

## PARTNERPLAN

# Gary Brough - Malawi December 2021

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Dear friends,

Where did a year go? Where did three years go for that matter? It's almost a year since we returned to Malawi following our COVID furlough and over three years since I came to Malawi to start work and prepare for the family move to Mzuzu. Yet, time has marched on relentlessly.



*Birthday celebrations*

The activities that Jacqueline has been supporting are both coming into an exciting new phase. Brick by brick, the Family Training Centre is nearing completion. Soon the team there will begin more detailed conversations about the shape of the ministry to which this building will become home. Several local organisations are adopting the back pain prevention programme, the training materials have been expanded, adapted and translated in preparation. Please continue to pray for these endeavours and Jacqueline as she works out how to support them in these new seasons.

Eilidh has thrown herself back into school life. We're delighted to see how much she enjoys learning and are grateful for a school setting that has nurtured that passion. Car journey games include doubling seven-digit numbers and this week's bedtime included memorising paragraphs in French for the school assembly. Morven has also moved up to the primary group within her nursery and even enjoys homework. In 2-years that have seen many children locked

out of learning, we're grateful for good school provision and the girl's enthusiasm.



*Joining Funny and Leah on the household survey*

In my work setting, progress has been more incremental. Just seeing some of our projects continue at all in the current climate can feel like a victory some days. It's a testament to colleagues' commitment to their work and the communities we serve. A few weeks ago, I joined some of our team on a field survey for a project that straddles Karonga and Rhumpi districts. They'd spent ten days visiting homes in isolated lakeshore communities, in villages accessed only by boat, motorbike or hike. I joined them for the final three days in temperatures over 35°C. Through this project, children and young people are being supported to play a more active role in community decision making. This allows them to address matters that are a priority to them and can often

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be overlooked when they are shut out of the decisions that impact their lives.



*Time with children supported by local self-help groups*

A silver-lining of the COVID crisis has been the opportunity to work more closely with colleagues, instead of the usual travel for donor meetings or being deskbound for report and proposal writing. We've worked together on consultancy projects to raise extra funding, on improving the monitoring and measurement of our projects and on other ways to strengthen the organisation for the challenging operating environment. I'm grateful for the car journeys, the hikes and the other informal opportunities we've had to encourage one another.

We're grateful to those who have given special support to the legal section and its work on addressing child marriage and gender-based violence. This includes support for girls at risk of early marriage to stay in education through scholarships and practical support. A particular word of thanks to those who contributed to The Guild's special fundraiser and Carsphairn Parish Church and Balmaclellan, Kells and Dalry Parish Church.

The year ahead is pretty uncertain. We're three months into the rainy season and have had only a handful of days of rain. Malawi has been returned to the red list after just a few weeks of open travel, despite not recording any case of the new variant. There is mounting pressure on household budgets as prices rise month after month. Inflation is at around 9%, and there have been increasing costs for essentials such as fuel (27%), water (60%), fertiliser (100%), cooking oil and many other commodities.

Numbers and experts suggest that Malawi is now at the beginning of the fourth wave of Covid. 3% of eligible adults have received two doses, 6% have received one dose, and the programme has been extended to include children aged over 12. Vaccine hesitancy - fuelled by fake news, misconceptions, and genuine concerns - is now one of the serious blocks to effective roll-out. However, for many, the climate and economic pressures are the more significant risks.

We are in advent, the season of hope and expectation. We celebrate the coming of Jesus, light of the world. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5) What a joy it is to see others bring the light of Jesus into the dark situations in our world. What a privilege it is to work with them and share that calling. What a wonder it is that we all, wherever and wherever we are, can be helpful to God in this way.

Our heartfelt thanks for your friendship and fellowship this year. We pray God's blessing for a joyful Christmas to each of you who have walked and prayed with us from afar.

Every blessing,  
Gary, Jacqueline, Eilidh and Morven