

2020 January Newsletter

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AAM lights up learners' future at Mkumbanjala

**AAM,
partners
back in
Humanitarian
action**



**Find out more
about our
whistle
blowing
policy**



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AAM lights up learners' future at Mkumbanjala

There was a sigh of relief among learners, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the education sector in Mzimba on 14th January 2020, as ActionAid Malawi (AAM) in partnership with Khosolo Forum for Development (Khofode) officially handed over a two class-roomed school block at Mkumbanjala Junior Primary School in T/A Khosolo, in the district.

Constructed to a tune of MK12 million, the school block is set to ease the learning space challenges at the school.

Speaking at the handover ceremony that was attended by learners, parents, traditional leaders and M'belwa District Council officials, District Education Manager representative, Mighty Kayoyo, hailed AAM for the donation, saying the additional school block will go a long way in creating a safe learning and teaching environment at the school.

Kayoyo assured stakeholders that government will upgrade the school to a full primary school by the end of 2020. He said



Their dreams are on: Grade Six learners at Mkumbanjala Junior School

government will also look into outstanding challenges such as shortage of teachers and lack of desks at the school. He called upon learners and the communities to take care of the new infrastructure.

On his part, AAM Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa, said being a rights-based organisation working in a number of areas in Malawi including Khosolo in Mzimba, AAM was touched by inadequate infrastructure for the learners at the school, a situation described as a violation of the children's right to education. He

said AAM will also construct toilets to improve sanitation at the school.

Mr. Golowa urged learners at the school to work hard in class to become productive citizens in future.

Opened in 2009, Mkumbanjala School has an enrolment of 295 learners against a total of four teachers. The school has classes from Standard One to Seven.

District Education Manager representative, Mighty Kayoyo, hailed ActionAid Malawi for the donation, saying the additional school block will go a long way in creating a safe learning and teaching environment at the school.



The school block that ActionAid Malawi officially handed over to government

Pictorial highlights of Mkumbanjala School Block Handover



Jubilant learners welcoming ActionAid Malawi officials at the school



AAM Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa, flanked by Council officials, cutting the ribbon to mark official handover



Officials interacting with learners at the school



All smiles: Mr. Kayoyo captured during new block inspection



Mzimba Activista Network members conducting drama performance



Mzimba Council chairperson, Amuso Ngoma, making a speech during the function

ActionAid Malawi called into disaster action again

At the onset of January, 2020, Phalombe District, located in the southern Malawi, received torrential rainfalls, accompanied by hailstorm, leading to flooding of the rivers such as Mombezi, Namazi and Phalombe.

After breaking their banks, the rushing rivers flooded onto crop fields, houses and properties, washing away crops, causing extensive damage, as a result.

The rapid assessment conducted by ActionAid Malawi (AAM) local partners on 18th and 19th January indicates that a total of 3954 households in the district are affected, 1096 of which are female headed households.

The most affected areas include traditional authorities Jenala, Nkhulambe, and Phweremwe where hordes of houses have been damaged, leading to displacements. AAM is currently putting together resources to assist the affected families.



ActionAid Malawi-support team during the assessment exercise in Phalombe in January



“When I heard the gush of water entering the house, I immediately carried my two grandchildren out of the house. However, it was too late to rescue my household items as the water had already flooded the house, leading to its collapse minutes later.” Emery Kachingwe, floods survivor in Mweremwe Village, T/A Jenala in Phalombe



“At the start of the farming season, I had hope but all that hope is now gone with Phalombe flood,” Estery Moffat, Mbona Village, T/A Jenala

“Accountability Training” expected to improve disaster-related response

In order to effectively respond to humanitarian emergencies including Cyclone Idai, ActionAid organized a five-day “Accountability in Humanitarian Emergencies” training workshop for its core humanitarian teams and grassroots partners from ActionAid offices in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The training, which took place the last week on January, 2020 in Maputo, Mozambique exposed participants to ActionAid Humanitarian Signatures, Core Humanitarian Standards, and Social protection in emergencies in line with ActionAid feminist and human right principles.

Fillinet Biliati of Chigwirizano Women Forum, a partner under ActionAid Malawi in Phalombe describe the training as an eye-opener and said it would the quality of their work during disasters.

“The training has helped me understand the rights based approaches and accountability mechanism we need to follow when carrying out interventions during humanitarian emergencies and other programs” said Biliati.



Pascaline Kangethe ActionAid Kenya Head of Program Quality and Assurance facilitating one of the sessions



Participants also visited ActionAid Mozambique's local partners to understand how they integrate humanitarian standards in their work



Biliati (in red dress) during the training in Maputo



ActionAid Malawi team discussing an assignment during the training.

Adolescent girls and young women in Chikwawa district are adopting positive health behaviors including use of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in order to protect themselves from HIV, unplanned pregnancies and other problems associated with unprotected sex.

This is reflected in the case of a 23-year-old Mary (not real name) of Efelemu Village, Group Village Headman (GVH) Lombo, T/A N'gabvu in the district. Mary, with the blessing of her husband, has gladly shifted from using local herbs as a family planning method to modern contraceptives.

The family's decision came after Mary, a mother of two children, received training on SRH and HIV information, Gender Based Violence (GBV) awareness, life skills and entrepreneurship. Mary received the training as a member of one of the 116 Out-of-School Clubs established by Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project in Chikwawa district that is being implemented by Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) with funding from the Global Fund through ActionAid Malawi.

Just like many people in the village, Mary and her husband used to believe in traditional birth controls before the training even though the method was not very effective as many women



Out-of-school club members in Chikwawa during one of their sessions

could still conceive despite taking the herbs.

After learning about various contraceptive methods explained what she learnt to her husband and together they went to the nearest clinic where Maria accessed contraceptives.

"I believe the modern contraceptives are effective than the traditional ones. This will help us plan and have children only when we want them so that we can manage to feed them," she explained.

Low contraceptive prevalence rate is among the contributing factors to the high total fertility rate (5.7-6.1 per woman) in Malawi according to the 2016 Demographic Health Survey (DHS). The AGYW Programme is therefore mobilizing the community members, particularly the young women and adolescent girls, to utilize modern contraceptives in an

effort to reduce this fertility rate and improve their health. Access to SHR services is also being promoted by the project mainly to reduce HIV incidences among the targeted beneficiaries by 2030.

"I believe the modern contraceptives are effective than the traditional ones. This will help us plan and have children only when we want them so that we can manage to feed them,"

“It is our collective responsibility to guard against fraud and corruption”

Amidst rising fears of funds abuse in Government, Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) the calls for accountability have become even louder. To ensure that every penny goes towards achieving social justice, ActionAid Malawi (AAM) is, among other efforts, implementing the Whistle-Blowing Policy. Linley Givah, AAM Head of Internal Audit and Compliance shares more about the policy.

Question: What’s the Whistle Blowing policy all about?

Answer: ActionAid Malawi (AAM) has a zero tolerance to fraud. The ActionAid whistle-blowing system aims to reinforce the organisation’s commitment to its policies, values, attitudes and behaviors, including its zero tolerance to fraud. The system provides an alternative channel to other reporting systems to learn of serious problems so that they can be resolved quickly. The whistleblowing policy has internal channels of reporting as well as the Tip-Offs Anonymous hotline which allows whistleblowers to be completely anonymous as they blow the whistle on things that are going wrong. The whistleblowing policy spells out who the policy applies to, what kind of wrongful acts should be reported, protection for whistleblowers and how the concerns reported will be handled.

Question: Why did ActionAid Malawi decide to have this policy?

Answer: AAM decided to have this policy as a way of strengthening its position of zero tolerance to fraud. Further, the existence of the policy helps all staff to have a common understanding of the position of the organization on fraud.

Question: Of what significance is the policy to the Country Strategy Paper V, “Action for Social Justice?”

Answer: Studies have shown that most organisations lose about 5% of their annual revenue/income through fraud. The same studies show that whistleblowing is the most effective way to detect fraud, with 40% of all fraud being detected that way. In order to achieve the objectives we have set out in our CSP V we need resources and losing those resources through fraud will make



Linley Givah: Whistle-Blowing Policy covers staff, partners and stakeholders

it difficult for us to meet the commitments we have made in the CSP V. The whistleblowing policy is therefore critical to ensuring that AAM does not suffer such losses at a time when income is dwindling.

Question: What’s the scope and life-span of the policy?

Answer: The whistleblowing policy covers all staff, partners, suppliers and other stakeholders. The policy is permanent and will be updated from time to time as the need arises.

Question: Any successes and challenges the policy has registered so far?

Answer: AAM has benefitted from the whistleblowing policy over the past few years. In 2016 two frauds were detected through whistleblowing. MK1.5million was lost in one fraud and MK1.3million in the other. AAM was able to recover the MK1.3million. In 2017 AAM detected a major fraud through whistleblowing. The amount lost was MK26.99 million and AAM has been able to recover

MK9million from this.

The main challenge we have had is that staff and do not come forward when they suspect wrongdoing. Most people don’t want to be involved in the fight against fraud. We need to stand together and say no to fraud collectively. ActionAid is our brand. Resources are dwindling. Let us guard our brand and our resources jealously.

Question: Any final remarks?

Answer: It is our collective responsibility to guard against fraud and corruption in AAM. ActionAid’s ability to raise resources is in the management of resources already entrusted to us and our good reputation. Whistleblowing allows us to detect frauds ourselves and that speaks to a good internal control environment. This would give donors and other stakeholders confidence that their resources are safe. It is therefore important that we collectively fight fraud so that we are able to get more financing from donors.