

# BSSH-LION Volunteers' Handbook

## Part 1 – Pre departure information



Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION), November 2023

a) central courtyard LION b) Front entrance LION c) internal corridor

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## **BSSH-LION Information Pack**

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The British Society for Surgery of the Hand (BSSH) aims to support members to perform voluntary work overseas and to deliver educational projects in low to middle income countries (LMICs). We thank you for sharing your skills, knowledge, and commitment to hand surgery with our colleagues in Malawi.

In 2021 Miss Sue Fullilove, the then President of BSSH, proposed a specialist hand unit in a low resource setting. Building on the established links that the overseas committee had in Malawi, that country was chosen and our partners in Lilongwe were identified. Working with the leads of the overseas committee and many others the project has become a reality.

The BSSH LION Hand Service is a formal partnership between the BSSH, the British Association of Hand Therapists (BAHT) and the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) in Lilongwe, Malawi. The main purpose of the project is to support the orthopaedic service at LION in the development of sub-specialist skills in hand surgery.

Thank you for participating in the BSSH LION partnership. This information pack provides some useful information to help you plan your trip.

### **MALAWI**

Malawi is located in south-east Africa. It is bordered by Zambia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique. It is a narrow, landlocked country with the beautiful Lake Malawi (also known as Lake Nyasa) forming a 750km-long border with Tanzania and Mozambique. It has highlands, central plateaus and isolated mountains. The East African Rift Valley runs through the country from north to south. Lilongwe is the capital and largest city. Blantyre, in the south of the country, is the second largest followed by Mzuzu and Zomba, its former capital.

It has a population of approximately 20 million people. The culture is warm and friendly, hence it is known as 'The Warm Heart of Africa'. It is a fairly conservative country, and the people are respectful, with manners and modesty highly prized.

Malawi is a democratic, multi-party republic headed by an elected president. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, and it has a largely rural and rapidly growing population. The country has a diverse population that includes native peoples, Asians, and Europeans. Several languages are spoken, though the official language is English. Other languages

include Chichewa, spoken by over 48% of the population, Chitumbuka (22.2%), Chiyao (15.1%) and Chinyanja (12.8%). It is mostly a Christian country, with a small Muslim minority.

The following are some Chichewa words and phrases:

“Muli bwanji?” - “Hi, how are you?”

“Takulandirani” - ‘Welcome’

“Ndili bwino” - “I’m fine”

“Ndili bwino, kaya inu?” - “I’m fine and you?”

“Achimwene” - “My friend”

“Zikomo” - “Thank you”

“Chonde” - “Please”.

### **Other useful phrases in Chichewa**

For people you are meeting for the first time/patients

Hello/How are you?

Muli bwanje?

I’m fine thank you, how are you?

Ndili bwino, kaya inu? (‘iwe’ for a child)

I’m fine, thank you

Ndili bwino, Zikomo

For people you know e.g., Colleagues, other clinicians/therapists, friends (from waking to midday)

Good morning

Mwadzuka bwanje?

Good morning, and how are you?

Ndadzuka bwino, kaya inu? (‘iwe’ for a child)

And how are you, thank you

Mwadzuka bwino, zikomo

For everyone 12-6pm and for most polite

Good afternoon	Mwaswera bwanje?
Good afternoon and how are you?	Ndaswera bwino, kaya inu? ('iwe' for a child)
Good afternoon, and thank y	Mwaswera bwino, zikomo

#### Useful phrases for patient contact

Does this hurt?	Awawa
I'm sorry	Pepani (good for removing dressings!)
Thank you very much	Zikomo kwambiri
See you tomorrow	Tiwonana mawa

#### Useful websites

[www.malawi.gov.mw](http://www.malawi.gov.mw)

[www.visitmalawi.mw](http://www.visitmalawi.mw)

[www.malawitourism.com](http://www.malawitourism.com)

[Chichewa Dictionary](#), including a [mini-course](#) for getting started.

## LION & KCH

The LION is a brand-new purpose-built healthcare facility attached to the Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH), which is the main public Hospital in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi. LION functions as the department of orthopaedics and neurosurgery at KCH. It consists of an emergency department, four operating theatres, clinic space, a modern radiology department, laboratories and a rehabilitation centre. LION offers a comprehensive range of diagnostic, orthopaedic, neurosurgical and rehabilitation services, free at the point of delivery for Malawi Citizens.

Kamuzu Central Hospital is a tertiary public health service hospital that serves the central region of Malawi, treating 43% of the Malawian population. It provides specialist services in a variety of medical and surgical specialities, including ICU, Neurosurgery, Paediatrics,

Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Orthopaedics, amongst others. It is estimated to have 1000 beds, although the true number of patients exceeds the number of beds. It serves approximately 7 million people referred from five district hospitals and from other parts of Malawi and parts of neighbouring Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The hospital is located in an area of the city called Area 33 (also Nangwagwa), south of the Lingazi Namilomba Forest Reserve and the Lilongwe Wildlife Centre.

### **Contact details LION**

Address: P.O. Box 31653, Lilongwe 33, Malawi

Email: [info@lion.mw](mailto:info@lion.mw)

Website: [www.lion.mw](http://www.lion.mw)

### **Contact details KCH**

Address: Kamuzu Central Hospital, P.O. BOX 149, Lilongwe, MALAWI

Tel: +265 1 753 400/555/744

Email: [hospitaldirector@kch.gov.mw](mailto:hospitaldirector@kch.gov.mw)

Website: [www.kch.gov.mw](http://www.kch.gov.mw)

### **PRE-TRAVEL**

The following documents should be read or watched before you travel, to ensure you agree with the ethos of the project and are happy to work within the terms of engagement:

- The Memorandum of Understanding for the project
- The relevant volunteer Job description (surgeon / trainee / therapist)
- The Team and House Guidelines
- The BSSH LION Volunteers Handbook (this document – note 3 parts)
- The Volunteers Induction meeting video (*note some info in this video has been superseded*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ekRvF1VgXo>

The following documents need to be completed prior to travel and a copy provided to the BSSH secretariat. It is also important to ensure that you keep a copy of these documents with you whilst travelling, and that a copy is kept with a family/contact member in the UK.

Documents to be completed or sent prior to travel:

- [BSSH pre-departure form](#)
- British Society for Surgery of the Hand volunteer written agreement
- Copy of your CV sent to the BSSH LION secretariat
- Copy of your medical or therapy registration documents, annual appraisal or fitness to practice documentation, sent to BSSH LION secretariat

**The documents above should be submitted to the BSSH secretariat on the email below 6 weeks ahead of the date of travel.**

[LIONhandunit@bssh.ac.uk](mailto:LIONhandunit@bssh.ac.uk)

You will be given an official invitation letter from BSSH to you, as a volunteer, to support your visa application and travel. If you want to take out a significant quantity of medical equipment for the project, you can also ask for a letter to help with customs clearance.

## **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

It is wise to start planning your travel well in advance of your trip to allow sufficient time to ensure the appropriate approvals and visas are in place prior to departure. Note a standard tourist visa is only valid for 3 months so do not obtain this too soon, Check whether you need a visa as UK nationals do not any more.

### **Flights**

Flights will be booked by the BSSH LION secretariat. Please try to initiate the booking process at least 6 months prior to your departure date, as flights get increasingly expensive with time. There are no direct flights to Malawi, however the following carriers fly to Malawi:

- Ethiopian Airlines, via Addis Abbaba
- Kenya Airways via Nairobi

Please liaise with the BSSH LION secretariat regarding your bookings on the email below:

[LIONhandunit@bssh.ac.uk](mailto:LIONhandunit@bssh.ac.uk)

Please note that if you need to change a booked flight due to a change in circumstances, any changes will usually need to be self-funded.

### **Visa requirement**

As of February 2024 a visa is no longer required for most visits by UK Nationals.

In some circumstances a visa may be required to gain entry into Malawi. The visa required varies depending on the length of time and work that will be undertaken during the trip. You can apply for a visa via the online portal, and it usually takes less than a week to come through. Note this is a simple process and you do not need to pay an “agent” or other third party to help you

To apply for a visa using the Malawi e-visa system visit: <https://www.evisa.gov.mw/>.

Select option 1 Apply for e-Visa. You will need to register on the website prior to submitting an application. For those volunteering for periods up to 3 months, a standard tourist visa seems to suffice, select single single-entry followed by medical as the reason for travel. For all addresses asked for put in Benetolo House. The LION letter of invitation can be uploaded each time an authorisation letter is asked for.

For those volunteering for periods of 3 months or longer a work visa may be required. There are various types of these and the BSSH Overseas facilitator will help you determine which one to apply for.

Upon entry to Malawi, you will be given a stamp in your passport that allows you to stay for 30 days irrespective of how long your original E visa is for. You need to attend the immigration office in Lilongwe before your 30 days is up and have the visa extended and your passport stamped again. You must take a copy of your E Visa when you attend the Immigration Offices along with your passport. The immigration officer will usually stamp your passport allowing a stay of a further 2 months. You do not have to wait until your 30 days are up to get the 2 months extension.

### **Address for immigration office**

Immigration Offices, Immigration Offices Lilongwe, Murry Road, Lilongwe, Malawi

Parking can be difficult as the road is very busy. The Immigration office is open 08.00 until 16.00. Lunch is 12-13.30. It is advisable not to attend over lunch time.

It is worthwhile taking multiple paper copies of the visa with you, as the authorities at Lilongwe airport may keep a copy on entry.

A payment in US dollars is required. It costs circa US\$50 for a tourist visa (this cost will be reimbursed by the BSSH upon submission of a completed expenses form, returned to the secretariat within 3 months of travel).

The e-Visa system will inform you through email after your visa application is submitted. After the necessary processing, the decision will be made on approval of the application. Once your visa is approved, you will receive an email and approval letter. The Visa approval letter must be shown to the Passport control counter at entry. Therefore, please ensure you take either an electronic or paper copy of the e-Visa approval letter with you on travelling to Malawi.

**It is your responsibility to organise your visa for the period of travel as it cannot be done on your behalf by BSSH.**

Please note that the tourist visa is only valid for 12 weeks, so please do not apply for it too far in advance of your travel.

### **Letter of support KCH-LION**

You will receive a formal letter of invitation signed by the appropriate individual at KCH-LION to support your visa application. This letter will need to be uploaded onto the Malawi e-visa system when completing your application.

Please ensure this letter contains your correct details and passport number. Even if you do not require a visa, we suggest having a copy of the letter with you on arrival in Malawi.

### **Travel insurance**

The BSSH has a collective insurance policy with Banner. We purchase it at a daily rate for each named volunteer. This insurance policy covers travel, medical care and repatriation for all volunteers travelling on BSSH-approved overseas trips. It will only cover the volunteer (not partners or visitors) and it will only cover your volunteer spell and travel to and from UK immediately before and after the spell. You may wish to arrange additional insurance for your personal belongings or other travel plans.

## **Indemnity insurance**

During your contracted time volunteering at the LION, you will be covered by the standard medical indemnity insurance of the KCH / LION hospital. You will not require additional indemnity insurance.

## **ACCOMODATION**

Accommodation has been provided in Area 43 of Lilongwe. This is about a twenty-minute drive from KCH LION. A 5-bedroom bungalow, 'Benetolo House', has been rented by the BSSH for the BSSH-LION project team. It consists of individual rooms (2 are ensuite), a large living area and communal kitchen. There is a large veranda, and a BBQ area outside. The house is set within an acre of wooded private grounds.

There is a housekeeper and gardener and night security guard for general cleaning, maintenance and security of the property. Your safety whilst away is of the utmost importance and whilst every effort has been made to ensure a secure and safe living space has been provided, it is advisable not to leave any valuables on display. BSSH does not accept liability for any property lost or stolen during your visit.

Address of Benetolo House:

Plot no 43/2/133  
Ufulu Road  
Area 43  
Lilongwe

Benetolo House is your home and your sanctuary during your time in Malawi and is a place for rest and recuperation.

Whilst there will inevitably be some work-chat and some zoom meetings in the evenings and weekends, please try where possible to leave work at work, and not let it dominate the household. When work is necessary at home, please try and ensure an appropriate balance of surgery and therapy, particularly as the therapist will often be outnumbered by surgeons.

Please show respect and kindness both for other house residents and the house staff. It can be very challenging living and working closely with each other for many weeks. The work

can be tough, mentally, physically and emotionally. Some volunteers will be missing home, family and friends. We all have our strengths and weakness, our irritations and our irritants. Be tolerant, respect each other's personal space and privacy, and support one another.

At the hospital, the consultant surgeon will co-ordinate the work of the LION Hand Unit with the support of the hand therapist, as well as supervise the trainee surgeon. At Benetolo House, these hierarchies should be minimised although responsibility has to be taken for certain aspects of managing the house and staff. There needs to be a designated point of contact for the staff and landlord, and agreement about who is responsible for paying bills, looking after the car and paying Charles, Mercy and William the guard. You should look out for each other and may give advice to other team members, but you must respect each other's freedoms and personal risk thresholds.

Malawi has earned its name as 'The Warm Heart of Africa' not only for the warm climate and beautiful scenery but also from the warm hearts of its inhabitants.

## HEALTH

### Vaccinations

Vaccinations should be completed in line with [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\)](#) website for country specific Travel Advisory Notices (travel restrictions) and entry requirements.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malawi>

The following vaccinations are currently recommended when travelling to Malawi but you will need to check for updates. Make sure you are up to date on all routine vaccines before you travel.

- COVID-19 – please check if you will be required to provide proof of vaccination on entry to the country for your period of travel
- Cholera
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Polio - A single lifetime booster dose of Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) is recommended for adults who received the routine polio vaccination series as children; the routine series is recommended for unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated children and adults and those with unknown vaccination status

- Typhoid

Contact your GP in the first instance to get a copy of your vaccination record and find out whether your existing UK vaccinations are up to date.

You should also ask if the GP practice is signed up to provide free NHS vaccinations for travel, as not all GP practices are.

If the GP practice does not provide NHS vaccinations for travel, you can try a:

- private travel vaccination clinic
- pharmacy offering travel healthcare services

### **Yellow fever certificate**

A yellow fever certificate is not required to gain entry to Malawi. However, certain countries have yellow fever certificate requirements on transit. If your transit time is >12hours in an airport located in a country with risk of yellow fever virus transmission (e.g., Ethiopia), then you will require an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP).

If you have not been vaccinated against yellow fever, you should be vaccinated at least 10 days before you travel to allow enough time for the vaccine to work.

### **Malaria prophylaxis**

There is a high risk of Malaria in all parts of Malawi. Anti-malarial prophylaxis is recommended for all travellers to Malawi, regardless of the length of time you will be spending in the country.

Common species are:

- *P. falciparum* (primarily)
- *P. malaria*, *P. ovale*, and *P. vivax* (less common)

Recommended chemoprophylaxis includes:

- Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, tafenoquine
- Chloroquine is NOT recommended for prophylaxis due to resistance

Other recommended measures include:

- Wear long-sleeves and trousers in the evenings

- Always sleep under a mosquito net (mosquito nets will be provided at the BSSH guesthouse)
- Use mosquito-repellent particularly in the evenings
- Avoid sitting outside near water sources in the evenings
- Close windows in the evenings

The following website provides detailed information regarding malaria prophylaxis.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2020/travel-related-infectious-diseases/malaria#5550>

Antimalarials can be purchased privately using online pharmacies, or via specialist travel clinics. Asda and some chain pharmacies also offer travel clinics and antimalarials at reasonable prices.

The following online pharmacies provide good rates for antimalarials (as of November 2023).

- [www.doctorfox.co.uk](http://www.doctorfox.co.uk)
- [www.chemistclick.co.uk](http://www.chemistclick.co.uk)

### **HIV Pre or post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)**

The prevalence of HIV in Malawi is estimated at 9%, with females having a higher incidence than males. Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a course of anti-HIV medication that must be started as soon as possible after you've been exposed to HIV. PEP is available at KCH.

You should ensure adequate precautions, including eye protection, double-gloving and surgical gown/apron when performing high-risk procedures.

### **Needle Stick/Sharps Injury**

If you sustain a needle stick injury whilst at work you should follow the standard operating procedure of KCH/ LION. Bleed the wound, copious washout, provide PEP and appropriate dressings as first treatment. Attend the Lighthouse HIV department, medical outpatient clinic 1, at the KCH main hospital site; who will do HIV testing immediately as a baseline (to test for HIV already present) and provide PEP for 4 weeks. 1 tablet a day best with food. Further testing will be carried out at 4 weeks and 12 weeks. Contact the head of either the surgical department or therapy department immediately.

## **Healthcare in Malawi**

There is a state provided public healthcare system as well as many private clinics and hospitals. Take a complete supply of any regular prescriptions you require for the total duration of your stay. It is advisable to carry a basic first aid kit containing simple analgesics, dressings, plasters, antihistamine, oral re-hydration sachets, etc.

If you become ill during your stay, seek appropriate medical attention from either a government hospital or a private clinic. You can buy most medications over the counter without a prescription. However, as detailed above, we would advise that you bring any regular prescription medications with you. The medical staff at KCH are usually very helpful and willing to see visiting volunteer staff with health problems.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Climate & weather**

The climate in Malawi is very warm, with an annual average of 24 degrees. The hottest and rainiest part of the country is Southern Region. The coolest is the Central Region where KCH-LION is located.

Malawi has two main seasons, a cool dry season between May and October with mean temperatures of around 13°C in June and July and a hot wet season between November and April with temperatures between 30°- 35°C. The weather during summer, November to April, is hot and humid as these months are also part of the rainy season. The coolest months are June and July when daytime temperatures hover around 21 degrees Celsius. It tends to be cooler in the evenings and can be cold overnight.

### **Transport**

There is a reasonably reliable bus service that connects the major towns, but the buses are old, and overcrowded. Single fares range from 700mkw+ for a single journey within the city. *(note at time of writing inflation in Malawi is exceptionally high so these figures are liable to be underestimates)*

Private taxis are readily available, be prepared to negotiate on the price as they will charge you tourist rates! We have negotiated a tariff with a local driver, "Eliot" for trips outside Lilongwe, and we recommend that you use his services especially for longer trips.

There are also a number of Tuk Tuk's if travelling short distances.

Lilongwe is small but spread out and travel is far easier and safer by car. A car has been purchased for BSSH team use. This is to be used primarily for commuting to and from work, but may also be used for general errands, social purposes and activities in Lilongwe. There is separate guidance about the car. **Please do not try to drive the car until you have familiarised yourself with the guidance** and undertaken an orientation drive with a colleague who has become familiar with the car and driving here. The main roads in Malawi are generally surfaced, however, smaller roads and side streets are often narrow and in poor condition, particularly the further you travel out of the city. If you want to travel outside Lilongwe, we recommend you should hire a more suitable vehicle (probably four wheel-drive). We also recommend that you consider hiring both a vehicle and driver.

Non native people rarely travel on foot due to the heat and security issues at night. You will see plenty of cyclists and motorcyclists on the roads, however we would not advise this as a mode of transport. Motorcyclists in particular are often unlicensed drivers and a lot of motorcycles are not roadworthy.

There are many road traffic collisions, therefore whenever travelling on the roads (regardless of your mode of transport), remain vigilant of other road users (including animals).

Do not travel alone after nightfall. Always carry a torch/head torch with you when heading out in the evenings.

### **Driving in Malawi**

You can drive in Malawi using your UK driving license (don't forget to bring it!) for your first three months. Thereafter, you will need to get a Malawian licence.

Be careful when driving, and try to avoid driving at night as there are no streetlights or pavements. Driving at night outside the main towns is not recommended due to the security risk. There are also drink driving issues and lots of people/chickens/goats/dogs etc. in the road.

There are no road-side recovery services in Malawi, therefore it is important that your vehicle is well maintained and regularly serviced. It is advisable to check your tyre pressures, water and oil levels etc. regularly. Top up on fuel more often than you would in the UK and carry a full jerry can with you as there are regular petrol shortages. Petrol prices are nationally set, and there are petrol stations in most settlements on major roads.

## Money

The currency is the Kwacha (MWK). On November 6<sup>th</sup> 2023, 1 GBP was worth 1,900 MWK, but global financial conditions have led to significant exchange rate volatility for the Kwacha and corresponding inflation.

Whilst there are ATMs in Lilongwe, it is best to exchange your money at Lilongwe airport as they offer better rates than elsewhere. It is not generally possible to acquire large amounts of Kwacha in the UK prior to travel and the exchange rates are better at Lilongwe airport. The exchange rate is better for GBP rather than US dollars. However, if you are intending on visiting neighbouring countries such as South Luangwa Park in Zambia, you may need to pay for some items and permits in US dollars cash.

It is advisable to budget for a weekly spend of around £150. If you are planning weekend trips away, you may need to allow additional funds for accommodation, game park entry etc. Whilst you may be able to pay for these using cards, it is often easier (and cheaper) to pay by cash. Frequently the card machines do not work so cash is needed.

A volunteers suggested budget as of November 2023:

**Food & Drink: average £43/week** (includes alcohol for the house, eating out, food when away for weekend trips etc)

**Entertainment: average £9/week** (e.g. yoga class, wildlife park, quiz nights)

Internet data: average £3.40/week

**Money to claim back from BSSH: average £43.50/week** (e.g. water/electricity bills, money for market, wages)

**Travel: average £23/week** (e.g. tuktuk, trips outside Lilongwe for weekends)

**Accommodation: £82/week** (weekend trips - bear in mind I have been here a while and been on a few trips so most people may only do 1 or 2 during their stay. For me this included Blue Zebra and safari in Zambia which are slightly on the pricier side of things, so this is a very variable budget depending on what people want to do!)

Other things would be souvenirs/gifts, small tips e.g. for guys carrying luggage or shopping to car (negligible amount), toiletries/medication if needed.

You can pay using debit/credit card in most restaurants, bars and hotels. However, the exchange rate is not favourable even if paying via Monzo. It is useful to have a Starling or

Monzo card, which is widely accepted in Malawi and has reasonable rates of exchange. Setting up an account is very quick and easy to do online, but this must be done in the UK so that you receive the card ahead of travelling.

ATMs can be found throughout the city and there is an ATM at the LION. Malawi is more expensive than you may expect. Lunch in the hospital café costs 3,000-5,000 MWK. Lunch in a café or restaurant in the city may range from 10 – 20,000MWK, expect to pay 15 – 25,000MWK for a main meal and drink in a western-style restaurant.

### **Foreign exchange bureaus**

- Lilongwe international airport – various banks and Victoria Forex
  - Opening times: at least one most of the time.
  - Offer the best exchange rates, so best to exchange money at the airport for use during your time in Malawi
- Golden Forex Bureau, the Gateway Mall
  - Opening hours 8am - 4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12 Sat, closed on Sundays
  - Similar exchange rates to those offered at the airport

### **Expenses**

It has not been possible for BSSH to set up a bank account in Malawi. Therefore, it will be necessary, at times, for one of the team to pay for items that are due to be funded by BSSH, for example groceries, fuel for the car, utilities etc. Most of these payments need to be made in cash. Receipts must be kept for any such expenses and attached to a completed expense claim form to apply for a refund from BSSH (you will be given a copy of the BSSH expense claim form ahead of travel). If at any time there are more significant expenses that it would be difficult to pay for upfront (such as car servicing), then please contact the BSSH Secretariat LION team to arrange a transfer of funds.

### **Food**

**Basic groceries will be bought each week for Benetolo House, so the majority of your food will be provided. Food supplies in the house may also be used to make packed lunches for your day at the hospital, if desired.**

There are regular supermarkets as you would find in the UK, as well as street stalls and local corner shops. You will often find that Malawian produce is cheaper in the supermarkets than items imported from South Africa or elsewhere. (*See Handbook part 2*)

If you have any special dietary requirements (e.g., Gluten free, vegan etc), we strongly advise you to bring some dietary food items with you as these may not be readily available in Malawi. Certain food items are not available or are very expensive due to import costs. It is essential for anyone with dietary requirements to discuss with the team on the ground in detail before arrival so they can be guided about what is available in the local shops. You may also wish to bring items such as your preferred brand of tea/coffee etc. (*note - Malawian tea and coffee is in fact very good!*)

Malawians mostly eat meat in some form of sauce with rice or nsima (a savoury jelly-like dish made from maize flour). It's not to everyone's liking but the locals love it, and it's definitely worth trying as you may love it too!

There are a variety of restaurants selling all types of international food from Korean to Asian, Chinese, Italian and many others. Fast-food outlets such as Pizza Hut and KFC can also be found in Lilongwe.

A list of restaurant recommendations is included towards the end of this guide.

## **Drink**

There are excellent local spirits (Malawi gin, Malawi vodka etc.) at decent prices. Wine is imported from South Africa and there are a variety of beers. Beer is mostly bottled. Carlsberg is the only brewery with a licence to operate in Malawi, hence it is readily available and very cheap. Imported beer is considerably more expensive.

The BSSH is a charity and not permitted by the Charity Commission to fund alcohol, therefore, it will not be included in the regular grocery shop. Volunteers and guests are welcome to buy alcohol for responsible use at Benetolo House.

## **Water**

There is a good standard water supply, however drinking tap water is at your own risk as it may not be safe to drink. There is a water filtration system at Benetolo House to convert tap water into filtered water. When away from the house we recommend taking a water bottle with you or buying bottled water.

## Electricity

There is mains electricity supply throughout Lilongwe, however there are regular power cuts. The times vary, but they are often pre-arranged and are usually between the hours of 5am and 11pm. There is a generator at the BSSH guesthouse, but some basic backup in the form of solar lights/torches/candles etc is still advisable. Bring a torch with you and batteries (ideally rechargeable ones).

Malawi uses an English electricity system (i.e., standard three pin plugs), so don't worry about adaptors. Do bring power-surge protection plugs with you as there are frequent surges which may otherwise damage your electronic devices, such as laptops and mobile phones.

## Phones

Most people have a mobile phone, and you will find that most of the staff at KCH-LION communicate via WhatsApp. You can buy a simple pay-as-you-go sim for little over £1 (with data and minutes on top), so make sure that your phone is unlocked ahead of travel. Airtel is the most widely used and recommended company. There is an Airtel shop at the airport.

**It is advisable to allow one of the Airtel card vendors to insert the sim and make appropriate adjustments to your mobile phone settings to allow proper usage.** You will need to have your passport /number available when you purchase a Malawian sim card. A 30 day data package eg 32GB or a combined data and Airtel mobile to mobile bundles are popular. Most communication at the LION and with the volunteers uses WhatsApp hence data is most useful for 4G

If you insert a Malawian sim into your phone, you can still keep using your UK number for WhatsApp without international charges (just select 'keep number' on opening WhatsApp after inserting the Malawian SIM card into your phone). This will allow you to keep in touch with family and friends.

Malawi is either an hour or two hours behind the UK depending on the time of year, so keeping in touch with family and friends is pretty easy.

## **Clothing**

Clinicians generally wear semi-smart (or fairly casual) clothing or theatre scrubs. A short-sleeved shirt and chinos is the norm for men, and similarly semi-casual clothing for women. Boots, closed toe-shoes or trainers are best as you will be on your feet most of the day, and it is fairly dusty (particularly during the dry season). You may want to bring your own scrubs although there is a supply at Benetolo House. You should also bring theatre shoes and surgical hats (non-disposable would be ideal as you can wash and re-use them throughout your trip).

For therapists – wear your standard UK uniform or scrubs.

## **SAFETY & SECURITY**

Malawi is a poor but generally a safe country. As with many low-middle income countries, there is a vast inequality in wealth with some very wealthy individuals and many people living in extreme poverty, particularly in the rural areas.

Crime is often opportunistic in nature such as bag snatching and theft. Violent burglaries and carjacking do occur; however, the overall crime rate is low as the penalties are very severe if caught. You will pass through regular Police roadblocks if travelling around the country (some permanent and some popup), but they are generally friendly. The police may ask for money or a drink though but will smile and wave you through if you say no!

Do not carry your mobile phone or other valuables on display in public, particularly when travelling on public transport. Ensure all valuables and small electronic devices such as tablets/laptops are stored securely and out of sight when not in use.

It's no different to anywhere else, be sensible and vigilant particularly at night, in bus stations and when changing money on the black market.

Malawi has a similar police and judiciary system to the UK. It is highly unlikely but if you are unfortunate enough to be a victim of crime during your stay, please inform the police.

**Police emergency number: 997**

Do not swim in rivers or in the lake between dusk and dawn due to the risk of crocodiles.

## **PACKING CHECKLIST**

### **Documents**

- Passport
- Printed documents required of the following:
  - Copy of e-Visa approval if needed
  - Copy of letter of support from KCH-LION
  - Copy of BSSH approved volunteer letter
  - Copy of Customs clearance letter if carrying donated equipment
  - Copy of travel insurance
- UK driving license - You will need to carry this with you at all times when driving.
- US dollars or GB pounds – Both can be exchanged at the airport at a reasonable rate, although you get a better rate for GBP.

### **General**

- Water bottle
- Toiletries (see below)
- Mosquito repellent
- Insulated water bottle
- Sun hat/cap
- Sunglasses
- Trainers
- Walking boots, particularly if planning to go on hikes
- Work shoes – closed toe (many staff wear trainers but bear in mind that they will get dirty due to the dust/climate)
- Flip flops/sandals
- Books – we'd like to collect a small library of books for those visiting Malawi like yourself, so please bring a book to leave at the house
- Small rucksack/bag
- Small bumbag/or other similar for carrying phone, small valuables whilst at work
- Luggage locks

### **Clothing**

Malawians tend to dress relatively conservatively (avoid short shorts/ skirts) and long sleeved clothes also provides protection from mosquitoes.

- Light, cool clothing
- Light long-sleeved tops and trousers (for evening mosquito protection)
- Work clothes – similar smartness to UK e.g. polo shirt and chinos for men, dresses/smart top and trousers for women. Therapists should bring their usual uniform worn in the UK.
- Swimming gear
- Activewear - for activities, sports, hiking
- Thin raincoat (if travelling in the rainy season)
- If travelling between May to July – you will need warmer clothing for the evenings, fleece and light jumpers

### **Electronics**

- Mobile phone & charger
- Laptop & charger
- Surge protector
- Torch and/or head torch
- Re-chargeable batteries
- Battery pack for phone or electronic devices
- Headphones

### **Health/first aid**

- Regular prescription medications, if applicable
- Antimalarials
- Analgesics – Paracetamol, Ibuprofen
- Anti-histamine cream/spray
- Oral rehydration solution/sachets
- Loperamide
- Plasters
- Simple dressings
- Bandage
- Antibiotics for traveller's diarrhoea – may be useful to have a set but can get from visiting KCH medical clinic

### **Toiletries**

*Can buy some locally but anything branded is very expensive as imported*

- Sun cream (can be difficult to find in Malawi so bring plenty of your own)

- Shower gel
- Toothbrush/ Toothpaste/ Mouthwash/ Floss
- Deodorant
- Moisturiser
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Razor/ Shave gel
- Nail scissors
- Glasses/ Contact lenses/ Contact lens solution
- Hairbrush
- Hair ties
- Sanitary products

### **Household items**

- Towels (if possible to leave behind at Benetolo house)
- Hand/Face towel
- Bedding is available at the house, but it may be nice to bring your own, particularly if you will be staying for a prolonged period of time.
- 2x flat sheets and 2 pillow-cases – some sets available in the house
- Any home comfort foods – e.g. cereal/snack bars, your favourite brand of teabags, and any dietary/allergy related foods/treats/snacks
- Boardgames – it would be nice to build up a selection at the house (currently there is Monopoly, Uno and some playing cards)
- Check with house team what else may be needed

### **Work kit**

- Backpack – to carry kit and personal belongings around hospital (secure storage not currently available at KCH for surgeons, however a locker with padlock is provided for therapy staff)
- Scrub shoes (with carry bag). Scrubs are available at the house so you do not need to bring your own
- Scrub hat (preferably a BSSH scrub hat, you can request one from the secretariat if you do not own one already)
- BSSH lanyard
- Name badge/ID card
- Eye protection

- Surgical gloves – some are available at KCH but often only one size, so it is useful to have a few pairs for longer/more complex cases
- Hand sanitiser – small one to carry around hospital
- Face masks as these are sometimes difficult to locate
- Plastic bags – to carry home dirty scrubs
- Bumbag/ shoulder bag – to carry phone and pen etc around hospital. Therapists will need to carry scissors, gloves, tape and a goniometer.
- Loupes – can get a cheaper set off Amazon/eBay if you do not want to take your expensive set
- Refillable water bottle
- Notebook
- Pens
- Medical supplies (see below)

### **Resources & equipment**

Equipment (if you can source some, it would be very helpful and greatly appreciated by the team at KCH-LION): Equipment needs do vary from time to time, so it is sensible to check what is appropriate before you bring stuff. There is a list on the BSSH website of useful items, and an ongoing equipment program overseen by the management team.

### **Optional for trips/hikes**

- Camelbac or other similar portable liquid carrier
- Binoculars

### **USEFUL WEBSITES**

<https://www.bssh.ac.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel->

[vaccinations/https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malawi](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malawi)

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2020/travel-related-infectious-diseases/malaria#5550>

[www.Malawi.gov.mw](http://www.Malawi.gov.mw)

[www.visitmalawi.mw](http://www.visitmalawi.mw)

[www.malawitourism.com](http://www.malawitourism.com)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ybnsvosaxsw8wf/Hiking-Guide-to-Mount-Mulanje.pdf?dl=0>

### **An outline of the consultant schedule**

Mon: Trauma Meeting - Hand Clinic (a.m)- Ward Round (p.m)

Tues: Trauma Meeting - All Day Theatre ED Procedure Room List

Wed: Trauma Meeting - All Day Main Theatre List

Thurs: Trauma Meeting - All Day Theatre ED Procedure Room List

Friday: Trauma Meeting - Hand Clinic (a.m) - Ward Round (p.m)

Plus Additional Teaching on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for Registrars and OCOs.

## MEET THE TEAM

### BSSH LION Partnership UK

Mr Martin Wood	LION leadership team BSSH GPC
Mr Jonathan Jones	LION leadership team BSSH GPC
Ms Kate Owers	LION leadership team (Education)
Ms Sarah Mee	LION leadership team BSSH BAHT
Ms Chloe Baxter	LION leadership team BSSH BAHT
Ms Alexandra Griffiths	LION leadership team (Trainees)
Mr Jeremy Stanton	LION leadership team Equipment

### BSSH LION Education team

Mr Carlos Heras-Palau	Education BSSH
Mr Wee Lam	Education BSSH
Mr Benjamin Wood	Education resource development
Mr Simon Parker	Education resource development
Mr George Hourston	Education resource development
Ms Jia Choong	Education resource development

### BSSH LION Partnership Malawi

Dr Sven Young	CEO L.I.O.N
Dr Boston Munthali	Medical Director L.I.O.N
Dr Kumbukani Manda	Head of Orthopaedic Dept. L.I.O.N
Dr Leonard Banza	Orthopaedic Consultant L.I.O.N
Miss Wezi Harawa	Physiotherapy Representative L.I.O.N
Dr Chawezi Katete	Orthopaedic Trainee Rep. L.I.O.N

