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## St Andrew's Clinics for Children (STACC)

L. Robinson

Life Sciences Support Team, Sir James Black Building,  
University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ

E-mail: [Lillias.Robinson@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Lillias.Robinson@glasgow.ac.uk)

### BEGINNINGS

While occupying the John Graham Kerr Chair of Zoology at the University of Glasgow, Professor David Crompton organised opportunities for students reading the Honours Degree in Parasitology to spend supervised summer visits in places where parasitic infections were endemic. Two such students, both qualified nurses, went to Sierra Leone to assist during the summer of 1992. Funds had to be found to support such visits and in their case *The Sunday Post* ran an article appealing for support for the "Angels in Doc Martens".

More money was donated than was needed to send and support the nurses in Sierra Leone, and so Robert Ewen, then Secretary of the University Court, suggested that a charity/company might be established with the surplus funds to help children in need in Sierra Leone. The name "St Andrew's Clinics for Children (STACC)" was adopted, and STACC was formally established in 1992 by staff at the University of Glasgow with the mission of supporting clinics in sub-Saharan Africa to deliver primary health care to children in some of the poorest parts of the continent. Over the years since 1992, over 1.6 million African children have received treatments due to the generosity of STACC's donors and supporters, and we have been able to support the work of clinics in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda.

### GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Since 1992, STACC has raised funds to support the provision of basic health care for children in several countries and centres in sub-Saharan Africa. Each centre supported by STACC is identified below in order of establishment.

#### 1992-2020 Sierra Leone

Registered as a National Non-Governmental Organization (STACC/SL) based in Freetown. Coordinator: Dr. Mary Hodges. Health care focused on mobile and fixed clinics, de-worming school-age children and infant feeding. Overall 1,004,960 treatments were delivered. Of these 470,831 were de-worming treatments delivered to school-age children between 2004 and 2009. This programme was then

adopted by the Government of Sierra Leone into its national programme for the control of intestinal worm infections in school-age children. The health care team continued to contribute with training for the national programme and the supply of medicines. With much of the work adopted by the Health Ministry, the centre was able to wind down in 2020.

#### 1998 Nigeria

Registered as a National Non-Governmental Organization (STACC-ILEIFE) based at the health centre of Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Osun State (Fig. 1). Coordinator: Professor Samuel Asaolu. Health care is provided through mobile clinics visiting ten locations each month. Children under five years of age have top priority and 37,995 children in this age cohort have been registered and receive treatment as necessary. Malaria is a major problem in the area and insecticide-treated bed-nets have been purchased and distributed to reduce the transmission of malaria parasites. STACC-ILEIFE has just celebrated its 25th anniversary! To mark the occasion, the Clinic's director gave a short talk to STACC supporters in January 2024 on the activities of STACC Ile-Ife and the key challenges faced by his team. A recording of this presentation is available at <https://www.standrewsclinics.org.uk/ileife-mi>. A further five days of events were organised in Nigeria (11th -15th March 2024), including an anniversary lecture, entitled "Care of children at a time like this".



**Fig. 1.** STACC Ile-Ife health care team. (Photo: Professor Samuel Asaolu)

#### 2003-2018 Pemba Island, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Registered as a health centre of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. An outreach service began in 2004 in addition to the base clinic at Gombani. Coordinator: Mr Yahya Al Sawafi. The base clinic at Gombani and the outreach service have provided over 20,000 treatments for children annually. Insecticide-treated bed-nets were distributed to reduce the transmission of malaria pathogens. Mothers were also cared for. According to the World Health Organization, the

health care supported by STACC and the Ivo de Carneri Foundation (IdCF) was the only free health care available on Pemba Island with its population of about 350,000. STACC provided 60% and IdCF 40% of support. At the time of support ending in October 2018, 330,000 treatments had been given. Sadly, the decision to withdraw from Pemba was taken partly because IdCF appeared no longer to have funds, and STACC could not take on the full commitment.

### **2003 Uganda**

Children's ward at St Kizito Hospital, Matany, Karamoja. The hospital is registered with the government of Uganda. Coordinator: Brother Guenther Naehrich. Since STACC began to support the Children's Ward at St Kizito Hospital, approximately 90,000 children have been admitted as in-patients. STACC contributes approximately 36% of the costs of running the children's ward. The main diseases treated are malaria, upper respiratory tract infections and intestinal disorders. However, nutritional problems amongst young children are a continuing challenge. The hospital seeks to provide additional nutrients for local children and STACC supports this by providing funds to cover the cost of a vegetable garden and the purchase of a small flock of goats for a supply of much-needed milk.

### **2007 Kenya**

The BION project is registered with the Government of Kenya's Department for Gender and Children, serving a Maasai community around Lake Magadi. Coordinator: Ms Seleina Limion. Nearly 8,000 children have been reached directly or indirectly through their mothers with insecticide-treated bed-nets, safe water containers, and better personal and home hygiene. Food is regularly distributed for the children. In 2019, STACC responded in principle to a request from BION to begin a female genital mutilation (FGM) awareness programme. It has taken some time to organise, but this project is finally about to begin, in spring 2024.

### **2008 Ghana**

Registered as a Non-Governmental Organization (StACC Ghana), based in Bongo District. Coordinator: Dr Michael Wilson. Initially, health and dental education were provided in primary schools, and dental operations carried out by mobile teams in remote districts. The team then participated in the national programme for schistosomiasis control with the treatment of 22,945 school-age children in Bongo District. A major health education programme has been introduced into the Bongo District school system. More recently, STACC funded the purchase of a ventilator in the Paediatric ICU in KAT Hospital, Kumasi, which is essential in the management of critically ill young children, and funded the refurbishment of counselling space.

### **2016 Uganda**

Children's ward at St John's Hospital, Aber, a private not-for-profit hospital registered with the government of Uganda. Coordinator: Nassuna Rose (Sister

Rosemary). The children's ward at St John's Hospital has 42 beds, and 4,500 admissions annually. STACC covers 36% of all costs of running the ward.

### **2022 Malawi**

At the Masambuka Clinic, STACC-Malawi will provide essential primary health care for children in Machinga District, a rural community in one of the poorest areas in Malawi. Coordinator: Professor Mwapatsa Mipando. STACC has provided initial capital to finance a new clinic building at Masambuka, including funding for a solar energy plant to power refrigerators to keep medication fresh. Once established, STACC has agreed to make quarterly payments for treatments for children in the community for an initial period of five years.

### **STACC'S IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE**

In the period 1993 to 2023, STACC received donations from the public amounting to £2.75 million. STACC holds approximately £200,000 in reserve to offset unexpected problems caused by political unrest, epidemics, natural and man-made disasters and other identified risks. Of the remainder, more than 95% is spent by African health workers at the seven health centres supported by STACC, and the remaining percentage on essential insurance, audit fees, company secretarial services/governance, fund raising, and printing.

Malaria, respiratory tract infections and intestinal worm infections remain the most common among the many other ailments treated. Over 1.5 million children have benefitted from medical treatments, but STACC also provides nutritional interventions and essential equipment to aid the work of the clinics. Equipment such as 4WD vehicles, motorbikes, phototherapy units for treatment of jaundice in newborns, anaesthesia equipment, ultrasound scanners, microscopes, portable generators, hundreds of insecticide-treated bed-nets, and plumbing for reliable water supplies. STACC has also sent funds to the Uphill Trust in Uganda to complete construction of a latrine block for girls and for the Trust to employ a school nurse.

STACC is managed by a Board of Directors, of which the author is a member, who work on a purely voluntary basis and receive no payments or expenses. The Board is currently chaired by John Briggs, (previously Professor of Geography and Clerk of Senate at the University of Glasgow, and a specialist on development in Africa) and meets four times per year to discuss governance requirements, review the work of the clinics, agree funding levels for the coming quarter, and discuss future fund-raising activities and development priorities. David Crompton is now Honorary President. STACC's accounts are inspected annually and published on the website of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

STACC adheres to the following important principles and values:

- All clinical and managerial decisions are taken locally by the clinics themselves, not by the STACC Board in Scotland.
- All treatment and medication is free of charge at the point of delivery
- supported clinics must commit to using only *bona fide* medicines in their treatments.
- Supported clinics must commit to having in place clear policies relating to equality and diversity procedures and to safeguarding.

The Board is grateful for the generosity and interest of the many donors who have supported STACC since this amazing small charity was founded in 1992. We hope STACC will continue to go from strength to strength, and we hope readers will look at STACC's website and consider becoming donors themselves (<https://www.standrewsclinics.org.uk/>).