

Where there's a William...

KAIYA MARJORIBANKS

A 93-year-old is helping his Killearn-based charity bring clean water to a project in Malawi - by cycling to Australia.

The community of Ibuluma in Northern Malawi has been the focus of the William Stewart Foundation for over three years, particularly helping orphans and the elderly.

The organisation was founded by Mr Stewart along with his Malawian friend Levison Mlambya, but has gone from strength to strength with the support of communities in the Balforn and Killearn areas, where his daughter Mary Young lives.

Now, however, the spirited nonagenarian is hoping to raise several thousand pounds to build a borehole - completing a cycle to Oz on his exercise bike - so more than 700 children can have clean water on site, reducing the risk of diseases such as typhoid and Covid-19.

Mary, who is administrator for the charity, said: "My father has got on his bike, literally. Well he's never been off it, really. He phones me while he's exercising - not a hint of being puffed.

"He was born in Australia but his family moved back to Scotland when



Aid The organisation was founded by Mr Stewart along with his Malawian friend Levison Mlambya

he was a baby. He has always longed to go back to the land of his birth but has never had the opportunity.

"Now he is on his way - in his imagination while he keeps himself fit, dealing as he does with two disabilities; peripheral neuropathy and Parkinson's."

William has made other 'shorter' journeys on his bike - John o' Groats to Land's End and back and, from his home near Southampton, around the south of England to his old haunts.

"He started his ride to Australia in 2016," said Mary, "and has decided that now is the time for us to join him on the journey.

"He is cycling to raise money to

93-year-old is cycling to Australia for charity

provide a borehole at the foundation's Resource Centre in rural Northern Malawi."

In a country which has grinding poverty, malnutrition, and other diseases such as malaria, typhoid and cholera to contend with, coronavirus is a frightening spectre, especially given a lack of water.

Water stations have been set up at the centre where the children can wash their hands regularly and many extra bars of soap have been purchased.

Mary added: "There is a borehole at the Chambo Health Centre which is just over half a mile from the foundation's premises and so water must be carried - and a lot of it.

"But, the borehole is beginning to dry up; the water table is becoming too low in the dry season and until December when the rains come again, there will be no, or just a trickle of, water. It means that there will be no option but to use the river water, with not only the risk of dysentery, typhoid

and cholera but the increased danger of COVID-19 too."

The UK sister charity Friends of the William Stewart Centre Malawi has launched a ring-fenced appeal to have a much deeper borehole made at the centre. Ideally, it would be a well with a solar powered pump, also able to be connected to the electricity supply, with tanks to allow for much easier irrigation of the foundation's crops and vegetables.

The total cost is £8,000, but the initial fundraiser has been set at £5,000 which would provide a deep borehole with a submersible pump.

"As my father pedals," said Mary, "our team is looking for crowd support on his journey."

To keep updated with William's efforts visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc7zVbGXII8&t=3s> and to donate go to <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/clean-water-in-ibuluma-1>

More information at www.williamstewartfoundation.org



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