**Post-course report form**

**Name:** Helet Kuhn

**Bursary applied for:** Charitable bursary

**Title of course attended or Project details:** Volunteering at the BSSH/BAHT LION hand unit project, Lilongwe, Malawi

**Date:** 24 May – 21 June 2025

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| **Introduction:** Include details of who you are, why you applied for this bursary and your experience of the event (maximum 100 words) |
| My name is Helet Kuhn. I am the team lead of a small hand therapy team at St Richard’s hospital, Chichester. I applied for the BAHT charitable bursary with the aim to cover additional volunteer costs which needed to be self-funded, such as travel expenses to and from the airport, pre-travel vaccinations and extra baggage allowance (including an extra suitcase for transporting splinting material and medical supplies). The BAHT bursary scheme made it possible for me to support me with the extra expense.It was my first experience working as a volunteer Hand Therapist and I found it extremely fulfilling. |
| **Title: “What have I learned and how will I put this into practice?”** The report will be uploaded onto the BAHT website and may be included in an e-bulletin. It should not contain any confidential information or any comments that are potentially damaging or libellous. It should be 500 words +/- 10%. |
| It was a great privilege to be part of the BSSH / BAHT LION volunteer project in Malawi. It strengthened my resilience and character as a person, helped me to be more creative in my ways of working as a hand therapist and made me more appreciative of the accessibility to our own local hand therapy services. I have worked closely with a variety of surgeons and therapists during my time of volunteering. This provided me with a wider perspective and clearer insight on the delivery of hand surgery and therapy services around the world. It was a good opportunity to experience other ways of working within different hand therapy units. During the 4-week visit, I had the opportunity to share my BAHT acquired hand therapy knowledge and skills from previously attended BAHT courses with Malawian hand therapists / technicians. Regular training opportunities are scarce in Malawi. It can be challenging for local therapists to source and attend courses on the subject. BAHT enabled me with great hand therapy education throughout my career. It has broadened my hand therapy horizons, and in exchange, helped me to share my transferrable skills with the therapists of Malawi. I assisted with training on practical splinting, made use of easy anatomy charts and drawings to encourage anatomy knowledge, and had informal discussions on standardised treatment guidelines. One of the practical sessions included fabrication of a paper hand model out of carton and string, to demonstrate tendon glide and the mechanism of triggering. I will continue to use similar training information in future training sessions with junior therapists at our local hospital. This will enable sustainability of the hand therapy service in the local area.The experience gave me insight in how to create sustainable ways of looking after our local hand therapy environment at our hospital. The therapy unit in Malawi made use of every tiny bit of plastic off-cut, as the material is so costly and difficult to source locally. It helped me to think in more creative ways, for instance by remoulding all the tiny bits of material together and fabricate desensitisation objects eg different hand grips and textured beads. We will now be more focused on recycling our tiny pieces of plastic, which we so often throw away to clear our treatment area. I have managed to share some of our pre-used soft splints with the LION hospital in Lilongwe, which I hope will be a continued, sustainable service. The visit to the LION hospital helped me to establish a link between their therapy department and ours. The LION project aims to end in 2028, but we are planning to create a longer-term link with the LION therapy unit, by sharing future informal hand therapy training from our hospital with the Malawian colleagues by using the possibility of an on-line link. This should help to provide a sustainable opportunity towards learning and development. I am planning to do a feedback presentation to our local OT department about my recent visit to the LION project and aim to assist with future fundraising efforts to support the project further. |