

Minutes of the Mamie Martin Fund AGM held on the 4th Nov 2023



Present at the online meeting were the following member-supporters Rachael Atherton, Margaret Coutts, Walter Dunlop, James Champion, Mariot Dallas, Hazel Dawson, Emlyn Evans, Moira Dunworth, Kate Jere, Heidi Kastern, Handy Kamanga, Helen Kinloch, Alan Laverock, Katy McNeil, Precious Mahone, Rachana Patel, Amy Rankin, Mercy Sibande, Eileen Sinclair, Janet Sinclair, Kevin Simpson, William Sinclair, Phil Wright, Angie Wynn

Welcome and apologies

Angie Wynn, one of our co-convenors, welcomed everyone to the meeting online and all those watching the livestream on Facebook, and pointed out that this is the 30th year of operation of the MMF.

Apologies were received from Alison & Colin Cameron, Alistair & Carol Cuthbertson, Sue Dumbleton, Jean Gordon, Angus & Jill McLeod, Peggy Shatwell, Penny Turton and Arthur West.

Minutes of the Previous AGM and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from those present. Alan Laverock proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the AGM 2022. Willie Sinclair seconded the proposal. The members voted unanimously to accept the minutes.

Presentation of the Annual Review

Angie began by sharing a brief history of the Mamie Martin Fund and then an overview of the year and its highlights

- It has been a positive year – a major highlight being the visit of Mercy Sibande to the UK. Mercy is the MMF Director in Malawi. Her visit engaged many people and was a great success.
- Regular monthly donations from supporters are vital to the work of the charity and enabled us to support 148 girls in 7 schools in North Malawi. This is especially appreciated in these difficult economic times. The Cameron Endowment from the Scottish Government ended this year apart from a small number of girls (4). The Thompson Fund and Pat's Fund supported girls at Embangweni School for the deaf. The Lancashire West Methodist Circuit members supported

girls at St Mary's school in Karonga, and the Katy fund supported girls at a number of schools, concentrating on girls in forms 3 & 4.

- Mercy visited Scotland for 2 weeks in May during which time she was very busy and engaged with many supporters. She spoke to the Cross Party Group for Malawi at the Scottish Parliament, visited our supporters at Lancaster West Circuit of Methodist Churches, and at the One World Shop in Edinburgh. Falkirk High School pupils enjoyed a visit from Mercy and some supporters met up with her in the Botanic Gardens coffee shop in Edinburgh. Our 30th birthday was celebrated with Mercy and supporters old & new at our Coffee Morning in Dalgety Bay Parish Church hall. Huge thanks to Isabel Stanners who baked the wonderful spread of cakes and scones for the coffee morning.
- Alison Cameron (patron of MMF for many years) retired this year. She spoke at the coffee morning in Dalgety Bay Parish Church and was thanked for her friendship and support.
- A large part of the Board's responsibility is Governance and it is good to have more people from Malawi involved in this. Rennie Kamanga and Patrick Chinguwo are our special advisors on the Board. We use the intranet app Podio and a Whatsapp group for communication between Board meetings. The Monitoring & Evaluation group has worked hard monitoring our strategic plan which was re-written last year with more focus on localisation and data collection.
- Thanks to Handy Kamanga who managed the MMF Instagram account during this 30th Birthday year
- Huge thanks must go to Moira Dunworth who is our volunteer administrator . The Trustees and member-supporters are very grateful for her dedication to this role and her role as Marketing Lead for the charity. We are still looking for IT support for Moira and would be grateful for a volunteer to support her with this.
- Looking ahead – we would love to welcome more trustees to the Board, involve more ex - pupils in Malawi in supporting the work of MMF in Malawi, and implementing our strategic plan.

Angie exited the Chair and Mariot Dallas took over chairing the meeting from this point.

Report from Mercy Sibande (MMF's Malawi Director)

Mercy was able to join the meeting live from Malawi to give her report. But first a short video by Helen Nkhoma, a pupil at Bandawe Girls SS was shown in which she thanked all our donors for supporting girls' education in Malawi.

Mercy described her work with the schools. She visits all seven schools supported by MMF once a term and interviews all the new recipients of MMF bursaries in term 1. The schools choose the most needy girls and Mercy meets each one individually. She checks their backgrounds and circumstances and provides any small necessities required from the Ready to Learn fund. One girl in form 1 at Bandawe had lost both her parents in a traffic accident and is now being cared for by her grandmother.

So many girls need support. Donors in the UK are doing great work providing school fees and money for the ready to learn fund. Mercy also mentioned the return of girls who had to leave school due to pregnancy. With the support of MMF and their families and the schools some of them are able to

return to school determined to finish their education. A girl from Elangeni had to leave school during the year when her family's circumstances changed and they could no longer provide school fees. A MMF bursary was available for her this year so she has returned to the school.

Mariot liked Mercy's sentence - "an educated girl can stand and speak for her country"

Member-supporters were given the chance to ask questions of Mercy. Helen Kinloch asked how the schools decide which girls receive support from MMF. The payment of fees is decided solely on need and not academic achievement. The girls chosen are the ones who come to school without fees and likely are poorly dressed. They generally don't have a school uniform or bag, and probably had to borrow the bus-fare to get there. Quite often they are orphans being cared for by a grandmother or other relative. Helen thanked Mercy for answering her question.

Treasurer's Report

Alan Laverock, MMF treasurer presented his report with the aid of slides .

The main points to note were the following

- Income from donations was lower than the previous year. Donations down by £4 - 500 per month.
- Costs in Malawi continue to rise, including school fees
- There is £34,630 in the reserve account
- The Cameron Endowment (2nd tranche) has come to an end. A small amount was left over which is being used to allow 2 girls to finish their last year of schooling.
- The Thompson Fund which supports girls at Embangweni School for the Deaf has raised an impressive amount of money this past year. Approx £3000 per girl is needed to support them through their 6 years of school at Embangweni
- The Lancashire West Methodist Circuit of churches are also doing a great job supporting their girls at St Mary's in Karonga
- Both the Pat Fund and Katy Fund are time limited
- There was a balance of £77,000 at the year end
- £65,000 was spent in Malawi over the year and £5,000 in Scotland

There were no questions for the treasurer at the end of his presentation. Mariot asked for an online vote to accept or not the report. 95% voted for and 5% (= 1 person) wanted more information before voting but failed to ask a question.

Marketing Report

Moira Dunworth, MMF's volunteer Marketing Lead, gave an overview of the year's activities, including a wee slide video which highlighted various events. It was a busy year with lots of fun and engagement of supporters. Moira thanked her team of volunteers that help with social media and making of videos etc for sponsored events such as the Glasgow Kiltwalk, Manchester Marathon, the ROC

England (congratulations to Helen Nyul), Hebridean Cake Sales, and Humble Garden Openings. Two fifths of our income is from fundraising activities and three fifths from regular donations. Almost 50% of fundraising is from sponsored events. A very special mention to the Smart family who lost a dear family member Barry recently. They asked that a Just Giving page be set up in his memory and his many friends generously donated £4000 to support girls' education in Malawi.

Janet Sinclair reported on the main fundraiser of the year #Birthday 30. Supporters volunteered to do 30 things based on a theme, to raise money and/or awareness of the MMF through sharing photos etc on social media. 27 supporters signed up to do many varied activities. These included reading 30 books, trying 30 new recipes, cycling over bridges, to churches, reservoirs etc. Other challenges were doing 30 wild swims, performing poetry at 30 open mic events, playing 30 tunes on the accordion for social media pages, learning Chichewa, photographing 30 special trees, doing yoga poses and producing 30 artworks. Well done to all who took part in this special birthday year.

Handy Kamanga reported on her experience of producing posts for MMF's Instagram account. She enjoyed the challenge and thanked Moira Dunworth for her help advising her and the many things she taught her over the year. Handy says the experience has helped her feel closer to the people and culture of Scotland. She has found the activities by fundraisers very entertaining.

There were no questions for the Marketing team but Moira re-iterated the importance of regular monthly donors to the Mamie Martin Fund.

Constitutional Changes 2023

Willie Sinclair presented the constitutional changes which were

- Replacing the words "will, upon registration be" a SCIO, with the word "is" a SCIO in clause 1 of the constitution as the MMF has been a SCIO since 2014
- In clause 103 inserting the words "prior to their presentation at the AGM" after the words "the Board must prepare annual accounts, complying with all statutory regulations. This change is to ensure that the accounts are ready and verified by the independent examiner in a timely manner each year.

These proposed changes were then put to the vote and both changes were passed unanimously. The Constitution will now be updated.

Election of Trustees

Six of the current trustees (Mariot Dallas, Alan Laverock, Catherine Jere, Eileen Sinclair, William Sinclair, and Angie Wynn) plus Phil Wright a new trustee, all stood for election. The voting paper was circulated and voting took place prior to the AGM. All the trustees standing were elected for another year in office. Our two Malawian trustees, Remmie Kamanga and Patrick Chinguwo, didn't stand for election this year to enable us to progress our quest for a new bank account. UK banks have very strict verification requirements, and the provision of exact postal addresses as we have in the UK wasn't possible for our Malawian friends. Remmie and Patrick have kindly agreed to be advisors to the Board.

Election of Independent Examiner

The member-supporters agreed unanimously to elect Andrew Cowling as independent examiner of the accounts for the coming year.

Any Other Competent Business

No other items of business were raised

This concluded the main business of the AGM

Speakers

Mariot introduced Precious Mahone to the meeting. She was attending on Zoom from Malawi but unfortunately having trouble with the sound. She had pre-recorded a video of her talk about Embangweni School for deaf pupils so this was shared on zoom. Precious is a teacher and boarding mistress at Embangweni.

There are a total of 90 students at Embangweni (54 boys and 36 girls). There are 15 students in each form (deaf pupils have 6 years of secondary education). Most of the students have severe hearing problems. Deaf childrens' schooling is not a top priority for their parents and guardians – they worry that school fees might be wasted if the young person doesn't find employment on leaving school. However the community of Embangweni was and still is very involved in the school. The community provided materials and labor in the construction of the school and today provides foodstuffs for school meals and raises funds for the school. Government grants also help with the running of the school and of course school fees too. The Mamie Martin Fund plays a part in the running of the school with the provision of school fees for needy girls.

The students at Embangweni deserve the same life chances as any other student. Once they learn sign-language they can do anything. They can be teachers. They can work anywhere. Mercy understands the problems of the students and has been learning sign language to help her communicate well with the girls. Thank you MMF for sending such a kind person to help the girls.

The school has many success stories. For example, Monika who is teaching Mercy sign language, is studying design. One of the school's first graduates, a young man called Blessing, studied community development and obtained his diploma. He now works in human resources for a driving school, and recently he was elected chairperson of the deaf society in central Malawi.

Precious thanked MMF for giving her the opportunity to speak to the meeting.

Walter Dunlop asked Precious about training opportunities for the students after they completed school, the availability of translators and also if hearing aids were readily available for students. As Precious' microphone wasn't working Moira said the question would be submitted to Precious and hopefully the answer could be conveyed after the meeting.....

1) At the moment Embangweni secondary school for the Deaf does not have post secondary school aid. For those who have successfully completed their secondary Education and if parents are able to cater for their post secondary school courses they do so but for those who have failed they either come back to repeat or they may not

2) there are inadequate number of translators and no special training has been offered so far

3) No girl is able to afford a hearing aid because of their economic situation. For those that have, were just been given by charitable organization

The second speaker of the afternoon was **Kevin Simpson of Malawi Fruits**. As Kevin was travelling at the time of the AGM he also spoke via a pre-recorded video. The subject of his talk was Beyond Education and looked at the opportunities in the agriculture sector with particular regard to Malawi Fruits. After a secondary education women tend to write off agriculture as a career as they see it as back breaking work in the fields. But Malawi Fruits demonstrates a very different kind of agriculture.

- The ethos is that people should be growing cash crops as well as food for themselves. And it should be a viable career option for young girls. It must be done in modern ways.
- Where irrigation can be provided there is opportunity to grow a crop besides maize to generate household income. Solar powered irrigation pumps (each one irrigating 1 acre) have been introduced and training given in their maintenance and what to grow. The pump can be connected to a drip (gravity) irrigation system which makes best use of available water and needs less labour. It also pushes up the quality of the produce and makes it more marketable.
- Greenhouse farming has been introduced with polytunnels. This is specifically for women farmers. 135 women are growing tomatoes and peppers at Chitechi on the shore of Lake Malawi. The plants are grown in sacks so there is no waste of water or fertiliser and no weeding! The women can grow 15kg of fruit from each plant twice a year which can be kept in a solar powered chill store post harvesting and until taken to market. Harvest loss is less than 5% and the fruits are of a consistent high quality. There are also 20 single polytunnels at Ekwendeni where water comes from a borehole. This is a women's co-operative.
- Value addition. These systems enable the women to produce high quality crops from high quality seeds and seedlings. And crucially a consistent supply which then commands a good price from buyers.
- Who does what? Finance – Lend With Care provide interest-free loans to young women so they can buy the equipment. Training is given at the start and throughout the growing period. Training is free as Malawi Fruits buy the produce and earn a profit margin when selling it. A big plus is that there is no hard labour for the women in comparison to the old small scale farming methods.

THE END