

Chair's Report AGM 26 September 2023

As we look back at last year, I can't help thinking how much it mirrors our first year (2012). In a sense, last year was the first full year of our new beginnings after the impact we experienced during the Covid pandemic. Like many other charities, we emerged from the pandemic with a determination to build back better and I believe that we have been able to do that throughout this year.

When we began as a charity in 2012, we were starting from scratch. This time around we began with a solid base; we had a well-established and experienced Board, our long-standing Country Facilitator (Mr Dezie Trigu) and a clear and concise Strategic Plan. Although we were working with a much-restricted budget we were still able to improve the lives of children and teachers in Malawi. We started from a sound financial base along with a group of committed volunteers and partners who continued to support our work. Added to that we had a strong network of partners through the significant roles we played in Scotland and Malawi in supporting the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Malawi Scotland Partnership.

Beyond our control were the constant challenges faced by our friends in Malawi. In the last year alone, they experienced a widespread outbreak of Cholera as well as the devastating impact of Cyclone Freddy which affected over 2 million people and displaced over half a million with a death toll of over 1,000. Add to this, the challenging environment in which many of the Malawi communities have to work and provide an education for the children, only illustrates for me the continued need for Classrooms for Malawi's support as our friends try to cope with so much on a daily basis.

As we began the year, it was clear that our capacity to raise funds, to deliver our work programme, was still fairly restricted. Similar in many ways to the two previous Covid impacted years. The serious cost of living crisis within the UK remains a significant factor in our ability to raise funds through individual giving and events. In addition, we found many grant sources were still restricted and we were one of many who were seeking funds in ever decreasing availability. However, I am pleased to say that we approached the difficult financial climate with the attitude of making a little go a long way and thankfully we were able to do that.

Thanks to our friends at Lancashire Rotary, we were able to offer training to 27 nursery volunteers, mostly young mothers, at 6 of the nurseries where we work. This Rotary group also funded much needed repairs to kitchens and classrooms in 4 nurseries badly damaged by Cyclone Freddy. They also paid for the delivery of soap, leaflets, buckets and basins to the 15 nurseries they support, to assist in the fight against Covid and Cholera.

In April, we rolled out the provision of sanitary kits at Ngumbe Community Day Secondary School. The kits are reusable and are expected to last for at least 3 years. This was paired with comprehensive menstrual and sexual health education to support the girls. The boys were educated through the "Men Who Know" programme. Teachers, the PTA members and Mothers' Groups also learned about the programme and how to support the pupils. We are grateful for the support of our friends at Days for Girls during these presentations.

We worked closely with two groups, Hillpark Secondary and Kilsyth Boys Brigade, who visited Malawi in the summer of 2023. They visited their partner schools, Chilangoma Primary School and Katete Primary School. Between them they assisted in renovating 9 classrooms, provided library facilities as well as installing electricity in 12 classrooms. They engaged with the school committees in establishing ways to develop, long term mutual partnerships. We also assisted in hosting visiting teachers from Princethorpe College on their visit to their partner school at Lauderdale Primary School. They will take a group of students to Malawi in 2024 and plan to visit and support work at Lauderdale Primary School and Makalanga Primary School.

We also received support from groups who were not travelling to Malawi.

- Dunblane Boys' Brigade took part in sponsored fundraisers to repair the kitchen roof at Nansato PS.
- The Lindsay family ran events to fund 30 bunk beds and 60 mattresses at Ngumbe CDSS.
- Our own major fundraiser, the Afternoon Tea event was extremely well supported and allowed us to complete the build of the kitchen/community hub at Bright Future Nursery.
- Bannerman High School provided funding which will allow us to proceed in 2024 with a new 2 classroom block/library room at their partner school Masalani CDSS.
- Celtic Foundation who are currently planning their group visit to Malawi in 2024 and will visit Masalani CDSS . They are providing the gap funding needed for the new 2 classroom block/library room at Masalani to be built in 2024.

We were very fortunate to receive support from a number of local schools and groups in Scotland who provided materials to support schools in Malawi. We are grateful to our friends at Bananabox Trust Dundee for transporting the materials to Malawi.

- St Anthony's Primary School in Rutherglen funded pencils and notebooks for the pupils at Katete Primary School and Bright Future Nursery.
- Fernhill School, also in Rutherglen, provided science books for Ngumbe Community Day Secondary School.
- St Mary's School in Melrose sent new school uniforms for the children at Emazinyeni PS.
- Kilsyth Boys Brigade provided 8 laptops for use in Katete Primary School
- Fix-it IT repair company in Motherwell provided 11 laptops for use in the 6 Secondary schools where we work.

In addition, we were grateful to our supporters who undertook a Kiltwalk, walked the Camino de Santiago de Compostela or ran a marathon to help raise funds for us.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported us in any way this year and allowed us to complete many of the tasks we set out to achieve.

I would also like to thank the many people who helped to keep our charity going during the last year. . Our Board members , office volunteers, other volunteers and the many who have donated in various ways to support our work. I would also like to thank our colleague Dezie who works tirelessly in Malawi itself to ensure the projects and programmes are delivered.

To our friends in Malawi, in the various schools where we work ,I am grateful for the cooperation and support you give to us. Also to the District and Divisional Education Managers with whom we work closely to coordinate our work with their school development plans. Without these close partnerships we would not be able to work in such close harmony with you and be able together to help improve the lives and conditions for the children , teachers and wider school communities where we have worked..

As we come to the end of our first “new” year I am grateful to report that we are still in a robust position as a charity and are ready to take on the increased workload we plan into 2024. In our own small way, we will continue to support and work alongside the communities in Malawi for the benefit of the children of Malawi to give them every opportunity to reach their full potential.

With best wishes and gratitude for all the support we receive.

James Kelly
Chair
Classrooms for Malawi
26 September 2023