



# Disabilities and Rehabilitation Project



## 2021 Report

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## Reducing stigma through our Disabilities and Rehabilitation project

Throughout 2021 Matilda, our Disabilities and Rehabilitation Project Manager has continued to offer home visits and support groups as well as running awareness sessions at 15 pre-schools and primary schools. This has included offering basic training to the teachers.

Matilda talks with the headteacher and teachers at each school to establish how many children attending have additional needs and trains them on ways they can adapt their classes to ensure that these children are included. Then she meets with students to talk about disabilities, the challenges someone with a disability might face and how they, as their peers, can include them.

She worked with over 2,500 pupils and within the 15 learning facilities, 150 children were identified as having a physical or cognitive disability. Not all of these children are registered with our project – and nor do they all need to be. Some are, in fact, former clients who have been discharged as they no longer need additional support from us. However, Matilda is now seeing others who could benefit from joining our programme.



Matilda shared some feedback from the awareness sessions. She said, "What I really like is that some of the learners with disabilities have told me that they now have higher self-esteem and feel accepted in class and out of school.

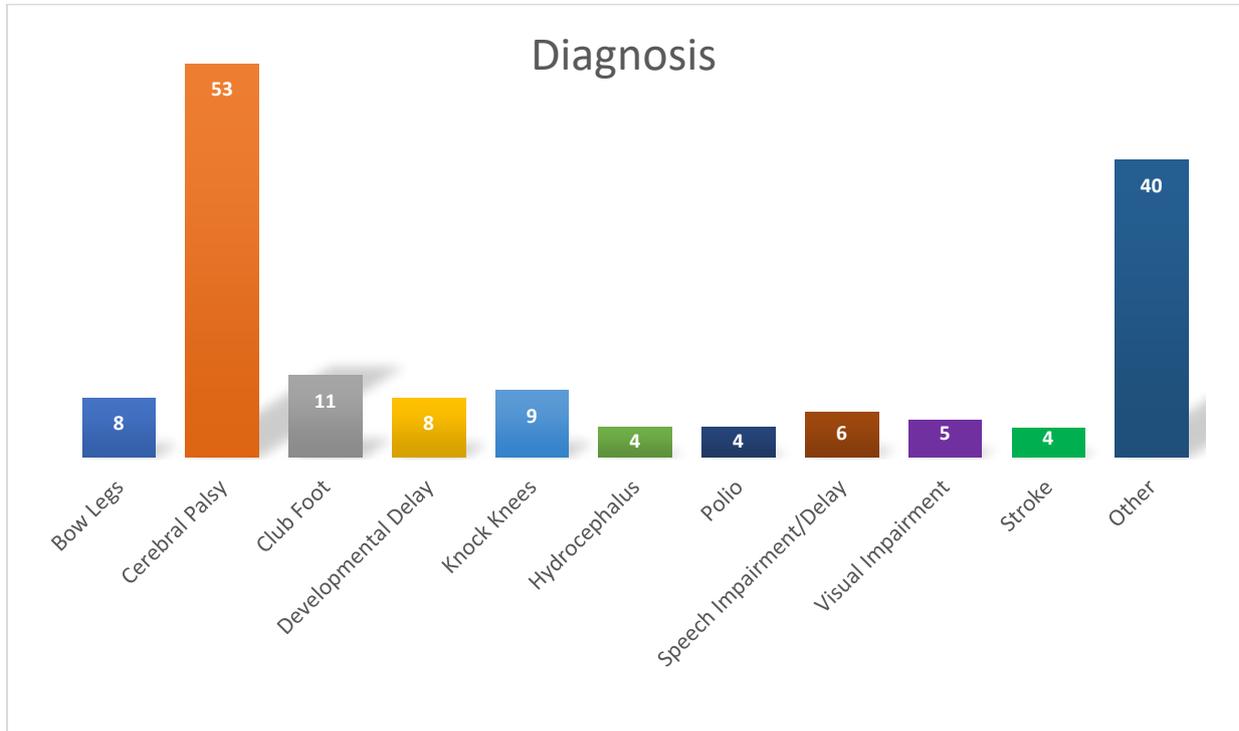
"Not only have we explained the importance of inclusive education and given the teachers a basic understanding but the students are feeling the support.

"We have also identified more children who would benefit from home visits and it has strengthened our relationship with all of the community."

Although Matilda has identified more children who will benefit from our project, the total number of clients has not changed. We have 130 clients registered – including 31 new clients. Throughout 2021 we discharged 19 clients, had nine leave due to relocating to other parts of Malawi and six sadly died – the majority from malaria or causes not directly linked to their disability.

The average age of our clients is 11 years, 57% are male and 24% of our clients rely on nutritional support. Eighty-six are Active Clients so receive home visits or attend group sessions each week and the other 44 are Occasional Clients who will sometimes attend group sessions for Matilda to monitor long-term progress.

Across our clients we have registered 147 diagnoses as some have multiple challenges.

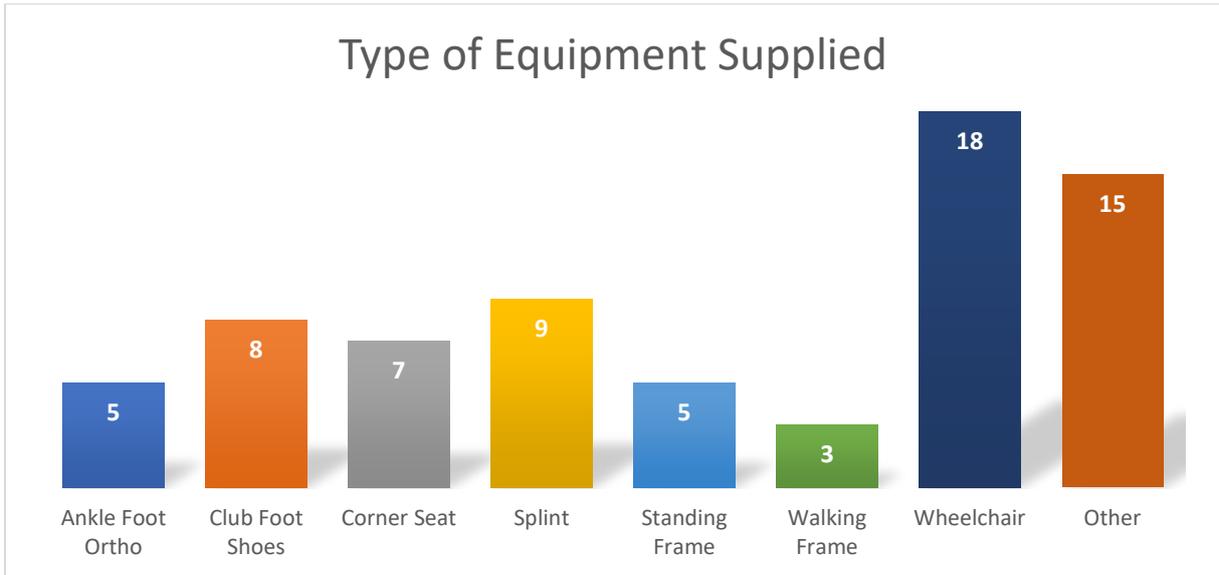


Matilda continues to create bespoke treatment plans with the parents or guardians with goals that the family can work towards together. We have continued working with malnutrition clinics and the orthopaedic specialists to ensure children are able to receive the relevant support and operations.

500 Miles, now known as Mzuzu Central Hospital Prosthetics and Orthotics Centre, continue to provide our clients with specialist orthopaedic equipment, and other partners in Malawi have provided equipment this past year too.

Where modern equipment cannot be sourced, our wonderful local carpenters put their skills to the test to make walking frames, corner seats and parallel bars.



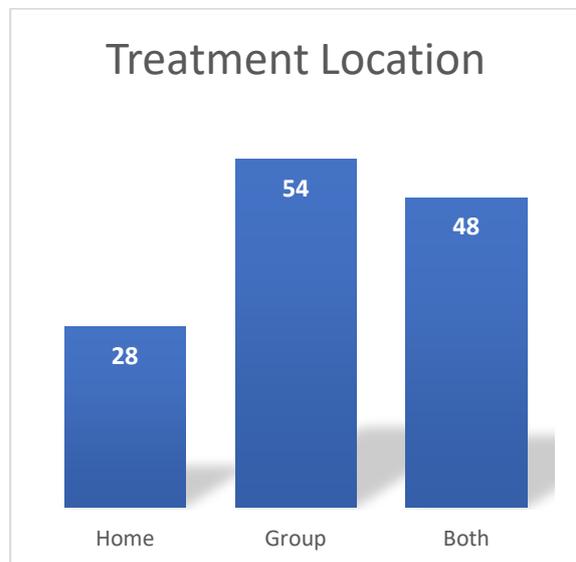
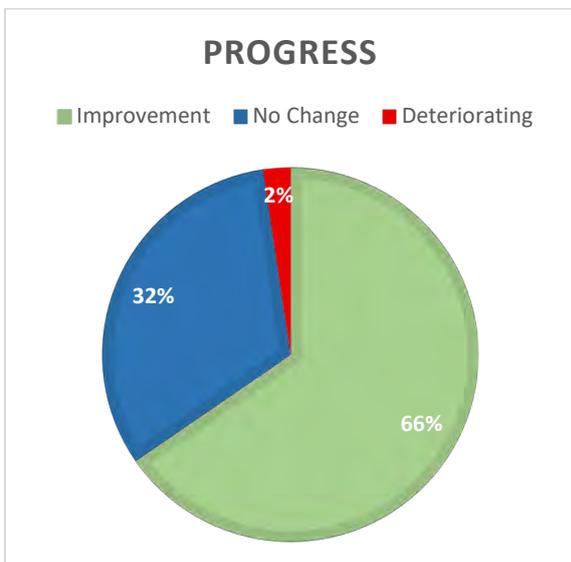


As a result of the hard work and continued dedication of the clients, Matilda and the partners we work with, we are proud that 66% of the clients are showing improvement and achieving milestones. Of those recorded as No Change, the majority are new clients. For the two clients deteriorating, Matilda is able to monitor them closely and support the families as both children struggle with feeding.

Occasionally we receive referrals from the hospital for adult clients, usually those recovering from a stroke. In 2021 this included a 70-year-old client who is still trying to regain the use of her legs.

Many have asked how Matilda is able to manage such a large client load and the answer is because the majority of her clients will attend either solely group sessions or group sessions with occasional follow ups at home. This means she is able to split her time to support her clients and their families – she is extremely dedicated and hardworking!

This coming year, we are hoping to spend some time looking at possible links and causes to some disabilities in the hope of developing more education and awareness.



## 2021 Milestones

- Eleven clients with cerebral palsy have achieved different goals including crawling and walking, talking, feeding themselves and attending school.
- Five clients with club foot had corrective surgery and since recovery, can now walk independently, run and play ball games with their friends.
- One client with brittle bones is now able to walk to school independently.
- One client with spina bifida is able to sit, crawl and walk short distances whilst aided.
- Two clients with hydrocephalus, for whom we provided funding for their operations for shunts, are now able to sit and walk independently, have learnt to talk and one is able to turn themselves over when lying down.
- Two clients with knock knees are now walking independently.
- A client with breathing problems has built up the strength to stand unaided and has started to walk with the use of parallel bars.
- A client with amniotic band syndrome is now walking and running on her first prosthetic leg.
- We have funded 20 children to receive hospital check-ups, 19 to meet with orthopaedic specialists and three to have operations.
- Seven wheelchairs, a set of crutches, four leg splints, two sets of prosthetic legs and a hand splint were donated through partner organisations and individual donors. We also repaired a wheelchair and made two corner seats, two standing frames, one walking frame and two sets of parallel bars.



Thank you to everyone who supports this project, helping Matilda provide a vital service to the communities between Kachere and Chituka in Nkhata Bay District, Malawi.