



## Build a Village Project

Interview with Napoleon Dzombe  
Written by Marcus Westberg



*The nation of Malawi is considered one of the poorest nations in Africa and in fact, the world. Malawi is a land of small plot farmers, with over 90% of the population listing themselves as subsistence farmers. Unlike many of the emerging nations, Malawi remains a nation of rural villages.*

*The conditions of the cultivatable land in most regions of Malawi, as well as the weather conditions, are conducive to a larger number and variety of crop harvests than is currently being produced. In many cases two and three crops a year could be produced on land that is currently only bearing one.*

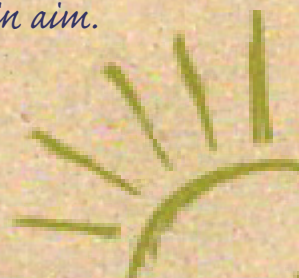
*Despite the rich potential of the land, the people have turned primarily to maize (corn) production, with this single crop currently accounting for 80 to 90% of the average village person's diet. A diet consisting of a single food item cannot nourish the body adequately, so the nation suffers from continual malnutrition. Sickness and disease are often in overwhelming proportions because of the lack of land usage for food that will offer a more varied, nutritious diet.*

*Visionary Malawian leader, Napoleon Dzombe, has been working tirelessly with the aid of The Malawi Project, the Nu Skin Force for Good Foundation™ and a number of Malawian government departments to build a village which will act as an agricultural training centre for Malawian farmers. NTC Executive Marcus Westberg recently visited Malawi to meet Napoleon and learn more about what he is doing to secure the future of his nation.*



*With regard to the Mtalimanja model village, what exactly is it you want to achieve?*

*What I want to do is teach people to fish, not give them fish. I'd like to get about 200 farmers to the school and train them for two years. Then at the end of the two years I can provide them with a small loan so that they can start using what they have learned. My project will be to assist them to look for a market where they can sell what they produce. That way we can empower the ordinary people in the villages to work on their own and eventually they may also be supporting others, just because they have been empowered. So it's to give them independence, that's the main aim.*







### ***How will this be achieved?***

*I would like to get one man from every village so that that man can be a model in his village when he returns. Then, others will be learning from him. The reason why people in Malawi are dying, and have been dying from hunger, is that they have resources around them, but most of them don't know how to use them. For example, during the year 2001, people were dying. One day I carried three dead bodies, right from my house. But during that time, we had enough water in the rivers. So if they would have used that water for irrigation, I think they would not have died. But just because they did not know how to use the resources around them, that's why they were dying. So I have decided to introduce a school where the people can learn those skills. The moment they learn those skills, they will realise that the resources around them can save their lives. They will be learning irrigation, animal husbandry, making compost instead of using fertiliser, how to grow fruits and knowledge about agriculture in general.*



### ***When will this happen?***

*Well, as of now, I already have 43 farmers on the scene who are practising irrigation, even before the opening of the school. In 2007, I need to increase from 43 to a hundred. Thereafter we can come with two hundred, when we have enough houses.*



***The first step, of course, is to create subsistence farming. But I have also heard you talking about surplus farming as one of your main objectives. And export is of course necessary to get the economy on its feet.***

*Well, I will start it small, as we are doing now. But in the years to come, I hope it will grow so big that it would cover the whole entire nation, plus export to other countries. Economically, Malawi has been depending on tobacco, but the market for tobacco today is slowing down. Therefore, the value of our money is just crashing, every day. So at the end of the day, Malawi will be broke. Therefore, as one way of supporting our country, we are finding other sources of income. This way we are helping the government as well.*

*What I wish to do is to have small processing plants where people can supply their produce to be processed further, so that they can get more money on the market. You know, people in the villages are starving, they are very poor, so that's one way to alleviate their problems. That's why I'd like to help create small industries so that they can at least process their things and sell them at a better price on the market.*





***How do you see the Mtalimanja model village in the bigger picture?***

*This is a model village. Not only for Malawi, but for the whole of southern Africa. There's no other village like what I'm building today. So I'm just setting an example so that other guys can learn from me. You know, civilisation begins from one point, then it spreads. So the starting point for this kind of civilisation in this part of Africa will be from my place.*



***Most of your funding comes from abroad but you also contribute a lot from your personal means. You were in business for many years. What resources did you bring from your businesses that you've been able to use for development projects?***

*Well, we are using the lumber from my timber business for roofing. We are using the trucks to transport everything to the site and for VitaMeal™ distribution. The little I still get from my business, I have to contribute, that's my motto. As of now, it's only the trucks and the sawmills that remain. But the little I get from the saw mills, I am contributing.*



***How many people do you employ at the moment?***

*There are over 200 people working for me over at the Mtalimanja model village site; here at Mtendere Orphan Village about a hundred; at Chikangawa over fifty, which means there are about three hundred and fifty people who are employed. The number will have to be reduced once construction at Mtalimanja is over though.*



***The VitaMeal plant – do you see that as a separate project, or working together with the agricultural programmes?***

*Well, the VitaMeal plant uses soya beans and maize, so we are empowering the people to produce those things locally, so that the VitaMeal plant can purchase these products from them. Therefore, the plant itself is already a market for the farmers. If people were dying of hunger, which means their capacity is too small to produce even their own food, it would be very difficult for them to supply food for the VitaMeal plant. Therefore, we need to teach them how best they can produce excess maize and soya beans, to support themselves and the VitaMeal plant. So the VitaMeal plant and the Mtalimanja model village will be working hand in hand, since the VitaMeal plant will be giving them money to buy fertiliser and seed and so on.*







***How does VitaMeal get distributed and how are the recipients of the VitaMeal chosen?***

We have the village head man, traditional chiefs; those guys are responsible for deciding who needs to get the food. We work very closely with them - we have staff that go and verify the sites so that we can be sure that the orphans in the villages get the food. Most of the people who have been going to the villages to see what we are doing have been very, very impressed.

We have distribution centres in the villages so we take our trucks there. We have designed cards; each card has 12 months on it. So we give one card to each orphan, directly. In order to prevent forgery the cards have been stamped by our Nourish the Children stamps. We also have registers in case a child loses their card.



***You also want to develop another product, a cash product, from the Madalitso food plant?***

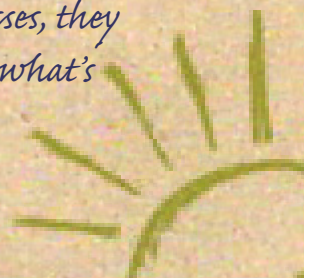
Yes, that is something which I am working on. You guys have been so generous in that you are supporting the needy in other countries. But at one point, you'll no longer be able to keep helping. When that point comes, then the whole process will fall apart. Therefore, we need to work hand in hand with you. While you are helping us, we have to find an alternative so that when you have difficult times, then we can easily support the plant to feed the disadvantaged in the villages by ourselves.



***The aid sector has lost a lot of credibility in the past few years. Do you feel that? Or do you feel like you are trusted by those who supply you with funds and materials? Furthermore, are you able to delegate some of your work to others? You seem to work around the clock!***

Well, people have been coming to see what's going on with their own eyes. And they have seen exactly what we are doing. So I don't think they doubt us. But at the same time that's why we are asking our people to do their part, so that they can learn to survive on their own. So our mission is to help today, help them so that they can stand on their own in the future.

Indeed, I'm already training other people to work with me. Since I'm working with international organisations, I have to work at many different levels, from running the VitaMeal plant and overseeing the building at the Mtalimanja agricultural village to dealing with government officials, so that I can prove that we can run our programmes successfully. Many organisations are failing because the top bosses, they just live in big houses and cool offices, they don't go into the fields to check what's





going on there. So at the end of the day, the massive aid which comes into the country doesn't reach the poor people in the villages. So I have to see to it that those disadvantaged guys get their part. So that's why I work so hard and on many different levels. But I have some people who are working with me.



***Do you have any political ambitions?***

Well, I am doing more than what a normal Malawian can contribute to the country. You know, many people, they need to be politicians just because they want to contribute to their country. But I'm already contributing more than anybody, so there's no need for me to go into politics. I'm trying what I can to save the country.



***Finally, do you have anything you would like to say to the contributors of VitaMeal?***

Well, I'd first like to thank them and assure them that their generosity is deeply appreciated. I'd also like to appeal to the contributors, that if they could donate on a regular basis, that would really help us on the ground to work more efficiently. If they give this month and then next month they don't give, it is too difficult for us to plan ahead. If people can give consistently this will allow us to plan further ahead.

