

## *Namitembo News: Meet Some Trade School Graduates!*

Over the last five years, as the Namitembo Trade and Agricultural School has gradually taken shape, many of us have wondered how great a difference the school was making in the lives of the graduates. With the recent visit of Fr. Owen and Bishop Thomas, this question was raised again, and so we asked our “reporter on the ground” in Namitembo, parishioner John Duffell, to find and interview a few of the graduates. What follows is an initial sampling of some of the graduates. For more examples, please see our web site at [www.stbridgetchurch.org](http://www.stbridgetchurch.org)!



**DUNCAN MWABANANJE** was a carpentry/joinery student who completed one year at NAMTAS (2007) and received a Grade III Certificate from the National Trade Test. His home is Chinseu Village in Namitembo Parish. Prior to attending NAMTAS, he worked in Chinseu with his two brothers in their own carpentry workshop. None of them had had any formal training, but had learned through apprenticeship with other relatives. Currently, Duncan is the only one of the three with any formal carpentry training, and he's interested in returning to NAMTAS for Grade II when he has the time (Grade I, too, if it is made available). He credits the training he received at NAMTAS with the greater profits at the Chinseu workshop, where he still lives and works. He says not only has his workmanship improved, but his business sense as well. As an example, while he used to sell box beds for K3500, after attending NAMTAS and receiving the Grade III certificate he'll sell a bed made with the same amount of wood for K8500 (note that some of this is due to increase in cost of the materials). His workshop

does upholstery as well as roofing supports.



**JENNIFER LIWONDE** was a carpentry/joinery student for two years at NAMTAS (2007-2008) where she earned Grade III and Grade II certificates. She originally comes from here in Namitembo Parish, Luwezi area (Nkamwa Village). Right now she is employed by Namitembo Mission, where she works under the supervision of the head carpenter here, Mr. Kalambule. They create things like doors, doorframes, windowframes and desks for all of the mission's construction projects, especially NAMTAS itself (it's too much work for the school's carpentry department to handle alone). She is now staying up the road in Mitumbiri Village. She was offered this job by Father Owen, after she did her attachment (work-study) here at the Mission for several months of her Grade II. If given the opportunity, she would be very interested in taking Grade I classes if and when they are offered. Her daily wage is K155.



**JAMES BAKALI** was a bricklaying student for two years here at NAMTAS (2006-2007) where he earned both Grade III and Grade II from the National Trade Test. His original home is Chinseu. Currently he is living in Area 36 of Lilongwe. He is not employed by a company, but he does work (albeit irregularly) with a group of other bricklayers on "ganyu" - casual labor, when it can be found. He says this work pays better by the day than formal work (between K400 and K800 per day), but it's spotty; since July 15th of this year, he's only found 2 weeks' worth of work. He did work for a company, Riverside Construction, for about 6 months in 2008. He says one of the major obstacles for people with certificates in bricklaying is that sometimes the construction foremen do not have certificates, and can be a little intimidated by the prospect of working with more qualified workers!



**LLOYD MKWANDA** was a carpentry & joinery student for one year at our NAMTAS (2005) where he earned his Grade III Certificate from the National Trade Test. He comes from Kaunde Village in Zomba district, just outside the Namitembo Parish boundaries near the top gate of the nearby Chungalume barracks. He has been with the Hau Long Construction Company (at Zomba General Hospital) as a carpenter for 7 months now, and like all the other carpenters there, earns K250 a day. He's staying 4 miles outside of Zomba town. He agrees with his friends that finding work in general as a carpenter is easy if you have your certificate -- but he feels that it is still not so simple to find a really good wage. But things are getting better. Prior to working for Hau Long, he was employed directly (but at much lower wages) by Chancellor College, in the maintenance department for about one and a half years.



**PATRICK NAKHWALA** was a carpentry/joinery student who completed one year at NAMTAS (2005 - the first year) and received his Grade III certificate from the National Trade Test. He comes from Zomba district, in Mwamba near Lake Chilwa. Currently he's working for Hau Long Construction as a carpenter; prior to that he'd worked for three other companies for 1 year, 8 months, and 2 months. He's staying in Zomba town, and working for Hau Long at Zomba General Hospital where new wards are being built. Patrick makes K250 a day - with overtime pay on weekends, working 7 days a week gives him K4250 per fortnight if he's up for it. Patrick is glad for his Grade III certificate, and says it's not difficult to find work as a carpenter if you have the certificate - the tricky part is finding steady work with one company, at a good wage. Like many of his colleagues, he'd like to go all the way to Grade I at NAMTAS or elsewhere so he can get a better wage (just not at Hau Long).



**VASCO MATENGO** is a solid success story. He was a bricklaying student for two years at NAMTAS (2005-2006), and was one of the students from NAMTAS' first year. He received his Grade III and Grade II certificates from the National Trade Test, and after returning home to Chiradzulu district, did home study for his Grade I certificate since he could not afford taking Grade I classes anywhere that offered them; he wrote the exam and has yet to hear the results. He started working for Hau Long in September of 2008, and has already signed a 5-year contract to work for them as a senior foreman. He's overseeing construction at Zomba General Hospital (where he works with many other Hau Long employees who studied at NAMTAS). He's staying in Zomba town and his current salary is K15,000 per month. He volunteered that if NAMTAS started offering Grade I, he'd go back to study there for a year even if he winds up getting the certificate anyhow - he valued his education there and would like to work more with Mr. Kapinda. He said that someday he'd love to teach bricklaying himself. His main suggestion for the trade school was that it should try to get some official agreements with construction companies for the required months of work-study. Prior to working for Hau Long, Vasco worked for Chiwachi Construction at Zomba Mental Hospital, and ABC Cosmo in Blantyre.



**SAMALANI MAGANGA** was a carpentry/joinery student for one year at NAMTAS (2005) where he earned his Grade III Certificate from the National Trade Test; he then went on to earn his Grade II at Thondwe Village Polytechnic. He's been working for Hau Long Construction at Zomba General Hospital since March 2009, and he's staying in town. Like all carpenters at Hau Long (most of whom have a Grade III certificate) he makes K250 per day. Still, like his friends, he would like to work his way to a Grade I and try his shot at finding better work. Prior to working for Hau Long, he did maintenance for Chancellor College for a few months, and other than that, has mostly done piece work around his home in Zomba town.



**PATRICK JULIO** was a carpentry/joinery student who completed two years at NAMTAS (2006 & 2007). He received a Grade III certificate from the National Grade Test, and passed the practical, but not the theory section of his Grade II. He re-sat the exams later, and is still waiting for those results. Patrick comes from Mulanje, in southern Malawi. Currently, he's working for N3 Construction as a carpenter and

joiner on a 6-month probation period preceding a possible 2-year contract (he has worked for two other construction companies on a short-term basis since leaving NAMTAS). His current worksite is at Chancellor College in Zomba town where new offices are being constructed for the lecturers. He's staying in Matawale, in Zomba town, and gets a salary of K4550 per fortnight, which is subject to an increase upon presentation of his Grade II certificate. Patrick was very happy to hear that the hostel accommodations would be available for male and female students by the start of the next school year, as he felt this was a big need at NAMTAS. He's very interested in continuing to Grade I so he can receive better fees and have a better shot at becoming a foreman or supervisor.



**HENRY SHAWA** was a computer science student who completed one year at NAMTAS (2007) and received an IT Certificate from Software Development Limited certification agency. His home is Mitumbiri Village, just a kilometre down the road from Namitembo Mission. Currently, he is working as a secretary and graphic designer at Liwonde Photo Studio in Zomba town - this is one of the "secretarial bureaus" in town that types up business letters, spreadsheets, invitations, and so forth, and provides assistance with design for logos, cards, and signs. He's earning K5000 per month and he's living in the "Mpunga" area of town...not such a fantastic salary for town living, so at the moment his goal is to sign up for a second year of school; his main trouble is with the fees for the testing. He expressed ambivalence at the NAMTAS' use of UK exam boards for computer science, saying that he wouldn't have a job without his UK-board-approved certificate, but that the cost might be prohibitive to a lot of local students.