

Chair's Report

(for more detail and photos see our annual report)

In 2025 we received funds from a variety of sources including the Hilden Trust, Madelon Global Health Foundation, the parishes of St John's and Mary Magdelene, fundraising (including earned income from running Dialogue Groups and selling hand-made Malawian goods in Scotland) and donations from supporters.

We sent £25,909 as direct donations to STEKA Malawi.

STEKA used our money to:

1. Complete the infrastructure needed to bring **mains electricity** onto the STEKA Vocational Skills Centre campus with the support of the Elliot Foundation. This has had a huge impact – not just by enabling learners to use machinery all day but also enabling us to introduce cleaner and more environmentally friendly cooking facilities into Clare's Kitchen (electric ovens instead of burning charcoal). Women living in our temporary hostel can use electric cooking facilities in the evening too. This supplements our solar power which kicks in during power cuts. An excellent spin off is that the local football ground now also has lights which can be seen in drone footage filmed after installation. And local farmers who travel far from home can charge their phones at the Centre and remain connected to their families. The electricity project has been a major challenge however and credit must be given to Godknows Maseko, who successfully negotiated difficult meetings with communities and chiefs over permissions and planning to build the 950m long system.
2. Design and build a **Rotary / Watson's nursery** which can accommodate disabled children often excluded from education in the local area as well as the children of the women who study at our Centre.
3. Complete '**Clare's kitchen**' building and electric cooking facilities a place where food can be cooked for learners, residents of the women's hostel and food and other items sold to the local community.
4. Kit out a building with beds, showers and toilets to serve as a **temporary women's hostel** so that women can live securely on site and complete their training (to counter the Malawi wide phenomenon of the majority of women and girls not being able to complete courses for a variety of reasons including food insecurity, travelling long distances, family and childcare responsibilities.
5. Build a **300m wall** around the parts of the campus where our women's hostel and teaching facilities will be located

Using money donated by Charlie Miller Hairdressers we bought a **Starlink** satellite dish and connection for the Vocational Skills Centre. This has had a huge impact – enabling the teachers and learners to research designs and projects, download patterns and update lesson plans. And future innovations are focussed on opening an 'internet café' for local community users.

We **spent over £3.5k on goods** such as bags, aprons and Christmas decorations within Malawi which we later sold in Scotland to raise income for the charity (and to pay for more goods to be

made). This investment isn't just about earning an income for STEKAskills, it is also about creating jobs which improve people's lives. As Kira, one of our tailors, says:'

"Your orders are so important to me and my family. When you pay for bags and hats to be made, that money becomes school fees for my sister and helps bring food on our table. Your orders don't just buy a product - they help me build a home, and a more independent future for us."

We ran paid for **Dialogue Groups** for 5 visiting Scottish youth / school groups, challenging the donor dependency model that is familiar to people in the UK and developing a deep understanding of Global Citizenship for everyone taking part.

Following the advice of larger charities which are part of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, we are also making our money go a lot further in Malawi through use of alternative sources for **money transfer**. This enables us to keep funds in sterling as long as possible and only transfer money at the point it is needed (and thus avoid the full impact of currency devaluations). We also get a better exchange rate.

Community Outreach

See our annual report for details of the wide range of community outreach activities our trustees have been involved in. A few of these are summarised below:

Helen Maseko completed a qualification as a Trainer of Trainers in **Gender Based Violence and Mental Health Programming** for women and girls. Helen travelled widely in Central Malawi training in these areas but also teaching women how to make fertiliser, soap, lotion and tree planting to **earn an independent income**.

Godknows Maseko is on the board of several organisations aimed at childcare and education. His community outreach activities have focussed on **working with the community** about the advantage of taking disabled children to hospitals and to school; the disadvantage of initiation ceremonies both girls and boys; men having to understand the role of women as more than a housewife and girls having a voice, particularly to speak out when they are abused to break the silence. His role as Chairman of the Catholic Men Association of Blantyre Archdiocese has given him real opportunities to work with a wide range of men beyond the communities surrounding the Vocational Skills Centre.

In Scotland, our chair has developed and delivered **workshops** for schools, and other groups such as Rotary, to challenge their perceptions of Malawi and understand the debilitating impact of concepts of donor dependency and the 'white gaze'.

We developed an entry for the **Scotland Malawi Partnership Photo Exhibition** which is travelling Scotland with two photographs representing STEKAskills' values and work.

Photo 1 is entitled 'Rejecting donor dependency and creating lifechanging experiences for young Scots and Malawians'

Photo 2 is entitled 'A different type of 'White Gaze' - why Critical Dialogue Groups are World-Leading'

See the photos and full text in our annual report.

Two trustees were board members of Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP). And all are SMP and Development Association (SIDA) members and can attend and contribute to a whole range of events.

Challenges

Inflation (around 40% and much higher for fuel and some food) rocked Malawi and caused the costs of building to increase.

This has been a very successful year in terms of the range of ambitious projects funded by STEKAskills. It has also been a very difficult year in terms of the increased pressure on the team of volunteers in Malawi caused by having to manage multiple projects as well as the other activities at the STEKA Vocational Skills Centre.

It has become clear that we need to institute measures to ameliorate this.

If you want to add in any numbers in your report, you may want to say

11th October 2025, 3pm. Fundraising

Finance report for 11 October 2025 meeting STEKAskills

Report for the meeting;

- Bank balance as of this morning £32,937.04;
 - Since end of May (last Board) we have transferred £9559.98 to Malawi for use on the wall, Nursery and other projects
 - Full split of where we've spent this per project will be completed in the coming weeks
 - In that same period, we have received £11,090.23 through a combination of ;
 - We have also made payments to replenish stock for Christmas, so in a reasonably good position
- The donations and fundraising have been main contributors to our good position, but

3 March 2025, Zoom, Emma's home, Edinburgh

Chair's report (Emma spoke to previously circulated paper)

Extra dialogues

Watson's. Great to see evidence of developments such as the Clare's

room (women's kitchen) building and bunkbeds etc for the temporary women's hostel. Challenges include projects not being finished and lack of social media content and photo evidence to show progress.

Electricity project

Has been delayed by nearly a year due to risk of damaging crops and permissions about erecting pylons from Chiefs. God Knows has had meeting with Chiefs who are supportive.

Action

GodKnows is meeting Chiefs this week for further discussion.

Market Stalls

Have gone well but need better signage, Emma suggests purchasing two roll out banners, £150 each, one about our products and one about our dialogue model. Selling bric a brac has been successful in raising funds at stalls. Several markets are planned over the next few months - Crief, Crail, North Berwick, Haddington, South
More volunteers bringing stock

Queensferry. However, increased number of markets needs more stock production. Emma reported the Chair of Scotland Malawi Partnership has agreed to transport goods to and from Malawi on STEKAskills behalf.

Action 1

Need more stock for stalls, Emma in touch with STEKA to arrange
Consider paid employment for Tereza to oversee stock production and task Gift with managing funding, which will relieve God Knows of this responsibility.

Present system is scattered over several people / projects. Emma Teresa could be trained and paid to do this? Gary reminded all that it costs £15 per transaction so need care not to proliferate too many transactions. Emma explained tricky to send money before goods are made, however Gift has a UK bank account which can be used to hold

money till required and there is a WhatsApp group (which Godknows and Stefanie are part of) for transparency about all transactions.

Emma was shocked at the increased poverty and lack of basic goods on her recent visit. GodKnows and Gift reported the difficulty of losing money due to exchange rate and goods such as cooking oil and sugar are very expensive. Grain has also shot up in price due to war in Ukraine. Several suggestions made including bringing in cash to avoid transactions, Gift suggested not receiving money till ready to use it .

Action

transfer.

Support from St John's and Mary Magdalene

Emma reported really affirmative support from the parish communities and amazing levels of funding raised.

Update on current finances

Fundraising strategy

Agreed fundraising strategy requires a separate meeting.

Starlink

Challenges include projects not being finished and lack of social media content and photo evidence to show progress.

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Has been delayed by nearly a year due to risk of damaging crops and permissions about erecting pylons from Chiefs. Starlink which would reduce costs and allow students and staff access

to the internet for many different purposes, including research, vocational skills, media centre and practical demonstrations etc.

Gift suggested an internet cafe could be set up to generate income and provide a community space at STEKA a great idea which was supported by all.

Prospectus

Discuss previously circulated Prospectus / STEKAskills past and future

Christine suggested adding a timeline to

show progress against each project on the updated prospectus.

Action

Emma to consider adding a timeline, make final changes and circulate.

Charlie Miller Partnership update- May

May was welcomed to the meeting and was thanked by all for her and her family's continued contribution to STEKA and STEKAskills. May reported STEKAskills has been featured in Charlie Miller social media and magazine. A recent fundraiser raised £2,500. L'Oreal have donated 20 pairs of hairdressing scissors, which are nicely packaged with STEKAskills logo. May suggested producing Christmas decorations in Charlie Miller colours (gold) and Christine suggested hair decorations could be made, eg hair bands, clasps, crocodile clasps, scrunchies etc which could be sold at markets and salons.

Action

Emma to meet Charlie Miller team and suggests May now takes a leading role in communications with Charlie Miller, while Emma takes a more supporting role.

April Board Meeting

Volunteers

* STEKA now has a supply of electricity, pylons are in place which is a major credit to Godknows, who successfully negotiated challenging meetings with Chiefs over permissions and planning. An excellent spin off is that the local football ground now also has lights which can be seen in drone footage filmed after installation. And local farmers who have to travel far from home can charge their phones at the Centre and remain connected to their families.

* The nursery is behind schedule, but is due to open Wednesday 15th

October.

* There are not enough funds to provide running water and furniture in the nursery. Emma suggests these are funded by discrete projects, there is possibility of these being funded by the Rotary and others.

* There is possibility of running workshops on topic of the 'white gaze', how this is defined and how it can present. Pupils at George Watson's have had this explained and understand why this is preferred approach.

* Emma has been in conversation with Scottish Government about small grants which are restricted to certain countries. One of themes is about addressing populism.

Actions:

* Emma to update on nursery progress to donors - George Watsons, Rotary and Clare's kitchen

* Consider discrete projects to fund running water and nursery furniture

* Emma to investigate Scottish Government small grant scheme.

Godknows discussed rapidly rising costs in Malawi, for instance increasing price of cement, oil and gas has a major impact on speed of progress.

Godknows discussed children getting good nutrition and women being cared for, the centre will be central point for providing porridge through the Butterfly organisation?

Godknows attended a course on designing buildings for children with disabilities and as a result the nursery will be an excellent exemplar for other nurseries to follow. A big effort is underway to get things ready for nursery opening on Wednesday 15th October. There will be a ceremony with Watsons and Rotary

Actions

* Emma to report progress to Dalkeith Rotary on November 16th 2025.

* STEKAskills to stop using the expensive method of banks transferring money and switch to Mukuru (a leading provider of international money transfers) already getting a rate which is more than double the bank rate.

2. Management of projects at STEKA

Challenges include projects not being finished and

lack of social media content and photo evidence to show progress.

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crops and permissions about erecting pylons from Chiefs. Starlink which would reduce costs and allow students and staff access

to the internet for many different purposes, including research, vocational skills, media centre and practical demonstrations etc.

Gift suggested an internet cafe could be set up to generate income and provide a community space at STEKA a great idea which was supported by all.

Emma is concerned about the pressure on Godknows and his team as so many big projects are being managed at same time, for instance, building the wall, the nursery and the kitchen. Steven and Godknows are not paid, but perhaps Steven could help with reporting / scheduling / planning? Steven cannot be contracted by STEKAskills, but perhaps the charity could transfer money to GK to allocate to this?

Action

- * Godknows to suggest ways to relieve the pressure on himself
- * Emma and Godknows to discuss ways to employ Steven
- * Emma and Godknows to discuss rising cost of oil and gas

3. Refreshing the STEKAskills strategy

Gemma studied STEKAskills 2023 strategy and commented that having a variety donors is a good thing, but it is not clear how many donors there are and asked how data is saved. Emma said there are a mix of individuals and organisations and arrangement is more ad hoc. Data is gathered through the Just Giving forms which identify one offs / regular donors and through financial records.

Gemma suggested mapping out donors and identifying major and minor touch points to identify donors to facilitate tailored communications to them, for example a Christmas message, an engaging annual report, telling the story with numbers to support progress. Short overviews and videos are good way to tell the story. Emma said the Annual Report does this, but maybe this could be circulated more than once a year?

Gemma also commented that it is hard to find words to describe the impact of

the dialogue groups initiative and critical dialogue approach, global citizenship is easier to understand and has become a massive topic in schools.

Emma reported that due to inflation and building work the number of people at skills centre has gone down. However St John's and Mary Magdalene have raised money to support a women's hostel.

Emma reported that Gift is now a full time manager Lacaverna, the Board send congratulations to Gift.

Father Jack Dalrymple has maintained links with STEKA home, and commented that congregations like to hear stories about how's things are going, many remember Gift and Abigail. Emma wondered if there was anything further we could do with parishes? Not large scale but to keep interest alive, eg the latest news, a four page update, including reference to the women's hostel.

Actions

- * Godknows to remind Abigail to share photos and films more regularly, for example Wednesday's ceremony is great opportunity to record successes.

- * Mobile phones already being used by dedicated members of the dialogue team to capture discussions about sharing power, all to be reminded to share photos on TikTok and Instagram.

- * Mike to encourage more volunteers and link them to specific projects

- * Emma to do presentation to new volunteers

- * Thought to be given by all about tailoring communications to different groups, eg Mary Magdalene and St John's, as they have already met Godknows, Abigail and Gift.

- * Christine to collate info and draft a newsletter for churches

- * Anne suggested Gift could have an online conversation with parishes who will remember him, perhaps following a service

- * Emma and Father Jack to get date to discuss these suggestions

John Elliot - wants Malawian report, not Scottish

4. May report on progress with Charlie Miller hair salons

May has been invited to Charlie Miller Holy Corner branch on 20th November to meet staff to discuss how best to display aprons / bags and how this fits with

their corporate image. Suggested it would be useful to present a slide show about what's happening in Blantyre.

5. SWOT analysis

Gemma suggested downloading an example of SWOT analysis and fundraising strategy from ChatGPT. An example would have headings such as executive summary / analysis / goals and objectives / streams / individual and major donors / corporate partnerships / events. Lisa suggested replacing the word 'Threats' with 'Barriers', which Board agreed with.

6. Fundraising

Communicating with donors could be improved. Anne asked how supporters want to be communicated with, do we know their preference and what difference their support making? Ayo is no longer available to help but Emma thought that quarterly update is manageable, either online or hard copy.

Ideas included:

- * plan another concert with Mairi Campbell and Dave Lahunga
- * linking with colleges, although Emma notices young people keen to volunteer but don't have time
- * any other churches worth approaching?
- * concert / poetry night
- * Lisa suggested - 'not on the high street', to sell stuff but Kathleen has been selling on Etsy, might not be possible to have both?

Actions:

- Anne and Emma to discuss how best to share the newsletter.
- Make list of volunteer duties. May work better if volunteers are allocated a defined task, for example listing stock on a spreadsheet.
- Suggestion that volunteer could organise visits, eg setting visits up for Emma and secretarial work.
- Gemma could do some talks, has experience with Mary's Meals can suggest to some groups for example that they can leave money in wills.
- Gemma suggested sponsored walks to raise cash
- Emma to be freed up for some tasks, eg consider not so many markets, but

could others to sell our stuff on our behalf? Davy has contact with One World shop - they only take 10%. Registering with Fair Trade is huge - not suitable for STEKAskills.

- Revisit platforms for selling stuff online.

AOB

- * knitting machines are being stored in basement of St John's church
- * 28 sewing machines are ready to be sent to Malawi
- * Mae suggested dedicated phone line with message left for enquires when Emma not available
- * Photographic exhibition is being prepared, schools have given permission to use photos.

Actions

- * Christine to contact banana box scheme about sending sewing machines
 - * Christine and Emma to find a home for knitting machines
- whereas the Bank gives us 2400 MKW for £1 (and charges £15 per transfer). The platform Mukuru averages 5200MKW average for £1, plus no charges. Talk Remit 5400-5500 MWK for £1, and £2 charge (but lower limits for what can be sent)
- Illustration; to get 10.5m MWK used to cost £4400 approx; now costs £2000 to £2100 depending on daily rate
- Verbal Report
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CONFIDENTIAL – THIS PAPER HAS NOT BEEN SHARED WITH GIFT AND HE WILL BE ASKED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE BOARD MEETING WHILST IT IS DISCUSSED.

New Job Costs

The finance group believe that it is vital at our current stage of development that we take the strain off the Vocational Skills team which is working hard to try and manage the building and other developments we fund at the Vocational Skills Centre. We should not be relying on volunteers in Malawi (this was a lesson learned from the Scottish Government when we received our Dialogue grant) and the Finance group proposes that we use the Ursulines grant and Dialogue income to fund STEKA to create 3 new jobs and pay for Steven and the teachers at the Skills Centre; and we have a plan to ensure the sustainability of this. The costs of each job will depend on the exchange rate we can secure and these have been estimated using the best Mukuru rate we might be able to obtain (K5,500 / £ and the lower rate we can obtain using cash or Gift's UK bank account or TalkRemit K4000 / £).

Job 1: Assistant Manager (Finance and Projects) Cost is 700,000MKW (£129 using best Mukuru rate; OR £175 paying through into a UK bank account, TalkRemit / month). So, between £1548 - £2,100 / year.

Job 2: Trainee Operations Manager – Centre for Dialogue and Production of Goods for Sale
K210,000 (£38.18 OR £52.5/ month) £458 - £630/ year.

Job 3: Steven (who will assist with communications with STEKAskills)
k250,000 (£45-£62.5 / month: £540- £750 / year)

Job 4: Warden tbc (will include accommodation)

Annual cost between £2,546 and £3,450 + warden costs

Existing job costs:

Teachers K230,000 (£42 - £57.5/ month: £504- £690 / year)

Annual costs: 6 Teachers, 3 tailoring, 3 hairdressing (£6,048 - £8,280)

TOTAL for funding all jobs between £8, 594 and £11,760

Note:

Ursulines grant £10,000 can be used for any of this

Charlie Miller took £577 this year from selling our decorations (will fund a hairdressing teacher).

Expected income from dialogue groups in 2026 (£2,000 - £5,000) ; from sales of clothes and bags at dialogue sessions (£1,000)

Elliot Foundation and the Madelon Foundation have both asked for suggestions of future funding needs and we could request funding jobs.

As a charity we are committed to power sharing with poverty experienced people and supporting the development of the STEKA Centre. Consequently, we want to focus on employing people who have this type of experience and have lived at STEKA where possible. Gift has been interviewed by Godknows for the assistant manager role as he has extremely pertinent skills (from his BA (hons) Public Sociology, MSc International Business and Leadership (in which he studied accounting) and from his current job. He has also lived in Malawi and Scotland which gives him further useful insights.

In terms of power sharing, it's essential to have people like Godknows, Helen and Gift on our Board, so we don't want to lose Gift as a trustee. Of course this is fine because we won't be employing anyone direct and the assistant manager role reports to Godknows and is a STEKA appointment. However, I have been asked to demonstrate the ethics of employing a trustee and the notes below demonstrate that according to our own governing document and OSCR rules, we would be able to employ a trustee directly if we wanted to .

Rules about employing a trustee in another role:

From our Governing Document:

Purposes

The objectives and purpose of the group is to involve Scottish (or any other associated) communities (particularly young adults or organisations such as schools, churches, clubs) in connecting with their contemporaries in Malawi to: (4.1) Develop and sustain a STEKA Centre for Vocational Skills and Community Enterprise, enabling it to reach more homeless and vulnerable young people in Malawi who would otherwise be faced with lives in poverty; encouraging their social participation, getting their voices heard, giving them life skills and vocational skills to help them secure sustainable futures. (4.2) Understand the UN's Global Goals for sustainable development and help realise the power of volunteering which the United Nations deems essential to the achievement of the Global Goals to "facilitate changes in mind-sets by raising awareness or championing those changes and inspiring others".

Trustees

8 39 No charity trustee may serve as an employee (full time or part time) of the organisation; and no charity trustee may be given any remuneration by the organisation for carrying out their duties *as a charity trustee*.

(so we can't pay people for being a trustee, but can for helping us achieve our purposes).

6 No part of the income or property of the organisation may be paid or transferred (directly or indirectly) to the charity trustees - either in the course of the organisation's existence or on dissolution - **except where this is done in direct furtherance of the organisation's purposes.**

36.3 in circumstances giving rise to the possibility of a conflict of interest between the organisation and any other party [trustees must:]

36.3.1 put the interests of the organisation before that of the other party;

36.3.2 where any other duty prevents them from doing so, disclose the conflicting interest to the organisation and refrain from participating in any deliberation or decision of the other charity trustees with regard to the matter in question;

38 Provided they have declared their interest - and have not voted on the question of whether or not the organisation should enter into the arrangement - **a charity trustee will not be debarred from entering into an arrangement with the organisation in which they have a personal interest; and (subject to clause 39 and to the provisions relating to remuneration for services contained in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005) they may retain any personal benefit which arises from that arrangement.**

OSCR Rules

The **2005 Act** states that **you must not pay a charity trustee**, for services provided to the charity, either as a charity trustee or under contract, **unless** you meet **all** of these conditions:

- *there is no restriction to the payment in the charity's **governing document**.*
- *less than half the total number of charity trustees are getting paid (directly or indirectly) by the charity or are connected with any person who is getting paid for services by the charity*
- *there is a written agreement between the charity and the charity trustee*
- *the written agreement sets out the maximum amount to be paid, and*
- *the charity trustees are satisfied it is in the interest of the charity for the services to be provided by the charity trustee for that maximum amount.*

Examples of when it might be reasonable to pay a charity trustee, provided the conditions above are met:

- *When a local tradesman is a charity trustee and provides services to the charity at a competitive rate.*
- *When employees of the charity are also charity trustees because of their position: for example, as chief executive or because they are elected as a staff representative.*

See diagram below:

