

Football Pitch by Ben Hayes

A football pitch (also known as a soccer field) is the playing surface for the game...

Our Football Pitch project was originally developed as one of the ideas that would help the mission generate income. It was unanimously agreed on by staff and the project began in 2018. The business concept of this project is to build a community stadium that would have multiple uses. First, this was an opportunity for Namikango staff to provide a venue for their own recreational activities, as well as to be used by students who are on campus. Secondly, it can also be used by the community at a fee. That fee will be used to maintain the facility and to support the work of other Mission ministries.

Football (soccer) is the most popular sporting activity in Malawi. Football has been used as a tool for entertainment by corporate leaders, and as a means of communicating important messages to the community at a public gathering.

Our Mission stadium will be used for football matches and for hosting open-air events such as camp meetings, public functions, weddings, and other activities that require a larger, open space.

At this stage, the land has been cleared and leveled, a wire fence has been put up around the pitch, water lines have been installed for a water sprinkler system under the field with a 5,000-liters water reservoir for watering. We covered the football pitch area with black soil and planted grass over all the field. The remaining works include: covering the wire fence with sacks to protect players running into it; installing goal posts; and building toilets there.

With all these things in place, we believe the facility will be ready for use by August this year. Later on, we will be looking at the possibility of adding a brick fence around the field and putting up a spectators' stand. This would be done from the income received from the project.

Some late news from Malawi

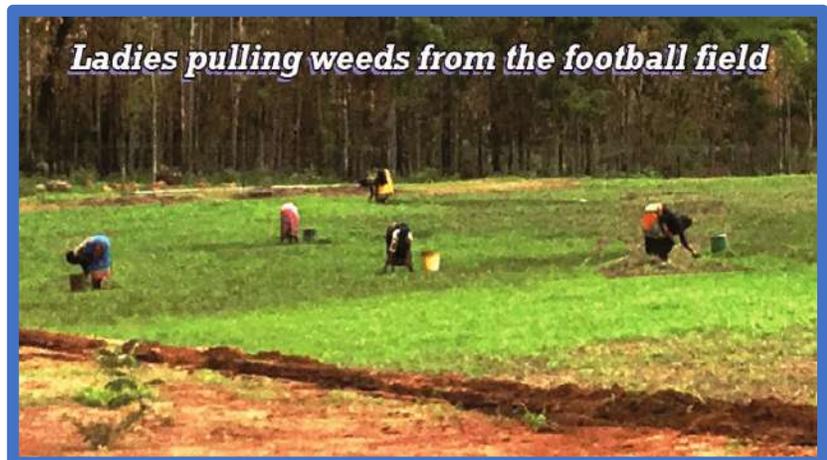
- Malawi remains one of the few nations in the world that has not yet gone into a Coronavirus lockdown.
- They are preparing for national elections this month, June 23, but there is a possibility of a postponement.
- There have been 547 cases of Coronavirus confirmed in Malawi with 6 deaths reported.
- Scientists are concerned with how Coronavirus will affect people with HIV, malnutrition, malaria, and other ailments prevalent in Malawi.
- Local market places and roadside sellers are facing declining business with a lack of customers as people fear contacting the disease.



Drainage System being installed around the field



500 liters (132 gal) tank for watering



Ladies pulling weeds from the football field

Here are some things in Malawi's favor as they face the virus:

- Malawi is protected by a mild climate, which it is felt does not favor the virus.
- They have a population with an average age of 17 years old; it's reported the virus is most deadly among the aged.
- In Malawi 80 percent of people are already isolated - living in rural, largely self-sustaining farms.

Our Football Team by Ben Hayes

The Namikango Football Club (NFC) began in 2017 and has continued to grow over the last few years. This team began with the purpose of connecting with the community through an avenue that most everyone in Africa loves – Soccer! The team is led by Team Captain (our Maintenance Foreman at Namikango) Joel Chimpeni, with several other staff members as part of the team.

NFC, in its first few years, dominated in the local area and were champions of Thondwe (where Namikango is located). They entered many tournaments and held matches with other business and local teams.

Last year the team moved up into one of the more professional leagues to begin the next phase of the football world in Malawi. It was a challenging year, as this is a league of

experienced teams. They worked their way towards playing professionally in Malawi. Our team has 25 players, 2 coaches, a team doctor and a manager. The team finished 17th out of 19 teams last year, but they still feel good about breaking into this new, tougher league.

We have been blessed far beyond playing soccer – staff members have mentioned several times how our relationships have been greatly strengthened with local community around Namikango through this venture with the team. It is a place where we mentor kids that we otherwise would not have the chance to help. It is also something fun for all of our staff to support. We have experienced the highs and the lows and are hoping for another good season this year!



Wow! Stars Shine Bright in Malawi by David Langford, Namikango Mission Board

It's not surprising that Namikango has added athletic events as a part of their outreach to Malawians. Even before the education and training they would receive at university, missionaries Ben and Ryan Hayes were very accomplished athletes while attending Lubbock Christian High School. Obviously, growing up playing soccer (excuse me, "football") in the fields of Kenya prepared them well to be outstanding athletes in multiple sports.

Ben Hayes played football, basketball, and tennis, making the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) All State Football team his senior year and helping LCHS advance to the state playoffs for the first time in several years.

Ryan Hayes followed in his big brother's steps also playing tennis, basketball, football;

he even added track & field. In Ryan's senior year, he made the All State teams in tennis and track & field. And his football team went undefeated, winning the TAPPS State Championship. Ryan made the All State Football team his sophomore, junior, and senior years.

Ben and Ryan would be the first to agree that physical training and accomplishments are, as Paul said, of less value than godly things (1 Timothy 4:8). But those physical abilities become godly things when they are used to spread the Gospel and advance the Kingdom, such as what is currently

happening at Namikango; their value increases immensely as God takes our abilities and promises to do immeasurably more than all we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).



Go Namikango!



Namikango Mission • PO Box 21 • South Houston, TX 77587

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**Head Nurse Memory Somanje
Trained in Handling Covid 19**

Stanley Mkwanda

by Ben Hayes

Stanley Mkwanda was a member of the Namikango staff team when I came in 2012. He worked in the accounting office, handling daily cash and other financial duties. While he was on staff here, he graduated from the Namikango Bible School and was heavily involved in church leadership and in our bible school work. The time came when he wanted to further his education.

We had great trust in Stanley and sent him on scholarship to African Christian College in Swaziland, together with his wife, Memory, who is now our Head Nurse at the Maternity Clinic, and young daughter. After three years there, he has returned to us with a Bachelor's degree in Bible. We have envisioned a new position for him at Namikango as the Coordinator of the English Bible School. He will be working alongside Eric Gephart. He has become a solid member of the Bible School team at Namikango.

Stanley is an intelligent, grace-filled man who loves God, loves his family, and is passionate about serving people. We are blessed and excited to have him back as part of our team as we move forward.

Rebuilding Broken Relationships

by Stanley Mkwanda

People in Malawi are thirsty to hear the "Good News" of Jesus Christ. This is true in both the villages and in the cities. Despite the recent hunger difficulties in the villages, largely the result of a pest called 'the army worm' which destroyed crops for many small-scale farmers . . . many people are still showing up at these camp meetings . . . before the virus hit.

The theme for the meetings was, "Loving God by Loving our Neighbour." This theme is a good one as we can see by the comments and feedback from people who attended.

Yes, many people go to church - but they do not live Christ-like lives. There is a great need for God-centered relationships to be built between people and churches; I am very optimistic that the introduction of this theme of "loving your neighbor" is going to help in rebuilding the broken relationships between our neighbours and between us and God, in families, in churches, and in communities at large.

A camp meeting usually involves three of us staff members. We leave Namikango campus Friday morning for the village that will be hosting the camp meeting, and return late Sunday night. Although it is not an easy thing to leave our homes, we feel gratified when we see people really taking hold of the message being taught. Our emphasis is on how it is impossible to love God without loving the person next to us. As 1 John 4:20 says, "If we say we love God but hate any of our brothers or sisters, we are liars. If we don't love someone we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen him". Our love for God can only be seen in the love we show to people around us.

God is at work through these camp meetings. In one meeting, a lady admitted that she was not living at peace with her neighbour and she vowed to amend their relationship. This shows that the gospel meetings are yielding good fruits in people's lives. We are encouraged as we see God working in restoring broken relationships. Please pray for God to be at work in all the camp meetings and that we are able to resume them soon.





Ben & Becca and Ryan & Justine,

We always follow the work at Namikango and thank God for your hard work. We are grateful for hearing the interesting, hard work you are doing. Nova Purdy Vaughn is my mother and she fondly remembers her years with you young men in Kenya. She is almost blind but is gracefully aging and is an inspiration. Your work inspires her.

In Christ,

Mevanee & Phill Parmer with Nova Vaughn

Update on Missionaries' Furloughs

Hello everyone,

We hope you are all well and safe. As things in the US begin to open up again slowly, we are also able to begin moving and visiting family and friends. Our furlough plans are being extended slightly due to COVID.

As I write this, Eric is in Pennsylvania, Ryan and Justine (and family) in California, and our family is visiting between Lubbock and Houston. We plan to all come together in Houston in the beginning of July for a board meeting, which we are looking forward to. It will be the first time in several months for our missionary team to meet, and even longer since we last met with the board.

We hope many of you have also been able to visit loved ones that you may not have seen for some time, and perhaps have begun to resume a "normal" routine of some kind. We look forward to getting to see some of you in the coming months. In the meantime, may the Lord bless you all, and thank you for your continued prayers for our Namikango staff in Malawi, and for us here. We are praying for you all as well.

Blessings, Ben

Missionaries

<http://www.NamikangoMission.org>

**Ben, Becca, Braylon,
Brooklyn, & Britain Hayes**

BenBecHayes@hotmail.com

<http://hayesmalawi.wordpress.com>

**Ryan, Justine, Amelie,
Lily, & Rylee Hayes**

RyanHayes@cmfi.org

JustineHayes@cmfi.org

<http://ryandjustine.wordpress.com>

Eric Gephart

EricGephart@cmfi.org

TransmissionsFromTheField.com

Editor

Sidney Vaughn

sidneyv@swbell.net

713-944-8484

Mail Contributions to:

Namikango Mission

P. O. Box 21

South Houston, TX 77587



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