

Report on the visit to Malawi, 2017.

## **Contents**

Part One	Background
Part Two	Lilongwe and Dedza
Part Three	Blantyre and Zomba

## **Participants**

Professor Brian Kelly, Volunteer, Lord Provost's Malawi Project  
Gillian Walsh, International Officer, Lord Provost's and International Office  
Maria Quintas Zon, Service Development, DRS  
Sammy Birnie, Senior Desktop Engineer, ACCESS  
Sam Byrne, Senior Desktop Engineer, ACCESS  
Robert McPhee, Senior Technical Analyst, ACCESS

## PART ONE

### Malawi 2017 - Background

- Professor Brian Kelly, Volunteer, Lord Provost's Malawi Project
- Gillian Walsh, International Officer, Lord Provost's and International Office

This year we decided to try a few new approaches. The container was sent from Glasgow on 16<sup>th</sup> May, thus ensuring that it would arrive in good time at Lilongwe. The normal "gift letter", which contains a request for a waiver of customs duties, was sent immediately after the container was despatched and contact was quickly established with the Malawi Revenue Authority to reinforce our plea for a smooth passage, given the difficulties we had encountered last year.

We opted to try a different route to Blantyre via Dubai and Johannesburg. This was the cheapest available but was longer than previous routes and proved to be very tiring. The group met at the airport at 11.30 on 3<sup>rd</sup> September and with all the flights being on time we duly arrived in Blantyre by mid-afternoon on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

We had decided that this year we would apply for visas on arrival at Blantyre, contrary to the advice being offered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British High Commission. This proved to be successful and saved a great deal of time and effort in obtaining the visas before travelling.

One of our cases was wrongly labelled at Glasgow and was offloaded at Johannesburg. This caused a considerable amount of difficulty since the case had to be retrieved and re-labelled for the onward journey to Blantyre. Sammy and Sam travelled on to Lilongwe. They had a problem with their accommodation booking but that was quickly resolved.

This year, our friends from SEPA, Charles McDougall and John Rooney had decided to visit Malawi. They arrived a few days after the Council team and were initially based in Blantyre. They helped Robert and Maria for a few days before travelling to Lilongwe to meet with Sammy and Sam. Charles and John accompanied Sammy and Sam to Dedza and undertook some work there before returning to Lilongwe. After helping in Lilongwe they planned to do a bit of touring around, visiting Lake Malawi and some of towns in the north of the country.

### Visits

**5th September** – Our first meeting had been arranged for 10.00 a.m. with the Chief Executive Officer, Blantyre City Council. The CEO had been called away to another meeting and was not available to meet us. We met with the Director of Administration and the Public Relations Manager.

BK provided an insight into the work which Glasgow City Council had carried out over many years and GW explained about our desire to discuss the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding with Blantyre City Council.

It was established that there is a need for better networking of local authority computers and a shortfall of desktop computers was identified.

Interest was shown in the work which was undertaken previously in Lilongwe in connection with waste management. We agreed to send a copy of our report to the Director of Administration.

It was agreed that Maria would call at the Civic Centre later in the day to take a closer look at what is required by way of IT support.

It was agreed that we would call again to speak to the CEO on 14<sup>th</sup> September at 10.00 a.m.

We visited Dr Jane Mallewa, Department of Medicine, Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. A large number of boxes of medical supplies and equipment had been sent to the hospital and among those were seven boxes containing specific pieces of kit which had been requested by Dr Mallewa. The boxes had not been supplied to Dr Mallewa and some tracing work had to be carried out to recover the boxes.

The Hospital Director, Dr Gonani, was not available at the time of our visit. Dr Mallewa agreed to relate our proposal to install around 40 desktop computers, next year. This year we had 10 desktops for the hospital and Dr Mallewa suggested that the five sections in her unit should each receive two. She requested that we should provide a gift letter to confirm this distribution and we agreed to do that immediately.

Our next planned visit was to the Fountain of Life Project. It transpired that the project is based in Lilongwe. Our understanding was that there were bases in Lilongwe and Blantyre. We contacted Sammy and he agreed to speak to Kathy Bowler whose husband was the founder, to establish if we could offer any assistance. Given that we had time on our hands, we returned to the Old Town Hall to help assemble the kit which was being prepared by Maria, Robert and numerous Malawian colleagues. Robert was having difficulty in getting the computers to load up but was trying various approaches to find the solution.



**6<sup>th</sup> September** – Visited the Step Kids Awareness project.



Although an appointment had previously been made, Godknows had been called to Court to give evidence in a custody case and it was not known when he might return. Sandra confirmed that all the boxes we had sent had been received. It was arranged that Godknows would e-mail Gillian.

We spent time with some of the staff and children and met a young volunteer from London who had been working at the orphanage for the previous 6 weeks.

We returned to the Old Town Hall to give assistance to Maria and Robert.

We visited the Malawi Revenue Authority to keep our appointment with the ICT Director, Max Mlomba. Unfortunately, Mr Mlomba was not available and neither was his PA. After waiting for a reasonable period we decided to leave. We consider it disrespectful that such appointments are not honoured with no attempt to give a reason or an attempt to apologise and offer an alternative date and time. There had also been a failure by a senior member of the IT staff to respond to several

emails from Robert McPhee requesting a meeting. It was decided that the 10 computers which were to be offered would be used elsewhere.

Visited Police Malawi and met with Superintendent Alex Sementi, Regional Coordinator Community Policing, Southern Region, and a member of his senior staff, Memory.



We had a comprehensive discussion about the joint project with Police Scotland and emphasised that the computers which we intended installing were to be used specifically in connection with that project. Mr Sementi made a plea for additional computers for more general use at the HQ and some for use at the District Police Stations at Blantyre, Limbe and Chileka. Given the availability of the computers not used at the MRA, Robert eventually installed 15 desktops and provided 4 laptops for use by Mr Sementi and his senior staff.

**7<sup>th</sup> September** – We travelled to Mangochi. On route, we had planned to install computers at Balaka Secondary School but with the failure of Mr Mlomba to make contact, that element of our plans was abandoned.

**8<sup>th</sup> September** – We visited the Women’s Tailoring Project at Nkhudzi Bay. We were given a very warm welcome with singing and dancing and a mini play performed by a group of teenagers, the subject matter of which was the value of education.



We met some of the tailoresses who are teaching young women from their village how to make clothing, hats and bags which can be sold at the market at Mangochi. The project needs support in the form of sewing machines. Only three of the seven machines were in working order.

**9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> September** – Time off. Visit to the Lakeside.

**11<sup>th</sup> September** – Visited the nursery school and the youth project at Nkhudzi Bay. We spoke to the chairman of the development committee.



Two classrooms are presently being used by the nursery, the third classroom is being used by the tailoring venture. The kitchen and the feeding arrangements for the children were given consideration.

The construction of the Youth Centre is somewhat remote from the village. The foundations have been laid and brickwork built to about one metre above ground level.



The sponsor of the project is an Italian lady and she has funded the works to date. It appears that the project is no longer being aided and it may be some time before further works will be undertaken, unless funds can be raised from other sources. The Chairman requested that some of the pictures we had taken be sent to him.

**12<sup>th</sup> September** – We visited the Open Arms Orphanage at Mangochi and discussed progress with Rashid.



The home is very well run and is almost a mirror image of the home in Blantyre.

**13<sup>th</sup> September** – Visited Zomba prison and met the High Commissioner of Prisons and the Commissioners for Security and Education. We had a very productive discussion and reached agreement on several ways we could work together. The Administrative Officer was tasked with preparing a draft Memorandum of Understanding with assistance from Marcel from AYISE. The MOU may include elements of training

assistance supplied by AYISE. We agreed to donate around 50 desktop computers next year for use at Zomba and Blantyre prisons.



We also agreed to leave some computers from this year's supply with Sylvester Chawala, College of Health Sciences, Zomba campus, on the understanding that he would make arrangements to install them in the prison. It transpired that 16 computers were left for use by the Prison Service and we have suggested that 6 should be used at Zomba and 5 at each of the other two prisons under consideration.

We met with the Medical Officer of the prison and visited the surgery, the pharmacy and the laboratory. We were shown the feeding station and the education block. All of these facilities were very basic. The prison is designed to accommodate 800 inmates but presently there are 2,200. Feeding arrangements are unsatisfactory and poor hygiene and sanitation is evident throughout the establishment. Only 174 inmates are currently seeking to improve their education. There is a chronic shortage of teaching materials and only 3 old computers were found to be operating.

We met Michael Nyang'ama, Projects Coordinator, of Insieme per il Malawi Onlus at his office in Zomba. Michael explained why the Youth Project at Nkhudzi Bay was suspended because of the holding back of funding from the original funder. Michael hopes that the project may make progress but in a staged basis over the next few years. He hopes that it will eventually be supported by two or three local villages and may attract young people from as far afield as Mangochi. Michael asked for IT support for the local secondary school in the form of four desktop computers. He also suggested

that revenue could be raised from the establishment of a computer facility, with three of four desktops, for public use, which he could set up in an office in Zomba.

Our next visit was to Zomba Central Hospital. Despite having made an appointment, well in advance, the Hospital Director, Dr Joshua was not available.

We then visited the College of Health Sciences and met with Sylvester Chawala. The nurses training suite is working very well and all 24 desktops are being fully utilised. Maria had already been to the college and had checked out all the kit. On this occasion we were able to donate 12 laptop computers which Sylvester agreed to rebuild for use by students who would be permitted to borrow them for up to one week at a time.

14<sup>th</sup> September – Visited Open Arms Children’s Home and met with Charlie McCalder. Presently there are 28 children at the Home. We discussed the situation with the washing machines and tumble dryers and Gillian handed over some knitted hats for the children. We had great fun meeting the children and staff but were saddened to meet a two year old Mozambican boy whose mother had been killed in a road accident and whose father had not yet been traced. All the children are extremely well cared for and are clearly thriving and healthy.



We made a return visit to meet the Chief Executive Officer, Blantyre City Council, in accordance with the arrangements which had been made. Again, it was most disappointing that the CEO was not available to meet us.

15<sup>th</sup> September – Meeting with Marcel and Monica at AYISE. We discussed a range of issues including Monica’s continuing education, the provision of computers in schools, the differences between the structures of Blantyre City and Rural in education terms, the failure of Blantyre to provide the promised support for transporting our IT staff to various locations, and the assistance which may be offered to the Prison Service in drafting the proposed MOU. Marcel advised us about his proposed bid to UNICEF for financial support. Gillian agreed to speak to her UNICEF contact when she returned home.



Monica provided an update on her studies. She remains hopeful that she will gain entry to the National Government University which has the best infrastructure. Gillian explained that we would be prepared to continue our support subject to Monica providing written evidence of all her spending to date regarding fees, expenses, books, etc.

16<sup>th</sup> September – Left Malawi to journey home.

**Future actions.**

Laptop for Rashid – Open Arms

Computers per Andrew and Sylvester for Zomba Prison

4 computers for secondary school at Nkhudzi Bay

4 computers for Michael Nyang'ama

Waste Management report to go to Admin Officer Blantyre CC

40 desktops for Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre

Sewing machines for tailoring project at Nkhudzi Bay

Pictures to Chairman Nkhudzi Bay

50 desktops for Prisons

50/60 desktops for Police Service for Blantyre, Limbe, Chileka and Mzuzu

Gillian to speak to her contact at UNICEF for Prisons/Ayise.