

Dear friends of 500 miles

It is now over 7 months since 500 miles formally handed over full fiscal and administrative responsibility for its flagship prosthetic and orthotic (P&O) service at the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) in Lilongwe. The service was handed over to the LION Trust – a joint venture between the Malawi Ministry of Health (MoH Malawi) and a Norwegian consortium – as a fully integrated part of Malawi's national health service. Please read on to see how things are going.

500 miles' ongoing support of this service will be principally through our One Smile fund which is gradually becoming the main focus of 500 miles.



One Smile effectively

pays for, or subsidises, P&O devices for people who cannot afford to buy what they or their children need, people like those featured in the Patients/One Smile section below.

You can read Yohane Phiri's own account of his first 9 months of study in Cambodia – and we have other inspiring training news! I hope you will also enjoy reading about the one-off assistance we were able to give to a disability charity working in Salima, Malawi, new developments in Zambia and stories of patients assisted by One Smile.

You'll notice that this newsletter

has crept up to 8 pages. We will revert to the shorter format in our next issue – there was just a lot to tell you about this time!

Thank you very much for your interest in and support for 500 miles. We never forget that we could not do what we do without your strong and loyal support.



The P&O team at LION.

Olivia Giles

Project updates

Malawi

What was 500 miles' P&O service in Lilongwe is now the thriving P&O department at LION, capably managed for the LION Trust by Benadeta Singini (pictured right). The handover to the LION Trust has been smooth and the department is running well.

500 miles has promised at least four years of substantial financial support after handover, but this support is expressly conditional on the LION Trust continuing to run the service on the same basic principles as those on which it was run by 500 miles, which essentially means that all-comers must get what they need regardless of their ability to pay. 500 miles is using its One Smile fund to support this aim.



Sustainability

Of course, our commitment to the LION Trust has only increased the continuing challenge for 500 miles and the P&O department of LION to ensure the long-term sustainability of the P&O service – but we need to strike a balance between making sure that nobody goes without and being certain that, for the long term, the service can stand on its own two feet financially. One factor which supports these dual aims is using a low-cost but effective system of manufacturing, in-country.

To encourage long-term sustainability, 500 miles' commitment to at least 4 years' run off support is also contingent on the P&O department meeting certain targets around (1) production, (2) quality and (3) in-country income. So far, it has exceeded both the production and in-country income targets each month quite easily. Well done to the whole team!

Meeting the quality target is proving tougher, and it is also harder for 500 miles to assess – but we will persevere in trying to ensure that the quality of the product and service is maintained as we believe that patient safety and patient satisfaction with the service is key to its longevity.



Christine McMonagle of The University of Strathclyde helping to complete the installation of the QMS in 2024.



Above: Beatrice Kabota.
Left: Eliaichi Mlay.



Quality is being reported on fortnightly through the bespoke quality management system (QMS) designed for 500 miles by Sandra Sexton and which was fully installed in the P&O department at LION before handover. These fortnightly reports and compliance with the QMS will now begin to be externally audited three times a year, twice by Beatrice Kabota, Master of Public Health and the cervical cancer prevention programme coordinator at Nkhoma CCAP Hospital in Malawi, and once by Eliaichi Mlay, an experienced Tanzanian prosthetist/orthotist with a master's degree, supported by Sophies Minde, by a Norwegian P&O clinic,

which has been a long-term friend of 500 miles. The aim of this constant auditing is to ensure that any weaknesses in quality are quickly picked up and resolved effectively on an ongoing basis.

High quality clinicians are also key to the longevity of the service so 500 miles' training programme will be ongoing after handover.

Zambia

Using 500 miles' One Smile fund, we have begun to pay for a P&O device for one adult* in Zambia each month who is struggling to pay for what he or she needs. We are doing this through Timothy Miti, a trusted employee of the P&O department at The University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka (the P&O department at UTH). You can read about the first beneficiary, Steven, in the Patients/One Smile section below.

This activity is low level because the Zambia Ministry of Health (MoH Zambia) has supplied the P&O department at UTH with only "high cost" components and materials and the devices made from them are being charged out at very high, profit-making prices. There is of course scope for 500 miles to assist many more people if MoH Zambia will buy "low-cost" stock and/or if the P&O department at UTH will charge 500 miles more modest prices and so contribute to assisting Zambia's poor itself.



Timothy Miti.

If Timothy's name sounds familiar, it is because he has featured in this newsletter before as a student whose three-year diploma in P&O from Mobility India (2019 to 2022) was sponsored by 500 miles and who was eventually employed by MoH Zambia in September 2024.

*Beit CURE, a private American hospital in Lusaka, provides a free P&O service for children.



Steven Zulu, a Zambian beneficiary of One Smile. You can read his story on p7.

Project updates

KODO

KODO (Kuthandiza Osayenda Disability Outreach) is a grass roots organisation based in Salima in Malawi, which was founded by George Chimpiko, who has physical disabilities and who, since his retirement, has dedicated himself to helping other people with disabilities in Malawi.

KODO was a long-term partner of 500 miles in Lilongwe and, in that capacity, George kindly attended our lunch to mark the handover of 500 miles' P&O service in March 2025. That day, George told Olivia that KODO had been gifted 85 personal energy transportation tricycles (PETTs) by The New Life Centre Zambia (NLC) but that they had no means of getting them from Lusaka to Salima.

KODO was first introduced to 500 miles by The **Global Concerns Trust (GCT)** and so Olivia invited KODO to make a proposal to 500 miles through GCT for what KODO needed. The proposal was somewhat wider than originally indicated and NLC failed to bring the promised PETTs to the border, but by the end of August, George himself had gone all the way to Lusaka to collect 50 PETTs and parts for assembling another 15.

500 miles paid for the exercise and the distribution of the PETTs in Salima. GCT said that the PETTs will make a huge difference to the recipients, including Dyna, Geruld and Pemphero pictured.



George Chimpiko (on the left).



Left: some of the PETTs Geroqe brought all the way from Lusaka. Above: Dyna Dyson, Geruld Nankhwende and Pamphero Yoweli, on their PETTs.

Training update

In all of 500 miles' projects over the years, our primary aim has always been to build in-country capacity (1) to produce high quality prostheses and orthoses and (2) to manage efficient orthopaedic workshops – because that capacity is crucial for the sustainability and long-term success of any P&O service.

Therefore, sponsoring the training of new Malawian prosthetists and orthotists will remain a key element of what 500 miles will do to support the P&O department of LION.

Yohane Phiri

In our May 2025 newsletter, we reported that in January 2025 Yohane from Malawi began studying for a three-year, diploma-level course in P&O with Exceed Worldwide in Cambodia, fully sponsored by 500 miles. Yohane worked for 500 miles as a technician, both in Mzuzu and Lilongwe, for over 5 years.

It was his long and faithful service, his ability and his clear sense of vocation that earned him this chance to study. Exceed have reported that Yohane is doing very well. You can read more about Yohane [on our website](#), while he has also provided an account his first 9 months' experience, which you can read on the next page.



Maggie Kamwendo

And we have more happy training news! Maggie has been 500 miles' invaluable receptionist in Lilongwe service since 2018. Maggie's contribution far exceeds her pay level from MoH Malawi but as she had only a school certificate, her remuneration has been restricted.

Starting in July 2023, 500 miles sponsored Maggie to undertake a three-module Diploma in Business Management with ABE and in August we learned that Maggie had earned her diploma.

We are so proud of her – and delighted that she is now eligible for higher pay.

My first 9 months at Exceed

Yohane shares his experience of training at Exceed Worldwide in Cambodia

Throughout my time at Exceed, I've embarked on an incredible journey, marked by academic challenges and unwavering support. As a student of Prosthetics and Orthotics, I've had the opportunity to explore a range of fascinating subjects, with my favorite classes being those that focus on the design and functionality of artificial limbs and orthopedic devices. Specifically, courses like Trans-Tibial (TT), Ankle Disarticulation (AD), Trans-Femoral (TF) and Anatomy and Physiology have captivated me, as I've learned to create customized prostheses and orthoses that cater to individual patients' needs.

What draws me to these courses is the profound impact these devices have on people's lives, enabling them to regain mobility, independence, and confidence. The combination of technical skills, creativity, and patient interaction makes this field incredibly fulfilling.

I've been fortunate to be part of a diverse class of 14 students, comprising 4 students from Myanmar and 9 from Cambodia. This cultural melting pot has allowed me to learn about different cultures and experiences, fostering a tight-knit community that has been instrumental in navigating the ups and downs of my academic journey.

Beyond academics, I've engaged in sports and social gatherings, building relationships with peers and locals alike. Exploring Cambodia has been a delightful experience, with its rich culture and towns consisting of vibrant markets. I've also been warmly welcomed by the Cambodian people, who have shown me incredible hospitality. Additionally, I've found a supportive Christian community church at the International Christian Assembly (ICA), which has provided comfort and guidance throughout my time here.

While adjusting to life in Cambodia, it has presented its challenges, including the heat and language barrier, though I'm slowly adapting. Despite occasional frustrations with not being able to express myself fluently in Khmer with local people, I'm determined to improve.

As I look to the future, I'm excited to make a meaningful impact as a prosthetist and orthotist. I'm eager to contribute to innovative device development, collaborate with healthcare professionals, and provide personalised care to patients. Working with diverse cases, from pediatric to geriatric, will allow me to make a difference in people's lives, helping them regain mobility and independence. With this fulfilling career path ahead, I'm confident that my time at Exceed will have equipped me with the skills and passion to excel in this field.



One Smile is a fund within 500 miles which is used only to pay for P&O devices for people in Malawi – and a few in Zambia – who cannot afford to buy what they or their children need just to stand up and walk or enjoy maximum body function – so that they can go to school or to work and participate in community life.

One Smile is gradually becoming our main focus. All donations to 500 miles which are not made for a specific purpose, such as training, will be applied to One Smile – in the case of Malawi, thereby also creating income to sustain the P&O department at LION for the long term. Here are a few stories of patients who have recently benefitted from One Smile.

Steven Zulu

Steven from Eastern Province was the first beneficiary of our new activity in Zambia. He is a 36-year-old subsistence farmer, married with one child. In 2007, when Steven was 18, he was involved in motorcycle accident that led to the amputation of his lower left leg at Chama District Hospital.

In 2011, Steven got a low-cost below knee prosthesis from a private hospital in Zambia, probably paid for by 500 miles, but it has long since worn out. Steven said he finds it difficult to farm without a leg. When Steven heard that 500 miles could pay for a new prosthesis, he travelled to Lusaka on a truck. He found a friend to stay with during treatment and he will hopefully find hospital transport to take him home. Steven's new leg should last him a few years and allow him to support his family. The cost of his leg was £300. You can see him walking in the [short video on our YouTube channel](#).



Elina (see below) together with Apatsha and Metusellar (whose stories are on the next page) were all referred to the P&O department at LION by the **Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA)**. MACODA is funded by **Hope and Healing International** to contribute 40% of the cost of devices supplied to referrals who are under the age of 18. One Smile covers the 60% balance. Generally speaking, but depending on their rate of growth, children require new prostheses and orthoses every three to six months – but in Malawi and Zambia they rarely get them as often as that.

Elina Jabiti

Elina was born in January 2021 with club foot, the condition where the foot is turned downward and inwards. It was more severe on the right than the left. Unfortunately, it was left untreated and so Elina had been going to nursery school, walking on the outer edge of her feet. In May 2025, MACODA referred Elina, then aged 4, to Ntcheu District Hospital for surgery on her right foot followed by serial casting to try to hold the foot in its new position. Elina was then referred to the P&O department at LION for fitting with ankle foot orthoses (AFOs). These AFOs, which are moulded splints, are to prevent the right foot from returning to a deformed position and to correct the left foot with only mild club foot deformity.

She was fitted with her AFOs in early August and after two months her parents, who both farm for a living, were delighted to see their youngest child walking again, with well aligned feet and with a much improved gait. You can see for yourself in the [short video on our YouTube channel](#).



Apatsa Lemekezani

11-year-old Apatsa lives in Dowa with her father, who is a bricklayer, her step mother and her three siblings. Apatsa's mother died when she was four.

Apatsa was born without a lower right leg but it was not until August 2018, that her parents brought her to a MACODA clinic at Dowa District Hospital where she was referred to 500 miles in Lilongwe for her first below knee prosthesis. Between 2018 and 2024, Apatsa received only 4 devices because her parents didn't bring her to MACODA, or direct to 500 miles, probably due to transport costs.

Fortunately, MACODA referred Apatsa to the P&O department at LION for review in September 2025 when it was observed that her prosthesis was tight and worn out, that its alignment was wrong and that both issues were causing her to walk with poor gait. Apatsa's stump was cast for a new prosthesis on the same day and the device was fitted the next day, all so that Apatsa and her family would not have to stay in Lilongwe for any longer than necessary as that is very costly. (This does not happen in the UK!) Apatsa and her step mother were delighted with the new device and they know to contact MACODA for assistance with transport if Apatsa has any problems. Have a look at the improvement in Apatsa's gait in the [short video on our YouTube channel](#).



Metusellar Wackson

Metusellar was born with a short left tibia and with his left foot turned outward. When Metusellar was 13 months old, he was referred by Kamuzu Central Hospital to 500 miles for an extension prosthesis – a device which he could stand into with his turned-out left foot and which would equalise his height as he was beginning to stand and walk.

From then to age 9, Metusellar received only five extension prostheses from 500 miles before he was referred by MACODA to the P&O department at LION in June 2025 for his sixth device. You can see from the photo of the devices side by side, and [the short video on our YouTube channel](#), that the last one was completely broken, wasn't supporting his knee joint (which was forced inwards when walking) and that the straps were totally worn-out. Metusellar was improvising with pieces of string to hold the device on.

Metusellar and his mother, who is a single parent of four children, were very happy with the new device because it controls Metusellar's knee, it is well aligned, it has

been fitted with strong, durable leather straps and cosmetically it looks good as the whole device has been covered with EVA foam. Metusellar, who is in Standard 4 at a Lilongwe primary school, said that he felt balanced when walking and that he is going to start playing football with his friends once he has got used to the device.



Supporting One Smile

One-off donations to One Smile are of course extremely welcome and gratefully received but regular donations to One Smile are really the life blood of the charity – and are now even more important.

You can get an idea of [device prices on our website](#). A regular donation of £12 a month with Gift Aid (£15 without Gift Aid) would pay for an average prosthesis or orthosis, such as a below knee prosthesis, for someone each year. In this newsletter, we've shared the stories of just four of the patients we've helped through One Smile – there are many more who need support. We have a [dedicated page on our website](#) for One Smile, if you'd like to support us in this way. Thank you to all of you who already do!

Donating through Just Giving? They invite donors to "add a small tip on top of your donation so that they can continue to help more people". They say this is to avoid charging charities a platform fee – but 500 miles does already pay Just Giving a monthly fee and in addition, Just Giving makes a charge on each donation, so there is absolutely no need to do this! You can select the "Enter custom amount" option and specify "0".