

act:onaid

ActionAid Malawi

Newsletter

Vol. 4 Issue 1. February, 2021



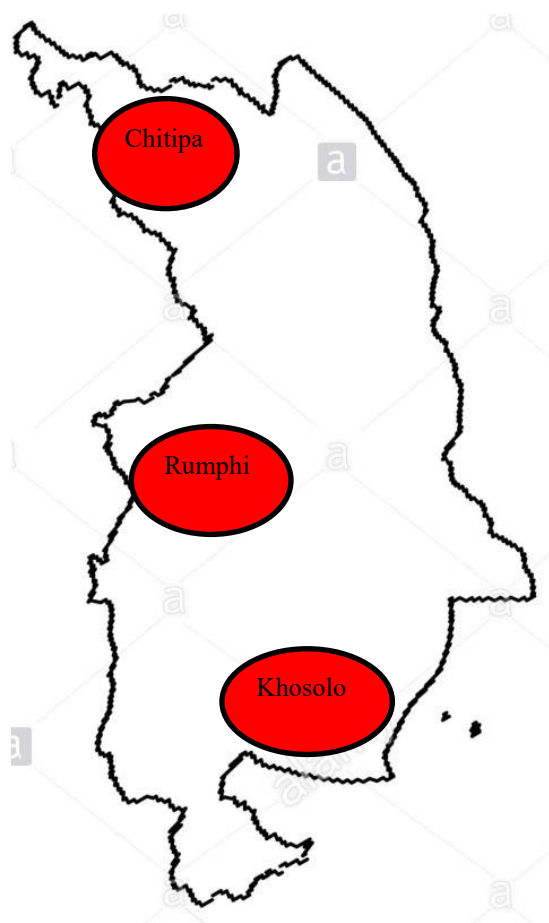
**Hostels keep
girls' dream alive**

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER

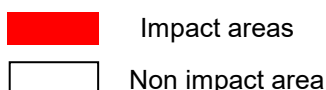


Hostels keep girls' dream alive	3.
Securing justice for sexual violence survivors	5.
"From GBV to Economic Empowerment: A case of Nelie Mhango	9
Care-givers: Lighting children's future	15.
Canal turns Kopakopa Village into food basket area	17

Northern Cluster Map Covered under this Newsletter



Key



Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBCC: Community Based Child Care Centre
CBO: Community Based Organisation
CDF: Constituency Development Fund
CDSS: Community Day Secondary School
CSP: Country Strategy Paper
ECD: Early Childhood Development
ED: Executive Director
GBV: Gender-Based Violence

IGA: Income Generation Activity
LRP: Local Rights Programme
RAC: Reflect Action Cycle
RFF: Roger Federer Foundation
SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SIG: School Improvement Grant
TA: Traditional Authority
VSL: Village Savings and Loans

From the Executive Director

It is with profound gratitude that I welcome you, dear reader, supporter, donor, and partner to this exclusive publication in which we are solely focusing on our gains and lessons in the northern cluster.

You may wish to know that the launch of our Country Strategy Paper V entitled: Action for Social Justice in 2018 necessitated our shift from Local Rights Program to Regional Cluster implementation arrangement.

It is pleasing to note that since the shift, there is a lot that has been achieved on the ground in areas of women and girls rights, emergence response, food security and resilience, and civic participation and state accountability.

ActionAid Malawi together with our local partners, we are proud of our contribution to social justice, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas where poverty levels are characteristically high.

This publication is, therefore, a result of the success story documentation exercise that took place in December, 2020, in the Northern Cluster, focusing on Chitipa, Rumphi and Khosolo Local Rights Programmes (LRPs)

The publication looks at the three-year period in which the current CSP V has been operational.

The success stories we are sharing in this publication centre around ActionAid's achievements in the northern cluster.

We hope to produce similar publications on the milestones registered in the central and southern clusters.



ActionAid Malawi Executive Director, Assan Golowa

You will also have an opportunity to get an impression of our 2020 national achievements and impact through our 2020 Annual Report to be published in the second quarter of the year.

ActionAid Malawi recognizes and appreciates the untiring support from our supporters and donors towards making "Action for Social Justice" possible.

We are equally grateful to our local partners, key government institutions and numerous volunteers who dedicate their time in joining the cause against poverty and injustice.

Enjoy the read and don't forget to drop us your feedback through the contact and social media pages provided at the back of the publication.

Remember that, as you read the stories in this publication, covid-19 is real. Mask up, wash your hands regularly, and observe social distance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Assan Golowa'.

Assan Golowa

ActionAid Malawi Executive Director

Hostels keep girls' dream alive

“The building was also used by sex workers and drunkards who would, at night, harass us, mistaking us for sex workers. The sex workers would mock us, saying there was no benefit in education. They kept persuading us to join their trade. Fortunately, I never heeded their calls though I remember some of my classmates quitting school for sex work”



Eftasi Mugara (2nd Right) relaxing with her classmates outside the hostel

Before ActionAid Malawi, in Alinafe and other girls rented partnership with Maukako accommodation within the school community based organisation vicinity. But the structure that used to constructed a girls' hostel at accommodate Alinafe and fellow Mibanga Community Day Secondary learners proved yet another violation to School (CDSS) in Nthalire, Chitipa, their right to education. becoming a nurse was almost a distant dream for 19-year-old Eftasi Mugara.

Staying almost seven kilometres away from school meant she would wake up at 5am to trek to Mibanga CDSS, just to ensure she entered the class before 7:30 am. Nevertheless, at times she would arrive at school after 7:30 am, earning herself some punishment from the teachers. This affected her concentration on education.

Eftasi' bumpy road to education is shared by Alinafe Chisale, a form three girl at Kanjuchi Community Day Secondary School in Khosolo Local Rights Programme (LRP), where ActionAid Malawi, in partnership with local organisations, are implementing various interventions.

“The building was also used by sex workers and drunkards who would at night harass us, mistaking us for sex workers. The sex workers would mock us, saying there was no benefit in education. They kept persuading us to join their trade. Fortunately, I never heeded their calls though I remember some of my classmates quitting school for sex work,” recalls 18-year-old Alinafe, the first born in a family of four.

Poor accommodation affected Alinafe's performance in class, scoring only about 60 percent in her best subjects that include English, Mathematics and Science.

However, the construction of girls' hostel by ActionAid Malawi saved Alinafe and fellow learners from further nightmare of the make-shift hostel at Kanjuchi Trading Centre.

In an attempt to realise their dreams,

Hostels keep girls' dream alive

Page 3

The school friendly hostels both at Kanjuchi and Mibanga, are now helping Alinafe, Eftasi and fellow learners' study at night, a development that has significantly improved girls' performance at both schools.

Lameck Gondwe, headteacher at Kanjuchi Day Secondary School, reckons that Alinafe's academic performance is now impressive unlike in the past when she was in self-boarding.

"She is now scoring above 80 percent in her best subjects. I am sure she will realise her dream of going to college to study nursing. Moreover, due to the girls' hostel which was officially opened in 2019, a record number of 17 girls passed their Malawi School Certificate of Education, which is quite an improvement from only about 10 in the previous years," says Gondwe, adding that Kanjuchi girls hostel accommodates all 67 girls at the school.

His counterpart, John Mombo, headteacher at Mibanga CDSS agrees that a girls' hostel is improving girls academic performance.

"For us here, the first cohort of

beneficiaries of this girls' hostel will be writing their Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations this year. However, I am confident most the girls will do well. We have been encouraging them to study every evening, especially from 6pm to 8pm. Their performance during the terminal tests has also improved," he says.

Speaking during Mibanga Hostel Handover ceremony in October, 2020 ActionAid Malawi Executive Director,

Assan Golowa, said the organisation decided to support construction of the infrastructure at the school to promote girl education in the area.

"This is a hard to reach area and it's difficult for the girl child to access education. As an organisation which focuses on promoting the rights of girls, we decided to construct this hostel to help the girl child get educated. As they say, educating the girl child is educating the nation," said Golowa



Fully focused: Alinafe (right) with a classmate studying outside the girls' hostel



Trouble haven Alinafe's old hostel at Kanjuchi Trading Centre



A hostel constructed at Kanjuchi CDSS with support from ActionAid

Securing justice for sexual violence survivors

A 13-year-old Ivy (not her real name) wishes the day she was sent to the market to buy relish for supper never came in her life. Upon reaching a maize-mill which was some stone's throw away from the market-place, Ivy saw a man coming from a house behind the maize-mill calling out her name.

"The man asked me to help him with some household chores at his house, saying his wife was away and he needed someone to urgently help him with something," recalls Ivy, words struggling to come out of her traumatized mind.

When Ivy reached the house, the man grabbed her by the hand and took her to his bedroom where he defiled her. Ivy was then given K300 and told not to tell anyone about the incident. He threatened to kill her if she revealed the incident to anyone.

Out of fear, Ivy, who was until the incident a standard three learner at a nearby primary school, complied. But silence cost Ivy as the man, using the same tricks, defiled her twice more on separate days of the month of June, 2020.

Two months later, Ivy's mother started noticing some strange behavior in her first-born daughter.

"She started looking lazy and was most of the time asleep. She started becoming so choosy about foods. When I took her to the hospital for pregnancy test, it was revealed that she was carrying a two-month-old baby.

The news broke my heart. I could sleep that night. My husband was equally devastated," says Ivy's mother.

After days of being quizzed, Ivy revealed the man behind the act. News angered Ivy's parents who reported the



Too fresh to forget: Ivy pointing at direction of the home of her defiler

matter to Chikulamayembe Women Forum for possible redress.

"When we received the case, we immediately referred it to police who arrested the man. As a forum, we supported the survivor and her parents by providing means of transport to and from the court to ensure that justice is delivered on the matter," says Regina Chihana, programme coordinator at Chikulamayembe Women Forum.

Sensing danger, the perpetrator, who has six children from three different wives, made several attempts to bribe the Ivy's parents, including offering K100 000 for them to withdraw the case. However, the parents, at the advice of the women forum, rejected the offer, and used it as evidence against the perpetrator in court.

After almost six months of case hearing, the man was convicted and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment with hard labour by Bolero Magistrate Court.

Chihana says justice delivered on the case has solidified the communities' confidence in the Forum, adding the case is just one the numerous ones the forum has been handling the area.

"As a girl and women rights focused forum, we have noted that most of the gender and sexual violence cases in the area are perpetuated by men and boys against women, young women and girls. In 2020 alone, we handled over 100 cases on gender-based violence. Depending on the nature of the cases, some of them are resolved at the forum, while others are referred to other institutions such as Police for redress," she says.

Chihana says her organisation is concerned about any incident of sexual and gender-based violence as it limits girls and women participation in social, economic and political life, "which eventually subjects women and girls to poverty and injustice."

“Action Aid Malawi gave me a rod to live on”



Before I joined Nthalire Activista Youth Network, life was tough for me

“Since 2018, when I graduated, my life has never been the same. I used to live in a grass-thatched house but now I built a modern house, thanks to the proceeds I am making from this business. I have so many customers for whom I make things like chairs, sofa chairs, doors, and door frames”

When Andrew Kalua performed poorly in the 2011 Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations, he feared his future was doomed. Born and bred in Nthalire, Chitipa, where opportunities for the youth are limited, Kalua could not see himself beyond a subsistence farmer.

“I simply decided to marry and resigned myself to a life of misery, like the majority of the youth here. Farming became the only available option for me, as, with my poor academic performance, there was nothing else I thought I would do in life,” says the 34-year-old Kalua.

However, when Kalua came across the Nthalire Activista Youth Network in 2013, he happily joined and that became the turning point in his life.

The Activista Youth Network is a global youth platform under ActionAid. The platform is influential in driving ActionAid campaigns on Tax Justice, Education and Youth Empowerment using traditional, mainstream, and social media

platforms.

One key intervention under youth empowerment is vocational skills for out-of-school youth. In 2017, Andrew Kalua was one of the 18 youth supported by Malumbo Community Based Organisation (CBO), a partner under ActionAid Malawi, to undergo training workshop in carpentry.

Following a six-month long training in carpentry, Kalua was given carpentry tools for his start in his entrepreneurship life.

“Since 2018 when I graduated, my life has never been the same. I used to live in a grass-thatched house but now I built a modern house, thanks to the proceeds I am making from this business. I have so many customers for whom I make things like chairs, sofa chairs, doors, and door frames. I thank ActionAid Malawi, through its support to Malumbo CBO. ActionAid Malawi gave me rod rather than fish to live on,” says Kalua while working on his shop.

On a good month, Kalua makes about K150 000 which he says is enough to meet his family needs. Kalua adds he



Always busy: Kalua working on a door frame for a client



Madebvu: Malumbo CBO is helping create employment for the youth

“ActionAid Malawi gave me a rod to live on”

Page 6

managed to train five fellow youth in carpentry, as one way of contributing to youth empowerment in the area.

Malumbo CBO coordinator, Shadreck Mandebvu, says training the youth in vocational skills has proved key to

alleviating unemployment levels for the majority of the youth in Nthalire. He says the CBO invested about K6 million to train 18 youth in vocational skills.

“Without any technical college around Nthalire, most of the youth have

nothing do after writing their MSCE examinations. So, our program though reaching out to only a limited number of youth, is a timely intervention to unemployment levels here,” he says .

Tax Justice project keeps Maria in school

A 14-year Sofie Unjika, who wants to be a medical doctor feels her Kalopa Primary School in Chitipa is the best place to help her realise her dream. Sofie, now in Standard Seven, says the school has a conducive learning environment, especially for the girls.

Sofie is a member of the learners’ council at the school, a structure that is key in influencing good governance and delivery of gender-responsive public services at the institution.

“Through the learners’ councils, we are able to raise our issues and demands to the school and it’s

Page 8



The Tax Justice project has empowered Kalopa Primary School learners



Sofie explaining how the project has inspired her to work hard in class and (Right) members of the learners council at Kalopa School

Tax Justice project keeps Maria in school

Page 7

encouraging to note that being implemented are Ntchisi, the school management is Lilongwe and Neno. responding to a number of them. For The project, among its key outcomes, include calling upon government to increase the size of the national budget through raising fair tax, management who took it up. As I particularly corporate tax; asking the speak, we have newly constructed girls' toilets at the school," says Sofie.

Sofie also hails the transparent utilization of resources such as school improvement grants and constituency development funds, which she says resulted in building confidence in the school's efforts to ensure they acquire quality education.

Sofie is one of the 30-member learners

council which provides a governance interface between school management and the learners at Kalopa Primary School. The governance structure is part of the "Breaking Barriers: Tax Justice for Gender Responsive Public Service" project being implemented by ActionAid Malawi in Chitipa District. Other districts where the project is

Sofie also hails the transparent utilization of resources such as school improvement grants and constituency development funds, which she says resulted in building confidence in the school's efforts to ensure they acquire quality education.

government to increase share of funds allocated to and spent on free, quality and inclusive education, and scrutinizing the educational budget and expenditure and holding the government to account for the provision of free, quality, and inclusive public education, especially for girls and marginalized children.

Reacting to the project's milestones at Kalopa, matron Margret Sinkala says the project has helped improve girl retention at the school.

"Prior to the project, girls drop-out rates were high at the school. We would lose about 20 girls per term to either early marriages or teenage pregnancies. However, with the coming in of the project, the dropouts have significantly reduced to about three or four girls per term," she says.

Sinkala attributes the massive milestone to collaborative efforts among teachers, learners' council, mother groups and school management committees.

"Through the project, we have realised the importance of supporting girls and other marginalized groups with things such as construction of washrooms, school uniforms and exercise books.

This has led to increased attendance in classes, especially among girls in senior classes," she says.

From GBV to economic empowerment: A case of Nelie Mhango



Can now afford a smile: Nelie captured at her Shop at Rumphi Town

When in July, 2013, Nelie Mhango broke news of her HIV status to her husband, little did she know that would be the beginning of her troubled marriage life.

Home turned hell for her as her husband started verbally abusing her. He even suggested that she should go back to her parents, saying he was no longer interested in sharing a bed with an HIV positive woman.

The husband's estranged conduct broke Nelie down. She lost hope in love and life

"I at times thought of filing for divorce but I feared for my two children whom I thought would miss my care and support once I leave them with my husband," says a 42-year-old Nelie, who hails from Chigwere Village, Traditional Authority Chikulamayembe in Rumphi District.

Mhango decided to stay in an abusive marriage for the sake of her children. A ray of hope finally shone on her when, in 2018, a friend referred her to Rumphi Women Forum, an ActionAid Malawi partner in Rumphi Local Rights programme.

The women forum brought together Nelie and her husband for counselling, a development that eventually

compelled Nelie's husband to reconcile with his wife. Following the intervention by the women forum, Nelie and her husband started living happily again.

With proceeds from the 2018 farming season, Nelie's husband gave her capital to start some kitchen utensil business. Two years later, Nelie's business looks on a steady growth.

"On a good day, I make about K15 000 from this business. The money realised from this business is helping us meet family needs, including paying school fees for our two children. I am very grateful to ActionAid Malawi through Rumphi Women Forum for reconciling me with my husband," says Nelie.

Programme coordinator for Rumphi Women Forum, Mercy Kasambara, says her organisation has since 2007, resolved over 200 cases similar to Nelie Mhango's.

"Rumphi District is a patriarchal society and before we started operating in 2007, cases of gender-based violence such as defilement, wife-abandonment and physical abuse were high. With the coming in of Rumphi Women Forum, in collaboration with other stakeholders, are able to resolve most of the cases.

"We have also managed to raise massive awareness on the evil and implications of gender-based violence in the district," says Kasambara.

"On a good day, I make about K15 000 from this business. The money realised from this business is helping us meet family needs, including paying school fees for our two children..."

“Land is the only husband I have” Land ownership transforms Gondwe’s life

“I now have about two acres of my own land which I registered with the village head. The land has proved key to improving wellbeing at the family in our household...”



Now has her own land: Gondwe preparing her land for 2020/21 growing season

She is always a busy woman. She is either in her field, cultivating crops or attending to her goats. Through that, she is able to take good care of her five children.

Two of her children are in secondary school and, using proceeds from crops, goats and village savings and loans group, she is able to pay for their school fees.

That’s how inspiring the story of a 42-year-old Sinya Gondwe, a widow of Kamzinga Village, TA Chikulamayembe in Rumphi District, reads. But Gondwe’s story didn’t happen by chance.

It was a result of sheer determination and empowerment by Chikulamayembe Women Forum, an ActionAid Malawi partner that has been championing a decade-long campaign on women’s land ownership in Chikulamayembe.



The proceeds from farming help Gondwe to join VSL and borrow money for livestock business

According to Chikulamayembe Women Forum, Program Coordinator, Regina Chihana, the 2007 Poverty Vulnerability Analysis commissioned by ActionAid Malawi showed that poverty levels were high among women in the area due to, among other factors, women’s lack of access, control, and ownership over productive resources such as land. “Due to the patriarchal system here, a majority of women couldn’t own land. This limited their

Land ownership transforms Gondwe's life



Wongani Reflect Action Cycle: One of the structures empowering women to have control over land in Rumphi District

Page 10

productivity as most of the decisions regarding crop cultivation and marketing were made by their husbands. In the event of the husband's death, women became the worst victims as relatives from the deceased husband would grab land from the widows," says Chihana. Chihana says such an unjust and oppressive system inspired the formation of reflect action cycles (RAC), a grassroots structure that generates human rights issues affecting the area and draws an actionable work-plan for resolving them.

For Chikulamayembe Women Forum, RACs which were formed across the T/A, became a critical advocacy group for women land ownership in the area.

"Since 2008, we have been conducting lobbying meetings with various groups, especially chiefs to ensure that women have right to access and control over land in the area. The campaign has since become a success as the late Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe became a champion of women land ownership in the Rumphi," says Chihana.

To date, says Chihana, Chikulamayembe Women Forum has

facilitated land ownership for about 365 women, including Sinya Gondwe, in the area. Gondwe says having control over land has helped her make key decisions with regards to the type of crops to cultivate and where and how much to sell.

"I now have about two acres of my own land which I registered with the village head. The land has proved key to improving wellbeing at the family in our household as I am able to cultivate crops according to financial needs of the households. Land is now the only husband I have" says Gondwe.

Getting expectant girls, young mothers back to their future



Agness (Right) with a friend reflecting on a bruised past and focus on the future

Upon discovering that she was pregnant, Agness Mhondo, a Form Four student at Kanjuchi Community Day Secondary School in Mzimba feared for her future.

Agness, could not come to terms with the devastating news.

“I have always wanted to be a nurse and I feared the pregnancy would completely destroy my dream,” recalls a 19-year-old Agness who hails from Chitawo Village in traditional authority Khosolo..

“When my parents heard the news of my pregnancy, they were equally upset and chased me from their home to follow the man responsible for my pregnancy. My boyfriend reluctantly accepted me into his house, because he wasn’t prepared for marriage, either.”

However, when a Youth Activista Network in the area heard Agness’ news, it decided to conduct a follow-up. The network, through its Kanjuchi Youth Activista chairperson, Vincent Banda, counselled Agness against dropping out of school and convinced her that despite her pregnancy, she could still sit for the 2020 Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations

“I am grateful to Kanjuchi Youth Activista for rescuing my future. I am now fully focused on studies and my parents are also supportive”

which were due in October. The group also convinced Agness’ parents to welcome back their daughter to facilitate her preparations for her examinations.

Banda says Agness’ boyfriend and parents from both sides were supportive of the group’s decision and Agness was allowed to return to her parents’ home to continue preparing for examinations. The development brought huge a relief to Agness who saw her dream to become a nurse get revived through the network’s intervention.

“I am grateful to Kanjuchi Youth Activista for rescuing my future. I am now fully focused on studies and my parents are also supportive. I know I made a mistake by falling pregnant while still in school but I promise never to disappoint during my examinations,” says a visibly confident Agness, the first born in a family of six.

Kanjuchi Youth Activista Network leader, Banda says, the group moves in to rescue girls from marriages as one way of promoting the right to education for the girl child in the area.

“As a network that was formed to advance human rights in area, we see girls dropping out of school due to early marriages or pregnancies and a huge drawback on our campaign for girl child education.

This is why we take initi-

Page 13

Getting expectant girls, young mothers back to their future

atives to ensure that girls that fall pregnant while at school be given an opportunity to continue with their education,” says Banda.

Banda says in 2020 alone the network has brought back to school, four girls who dropped out of school on early marriage and pregnancy-related grounds.

“However, as a network that is working under ActionAid Malawi, we are not just focusing on education alone. We are also focusing on other equally key areas such budget tracking of funds such as school improvement grants and Constituency Development Fund and raise awareness among communities to ensure they hold duty bearers account any action or inaction they take on our behalf,” he adds.



Banda: Leading Kanjuchi Activista Youth Network the fight for education at Kanjuchi

Preparing the youth against unwanted future

“I want to be the last girl to have fallen victim to unplanned pregnancy, especially while at school in this area,” confidently says a 19-year-old Linda Tembo, a Form Two girl at Ng’ombechinda Community Day Secondary School in Mzimba. Since her pregnancy, which led her to deliver a baby in June 2020, Linda, who hails from Makhangala Village in Traditional Authority Khosolo became an active member of Khosolo Youth Activista Network which is going around the village promoting sexual and reproductive health services among the youth.

The Khosolo Youth Activista

Page 13



Linda Tembo: I don't want any girl from this area to go through what I experienced

Preparing the youth against unwanted future



Linda and members of Khosolo Activista Youth Network proudly showing off some of the contraceptives being promoted in the area

Page 13

Network is youth platform under Khosolo Foundation for Development, one of the local partners working under ActionAid Malawi in advancing social justice, through various anti-poverty programmes including sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)

The youth group, which has a membership of about 30 says it decided to take such a nature of intervention due to high rates of teenage pregnancies, leading to massive school dropout rates in the area.

"Initially, most girls including myself

didn't have access to sexual and reproductive health services. This was mainly due to a culture of silence as most people associated methods such as use of condoms, emergency pills and other family planning methods to promiscuity" says Linda.

She says following the launch of the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) campaign in the area, there has been an improvement in terms of awareness and demand for SRHR services among in-school girls.

Linda's remarks are shared by Sceva Chirwa, who acts at an SRHR desk officer at Khosolo Health Centre.

Chirwa says his office has so far seen more girls getting interested to know about SRHRS, a move which has made them to embark on outreach activities such as awareness campaigns on available sexual and reproductive health rights.

"Through the Khosolo Activista Youth Network, which is effective in mobilizing the youth, we have been reaching out to a number of young people with information on sexual and reproductive health services. Many youth, including girls are coming forth to get the methods of their choice, including condoms," he says.

Care-givers: Lighting children's future



Mhango: I feel motivated to be here because I know how ECD helped my children have a great start in primary education

Visiting Tiyanjane Community Based Child Care Centre (CBCC) in the morning, one is certain to be welcomed by a buzz of highly-spirited children, either singing on top of their voices or reciting something, especially alphabet letters. This has been a norm at the centre since 2011, when ActionAid Malawi started implementing a comprehensive Early Childhood Development Program (ECD) with support from the Roger Federer Foundation (RFF)

However, behind such a jovial mood engulfing the children, aged between four to six, are tireless individuals, named caregivers, who sacrifice their family time to ensure that the children

are fully ready for primary education by the age of six.

A 52-year-old Agness Mhango a Head Caregiver at Tiyanjane CBCC located at Chaghalaghala Village in Traditional Authority Nthalire, is one such unsung heroines pushing for children's bright future on a voluntary basis.

Mhango wakes up early every morning, does her household chores, including preparing her children for school. She then walks to Tiyanjane CBCC to play with about 147 children at the centre, in addition to supervising fellow caregivers.

"I have been doing this for five years now and I don't see myself quitting," says Mhango on the sidelines of a session at the centre.

"I know how difficult it was for our children to have a better start in primary school before this program came. Most of the children would barely attempt primary education and drop out midway. Some would re-start after reaching about nine or ten years, which was bad, especially for girls because by the time they reached standard eight, they would look too old to be in primary school."

Mhango says she feels motivated to be a care-giver, having

Page 16

Care-givers: Lighting children's future



Now a habit A kid washing hands at Tiyanjane CBCC



Mhango (2nd Right) with fellow caregivers at Tiyanjane CBCC

Mhango is now one of the 4,800 care-givers trained by ActionAid Malawi through ECD program that is aimed at “improving the well-being of poor and vulnerable aged between four to six in the target districts through access to quality and sustainable ECD services



Jubilant Kids inside Tiyanjane CBCC

generating initiatives such as goat-pass program and revolving fund which has boosted the morale among us. We now offer care-giving role while also improving the well-being of our families through the income generating initiatives,” she says.

Mhango is now one of the 4,800 care-givers in trained by ActionAid Malawi through ECD program that is aimed at “improving the well-being of poor and vulnerable aged between four to six in the target districts through access to quality and sustainable ECD services.”

Earlier in 2020, McKnight Kalanda, Director of Child Affairs in the Ministry of Gender and Community Development said government would sustain and upscale most of the interventions implemented under the ActionAid Malawi comprehensive ECD program to ensure that care-givers remain motivated through various economic empowerment initiatives.

Page 15

seen how her two children, who passed through Early Childhood Development (ECD) performed during primary school. Mhango says her volunteerism spirit rose following the series of trainings by ActionAid Malawi. “ActionAid Malawi also mobilized us caregivers into some income

Canal turns Kopa-kopa Village into food basket area

Prior to 2017, a low-lying Kopa-kopa Village, etched among numerous hills in Traditional Authority (TA) Nthalire, Chitipa, was a hopeless food story. Every season, smallholder farmers would toil in vain in their fields. Rain-fed agriculture let them down, resulting in increased poverty levels at household levels.

“We were no strangers to hunger,” laments Principal Village Headman Kopa-kopa. “As you know, Nthalire is a farming area with fertile soil, but the recent pattern of rainfall has subjected us to perennial hunger. Parents couldn’t send their children to schools due to hunger. No wonder, cases of child marriages were not uncommon in my area.”

Fed up with hunger, in 2005, about 30 smallholder farmers whose crop fields are along Mibanga River organised themselves and started practising irrigation farming. Every day, the farmers would draw water from the river to irrigate their crops.

But, drawing water manually to irrigate crops became yet another back-breaking task for the smallholder farmers. This compelled them to approach Maukako Community Based Organisation (CBO), a grassroots partner under ActionAid Malawi working with communities in Nthalire to fight poverty and injustice.

In 2017, the farmers and Maukako CBO raised a joint fund proposal to ActionAid Malawi, seeking support for the construction of an irrigation canal. The ActionAid Malawi support, which was in form of hiring a contractor and procurement of cement, enabled the construction of a one-kilometre canal, effectively irrigating about 50 hectares of land.

Jostina Munthali, one of the Maukako



Loveness Munyenyembe: One of the farmers benefitting from the irrigation scheme

CBO leaders, says her organisation decided to support the farmers with canal construction due to the important role food security plays in ending poverty.

“The irrigation scheme expansion has

“I have two acres of land in this scheme where

I cultivate maize, tomatoes, groundnuts and beans almost thrice a year. I no longer experience hunger at my household. I thank Maukako CBO and ActionAid Malawi for the construction of this canal,” says Munyenyembe as she harvests maize from her field. “

proved to be a brilliant investment on our part as well as for the smallholder farmers themselves. Most of them are now cultivating twice or thrice a year due to this scheme. It is our expectation that through this irrigation scheme, many smallholder farmers, especially women, will be economically empowered,” says Munthali.

Munthali’s remarks are evident in a relief-packed testimony by the 52-year-old Loveness Munyenyembe, one of the smallholder farmers currently benefitting from the scheme.

A mother of six, Munyenyembe says the irrigation scheme has cut the vicious circle of hunger at her household besides earning her income for family needs, including paying for school fees for her two children in secondary schools.

“I have two acres of land in this scheme where I cultivate maize, tomatoes, groundnuts and beans

Canal turns Kopa-kopa Village into food basket area

Page 17 almost thrice a year. I no longer experience hunger at my household. I thank Maukako CBO and ActionAid Malawi for the construction of this canal,” says Munyenyembe as she harvests maize from her field.
Munyenyembe’s story mirrors those of 300 smallholder farmers, 200 being women, currently benefiting from Mibanga irrigation scheme,. Most of them are under clubs, which are five in total.

Chitipa District Council, Director of Planning and Development, McMillan Magomero hailed ActionAid Malawi for “greatly complementing government’s efforts in the district.”
He promised that the council work with smallholder farmers in finding solutions to some of the outstanding challenges on the scheme.



Part of Mibanga Irrigation Scheme which is currently feeding thousands



ActionAid Malawi Executive Director, Assan Golowa (2nd left) with members of Maukako CBO appreciating the scheme

ActionAid Malawi impact in the northern cluster and what it means for the organisation

Three Key questions to
ActionAid Malawi Head of Business
Development, Grants Management
and Communication, Tiwonge
Kumwenda Simkonda

Question One: What's ActionAid Malawi impression so far on the impact the organisation has had in northern cluster under the current Country Strategy Paper?

Answer: As ActionAid Malawi, we are impressed with the level of impact our on the communities, especially women, young women, girls and people living in poverty. Guided by our current Country Strategy Paper: Action for Social Justice, we, together with local partners, have implemented various interventions centering on strengthening human rights of the vulnerable groups, building resilience of people living in disaster-prone areas and championing advocacy to ensure government's delivery of public resources, especially in health and education sectors is gender-responsive .

Question Two: What have been the notable achievements so far you have registered under the current strategy in the north cluster?

Through the support from our supporters and donors, we and our local partners have managed to empower young women and girls with human rights, especially sexual and reproductive health rights so as they are take full control of their bodies, outwardly and inwardly till their realise dreams. We have also empowered grassroot structures such as women forums and reflect action circles which have proved vital in women's economic and social empowerment by way of having control over productive resources such as land and strengthening redress mechanisms to cases of sexual and reproductive heath rights. In some instances we have come in with direct intervention such as construction of school blocks and hostels to promote right to education for girls in hard to reach areas. It's also encouraging now to see more women practising resilience agriculture, which is key to ending hunger and poverty in rural communities.

Question Three: Are there any sustainability measures for these interventions?

ActionAid Malawi follows a human rights-based approach in its implementation and working with local partners and government structures offers a strong possibility of sustaining our interventions. Our interventions also focus on shifting the power to women and vulnerable groups so that they eventually take control of their lives.



Kumwenda-Simkonda: Our interventions are leaving lasting impact

“We have also empowered grassroot structures such as women forums and reflect action circles which have proved vital in women's economic and social empowerment through exercising control over productive resources such as land and strengthening redress mechanisms to cases of sexual and reproductive health rights violations. In some instances we have come in with direct intervention such as construction of school blocks and hostels to promote right to education for girls in hard to reach areas. It's also encouraging now to see more women practising resilience agriculture, which is key to ending hunger and poverty in rural communities”



CONTACT:

ActionAid Malawi
Art Business Unit 3-5
Bwila 47/122
Behind Kaunda Filling
Station
Private Bag 30735
Lilongwe

Website: <https://malawi.actionaid.org/>

Facebook: ActionAid International Malawi

Twitter: @ActionaidM