

# Malawi Children's Initiative

Dear friends,

I want to start this annual newsletter with gratitude for you, Malawi Children's Initiative supporters. There is so much going on in the world, it can be truly overwhelming. When the news and the events in the world seem like too much, know that **your support toward our organization has saved and changed the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in the world.**

Your money has relieved suffering through the provision of nursing care, saved lives through support for medications and studies otherwise unavailable to hospitalized children, and contributed to the education and improved circumstances of hundreds of people of all ages. Thanks to our donors, MCI just completed its seventh year serving the children and families in Lilongwe and at Kamuzu Central Hospital. For this, I am and will always remain truly grateful.

As in many parts of the world, Malawi has had a very challenging year in 2024. In March, President Chakwera declared a State of Disaster in 23 out of Malawi's 28 districts due to El Niño conditions causing droughts and floods across the country.

These weather conditions caused a decrease in crop production by as much as 44%, leading to widespread hunger, especially in children. This situation is expected to deteriorate during the October 2024 - March 2025 lean season, with predictions that **28% of the country, or about 5.7 million people, will be in a severe acute hunger crisis.**

Malawi continues to face high levels of inflation, at about 32% in 2024, and in the last 12 months, the Malawian government has been forced to devalue the kwacha (the Malawian currency) by 40%. **This means money in people's bank accounts lost 40% of its value in a single day, while the cost of food and goods rose by a third.** Due to a lack of foreign currency in the country, there are fuel shortages leading to daylong waits for gas and few items able to be imported into the country. The situation is dire.

Again, I understand compassion fatigue. In this world of constant news and exposure to the struggles of people all over the world, it is easy to feel hopeless and do nothing. The ongoing donation of your hard-earned money toward people you will never know or meet gives me hope. I see the value of your contributions. I see the lives that have been transformed. Between now and December 31, all donations will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$25,000 by Douglas Boteler, a generous donor from Burlington, N.C. Please consider a donation today: [www.malawichildreninitiative.org](http://www.malawichildreninitiative.org). I wish you peace and love this fall and holiday season.

**Elizabeth Fitzgerald, MD**  
Founder and President of MCI



## \$25,000 MATCH FROM LOCAL DONOR

In August 2024, a local businessman from Burlington, Mr. Douglas Boteler of National OnDemand, and Mrs. Gayle Peacock, a longtime champion of healthcare improvement projects in Malawi, joined Dr. Fitzgerald for a week learning more about the work MCI has been doing, getting to know the team and the hospital staff, and exploring the concept of building a new Children's Hospital at KCH.

They spent time touring the wards of the pediatric department and witnessing firsthand the dedication and hard work of the nurses and doctors taking care of patients under the most challenging circumstances. They were especially moved by the work of our MCI Nutritional Rehabilitation Unit staff, who care for the severely malnourished children admitted to the hospital. Ms. Peacock, whose family has already generously donated to many programs at KCH through the University of North Carolina, donated \$20,000 to MCI in September, which supported the expansion of lab services at KCH to 24 hours. Mr. Boteler has offered to match up to \$25,000 to support MCI's work. **Any donation received between now and the end of the year will go toward this \$25,000 match!**



The group also toured the Mercy James Institute in Blantyre, the hospital upon which the KCH team hopes to model a future KCH Children's Hospital. The enthusiasm and hope of all the Malawians who care for sick and dying children inspired Mr. Boteler to additionally support a capital campaign to build a future KCH Children's Hospital, which is planned to begin in early 2025.

[Donate at MalawiChildrensInitiative.org](http://DonateatMalawiChildrensInitiative.org)

## KCH PEDIATRIC LAB HAS GONE TO 24-HOUR COVERAGE

Imagine going to the hospital in the middle of the night because your child was terribly ill, and being told there was nothing the doctors could do to evaluate them, as the lab and radiology department were closed for the night.

Although the KCH Pediatric lab officially opened in November 2019, it was not until August of this year that we were able to move to 24-hour coverage, and it has made a tremendous difference in the ability to diagnose and treat children, many of whom come in the evening hours.

Our dedicated team has worked hard to ensure and maintain the highest standards for the lab, working with local and national experts to improve service quality and delivery. We are so proud of their achievement and how they consistently contribute to saving and improving the lives of children!

## MCI SCHOLARSHIPS

MCI provides dozens of scholarships to Malawians from grade school through post-graduate education. We try to invest first in our own employees, as well as in the staff at KCH.

Currently, our Lab Manager, Mr. Samson Banda, who has been with MCI for 5 years, is pursuing a Master of Science in Medical Microbiology. Chimwemwe Sangoh, an NRU nurse with MCI for 3 years, is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in social work. Saidi Chimbalu, a nutritional specialist with MCI for 5 years, has just started a Bachelor of Science in Public Health. Grace Majaha, a technical nurse/midwife, is working toward her Bachelor's degree in Nursing and Midwifery. Loness Eliya, a nurse who has worked for MCI for 3 years, continues her Master's in Critical Nursing in Kenya. These team members attend school full-time while continuing to work full-time, as well. Many also have families. We are so proud of their dedication to excellence and continued education!

MCI is in its third year of the Docto-Doc Initiative, a program that has supported two pediatricians in training through their residency. Dr. Isaac Banda will begin his third year in Blantyre, Malawi to gain exposure to pediatric critical care and emergency medicine. He has recently passed his first qualifying exam (yay Isaac!). Dr. Lozani is beginning his second year at KCH and is an important part of the growing residency program and its work.

