



It takes Malawi...

Sharing Impact Stories from
Advocacy and Child Protection





...to End Violence Against Children

We believe in the power of one voice — its ability to do the impossible, overcome inequality, challenge harmful behaviours and call for justice for children. We mobilise, amplify and harness voices – especially those of children – across the world to call for what is right, what is fair and what is just.

We want to change the way the world works for children and create lasting, sustainable impact. We believe all children should be valued, listened to, included and nurtured within peaceful, reconciled and equal families, communities and societies.

We work for justice for children through advocacy and global campaigns. At local, national, regional and international levels we work to change unjust policies, practices, and structures affecting the most vulnerable children. Through our current global campaign, **It takes a world to end violence against children**, we are catalysing a global movement of people committed to keeping children safe from all forms of harm and violence.

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Francis Dube
National Director
World Vision Malawi

Foreword

World Vision's core ministry focus is to improve the well-being of children - especially the most vulnerable - to be cared for, protected and encouraged to participate in decisions that affect their lives. One of the ways we aspire to achieve this is through our child protection work, where we employ a systematic approach by strengthening the protective environment around children.

We embarked on a journey to gather and compile some stories in our areas of impact, to highlight the positive change from these models and approaches. These stories focus on **Child Protection, Systems strengthening, Advocacy, gender**

equality and social inclusion, child participation as well as faith and development.

We are therefore delighted to share a few of these stories. They represent and attempt to demonstrate our contribution towards achieving a safe place for all children, as they fully grow and reach their God given potential.

Special appreciation goes to all staff and partners, who work tirelessly to make this mission a reality. We also acknowledge the children and caregivers who shared their experiences with us.

...stories that represent and attempt to demonstrate our contribution towards achieving a safe place for all children to fully grow and reach their God given potential

More than a Statistic



Mary, 19, now has a new lease of life and opportunities

At 16 years old, Mary* fell pregnant.

"I was in grade 8 at the time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools had been closed, and I was just at home waiting. I suppose I got bored, but I ended up sleeping with my boyfriend. Then I got pregnant..." a visibly shy Mary explains.

"I felt as though it was the end of my life and education. To make it worse, the father of my child refused responsibility for the baby. He only accepted the responsibility after my parents confronted him, but to date, he has never supported us in any way," narrates Mary.

Mary and her baby are now a statistic.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), **adolescent fertility rates** in Malawi are as high as **136 per 1,000 births**.

In addition, teenage pregnancies and child marriage are interlinked. Ironically, society is oftentimes forcing the young girl into marrying the man or boy that has impregnated her. This means that she is pushed into adulthood, dropping out of school, and thereby further putting her mental and physical health at risk.

Mary narrates that after she gave birth to her baby boy, she was

136
per 1,000 births
Adolescent Fertility
Rates in Malawi

approached by volunteers from World Vision and Save the Children, "I then met Mrs. Hilda Masuka. She introduced herself as a child protection worker. **She came to my home and encouraged me to return to school.**

When I was ready to return to school, my father then went to Kholo Community Day Secondary School and asked them to enroll me into the school, and they accepted."

Mary is now in Form 2, and she is one of the 80 girls at the school, who are self-boarding.

"The school provides hostels for the girls to rent, because most of us live much further away from the school. My parents support me with school fees, boarding fees and food. My friends and I have a communal setting. We cook together, and help each other with studies after classes," says Mary.

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy prevent young people from completing their education, and they miss out on academic and economic opportunities that can help them and their families rise above poverty.

Mary's parents are farmers, and it is her dream to become a nurse one day, to do well for her child and her family. She is determined to become much more than just a statistic.

**Mary's name has been changed to protect her identity.*

Did you Know?

Girls aged 15-19 years are twice as likely to die during childbirth as women 20 years and above. Coupled with HIV, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for young women aged 15-19 years (UNFPA).

Bridging the Gap in Child Protection



Part of the membership of Linjidzi CVSU. L-R Jim Jenala, Jane Makeke, Samson Januwale and Kasote Bauti with Catherine Mbukwa (C), WV staff

Normally, communities that are remote and away from towns are sidelined when it comes to social welfare services, especially those targeting children and vulnerable people. With this in mind, government established the community victim support units (CVSU) to assist in handling cases of abuse within the communities. These comprise of government social workers, police, teachers, youth representatives, community members, and health personnel.

They were, however, but they have reportedly not been as effective as expected due to lack of resources.

Linjidzi CVSU is in Traditional Authority Lundu, in Blantyre, the southern part of Malawi. In August 2022, Linjidzi CVSU was completely transformed when World Vision Malawi (WVM), with funding from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), conducted a capacity building workshop.

"These committees had been there for a very long time, but they were practically non-existent. The social welfare workers would be too busy to effectively help us, as such, there was always a backlog of cases, and over time morals and safety within our villages dwindled..." explains Kasole Bauti, a Child Protection Worker (CPW) and member of Linjidzi CVSU.

With the capacity building given by WVM and UNICEF, Linjidzi CVSU

“This is one of the beauties of this job. We do not get paid for it, but the joy of having people come just to say ‘thank you’ after helping them, makes it all worth it.”

became active once again, working in case management and referrals, and it reportedly also garnered support from the traditional leaders. “The CVSU was opened up to the community. Those that had the capacity and passion to do this work were invited to join the cause. Each member within the CVSU represents the eight group villages, that is, each community is well represented. The committee also works hand in hand with the Police, teachers, health workers, youth and disabled persons,” says Jane Makeke, the Chairperson of Linjidzi CVSU.

On Wednesdays each week, the committee conducts a mobile Court session, from morning to sundown. On this day, they assess and hear cases that need to be addressed. Cases range from child abuse, domestic violence, neglect and assault.

“Normally these cases are reported through the village Chiefs when they are unable to resolve them by themselves. We too escalate cases to the Police and Magistrate Court when it is above us. For instance, rape cases are referred to the hospital and Police for proper handling,” explains Jim Jenala, the Core Case Manager for the Committee.

The 15-member group, which works on voluntary basis, has in the past five months helped 19 children against various forms of abuse,

that included child marriages, child labor, and neglect. It thereafter helped them get back to school.

“I once had a 14 year-old girl who was forced to marry her 16 year old boyfriend after they got pregnant. The mother literally dumped her daughter on my doorstep, in anger. Together with my colleagues, we spoke to the parents of these children, educating them on child rights, and the need to support their children to return to school. They understood, and as I speak, they are raising the grand child and the girl is back in school,” Jane adds, beaming with pride.

“This is one of the beauties of this job. We do not get paid for it, but the joy of having people come just to say ‘thank you’ after helping them, makes it all worth it. In the

few months we have been operational, people now know that we are the community policing forum, and these reflector vests get us recognized from a mile away,” says Samson Januwale, the Chairperson for the Community Policing Forum.

The Committee hopes that one day they can provide shelter for the victims, provide material support to children retrieved from marriages so they can complete school, and introduce more economic activities within their areas to alleviate poverty, which is the main driver for abuse.

Linjidzi CVSU is one of the eight Committees (with 120 members in total) that WVM has trained to help identify, report and manage abuse cases, as well as to raise awareness of human rights in communities.



Samson Januwale (L) and Kasote Bauti hold up one of the registers they use to manage cases reported to the CVSU



“I love it here, they teach us good morals. I love dancing beni at Children’s Corner. I also love the play time. I want to be educated and become a nurse one day. I saw a nurse back home, I want to be like her. – Abigail (15).

“I love playing ball. I also made new friends here” – Felix (14).

Creating Safe Spaces for Children

Play is good and healthy for children. It helps build their imagination and creativity, promotes emotional and behavioral benefits, improves literacy, promotes physical fitness and it gives children a chance to just be children.

That is why Children’s Corners (CC) are important because they give children a safe space to play, relax, have fun and socialize.

Abigail Joseph is 15 years old and in Grade 7 at Tafika Primary School, and she says coming to the Children’s Corner has helped

build her character. She learned to respect her parents to be helpful at home.

Tsanya CC in Blantyre, uses a church as their temporary premises. “The church volunteered their building for us to use, twice a week, for our activities. We use the open space when it is not raining, and during the wet season, we use the structures,” explains Evelyn Kalipinde, a volunteer at the corner.

Evelyn, together with three other colleagues, work with 81 children on Mondays and Fridays. They start at 2 pm after school hours, placing

the children in groups according to age.

“We have smaller children, pre-teens and adolescents. We teach them life skills, child rights, and reporting procedures in case of eventualities when they encounter abuse. We play games with them, and sometimes have away games against children from neighboring corners,” she says.

Through the Building a Resilient Safe and Inclusive Community – Child Protection (BRSIC) project, UNICEF has helped fund the training and capacity building of 312 volunteers, to manage 104 Children’s Corners across Blantyre alone. From these efforts, more than 15,000 children are able to benefit.

Moulding Future Leaders With the Good News

How the creation of Bible Clubs is changing young lives in Malawi

“Lots of singing, dancing and reciting verses...,” 12-year-old Alinafe Kambale describes her time spent at the community Bible Club. Clad in her maroon shirt, she smiles and begins to recite her favorite bible verse; **“In the beginning God created the heavens and earth- Genesis 1 vs. 1”**.

Alinafe, like most children in her community of Selenje, belongs to one of the 13 Bible Clubs that have been set up in the area through World Vision.

Proverbs 22:6 KJV:

King James Version

Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The Bible Club meetings take place during the weekends or on holidays when children are back from school. They are facilitated by a team of 29 pastors that have split themselves into 13 Bible Clubs in the villages in Thundu Area Program, in Phalombe district.

“They are encouraging the spirituality of our children’s lives and resulting in a lot of good behavior change,” says Josam Machoko, a pastor and faith leader responsible for over 54 children under one club.

The Bible Clubs have become valuable as they are an easy way to gain access to teach the word of God to all children irrespective of their church denomination. “We get encouraged when we see children that initially did not know anything about Christianity being in the forefront participating in the clubs,” adds Machoko.

“Instead of spending my time being idle, I like to come to the club to dance and sing and play sports. I think I am more confident now; I used to be so shy, but now I can recite verses and sing in front of other people. The pastors make learning the Bible fun,” says Alinafe.

Through this program, over 217 children are now Bible Club members in Thundu Area Program, and the numbers are increasing with each passing day. From the initial 11 clubs they are now at 13 with more in the offing. To achieve this exercise, World Vision staff have been working closely with pastors and child protection workers in the area.



Alinafe (in red) shares a lesson with her friend

Florafancy Gives Testimony About Her Devotion To CVA

Every person is born with a precious gift and great potential. But Florafancy Chilanga of Chikakunda village in Nkaya Area Program, Balaka district never knew this. She did not know that her presence and existence in this world had a specified destiny, until she joined activities of Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) model.

Florafancy joined the local CVA group in 2019, when she was just 19 years old. Through the interactions, she discovered that the model was a social accountability and local level advocacy methodology that aims at addressing inadequate services, improving relationships between communities and government, and empowering communities to hold the government agencies accountable. The CVA incubated her mind to become a versatile and courageous personality.

She now has a testimony about her devotion to the CVA. Her membership managed to open doors of opportunities. She has been active in high level decision-making forums of the community. She was also privileged to attend a Child Journalism course, and is able to report and write news about the community. Furthermore, she is currently pursuing a tailoring qualification, courtesy of the CVA model.



Florafancy has learnt the trade of tailoring through the CVA

Did you Know?

CVA is an evidence-based, social accountability model that operationalises and strengthens relationships of direct accountability among citizens, policymakers and service providers. It tackles the root causes of poverty, vulnerability, marginalisation, exclusion, inequality and poor governance. Some of the activities include giving the marginalised a voice; helping them realise their potential and using that potential to ignite change in their communities.

Bible Clubs for the Win



Mayamiko reads a scripture passage to his friends during the weekly bible club

14-year old Mayamiko aspires to be a doctor but his performance at school was not impressive.

"I was a bully and I hardly concentrated on my studies so my grades were always very poor," he confessed.

In a bid to reverse this behavior and ensure spiritual growth in his son, Mayamiko's father asked him to join Mvokiwa Bible Club in Dindi Area Program in Phalombe district. "Being sent to the Bible Club was one of the best gifts my father has ever given me," says Mayamiko.

The lessons from the Club did not only reform him spiritually, but also his performance in class and behavior at home improved.

"My favorite verses are Luke 19:1-10 because it gave me hope that

repentance and salvation is for everyone, I can change to the better just like Zacchaeus, and Ephesians 6:1 which taught me that God wants us to be obedient to our parents," he adds.

"When I first joined, I did not know the word of God but the pastors here gently lead us on which path to follow to do right by God and ourselves," adds Mayamiko. Barely a year ago, Mayamiko could not recite a single verse from the Bible, but now he does not only recite verses, he ably preaches and teaches his friends about the gospel. He is a good boy at home, and works hard in school.

"Being sent to the Bible Club was one of the best gifts my father has ever given me"

For him, this can be attributed to the dedication and patience of his Bible Club mentor Apostle Kanyaboma Lazaro.

Apostle Lazaro, however, refuses to take all the credit.

"World Vision trained me and 19 other members of our Pastors Fraternal, on several topics, including how to handle and effectively teach the children and adolescents. They provided us with books and sporting equipment such as balls," he says.

"If we could get more learning materials and toys, it will attract more children to attend our fortnightly gatherings. The pastors also need to be supported with transport because they travel long distances on foot to reach other children," says Apostle Lazaro.

He further adds that apart from making a positive change in the lives of children such as Mayamiko, the Bible Clubs have also enhanced inter-denominational unity, as the clubs welcome every child regardless of their church affiliation.

"But what excites me more is that in our club we also have children who do not belong to any church so this is the only chance they get to learn about Christ, God's Kingdom and salvation," concludes Apostle Lazaro.

World Vision implements this project to boost the children's knowledge on the word of God and to reduce cases of immorality by grooming the children at a tender age.



Felix (in white) interacts with Phinleys Phinifolo, a seasoned journalist who corresponds with World Vision Malawi

The Winding Path To Journalism

Ever since Felix attended the child journalism course, his mind has been set on becoming a journalist.

Felix Kalamu is passionate about writing and telling stories.

He comes from Chamba Area Program in Machinga district. As a Registered Child, he remembers clearly from the journalism training that simplicity, style and accuracy were the three magic keys to the kingdom of writing. So he mastered them and started writing for his community.

profession, I can polish up my skills in the two, and become an even better journalist one day," he says.

He has hope that one day his dreams will come true though it has taken a winding path. "I know that my profession has taken a winding path. But I am sure that one day I will be in a certain newsroom writing and editing news," he assured.

Edna Kalamu is Felix's mother. She is happy that her son is now a role model in the community through the interventions of WVM. She said the seed that was planted during the Child Journalism course has now grown through his son. "I am very thankful to World Vision and all who have made my son to be what he is now," she said.

“
...one day I will
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and editing news

"I am currently enrolled at Machinga Teachers' Training College, but I still believe that this road will lead me to my heart's desire, which is journalism. Writing and editing are key in journalism. So I have confidence that through the teaching

Toiling Futures Away: The Child Herders



Wild fruits that children eat while herding goats in the fields

According to the International Labor Organization, “**child labour** is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.”

Child labor takes away from the children their rights to play, to education and to a safe space. Poverty and lack of civic education ranks top among the reasons why child labour is rampant in Chitundu, Dedza. For this reason, World Vision used the Citizen Voice and Action model to sensitize communities against child labour.

“It is to be noted, that not all work is classified as child labour, as it all depends on the type of work, and the hours worked. However, we noticed that communities here are unaware of child rights, as they think it is all part of chores that children

are to participate in,” explains Joseph Chikwapula, the Child Sponsorship team leader.

Joseph says, they then engaged the community volunteers, who in turn engaged the parents to realize the importance of school for children; and the dangers of having children work for too long in bad weather and without food.

Bundled up, these boys, ranging from 9 – 15 years of age, have a similar story to tell. Of walking for long hours and longer distances; of taking baths in water streams and rivers; of having just one meal per day, and sometimes barely eating; of missing school and missing out on play time as children.

Twaibu is 15 years old, and only in grade 3. He should be well ahead in school, probably in grade 8 by

now. But had been toiling the years away, herding goats for his family from sunrise to sundown, therefore hindering him from attending school as he desired.

“I would only eat in the evenings after I came back from the field. Because I did not have shoes, I used to go barefoot. I have stepped on thorns so many times I can’t even count, my feet would get swollen, but still I had to go out to herd the goats because my family relied on me to do it,” narrates Twaibu.

“In the event that we completely did not have food at home, we would eat wild fruits called nthudza,” he says.

Twaibu is among a group of young boys that have recently returned to school, all thanks to the advocacy and child protection work that World Vision and the communities are doing.

For some of these children, their parents would let them go to school in the morning hours, before proceeding to herd the goats. Yet for some, school was entirely out of the question.

“Sometimes the goats would be sold, and the money realized therein used to buy school materials and food at home, that’s why it was important that we herd the goats diligently,” says Precious, 13.

These young boys have had their childhood taken away for so long, but we hope that this marks a turn-around for them: to be young, carefree and educated.

“I enjoy coming to school now, because I get to interact with my friends, and the subjects we learn are really interesting. I love Mathematics and English, and hopefully one day I can be a teacher,” says Twaibu.

Alinafe, A Rebel With A Good Cause

Long distances to school, inadequate knowledge on child protection, low literacy levels, peer pressure, inadequate school infrastructures, and harmful and retrogressive cultural practices, are some of the many factors that are sending many children into unwanted and early marriages. Alinafe*, from Onga Area Program in Chiradzulu district has been a victim to some of them.

At just 15 years of age, Alinafe got married. Peer pressure led her into the trap of a child marriage in 2017 when she was in grade eight.

"It was the peer pressure. I saw my friends getting married, so I decided to follow suit," she says.

She was later withdrawn from the marriage through the intervention of the child protection committee in her community. Following this, she went back to school and got selected to Providence Industrial Mission secondary school in 2018.

"Unfortunately, I got pregnant this time around. My mother managed to ask the school authorities to reseat my spot, but she was disappointed and bitter with me. I don't blame her," Alinafe says, with sadness.

After nursing the pregnancy and delivering a baby girl, Alinafe was encouraged to go back to school by her mother, as she took care of her grand baby.

"I want to be a nurse one day. I

regret my past, but I think my future is still bright. I want my dreams of becoming a nurse to be a reality," she says.

Alinafe's mother, Chisomo*, is very understanding and loving towards her daughter, but this was not always the case.

"Had I been alone in this fight, I could have lost my daughter. World Vision staff helped bring peace in my family through the home visits. I knew how to support Alinafe well because of the counselling I received," explains Chisomo.

Alinafe is now a rebel, but one with

a good cause. She is against all her friends persuading others to have girlfriends or boyfriends, or those in favor of child marriage. Alinafe wants to build a strong advocacy strategy that will see all teenage mothers back to school.

"I want them back to school and never kill the dreams they had," she promises.

Alinafe wants to see improved protection and access to quality education for all children in her community. She does not want others to go through what she went through.

"I would like to see inadequate school infrastructures, harmful cultural practices, low literacy levels and all things that hinder progress for children to be the thing of the past," she says.

Alinafe and Chisomo's names have been concealed to protect their identities.



Alinafe is happy to be back in school.

Amplifying Children's Voices through Child Parliament

Children have a voice, and through platforms such as the Children's Parliament, their voices are amplified and heard. Children's Parliament provides a foundation from which to promote decision making processes that are more collaborative and inclusive for children and young people. Issues concerning children can best be presented by the children themselves to say the least.

Beaton Nampeya is the representative of the children from Nanchidwa Ward in Njema Area Program in Mulanje district.

"I felt honored to be chosen as a representative for Nanchidwa Ward children, so when I went to the Children's Parliament I presented the problems that we face here," says Beaton.

Among other problems he presented in the Children's Parliament was the child marriages which subsequently contribute to high rates of school dropout, early pregnancies and gender-based violence.

"Most children are forced into marriage due to poverty, and it is painful to see someone whose performance in class was promising, dropping out of school and abandoning all their dreams. These victims do not have a chance to speak out and be heard by decision makers. That is why I utilize the opportunity to represent them at the Children's Parliament to possibly influence decisions that may improve the children's welfare and promote our rights in general" explains Beaton.

Coincidentally, he aspires to become a Member of Parliament in future.

"The Children's Parliament experience assured me that people see a leader in me and the dream to represent my people at the National Assembly in future can come to reality as long as I remain focused," he adds.

Across the globe, Children's Parliament ensures the voices of children and young people are heard by decision makers and that they influence the policies that affect them. In Malawi, the Children's Parliament is championed by World Vision and other partners.



Beaton (centre) has found a voice for himself and his peers to advocate for change



Suggestion boxes like these are a safe way for people to outline their grievances

Safeguarding in Emergencies

Abuse is rampant during emergencies, and because of this, World Vision together with the World Food Programme institutionalized Complaint Feedback Mechanisms (CFM); and during registration and cash distributions, communities are sensitized on the use of the aforementioned.

On distribution days, for instance, suggestion boxes, help desk and CFM committees are made available and easily accessible by the beneficiaries. Besides, community members are also made aware of the toll free lines to report any abuse. Consequently, different complaints are lodged through these mechanisms.

In the past, it was observed that beneficiaries were facing challenges regarding issues of protection, sexual exploitation and abuse based on gender whenever humanitarian interventions were taking place in their areas. Some of the abuses were being perpetrated by the humanitarian workers and other community leaders. This led to lower levels of participation in project activity implementation by the community members, since people were afraid of being harassed and abused.

The most affected were women, children, people living with disabilities and the elderly.

One-Stop Centres to Combat Child Injustice

Child protection and safeguarding demands multiple sectors to work as a team. World Vision Malawi through the UNICEF BRISC Project works to strengthen existing systems and structures to foster efficient child safeguarding, protection and reporting.

Martha*, aged 12, was raped countless times by a 65-year old man from within her village, in Blantyre district.

Her parents, upon realizing that something was wrong, pressed her to find out what happened, and she divulged the unfortunate events to them. They reported the case to Chimembe Police Unit and the victim

was referred to nearby Chimembe Clinic for an examination to collect evidence. Chimembe Clinic did not have the resources for extensive tests, and thus she was referred to Chileka Health Centre, where it was proven that she was sexually assaulted. Unfortunately, Martha is now pregnant and HIV positive.

The suspect was remanded to

Chimembe Police Station and is awaiting to appear before the court of law to answer charges of defilement.

Martha and her parents have all been provided with Psychological First Aid Counselling service to enable the victim to live positively, safe and secure in spite of the ordeal. The parents have also been encouraged to accept the situation and live positively, while at the same time taking responsibility in ensuring that the victim is happy all the time to avoid depression and discrimination.

Stakeholders from World Vision, Social Welfare, Chileka One-Stop Centre Facility and Malawi AIDS Counselling and Resource Organisation (MACRO) have worked collectively to help Martha and her family receive the justice they deserve.



Sexual assault on children like Martha has critical effects that are damaging mentally and physically

**Martha's true identity has been concealed to protect her and her family.*

Acronyms

AP	Area Programme
BRSIC Project	Building a Resilient Safe and Inclusive Community – Child Protection
CBCC	Community Based Child-care Centre
CBO	Community Based Organization
CC	Children’s Corners
CFM	Complaint Feedback Mechanism
CPW	Child Protection Worker
CVA	Citizen Voice Action
CVSU	Community Victim Support Unit
CWB	Child Well being
RC	Registered Children
TA	Traditional Authority
WV	World Vision
WVM	World Vision Malawi

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