

# MEDIC MALAWI UPDATE

October 2014

## VIRGINIA

Until last month Virginia Soko was blind, and had been for three years. Now she can see again, as these wonderful 'before and after' pictures show. **Our eye surgery is underway at St Andrew's! It is life changing, uplifting and exhilarating** – as Virginia explains in this lovely interview with Aubrey Wande, our administrator.



**Aubrey:** How are you madam?

**Virginia:** I am fine

**Aubrey:** How old are you?

**Virginia:** I don't know.

**Aubrey:** Can you show me of what size you were when there was the last big famine in Malawi?

*She shows Aubrey the size of a 10 or 11 year old. The last big famine was in 1959. From that to date 55 years have elapsed and adding 10 or 11 to it then the approximate age of hers should be between 65 and 66 years.*

**Aubrey:** Since the time you became blind what chores are you unable to do that you did before?

**Virginia:** Cooking, fetching water, gardening etc

**Aubrey:** In 2012, a similar exercise was conducted, why did you not come?



**Virginia:** We heard about it after the exercise had already finished and I was sad.

And on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, after the surgery...

**Aubrey:** How does it feel to be able to see again?

**Virginia:** Very very good. I thank you all for your effort in making me see again. I will be able to see my children again and my grandchildren for the first time. I will be able to do all the jobs I failed to do before and I will no longer be a burden to my relatives.

**Talk about making a difference to someone's life!** And the team operated on nearly 100 patients in a week. This major extension of the work of St Andrew's will take place monthly, tackling the curse of preventable blindness.



## AMOS

I tingled with excitement when I recognised the surgeon's name – Amos Nyaka, an ex-pupil of mine from

Kamuzu Academy! From a humble background, but very bright, he trained in Kenya but has now returned as an eye surgeon in Lilongwe. It was great to be in touch again and even to discover that he also has twins. So we will work closely together to bring surgery to St Andrew's which Amos, on his first visit, described to me as 'a wonder'. My thanks also to our old school who hosted Amos and his team free of charge for the week, and who have promised to do so in the future too.

**TWO NUMBERS: 75 %  
AND £30**

**75% of blindness in Africa is preventable.** With the help of Amos, and our partner the Malawi Eye Surgery Fund of London who gave great expertise in technical preparation and their skill during the week, we can attack especially cataracts which have caused blindness, and trachomas which surely will... And during Amos' visit about 250 came for non-surgical work, a huge number for the small hospital, which Aubrey accommodated brilliantly with army tents and loos, food and transport .

**Each operation costs about £30.**

That's all. Please can you help with this work? With no UK costs, every penny you give will get to Malawi and can be steered to this fantastic work.

Thank you.

*Stephen*

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