



Dear friends of 500 miles

Thank you very much for your ongoing support of 500 miles, now in our 15th year!

The 11 months since our last newsletter have been a period of steady graft as we have found our feet again post pandemic. We have been re-establishing production volumes and our outreach practice as well as making plans in anticipation of major changes on the horizon ahead of the planned handover of 500 miles' P&O service in Lilongwe to MoH Malawi. You can read about our plans and these changes below.

I hope you will also enjoy Samuel Mkomera's account of his first few months in Thailand studying for his degree in P&O, some terrific fundraising stories and a report on the progress of our final appeal – as well as a selection of heart-warming patient stories.

We are experiencing economic instability and uncertainty here in the UK – but it's all relative. If you – or your children or grand-children – need a prosthetic or orthotic device in order to be able to stand up and walk, you have the luxury of knowing that it will be provided, free, by our NHS. For the majority in Malawi and Zambia, getting this essential help will depend on whether a charity, like 500 miles, will buy the device for them – and that's assuming they can even get to a P&O centre. The cost of one of my below knee prostheses is over £5,000. You can buy a below knee prosthesis for someone in Malawi from our centre in Lilongwe for £175.

Olivia Giles

Abbreviations

The terms we use to keep things simple!

KCH: Kamuzu Central Hospital, Malawi

MAP: a Malawian NGO

MCH: Mzuzu Central Hospital, Malawi

MoH Malawi: Ministry of Health of Malawi

P&O: Prosthetic(s) and Orthotic(s)

SFH: St Francis Hospital, Zambia

Our patients

The devices that 500 miles funds and supplies give children the chance of an education, because they can physically get to school, adults the chance of working because they can stand and walk and everyone the chance of social inclusion and participation in their communities. Here are the stories of patients who have visited our Lilongwe centre in the last 11 months for a variety of devices, from 4-year-old Febe to 70-year-old Lakib.

Febe

4-year-old Febe Levie was born with a muscle imbalance in her feet which has resulted in her developing supination. This means that she walks on the outer edge of her feet because the muscles on the outside edges are not firing properly. The condition is more severe on the right side. Febe was at pre-school but was refusing to go because she couldn't see any other kids walking like her and it was painful to walk.

Febe was noticed by MAP and referred to 500 miles to see if we could help. Our prosthetist, Samuel Mkomera, prescribed, made and fitted a **rigid ankle foot orthosis** (AFO) for Febe's right side and a **flexible AFO** for her left side. As soon as Febe started walking with the AFOs, her gait changed, as you can see in the [short video on our YouTube channel](#). She can now walk comfortably and for longer distances. Samuel told us that Febe promised her mother to go back to nursery school and that she is looking forward to playing with her friends. Febe's orthoses cost **£50 each**.



Our patients

Lefani

8-year-old Lefani Thomas was born with a short and underdeveloped femur on his left side, a condition called proximal femoral focal deficiency. Obviously, he had never been able to walk properly, but he was only noticed in 2016 by MACOHA (a semi-governmental agency with which 500 miles conducts outreach) when Lefani was three. MACOHA referred Lefani to 500 miles and we made his first extension prosthesis which is a combination of an orthosis to support his femur and a prosthesis to operate as the lower part of his leg. Lefani's second device was made in 2020 and he was again referred to us by MACOHA in January this year.

Lefani should have received new devices much more frequently than he has, but at least he has not missed any school - and his mother knows that she must keep bringing him back to us when he outgrows his device. You can see the contrast in how Lefani walks with and without his device in [the short video on our YouTube channel](#). Lefani said that with his **ortho-prosthesis** (which cost **£205**), he can go to school and play football and other games and he says that he is not limited in what he can do.

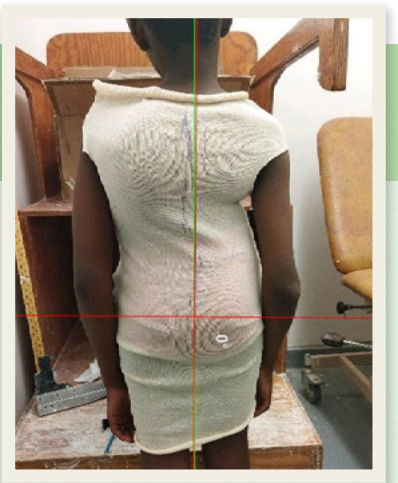


Left: Lefani with a new device earlier this year. Centre: the new device in the workshop. Right: Lefani in 2020.



Mausamatha

28-year-old housewife and smallholder farmer, Mausamatha Zebron, had her right leg amputated below the knee when she was 12 because she was bitten by a snake. She wasn't referred to 500 miles until 2013, when she was 19, when we made her a **below knee prosthesis**. One of 500 miles' partners, **Positive Steps** brought Mausamatha back to us in April this year for a repair but the leg was so loose and worn out that we immediately decided to make a new leg. The cost was **£175** and, as you can see in the [short video on our YouTube channel](#), Mausamatha was immediately mobile and functional.



Thandiwe

15-year-old Thandiwe Kumchenga is a very clever teenager who was selected to attend a government boarding school. She is well but because she has idiopathic scoliosis, she feels pain when she sits for too long and has difficulty breathing.

When Thandiwe was 6, her mother noticed that her spine was rounded but it was not until she was 8 that Thandiwe was seen by doctors at KCH who prescribed a corset. 500 miles has made Thandiwe four thoraco-lumber support corsets over the years but when she returned this year, she was complaining that the corset did not allow her to breathe freely and that it was not giving her enough support. Our prosthetist, Maliwase Munthali, took a fresh cast and fabricated a **Boston brace**, which is a rigid plastic shell, with a front opening.

Thandiwe said that she felt taller, better supported and able to breathe comfortably - and also that the corset felt lighter and less bulky. Maliwase said that although the corset was fitting well, they could not achieve maximum correction of Thandiwe's spine because of the severity of the curvature, but that the multi-disciplinary team agreed that the brace will support her well until she can have corrective surgery. The cost of the device is **£140**.



James

9-year-old James Jere wants to be an accountant when he grows up. James was born with a very short right leg and a small right foot on which he would never have been able to bear weight and so, in 2014, when James was only one, surgeons at KCH amputated his leg through the knee in hope that he would be able to walk with a prosthesis. In January 2015, 500 miles fitted James with his first **through knee prosthesis**. The photos show James getting his fifth device this year (at a cost of **£345**) and our **short video on YouTube** shows how well he walks on it. But between 2015 and 2022, James has received only five devices in total and even with a number of repairs, that is not enough for an active, growing child. When James arrived this year, his device was far too short and tight to wear and our manager could see from the skin on his knees that he had been crawling a lot. His mother had not brought James back to us sooner because she couldn't afford the transport.



Batriat

39-year-old Batriat White was involved in a minibus accident in 2014. His left foot was so badly damaged that the surgeons had to perform a Symes amputation, leaving only the heel. Batriat was referred to 500 miles by MAP and we fabricated a **Symes prosthesis** for him at a cost of **£124**. His device was replaced in 2020 but Batriat farms to feed his wife and three children and is obviously very active on his prosthesis. When he returned again this year his device was already worn out. If you visit our YouTube channel, you can **see a short video of Batriat walking** in our centre – we think you'll agree that nobody would guess Batriat is an amputee.



Rhoda

42-year-old Rhoda Mwale was caught up in a house fire when she was 7. She suffered such severe burns that her lower right leg became melded to her right thigh and so she had to undergo a through knee amputation. Since then, Rhoda has got around on crutches. She dropped out of school because she couldn't cope with the way her peers treated her due to her visible disability.

Only last year, at 41, Rhoda was discovered by an organisation called KODO which is a partner of 500 miles working in Rhoda's area. KODO brought Rhoda to Salima to train her in tailoring and in March they brought her to 500 miles to see if she could be fitted for a prosthetic leg. Please watch **the YouTube video** on our channel to see Rhoda taking her first steps without crutches since she was 7. She said "the people in my village will be truly amazed to see me walking like this!" Her **through-knee prosthesis** cost **£340**.



Lakib

70-year-old Lakib Jeke lost his lower right leg in a road traffic accident 8 years ago when he was 62. He was knocked off his bike and run over by a car. The bones were crushed so badly that his leg below the knee couldn't be saved. He was quickly referred to 500 miles by MAP and we successfully fitted him with a below knee prosthesis which he took to straight away. We didn't see Lakib again until April this year when he appeared with the most patched and repaired device we have seen. He said he had not come back before because he couldn't afford the transport. Lakib wanted to retain his socket because it is comfortable, but we replaced the rest of the device and gave him a new pair of shoes which will also help to protect the foot of the device – and he walked away, quite happy. We called it a **repair**. There is **no charge** for repairs.



See more of our patients at: 500miles.co.uk/patient-stories

Project updates

Malawi: Lilongwe

The volume of work at the 500 miles prosthetic and orthotic centre at KCH in Lilongwe is back to pre-pandemic levels of around 140-150 devices being dispensed each month. The staff is coping very well despite one member departing for Thailand in August to study for his degree and another only working part time while she studies for hers.

We are very sorry to see the departure at the end of October of Evelyne Huizinga who has been the manager of our Lilongwe centre for the last 2 years and 3 months. Evelyne is leaving Malawi to be with her partner who will be studying in Europe. Our thanks to Evelyne for all of her support and especially for looking after our centre, our staff and our patients throughout all the challenges of the pandemic.

We are delighted that Australian, Beth Sheehan, who managed our Lilongwe centre from November 2014 to May 2016, will return to her old job! Beth and her Malawian partner, Lamek, have been living in Scotland. They now have an 18-month-old daughter, Gabriella, who will see Malawi for the first time in November.

We reported last time that we were looking forward to moving into new premises at the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) at KCH which is being created by a Norwegian consortium called The LION Trust. Phase 1 of LION, which comprises the surgical theatres and wards is now complete and partially operational. Phase 2 is the rehabilitation building (without a roof and ringed in the photo). Our P&O service will occupy the whole of the ground floor of the building, with physiotherapy and occupational therapy on the first floor. Despite inevitable construction delays, there has been substantial progress and you can see our workshop starting to take shape. LION has replaced and supplemented a lot of our heavy equipment which, after 14 years, is starting to wear out, and it is already in Lilongwe, ready for our move - hopefully in the spring.



Above: Evelyne with our trustee, Susan Dalgety, who visited the Lilongwe centre in September.



Right: Beth with her partner Lamek and daughter Gabriella.



Construction well under way at KCH, with the workshop starting to take shape (above) and progress visible from the air (right).





Above: the team in Lilongwe in a training session.

Handover is planned for the end of 2024 and by that time, we hope that MoH Malawi will have employed the staff members who are currently still paid by 500 miles and that we will have been able to use our outreach programme to make everyone in central region who could benefit from our service aware of it and how to access it.



Mwayi and the team on outreach at Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

Malawi: Mzuzu

As we reported last time, in July 2021, 500 miles handed over a fully equipped, fully operational, purpose-built, 250 square metre prosthetic and orthotic centre with a fully trained Malawian staff to MCH and MoH Malawi. Our offer to buy the

next annual supply of imported materials so that there would be no hiatus in service in Mzuzu was declined. The centre remains open but it does not currently have stock and we don't know if any has been purchased yet.

Zambia

We have continued to fund our small, low level, P&O service at SFH in Katete in Eastern Province. In August, along with the physiotherapy department, we moved into more spacious new premises, built at SFH in 2021 with the assistance of Medical Support Group and Wild Geese of The Netherlands. Our representative at SFH does not have the training, machines or materials to make prostheses or complex orthoses, but she can make simple orthoses and carry out repairs to more complex prostheses and orthoses and she is building a register of people who need these devices (currently standing at 171) in case we are able to find a viable way to assist them with either "first time" or replacement devices.

Timothy Miti qualified with a three-year diploma in P&O from Mobility India in July. We hope that he will soon be employed by MoH Zambia.



Above: Timothy collecting his certificate of graduation, at Mobility India. Right: Agness working with a patient at SFH in Katete.

Training update

Samuel

Samuel Mkomera is the third Malawian to be sponsored by 500 miles for a degree in P&O. Samuel qualified with a 3-year diploma from the Cambodia School of Prosthetics and Orthotics in March 2020 and since then he has been working at our Lilongwe centre. In March 2021, he was promoted to assistant manager.

At the end of July this year, after only 10 months of married life, Samuel left for the Sirindhorn School of Prosthetics and Orthotics, which is part of Mahidol University in Thailand, to upgrade his diploma to a degree over two years. Samuel was one of only two students selected to undertake this prestigious course. You can [read Samuel's profile on our website](#), but this is his account of his first three months in Thailand.



I arrived in Thailand on 1st August, 2022. Thailand's environment, weather, culture, and food are similar to those of Cambodia and that made me adapt more easily. Like Cambodians, Thai people are friendly and welcoming! The food is also spicier but very delicious. I find myself mostly liking the flavor of a certain local leaf vegetable called basil (Horap'ha in Thai language). Neighboring restaurant waiters used to make fun of calling me "Horap'ha" when am ordering food from them.



The course began on 8th August, 2022. I was impressed with the learning schedule in that the class venues are in different Mahidol Campuses depending on the subject. If the class venue is far from the dormitory, a school bus takes us there. Naturally, I enjoy travelling and exploring new environments hence with this system, I find the classes interesting.

In this semester, we were introduced to 6 subjects; Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Innovation and Creativity and Philosophy of Science. Classes are in English, but foreign students also get Thai Language classes for easy communication with local people and patients. The digital methods of studies are capitalized hence

giving me an opportunity to gain experience in using academic and professional computer programs. I mostly like Innovation and Creativity, Physics and Biology because these subjects have many areas that need direct application to our P&O profession. We took mid-term exams the previous week and from the 3 subject whose results were announced, I got 84% for Physics, 80% for Biology, and 81% for Thai language.

Although most of students at SSPO are from Thailand, the school enrolls students from different countries including Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Taiwan, Egypt, Rwanda and Malawi. It's just unlucky for me that I am the only student for this years' intake for the 2-year upgrading programme because the colleague who was accepted with me didn't manage to get a sponsor. I find this a challenge since for some classes, like Physics, I have to study alone. However, it gives me an opportunity to interact with students from different intakes, both local and foreign students. Most of our lecturers are Thai but there are a few from Japan, Pakistan, America and Germany.

After the long Covid19 era, the school has organized a social and sight-seeing trip for all SSPO students and staff on 11 and 12 November to tour around the mountain area of north Bangkok.



[Read more about our students at 500miles.co.uk/projects/training](https://500miles.co.uk/projects/training)



Sit down to eat in your country – and in Africa, someone will stand up and walk

Having raised **£128,000**, we are very nearly halfway towards reaching our bold £262,500 target for achieving the handover of our busy Lilongwe centre at the end of 2024.

£262,500 is the equivalent of 1,500 devices at £175 – which is the cost of making and fitting an average prosthesis or orthosis, like a below knee prosthesis – **but many of our devices are cheaper**. If you are able to help, here is **how you can donate**.

We hope you are as impressed and inspired as we are by all the stories of the wonderful ways in which people have supported our final appeal over the last 11 months.



NC500 is no sweat for Nic

In May, spurred on by The Proclaimers who signed bottles of whisky for her fundraising auction, **Nichola MacLean** completed the NC500, raising **£900** each for four charities which 500 miles was lucky to be one of!

Edinburgh Revisited

In January, despite unfortunately timed Covid restrictions, photographer, **Gordon Hunter** and poet, **Don Ledingham**, successfully re-launched their wonderful exhibition, Edinburgh Revisited, at the **Open Eye Gallery in Edinburgh**. Edinburgh Revisited is a series of evocative poems about classic landmarks illustrated by stunning black and white photographs, all of which were also compiled into a beautiful coffee table book. Through print and book sales they raised the incredible sum of **£3,150 EACH** for 500 miles and **Leuchie House in North Berwick**. You can still buy the book on the **Edinburgh Revisited website** for £25!



Wayne's 500 miles for 500 miles

On 22nd December, **Wayne Davidson** managed to complete his 500-mile walk within his 6-week target, raising an amazing total of **£1,750** for 500 miles. Having been brought up in Malawi until he was 18, Wayne feels a special connection with the country and wanted to do something to assist people with disabilities there.

Fundraising



Sylvie climbs incredible heights for 500 miles

In March, **Sylvie Grenon** climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to raise money for 500 miles but, not content with that, when she noticed the miles she had clocked up along the way, Sylvie decided to keep walking on her return home to complete a total of 500 miles, all in time for her birthday in April – and she raised a brilliant **£1,243** for us.

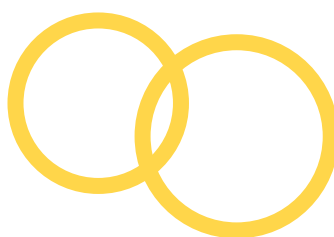


Jennifer's marvellous marathon milestone

In June, **Jennifer Wilson** ran her first marathon. When she set up her Just Giving page, Jennifer Wilson wrote, "I've run my way through lockdown and can't quite believe I've gone from a 4-mile-plodder to someone who even has a chance of reaching the end of a 26-mile course." But she did – raising **£1,370!** When she finished, celebrating with fish & chips and champagne, Jennifer wrote, "And maybe now someone in Africa can walk because I ran." We can assure her that they will!

Mike & Kay go for gold

In August, instead of receiving gifts for their golden wedding anniversary, Rotarian, **Mike Farley**, and his wife, **Kay** very generously asked family and friends to make a donation to 500 miles and as a result, we received the huge sum of **£1,550!**



Christine walked Hadrian's Wall

In July, **Christine Percival** was as surprised as we were when she discovered half way along Hadrian's Wall with her daughter, Lynda, that Lynda and her other daughter, Shelley, had opened a fundraising page for 500 miles.

Jim Percival, Christine's husband, died unexpectedly in November 2020. Jim and Christine have been among our most consistent and generous supporters for many years. We are sure that Jim would have been very proud of Christine and the **£1,422.50** she raised!

Helen's garden parties

In August and September, Helen Lobban – with support from her husband, **Gordon**, and from our mutual friend, **Jean Terry** (who makes greetings cards for 500 miles) – hosted two extremely elegant afternoon teas in her beautiful garden. Guests were treated to a wonderful selection of home baking and tea and coffee and many of Jean's cards and knitted goods were sold. Helen raised an incredible **£762.50!**



Gryffe Valley Rotary Club's Musical Lunch

In October, **Alan Watt** lead **Gryffe Valley Rotary Club** in putting on a joyous musical extravaganza which we think has raised over **£2,000** for 500 miles. This sold-out event was very kindly hosted by St Columba's School in Kilmacolm. After a delicious lunch served by pupils of the school, the club members and their guests were treated to a variety of music and songs from classical to pop music and from favourites from musicals to folk songs.