



# Friends of Sick Children in Malawi



('FOSCIM')

[registered charity number 1140578]

## Spring 2019



In 2018 **99.6p of every £1** received from you, our supporters, was applied exclusively for the frontline needs in Malawi. Very few charities can claim that sort of outcome for their donors.

### Introduction



As **Spring** emerges in the northern hemisphere, in Malawi it is the equivalent of **Autumn**, the rainy season is ending and it is harvest time.

Early in 2019 The Malawi Ministry of Agriculture forecast a 25% increase in this year's maize harvest compared to last year. Since then there has been major flooding so we wait to see the impact upon the harvest the results of which impact the health of Malawi children as well as pregnant mums. Let's hope for good news.

The rainy season is always the busiest of times at the Hospital, often 3-times the number of children who present during the rest of the year!

Trustee, Prof. Liz Molyneux has just returned from Malawi and sends the following message:

"I returned from Malawi in the early hours of April 8. Manchester airport was shrouded in low lying cloud and it felt cold. Blantyre has been increasingly hot and sticky, as it so often is before rain falls. This wet season has been wetter than many on record. In 4 days from March 5th-8th southern Malawi was hit by a tropical depression. And even in Blantyre rainfall of 421 mm was recorded over those 4 days; the highest rainfall recorded for the whole of March was in 2001 and was 331mm. The tropical storm blew out to the Mozambique Channel and gaining strength from the warm waters, swung around and



returned as Tropical Cyclone Idai hitting Mozambique on 15th March before moving on to Zimbabwe, leaving immense destruction.

We were spared the cyclone but the rain has done immense harm in the lower River Shire valley: houses have collapsed, maize crops and livestock washed away, 56 have died and many, many more are now displaced. People have been sleeping in schools and churches and local and international organisations are attempting to provide clothing, blankets, clean water and food. Long term needs are seed, farm utensils, schooling and health care.

Many of the children admitted to our Paediatrics Department, and especially to the oncology ward, come from the Valley. Transport has been difficult and consequently treatments have sometimes been delayed or missed. Climate change proves to have far reaching and unexpected effects.



The oncology ward has been full. All the 22 beds are in use. Sisters Thundu and Likoleche are retiring this month. They have been with the unit since it opened in 1997 and I have known them since the 1970s – we have grown gray together! They will be greatly missed as their experience is irreplaceable. Two young freshly graduated nurses have joined the team and they are warmly welcomed. These two nurses have been working for pocket money, (about £20 a month), a sum that hardly pays their monthly bus fares. I admire them for coming and working and for their uncomplaining commitment.

Dr Chagaluka is a great head of oncology, he is loved by the children and there is a happy atmosphere on the ward. Eunice our clinical officer is a

quiet, dedicated clinician who carries out a lot of the practical procedures and keeps the outpatient's clinic going. In her 'spare time' she is doing a palliative care course by 'distance learning.' Sister Kamwendo is leading the nurses and the team is working well.

Professors Steve O'Brien and Simon Bailey from Newcastle came for a week and managed to buy and install a full blood count analyser in the small paediatric lab near the ward. This is wonderful as it means we can monitor therapy against any toxicity to their blood and lower or raise drug doses as necessary. This has not been possible before, especially for outpatients where it is really important for the children with leukaemia. They also paid for the replacement of batteries in the UPS machines that protect the blood gas analyser from electrical power surges which damage it at great cost. Both the gas analyser and the blood count machine are also useful to the whole Paediatric department.

I was able to help with the exams for post graduate paediatricians in training taking their clinical exams and also 5<sup>th</sup> year medical students doing their end of year exams. They did their teachers proud.



The academic head of department is now Yamikani Chimalezeni, a Malawian paediatric cardiologist. It is great to see our Malawian colleagues increasing in number and taking over positions of responsibility.

I spent most of this visit in oncology, my next visit will be more for neonates. The needs of the children are huge and staff and families do their best for them in difficult circumstances. Thank you to all our FOSCiM supporters for all that you do – every little bit makes a difference.”

## The FOSC Ward Staff Team

Some of our fantastic supporters continue to help secure the vital FOSC Ward Staff team. We have a new, very substantial, donor who wishes to remain anonymous, and special mentions also go to Arthur & Sheila Dolby in Scotland, to Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP and managing partner Jane Haxby, to Barbara Zimmer and Osnabruck Lions Club, to Mrs Winifred McClelland and to Dr. Michael Eyre.

I cannot overstate the value of the support we receive from **all** the people who help ensure the delivery of vital healthcare to the almost 100,000 very sick children we see each year in the resource poor Malawi environment. The whole Malawi team are greatly relieved and extremely grateful for the support of **all** our donors.

Work is on-going on a longer term funding solution not only to secure **but** grow the team to meet the increasing demand for care. Details are given later in this newsletter.

## The WORKSHOP mobilising Malawi's children

The 2018 Christmas Present Appeal went well again – thank you to all those who supported what has gained quite a following and continues to grow and be of interest; as one fan said “the true spirit of Christmas”.

The Malawi ‘elves’ managed to come good with delivering 34 wheelchairs and 27 corner/home chairs in time. Only a very small number of corner/home chairs were not delivered before Christmas Day and that was due to the families rather than the Workshop.

At the time of writing, 648 wheelchairs have been made as a result of the FOSCiM – QECH Workshop collaboration. With continuing support from particularly Kitchen Table Charities Trust and The Roger & Douglas Turner Charitable Trust, together with the successful Christmas Appeals, I estimate we could reach the 1,000 wheelchairs milestone in Autumn 2020. Watch this space and please start saving for next Christmas!

## Special Feature

### **Our classroom and teacher – an interview**

Despite the resource poor environment in this, one of the very poorest nations in the World, we value education and are proud of the efforts made for the children. It has all to be paid for from charitable donations.



**Name:** Wezi Hara

**From:** Zimba district in Northern Region of Malawi

**Family:** Married with four children three girls (10,8,6) and one boy (2)

**Role:** I am a teacher working with the children who come to the hospital for treatment and sometimes their siblings. Their ages can range all the way up to 18 years. I teach them while they are with us so as to maintain their education. Those who are able to walk, they come to the classroom while those who are in bed, I take the education to them. I do reading, playing, maths. Sometimes we have 28 in class, though it depends on which patients have been admitted. We don't have any standard days as I have to adapt to when the children are free, when the doctor wants them they have to go.

**Why you do what you do:** It's a passion; it's fellowship with the patients. Interacting with them is amazing.

**Highlights:** My role gives me the opportunity to help sick children particularly those who have been in hospital a long time. It stops them from forgetting their education. Many children really enjoy the school; they dance and sing, forgetting they are even sick. Some even come back and tell me 'I know this because of this school.'

**Challenges:** Sometimes the children are just too sick to learn and this can be difficult.

## 'CRAFTING' for the babies, children and mums

We always try to feature in our newsletters some of our nationwide, volunteer 'army' of knitters, sewers and crocheters, and here are some of the stalwarts:



**The Kingfishers Knits** who have just completed their 200<sup>th</sup> blanket for FOSCIM! Pictured are Anne Smith (left) and her formidable friends at Droitwich, Worcs.



### **Kingswood Knit and Natter** (Warks)

left to right: Chris, Rosemary, Anne (shy -hiding!), Gill, Ali, Janet, Elaine, Maureen and Jenny (offering a rear side view!)

.....and (right) crocheter extraordinaire, **Margaret Withers** (Worcs)  
[who caught up with me just after I finished a round of golf]

*Send me your photos if you would like to be featured.*



The next Malawi container is scheduled to be packed on Saturday 18 May. It takes about 10 weeks for the goods to arrive. Let's hope that the impact of Cyclone Idai on the Mozambique ports will not delay delivery.

## FOSC Wards Team Funding Issue

The future funding of the **existing** FOSC Wards Team of just 30 staff requires some **£50,000** of charitable donations every year.

To fund the team of 50 that is necessary to properly deal with the increasing demand and the impact of Malawi State funding constraints in the health sector will require some **£ 100,000** of donations every year.

It is already a huge, huge challenge to secure just the £50,000 but, as reported above, one to which some of our amazing supporters have rallied. A secure and stable funding source of £50,000 per year for, say 3 years, is desperately needed to preserve the existing team so that with a secure and stable funding source for the existing team all our efforts can be turned to searching for funds to increase that team towards 50.

The cost of nurses, clinical officers, nurse auxiliaries and other team members is **less than 1/10<sup>th</sup>** of what the equivalent would be in the UK! **If you have any ideas for possible sources that we could approach, perhaps by your introduction, please contact me (details below).**

**Marathown** - you may well receive a separate communication on this!

During August (or at your convenience if holidays clash) we are hoping that as many of you as possible, plus family and friends if you fancy, will do a sponsored, self-guided, self-marshalled, self-determined “Marathown” to help fund the vital FOSC Ward Staff. Walk or run, take in your local pub (there *and* back!), whatever you want, but all on the same day please. This will also be happening in Malawi.

For more information or help with planning, please contact us.

LINK <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1003697>

.....also in the NEWS.....

**Cyclone Idai** : Outwith the scope of FOSCiM, Alexis has been raising money and working with friends and contacts in Blantyre to buy chitenjes for some of the women and girls displaced by the cyclone. The colourful wrap is multi-functional and essential to maintaining the dignity of these women who have lost so much. Our friends at The Mount Pleasant Inn have been helping together with social enterprise, Tina Pads of Blantyre to purchase chitenjes in the local market – the cost is a little over £2.00 each. The first lot of over 150 were distributed in Chikwawa.

Money has also been raised here for re-usable sanitary protection for those women displaced by the cyclone. This is being provided by Tina Pads of Blantyre, Malawi.

**Thank you to everyone who has been donating via Alexis.**

## What now?

If you would like to discuss how you might help us with **any** of our funding needs or other challenges and issues described above, please simply email me for a 'chat' at:

[gordon@friendsofsickchildreninmalawi.org](mailto:gordon@friendsofsickchildreninmalawi.org)

**To make a donation**.....you can do this online or directly from bank to bank or by cheque.

Please be aware that if you donate on line, intermediaries like PayPal, Virgin Money Giving, Just Giving etc. all deduct charges from your donations but now you may opt to pay their charges.

Bank to bank donations or donating by cheque are **free** of charge.

### Our bank details:

Account name: Friends of Sick Children in Malawi  
Bank sort code : 40 – 11 – 04  
Bank account : 2 1 6 1 2 0 6 9

**Finally**, on behalf of everyone involved in 'the project' in Malawi and those tens of thousands of children and families whose lives benefit every day from our donors' generosity, a very big thank you and please keep supporting us to whatever extent you can.

Sincerely,

*Gordon*

Gordon Cowie MBE  
Founder and Chair of Trustees  
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### Important

If in future you would prefer not to receive our newsletter please advise us at the email address above. The same applies for any other communications that we may send from time to time.