



CHILDREN

Lost Childhood

The sun is still hidden below the eastern horizon when village roosters begin their morning cadence.

Soft sounds can be heard from within the thin-walled village huts. The family is awake, and a thin wisp of smoke signals the cooking fire is already burning. Mother has already been outside and has a meager meal well along. As the two boys put on their thin, worn shoes, frayed shirts and hand-me-down pants, their father is preparing to go to the field. It takes three months to cultivate the land to raise enough food for the family. They are behind schedule, and it is critical they put in every minute of the 15-hour days needed to have the fields ready for planting.



While the boys finish their preparations, their sisters arrive with 5-gallon buckets of water on their heads. It will be enough water for two meals that day, washing dishes, and for everyone in the family to bathe. They need to allow time for the water to settle. The rainy season is months away, and the river is nearly dry. Try as they might, the water buckets stir up the river sediment and the water is dirty from the mud washed down from the mountains.

The sun's rays begin to crack open the horizon, as the rooster settles in to do what roosters do. The boys move to the field. They remain there through the hot 80° temperature until the sun crosses to the distant horizon.





The girls are busy mending clothes, cleaning house, cutting firewood, and caring for their younger siblings. Mother is busy with other chores, and the girls must carry the smaller ones on their backs all day.

Although going to school is required, most village families cannot afford the cost. If children go to school the fields will be neglected, and the family may starve.

These children have never owned store-bought toys. Their toys are hand made from castoff wire, sticks, tire rims and plastic bags. With little time to play, real toys would often go unused anyway.

Medical care often goes unfulfilled because government hospitals are out of supplies, short on staff, and unable to handle the heavy load.

In spite of having no time to experience carefree play, the children have something their first-world counterparts often do without. They have a strong family bond, a close-knit community, and a solid link to their past.

One thing offers hope for a future of something more than working 12 to 16 hours a day. That something is education. Supporting the education programs of the Malawi Project is of the utmost importance. Without you, children will spend their entire lives in constant toil, trying to eke out enough food to survive just one more day.



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