawian National Curriculum, especially those that have the highest fail rate at secondary school level: English, Mathematics and Science.

These will be taken primarily by volunteers who either have a teacher training qualification *or* a university degree in the subject they wish to teach. The focus will be on group work and collaborative learning, rather than following the standard form of a classroom-based lesson. There will be many donated books and materials at the centre from English schools; however

resources will still be limited so volunteers should have a lively passion for their subject and the ability to be creative with lesson planning techniques.

We are looking for a commitment of a minimum of 12 weeks with the option of extending. Please contact Rosa (rosa@phunzira.org) for more information.

3. Life skills workshops *(from Jan 12 onwards)*

There will initially be three important life skill areas we and the community would like to focus on. In the future we expect more topics to be covered at the centre, which will reflect the changing needs of the community. The interactive classes will act as a forum for discussion with a focus on transferring skills, initiating income generating activities and improving health in the community.

For these sessions we are primarily looking for creative volunteers who have good social/communication skills, leadership training experience and relevant work or academic experience particular to their chosen life skill.

Initially, these group sessions will cover:

- (i) Fishing: Ruarwe is a small village situated on the shores of Lake Malawi, hence the primary source of income for most families is fishing. Classes will include how to make and repair nets, alternative methods for deep lake fishing, and how to farm fish sustainably. NYM has recently completed construction of a pond in the gardens, built using natural and local resources with fish sourced from the local river and therefore incurring no costs. This pond will be used as an example to teach local people living away from the lakeshore how they can farm fish in an affordable and sustainable manner.
- (ii) Crop cultivation: The centre will provide classes on how to grow specific crops that are both compatible with the soil and in high demand from nearby lodges. Classes will take place at the centre as well as directly in NYM's other target areas, and will include information on what variety of crops can be grown, how to maximise produce in terms of seed planting and avoiding disease, how to irrigate, how to fertilise, and how to establish groups for selling. There is already great progress in the NYM gardens using local and sustainable tools. They play a vital role in demonstrating how to diversify crops, as well as helping with sustainable income generation and improving nutrition in the area.
- (iii) HIV/AIDS awareness: HIV/AIDS is known to be the leading cause of mortality and disability in Malawi. However very few people in rural areas have ever been tested.

HIV is a complex issue with many cultural and socio-economic factors shaping the epidemic. Gender inequalities mean that women and children are even more vulnerable in such an environment. Lack of education and understanding only serves to create higher levels of fear and stigmatism, further ostracising people affected by HIV. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach. NYM will be running sessions that will cover topics such as explaining facts about HIV and dispelling myths, discussing how to protect yourself and others, showing people how to live positively/stay healthy and tackling issues of gender inequality.

Taking time for travelling to and from Ruarwe into consideration, we ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of one month in Malawi to ensure enough time for both the community and volunteers to benefit from the experience. If you are someone interested in covering other useful and contextually relevant life skills such as renewable energy or water sanitation, please contact Rosa (rosa@phunzira.org).

4. Youth-orientated initiatives (Aug 2011 - Aug 2013)

Volunteers will assist in promoting education and healthy play-time for those attending the youth centre at NYM, as well as help to run the youth-orientated initiatives that stem from it. Art, music and drama are an important part of Malawian culture and with the number of orphans rising we aim to encourage, support and nurture the youth in the community.

We ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of 1 month, and it is preferable to have a recent CRB check. Any relevant work experience with adolescents, children and vulnerable people is welcome. Please contact Rosa (rosa@phunzira.org) if you are interested.

5. Health Workers (from Jan 2012 onwards)

There is great need for better and more accessible health care in Ruarwe and the surrounding region. Until recently Ruarwe had not had an operational health centre for many years. During this time villagers had to travel exceptionally long distances, usually by foot, just to seek basic medical attention. The result was that people were falling sick and, in many cases, dying of treatable diseases. In 2011 Phunzira started working with the District Health Officer for the area and in April the health clinic re-opened its doors. The health centre is now open five days a week and also runs an emergency out of hours service. In addition to drop in general clinics there are also more specialised clinics, such as antenatal care, family planning and an under 5's clinic. There is also now a small treatment room for minor procedures and wound dressings, 2 beds for patients who need to stay overnight and a drug stores room stocked with basic medicines. During the first three months of opening its doors, over 800 patients were seen with a wide variety of medical problems, many of who would have suffered unnecessarily if these essential medical services had not been so

accessible. The centre is currently staffed by one UK doctor and one Malawian medical assistant.

Phunzira is now looking for doctors and nurses (qualified or in final years of training) to volunteer at the health centre with a commitment of a minimum of one month for student electives and three months for qualified health personnel. Common presentations are malaria, diarrhoeal disease, chest infections and trauma. With a stark lack of knowledge about the disease, HIV is an ongoing challenge with very few people aware of their status. In addition to working at the health centre there is plenty of opportunity to work within health education and conduct research. We are also now in the initial phases of building our own "health boat" to provide mobile health services and transport patients to and from hospital.

For more detailed information about health in Ruarwe and the health centre please refer to our website. If you are interested or would like more information please contact Georgina (georgina@phunzira.org).

If volunteers want to set up workshops or run sessions in other areas of interest relevant to Phunzira's objectives (such as sports sessions, women's groups, choir groups, drama classes etc.) then they should contact Rosa (rosa@phunzira.org)

Concessions for Phunzira Volunteers and General Information:

All Phunzira volunteers will initially be accommodated free-of-charge at Zulunxhuni River Lodge, which lies on the shores of Lake Malawi and is approximately a 30 minute walk from NYM. It is a stunning location with waterfalls backing onto it, and the owners can arrange treks up the river on the weekends.

At the lodge volunteers can choose to be either catered by Zulunxhuni or self-cater. There is a basic self-catering area with cooking equipment and a paraffin stove provided, as well as a shower and toilet. Volunteers should expect for the most part to be staying either in the dormitory or camping. Ruarwe is a very remote village with little produce available and therefore we recommend volunteers to plan in advance. There is more detailed information on accommodation and eating in our Welcome Pack which can be found on the volunteer page of Phunzira's website. In 2012 we will be starting the construction of our own volunteer accommodation.

For taking breaks the ferry to Nkhata Bay (Malawi's main tourist town) costs around £3.10 each way for a third class seat. There are currently no roads in or out of Ruarwe, but it is one of the main ferry stops so for long-term volunteers that wish to take extended breaks there are many beautiful locations that are easy to access by water instead.

All volunteers will be expected to pay for their travel to and from Malawi. A typical return ticket during low season from London to Lilongwe costs around £600, and the most commonly used airlines are Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines and South African Airways, all of which have at least one stopover (there are currently no direct flights to Malawi).

Links:

About Phunzira:

www.phunzira.org

Map of Ruarwe:

www.maplandia.com/malawi/northern/ruarwe

Zulunxhuni River Lodge:

www.lake-paradise.com