ISSUE 17 NOVEMBER 2026

Dear friends of 500 miles

Thank you for your strong and loyal support for 500 miles, and in particular for One Smile, our internal fund which pays for or subsidises prosthetic and orthotic devices for people in Malawi and Zambia who cannot afford to buy their own.

As One Smile is now the main focus of 500 miles, it takes up quite a lot of this newsletter – including an interview with Amon, a patient who has benefitted from One Smile – but we have a couple of other updates for you on what 500 miles is still doing in Malawi, and on our shoe collection in Scotland for Malawi. And we thank Brian Kelly for his work for 500 miles and his kind promotion of the charity in his memoir, GLASLAWI.

We thoroughly appreciate your continued interest!

Olivia Giles

Flat shoes

500 miles is now ready to re-start a regular collection of shoes for sending to prosthetics and orthotics services in Malawi through Malawi Partnershipping. If you have any sturdy flat, lace-up or Velcro fastening shoes (trainers are ideal) that are still in good condition, but that you don't need or wear any longer, please will you get in touch (email address below) so that we can arrange to get them from you.





GLASLAWI book launch

On the 22nd of September 2026, Brian Kelly, a stalwart friend of 500 miles, launched his memoir, **GLASLAWI: Glasgow to Malawi – A life in service, a journey in hope**, at an event in Glasgow City Chambers hosted by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Jacqueline McLaren. GLASLAWI – **available on Amazon** – is the story of how Glasgow City Council staff and other volunteers worked with Malawian partners to support schools, hospitals and local services over more than 20 years.

The projects ranged from refurbishing and installing computers to sending refuse collection vehicles and wheelie bins to Lilongwe – but Brian also led teams of volunteers from Glasgow City Building to construct, plumb, wire and furnish 500 miles first and second prosthetics and orthotics clinics at Kamuzu Central hospital in Lilongwe in 2008 and 2010. As Olivia said at the launch, "Without Brian, 500 miles' work in Malawi would not have been nearly as successful as it has been – and it might never even have got off the ground." Brian, thank you from the thousands of people who have benefitted from your life in service – and for all of your kind words about 500 miles in GLASLAWI.

Box 500, 44-46 Morningside Road
Edinburgh EH10 4BF

www.500miles.co.uk
olivia@500miles.co.uk

Registered Charity
Number: SC038205

Malawi update

Following the formal handover of 500 miles' large prosthetic and orthotic (P&O) service in Lilongwe 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, 500 miles is continuing to guide, monitor and audit the performance of what is now the Prosthetics and Orthotics Department (P&O Dept) at the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION).

The factors with which 500 miles is primarily concerned are production levels, income levels and the quality of the product and service.

In the year to the end of October 2026, the P&O Dept delivered 228 prostheses and 1,319 orthoses. This far surpasses the modest target that 500 miles set for the P&O Dept at handover – but it also exceeds the production level at 500 miles' P&O service before we handed it over.

Since LION increased its device prices at the P&O Dept at Easter 2026, 500 miles' income target for the P&O Dept has become irrelevant, but it is obvious that the income that LION is receiving from the sale of devices constitutes a greater percentage of the cost of producing devices than before handover.

Quality management system auditing



Above left: Pia Nolstedt. Above right: Benadeta Singini. Right: Beatrice Kabota

It is more challenging to monitor and assess the quality of the product and service at the P&O Dept, but we believe that patient safety and satisfaction with the service are essential for its longevity. As such, we do this by regularly auditing compliance with the bespoke quality management system (QMS) designed for 500 miles by Sandra Sexton, which was fully installed in the P&O Dept before handover - and then trying to work on any weaknesses that the audits disclose.

Benadeta Singini, the manager of the P&O Dept, carries out and reports to 500 miles on internal fortnightly audits using our template report, so that we can readily compare performance over time. 500 miles also arranges triannual, external, professional and non-professional audits. The external auditors complete the same template report, which is helpful for direct comparison with and validation of the internal reports.

Pia Nolstedt of Sophies Minde, a Norwegian P&O clinic and long-term friend of 500 miles, carried out the first annual, external, professional audit of compliance with the QMS in February 2026 alongside Eliaichi Mlay, a Tanzanian prosthetist/orthotist. Their report identified a weakness in the P&O Dept's clinical note taking. We are extremely grateful to Pia for following up on this by designing and conducting a six-part online training course in clinical notetaking for the clinical staff from June to November 2026, on a voluntary basis in her own time.

And we have already seen how effective this has been! On 20th October 2026, Beatrice Kabota, Master of Public Health and the cervical cancer prevention programme coordinator at Nkhoma CCAP Hospital in Malawi, completed her third external, non-professional audit since handover. She wrote **"Overall, the clinic performance has improved compared to previous audits. The clinic was generally clean, staff punctuality has improved, and clinical documentation was strong."**

One Smile and our patients

LION is working to minimise the funding gap between production costs for devices and the income they generate. As well as increasing device prices at the P&O Dept at Easter 2026, from the beginning of 2027, LION will also begin to charge partner organisations referring patients to it a much higher percentage of those prices than before. 500 miles strongly supports LION's maximisation of the P&O Dept's income, as this is essential for its long-term sustainability.

But there will always be a funding gap at some level, because (1) P&O is a very expensive health service, (2) poverty and disability go together and (3) 500 miles supports the P&O Dept on the condition that all-comers receive support regardless of their ability to pay – meaning that many devices are unfunded. Even with support from third party organisations, the patients of this service can't afford to cover its costs.

That's where One Smile comes in. It's a fund within 500 miles used only to pay for (or subsidise) P&O devices for people in Malawi and Zambia who can't afford what they or their children need to stand up and walk or enjoy maximum body function – so that they can go to school or work and participate in community life.

For now, the majority of our One Smile expenditure covers the device-manufacturing costs that the in-country income from the P&O Dept can't meet. This will continue for another year or two, but we've agreed that whilst LION will gradually assume responsibility for paying for all of the P&O Dept's costs itself, we'll increasingly use One Smile to support poor individuals in Malawi to pay LION for their devices.

Please enjoy our interview with Amon and the stories of two patients, who have all benefitted from One Smile.



Amon and his mother, with Benadeta (left) and technician, Charles Mwanza (second right).

An interview with Amon (and his mum)

Now 16, Amon Tengani has been a patient of 500 miles' P&O service in Lilongwe, and now the P&O Dept, since he was a baby. He's currently referred to the P&O Dept by Children of Blessing Trust (COBT), who pay 25% of device costs for their referrals, while One Smile covers the rest. We're grateful to Amon and his mother, Elita Israel, for agreeing to be interviewed by Benadeta Singini.

Amon: My name is Amon. I was born at Area 18 Health Centre, Lilongwe on the 13th of March 2010. I am the second-born child and live with my mother and two sisters. My mother works at Sparrows Christian Academy as a cleaner. My father, who is a carpenter, has remarried and does not live with us or support us.

Elita: Amon was born with a congenital amputation, without part of his right leg below the knee. We have been coming to 500miles/LION to get prostheses since 2011, when he was just a year old. He's received 11 legs during that time. We were first referred to 500 miles by MAP, then by COBT since 2016.

Amon: My devices assist me to go to school, walk long distances and play football – I'm a goalkeeper. On top of that, this prosthesis is assisting me to drive a car and I am taking a mechanics course at a garage.



Without my prosthesis, I wouldn't be able to do any of these things. If I had not been able to go school, in the future I wouldn't have anything to do. I could have been a beggar.

I like coming to LION because it is giving us patients a very big space. All of us are accommodated at the patient waiting area, unlike at Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) where most of us patients had to wait outside the building due to space. Also, LION is offering me privacy when doctors are assisting me.

The staff are very friendly. They do not shout at me whenever I tell them that I have a problem with my prosthesis that they have made for me.

At the moment, I am in form one at Mkomachi Open Secondary School. During the weekend or holidays I go to a certain garage where I am learning mechanics, as I want to become an engineer in future.

Elita: I want to thank 500 miles for what it does for my child. Without 500 miles, KCH, and now LION, wouldn't have prosthetic services and I wouldn't know where I could get these services for Amon.

Amon: I thank COBT and 500 miles for the services that they are giving me. I am free to come whenever I need to.

---

500 miles can promise this to Amon, but only because of One Smile. The cost of Amon's trans-tibial prosthesis is £150. You can see how well he walks on our short video on YouTube!

Malawi update

Florida Robert



Florida is a 4-year-old girl from Mchinji in Malawi. She was born as one of a pair of twins, conjoined at the abdomen and pelvis, with two shared lower limbs. In 2024, an operation to seperate them left her only one lower limb. Unfortunately, her sister developed complications after the surgery and died.

In July this year, Florida was referred by Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre to the P&O Dept for casting of her residual hip joint for a hip disarticulation prosthesis.

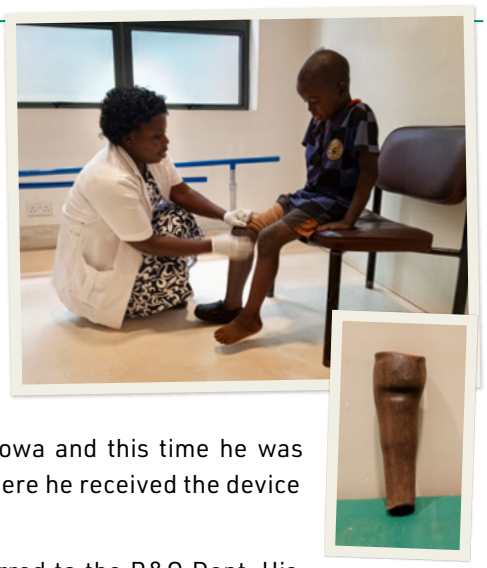
Florida won't be able to use an off-the-shelf prosthesis until she's at least 12. And, because suitable hip joint components for young children can't be made at the P&O Dept, Samuel Mkomera, Florida's prosthetist, created a hip joint using a door hinge, reinforced with polypropylene to be both strong and lightweight.



After the prosthesis was fitted, training began – both for Florida and her mother. The initial focus was on helping Florida become comfortable with the prosthesis, maintain a standing position, and learn how to move the prosthetic leg forward. But learning to walk with a hip-level prosthesis takes time, practice and lots of encouragement, particularly in a young child. You can watch Florida taking her first steps with Samuel in **our short YouTube video**.

Florida's family were not going to come for the limb fitting, as they couldn't afford to contribute – but One Smile was able to pay the full cost of just over £600. Florida is now overdue for review. While One Smile will cover any device she needs, the cost of transport from Blantyre will be a major deterrent to the family bringing her.

Nelson Julius



Nelson is 10 years old and the middle child of three. His parents divorced when he was 6 and he now lives with his mother and extended family. They all depend financially on his mother's small business. Nelson is at Chingaya Primary school in Dowa district, about 3km from his home.

Nelson was born with a congenital trans-tibial amputation of his right leg. In 2018, when he was 2 years old, he attended a MACODA clinic at Dowa District Hospital, which referred him to 500 miles for a prosthetic. He was then cast for a leg, but his parents didn't bring him back to have it fitted.

In 2021, Nelson was referred again to 500 miles by another MACODA clinic at Dowa and this time he was successfully fitted. Then, in 2024, Nelson's uncle took him to a Jaipur Limb camp where he received the device you see in the photo (right).

Fortunately, MACODA picked Nelson up again in August this year and he was referred to the P&O Dept. His prosthesis was completely worn-out and his residual limb was scarred by the hard socket. Nelson said that he was going to school only twice a week and couldn't play with his friends much, as the socket was painful and the forced bend in his left knee was sore.

Nelson was very happy with his new device as his height is equal, he no longer feels pain and he can wear shoes on both feet – so he can go to school Monday to Friday. You can see the difference that the new leg makes in our before-and-after **video on YouTube.**

Whilst, as above, LION has increased the prices of devices at the P&O Dept, they are still exceptionally good value for the GBP as you can see **on our website,** which has been recently updated. Unfortunately, this is partly due to the de facto devaluation of the Malawi kwacha relative to the GBP – but it means that it still doesn't cost us much to make a huge difference to someone's life.

One-off donations to One Smile are of course extremely welcome, but regular donations to One Smile are really the life blood of the charity – and they are now more important than ever.

A regular donation of £12 a month with Gift Aid (or £15 without) would pay for an average prosthesis or orthosis, like a below knee prosthesis, for someone each year.

If you can help in this way, please **visit our website**. Thank you to all of you who already do!