We support Paul’s teaching given in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that we should give as we have decided in our own heart and not under pressure. Consequently, we do not include any requests for funds in our literature. However, we do want to provide some information about how we operate financially.

All our work is done on a voluntary basis. We are therefore able to use 100% of any gift according to the donor’s chosen designation. We would be grateful if you would indicate clearly if you want a donation to be used for a specific project.

We would be grateful if you could let us know if you would like to receive a Gift Aid Declaration form. We use a small percentage of the money that we receive back from gift-aided donations to cover the cost of producing newsheets and leaflets, and also for other administration costs which relate directly to projects. If you are not receiving a newsheet and would like to be added to our mailing list, please could you contact us at either the postal or the email address given below. These newsheets give ongoing feedback about our projects.

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Most of us will remember the promise that was used extensively in advertising a few years ago: the promise that we could “Make Poverty History”. However, with the enormous sums of money that have been poured into Africa for so long and the comparative lack of positive results that we can actually see, we could well question whether fulfilling this promise is really possible. Can we ever really bring a complete end to Poverty?

If we are to take this question literally, I believe that the answer is NO. I personally do not believe that we can ever completely eradicate poverty and therefore this promise is a false one. Jesus Himself said that we will always have the poor with us. However, I DO believe that we can make a significant and long-term positive difference but only if we recognise that giving money alone will not bring about a long-term solution to the problem of poverty.
The reason that I say this is because the causes of poverty are numerous and complex. It is not only brought about by a lack of resources but a variety of other issues such as lack of information and training, and a mindset of despair and defeat.

Experience has also taught us that because so much funding has been provided in a way that builds donor-dependence there is now an unrealistic expectation for continued funding and a very limited understanding of the importance of making the most of the funds provided. As a result, projects often fail because there is no long-term vision and expectation.

If we are to eradicate poverty, we therefore need to deal with all its causes and not just the financial one and it is essential that we adopt strategies which deal with at least some - if not all - of the factors which cause poverty.

It is, in fact, comparatively easy to give money but it is far more costly in terms of time and commitment to deal with the other issues relating to poverty. We also need to adopt strategies which encourage long-term benefits from the funds given and set up projects so that they do not rely upon continued investment from abroad.

As a charity, it is our aim to provide the maximum benefits for beneficiaries and to enable communities to stand on their own feet without relying on continued funding and relief aid from abroad. We have therefore put in place a number of strategies which deal with many of the causes of poverty and which have made a significant different to the long-term success of our projects.

SUMMARY OF OUR CURRENT STRATEGIES:
[Some of these strategies over-lap with each other.]

FIRST: Working in partnership:
This first strategy is important because it is essential to establish a partnership with beneficiaries in order to put many of our other strategies in place.

You may have noticed that the slogan we use under the name ‘Faith in Action’ is ‘Working in Partnership with churches in Africa’. Building partnerships and working as a team with our link churches in Arica has always been an important aspect of our work.

The essential ingredients of true partnership are first of all equality, second relationship, and third openness and honesty. These will

With each project, local committees are set up to encourage and support beneficiaries and also to monitor the project.

Farmers’ Committee at Ngabu

are no problems which need rectifying.

EIGHTH: Networking and Supervision.
When each village project is set up, local leaders and government workers are present to oversee the distribution. In this way all our work is done in an open and accountable way and we work closely with local government development officers who support and encourage our work. We understand that some of our projects have been used by them as a demonstration model for others.

Local committees are also set up to encourage and support individual beneficiaries and to monitor each project.

NINTH: Encouraging re-investment.
We believe that it is also important to teach beneficiaries about re-investment. African culture tends to spend, use, or give away what they have. They are extravagantly generous to each other and to visitors and rarely put money aside for future use or benefit. They therefore often fail to gain the maximum benefit from the projects that they receive.

Let me give just one example of the benefits of re-investment: we provide goats for families who foster orphaned children. If they sell all the kids that these goats produce they will gain about £288 each year from this project. However, if they keep just one of these kids each year in order to increase their breeding females and thus to re-invest in their project, their yearly income after 10 years could be £1,584.

We should add that not all these strategies can be applied to every project. For example, a project must produce an income for it to be provided as a loan. But we seek to apply these strategies where they are appropriate. As a result, we are seeing some really significant and long-term benefits for families and communities.
Can We make Poverty History?

Strive to achieve them.

Sixth: Provide equipment which is bought locally.

We only provide resources that are purchased locally where this is possible. In this way spare parts can be bought easily and the technology is available to maintain each project.

When purchases are made outside the recipient country, foreign currency is rarely available to buy spare parts and these have to be provided by donors. This produces long-term donor-dependence. Furthermore, when continued funding from abroad is not available, the project will fall into a state of disrepair.

Seventh: Building hope.

When families and/or communities have faced years of poverty and hardship, this can result in a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. As a result they find it almost impossible to believe that they can ever stand on their own feet. This lack of hope means that projects will often fail because people expect them to fail. If projects are to succeed, self-confidence in their many skills and abilities needs to be developed.

One common way that we often fail to build hope and self-confidence in the lives of beneficiaries is through donors presuming to lead, organise and/or to run each project. This may be well-intended but it under-mines their valuable skills and communicates that they are not able to do this for themselves. In direct contrast, God gives us the freedom to learn through making mistakes and we should extend this same freedom and trust to others. It may take longer to see positive results but these results will ultimately be greater and more long-lasting.

It is for this reason that we do not take a leadership position in any of our projects although we do monitor their progress and check that there require humility, time and commitment to establish. Building relationship is essential because we can only trust people who we know and it only when trust is built that open and honest dialogue can take place. Trust also enables others to listen to, and to act upon, the suggestions and recommendations that we make. I will share later why this is so important.

In direct contrast, it is much easier to try to deal with poverty from a distance. A lot of people often advise voluntary or charity workers not to get emotionally involved. This is because they rightly understand that when we get close to people in need, their needs can become overwhelming. We have experienced this as the needs shared with us often appear endless. It often seems that we have no sooner dealt with one disaster before there is another, and another, and another! However, it is our belief that there is a cost required before success is possible.

We provide resources that are purchased locally. Our wells use Afridev pumps, the parts for which can be purchased in local markets.

Well with Afridev Pump

Pastors attending our first Conference in Blantyre

Second: Identifying with beneficiaries and understanding their culture:

It is difficult to help others if we do not really understand the circumstances, problems and limitations that they face. In order to identify with them in at least some measure, we always stay with Malawian church leaders when we visit Malawi and usually eat and sleep in their traditional mud and thatch houses when we visit the rural areas. The fact that we stay with the people in their villages also communicates that we really care about them and their well-being.

As well as staying with church leaders and local pastors when we visit Malawi, we have also participated in ten day conferences in Malawi. These meetings have a spiritual aspect to them but we also spend considerable time discussing all our projects as well as suggesting some new ones. Everyone is encouraged to participate in these
discussions and thus we work together as a close-knit team and are all 100% motivated to make each project successful.

**THIRD: Establishing ownership of projects.**

Beneficiaries will only gain long-term benefits from projects if they own them. If they do not own each project, beneficiaries will expect donors to maintain and to repair them. This means that projects will only last as long as donors are available to keep them up and running.

There are at least three ways that we can encourage beneficiaries to own projects: first, we should never impose projects on others but only provide for those which are really wanted. No-one will maintain something well that they did not choose to have.

Second, where possible, we provide funds for projects as loans. If people pay back the money that they have been given, they feel that the project is really theirs. In this way, the projects are also multiplied.

Third, if we can not provide funds as loans, we seek to involve the community and/or families in the setting up of projects and thus they have also contributed to it. We also encourage recipients to share the benefits of projects with others. In this way they become donors and not just recipients. In some projects this sharing of benefits is monitored.

Two examples of this is found in our provision of goats and wells: Where we provide goats, families construct their own kraal and give one of their first kids to another family. When we construct wells, we involve the community in every stage of construction and train a committee to maintain it.

**FOURTH: Providing knowledge and training.**

We have found that sharing knowledge and information can be just as important as giving funds. We use a hand-operated rig so that communities can be involved in drilling each well. Communities also collect sand for cement.

A Vonder Rig

We have access to so much information in the West which is often not available to others and we need to share this where it is appropriate.

I have just written that it is wrong to impose projects on others. However, there are groups who I believe have made the opposite mistake: they say that they will only do what they are asked to do by beneficiaries. I think that this is also wrong because it robs them of information which could change their lives.

The middle, and I think better, path is to work in partnership with both sides providing information and making suggestions and requests, and then only proceeding when there is complete agreement on both sides. In this way we are able to share the vast realm of knowledge available in the UK which is often not available in Africa.

I would like to give you just one example of where information was just as important as funding: in the Lower Shire it is not traditional to use fertilizer and thus crop yields can be low. We therefore explained the benefits of fertilizer to a group of pastors and asked if they would like to try it and then let us know the results.

With their agreement, we provided funds for fertilizer in villages where these pastors lived. They returned the following year and shared with great excitement the results that they had seen: they told us that one acre without fertilizer would have produced 5-30 50kg bags of maize. However, with fertilizer they had received 55-70 50kg bags of maize. As a result, they are now motivated to save funds from their increased yields and to buy their own fertilizer from now on.

As well as providing information as we have just described, project coordinators give training on maintaining any machinery that is bought. Beneficiaries also receive training on keeping accounts where this is appropriate and teaching on the importance of budgeting and of saving some of the benefits of each project for future emergencies.

**FIFTH: Showing potential benefits of projects.**

When we provide funds for projects, the potential benefits of each project should be explained. For example, if we provide a high-yielding crop, we should clarify what the yields for this crop should be. If we fail to do this, beneficiaries will accept less without making any effort to change farming methods in order to achieve the full benefits. If they do not know what the benefits should be, they cannot