

HEEED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



The HEEED Volunteer Programme is currently run by **Caroline BETBEDE** and its present focus is at **The HEEED Centre**, also known as the **Panda Garden**. This is located just behind Cape Maclear Ecolodge, in a 0.6-hectare demonstration garden and Centre of Environmental Education.

The HEEED Centre Activities seek **to empower the local community** to take responsibility for their **own health, the health of the environment, as well as promoting their own, sustainable, economic well-being**.

We are seeking **empowered, self-motivating, and creative** volunteers to assist us in our efforts within Chembe Village! The most successful volunteers will be those who come with an **open mind**, and are ready and enthusiastic to learn about Malawi and our efforts within the community.



Illegal firewood being collected from LMNP



Fuel briquettes are cheaper than firewood

HEEED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

The formally pristine Lake Malawi is severely **over-fished**, threatening to drive to extinction many endemic and endangered fish species. A dramatic increase in **deforestation** is another threat caused by the fuel needs of the rural communities lying within and around LMNP. With an increased population competing for diminishing natural resources, the task of conservation and environmental education has to include a comprehensive programme that addresses social issues related to the local population. Nowadays, **the conservation of natural resources, health, environmental and economic development** are all inextricably intertwined and the volunteer will get the chance to support those 4 objectives.

❖ HEALTH

- **Early Childhood Development Programme**

19 children between the ages of 2-6 receive a daily meal, a fortified *Likunipala Porridge*, 5 days a week. On top of this feeding program, an English teacher and her assistant teach and read to them in English from 7 am to 11am. These children have each been orphaned due to family illness, and are taken care of by family members other than their parents. **Volunteers can assist in managing the children as well as reading to them, playing, and facilitating creative activities.** The programme is currently funded by University of North Carolina Charlotte, USA.



A young child takes part in the daily morning feeding programme

- **Home Based Care**

Within Chembe Village, 22 families who are particularly needy due to factors such as HIV/AIDS, other illness and poverty - receive practical assistance twice per week. **Volunteers can assist in this programme by helping family members with chores, such as light cleaning, fetching water and nutritional advice.** This is also a great time for you to practice your Chichewa!

- **Bilharzia Snail-Sampling**

Data collection, research and health/environmental education are the basis for this activity – by helping **HEEED** staff “test the waters” and learn how to sample the waters (around lodges) for the bilharzia vector. This parasite lives part of its cycle in a small snail as well as in humans, lowers the immune system and recent studies have shown this debilitating disease to be linked to the higher prevalence of HIV and AIDS along the lake-shore. **Volunteers can track and monitor the changes of the parasite in the area through experiments done with the data collected.** This information is provided to the local community and can be used as an educational tool to raise the awareness on the cause and effects of bilharzia.

❖ **EDUCATION**

- **Teaching at Chembe Secondary School**

Following a MOU with Chembe Secondary School, qualified university graduates can assist in teaching the following subjects within the present curriculum: **English; French; Mathematics; Biology; Chemistry; Physics; History and Geography.**

There are a total of more than 200 students, from Form 1 to Form 4, for only 8 Malawian teachers, hence the need for volunteer teachers. HEEED liaises with the local Headmaster in order to establish the time-table for the HEEED Volunteer assistant teacher. **Computer-training** could also be considered as a subject, as well as overall **health issues, including bilharzia and HIV/AIDS.**

Apart from standard Ministry of Education text books on these subjects, HEEED could provide “*The Hiding Hyena*” as an educational cartoon booklet, using cartoon wild-life characters , seeking to eliminate HIV and AIDS among young people. HEEED could also provide relevant photocopied texts from the HEEED/GoM publication “*Lake Malawi National Park – UNESCO World Heritage Site*” which gives detailed descriptions of this biological wonder.

- **Adult Literacy**

Lead English classes with adults who are interested in improving their English comprehension. Lesson planning will help you to guide your adult students through reading, writing, and speaking English. Classes can be held at the HEEED Centre with adults, many of whom did not benefit from the expanded English curriculum that now exists in Malawi.

- **Art Education and Creative Recycling**

HEEED **Art Centre** oversees *Art and Environment* weekly classes for 10 Chembe Primary School children and *Advanced Art* classes for 12 Chembe Secondary School students during the academic year. HEEED **Handicrafts** produces (saleable) hand-made paper products from recycled waste paper (books and cards), crocheted bags from plastic waste, bottle-top baskets, tumblers from bottles, and much more!

Volunteers who are particularly creative will thrive here, and we welcome your artistic knowledge into this programme.



Drawing pinned Cichlid fish at the HEEED Centre

❖ ENVIRONMENT

- **Mud-Stove and Fuel Briquette Production**

The overall aim is to reduce deforestation in neighboring Lake Malawi National Park. Mud-stoves, made from a mixture of mud and *vetiver* grass, reduce fire-wood consumption by 2/3 and are being constructed in different parts of Chembe village. Fuel briquettes, a sustainable alternative to firewood are made from chopped *vetiver* grass and leaves. **Volunteers can assist in the production of fuel briquettes and mud stoves, oversight of the operation, as well as leading instructional demonstrations to educate the community on this eco-friendly form of cooking and reducing wood use.**

- **Nutrition & Cultivation**

HEEED has developed a nutritious menu, using locally produced vegetables and protein and encourages organic gardening , without the use of artificial fertilizer. This is an activity that HEEED volunteers could participate in/liaise with Home-based Care and Early Childhood Development Programmes. There is always work to be done with **garden upkeep, records related to planting, harvesting and using our land as an educational tool.** HEEED Staff members and the community are encouraged to cultivate small plots.



Horticulture class at Panda Garden, Chembe

- **Aquaculture**

HEEED has long recognized rampant over-fishing in the Lake is depleting stocks and that family aquaculture ponds are a sustainable source of protein. HEEED has also demonstrated that, although smaller in size - the taste of the cultivated fish is no different from the wild-caught fish in the Lake. HEEED and the volunteer can provide the **technical know-how on the construction and maintenance of fish-ponds**, while the plastic lining is a cost borne by the interested family.



Aquaculture class at the HEEED Centre

- **Tree-Seedling Nursery**

A variety of indigenous seedlings, also fruit trees are raised from seed and distributed freely to local families and schools.

However, HEEED charges a fee to non-Malawi buyers and these purchases help to defray costs of HEEED salaries and electricity. The best time to plant a tree was 15 years ago, the second best time is now. We look to **inspire more families to plant their own trees** and enjoy the benefits down the road.

- **Cultural Mapping within Lake Malawi National Park**

Assist National Park staff in locating and mapping points of local interest within Lake Malawi National Park. Within the hills and small mountains that surround Cape Maclear, there are **historically significant cave paintings** that have gone undocumented up until now. Through cooperation with the National Parks Department, we plan to assist their staff by doing transect walks through the park, mapping the area

with a GPS and noting our discoveries. The potential also exists for trail marking/building once points of interest have been discovered, thus increasing tourism to these areas.

❖ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

❖ HEEED Handicrafts

A group of talented young artists produce a variety of hand-made paper products that include cards, books, business cards, gift items. Creative recycling is the hallmark of this enterprise that also provides an income to HEEED and **volunteers are encouraged to participate in quality control, innovative ideas, as well as the marketing of HEEED Handicraft products both locally and overseas.**

HEEED Handicrafts also organizes *Art and Environment* drawing and calligraphy courses for young students. **Volunteers can assist in the day to day production of items, create new designs and marketing plans, or organize a village-wide cleanup to collect recyclable materials.** Latterly, the abundant plastic bag waste has now become recycled into functional crocheted bags with varying colours and designs.



HEEED greeting cards, made with recycled materials

VOLUNTEER ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation Options

HEEED volunteers stay at **Cape Maclear Ecolodge**, which offers a lush environment and a beach experience on the beautiful shore of Lake Malawi. Volunteers can stay at **Tandy House** or opt for more spacious rooms at **Fish Heaven House**. **All profits from the Ecolodge are donated to HEEED**, supporting the ongoing community projects at Panda Garden.

Tandy House

This self-contained unit is situated at the rear of the grounds of Cape Maclear EcoLodge. There are 4 **private rooms** and a **dormitory** with fans, as well as 2 shared bathrooms.

Fish Heaven House

All rooms at Fish Heaven House are private rooms and equipped with fans. **Mbuna**, **Liyani** and **Mcheni** are double rooms with shared bathroom and **Chambo** is a double en-suite. Except for Mbuna, rooms are overlooking the garden and the Lake.

Volunteer Packages

During their stay, HEEED volunteers are provided with **accommodation and full board** at Cape Maclear Ecolodge at a **weekly discounted rate**. The weekly charge covers the cost of maintenance, electricity, and salaries of the HEEED staff, as well as the ongoing community projects at Panda Garden.

Prices below include set **breakfast, lunch and dinner from Monday to Sunday** and vary according to the accommodation options:

- Dormitory: **US\$ 140** per week
- Mbuna: **US\$ 210** per week
- Liyani and Mcheni: **US\$ 315** per week
- Chambo: **US\$ 385** per week

HELPFUL TIPS

Transport. HEEED can arrange a private taxi from Lilongwe airport to Chembe for US\$120. Volunteers can also opt for public transport: a bus from the airport to Lilongwe bus station costs about US\$ 5; and a bus from Lilongwe to Monkey Bay (18 km from Chembe) costs about US\$ 22. There are a number of Chembe “mo-ped taxis” (*matolas*) that ply between Chembe and Monkey Bay for around US\$ 3. In Chembe village, HEEED has a vehicle that can be used for project purposes. Two bicycles are also kept at Tandy House and made available for volunteers, with a lock and a pump.

Laundry. Clean sheets and pillow cases are provided weekly. Volunteers are expected to take care of their own personal laundry, although it can be provided as an extra service upon request (US\$3).

Meals. Dietary restrictions (vegetarian, allergies etc.) can be accommodated. Breakfast is served from 7am, lunch from 12 pm and dinner around 6pm.

Telephone & Internet. Volunteers bringing cell phones and lap-tops can buy TNM or Airtel SIM cards for less than US\$ 1. Credit bundles can be topped up with weekly or monthly vouchers in the village.

Cash. Either US dollars can be exchanged or Malawian Kwachas can be withdrawn from ATMs at the airport and in Monkey Bay or Mangochi. Volunteers are expected to bring US dollars to pay the visa fee at Lilongwe airport.

Leisure Activities. Volunteers can engage in hiking, biking, kayaking, going on boat trips and sunset cruise, as well as snorkeling and SCUBA diving, to discover the myriad wonders of Lake Malawi National Park. All activities organized by Scuba Shack Diving School can be offered to HEEED Volunteers at reduced rates.

Visa. HEEED volunteers are encouraged to stay for a minimum of one month. Non-Malawians can enter the country on a tourist visa for 30 days (\$75) and this can be renewed for up to 3 months at an Immigration Office. Those wishing to stay longer can leave Malawi and visit Mozambique or Zambia for a short holiday and return for another 3 months or have HEEED arrange an in country extension for an additional 3 to 6 months.

Health and Travel Insurance. HEEED Volunteers are expected to provide their own health and travel insurance for the duration of their stay with HEEED. The local Chembe Billy Riordan Health Clinic can assist in emergencies and we also recommend that HEEED Volunteers take an anti-malarial prophylactic.

HEEED POLICY

HEEED Commitment

HEEED accepts all volunteers on an independent basis and will do all it can to ensure that the Volunteer will have an enjoyable and safe experience during their stay in Malawi.

However, the HEEED Volunteer is ultimately responsible for his/her own safety, health or events outside HEEED control – while working as a Volunteer. Although HEEED can and will offer support in an emergency situation, the Volunteer is expected to organize his/her own travel and travel insurance. To this end, the HEEED Volunteer will be requested, upon arrival at Tandy House, to sign a waiver and to pay a deposit for the room key.

At the same time, HEEED undertakes to give the Volunteer an orientation session, introducing him/her to all staff, an up-date on current news at the project site, basic safety and cultural issues, as well as emergency telephone numbers.

Code of Conduct

HEEED Volunteers are expected to respect local customs, religions and traditions and behave in an appropriate manner. Unfortunately, illness and funerals are a regular occurrence in Chembe and this may delay or alter work plans.

Moderate use of alcohol is permitted but no drugs are allowed at Tandy House. No visitors are allowed overnight at Tandy House and the HEEED Volunteer must inform the night watchman if he/she will return late.

Should the Volunteer decide to alter his/her programme or duration of stay – he/she needs to inform the HEEED Malawi Coordinator. Communication with HEEED staff is extremely important.

Teacher's Assistant

The HEEED Volunteer who assists a Malawian school teacher at any level will soon become familiar with the general approach of Malawian students and teachers to one another.

Malawian students are often taught by rote and not encouraged to question the teacher's information or opinion. Consequently, many foreign teachers are surprised by the passive behaviour of the average student and the HEEED Volunteer is encouraged to find his/her way to stimulate independent thinking and enterprise among students.

At the same time, the HEEED Volunteer needs to recognize the Malawian school curriculum and work within this frame-work – whilst also providing complementary, innovative material and methodology.

Begging

This trait has become more pronounced since the days of President Muluzi, when hand-outs from foreign donor organizations became the norm. As a result, a begging mentality has permeated the whole strata of society and the HEEED Volunteer needs to be alert to requests for anything from pencils to the contents of their purse.

We strongly discourage a HEEED Volunteer from succumbing to more or less subtle forms of begging. If a Volunteer wanted to provide school fees for someone, this could become a subject of discussion. However, this would require careful handling – if money is to be properly allocated and genuine school reports be sent to the donor. Please do not give any money to any individuals in the village or to HEEED Cape Maclear EcoLodge staff.

Please report any HEEED staff who request money from you as this is against HEEED policy. Gifts are greatly appreciated and should be handled by the Trainee Manager, Rhita Kaunda. All HEEED accounts are transparent and funds will be spent as you desire. Large donations will be deposited in their own designated account to be spent as the donor requests.

Questions and Comments

HEEED hopes that the Volunteers will enjoy their work and stay at Tandy House or the Cape Maclear EcoLodge – also managed by HEEED. A tip to the HEEED staff is appreciated and expected if you are pleased with the service.

Overseen by Rhita Kaunda – any donation to staff will be divided equally among the Staff members who have taken care of you, and this encourages them to work unceasingly to make your visit memorable and enjoyable.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our HEEED Volunteer Coordinator: heedvolunteer@gmail.com.