



## IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY!



**This year will be our 20<sup>th</sup> year and there is much to celebrate.**

### LOOKING BACK

Since EARS Incorporated's inception on 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1998, volunteers have worked on the ground in Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, India, Ethiopia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Fiji, PNG, Columbia and the Dominican Republic.

At the Coalition for Global Hearing Health Conferences we have run one-day workshops for people from many other countries. We have stopped by in other countries for a look-see or to provide

advice. Zambia and Nigeria spring to mind.

Donna Carkeet and Peter and Rebecca Bartlett and their family have been EARS Inc. stars. Donna ran an extremely successful audiology service and training program in the Dominican Republic where she lived for nearly a decade, and Peter and Rebecca established and still oversee an amazing project in Malawi where they lived for six years. Last year Lois and Ian Grant (Australia) and Helen Brough (UK) spent over a year on the ground in Malawi and continue to contribute now they have returned to their home countries. Prue Boyd has achieved a lot with almost nothing whilst living in the Congo.

Countless other volunteers, supporters and organisations have contributed to our achievements. I have attempted to acknowledge many of these on page 6.

### LOOKING FORWARD

As EARS expands the services we provide overseas, we need more local support. My prayer is for people here in Australia to step up and help us to run the charity. Our needs are many, including:

- Sending, monitoring and collecting the EARS donation boxes
- Accounting and legal advice
- Producing this newsletter
- Writing policies and procedures
- More prayer intercessors
- Fundraising
- Reviewing and updating our website

- Pastoral care for our volunteers, whether they are overseas or volunteering at home
- Organising training and information events

The eight volunteer members of the board of EARS Inc. have been trying to do all these things but there are too few of us for the increasing workload. We don't want to disappear into mediocrity. I believe that we need a Chief Operating Officer to step up to co-ordinate all these "needs" and the people God is calling to fulfil them.

You may be someone who can help or you may be in a position to pray for these people. If you feel that you have a word of advice, encouragement or direction for us, I invite you to share it. Our contact details are on the back page.

At our 2018 AGM, Deanna Connor is retiring from the EARS board. I thank her for her service and support. It was great having her as part of the team. Her contributions elsewhere are amazing, and we wish her well in them.

As we come to celebrating our twentieth year we look to the work we have done and that which lies before us, we look at ourselves and those around us, and we look to our Lord for direction and calling.

Be blessed.

*David Pither*

*President, EARS Inc.*



**EARS Inc. is an Australian, not-for-profit association dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of hearing impairment through training and equipping local individuals and agencies in developing countries.**

**We serve and empower people, irrespective of nationality, race, gender or religion, while showing the love of Jesus through our words and actions.**

**Our vision is for deaf and hearing impaired people in developing countries to have access to the hearing services they need to help them to reach their potential.**

## Fiji project

By Dr Donna Carkeet, audiologist and EARS Inc. board member

I have visited Fiji twice so far this year for the EARS Inc. project, ably assisted by volunteers. There are 17 special and inclusive schools and one Vocational Training Centre in Fiji. We have been assisting our partner organisation Frank Hilton Organisation (FHO) to conduct hearing screening in the special schools. This is the first time many of these special-needs children have had their hearing tested, even those who are in the deaf school.

From April 2017 to April 2018, FHO Audiology has visited 14 special schools and one district school in the Central, West and Northern districts. We have also conducted repeat visits to 6 of these schools to screen students who were not present or did not have consent during the initial visit.

Of the collective school roll of 1019, 964 of these schools' students have been screened by the team. The team was also able to screen 241 outpatients whilst on these projects.

62% of the children screened within special schools were identified as having a hearing loss, or with or at-risk of ear health issues that may contribute to hearing loss. It is easy for these children to be misdiagnosed as having ADHD or mild autism, learning disabled, or speech and language delayed.

Mild to severe permanent hearing losses in children can be hard to detect as they appear to respond to many sounds. These children however are not able to hear clearly and therefore don't pronounce words clearly.

Temporary hearing losses due to infections or wax blockages can cause a fluctuating hearing loss. These children often fail to learn well as they miss vital information on days they are not hearing as well. If a child with learning difficulties suffers from ear infections or excess wax, it will make their learning difficulties appear to be worse.

In the 14 special schools screened so far, we found 49% (N=469) of the children had an ear pathology at the time of screening. During our visits the ENT surgeon, Dr Oh,

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From left: Tukana, Ajen, Shabina, Elena, Terrence, Madison, Donna, Dr Oh (Ear Nose and Throat specialist) and Sureni (CEO Frank Hilton Organisation)



## Thanks!

We're grateful to the wonderful volunteers and EARS members who have given their time to assist with our small and large projects in Fiji.

### **Neelima Yadlapalli, Audiologist.**

Neelima was a great help writing protocols and training the local audiometrist to use real ear measurements for hearing aid evaluation.

### **Madison Linares Carkeet,**

**Audiometrist.** Madison's assistance in the school screening projects was invaluable.

### **Nick Kourtis, calibration**

**technician.** Nick calibrated all the equipment in Fiji again. He also repairs and calibrates some of our donated audiological equipment.

### **David Pither, Audiometrist (and EARS Inc. president).**

David trained local staff to make soft earmoulds. Between David and Nick, they managed to sort out our software and computer issues.

### **Judith Francis, Audiologist and EARS board member.**

Judith visited to observe the project on behalf of the board, but also assisted with screenings and staff training.

### **Mahes Satchi, Audiologist.**

In April, Mahes did an amazing job working with our staff in the clinic to see many of the children from Hilton Special school and Early Intervention Centre.

### **Lauren Churchill, Disability**

**worker.** Lauren worked brilliantly with some of our high needs cerebral palsy children, focussing on their communication skills and finding activities within their abilities. She assisted the screening projects, and was particularly good at getting children with autism spectrum disorder trained for play audiometry.



(Continued from page 2)

who is a volunteer with the Korean International Corporation Agency and currently attached at the Colonial War Museum Hospital in Suva, joined the FHO team at six schools. He examined and treated 157 students for middle ear pathology and ear wax removal and saw 25 outpatients.

So far, 163 special school children who were suspected of having a significant hearing loss have attended the clinic for full assessment. FHO reimburses transportation cost to schools and individual parents for the trip to the clinic, as well as refreshments or meals where necessary. 48 students have been fitted with hearing aids in both Hilton Special School, Hilton Early Intervention Centre and Gospel School for the Deaf. The team has diagnosed permanent hearing loss in 16 special school students and 8 outpatients who will be fitted in term 2 (May-August) of 2018.

Alongside this program we have been training teachers, raising community awareness and increased the experience of our trainee audiology assistants as they have developed better otoscopy, tympanometry and otoacoustic emission skills. Work on data collection and follow-up of all patients has been important aspect of their training and development. Overall this program has been an amazing success and demonstrated to the Fijian government that hearing loss and ear pathology is present in more children than previously thought.



*Local audiometrist, Sevanaia Ratumaitavuki, who was trained through Donna's Dominican Republic audiology course, has given up a lot of his time to participate in this important project.*



*So exciting to see Madison, one of our previous Dominican Republic students, able to assist on our project in Fiji.*



*As well as assisting in the training of our local clinic staff, Australian audiologist Mahes Satchi cheerfully dealt with all the schedule changes, leaking roof, wacky food, a cyclone and power outages.*



## ABC HCTC coming of age

For the first time since 2010 when Peter and Rebecca Bartlett arrived in Malawi and set up an audiology service at African Bible College (ABC) in Lilongwe, there are no expatriate audiologists at ABC. Ironically, that's something to celebrate, as the ABC Hearing Clinic and Training Centre (HCTC) is still open for business and every month is looking after dozens of people with their ear and hearing health concerns. ABC HCTC now has seven clinical staff – each with their own areas of responsibility, an office administrator and an earmould maker. They work well as a team and are committed to providing a high quality service at the Clinic and in more remote locations.

Following the departure of the Bartletts in 2016, Helen Brough (UK audiologist), Lois Grant (Australian audiologist) and husband Dr Ian Grant (Australian veterinarian and community development project manager) expanded the ABC HCTC's range of services in 2017/18 with the introduction of vestibular (balance) assessment and rehabilitation, neonatal hearing screening and early intervention rehabilitation. They also provided the staff with ongoing clinical and administrative supervision,



MAud UK graduate Fletcher Chisalipo has been contracted by ABC to lecture in the BScAud program.



The ABC HCTC team with Rebecca, Peter and Helen Brough (far right).

stakeholder advocacy and systems support. We thank Helen, Lois and Ian for the incredible service they all gave to the EARS Inc project in Malawi, and their ongoing commitment to the cause since they have returned to their respective countries.

In December 2017 for a preparation trip and in January 2018 for an outreach trip, Peter Bartlett returned to Malawi to work with the ABC HCTC team on providing hearing devices donated by Hear The World Foundation. The team was rather busy during the 3-week outreach trip ...

Tests: 288  
People fitted with devices: 115  
Devices fitted: 186  
Other consults: 281  
Total patient appts: 684

These outreach visits were done in partnership with Save The Children in Mzimba South and Lilongwe districts, and Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) in Dowa and Ntchisi districts. A further outreach in February was conducted with World Vision in Dedza district. The importance of working with community-based networks through experienced organisations cannot be overstated given the importance of follow up of patients and the ongoing maintenance of the devices and supply of batteries.

### What's Next?

Although our ABC HCTC team does a great job, apart from University of

Manchester graduate Fletcher Chisalipo, the audiology training of the ABC graduates is not recognised in Malawi.

The ABC Bachelor of Science in Audiology program was accredited by the Medical Council of Malawi in September 2016 but is yet to be accredited by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), so we have had to suspend training the new cohort of six students, which would allow us to include the previous students.

### Planning a trip?

Rebecca Bartlett will be in Malawi May/June to support the team and, with the hope of the BSc(Aud) being registered by NCHE in June, prepare for the new academic year which starts in August.

Peter Bartlett, Helen Brough and EARS Inc. President David Pither and Board member Wesley Ong will visit in October prior to the Coalition for Global Hearing Health conference and World Congress of Audiology in Cape Town.

Peter Bartlett is planning on another outreach trip in January 2019.

To continue our on the ground support of the ABC HCTC team and training program we urgently need more expatriate audiologists to go to Malawi.

**If you are a clinician and interested in assisting the Malawi project as a trainer, clinician and/or supervisor, please contact us: [admin@earsinc.com](mailto:admin@earsinc.com).**



## A Year to Remember

*In 2017, Australian audiologist Lois Grant and her husband Ian spent one year supporting the work of EARS Inc. and the ABC Hearing Clinic and Training Centre (HCTC) in Lilongwe Malawi. We asked Lois to share some highlights.*

Helen Brough (audiologist from UK), Ian and myself had an amazing year in Malawi. Whenever we think about stories, we think of special people we met and worked with.

### Newborn hearing screening program

One highlight of our time in Malawi was the newborn hearing screening work that began during the year. With Helen's high level of skill in paediatric diagnostic audiology and my background in early intervention and family-centred support, we were ready to take up this new opportunity. We knew this was something that Peter and Rebecca Bartlett wanted to see begin, and with new equipment for baby hearing screening donated by Hear The World, the pieces all fell into place and we could see God's hand in this.

Malawian staff at the ABC HCTC quickly became proficient with the screening and involved in rolling out the program at the ABC maternity unit as well as trying a project at local hospitals, although there were some challenges along the way. It was rewarding to see our staff and the ENT staff at the local hospital work together to begin some newborn hearing screening at the hospital. HCTC staff members, Alinane and Kamuzu, provided training and technical support. The first baby was being fitted with hearing aids by Tiwa just as we finished our year and we look forward to seeing the difference that early identification and intervention may bring to the children and families of Malawi.

### Student connections

When we think of highlights, our thoughts go to the group of young Malawian students who met for Bible study and prayer in our house each week. Although not directly related to Audiology, the times of laughter, sharing, studying the bible, praying and support were some of the most rewarding and special times that God gave us in our time in Malawi.

Ian was also involved in teaching (Community Development and Veterinary Science at different places as well as Biology in the ABC Audiology Degree program) so there were many opportunities to spend time with students.

We felt privileged to follow on from Peter and Rebecca and all they had achieved in the previous six years with support from EARS Inc. We pray that others will share in the work and vision over the coming years, especially the opportunity to mentor and encourage the Malawians there. There is also the ongoing challenge to have the new degree course fully recognized in Malawi, as well as future work in the health sector there. Lots of need and scope for more volunteers!

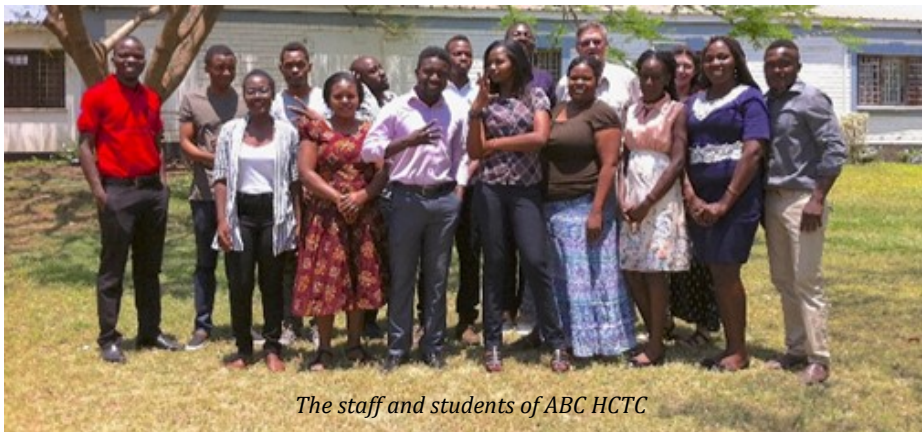


*Lois tests a child at a centre for disabled children.*



*Above: Alinane and Kamuzu quickly became skilled at using the equipment to screen a newborn's hearing.*

*Below: Ian and Lois with Alinane and the fantastic go-anywhere HARK vehicle.*



*The staff and students of ABC HCTC*



# EARS Honour Roll

We want to acknowledge the many organisations and individuals who have contributed significantly to the hundreds, possibly thousands of people in developing countries who are hearing better and have a better quality of life.

- **Churches:** Many churches have raised funds and prayed such as York St Church of Christ in Ballarat, Templestowe Uniting Church and Camberwell Baptist church in Melbourne, Thornleigh Baptist Church in Sydney, Crookwell Anglican in country NSW, Grace Church Dulwich in London, and the Round Church of St Andrew the Great in Cambridge.
- **Rotary Clubs:** Knox is a regular contributor, and we've support from Morwell and Camberwell clubs.
- **International agencies:** Hear The World Foundation has been a major contributor and partner in our projects around the globe. Sound Seekers in the UK has been a major sponsor and partner in Malawi. The Arizona State University Hearing For Humanity team have sent a group of audiology students to Malawi every year since 2012. Dr Michael Chowen has been a keen supporter of our clinic in Malawi as has been Thomas Mills, specialist Paediatric Audiologist and Dr Rob Mackinnon of Cambridge University Hospitals.
- **Other organisations:** We have received wonderful support from Australian and New Zealand Tentmakers Association (AZTEM), the British Academy of Audiology, Med-El Cochlear Implants, Hidden Hearing, Phonak, Sonic Innovations, Bernafon, Hearing Life, Connect Hearing, Oticon Foundation, and Audiology Australia.
- **Technical experts:** Ian Whittle has provided volunteer calibration services in Malawi as has Nick Kourtis in Fiji and Paul Flynn in the Dominican Republic. Paul ran a repair and calibration course in the Dominican Republic. In Papua New Guinea, Mark Fry is still busy arranging the assembly of the sound booth donated by Rotary in Morwell and Knox.
- **Allied health professionals:** We now have speech pathologists and professionals from other disciplines who are joining us on the field which means we are involved in providing a more wholistic service.
- **Donors:** Many individuals have donated funds to EARS, including my clients. Several audiologists and audiometrists send us second-hand hearing aids and equipment and we are now receiving money and old aids from the EARS donation boxes.
- **Prayer:** Jim Thompson and now Jan Bebbington have led our prayer team. Prayer is fundamental to what we do, as we serve in Jesus' name.

## Learning to Learn and Live

*During her time with the Bartletts in Malawi in 2017, Marg Anderson (EARS board member) visited a small school for hearing impaired and deaf students. With help from her church, she is sponsoring a vocational program at the school.*

The small school at Bandawe teaches hearing impaired students of all ages. Malawi is among the world's poorest countries, so vocational skills are as important as regular education. Teacher

Jacob Mvula says the past year was a busy one. The children received training in tailoring and knitting, and have worked on 50 desks for another school in their carpentry lessons.

The school has tried from time to time to grow vegetables, but it is a hot, dry place, and it is hard to set up a garden with enough shade to protect the plants from scorching and marauding goats. They need help to start a vegetable garden and

to convince the staff of the value of maintaining it. Anyone want to spend a year setting up a garden at the school?

They are raising chickens to eat and sell, managing to make enough profit to buy the next batch of chicks and feed them. One girl with learning difficulties seems to enjoy being in charge of the hens.

The school faces many challenges, as basic as feeding the children, a lack of teaching and learning resources like textbooks, shortage of classrooms and housing for their teachers, and ceilings need repair. The older children need light to be able to study and do homework but their solar lights were stolen when the night watchman died.

Despite the difficult circumstances, the children are doing well. At the end of last year, nine students out of 13 who sat for the National Examination were selected by three different secondary schools. A credit to their faithful, dedicated teachers.





## Want to donate to the work of EARS?



So much of what we achieve is through generous donations of time, expertise and equipment from many organisations and individuals, but we always need more funds so we can do more.

- Trivia quizzes are a fun and easy way to raise money and an EARS Trivia Quiz Kit is available. Email [admin@earsinc.org](mailto:admin@earsinc.org) and we'll send it to you.
- Good at fundraising? Join our fundraising team.
- Donations are welcome! Go to [www.earsinc.org/donate](http://www.earsinc.org/donate). A tax deductible option is through GiveNow.

## Sound booth finally has a home in PNG

Mark Fry has made two trips to Papua New Guinea to organise the removal of the sound booth donated by Knox and Morwell Rotary Clubs a few years ago. The booth has been moved from Mt Hagen Hospital (long story) to Goroke, but some of the pieces have been stolen along with the insulation and fittings. Mark will spend four weeks reconstructing what's left inside a shipping container with several pallet loads of supplies we have shipped to the site. A shelter should have been constructed by the time he arrives later in May.



*Concrete footings being prepared for the booth.*

## WHAT'S IN S.T.O.R.E.?

According to World Health Organisation (WHO):

- 466 million persons in the world have disabling hearing loss (6.1% of the world's population)
- two thirds of those with severe to profound hearing loss live in developing countries
- 60% of WHO Member States reporting on their capacity to provide hearing healthcare, had less than 1 audiologist per million population; 81% in the African Region, and
- only 41% have facilities for training audiologists; 20% in the African Region.

The gap between demand and supply in developing countries is compounded by a range of issues including poor public awareness of hearing loss and the benefits of hearing devices, a lack of accessible quality audiology services and practitioners, and the cost of hearing devices. With encouragement from WHO, governments are increasingly developing National Ear and Hearing Healthcare plans to address the hearing needs of their citizens.

For 20 years, EARS Inc. has supported and resourced audiology programs in several low and middle income countries and has developed, through observation and experience, the **S.T.O.R.E. framework**.

- **SERVICES** - Establishing a flagship hearing clinic
- **TRAINING** - Structured and intentional programs for local staff and/or students
- **OUTREACH** – Regular, strategic, clinical visits to those who cannot travel to the hearing clinic
- **RESOURCES** – Personnel, equipment, inventory, facilities, utilities, intellectual property, partners
- **EVALUATION** – Before, during and after projects



At the 2018 biannual Audiology Australia conference in Sydney in May, Peter Bartlett presented a poster outlining the S.T.O.R.E. framework with examples from his experience developing the African Bible College Hearing Clinic and Training Centre in Lilongwe Malawi, a tertiary-level audiology facility offering a comprehensive range of clinical services and devices, training and outreach.

With an annual Gross National Income per capita of US\$320, economically Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. The success of the EARS Inc. Malawi audiology service and training program demonstrates that it is difficult but not impossible to delivery quality hearing care despite seemingly impossible circumstances.

## EARS Inc. Volunteer Opportunities

If you are interested in volunteering overseas, please let us know and let's make a plan! EARS Inc. also needs volunteers to assist with organisational tasks and fundraising within Australia (see David's report on page 1). If you would like to be involved but are not able to travel at the moment, please still get in contact with us. We'll add your name on our database and let you know about opportunities that arise in the future. Please note that overseas volunteers must fund their own travel. We will assist as much as we can with accommodation and other expenses.

All enquiries to Judith Francis, EARS Inc. Volunteer Co-ordinator: [judy@earsinc.org](mailto:judy@earsinc.org).



### Retreating to reflect

In February, the EARS board gathered at Marg Anderson's home in Crookwell for a weekend of talking, sharing, praying and discussing the future. Other board members Judith Francis and Deanna Connor participated by phone (Judith from her home in Dubai).

Ian and Lois Grant and Mark and Brenda Fry were invited along to listen, advise and share their insights and experience. Their input was invaluable for our deliberations and soul-searching.

*Back row from L: David Pither, Peter Bartlett, Wes Ong, Ian Grant, Donna Carkeet, Mark Fry.*

*Front row from L: Marg Anderson, Brenda Fry, Lois Grant and Sheryl Pither.*

### Help us help people hear

If you'd like to help us achieve our mission...

- **Become a member** of EARS. See our website for membership forms.
- **Donate money.** Tax-deductible donations can be made through the GiveNow link on the Donate page on our website. Maybe consider a bequest to EARS.
- **Donate audiological equipment and hearing aids** (second hand is fine).
- **Volunteer.** We need hearing professionals to provide training and hearing services overseas. Technicians are also needed to check and calibrate equipment.
- **Join our prayer support team.** Contact our coordinator Jan Bebbington: [janbebbington@bigpond.com](mailto:janbebbington@bigpond.com).



E: [admin@earsinc.org](mailto:admin@earsinc.org)

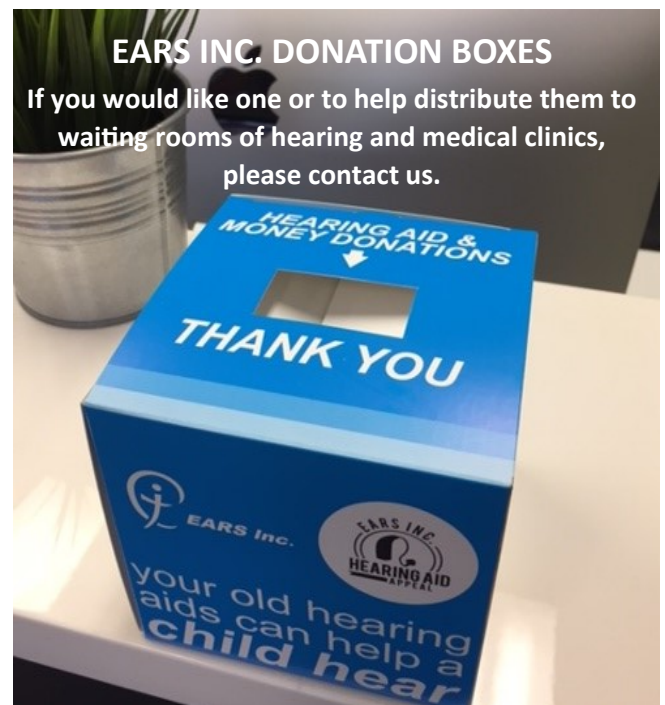
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### EARS INC. DONATION BOXES

If you would like one or to help distribute them to waiting rooms of hearing and medical clinics, please contact us.



Keep in touch with latest happenings by becoming a 'friend' on the EARS Inc. Facebook page.