



Friends of Sick Children in Malawi

FOSCiM registered charity number 1140578
FOSC registered charity number (Malawi) C647/2013

Establishing and developing sustainable paediatrics for the 50% of Malawians who are children.



SPRING 2024



Malawi is one of the very poorest nations of the World.

In 2023 *99.5p of every £1* received by FOSCiM from donors was applied for the frontline needs of sick children in Malawi. Very few charities can claim that sort of outcome.



WELCOME

 to our spring 2024 newsletter and update.

First and foremost for this edition...



I am sure you will want to join with me in wishing Joe and Young a long and happy marriage as they 'tie the knot' on April 1.



As most readers will already know, Joe is a consultant paediatrician, paediatric emergency medicine specialist and an associate professor at The Kamuzu University of Health Sciences. There is a special feature on her below.

... And - we need your help please

Our current BIGGEST need (amongst many) is funds to fully equip the newly refurbished Children's Accident & Emergency Department. PLEASE help if you can (see below).

Malawi – a current overview

Malawi has the fourth highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty in the world. More than two-thirds of the population live in extreme poverty, almost all of whom rely on precarious, small-scale farming for their livelihoods.

Deforestation for farming is one of the biggest environmental challenges in Malawi which was once heavily forested. Malawi also faces constrained water resources, declining fisheries, limited institutional capacity to manage natural resources, and farming practices that lead to soil erosion and reduced fertility ... among many other challenges. Climate change is also emerging as an issue, bringing unpredictable rains and droughts.

The economic health of the nation, and therefore its people, was dealt yet another blow in the fourth quarter of 2023 when the currency, the Malawi Kwacha, was devalued by some 45%. Consequently, the cost of imports became even more expensive for this landlocked country and with it the cost of living for its people.

Unreliable power and water supplies are continuing problems. Approximately 10% of Malawians have access to electricity (5% in rural areas and 46% in urban areas). There is also a lack of skilled and semi-skilled labour, and high lending rates make it expensive to access capital on the local market.

In the public health sector, the end of 2023 saw a critical shortage in the supply of drugs from 'the centre' and this has continued into 2024. Some of our donors have generously helped us to address some of the shortage but the central supply has yet to improve and things remain very difficult.

Against this backdrop and with your greatly valued support, our medical and related colleagues meet all the challenges put before them as they continue the drive to develop sustainable paediatric healthcare and improve the life chances of the children of Malawi.

Note: 50% of the Malawi population is under the age of 18 years i.e. they are children. By comparison the same proportion in the UK, Europe and USA is approximately 25%.

In this edition of our newsletter:

1. *Meet Joe Langton – consultant paediatrician, emergency medicine specialist and associate professor of medicine*
2. *The refurbished Children's A&E is open and treating patients*
3. *130 families benefit from our 2023 Christmas mobility appeal*
4. *Paediatric Cardiology - a major development*
5. *More of our 'army' of knitters, crocheters, stitchers etc.*

Meet Joe Langton

Continuing our recent series introducing readers to members of the team in Malawi ...



“I was born in Shrewsbury into a family that embraces traditional English music and dance. Living in this wonderfully alternative household, where we had an open house policy, I developed my passion for cultural diversity, dancing and music. My parents, who were both teachers, were strict and supportive in their style of parenting. As such, I learnt to work hard and always aim to give and do my best. My desire to pursue medicine started as a young child – I recently found a piece of schoolwork from primary school where I had written “when I grow up, I want to be a doctor who looks after children”. Fast forward several years and I achieved my ambition! I studied medicine at Birmingham University and during this time knew that I wanted to work internationally. I undertook my medical elective in South India and loved it – even getting to visit the birthplace of my father.

Upon graduating I joined the conveyor belt of training, and life derailed me from my desire to work internationally. However, after a change in my life circumstances, I was fortunate to be provided with the opportunity to spend a year working as a volunteer registrar, at **Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi**. This was without a doubt a life changing experience and re-inspired me to work internationally.

On my return to the UK I was successfully appointed into paediatric emergency medicine training. During this time I continued to work internationally, using my annual leave to go to Rwanda for the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. In my final year of training I was approached by a team from University College London, Save the Children and the World Health Organisation to undertake a multimedia education project back in Malawi. I grasped this opportunity with both hands and returned.

Eighteen months later I was appointed locally by the now Kamuzu University of Health Sciences in Blantyre, Malawi (previously called The University of Malawi College of Medicine). I continue to work as an Associate Professor in Paediatrics and Child Health for the University, where I am responsible for the Postgraduate Paediatric and Child Health training programme, and I also work as the Paediatric Emergency Medicine Consultant at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital.

I am part of the global education team for NEST360 (Newborn Essential Solutions and Technologies) an international alliance united to end preventable newborn deaths in African hospitals. In Malawi I am also the Chair of Friends of Sick Children (FOSC) [the ‘sister’ charity of UK registered Friends of Sick Children in Malawi].

Inevitably, wearing these many hats means life can be exceedingly busy and challenging, so to maintain a good work life balance I continue to play music, playing violin, keys and guitar in a rock band, I play ultimate Frisbee, run as many miles as possible each week, I draw and, if there is music, I will always dance.



Stress relief Malawi-style!



Over the past 13 years that I have worked in Malawi I have seen many advances in the healthcare that we deliver. The teams I work with are fantastic, working hard to deliver the best quality of care that they can. In fact, I am immensely proud to be part of the team!

However, sadly resources are still limited, which can impact on the care that we deliver. Both the department and FOSC/FOSCiM aim to improve the care that we deliver by augmenting clinical care by paying for drugs and investigations not available through the government system, supporting paediatric education (nurse and clinician) and improving infrastructure.

I am extremely proud to report that last year we officially opened our newly renovated Children's Accident and Emergency Department.



Left to right at the Opening:

- Elio Bizzaro (Contractor)
- Hitesh & Meeta Anandkat
- The Malawi Minister of Health, Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda
- Grazia Bizzaro
- Matron Ethel Chalimba
- Me - Joe Langton

In 2019, we reached out to Hitesh Anadkat to see if he would be willing to financially support the renovation of the Children's Accident and Emergency Department. To our immense delight he very kindly and generously agreed and in July 2021 we started the building works. Along the way he also brought on board Elio Bizarro of SR Nicholas our wonderful contractors, who helped fund the staff block. Words literally cannot express the gratitude of the Children's Accident and Emergency team for the amazing support that Hitesh and Meeta Anadkat have provided, together with Elio Bizarro. They genuinely enabled our vision and dream to become a reality.



At the official opening here I am showing The Malawi Minister of Health and other guests around the new department.

As a team we had also recognised the need to ensure that this spectacular building was decorated in such a way that it was appealing to the sick children, guardians and staff. We also knew that we needed to be able to furnish and equip the department in such a manner that we could deliver the highest possible quality of care. **Thanks to the hundreds of donations we received** we were able to engage the fantastic Madalitso Ziwaoh, the artist who worked very closely with the team to ensure that the department has been painted so beautifully.

As we move forwards there are still needs that we have to address to ensure that this fantastic team can deliver the highest possible quality of care.

We still need to acquire all the medical equipment necessary to enable us to deliver high quality care. Your help would be hugely appreciated and valued.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all our supporters – your donations genuinely change the lives of sick Malawian children and enable us to improve the quality of care that we deliver. Joe.”

130 Families benefit from our 2023 Christmas Mobility Appeal

While Santa was visiting the in-patient children, our **annual Christmas mobility appeal** was well under way.

In the wake of three consecutive record-breaking Christmas Appeals for children in Malawi with severe mobility issues, circumstances in Malawi this year dictated that we not press too hard with the 2023 appeal.

However, such is the appeal's popularity that 62 wheelchairs and 64 home chairs for tots, plus

sundry orthotics were requested by donors and all successfully delivered before Christmas Day. **The total value gifted was just over £10,000 of life changing mobility aids.**



Thank you so much to everyone who took part; we are, as ever, humbled by the response, and **more than 130 families** have benefitted from your generosity.

Some Christmas Mobility Appeal beneficiaries:



7 year old Paulosi



5 year old Guest



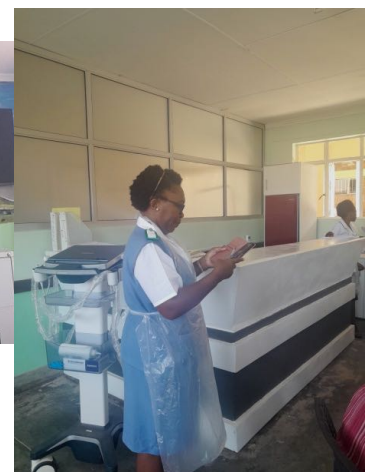
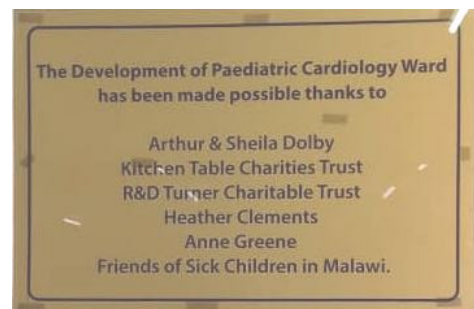
9 year old Malita

We keep close watch on the cost of materials in Malawi. The cost of imports will, of course, be adversely impacted by the devaluation of the Kwacha. Currency devaluation increases those costs but has an opposite impact upon exchange rates, meaning that the cost in GB£s to our donors has been held steady for several years, apart from a small increase (£1) last year in the cost of home chairs.

I hope donors will agree that £100 per wheelchair continues to be exceptionally good value. Realistically, even though that has been the cost to UK taxpaying donors without any change for several years, we know that may not be the case 'forever'. I will, of course, keep our followers informed if any future changes in donations for mobility aids are required but for now we continue as before.

Paediatric Cardiology – a major developmental step forward

Made possible by the generosity of those featured in this dedication, paediatric cardiology has undergone an important development under the leadership of consultant paediatric cardiologist Yami Chimalizeni.



Some of our amazing ‘army’ of crafters around the UK

We are so grateful for the blankets, hats, and baby and child clothing we receive to be sent with our annual shipment to Malawi. Some of our crafters have sent us these pictures to share with you.



Heather Francis (94 years young) of Bromsgrove and a one woman knitting dynamo!



Ladies of All Saints Church, Bewdley, “Knit & Natter”



From the All Saints' Knit & Natter ladies: 1 blanket, 32 hats, 51 jumpers, 23 jumper and hat sets, 6 vests, 7 pairs of premature baby booties, 4 crocheted child jumpers and 111 crocheted hats.

From the Kidderminster branch of “Teddis for Tragedies”: 445 knitted hat and vest sets; and from Soroptimists International, Kidderminster – “Sewing Sisters” group, 61 birthing sheets.

From Soroptimists International, Bromsgrove & Redditch (& friends): 39 hats, 28 jumpers, 12 jumpers with matching hats, 9 jumpers with matching hats and booties.



In Conclusion

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

gordon@foscim.org

joelangton@doctors.org.uk

A reminder of OUR CURRENT PRIORITIES

1. **Equipment for the revamped Children's Accident & Emergency facilities.**
2. **Sponsoring Malawians in their further education in Paediatrics.**
3. **Improving and maintaining our healthcare facilities for children.**

To make a donation.....you can do this online or directly by bank to bank payment or by cheque if in the UK. Bank to bank donations or donating by cheque are free of charge, but only in the UK.

Please be aware that if you donate online, intermediaries like PayPal and Just Giving all deduct charges from your donations but when making your donation you may be able to opt to cover some of their charges so that more of your donation comes to the charity.

<https://justgiving.com/friendsofsickchildreninmalawi>

IMPORTANT ~ Donors who are also UK taxpayers should donate through FOSCiM (rather than FOSC). This is so that 25% Gift Aid can be added to their donations courtesy of HM Government.

Bank details for direct donations:

Please *identify yourself* in the appropriate box of the electronic transfer so we know who to thank. Bank-to-bank is usually 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

And finally, on behalf of everyone involved in the establishment and development of sustainable paediatric healthcare in Malawi, and of those tens of thousands of children and families who benefit from your generosity, a very big thank you and please keep supporting us to whatever extent and in whatever way you feel able.

Sincerely,



Gordon Cowie MBE
Founder and Chair of Trustees
Friends of Sick Children in Malawi
www.friendsofsickchildreninmalawi.com
gordon@foscim.org

Social media addresses
Instagram: @foscmalawi
Twitter: @of_fosc
Facebook: Friends of Sick Children

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