



# SALUT-Malawi

*Sanitary Aid and Ladies Underwear to Malawi*

*Malawi-Twin Newsletter No 84*

*October 2021*

Dear Friends,

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October the United Nations marked **the International Day of the Girl Child**, a day created in 2011 to recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges they face around the world. Girls are still much more likely to be poor, illiterate and vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence. We are grateful to all of you who have contributed to SALUT-Malawi's efforts to empower girls in the communities served by Malawi-Twin and to protect their rights to education, safety and good health.

Despite the pandemic postponing the Container Project and ending prematurely our collection events and outreach work last year, **SALUT-Malawi delivered 73 boxes** to the 2021 Container Project, an almost 50% increase on our 2019 total! There were less knickers (especially for younger girls), soap and reusable sanitary pads since these depend on our collection events and schools' contributions. However, we did provide at least one box of bras in each size - small, medium and large - to every community we serve. Remember that a bra not only brings dignity to women of all ages, it also provides significant protection from sexual violence. Responding to a request from Father Denis, we also prepared a box of donations specifically for the nuns of St Mary's Convent in Karonga to help them as they serve others.

We are indebted to all our supporters and donors who brought us donations each time restrictions were eased. Back in March 2020, as the government deliberated about the first lockdown, **Bennett Memorial Diocesan School** hastened their collection for us and we got their generous donations just in the nick of time! The **Tonbridge MIND Charity** shop and the collection efforts of Joan Read and the ladies of **St Justus** (who scoured the charity shops of Paddock Wood) as well as **Hadlow WI** all provided us with a steady supply of underwear to sort and pack.

We did not feel it appropriate to ask for cash donations when so many were experiencing difficult financial challenges. Nevertheless, some regular donors, conscious of our predicament, donated more than usual. We also welcomed a new corporate donor – **BNP Paribas in Tunbridge Wells** – who was looking for a new charity to support and discovered us thanks to our fervent supporters who share SALUT's story on Facebook. In total, **we raised £2,202.27 which bought 1,040 reusable sanitary pads** due to our loyal partner Cheeky Wipes' continued 35% discount. Cheeky Wipes also donated hundreds of "period pants" in a wide range of sizes. Period pants are knickers that incorporate an absorbent layer and so can be worn for an entire day. They are washable and reusable.

And so, out of these challenges SALUT-Malawi has emerged more hopeful, buoyed by the indefatigable spirit of our supporters. Underwear donations have already begun to come in for next year. **Anyone who would like to donate underwear, soap or towards the purchase of reusable sanitary pads, can contact any member of the Team (see below), email [jacqui.nunes@gmail.com](mailto:jacqui.nunes@gmail.com) or call 07914 771 357.**

Looking ahead we hope to initiate new advocacy and fundraising projects. This autumn we have embarked on delivering our **outreach message** through the secondary school PSHE curriculum. In light of the recent cases of Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, it is clear that violence against women is a plague not limited to poor countries. The revelations of sex abuse at schools on the Everyone's Invited website tell us that, sadly, gender-based sexual harassment and abuse blight the lives of teenaged girls here as well as Malawi. Growing levels of deprivation in the UK mean that the period poverty we battle in Mseche, Karonga and other communities is a reality for an increasing number of women in our community as well. This is why SALUT-Malawi's outreach work is based on **solidarity**, not charity, with our sisters in Malawi.

We shared this idea with a number of local secondary schools in June and July. As a result, we started a pilot project with **Bennett Memorial Diocesan School** last month. We hope to roll out our message to **St Gregory's Catholic School** and other institutions that have expressed an interest in hearing about our project.

When we shared our last newsletter with you in January 2020, the world was on the verge of becoming a very different place. More than 20 months later, the paradigms shaping our lives are still shifting. COVID-19 continues to change and challenge the most fundamental aspects of our lives. Climate change is forcing us to re-evaluate our impact on the natural world. And new ways of discussing the discrimination long felt by the voiceless and the marginalised are demanding that we reconsider how we interact with others. While this upheaval can seem daunting, it is also the chance for us to pray, reflect and listen to the voice of God directing us to where we should go, what we can change, and how we must live. Now, perhaps more than ever, we can truly feel that we are one family, living in one world, caring for each other in one spirit.

Thank you again for all your support. We look forward to updating you early next year on our initiatives and plans to celebrate International Women's Day 2022.

God bless and we look forward to hearing from you,

***The SALUT-Malawi Team:***

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