



NAMIKANGO
MISSION

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Where Do We Go From Here?



**Empowering African communities through
Christ-centered transformation**



What Is Next?

by Ben Hayes

Saying goodbye is important in many cultures, but especially in Africa. As Becca and I and our kids were leaving Malawi, Namikango held a going-away party for us that gave us the opportunity to say goodbye both to staff and to many that we have worked with through our time in Malawi. It was a special and colorful event, involving gift giving, singing, and prayer. Church leaders from different regions were present, as well as members from the first Discipleship Journey Group that we started almost six years ago.

One of the questions on people's minds, however, as this event was being held for yet another (and the last) set of missionaries to leave Namikango in the last 12 months, was: "What is next? What will leadership look like moving forward?"

One of the responses to this question was answered by the presence of three of Namikango's Malawian board members (*pictured on the front cover, left to right*): Chester Kabinda (Church of Christ leader and long-time partner with Namikango), Symon Katete (long-time staff member at Namikango), and Bisani Mphongolo who previously worked at Namikango and continues to serve as a leader in the church of Christ. While Bisani has been a part of this board for several years, Chester and Symon both agreed to join us in January of this year.

Currently, these three men, along with myself, serve on this board, which will work together with the US board to oversee and lead Namikango moving forward. We met together several times over these last couple months, and

have realized the need to continue to add members with various skill sets. We are currently approaching five other individuals to consider joining us in the near future.

As I transition out of the Malawi Mission Director role over the next few months, both the Malawi and US boards have agreed on the need to find a local Mission Director to fill this vacancy. The boards will be working together to find this person, and together with the staff leadership at Namikango, set a vision for moving forward together. We are convinced that God has led us to this point and believe this is the next step for Namikango. In many ways, this is a monumental shift as we move towards a new phase in Namikango's history, with US workers moving into more supporting roles.



In another way, though, this has been the approach Namikango has operated with for many years. In spite of the large missionary team in Malawi, these last five years especially, and the leadership roles held, we have always helped to facilitate, train, and work alongside Malawian leaders to carry out ministry. The 2000+ congregations connected to Namikango do not exist because US missionaries planted them. The \$100,000+ dollars being saved in village banks (VSL) were not dollars given by the US, and the 100 babies/month delivered at the maternity clinic are not products of doctors from the US. They are the result of the partnership and leadership of both Malawian and US leaders, and the many partners of Namikango in the US and throughout the world, working together to see God's kingdom spread.

This is not stopping now. Rather, there are ways in which this has the potential to grow beyond where it has ever been. Each of Namikango's ministries are continuing and seeking to grow: Village Savings and Loans, Discipleship Training Institute, Women's Development, Camp Meetings, and Village Bible Schools, and more, all have a budget and plan for this year, to build on in coming years.

Because of the last several years, all of us know what it's like to have to deal with change. And, for many, knowing that the whole world was dealing with the change (specifically COVID), somehow made it easier to move through, and perhaps brought a sense of togetherness. As we move through these next years here in Malawi, the same kind of call for support and community is desperately needed. And it is needed not just through these years, but beyond.

More than ever, this is a time when partnering with Namikango both prayerfully and financially is crucial. While we see a place for US workers to continue going to Malawi to live and work in the future, right now is a time where the Malawian leadership assumes some of these responsibilities. Some ministries suffer when US workers move back to their home country. For Namikango, a ministry that God has been moving through for over 60 years, we see these next years as a platform for a launch into what God is going to continue to do.

Even so, we all still have roles to play in this partnership that are vital to God's kingdom, and we are asking you to continue to partner with us. Isaiah 43:18-19 is a verse we have referred to several times in the past year, and it is powerful and appropriate now:

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

When change comes, as challenging as it is, can we move through it with God? Is God calling us to it?

Thank you SO MUCH for what you have given to Namikango. Be blessed in knowing that God has used you to bring about an amazing ministry in Malawi, and that you continue to be part of this new thing "springing up."

With love and thanks,
Ben

UNDER THE MANGO TREE



Women's Development

With the flooding earlier this year, many people's harvest were affected. Zion (Women's Development Coordinator) has continued to train the women in how to make soap and grow and process sweet potato, as it is a good starch replacement for maize and more easily grown. This year's theme is "Righteous Woman, Rise and Shine!" This spiritual lesson on how to be a light in their communities is the primary focus.



DTI

The first cohort of students has finished their final semester! They traveled back home last month. It has been an amazing journey with this group. Graduation will take place July when the several of us from the US are making the trip there. As I write this, several of our staff are in the central region right now letting churches know about the next cohort of students scheduled to begin in August/September of this year.



Mozambique Team

Part of our team was in Mozambique last week, to visit, train, and encourage the Bible School leaders and teachers we work with. 27 teachers were present to be trained for this year's Bible school courses. Representatives from two main districts we operate in (Gurue and Milanje) attended.



Conservation Agriculture

Faith Somanje (our staff member who oversees this area of ministry) was in the North of Malawi conducting trainings on forest management and bee keeping. This is an initiative that will begin this year, seeking to help farmers take care of their own land and the environment in Malawi.



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