

# Extraordinary Lives: Resilience in the face of Disability





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EXTRAORDINARY LIVES:  
RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF DISABILITY

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World Vision National Director

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# Foreword

World Vision is glad to produce this newsletter celebrating Able to Thrive's remarkable successes in Malawi. Operative across Dedza, Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi, and Dowa Districts, the project supports over 4,300 children with disabilities from 2023-2025 through early identification and case management's holistic approach.

We are deeply grateful to World Vision US for securing the resources and the donor for bringing this vision to fruition. The financial commitment and technical support provision are ensuring opportunities for development regardless of ability. On the other hand, we also are grateful and acknowledge the support of our partners in the project: Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (MAP), Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA), Sandithandiza, ABC Hearing Clinic, 500Miles, and District Health Offices in Mzimba, Kasungu, Dowa, Dedza, and Ntchisi, just to mention a few. Their support and dedication to improving the welfare and functionality of children with disabilities in Malawi is remarkable, and World Vision Malawi will continue to utilize these partnerships beyond the confines of the Able to Thrive Project.

Able to Thrive falls under the education program but utilizes approaches and conducts activities linked to all programs within World Vision because of the crosscutting nature of the needs of children with disabilities. Addressing each child's needs through community efforts and stakeholder collaboration, we witness transformative journeys nurturing potential and embracing diversity, inspiring

hope and resilience where every child thrives. Reflecting World Vision's 2030 promise of inclusion, empowerment, and compassionate care.

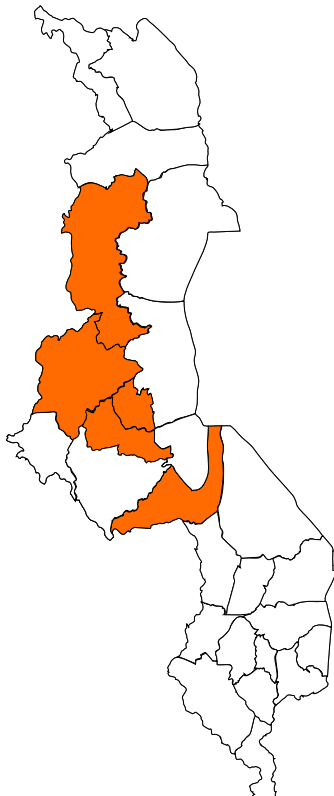
The stories herein demonstrate Able to Thrive's change theory—identifying, intervening, and referring children to support providers. When parents, communities, and organizations address children's requirements locally and beyond, lasting change occurs, reaffirming hope in every heart. Our collective efforts ignite this, joining a future where communities blossom as each child soars to their full capabilities. Though the work is not yet over, we believe that lessons that have been learned from the work on the ground, like the success stories in this newsletter, will continue to inform future planning and interventions, making each new step better than before.



**Francis Dube**  
**National Director**  
World Vision Malawi



# Summary



**Period:**

2023 – 2024

**Number of Beneficiaries:**

100,000

**Total Cost:**

US\$1,000,000

**Areas Covered:**

Mzimba, Kasungu, Ntchisi,  
Dowa and Dedza

# Able to Thrive capacitating primary health care providers on Cerebral Palsy

Screening kids with disabilities at Nkhudzi health centre Ntchisi





**J**essie Kalaya has been a Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) for over 24 years now. Her duty involves providing primary health care to under five children.

One of the common cases that kalaya has been coming across is under-five malnutrition, often putting such children under nutrition rehabilitation care.

“One of the common cases we come across with under-five children is malnutrition which is often identified during child growth monitoring, as such, we refer such children for nutritional rehabilitation programme so that they regain their health,” she says.

But despite working for over two decades, Kalaya has had little knowledge on Cerebral Palsy (CP), a form of disability that emanates from brain damage during and after birth.

The symptoms are quite similar to those found in children who are under nourished, a development which made it harder for primary health care workers like Kalaya make a clear distinction.

Noting such a gap, World Vision through the Able to Thrive project has been capacitating HSAs so they have the requisite knowledge in CP to distinguish it from ordinary malnutrition and make proper medical procedures.

Kalaya has just attended a four day training on ‘Cerebral Palsy Management’ with 19 other fellow HSAs in Mphelere area programme in Ntchisi district.

After the training Kalaya is well equipped with signs and symptoms of Cerebral Palsy and steps that need to be taken whenever they come across a case.

“So, our lack of knowledge on CP made us mistake CP condition for ordinary malnutrition cases, as such so many of the cases wors-

ened rendering the children with permanent conditions that would have otherwise been lessened or reversed,” she says.

“But after this training, I am now aware of what CP is and I will never mistake it for malnutrition. This will also help me identify the many possible cases that are in the communities and are often mistaken for malnutrition,” she adds.

Ntchisi Directorate of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Rehabilitation Technician Davie Kalua who has been a key facilitator in the trainings says World Vision’s Able to Thrive project has scaled up CP knowledge capacity among health personnel, a development that will make it easier to reach more people.

“The HSAs are primary health care personnel, and the knowledge they have gained from the training will help them detect the cases and reduce the cases through early detection. So I urge them to implement the action plan so as to reduce stigma associated with having children with CP and promote increased parental care on the same,” he says.

Charity Bazilio from Mketekete village in the area of Traditional Authority Kalumo has her eight year old first born Rosaline with CP conditions.

She has had to travel to Lilongwe for physiotherapy, a development that has been draining her a considerable amount of resources.

But with the Able to Thrive project, she can now go to Ntchisi District Hospital for the same.

“I am now happy to hear that I can go to the hospital right here to access physiotherapy for my daughter who at age eight has never walked. This will help me get the treatment in time while I can go back home to concentrate on other chores,” she says.

# A chance to thrive: How wheelchairs are promoting inclusive education

**W**hen Chifundo Zakeyu arrived at Kapiri Primary School at Golomoti in Dedza, in December 2023 as a special needs teacher, he embarked on a mission to reach out to children with physical disabilities in the surrounding villages.

His task was identifying these children and encouraging their parents to send them to school.

Among the children Zakeyu met were Yotamu, 7, and Mussa, 12, both of whom faced significant challenges mobility challenges and relied on crawling to move around.

While Mussa was already enrolled at Kapiri Primary School, his frequent absences were a concern. Yotamu, on the other hand, had never attended school before.

The villagers' priorities lay in farming for survival, leaving Mussa's parents struggling to find time to escort him to and from school. Yotamu's mother faced similar challenges.

Despite these obstacles, Zakeyu's persistence encouraged the parents to take the first step.

However, a new challenge arose: "The parents couldn't return to pick up their children after dropping them off," he says.

Yotamu's mother smiles back to her son who is excited with the wheelchair





He took it upon himself to ferry Mussa and Yotamu back to their homes after classes, carrying one on his back and the other in his arms.

"As a special needs teacher, I felt it was part of my job to ensure the children's education and social skills progressed," says Zakeyu, who is also a Church elder.

The area's hot climate made this task hard, but the rewards were worth it. Zakeyu's dedication hasn't gone unnoticed.

World Vision, through Able to Thrive project, recognized his efforts and provided Yotamu and Mussa with wheelchairs, greatly easing their mobility challenges.

Able to Thrive Project seeks to improve well-being of 4,300 children with disabilities, 49% boys and 51% girls, by promoting access to quality and inclusive services for their cognitive, social, emotional & physical development by 2025.

"I am absolutely thrilled! It has been incredibly challenging for the children to get to school and back home.

"In class, Mussa would struggle to stay upright for more than five minutes before needing to lie down again. But now he will be able to remain upright and fully engaged in lessons, which will make a world of difference in his learning experience," says Zakeyu.

Mussa's father revealed that despite numerous efforts by various specialists, his son's condition, which started within two years of his birth, remained unchanged.

He says the demands of providing for their household often compromised the care and attention Mussa required, due to the constraints of time.

However, he expressed heartfelt gratitude that the wheelchair would bring relief to Mussa's

educational pursuits and simplify his daily tasks.

Rufina Posiyano, Yotamu's mother, credited Zakeyu for playing a pivotal role in her son's school enrollment.

"When Zakeyu approached me, I was unaware that my child could be accepted into school. He assured me that enrollment was possible and that school would provide an opportunity to connect with organizations that could offer support," she explains.

Rufina beamed with pride, stating that she was now a happy mother, seeing her child thrive in school and interact with his peers.

She noted that Yotamu's school enrollment had significantly improved his speech, enabling him to communicate more clearly.

She also expressed deep appreciation for Zakeyu's kindness, highlighting that he would often transport Yotamu back home when she was occupied with other tasks.

Malawi ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD). Specifically, Article 24 of the UNCRPD emphasizes the right to inclusive education for persons with disabilities.

The article states that countries should ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, providing reasonable accommodations and support to facilitate access to education for persons with disabilities.

Malawian laws stipulate penalties for parents who neglect their children with physical disabilities.

However, some officials acknowledge the challenges faced by some parents who are forced to choose between caring for their children and providing for their household's basic needs.

# Incentives improved service delivery among volunteers

A MACODA volunteer uses a new bicycle to connect with and support her community





A simple, incentive can go a long way in making a person feel confident and proud in his or her job and that confidence and pride can help make an even better volunteer.

This is true as witnessed in volunteers working with World Vision Malawi in Mzimba district through its Njakwa Area Programme.

Recently, World Vision donated bicycles, drinking bottles, umbrellas and golf shirts to the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) to aid mobility for volunteers working with children with disabilities.

Through Able to Thrive, World Vision is operationalizing the activities of stakeholders and volunteers working to support people with disabilities, one of them are MACODA Volunteers. Victous Kumwenda and Maggie Mhango are some of the MACODA volunteers from Nthangwanika and Chitokoto Village Development Committees who received the incentives in the form of a bicycle, drinking bottle, umbrella and golf shirt.

Kumwenda said the bicycle has eased his mobility challenge and is now able to reach hard-to-reach areas where previously was unable to be reached with disability-related messages.

"Within this short period, I have received the bicycle, I have so far identified 12 children with disabilities from hard-to-reach areas which could not be possible without this donation. Walking was a tiresome job," he said.

While Mhango added, "Having a bike has allowed me to access more volunteering opportunities, and has helped me to feel integrated into my local community. The bicycle is my main travel way now and the golf shirt has improved our visibility.

Another volunteer, Limbani Mwanza from Mawamba VDC said the incentives have helped them to end discrimination for children with disabilities in hard-to-reach areas like Katope, Thete, Songamino, Dungulira,

Kacheche, and Lumano among others.

He said, "We have also improved our relationship with parents since we sensitise them on matters of disabilities after being trained by World Vision. So far, I have also identified 15 children with disabilities in new areas I wasn't able to reach previously due to mobility problems.

On his part, the President of World Vision Malawi volunteers in Njakwa AP Samson Msowoya said there is a good relationship between WVM volunteers and those of MACODA saying this is making their job to be simple.

Meanwhile, Challenger Masingi, Child protection supervisor for social welfare in Mzimba North has commended World Vision for coming up with a project that is also helping volunteers for MACODA saying this will greatly improve disability works in the area.

"Previously disability work was being done but not to the recommended standard but now the coming in of World Vision has greatly improved output. We are talking about early identification for children with disabilities among others, things that were not there," he said while emphasizing that the volunteers now have been equipped with the necessary skills and tools to do their job.

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"Within this short period I have received the bicycle, I have so far identified 12 children with disabilities from hard-to-reach areas which could not be possible without this donation. Walking was a tiresome job."

- Victous Kumwenda

# World Vision resuscitates disability volunteer work in Kasungu

Empowered volunteers bring hope to children with disabilities.





**I**n Traditional Authority Chulu, Kasungu district, where the Malawi Council of Disability Affairs (MACODA) is working, operations were disturbed due to the inactivity of volunteers who are in their everyday operations.

These are people who play a crucial role by strengthening ties to the community and broadening the players' support network, exposing them to the people they target hence their absence almost suffocated the operations of MACODA.

Wisdom Mseteka, MACODA's district Manager testified recently during a visit to the place that the lack of active volunteers in the areas was preventing his organization an opportunity to connect with people with disabilities, especially children.

Mseteka recalls, 'the inactivity of volunteers came due to several reasons like lack of resources to motivate them including that many of them were over-aged like 50 above. These volunteers were chosen way back and hence overstayed.

"We lacked resources to put in place new volunteers hence most of our disability work was not functioning since it was like we did not have volunteers in the whole TA Chulu. You can imagine, at 50 you cannot expect that person to be a volunteer and be active.

After recognizing the challenge, World Vision Malawi through its Mutchenda Area Programme provided resources for the recruitment and training of the new volunteers to improve disability work delivery.

This was done through Able to Thrive, a new disability inclusion project that is planning to reach up to ten thousand children with various disabilities by 2027 and 4300 in the next three years.

Mseteka said the coming in of the new project has brought relief to the operations of MACODA in the district since the new volunteers

have been recruited and trained by World Vision Malawi.

"Most importantly the selection was done at the Area Development Committee and Village Development Committee in all 24 Group village heads under TA Chulu. We now have 24 volunteers from each GVH and have already started working.

"They have received Golfshirts from World Vision and will soon receive bicycles, bags, drinking bottles as well as umbrellas just to motivate them and ease their mobility when discharging duties," said Mseteka adding they have so far identified several children among them a child who is scheduled to be given electric artificial hands and legs and World Vision has been key in providing transport and accommodation in referral places.

Moses Phiri, MACODA Volunteers Chairperson in TA Chulu commended World Vision for ensuring that they are well trained and equipped with relevant skills like identification, Comcare tools, types of disabilities, and sensitisation among other important areas.

"Within six weeks after training, we identified nearly 300 children with different disabilities under TA Chulu. There are some things we could not be able to identify as disabilities but after training, we are well aware. As volunteers we are based right there with the community," he said.

Rose Moyo one of the volunteers from Kawelere VDC said she has so far identified 23 children with disabilities of which 9 are girls adding their recruitment has created demand for their services in the area.

"the process of involving us as volunteers is truly transformative, benefiting both the organization and us as volunteer individuals who become part of the mission," he said adding by training and empowering local volunteers, World Vision is supporting the community to make changes that will last long into the future.

# Wisdom Mseteka, MACODA'S eyes in Kasungu

Wisdom Mseketa (white shirt), District Manager MACODA Kasungu, interacting with MACODA volunteers.





**W**ith just two years in Kasungu and over 28 years working for Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA), Wisdom Mseteka, the Kasungu district manager for MACODA says he is now enjoying his work more than ever in the district.

Mseteka came to Kasungu five years after MACODA closed its office in the district for understaffing. It was after a functional review that he was stationed in Kasungu to be in charge of MACODA's activities in the district.

Today, With World Vision's Able to Thrive project, Mseteka has received capacity building on Cerebral Palsy, a form of disability that affects the brain.

Apart from that, Mseteka says he feels more relevant as World Vision as a partner engages him now and again.

"One of the challenges that we face at MACODA is funding, so even capacity building trainings rarely take place from our coffers as we have so many activities but little funding, but With Able to Thrive, I have been able to attend a couple of trainings including one on Cerebral Palsy (CP), and all this makes my office so relevant," he says.

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"What World Vision has done is like giving me extra staff to ease up my work by capacitating community volunteers who work at Group Village Headman level."

- Wisdom Mseteka

Mseteka says World Vision has eased up his work through training of community volunteers who identify and register children with disability via a mobile application called 'CommCare'.

"What World Vision has done is like giving me extra staff to ease up my work by capacitating community volunteers who work at Group Village Headman level. These identify and register children with disabilities so they can access the requisite therapy, and previously we had to do this ourselves as MACODA" adds Mseteka.

Because of increased corroboration with World Vision, children with disabilities are now being enrolled in Early Childhood Development Centres for the first time in the area of Traditional Authority Chulu.

"One of my successes I would cite is enrolment of children with disabilities in the Community Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) in the district, more especially T/A Chulu. Previously, children with disabilities could not be seen to be in school, but with support from World Vision, that is happening now."

"Secondly, referrals were so hard to make as it took some bureaucratic channels, like from district health office, Central hospitals so on and so forth. But our partnership with World vision has created shortcuts as referrals are now made directly to institutions like Beit Cure, and recently 25 Children from Kasungu got referred to Beit Cure for physiotherapy and they got assisted and are now all well," adds Mseteka.

Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) was established by an Act of parliament of 2024 to be in charge of disability affairs through promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, access to health care and education among others, eventually replacing what used to be called 'Malawi Council for the Handicapped' (MACOHA.)

# Sign language club reunites Jamila with her peers

Mlozi Sign language club in Dedza.





Since childhood, Jamila, 24, has faced constant discrimination. Born deaf, she struggled with communication, which led to social isolation from her peers. At Namitete Secondary School in Lilongwe, she faced difficulties in overcoming the communication barrier. With her teachers lacking expertise in sign language, they were unable to offer the necessary support, leading to her inability to obtain the Malawi School Certificate of Education.

Jamila's dream of becoming a doctor was shattered, and upon returning home to Dedza, her hope seemed lost. However, her life took a turn when a sign language club was introduced at Mlozi L.E.A School, near her home. The club, established through World Vision's Able to Thrive disability project, aimed to support children with various disabilities, including those like Jamila.

Through the club, Jamila has found a supportive community of peers eager to learn sign language. Their shared interest has brought her joy and renewed her optimism for a future where communication barriers are overcome. "I'm thrilled to be part of this club. I share my sign language skills with my peers, empowering them with essential communication tools. Unlike my past experiences, I now feel fully included and valued, able to connect with others effortlessly," she said with a smile.

Jamila's peers' enthusiasm for learning sign language has opened new doors for her. "Although my dream of becoming a doctor was shattered, I'm now excited to pursue tailoring with renewed confidence. Thanks to the support of my club members, I'll receive invaluable help in learning this skill, bridging

communication gaps, and turning my aspiration into reality," she said.

The sign language club has brought immense relief to other two deaf learners at Mlozi LEA School, easing their stress and reducing their sense of isolation. Seeing their classmates learn sign language and actively engage with them has transformed their school experience.

Liness Phakala, a teacher at the school, stated that the initiative has addressed absenteeism and self-doubt among two other deaf learners. "They now feel loved, are participating, welcomed, and valued as they see their peers learning sign language and connecting with them. Jamila's presence at the club has been particularly inspiring for them," she said. Phakala, who has completed basic sign language training with support from the project, added, "In class, we're now moving forward together. Learners assist us in communicating with their peers including those with hearing challenges, fostering a more inclusive environment."

Joseph Chasiya, a World Vision Able to Thrive Volunteer under the Tchesa Area Program, stated that the project has effectively addressed discrimination against children with disabilities. He emphasized that children with hearing impairments have dreams, too, which they often struggle to achieve due to discrimination. Additionally, the project has provided essential support services, such as access to specialized education and resources, created safe spaces for social interaction, and fostered community awareness about disability inclusion. These benefits collectively empower children with disabilities to pursue their aspirations and participate more fully in their communities.

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"Unlike my past experiences, I now feel fully included and valued, able to connect with others effortlessly."

- Jamila

# Sign language bridges the gap in schools

**I**t is Wednesday and the time is 1:30 in the afternoon. Liness Phakala, a Standard 5 teacher at Mlozi Primary School in Dedza has just knocked off from her normal teaching work. However, she has another important task to do before going home and that is to teach learners Sign language.

Jamila's dream of becoming a doctor was just not far from her school, Phonic Mbiri also a Standard 5 teacher at Chifundu Primary

School is also preparing to teach sign language to her learners after knocking off from her normal shift. Similarly, she does this every Wednesday just like Phakala.

The two established Sign language clubs in their schools after being trained in Sign language by the Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD) with support from World Vision Malawi under the newly launched project dubbed Able to Thrive.





This is a new disability inclusion project that is planning to reach up to ten thousand children with various disabilities by 2027 and 4300 in the next three years and training teachers in sign language is one of its components to promote basic sign language skills in schools as one way of eradicating challenges that teachers encounter when teaching learners who have hearing problems.

“After being trained, it was my turn to establish a sign language club in my school where we teach learners and that was the agreement. The aim is that more learners should know this language so that they can help other people be at school or in their communities. I must say learners are adapting well and they are communicating well with two deaf learners that we have here,” said Phakala.

Added Mbiri, “I usually tell learners that this is another mode of communication and should be proud of it. The idea is that children who are deaf should have access to quality education at an early stage just like any other child who is born with no disability.

The two teachers have since commended World Vision Malawi for bridging the gap between them and learners with disabilities especially those who cannot speak but rely on sign language for communication.

16-year-old Amosi Matayani who is a standard 7 learner at Mlozi and Pemphero Gomani who is 10 and is standard 6 at Chifundu have both described the sign language as a plus saying they are easily communicating with fellow learners who cannot speak.

The two are members of sign language clubs in their respective schools with over 20 learn-

ers in each club and have commended World Vision Malawi for training their teachers who are imparting sign language skills to them.

Apart from Dedza, a similar project is also being implemented in Dowa district where 25 teachers have also been trained while across the whole five districts where the project is being implemented, 112 teachers have been trained in sign language, 59 males and 53 females.

Statistics indicate that Malawi has close to 29,000 learners struggling with variations in hearing impairments while close to 3000 learners solely rely on sign language as a mode of communication.

MANAD’s Advocacy Committee Chairperson Sekereni Edgar Kufakwina said WVI is important partner towards fulfilling its vision of ensuring that the deaf people enjoy the highest quality of life by alleviating communication challenges between learners and teachers in the country.

“Our organization is in partnership with WVI through Able to thrive project and we have been doing several activities like deaf awareness and sign language trainings in all the five districts targeting teachers, caregivers, World Vision staff in APs.

“Malawi is facing acute shortage of sign language interpreters and this makes huge challenges for a deaf child to have quality life. We commend World Vision for the project and ask others to emulate this good gesture,” said Kufakwina adding there is huge drop out of learners in schools due to lack sign language interpreters.

# Sandi, the first occupational therapy entity in Malawi

Mwanjabe envisions accessible therapy for all children.

*This vision became his lasting legacy after he sadly passed away.  
May His Soul Rest in Peace.*





**A**t the heart of Malawi's capital Lilongwe is an occupational therapy institution located at area nine with two sister institutions; Sandi and Sandithandiza.

'Sandi' comes from Nyakyusa language widely spoken in the northern district of Karonga. The word means 'I am here'. 'Sandithandiza' on the other hand means 'I am here to help'.

Titi Titus Mwanjabe is an occupation therapist and founder of Sandi Rehabilitation and Therapy Center as well as Sandithandiza.

Sandi was established in 2010 as a private business to offer occupation therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy as well as psycho-social support services.

Sandi started with the target of children with struggles in scholastic activities in elite private schools like Mt. Sinai, Bishop McKenzie and St. Andrews High school.

Mwanjabe later decided to establish another entity with the aim of reaching severely impoverished children that faced similar challenges but could not afford the commercial rates charged at Sandi Rehabilitation and Therapy Center.

"At the onset, we targeted children that struggled with scholastic activities in elite schools like Bishop McKenzie, Mt. Sinai and all others, but we noted that our services were quite pricey and too expensive for ordinary citizens."

"We also noted that there was an exponentially high population of children with various forms of disabilities in the rural setting than the urban areas which we had initially targeted, so we had to find a way of taking our services to them, and thus the birth of Sandithandiza" says Mwanjabe.

Today, Sandithandiza has partnered with so many institutions including Africa Vision Malawi, World Vision as well as Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (MAP) and many others.

In a bid to help with early identification of disability in new births, Sandithandiza has trained health practitioners in rural health centres who make assessments on new born children using a 10 point matrix in Lilongwe.

Currently, 20 percent of revenue generated from Sandi is dedicated to supporting the services of Sandithandiza to reach out to more-needy and underprivileged children.

With World Vision Malawi, Mwanjabe supports Able to Thrive project with supply of assistive devices and trainings on psycho social support to enable parents and their communities have a receptive mind towards children with various forms of disabilities.

"With World Vision's Able to Thrive project, we are providing assistive devices for various forms of disabilities for children as well as offer trainings to parents on how they can support their children," states Mwanjabe.

Mwanjabe feels the Able to Thrive Project has created an effective partnership on disability programming in the country which he feels will help create comprehensive support to underprivileged children with disability.

"Through Disability clinics, we have created a 'one stop centre' where we have Malawi Against Physical Disability (MAP) helping with screening physical disabilities, African Bible College (ABC) Audiology clinic screening hearing challenges and Sandithandiza assessing the cognitive and spiritual aspects of child development, so the support is indeed comprehensive."

"Now, because the project is only working in five districts, I would ask government to capitalize on the Able to Thrive project by World Vision Malawi and scale up the interventions to all the other districts so that every underprivileged child in the country has access to the services," concludes Mwanjabe.

# Global disability forum delegates learn from Dowa disability support group

Cashelle Dunn, World Vision Australia disability advisor, shares her story, inspiring others to support.





**A**fter the kick-start of a global disability forum at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe on Monday with delegates from 10 countries, Tuesday morning accorded the participants an opportunity to appreciate the various interventions by World Vision Malawi through the Able to Thrive Project.

At Chisepo Health Centre in Dowa district's Chisepo Area Programme, the visitors meet a disability support group chaired by Yami-kani Dzonzi. Also part of the group is Gerald Muwando, pastor for Church of Christ in the community.

He opens the sessions with a biblical verse from John nine verses one, two and three.

"And Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked, master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?"

"Jesus answered, neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but the works of God should be made manifest in him," reads the verse.

Muwando adds to say, the group has helped parents with children with disability get moral support through the biblical teachings by demystifying misconceptions around disability in the community.

"During our meetings we give the parents who have children with disability moral support through the biblical teachings. The bible teaches that having children with disability is not as a result of sin as others believe and that we need to show such children immense love as we do with all others," he says.

Muwando's short sermon is also drawn from Genesis chapter one, verse 26 as well as two Kings Chapter seven verses three, eleven and 20.

"In Genesis, we learn that God created man in his own image, so we are all God's image irrespective of our diverse forms of physical or mental disabilities. So, much as God is love, we must show these children unconditional love," adds Muwando.

40 year old Dahlia Chiluzi, mother of three whose third born was born with hydrocephalic condition, says the group has helped her be supportive towards her 14 year-old daughter, Tawonga who is now in grade three.

"Before Thrive Project came, I used to be stressed about the condition of my daughter, and I could not send her to school because the school environment was so unfriendly to her. But after Able to Thrive came last year, I got relief through the disability support group, and she now goes to school easily and mingles with peers," says Chiluzi.

Moved by the group's activities, Cashelle Dunn, World Vision Australia disability advisor inspired the group with her childhood story.

Dunn, who was born with epilepsy, encourages the group to scale up their efforts in supporting children with disability in the community so that they become independent members of the society.

"I was born with epilepsy, and it was not easy for my parents thinking about me going out with my friends because I have a seizure, and for me I always ignored that, I just wanted to do my things."

"But for me to reach this far is because I had supportive parents who wanted me to be happy and independent despite my condition, so every parent has the huge responsibility to ensure their child unleashes the greatest potential in them and become independent adults later," says Dunn.

# Able to Thrive creates a hub for disability in Kasangadzi

Celebrating families support group session at Chakhadza Health center in Dowa.





**I**n Kasangadzi community in the area of Traditional Authority Chakhaza in Dowa having children with disability was a 'sin' as parents and guardians with such children opted to locking them indoors.

As such, there was a low record on children with disabilities in the area, and this created a false assumption that the community had no children with disability.

"Preciously, it was harder to identify children with disability as parents only hid them from the community, and even more registering them in the sponsorship programme as parents were not open enough to register their children with disability," says Alick Majuweta, a sponsorship volunteer and member of Kasangadzi Self Support group.

Today, with Able to Thrive project, community groupings like Kasangadzi Self Support group have emerged where parents and guardians discuss how to support their children with disabilities.

To people like Benson Zude, that children with disability need the same opportunity as all others was not a thing of this world. His 15 year old son who has some form of physical disability had to crawl to school.

"I have a 15 year old son who, had to crawl to school. But after the Able to Thrive project, my son has been able to get physiotherapy treatment and he is now able to ride a bicycle and goes to school frequently and is now in grade five," explains Zude.

Prospelina Ntchamba is also a member of kasangadzi Self Support group. She has a granddaughter who was deserted after marriage break up with her husband.

Ntchamba attended a Celebrating Families training where she developed a mind-set change and started to take care of her granddaughter.

"My daughter in law forsook her daughter Prisca after she broke up with my son, leaving her daughter into my custody. At the onset I was so reluctant, but after attending Celebrating families training, I was so happy that children with disability like my granddaughter can be treated like any other, and I now take her for physiotherapy," she says.

Eva Mafulirwa is Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) Rehabilitative Assistant in the area. Mafulirwa says her work used to be tougher in the past as MACODA did not have active partners in the community.

"Before the Able to Thrive project, as MACODA we worked so much in isolation as even making referrals was so hard, usually taking time. But with World Vision, we work hand in hand with health experts who help with the screening in the communities, faith leaders who have also been crucial on community awareness, so partnership and corroboration is now so powerful," says Mafuirwa.

The project has also helped Mwafulirwa reach more children with disability unlike before where she only had 20 registered children with disability,

"In the past, my catchment area had only 20 children with disability, but just a year into the project, I now have over 50 and I expect to register more. So this project is really doing the best to make our work so easy," adds Mwafulirwa who is also a member of Kasangadzi Self Support group, a 23 member grouping of parents with children with disabilities.

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"...my son has been able to get physiotherapy treatment and he is now able to ride a bicycle and goes to school frequently and is now in grade five."

- Benson Zude

# Victoria has a disability friendly toilet after 18 years

Victoria (in wheel chair) 17 years old poses with her mother, GVH Chitenje Kasungu.





**V**ictoria Jentala from Malenga Village, Traditional Authority Chakhaza in Dowa district was born with a cerebral palsy problem, a group of conditions that affect movement and posture.

She is now 18 as she was born on 3rd July 2006 but for the past 17 years, she has been treated just like any other baby since she has a disability that affects both her legs and hands hence cannot make any movement or standing upright.

"She was usually defecating where she is anytime and changing clothes as well as washing was an order of the day. Though she was helped with a wheelchair, she never visited the toilet to help herself because it is not disability friendly," said her mother, Lusiya Daiton who is 53.

But today, the story of Victoria is different, she is now able to use the toilet, thanks to World Vision Malawi for providing technical support.

Daiton said, "She now has a disability-friendly toilet which she uses. Our job is simple now, just to help push the wheelchair to the toilet. It was really hard for us in the house since it was like we have a small baby always.

World Vision Malawi through the Able to Thrive project trained Mansions in different districts including Dowa on how to construct disability-friendly toilets for children with disabilities like Victoria.

The new disability inclusion project is planning to reach up to ten thousand children with various disabilities by 2027 and 4300 in the next three years.

It is against this background that Victoria, 's mother is grateful to World Vision for the project since her daughter has become one of the beneficiaries.

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"She now has a disability-friendly toilet which she uses. Our job is simple now, just to help push the wheelchair to the toilet."

- Lusiya Daiton

Kondwani Chikoti who was trained as one of the mansion and constructed the disability toilet for Victoria says though he was already a builder, being trained to construct disability-friendly toilets is a plus to him.

"I constructed this toilet after being trained by World Vision Malawi as one of the people staying in this area. I am ready to construct more such toilets as long as demand is there. The agreement is that I should also train others on the same and will do so.

"I am doing this work free of charge being a citizen of the area. By doing so, will be helping other people and this is my contribution to the community," he said while commending World Vision for equipping him with new skills he was not aware of.

Malawi Council of Disability Affairs (MACODA) Volunteer for Chakhaza A has since commended World Vision for the initiative saying so far 12 children with disabilities are also looking forward to having similar toilets in his area of which seven are girls.

Currently, World Vision has trained 100 mansions from 10 Area Programmes in five districts of Mzimba, Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi and Dedza and so far 10 disability toilets have already been constructed in the districts.

# ABC hearing Clinic pledges to help more Malawians

Audiologist Blessings Mvula attends to a patient at ABC Clinic.





**I**n developing countries like Malawi, deaf children face several challenges. This includes difficulty accessing adequate services, support and education exclusion from society and isolation.

Access to audiology services, therefore, can make a real difference in the lives of those on the verge of being deaf if given early treatment or those with a disability to make their life simpler.

It is against this reason that the country's first audiology service was only established in 2013 at the ABC Hearing Clinic in the capital city Lilongwe, by Australian couple Peter and Rebecca Bartlett.

Blessings Mvula, is one of the audiologists working at the Clinic and says some hearing impairments that people are facing can be prevented if people visit the clinic adding the hearing problem is huge in Malawi compared to what others may think.

"The clinic is open to everyone even those who want their ears tested. For children who are born at ABC clinic, it is a must to be tested even in public hospitals to avoid some hearing impairments that can be prevented at an early stage.

"For me, I studied audiology right here at ABC because we have a College that offers such a degree within 5 years. There is still a huge gap for audiologists and Malawi needs more ear specialists. I must say that there are only three countries that offer such degrees and these include Malawi, Egypt and South Africa," he said.

"As an audiologist, it feels so great to see someone doing well after getting the services I provide. It is now 10 years since ABC started delivering the services to Malawians and our school African Bible College will continue to provide more audiologists for Malawi and neighbouring countries," added Mvula who is also an Audiology lecturer at the school.

Mvula also an Outreach Coordinator at the institution has since commended World Vision Malawi for coming up with Able to Thrive, a new disability inclusion project that is planning to reach up to ten thousand children with various disabilities by 2027 and 4300 in the next two years.

He hopes that the project has the potential to reduce deaf cases since as Clinic they are also involved in the organisation's activities especially when it comes to screening and sensitisations in communities where the project is being implemented.

"Our relationship with World Vision Malawi started way back in 2016. The coming in of this project has further strengthened that. Through this new project, we are training their volunteers on early identification, doing screening in different places as well as assisting those children who are being referred to our clinic to get assistance.

"We have so far assisted nine children with hearing aids after being referred by the organization. We aim to assist as many children because the problem of impairment is just huge among communities. You can imagine at Bua Mtete and surrounding places in Mchinji within 5 days after doing screening we found that there are 166 children with different hearing problems. This explains more about the situation in our country," said Mvula while urging more people to study the Audiology course which he said is now marketable both in Malawi and beyond.

He added that the ABC clinic has helped the Malawi government to ensure that there are Audiologists in all central hospitals after donating equipment worth over K 200 million so that many people including children can be assisted.



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**ENOUGH**