SPECIAL NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2021

When I wrote the January newsletter to you, following the death of my father, I wrote it with great sadness. I write this with sadness, too, and now anger.

Towards the end of last year my father became aware of a rivalry springing up between the Foundation and the UK feeder charity, which is charged by Statute to raise money and/or awareness for the Foundation.

William tried to forestall it becoming worse and impacting on the Foundation's work by writing a series of documents setting out the way forward.

Since his death, his fears have become reality. A precis entitled 'A Necessary Clarification' is attached; this gives the situation up until June.

After his passing, Levison, who was carrying the most burden in Malawi expressed to me that SCIO's efforts at finding sponsors was moving too quickly for him to keep up and/or he was not being given any say in what projects would be given the go ahead in Malawi. The result was that he was becoming ill.

Naturally, as his Nasenje, I sought to help and became extremely ill with my failed attempts to do so. That is when I called in Jane, offered her my evidence, and she agreed to come on board, with the agreement of Levison.

Jane set out key documents, semi legalistic in style, to see if we could implement a different dynamic between the two charities.

Sadly, the hours of work failed; the documentation continued to be ignored by the UK charity.

At the same time, things became very antagonistic between myself, Levison and SCIO, and it became apparent that Levison had sought advice that he had no intention of following: leaving Jane and me appearing to create unnecessary and damaging inquiry into both charities. Jane and I continued to try to discuss matters with Levison long into the night on many occasions.

It is true that in absolute frustration with Levison I resigned on 16 May and along with me Jane and that Jane convinced me to stay, not least because

Levison threatened to leave the Foundation and along with him the Trustees in Malawi.

Thereafter, and after stating that I was not to leave, and that the Trustees would leave if I did, with nothing said in between about accepting any position from us, an e mail was received on 21 July: I was advised that Levison and/or SCIO had removed us both from the Foundation.

At the same time my admin role on the Foundation's facebook page was removed and subsequently, I find that I have been banned from both facebook pages – those of the Foundation and the UK charity, and the trustees have blocked me and anyone else who has questioned them.

It was the manner in which I was removed that has led to such disturbance. Levison saw fit to lie to the public stating that my father had intended me to retire. That is not true. I attach my father's last document on the subject.

He had included in it the paragraph which I suggested to him – that eventually my role would be taken over as the Foundation rightly became Malawian based, as had been within his original vision – that we were there to give a helping hand, to enable its flourishing.

The UK charity has now changed its name from Friends of the William Stewart Centre Malawi to Changing Lives Malawi. It is true that whilst it held its former names it *could not* raise funds for any other charity. It was legally precluded from doing so.

My family have then found, with incredulity, *after his passing,* that my father had sent over £50,000 to the Foundation, was supporting Levison and the Foundation from his pension payments and, in fact, had expunged nearly *all* his life savings.

The biggest angst for my brothers is that my father, only last year, then suddenly decided to change his will, also making Levison a benefactor of his estate.

There are other important financial matters which are, at the moment, pending.

Throughout the last few months I have tried to keep faith with my father's

original vision, to ensure that the future of the community in Ibuluma, and the children in particular, is as secure as it can be but this has proved an impossibility.

I know that some of you, my father's friends, are sponsors of children and young people and they, who are innocent in the events of recent months, must be put at the forefront, to be able to carry on with their schooling, learning, fun and, above all, being fed at the Margaret and Jean Stewart Centre, so that they can realise their dreams.

Obviously I can't now follow the format of my father's newsletters and provide details and photos of what is happening, because I am not being informed and the Foundation facebook page, has in any event, disappeared.

I will, however, keep the website intact for as long as is sensible as it is such a good record of the four years of growth – as my father put it – of a thriving oak tree from the planting of a tiny acorn and a pictorial record of how so much joy and happiness was brought to a community.

With kindest regards

Mary

1. A Necessary Clarification
2. The Way Forward

A very happy day at Stirling Castle

A NECESSARY CLARIFICATION – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WILLIAM STEWART FOUNDATION AND ITS FEEDER CHARITY FRIENDS OF THE WILLIAM STEWART CENTRE MALAWI

The Foundation was registered as an NGO with charitable status in 2017. Its Co-Founders were William Stewart and Levison Mlambya. Mary Young joined the Foundation's team in the UK and subsequently so did Sarah Black.

In 2018 it was recognised that there was a need for a charity registered in the UK, primarily because funders required a UK charity or a UK charity arm, and also to facilitate a cheaper and more effective method of sending donations to Malawi.

In 2019 Friends of the William Stewart Centre Malawi was registered as a charity with the Office of Scottish Charity Regulators OSCR. The lead Trustee of the charity – the SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) was Sarah, with three other trustees. (The reason why it has a different title from the Foundation is because 'Foundation' could not be used in the UK; only charities with a regular income can use the word).

The application, with a signed declaration of truth to OSCR, stated that the SCIO's aims were as follows:

'Fundraising, in as many ways as possible, to provide money to enable the aforementioned NGO to continue its work. To date it has relied on financial support from the core team members and individual donors which has enabled: crop growing so that orphans are fed; brickmaking and erection of latrine blocks, kitchen/stores and a purpose built Skills Shed; the provision of livestock; the sending of clothing and educational materials. As more land is gifted to the Foundation, more buildings need to be erected; more crops need to be grown; more people must be employed to work on crops, and outreaches to others. Being an NGO, the work must spread out to more in need.'

In other words, the sole purpose of the UK charity was to fundraise for the NGO's work so that the NGO could grow. The words 'raising awareness' were added to the SCIO's general mission statement as an obvious adjunct to its purpose.

The two charities, being synonymous, worked very closely together – it had to be that way, for obvious reasons. However, in late 2020 William became aware that a form of rivalry was springing up and formulated a three-stage plan to bring the two charities into proper working harmony. The last of the stages was set for 18 January but sadly William died before implementation.

Since not long after his death, Mary has been sidelined by the SCIO which action has obviously resulted in tremendous stress for both her and Levison. She had been charged by Levison in taking on the responsibility in the UK for the Foundation – stepping into her father's shoes - and he and the other Foundation Trustees have elevated her former title to that of Operations Director.

Mary prepared a non-legal Memorandum of Understanding between the Foundation and SCIO, in the hope, particularly as the Foundation learned that new trustees had been brought to the SCIO, that it would bring about a proper understanding of the SCIO's role. Unfortunately, this was rejected out of hand.

A supporter of the Foundation and sponsor was brought in by the Foundation's trustees and Mary – Jane Sanders who is an unregistered barrister with her own claims resolution company, as pro bono general counsel to the Foundation. Jane prepared a legal MoU which, once again, was rejected.

The Foundation has various programmes it carries out and for which concept notes for each were prepared in April and given to the local and national authorities in Malawi.

However, it is becoming clear that the SCIO is now in danger, by continuing to claim Foundation initiatives to itself and implementing its own, by its indiscriminate use of personal pronouns, and by its obstructive actions, of running the risk of destroying the very charity it was set up to further.

Malawian authorities – who pay close attention to social media – could justifiably make life very difficult for the Foundation and this could result in the negation not only of four years of very hard work but the generosity of so many donors and sponsors.

Two of the most recent social media posts from the SCIO state: 'The first boxes of books being delivered to Chambo Primary School for Friends of the William Stewart Centre's School Literacy Initiative….It's wonderful to see Sarah's initiative to raise literacy levels happening in the area local to the Foundation.
Thanks to all who have donated towards this project and, of course, to Levison for delivering the books to schools on our behalf.'

The accompanying screenshot is a note to teachers opening with 'School Literacy Project – An Initiative by Friends of the William Stewart Centre Malawi.'

The Foundation, as it grows, has had to look at streamlining its various programmes. Most can continue as is, for the time being. However, others are not now viable, in some aspects, because of time and cost concerns as they were originally and changes have been made. Omissions have also been noted by the Foundation, particularly with regard to informing sponsors of sponsorship; gift aid where sponsors are in the UK, and GDPR requirements.

On 8 June Jane sent a detailed e mail to the SCIO sponsors which was followed up from Levison and Mary with documents relating to each of these areas to be sent to each sponsor None of the three has had the courtesy of an acknowledgement.

It is impossible for the Foundation to carry out its work in this manner. It is hugely stressful, thoroughly time-wasting and prevents the onward travel of the NGO.

The Foundation has been left with no alternative but to highlight these issues publicly in the hope that the SCIO will recognise that it is a feeder charity to the Foundation, set up by the Foundation, and should be working as the Foundation does, in the interests of the Malawian people it was formed to assist.

THOUGHTS ON THE WAY FORWARD

As we enter the fourth year, it seems an appropriate time for me to consider the future of the Foundation, and the long-term aim of its becoming self-sufficient.

Over the past three years, we have seen tremendous growth and achievement. I don't need to detail them. However, again I say a big thank you to Mary, Sarah and Levison and to everyone who has supported the Foundation. I don't know how much money has been donated, along with several hundred boxes of clothes and materials and seeds for sowing. The list is endless.

Now is the time to think of restructuring. To further the aim of self-sufficiency, I propose that:

1. **Chief Executive Officer**

   Levison take on the role of CEO and that he recruits and names people who will take on various roles in the running of the Foundation. For example, the feeding of the children, and the manager of the farm, the care of the animals, and so on. I'm aware of the heavy load Levison carries, and although he is young and strong, in the future he will be increasingly involved in representing the Foundation to other organisations, which will mean his being absent from the Foundation site. As ambassador of the Foundation, what he says will have greater impact as CEO of the Foundation.

2. **Development Manager**

   Over the past years, Sarah has done a magnificent job and has raised a huge amount of money with her various and imaginative projects. However, I'm also conscious that Sarah also has the responsibility for the SCIO, and as that charity develops, it will involve her more. I'm proposing, therefore, to remove the role of Development

Manager of the Foundation, so that Sarah can devote more time and energy to the SCIO, which will continue to fund various projects for the Foundation.

3. Self-sufficiency

As more people in Malawi assume various roles, and as the Foundation continues to develop, I hope that they themselves will take on the responsibility of raising money. Levison and his immediate helpers have had good examples in what Mary and Sarah have done. I have a vision of the Foundation being one link in a chain of like-minded people in Malawi whose aim is to bring hope to the hopeless.

4. Administrator

The Foundation would not be where it is today without Mary's guiding hand and expertise. However, I am conscious that her position of administrator demands much of her time and energy, and it is essential that Mary finds someone who can be trained to replace her eventually as administrator.

Summary

The long-term aim, therefore, is that the Foundation will become self-sufficient, and this means that more Malawian people will have to become involved in the running of the Foundation. And that the SCIO will continue to raise money and raise awareness of what the Foundation is doing to bring hope to the hopeless. So this year will see the development of a structure which will go a long way towards the overall aim of making the Foundation self-sufficient

William
04/01/2021