

Zayed Energy and Ecology Centre - Solar Academy Nkhata Bay, Malawi Update- July 21, 2014

The Zayed Solar Academy is up and running! We have 29 students (see group photo below), who were chosen from 133 who applied to be considered for the program and attended the three sensitization workshops which were given locally. The program started with 67 students in two classes, one Chichewa, the other English. After one week of classes the students were given an assessment test to choose the brightest students. Today we will start the fourth week of classes. Everyone is thrilled with the program, the students see it as a major opportunity and are working very hard. Ideally we would like 15 students for the program, but if everyone does well we are going to try to accommodate everyone who is capable. The three solar teachers are working out well, it was a good choice to hire Chrispin Gogoda from Mzuzu



Chrispin Gogoda showing a charge controller



William Nkhulande demonstrating PV panel wiring



iBrian Nyrinda teaching

University as the main teacher and to set up the program. He is a great teacher and gives the program extra credibility. Brian Nyirenda will be helping Chrispin with the theoretical classes, he has an IT and electronics background, and is getting up to speed quickly with solar technology. He will replace Chrispin when he heads to the UK for graduate work in September. William Nkhulande, who teaches the practical aspect of the class is from the local village, he is an electrician who has been working installing solar. He is thrilled to be teaching, and has good practical experience with village low-tech solar installation. We are pleased that we have four girls in the class, and are doing everything possible to make sure they are able to stay in the program. The classes are being held in the existing church building on our site, we will soon be able



One of our students helps Chrispin install a PV panel

to move in permanently and do some renovation on the building to make it more user-friendly for use as our new shop. It is pretty dark inside, so we will add some translucent panels in the roof, replace the breeze blocks with wood shutters, move the door, and remove the alter. Nothing compared to constructing a whole new building at a different location for the Church congregation, which was our deal in order to have full use of the whole property. The building is almost complete, since this photo was taken, the contractor has plastered the walls with clay plaster, and has laid a cement floor.



Gail Swithenbank with Gilbert Kaunda, ZEEC Director with the contractor who is building the new church off site.

Construction on the other buildings will start soon.....



Our Solar Academy class - all 29 students and staff

TEVETA (Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority) will act as the credentialing agency for the solar program, they have asked us to offer brick laying, carpentry and welding courses, which would use the construction process of the Centre as an opportunity for on-the-job training. The TEVETA program in Malawi was initiated by the Canadian International Development Corporation to help deal with the problem of unemployment among youth -- the majority are unemployed, mostly because

of lack of skills) The students will learn construction skills by building the new buildings at the Centre. The skills training program has the possibility of slowing down the progress of the construction and could add to the cost, but as a group we decided that it is well worth it to give 50 or 60 local youth the opportunity to learn a trade. The brick-laying course will start in a week, and the carpentry class a few weeks after that. The TEVETA administration is planning a grand opening of the TEVETA program this coming Thursday, with their officials, our Chiefs, students and the local community.