

Dear friends of 500 miles

I am trying to stick to my promise of shorter newsletters! Thank you all for your continued interest in and support of 500 miles now that we have handed over responsibility for running all of our operational activities – and in particular for your strong support of One Smile.



500 miles will continue to guide, monitor and audit the performance of the Prosthetics and Orthotics Department (P&O Dept) at The Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) and to pay for training in prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) at international level for Malawians - but One Smile is now the main focus of 500 miles.

We thoroughly appreciate your strong, loyal and ongoing support!

Olivia Giles

Project updates: Malawi

The 31st of March 2026 was the first anniversary of the formal handover of 500 miles' large P&O service at LION to the LION Trust - a joint venture between the Malawi Ministry of Health and a Norwegian consortium - as a fully integrated part of Malawi's national health service.



Above: Benadeta

This service now forms the P&O Dept at LION and it is capably managed for the LION Trust by Benadeta Singini who is fully in the swing of running it for the Trust, whilst at the same time accounting to 500 miles for its key performance indicators (KPIs) which are important for the charity's ongoing financial support of the service.

Benadeta, Samuel, Charles and Peter are the four qualified clinicians. Dominic, Clinstone, Mike and Charles are the technicians with Mike and Charles also having responsibility for store keeping. Maggie is the receptionist – and Faith is the cleaner LION has appointed to the department. The P&O Dept is running very well indeed with production numbers and locally derived income steadily increasing.



Left-to-right:
George, Peter
and Samuel;
Charles and
Mike; Clinstone
and Dominic;
Maggie; Faith

Project updates

Quality management system auditing



Left: Eliaichi Mlay. Above: Pia Nolstedt

Besides device production levels and in-country income generation, the third KPI for 500 miles is around quality – and it is the hardest to monitor and assess. We are trying to do this by constantly auditing compliance with the bespoke quality management system (QMS) designed for 500 miles by Sandra Sexton and which was fully installed in the P&O Dept at LION before handover. We believe that patient safety and patient satisfaction with the service are key to its longevity and so, as well as asking Benadeta to carry out and report on a fortnightly internal audit on compliance with the QMS, we have dedicated significant resources to a triannual external auditing process.

Beatrice Kabota, Master of Public Health and the cervical cancer prevention programme coordinator at Nkhoma CCAP Hospital in Malawi will audit the QMS twice a year. She completed her first audit in November 2025. The first external professional audit was carried out over two days in February 2026 by Eliaichi Mlay, an experienced Tanzanian prosthetist/orthotist with a master's degree and Pia Nolstedt of **Sophies Minde**, a Norwegian P&O clinic, which has been a long-term friend of 500 miles. The detailed reports from the external audit have been extremely helpful for identifying weaknesses which could affect quality as well as training needs and we are currently following up on them.



One Smile and our patients

One Smile is a fund within 500 miles which is used only to pay for (or subsidise) P&O devices for people in Malawi – and 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.

In line with most tertiary care services in Malawi, the P&O Dept at LION is a paying service – but the majority of its patients can't afford the full prices of the devices. Many are supported by third party NGOs but most of the NGOs contribute less (some a lot less) than half of the full device prices.

It is the overriding condition of 500 miles' ongoing financial support of the P&O Dept that all comers continue to receive the devices they need, regardless of ability to pay – so there is an obvious funding gap for the LION Trust.

At Easter, the LION Trust increased all device prices at the P&O Dept at LION. We support this because it is essential for the long-term sustainability of the service – but of course this also increases the funding gap. Filling this gap for the LION Trust is where the majority of 500 miles' One Smile fund is currently applied but the fund is, and will increasingly, also be used to help individuals in Malawi and Zambia to pay directly for their devices.

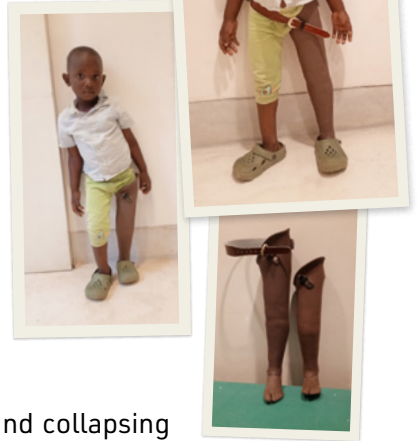
Please enjoy the stories of two patients who have recently benefitted from One Smile on the next page

Blessings Makawa

When Blessings was just 15 months old, he developed gangrene in his right leg and had it amputated through the knee at **Beit-CURE Children's Hospital of Malawi**. They then referred him to us for a prosthesis. We successfully fitted his first leg, though as little more than a baby, he couldn't walk out of the clinic.

Blessings came to the P&O Dept at LION for review in April 2025. The clinicians fitted a new device within a couple of days and, this time, Blessings walked well on his prosthesis right away. He should have been back for another review that October, but his mum couldn't afford the high cost of transport until May this year.

By then, the device was 11cm short and very tight. The foot was actually broken and collapsing inwards when he walked, as you can see in [our short YouTube video](#). The belt which secures the leg to the body was missing and Blessings was wearing tight trousers over the leg to hold it on! He was cast for a new leg immediately and it was fitted within two days.



The new leg levels Blessings up, so he can walk well. But he's still bending to one side from the habit of walking on a short leg. For the moment, he's too small to use a leg with a flexing knee but he'll soon need a prosthesis long enough to accommodate the joint.

Now 4, Blessings should soon go to the school where his mum teaches. She's been strongly advised to return him to the clinic every 6 months, or could risk scoliosis from walking on a short prosthesis. The cost of transport is a big challenge. But, as long as Beit CURE contributes 40% of the cost, One Smile can make up the deficit, and we can at least assure Blessings' mother that she only has to focus on the travel costs.

Trinity Chikaya

Trinity is nearly 14 years old and lives with her grandmother. After being diagnosed with cancer, her right leg was amputated in September 2025. The wound, high on her thigh, took time to heal. Since December, she's been getting Chemotherapy twice a month at Kamuzu Central Hospital (near LION).

In February 2026, the **Malawi Council for Disability Affairs** (MACODA), funded by **Hope and Healing International**, referred Trinity to LION for a prosthetic. She was so weak from her treatment that she couldn't come until mid-April, when we cast her for a transfemoral prosthesis.

Due to transport costs, Trinity didn't return for the fitting until May. She isn't strong enough yet to walk unaided but – as you can see from [our short YouTube video](#) – she managed pretty well with crutches.

Trinity's leg has a knee joint, but it will be some time before she can unlock it. She's been advised to build up gradually from 30 minutes walking, to gain the strength to lose the crutches and unlock the knee. She's due a review in June, to coincide with an appointment at the Cancer Centre, but transport costs may stand in the way.



Trinity is already two years behind at primary school, so it's important that she catches up. Her school is just 1km away, so we hope this will be possible. Trinity's grandmother is in no position to contribute to the cost of Trinity's prostheses, so One Smile will continue to make up the deficit in the full price of her devices (after the 25% contribution we hope that MACODA will keep making) so that Trinity has some chance of getting an education.

Support & celebrations



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.

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. If you would like to help in this way, please see the [Donate page on our website](#). Thank you to all of you who already do!

Celebrating 20 years of Partnership between Scotland and Malawi

To mark the 20th anniversary of its inception, the Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) created a photographic exhibition called Anthu Pamodzi, which means people together, which brought together images that tell the story of people-to-people connections at the heart of Scotland–Malawi relationships, to highlight collaboration,

friendship and mutual respect, and to capture how communities in Scotland and Malawi are working together to build a better world. 500 miles was delighted that our submission of three photographs was accepted to be part of the exhibition.

We were also very pleased to have 500 miles' story included in the health section of SMP@ 20 Anniversary Book for which Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal (HRH) who is SMP's Honorary Patron, had written an introductory message.

HRH attended the Anthu Pamozi exhibition at Edinburgh City Chambers on 20th January at which the SMP@20 anniversary Book was launched and HRH was presented with a copy.



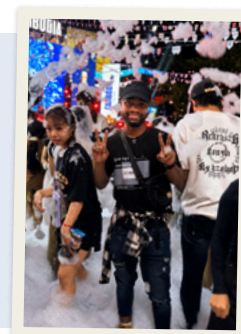
Our contribution to the exhibition. Left top and bottom, credit: Paolo Patrino Photography



Above: HRH at the event. Top right: the anniversary book. Bottom right: Olivia meets HRH. Credit for all: Kirsty Stroma Photography

An update from Yohane Phiri in Cambodia

Yohane Phiri is the 21st student we have sponsored for their international qualifications in P&O. Yohane has now completed a full year of his 3-year diploma with Exceed Worldwide in Cambodia and has just enjoyed a month's holiday travelling in Cambodia and celebrating the Khmer New Year at the riverside in Phnom Penh.



Heads up on shoes!

If you have any sturdy flat, lace-up or Velcro fastening shoes (ideally trainers) that are in good condition, but that you don't need or wear, please hold onto them until I can hopefully bring you more news about 500 miles re-starting a regular collection for sending to the P&O Dept.