BSSH LION Hand Surgery Project – Modus Operandi

*“Educating, Enabling and Empowering”*

The aim of the project is to establish a specialist hand surgery and hand therapy service at the LION. This will “help heal the working hands of Malawi “and to train local specialists for the future. The BSSH is immensely proud of the significant efforts made by all the Volunteers towards this ambitious healthcare project in one of the poorest countries of the world. Some volunteers will already understand the challenges of delivering healthcare in a low resource setting. However, whatever our skills and experience are, it may be helpful to bear the following points in mind:

1. The goals of this sustainable project are **Educating, Enabling and Empowering** local surgeons, trainees and therapists for the future.
2. Whilst we are perceived as “foreigners” or “azungus” in Malawi be assured we are invited and respected guests of the KCH /LION Hospital and are made to feel very welcome.
3. Providing care in Malawi can be challenging and it is important to manage our expectations. In a low resource economy, one should expect to be feel uncomfortable or frustrated at times and we must be prepared to cope with the emotional response to that.
4. If we do start to feel frustrated about what we are not able to achieve, please do not share this disappointment with the local team. They are there 365 days of the year, we are constantly changing.
5. The BSSH LION project must work within the constraints of the local service and it is important that visiting professionals be sensitive to this and be wary of imposing “their way” of thinking and working, as this could be counterproductive.
6. It would be helpful if volunteers are socially and culturally aware and mindful of the limited resources available. This may require difficult decisions on prioritising treatment. Volunteers are encouraged to use the weekly MDT service, their LION orthopaedic colleagues and links with the BSSH LION management team to help them.
7. The well known surgical /therapy mantra is we should “do what we do and do it well” but in Malawi, we may have to think “outside the box” and be more creative and resourceful.
8. The Surgeons or Therapist may have to work at the edge of their comfort zone. It is important that we do not undertake procedures that we are not confident to perform in this clinical setting. Don’t hesitate to “phone a friend” i.e a previous Volunteer /BSSH LION colleague.
9. From a cultural perspective, it is important for us to fully engage with and make friends with local staff. We are representing the BSSH and our profession and we should strive to demonstrate the required personal standards.
10. Living in Malawi, we **must** respect the personal risks that exist and safety of the Volunteers is of paramount importance. All volunteers **must** read the preparation documents and follow the guidelines in the House folders about security and driving safety.

BSSH LION Project Team 9th November 2023