



Friends of Sick Children in Malawi

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SPRING 2023



Malawi has the fourth highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty in the World. That's more than two-thirds of the population, almost all of whom rely on small-scale farming for their livelihoods.

In 2022 ***99.5p of every £1*** received by FOSCiM from donors was applied for the frontline needs in Malawi. Very few charities can claim that sort of outcome.



Welcome to our Spring 2023 newsletter and update.

HEALTH WARNING!

Any newsletter from Malawi at the moment must start with an acknowledgment of the terrible aftermath of Cyclone Freddy. We have here the first-hand account from Joe Langton in Malawi, a message which conveys much of the trauma and emotions confronted by colleagues in Malawi over the past few weeks and which will haunt some of them, possibly forever.

But not all news from Malawi is so distressing. Do read further on for some more uplifting stories of success and progress for the work you help us to fund.

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

On 13th March 2023 Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi and had a significant impact on Blantyre. This latest climate disaster comes on top of Malawi experiencing the deadliest outbreak of cholera in the country's history, with over 50,000 cases and 1,500 associated deaths reported from all 29 districts, including some 200 child deaths.

At the time of writing, 676 people are reported dead in Malawi and disaster management authorities say that the chances now are very slim in finding alive another 538 unaccounted for people. Malawi's President Chakwera declared a 14-day national mourning period.

Tens of thousands in Malawi have been left homeless and nearly 500,000 people affected by the heavy rains, floods and landslides. Malawi's financial capital of Blantyre and

surrounding areas, where The Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital is based, were particularly badly hit. A lot of areas became inaccessible, restricting movement of assessment and humanitarian teams and life-saving supplies. The true extent of the human and infrastructure costs will only be revealed once assessments are possible.



There are plenty of pictures on the internet of the devastation and misery in Malawi following the cyclone. I do not feel it right to show them here, but this one gives a sense of the aftermath on some peoples' homes.

Our team at the hospital in Blantyre mobilised and, as Joe reports below, the Children's A&E received exceptional numbers of dead, dying and badly injured children. The paediatric team were confronted with the worst set of circumstances any of them have ever witnessed and with which any of them have had to deal.

The World Meteorological Organization says it is likely that Cyclone Freddy, which started in February, is the longest-ever in recorded history. The human and infrastructure cost is considerable and hard to contemplate.

Returning to the Cholera outbreak, cholera has been endemic in Malawi since 1998 with seasonal outbreaks reported during the rainy season (November through May). However, the current outbreak has extended through the dry season and the flooding impact of Cyclone Freddy could only worsen the spread of cholera and other water-borne diseases.

There seems no end to the traumas that Malawi and its people have to confront!

To support our relief efforts in the wake of Cyclone Freddy you can donate at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/foscim-stormfreddy>

“As a paediatric emergency medicine consultant I can categorically state that this was the worst week of my career and the ongoing effects of this disaster are going to be felt for many more months to follow.” – Joe Langton

“During the first day of the disaster the children's accident and emergency department received 46 children who had died – I personally received 36 of these all of whom had died from horrific injuries. We also treated 53 other children that day who had sustained varying degrees of injuries. In addition, we continued to manage children with medical conditions including several who were very sick with cholera. **During this time the hospital had no water and I genuinely washed my hands in the rain puddles outside the hospital!**

Whilst this experience is not unique to the cyclone period, the disaster emphasised the importance of being able to wash our hands! **We have therefore recognised the need to install a back-up water supply for the A&E.**

The lack of resuscitation beds and patient transfer trolleys was a significant challenge as we struggled to transfer patients to x-ray and the wards. **Resuscitation beds are a fantastic piece of kit because all necessary procedures can be performed upon them** including patient transfer. This is crucial for trauma victims as it minimises the need to transfer them between a bed and trolley.

“Lack of monitors and infusion pumps made it extremely challenging to effectively deliver high quality care to the trauma victims.”

The space for the children who have died was overwhelmed during the cyclone and **the importance of being able to provide dignity in death was emphasised** – we want to make this space as tranquil and respectful as possible.

Finally, the need for an ongoing maintenance fund was recognised. The children’s emergency department is used extremely hard and during the cyclone it took a lot of hard hits! **To ensure that we are able to continue delivering high quality care we need to be able to maintain our space.**

We know that there are other areas to consider and lessons to learn from the major incident that occurred with Cyclone Freddy, **but for many of us it still remains too challenging to write in detail about this tragic incident.** However, the one thing that I can categorically state is that our paediatric team was **ABSOLUTELY AMAZING.** The nurses, clinicians, receptionists, cleaners, security staff and hospital management team all came together to work hand-in-hand to manage this major incident. Every single child and the families who came through the door received the **highest possible quality of care and emotional support required.”**

“It was an absolute honour to lead our paediatric team in the management of this major incident and I honestly couldn’t be more proud of the response that we delivered.”

Moving to more positive news, Joe continues her report:

“I am pleased to report that we are making good progress with the A&E redevelopment.

Phase 1 was opened at the end of October 2022 in the presence of our wonderful funders **Hitesh and Meeta Anadkat.** Since moving back into this space it has certainly been well used!

(Hitesh and Meeta Anadkat with Joe and mural artist Madalitso Ziwaoh)





The families love the welcoming space and we often see the children interacting with the beautiful artwork on the walls.

(the new A&E waiting area)

Phase 2, which contains a space for our multidisciplinary team, is almost complete and the staff are certainly looking forward to having their own safe space to reflect, relax and learn together.

Work on **Phase 3**, our minor theatre, orthopaedic assessment area, isolation unit and short stay ward, has also now started and is moving forwards rapidly. **Whilst it remains a challenge to continue working in a building site, we can now see that the end of the building works is getting nearer!**



The area that we are now focusing upon is the equipment and furnishings required for this fantastic space. Thanks to some generous donations we have been able to purchase some pieces of well needed equipment, but the list remains extensive! **The equipment needs include furniture for the bereavement space, patient monitors, infusion pumps, nebulisers, wheelchairs, resuscitation beds, dressing trolleys, furniture for the multidisciplinary staff area and the list goes on!** With all the daily pressures faced by the team it is a definite challenge to both source and cost these requirements – particularly in the current financial climate, however we anticipate that we will still need £100,000. This figure remains the same as reported in the previous newsletter because of some lessons learnt during the recent disaster that hit Malawi. To help us with this challenge, please support my latest fundraising initiative

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/paeds-ae-malawi>

Friends of Sick Children in Malawi - Email and Website

For reasons outside our control, we have had no email server or functioning website for the last 6 weeks and our previous email addresses are no longer operative. **With sincere apologies to all those who have tried to contact us**, if you have not received anything from us during that time please check your SPAM or JUNK folders.

We do now have a new email and web server and I can now be emailed at gordon@foscim.org and Stuart on stuart@foscim.org. Please add these to your favourites or trusted addresses to continue to receive our updates.

At the same time we have been obliged to bring our new website online **before** its content could be fully reviewed and edited. **It is a complete refresh with updated**

branding and images and we will be continuing to work on it to refine content and correct any errors.

The new website address is: www.friendsofsickchildreninmalawi.com

If you spot any errors or have other suggestions to improve our website please do get in touch.

In other news in this edition of our newsletter

- Christmas at Paeds
- **CONGRATULATIONS!**
- The 2022 Christmas mobility appeal outcome
- Sea container – the latest

Christmas at Paeds - Malawi



Santa makes a special visit to patients on the paediatric wards

CONGRATULATIONS!



Joe

Many congratulations to Josephine (Joe) Langton and Yamikani (Yami) Chimalizeni who have been made **Associate Professors of Paediatric and Child Health** at Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (formerly University of Malawi College of Medicine). These new positions are effective as of 1st March 2023.



Yami

CONGRATULATIONS
to
Elizabeth Ngalawango
who graduated recently with
B.Sc. Nursing and Midwifery

Supported by FOSCiM donors



The 2022 Christmas Mobility Appeal

In the wake of two consecutive record-breaking Christmas Appeals for children in Malawi with severe mobility issues, I had modest expectations for Christmas 2022. As it turned out I was proved wrong yet again! In monetary terms, 2022 was able to stand shoulder to shoulder with 2020 and 2021.

The result

Donations for **76 wheelchairs** and **116 home chairs** for tots; plus money for orthoses and donations totalling **£4,750** towards medical equipment for the re-vamped Children's A&E, educating Malawians in paediatrics, and for various other items.

Thank you so much to everyone who took part; we are, as ever, humbled by the response

Despite the nationwide cholera outbreak, all but 2 wheelchair case stories were able to be despatched to donors before Christmas Day. However, with a new record 116 home chairs ordered, we were simply not able to see enough younger children before Christmas Day. As during Covid, we were still able to issue special Christmas certificates rather than disappoint donors, especially those who were 'giving' chairs as Christmas presents to friends or relatives.

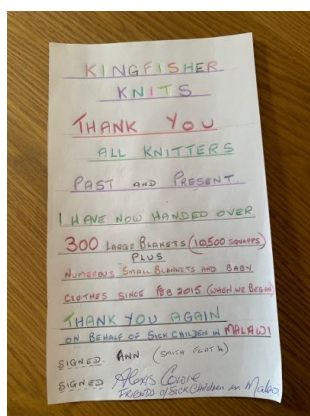
Please note: There has been a significant increase in the cost of materials in Malawi due both to global supply issues and the relative weakness of the Kwacha. As a result, we have had to agree to an increase in our Kwacha contribution towards wheelchair and home chairs for tots. But with Sterling gaining against a weakening Kwacha one almost cancels out the other, so at least for the near future, funding a wheelchair remains at a donation of £100 (if Gift Aid is available) or £125 if not.

However, we have had to agree on an increase of £1 for a home chair for tots. So, the new cost is £16 (if Gift Aid is available) or £20.00 if not.

Costs have hardly moved now for several years which I hope donors will agree is exceptionally good value but realistically it cannot continue like this forever. I will, of course, keep followers informed of any future changes.

Sea Container

Our latest consignment of **30 boxes** of goods for Malawi boarded a Cycle of Good/Krievac Project container in December and was uplifted by colleagues on 20th February.



Kingfisher Knits celebrated their 300th large knitted blanket for us, along with many other items they have produced over the last few years. Pictured here is the inestimable **Anne Smith**, the leader of this initiative, as she hands over to Alexis the latest output from the ladies.

As the note says, 300 large blankets means 10,500 knitted squares!! **Zikomo ladies!!!**





In what used to be our dining room (!), Alexis and friends Margaret, Laurie and Sarah are pictured hard at work on their regular Monday evening production line making reusable feminine hygiene products and accessories for mums, including those at Kangaroo Mother Care with their premature babies.

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### In Conclusion:-

Despite record breaking adverse weather events and disease outbreaks, the paediatric team at The Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi faces up to whatever is thrown at them **and with your help** the **development of sustainable paediatric healthcare in Malawi continues.**

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

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

or

[joelangton@doctors.org.uk](mailto:joelangton@doctors.org.uk)

### A reminder of **OUR CURRENT PRIORITIES**

1. Equipping the revamped Children's Accident & Emergency facilities.

**Target: £100,000**

2. In the wake of the horrendous Cyclone Freddy disaster, if you wish to make a donation as a result, our colleagues at the front line in Malawi will apply your financial support to their activities to treat, manage or help child victims.



3. Sponsoring Malawians in their further education in Paediatrics.
4. Improving and maintaining healthcare facilities for children.

## To make a donation:

**Bank-to-bank** is the best way to optimise how much of your donation reaches us.

### **UK - FOSCiM bank details:**

Account name: Friends of Sick Children in Malawi  
Bank sort code: 40 – 11 – 04  
Bank account: 21612069

### **Malawi - FOSC bank details:**

Bank : National Bank of Malawi  
Swift Code (BIC) : NBMAMWMWXXX  
IBAN / Account : 358328 Bank code: 002  
Branch name: Chichiri branch  
Reference : FOSC GBP AC

Bank to bank donations or donating by cheque are free of charge in the UK. Please email me at [gordon@foscim.org](mailto:gordon@foscim.org) with details of any bank to bank donation you make.

**IMPORTANT** ~ Donors who are also UK taxpayers should donate through FOSCiM (rather than FOSC) so that 25% Gift Aid can be added to their donations courtesy of HM Government (please request a Gift Aid Declaration if this will apply to you).

You can also donate using **PayPal** or via our **JustGiving** pages but please note that they both deduct charges from your donations (although you can choose to add an extra donation to cover those costs).

**PayPal:** [https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=H4HZ2YYVCF58C](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=H4HZ2YYVCF58C)

**JustGiving:** <https://www.justgiving.com/friendsofsickchildreninmalawi>

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

Sincerely

*Gordon*



Gordon Cowie MBE  
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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.