

## Birmingham Children's Hospital - Malawi Partnership

**Project  
Update Newsletter  
For  
Our  
Supporters  
~  
November 2012**



A project supported by BCH Charities, registered charity number 1074850

**Dear Supporter,**

My name is Cherish White. I recently joined the Malawi partnership project team in Birmingham as Project Co-ordinator and this year will form part of my university course in Business and Management at Aston University.

My role is to enhance the profile of the project even further, both internally at BCH and externally through publicity and raising awareness of what we are doing! Thanks to your ongoing support the project is continuing to grow hence the need for my role.

My aim for this year is to include fundraising so we are able to ensure delivery of our activities and plans for the future, demonstrating how far this important project has developed in the last few years. The project continues to thrive and is really having a positive impact at QECH. Your ongoing support is improving the lives of many children in one of the world's poorest countries.

Let me take this opportunity to remind you that this project continues to lead the field of Paediatric Links from the UK! With your ongoing support we hope that you will continue to be pleased with what your support is achieving and what is planned.

Before updating you on the project I would like to congratulate Gordon Cowie for his outstanding achievement in being awarded an MBE for services to healthcare in Africa! He has worked absolutely tirelessly for the work in Malawi supporting, either in Malawi or at BCH, all the doctors, nurses and other health professionals who have contributed to the exchange programme. He has made several self funded visits to Malawi, and won the hearts and minds of the medical and nursing leaders with his energy and enthusiasm.

Gordon is the reason why the BCH - Malawi partnership has flourished as one of the first and best developed UK international health links for paediatrics. I am sure you will all agree this award is fully deserved!



**Gordon Cowie – Project  
Advisor**

## Delivering the priorities

### ❖ Paediatric Registrars`

Dr Sofia Omar is currently working at QECH for a twelve month period. Sofia is working alongside the Malawian paediatric doctors doing clinical work and is teaching all staff groups. Having completed her orientation around the wards, she is working on the High Dependence Unit. We will update you on Sofia's progress in future newsletters.

From Malawi, two Paediatric Registrars, Dr Thembi Katangwe and Dr Jenala Njirammadzi visited Birmingham in June and attended the annual Infection in Children conference in Oxford. Both found this course to be valuable and their remaining time was spent attending ward rounds and clinics at BCH. Shadowing on the wards gave the doctors opportunities to gain experience treating conditions that are very rare in Malawi. Both doctors felt they could implement some new ideas back in Malawi and identified areas which could be adapted when they returned home. This experience motivated the doctors and both were determined to make a difference in their own hospital.

We will keep in contact with both doctors and hope to give you an update on their progress.



Dr Thembi Katangwe and Dr Jenala Njirammadzi  
with Stewart Mason

### ❖ Nursing exchange, development and training

The nursing element of the project has continued to grow and Jennifer 'Jenny' Thomas, a Senior Physiotherapist from Birmingham Children's Hospital, recently returned from Malawi after 6 months of volunteering at the QECH.



Jenny Thomas working at QECH

Jenny covered a variety of needs in the paediatric wards at QECH, joined in with paediatric outpatient physiotherapy clinics, acted as a clinical educator for undergraduate physiotherapists and was a guest lecturer for the first physiotherapy undergraduate course in Malawi.....a full and busy time for Jenny!

Jenny was faced with a number of challenges while working at QECH, such as staff not referring appropriate patients for physiotherapy. It was felt this was due to lack of awareness of the conditions that require and benefit from physiotherapy. She overcame this by making her presence known and explaining her role to the medical and nursing staff. She set up group therapy sessions and encouraged staff to refer patients and raised awareness through posters on the walls to highlight the conditions physiotherapy can assist in. This proved successful and a team approach was fostered.



Jenny Thomas working at QECH

Due to the limited resources and poor staffing levels, the environment at QECH was very different to that of BCH where Jenny is based. ***“Obtaining equipment such as walking frames, orthotics and medications needed for lowering hypertonia was challenging.”*** Jenny attended a course on making equipment from paper and cardboard and ran a paper technology workshop for the volunteer physiotherapists working at the hospital and surrounding villages all of which proved beneficial to the rural communities.

***“I have also rediscovered my passion as a physiotherapist, why I trained to become a physiotherapist and what I love about my job. This is a great motivator and will help pick up team morale!”***

We currently have paediatric nurse Louis Britten, working at QECH for six months. He is working on the accident and emergency wards and the special care ward in the high dependent unit. He describes his time as “amazing” and we will keep you updated on his progress in future newsletters.



Netsayi Gowero and Ethel Chimwala at Birmingham Children's Hospital

Coming the other way, Malawi nursing staff Netsayi Gowero and Ethel Chimwala came to Birmingham Children's Hospital in June for three weeks. They successfully completed a five day paediatric assessment skills course and shadowed on the wards.

Lessons learned included patient care such as skin care, vital signs training such as paediatric early warning signs and drug administration, and how to change artificial airways in babies who suffer from Choanal Atresia. Both have gained counselling skills.

Both Netsayi and Ethel felt privileged to have the opportunity and truly enjoyed their trip. We have had an update on both nurses. They have both returned to Malawi with fresh ideas how they could implement some of the things they saw in practice at BCH. Netsayi is currently working on a leaflet to provide information on Down syndrome.

***“The exchange visit programme is a very important programme and we thank the paediatric department and management of Queen’s hospital. It’s a stepping stone in our career and we ask you [BCH] to continue this.”***

***Netsayi Gowero, QECH Nurse***

### ❖ **Container Shipments**

This month saw the despatch of 45 cartons (127 cu ft) of essential equipment including amongst other items:

- ✓ Sharps Bins
- ✓ Plastic Gloves
- ✓ Hand Sanitizer
- ✓ Cannulae
- ✓ Thermometers
- ✓ Suction equipment

We have also ordered saturation monitors and wrap sensors which will be sent to Malawi thanks to the kind donation from Fleur De Lys. These will be of great benefit to the children in Malawi.

Also sent out were more large quantities of knitted hats, cot blankets and clothes, bed sheets, blankets and some items for the classroom. A big thank you to the ‘army’ of ladies around the UK who continue to make and donate these items.

### **Funding**

We are always looking for more funds to improve the healthcare of the children in Malawi. If you would like to donate we would be grateful to receive any donations at:

[Justgiving.com/malawipartnership](https://www.justgiving.com/malawipartnership)

### **A final word**

It is worth remembering that as administration and similar costs are either separately supported or not charged at all against project funds, virtually everything goes to the direct benefit of the health and well being of some of the poorest children in the world.

Thank you very much for your continued support.

**Cherish.**