



TELLING OUR STORY

1983 to 2017

A chronicle of a journey of hope for people of
Senzani Community in partnership with
World Vision

World Vision® 

ACRONYMS

ADC	Area Development Committee
ADP	Area Development Programme
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
ARV	Anti-Retroviral
CAC	Community Area Committee
CBCC	Community Based Child Care Centre
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CVA	Citizen Voice and Action
CDP	Community Development Programme
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GN	Gift Notification
GVH	Group Village Headman
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
HH	Household
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HTC	HIV Testing and Counselling
HTH	High Treatment Chloride
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LEAP	Learning, Evaluation, Accountability Partnership
LLITN	Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Net (LLITN)
LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Survey
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
MZUNI	Mzuzu University
PLWHA	People Living with HIV and AIDS
RC	Registered Children
SG	Savings Groups
SECODO	Senzani Community Development Organisation
SO	Support Office
TA	Traditional Authority
TDI	Transformational Development Indicators
TEVETA	Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Village Action Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSL	Village Savings and Loan
WV	World Vision
WVI	World Vision International
WVM	World Vision Malawi

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Driven by the desire to serve God and make a lasting impact in the world, World Vision is a leading global partner in transforming the lives of vulnerable children, within their families and communities, so they can become all Jesus created them to be.



Foreword by the National Director

Hello Dear Reader! My name is Hazel Nyathi, National Director for World Vision in Malawi. It feels so good to report on the progress we have made in Senzani, Ntcheu over the years, our industrious years. We celebrate what we have achieved working with the parents and leaders of this community in creating a better environment for their children, one where the children are not just living but thriving.

WorldVision opened its doors in Senzani in 1983 using a Community Development Programme (CDP) approach specifically in Namisu. We did most of our work in food security, education, health and water through various local churches in the area. We endeavoured to make our work more sustainable by working with community development structures from 1996 when we introduced the Area Development Programme (ADP) approach. This was the same time when the Malawi government introduced the Decentralization Policy which saw the emergence of Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs).

The best thing about our work throughout the years was that we maintained our focus in addressing household food and nutrition insecurity, limited access to healthcare, limited access to and poor quality education as well as limited access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation. Over time, we also saw the need to empower the youths. Our work was progressively informed by findings from various assessments such as Lot Quality Assurance Survey (LQAS) and programme mid-term evaluations.

We celebrate the great partnership we have had with various community-based structures in Senzani including the church not forgetting the critical role Ntcheu District Council has played in providing policy direction and technical support. It is thus a fact that Senzani is better today than we found it in 1983 and we owe all this to this great partnership which has given the children of Senzani an opportunity to dream again.

Over this period, ladies and gentlemen, Senzani Area Programme has registered great improvements in several areas: improved access to quality education through the construction of more school blocks and teachers' houses, providing of teaching and learning materials and capacity building of school management structures, parents and children themselves; improved access to safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene through the drilling of boreholes in a number of villages and community capacity building; improved food and nutrition security through both various interventions such as livestock and crop production and the introduction of savings groups; reduction in malaria, HIV and AIDS, and ARI prevalence due to community capacity building, construction of health facilities, including HTC centres, providing of Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets

(LLITNs) and a number of behaviour change interventions to mention but a few. As we conclude our work in Senzani this year 2017, I am glad to mention that we have left behind even stronger community-based development structures including the church.

With all these accomplishments, I would, therefore, like to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to the people of the United States of America because of their support for the people of Senzani over the 34-year transformational journey. The community is achieving all this because of your enduring generosity to improve the lives of children and their families.



This is a happy goodbye! Sometimes saying goodbye is hard, but when a World Vision community has reached self-sustainability, it's a cause for celebration.

HAZEL NYATHI
National Director, World Vision Malawi



Children in Senzani can smile to the future

Introduction

Background

World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

WorldVision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. In Malawi, World Vision has been implementing relief, development and advocacy interventions since 1982. The organization is currently working in all 28 districts through 39 Area Development Programmes and Grant supported projects. Senzani community is one of the areas with a very long history with World Vision Malawi. WV Malawi started working in Senzani community in the year 1983; barely a year after WV started its work in Malawi in 1982. The 1983 baseline assessment marked the beginning of a long lasting partnership between WV and Senzani area.

The Journey

In the course of the 34-year period, WV and Senzani community have undergone a series of development phases,

including the CDP, ADP, TDI and AP.

The CDP era covered the period from 1983 to 1995 which was characterized by the faith community being at the centre of WV work in the area. In the absence of the decentralized structures, churches appeared to be more organized structures which could drive the intervention. Key interventions during the era included construction of classroom blocks, teachers' houses and a bridge at Namisu River.

The second phase (1995 -2014) witnessed the transition of the area from CDP to Area Development Programme Approach. Key in this approach was the shift in focus from 'development with the people', to 'empowering people for development'. The ADP approach intended to gradually

assist communities to take ownership of projects and of their own development while addressing the macro causes of poverty. This called for expansion of the catchment area from one focus area to four others, namely GVH Senzani, GVH Matala, Matcheleza and Ngongomwa in GVH Mussa as part of the long-term commitment of an Area Development Programme. An ADP committee as established to which CACs would report. Key in the phase was also the introduction of the sponsorship programme. By the year 2014 the ADP transitioned into the AP approach.

Lessons

A journey this long cannot be devoid of lessons. World Vision is exiting Senzani with a number of

lessons which once adopted would contribute towards achievement of child well-being aspirations in existing APs and those yet to be. For instance, local level advocacy through the citizen voice and action approach should be introduced right at the start of the programme in order to yield intended outcomes. In Senzani CVA was only introduced at a later stage, thereby creating gaps on ownership of some interventions.

All in all, WV work in Senzani has left unforgettable marks in the lives of children and community members alike.

There has been improved access

to education through provision of classroom blocks and teachers' houses as well as improved access to clean water. The fierce cholera outbreak which hit the community earlier on is a thing of the past with WV health interventions. Besides, it is no longer a crime to come out in the open and declare one's HIV status as WV together with the community have broken the stigma that surrounded the situation.

This booklet, therefore, is a recount of a journey embarked on by World Vision Malawi (WV) and the people of Senzani community from 1983 to September, 2017. It highlights the main programme cycles, key interventions, achievements and lessons as told by the people of Senzani themselves.

How we started: Days of Community Development Programme Approach (1983 to 1995)



Bangalasoni: World Vision came in through the Church

Senzani community is one of the areas with a very long history with World Vision Malawi (WVM). WV started working in Senzani community in the year 1983; barely a year after WV started its work in Malawi in 1982. The 1983 baseline assessment marked the beginning of long lasting partnership between WV and Senzani area which informed the designing of the interventions that WV started supporting.

By the year 1984, World Vision started implementing interventions through a Community Development Programme (CDP) approach, which was the first development approach to be implemented up to 1995 before transitioning to the Area Development Programme (ADP) approach in 1996. The CDP as an approach involved working with the communities in addressing various identified needs.

The phase marked unique involvement of the faith community, particularly the church, in programme management. The church had overall responsibility of coordinating projects at community level. The church also supported the recruitment of WV staff as it was perceived to be the right structure to identify right personnel consistent with Christian values. During the specified period, WV interventions focused on one area i.e. Namisu in GVH Kanama and gradually expanded to other areas such as Senzani, and Matcheleza, where education, health, food security and community empowerment projects were implemented. Programme implementation was being coordinated by Customer Service Facilitators (CSF) who would report to the CDP manager. Specific committees at community level were established to coordinate specific projects. For instance, each construction work had a specific committee responsible for overseeing such projects and would be dissolved after completion.

Key Interventions During the CDP

With more bias towards infrastructure development, a number of interventions were done in the areas of education, health, food security, faith and development as well as road infrastructure. Such interventions included:



Faith & Development

Faith and Development was a very key thematic area during the CDP phase. All the developmental work being done during this phase was steered through the faith community considering that there were no local government structures present at the community level by then.

Key interventions marking a working relationship with the church included:

- Establishment of the Senzani Faith Based Organisation (FBO) which is functional to date
- Support towards Evangelism by churches and other church events
- Support towards some pastors' salaries especially for Zambezi Evangelical Church



Food Security

- Farmers were supported with maize seed and fertilizers between 1987 and 1990
- A community-managed maize mill was established in Senzani in 1987



Health and Nutrition

- Construction of Namisu Health Centre
- Provision of drugs including those for treating scabies when there was an outbreak on the same
- Provision of salaries for two health workers at Namisu Health Centre
- Launch of the HIV and AIDS education project in partnership with the local churches in the area



Road Infrastructure

- • A bridge at Namisu River was constructed to ease mobility challenges that the community was facing.



Education

- Construction of 16 classroom blocks in primary schools across the focus area
- Construction of 30 teachers' houses including head teachers' houses
- Establishment of three adult literacy centres in Matcheleza, Namisu and Senzani villages.
- Support towards staff salaries for 17 teachers from the focus area after supporting them with training



Partnerships

During the CDP phase, World Vision worked with the faith community. This was an era where there were no decentralization structures such as VDCs and ADCs at community level such that churches, therefore, appeared to be more strategic, well organized structures which could anchor WV developmental work. In Malawi, decentralization of power to local authorities was only adopted in October, 1998 in order to drive poverty reduction as well as a means to strengthen democratic institutions and participation at the local level.

Moving from Community Development Programme (CDP) to Area Development Programme (ADP)

Senzani was one of the Programmes that started implementing the Area Development Programme (ADP) approach in 1996 under LEAP 2.0 until when it transitioned to LEAP 3.0 in 2015. Unlike CDP that focused on ‘development with the people’, the ADP approach focused on ‘empowering people for development’.

While the design of an ADP varied from one country to another, “In Malawi, an ADP was a multi-sectoral integrated programme that addressed and covered geographically large areas and community groups aiming at bringing about transformational development in social, economic, environmental and spiritual aspects. ADP is basically an approach of enhancing holistic sustainable development in a specific locality of wider area (divided into commitment areas for efficient management) with a population of 30,000 to 60,000 people over a project lifespan of 15-20 years.” The ADP’s main goal was to gradually assist communities to take ownership of projects and of their own development, and to address the macro causes of poverty. Through this, the ADP would foster sustainability which later was reinforced through transformational development that centered on five key domains: Well-being of children and families in community; Empowered children as agents of change; Transformed relationships; Interdependent and empowered communities; Transformed systems and structures.

Consistent with the ADP programming, the catchment area for the ADPs by 1996 had expanded from one focus area i.e. Namisu in GVH Kanama to four additional focus areas i.e. GVH Senzani and Matala, Ngongomwa in GVH Mussa, and GVH Matcheleza. Senzani, as a Programme by 2017 has been working in

12 Group Village Headmen with a total population of 35,000 people from 6500 HH.

Partnerships

Besides working with the church and other community groups, WV started working with the Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs) established at Traditional Authority (TA) and Group Village Head (GVH) levels, respectively. These were community development structures that were introduced after the Malawi Government approved its Decentralization Policy on 28th January, 1996. To programme implementation, WV facilitated the establishment of an ADP Committee at Area Development Programme (ADP) level and Catchment Area Committees (CACs) at GVH level, respectively. The ADP Committee was responsible for the coordination of all work WV was implementing including Sponsorship at ADP level which was the same level as that of the ADC. CACs, on the other hand, were responsible for coordinating all interventions at GVH level and they were exclusively responsible for managing all sponsorship work. WV was responsible for building the capacity of these structures to enable them in managing their work, including information on all sponsorship Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of that time. They were able to mobilize RC parents and guardians and sensitize the community about their role in sponsorship. Almost everyone in the community was aware about sponsorship and how RC staff were recruited and the recruitment criteria.

Senzani ADP committee and CACs were both keeping records, organized their own meetings and prepared monthly reports which they submitted to the ADP office before WV staff could prepare a report for submission to the Support Office (SO).

Key Interventions Implemented under the Area Development Programme

The interventions implemented from 1996 were guided by the ADP cycle of five years marked by mid-term evaluations in between. The interventions ranged from Water Supply, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH), Literacy, Food Security, Health and Nutrition to Community Empowerment and Sponsorship. Considering that the ADP developed and relied on multiple sources of funding, some of the work in Senzani was implemented under special projects and donations besides sponsorship funding.



Coming in of school blocks has helped foster a love for learning

1996 - 2000



Education

- Distribution of learning materials such as school desks
- Introduction of Adult Literacy classes
- Provision of school materials such as school uniforms and shoes for RCs as well as exercise books



Health

- Distribution of Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets (LLITNs)
- Provision of sun plants
- Child immunization
- Introduction of drug revolving fund in 1999
- Training in food preservation and provision of solar driers for vegetable preservation



Water and Sanitation

- Drilling of 10 Boreholes, (2 in Senzani one, 3 in Chitale, 2 in Senzani two, 1 in Mokhotho, 1 in Ngongomwa, and 1 in Mateme)



Food Security

- Distribution of farm inputs like fertilizer, maize seed, sweet potato vines and cassava cuttings to farmers to promote household resilience through asset creation
- Distribution of small stock to households i.e. chickens, rabbits and Guinea fowls to promote household resilience through asset creation.
- Construction of two irrigation schemes i.e. Tunthu and Buche in 1997
- Introduction of the Village Savings and Loans (VSL) concept and formation of VSL groups as a tool of economic empowerment
- Capacity building of farmers in bee keeping including the provision of Bee Keeping Kits to farmers.
- Introduction of fish farming.
- Distribution of blue gum tree seedlings to school children in 1996 to promote environmental conservation
- Establishment of tree nurseries along rivers in 1999



Community Empowerment Project

- Introduction of home craft classes
- Introduction of fire briquettes



Infrastructure

- Construction of two bridges at Nyuludzi and Lisungwi rivers in 1997 and 2000, respectively
- Construction of Homes of Hope i.e. houses for vulnerable children including orphans

Sponsorship

- Recruitment of RCs
- Distribution of goats to RC families
- Introduction of several Sponsorship activities including Birthday Bounce Back activities

Special Project

- Introduction of MICAH Project that focused on health and nutrition



The future looks promising for children in Senzani

2001 - 2005

Education

- Provided teaching and learning materials in schools
- Supported one RC with school fees to study Theology at a Bible School in Mzuzu from 2002-2004
- Supported one RC with school fees to study Bachelor of Arts in Journalism at University of Malawi (The Polytechnic) from 2002 -2003
- Construction of 8 school blocks with 2 classrooms
- Establishment of a Relief Disaster Committee in 2005
- Distribution of relief food to RC families i.e. maize and soya from 2005 to 2006
- Distribution of 6,000 fruit trees (paw paws, guavas and oranges) to households in 2005



Health

- Distributed LTTINs to 6500 HH in 2002.
- Established HIV/AIDS committees in 200.
- Introduction Tipewe AIDS Trophy from 2001-2005.
- Supported HIV/AIDS Cycling Tour from Zalewa to Senzani in 2002.
- Supported the establishment of an HIV/AIDS support group with 30 people (PLWHA) in 2002 out of those that were there, 28 people members are still alive and live in the community.



Food Security

- Promoted food fortification through grinding mills from 2001-2002
- Provided soft loans on farm implements such as ox-carts, oxen and ploughs
- Supported an enhance visit for food fortification committee to Ekwendeni Mission Hospital in 2002
- Introduced fertilizer revolving loans in 2001
- Distributed 200 pigs to 200 households in 2001
- Distributed 6,000 Boer goats to various selected households in 2001
- Provided bee keeping hives to selected farmers
- Distributed 10,000 layers (Black Australops) to selected farmers in 2005.



Infrastructure

- Constructed 52 houses for orphans from 2002 -2004
- Constructed 4 resource centers from 2001 to 2005 including installation of solar and water pumps in the resource centers

Sponsorship

- Distributed maize seeds, bean seeds, fertilizer and school bags to RC families
- Senzani was visited by World Vision president John Kay in 2002



Community Empowerment

- Trained three youths in driving
- Supported the establishment of VACC and CAC
- Supported government in establishing five CBOs in 2005
- Conducted HIV/AIDS capacity building for community members in 2002
- Conducted bee keeping training for farmers in 2001
- Supported and conducted mushroom production training for farmers in 2005



Faith and Development

- Supported eight school-based bible clubs with Bibles

Design Monitoring Evaluation

- Supported 8 school-based bible clubs with Bibles WV conducted a mid-term evaluation in 2001

2006 - 2010

Water

- Drilled 40 boreholes in various villages and schools (2 boreholes at Chitale, 10 boreholes at Matala, 12 boreholes at Likudzi, 2 boreholes at Namisu, 8 boreholes at Senzani and 6 boreholes at Matcheleza)

Food Security

- Food Security
- Constructed 7 grain banks
- Distributed 124 dairy cows to 124 households
- Constructed maize mill at Namisu

Health

- Constructed two HIV Testing and Counselling Centres (HTCs) at Matcheleza and Senzani

Infrastructure

- Constructed Lisungwi Bridge in 2008 after it was washed away by rains
- Installation of solar panels at Senzani Resource Centre in 2008

Education

- Supported two OVCs with school fees
- Constructed one school block at Senzani Primary School
- Introduced the Community Based Child Care Centres (CBCCs) concept
- Supported primary schools in Senzani with sports kits

2011 - 2017

Water Supply

- Drilled 11 boreholes (8 boreholes at Matala and 3 boreholes at Mpochera)

Food Security

- Constructed one grain bank at Chitale
- Distributed relief food (2,000 bags of maize), fortified Likuni Phala and family kits
- Distributed farm inputs i.e. 250 bags of fertilizer under the food for work project in response to food insecurity in the area and relief food (maize, beans)
- WV in collaboration with Nkhoma Synod distributed cloth, shoes and food to needy families in 2015 as the area was affected by floods

Infrastructure

- WV constructed Sensani Field Office in 2012

Sponsorship

- Distributed birthday bounce back items to RCs such as rice, sugar, body lotion, tooth paste, laundry soap, and exercise books in 2016

Community Empowerment

- Supported capacity building of 100 youths in computer literacy
- WV introduced cash transfer in 2013
- WV in collaboration with community members and government partners formulated Sensani Community Development Organisation (SECODO) constitution in 2015
- WV in collaboration with community members and government partners formulated community by-laws from 2016 to 2017
- Conducted capacity building for child protection committees in 2017
- SECODO partnered with Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) in training youths in tailoring
- TEVETA in collaboration with SECODO trained 10 community members in bakery in 2016
- SECODO partnered with Mzuzu University (MZUNI) and constructed one girls' hostel at Likudzi Community Day Secondary School (CDSS)
- Supported the establishment of an Area Programme Transition Committee in 2016

Programme Evaluation

- Conducted Transformational Development Indicators (TDI) Survey in 2011
- Conducted end of term evaluation in 2014
- Formulated the Transition Plan in 2014
- Sensani Programme was extended from 2015 to 2017
- WV conducted Internal End of Evaluation survey in 2017 after programme extension
- WV conducted Internal End of Evaluation survey in 2017 after programme extension

Celebrating Impact

Memoirs of total war against HIV

The community was dying. But no one really knew what was claiming lives at such a speed. The radio had made mention of a new disease but Senzani community, in Malawi's central region district of Ntcheu, believed it was some magician's work, recalls 41-year-old Kerina Samden, a resident and health volunteer of the village.

“

A majority of people who died were said to have been bewitched”, Kerina opens her recount.

While people knew there was a tragedy living in their midst, those who first demonstrated signs of the disease could not come into the open to talk of their newly met danger. They suffered and died in silence and denial, fearing not only of their stigma, but the hate and torture that their surviving children and relations would be subjected to because of them.

“People couldn't come in the open to say that they were HIV positive”, says Kerina as she takes care of her drug revolving fund box which houses first aid medicines. “They died miserably and left a lot of children helpless”.

Day in, day out, the area, helpless, watched the death of the young and old who could have made a significant contribution towards the area's development.

But World Vision could not just watch the damage unfold. Through their many interventions, advocacy for people to get

tested and loosening the sting of stigma, 67-year-old Ruth Maluwa became a symbol of the fight. Ruth became a celebrated icon, a survivor and true champion who has gone on to inspire the community towards change.

She goes back to where it all began.

“It was in the year 2002 when I was tested HIV positive”, recalls Ruth, with a wry smile on her face as she plays with her grandchild. “I was really down; very devastated, not knowing the next thing to do. Frankly speaking, I thought that was the end of my world”.

After days of personal meditation, Ruth decided to reveal her sero-status to one of the World Vision's staff members in her community.

But telling Fraser Chisuse proved to be a watershed for herself and the community in as far as the fight against HIV was concerned. “I was invited to a training workshop organized by World Vision in Liwonde, Machinga where I was one of the participants who were taught how to handle various HIV/AIDS issues and to mount serious HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in our respective

communities,” she says.

Immediately after returning from the Liwonde training workshop, four people in the village—according to Ruth—declared their HIV status after they were convinced by her on the importance of doing so.

“World Vision wanted us to fight the pandemic our own way as a community”, she recalls. “They provided me with a motorcycle and I moved to places sensitizing people living with HIV/AIDS to the importance of declaring their HIV status, facing the stigma and fighting for our rights.

This—as observed by Ruth paid off because a year after this exercise, 50 people declared their HIV status, a thing she said had never happened before. Finally, the virus had a face but people knew there was hope.

“These people—on a monthly basis—were provided with free 50kg bag of maize, cooking oil, milk, and tablets of soap, among other items. Sibusiso (an energy enriched peanut butter) and Likuni Phala were also provided to children born with the virus, a development that improved their health status and prompted more people living with the virus to disclose their status,” observes Ruth.

Investing in Voluntary Testing

While World Vision brought in mobile HIV Testing Centres (HTC) during many awareness meetings that they had, Ruth realized that these were not enough as several other people had to travel long distances to Mikoke Health Centre, about 20 kilometres, for testing and counselling as well as receiving Anti Retroviral drugs. It was this realization that pushed Ruth to write a proposal to World Vision in which she called for the construction of an HTC Centre where people could have their blood tested; and access all the support needed. Her request fell on fertile ground. Two HTC centres were constructed in Senzani and Matchereza villages.

Amos Petro, a 17-year-old Form 2 Student at Likudzi Community Day Secondary School says that the HTC centres were a game changer.

“At 17, I’ve come for a test for four times now”, he says smiling as he gives his hand

to the medical assistant for testing. “If we didn’t have this facility, I don’t think I would walk all the way to Mikoke”.

Such is the case and the joy that Ruth has. “A lot of boys and girls are passionate about their health with higher levels of awareness than was the case in the past”.

The twin curse of HIV and poverty

In a community that was already swimming in poverty, the attack of HIV was a big blow. “For some of the people who were dying of the virus, it was simply because they did not have enough food and that was bad”, recalls Group Village Head Senzani. While training people on producing food crops that strengthened body immunity, World Vision went on to provide dairy cows to people living with HIV on a pass-on basis. That—in Ruth’s wisdom—did not only improve further the nutrition status of the people, but also made many to be self-reliant.

“I can tell you that only two people out of the 550 that have declared their status have died since 2002 when WV started implementing various HIV/AIDS interventions in Senzani area, which is very encouraging,” says Ruth.

Strengthening community efforts in combating the virus

This far, Senzani area has eight HIV/AIDS Support Groups whose members meet periodically to encourage each other on various issues affecting them and their area at large.

“During our meetings, we encourage each other on the importance of taking ARVs religiously”, says one of the members. “We also discuss how we can assist children left by parents whose lives were claimed by HIV/AIDS”.

Interestingly, the church has also been in the forefront advocating the acceptance of people living positively with the virus, a stand which Ruth says will forever keep

the momentum on the fight and push for an HIV-free generation.

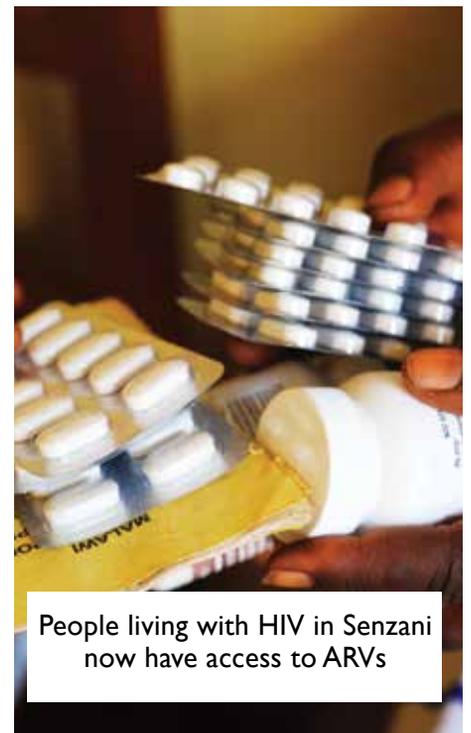
Since October 2016, 2,123 people have gone for HTC at Senzani with only 79 found positive.

Now that World Vision is phasing out its development projects in Senzani area, Ruth is upbeat that the community will sustain the efforts.

“During the entire period that World Vision has been making its HIV interventions, we have been taught to be self-reliant; I am very sure that the capacity built in us over the years will help us to keep working for years to come,” says Ruth.

Looking towards the fading sun, Ruth turns and says that if it were not for World Vision, without doubt, many people—including herself—could have died by today.

“But look now, many people living with HIV/AIDS—because of World Vision’s interventions—are still alive and living a happy and healthy life; they have sent their children to school and they are contributing, in one way or the other, towards the socio-economic development of our area and the country as a whole,” concludes Ruth.



People living with HIV in Senzani now have access to ARVs



Houses have hand washing facilities in Senzani

Fighting the nasty comeback of cholera

Namavutitsa arrived at the health centre motionless, on a bicycle. She was laid onto a stretcher, her hands and legs numb, and was rushed into the clinic. She had started experiencing diarrhoea and vomiting that morning as she was going to her maize garden; by evening, she had lost a lot of weight.

In an effort to rehydrate her quickly, the nurses decided to give Namavutitsa an intravenous drip of saline solution. A careful search of her hands and head for a visible vein to insert an injection proved futile. Repeated efforts were made until the nurse looked down, crestfallen. His effort to save Namavutitsa failed.

“She came in late,” recalls a health surveillance assistant who was there witnessing the unfolding tragedy. “If you brought her 10 minutes or so earlier, we would have saved her life”.

As her body was being cleaned, to dispatch

it back to the village for burial, several others arrived. Finally, it was official; Senzani was under siege from a cholera outbreak. A temporary camp was set up in a forest close to the hospital. Hordes of people turned up for treatment.

“It’s the speed of cholera that makes it so distinctive. When you enter an area with several sick people or a clinic completely overloaded with cholera patients, you know lives will soon be lost. Cholera can kill within hours—it’s the dehydration”, says Gracious Malata, a health surveillance assistant at Senzani Mission Health Centre. Soon, a handful of patients lay completely

still on their beds while intravenous drips were hanged on trees, rehydrating them. “The disaster caught us unawares”, recalls Patricia Billiati, a resident of Senzani Village. “Before we knew it was cholera, a handful had died. By the time an isolation camp was set up by Senzani Adventist Hospital, with support from Ntcheu District Hospital, we had funerals around the village”.

That year, 2002, the Ministry of Health had reactivated and deployed the cholera control task forces at national and district levels to control the epidemic and World Health Organisation, along with UNICEF assisted the Ministry to coordinate the response.

In October, 2001 until April, 2002 Malawi recorded its worst cholera outbreak with 33,150 cases and 981 deaths. The epidemic reached its highest peak between weeks 5 and 11, affecting 26 districts out of 28. The Southern Region was the worst affected with 69% of reported cases. Although the overall death record was at 2.96%, in some districts, the national average was as high as 6.7%, indicating the possibility of inadequate case management and/or shortage of supplies.

As noted by Malata, the 2002 cholera outbreak in Senzani was a culmination of clean water, sanitation and hygiene shortfalls in the whole community.

Immediately, World Vision provided High Treatment Chloride (HTH) to all areas of the community.

“We knew that safeguarding our catchment area alone was not enough so the HTH targeted every household”, says former Area Development Programme chairperson Erick Chimbamba.

For those who did not have easy access to clean water, HTH was given in larger quantities with sustained visits to ensure they were really using it. Schools were provided with water pails and HTH to ensure learners took treated water.

These strategies, along with education campaigns, saw people at risk of cholera know how to treat their water by boiling or with chlorine tablets, and significantly reduced the incidence of the disease.

But these advances did not address the main problem: lack of access to clean water. So the solution to eradicating cholera then did not only lie in the health sector.

“We knew that hospitals need to treat patients and prevent death,” says Frank Magetsi, a former development worker for World Vision in Senzani. “However, the long-term and game changing solution was in community development—giving people long-term access to sanitation which starts with having access to clean water.” Sensing danger, World Vision—as testified

by Malata—made several interventions that included the construction of boreholes in almost all the villages around its impact area in Senzani Area Programme.

“Across the villages, houses have toilets and a hand washing facility to ensure that everyone washes their hands after visiting the toilet”, says Billiati.

Taking the fight to a greater level, World Vision introduced Hygiene and Sanitation competitions that were competed for by villages. The aim was to improve sanitation and in so doing, combat cholera outbreaks at household and community levels.

In 2010, the disease resurfaced in one of the small villages of the community but never spread. Ever since, Malata says they have not registered any cases.

These, interventions, have left Village Headman Senzani more optimistic about the future.

“I remember there was a time in early 2000 when cholera claimed the lives of a couple, in Senzani 2 Village, leaving the children suffering. It was a horrible experience”. He committed to continue working hand in hand with health workers, among other stakeholders, to ensure that they do not go back “to those days”.



Martha captured getting water at their village borehole

The bridge that saves lives

In villages around Chanje and Namisu in Ntcheu, most people are farmers and labourers. They stay in the village during the planting season, and in the off-season migrate to other places to find work as labourers.

Located nearly 37 kilometres from the main dusty road that winds all the way like a snake to Malawi's popular M1 Road, people say it used to be a difficult trip before a bridge was constructed.

Namisu River is a passing point for many families that go to the fields. The location is strategic, but is exposed to flash, strong, and unpredictable floods—often occurring during the night. Few people know how to swim, making fast flowing waters a real threat to human life.

Sometimes, it is rains that fall in the upper villages that bring waters which kill people, explains Edward Bingalason.

“You can be walking and all of a sudden find that there's a lot of water coming even when it hasn't rained here”.

Water comes and leaves very fast but tragedies remain with the memories of local villagers. This passing place was the site of a number of tragic stories years before. In 1980, says one of the community members, after two days of non-interrupted rainfall, a small boy drowned.

He fell in the water while his mother had her back turned. It took only a few seconds. The water flowing

in the river and hitting stones, created a whirlpool and the boy was trapped in the current. His dead body was found the next day, only after the water receded. The community mourned the loss. But many still came.

While that was during the day, often the flash floods occur during the night, waking up people in panic. For those who would go to their gardens and find it full, they could stand under trees, soaked in rains, waiting for water to recede and cross the river.

“There was only a small place to cross the river”, explains 67-year-old Bingalason, “and it was slippery and dangerous. Crossing that small strip of mud over the river scared people—women and children in particular”.

For those who could not trust their skills to swim and stuck on the other side of the river, all they did was to seek refuge in the houses in the next village many kilometres away from their homes.

“The families with gardens on the other side of the river were hit the hardest; they would go for days, or in some instances weeks, without going to work in the gardens when water levels were high.”

This culminated into a nutrition problem in the



long run.

“Additionally, we produce a lot of cassava and sweet potatoes, among other cash crops in this area, but it was difficult to take them to various markets due to the absence of a bridge on Namisu River. As a result, we lost money that could help us to feed, clothe our children and send them to secondary schools,” says Bingalasoni.

It was, therefore, until 1984 when World Vision started working in the area that hope came and a bridge was constructed across the Namisu River. This development, explains Bingalasoni, eased many challenges affecting not just his Kanama village but many others.

“World Vision first arrived in this village before spreading to all the other areas. So this bridge was important because even the first team that came here with World Vision had to park their vehicle on the other side and walked to get over here”, continues Bingalasoni who was 34 by then.

So when the opportunity came, the community decided to construct a bridge. Ever since, the bridge has saved lives, says Village Headman Kanama.

“World Vision did it for two reasons: connect with us and deliver all the development interventions but also relieve us from the trouble we faced crossing that stretch”, says Kanama.

In Mpochera, a bridge allowed children to go to school

Not only were the bridges to connect and facilitate socio-economic development for the whole of Senzani area, but also open them up to the rest of the country.

While they produced their vegetables and remained on this end of the community, it is the children who paid the ultimate price. 39-year-old Charles Howa from Mpochera village, Sub-Traditional Authority Tsikulamowa in Ntcheu District, recounts how he and many other children in the community failed to make a grade in education because of Lisungwi River.

“Before the 1990s, we had no primary school; as such we relied on Matchereza Primary School”, he recounts. That school, however, is on the other side of Lisungwi River.

“But since there was no bridge across this river that would connect us to the other side, it was a tall order for us to cross it on our way to and from school,” said Howa.

The challenges compounded during the rainy season when they would wait for days and sometimes weeks for the levels of water in Lisungwi to go down for them to cross. As days and weeks went, says Howa,



The bridges have not just helped children go to school, they have also connected people of Senzani

many children opted to drop out of school. Illiteracy reigned.

While children failed to go to school, pregnant mothers delivered on the river shores as they waited for the moment to cross.

Harry Jamali says that many people (patients) lost their lives waiting to cross the river on their way to the hospital since the closest health facility is Phalula Health Centre, 22 kilometres after crossing Lisungwi.

“In severe cases, some people would be forced to cross the river with the sick on their back whilst the levels were still high, a development that also saw many of them being washed away by the waters,” says Howa.

“The bridge, just after its construction, eased the challenges our children faced when going to school, a development that improved school enrollment level and reduced absenteeism. Additionally, the bridge eased our movement to hospitals and transportation of our farm produce to the markets,” says GVH Kanama.

His counterpart, Mpochera of Mpochera Village feels the life of his people has been improved by the 20-metre long bridge constructed across the Lisungwi River.

“Literacy levels in my village, just like food security at household level, have improved tremendously because children are able to go to school and my people are also able to cross the bridge when going to hospitals and their gardens, which was never the case before,” says Mpochera.

As more extreme climate conditions develop, the floods are becoming stronger and more unpredictable, a situation that makes them value the investment more.

And to ensure that the bridge constructed by World Vision services the people in their communities for their entire lives, the two village heads say they have been carrying out vigorous sensitization campaigns aimed at guarding against vandalism.

“We feel this is the best way to say a big thank you to World Vision. We all know what we went through before the construction of the bridge, and we don’t want to go back to that torturous period,” says Group Village Headman Mpochera.

The water that changed everything

The first thing you notice about Matele 3 Village is its beauty. Even in the approaching summer, trails of green can be found, short brown grass, dry fields of maize and spectacular rolling hills, the people living here are blessed. This is the home of Diana Chihale. But there was a problem.

This Matele Village and its neighbour, Lusinja, were popularly called Kamwamkodzo—a place with serious water challenges that forces its inhabitants to drink urine.

But stories change, when change comes. For 67-year-old Diana, 9 March, 2014 will remain committed to memory. For her, this was not any other day.

Since she was born in 1949, while Malawi was still known as Nyasaland and ruled from Britain, she had to wait for 63 years to drink water from a borehole. The only water she had known came from a stream that cuts across her village to Likudzi and

Lisungwi rivers. While it may have been close to her, the neighbouring village, Matele 2, had to cover over a kilometer to get to the stream.

Come rain or sunshine, they did everything they could to get water from the stream. The amazing thing, says Diana, was that the stream rarely went too dry. “That’s one thing we thank God for. Even in the droughts of the greatest droughts, like in 2001, there was one hole that gave us water all year round.”

Repeated calls to government and other service providers yielded nothing and there

was nothing they could do, chips in William Nyambo, World Vision’s community Change Agent for Matele Village and two others of Sub-Traditional Authority Tsikulamowa in Ntcheu District.

Listening to Diana walk back the memory lane, there is every opportunity to doubt her story considering the advancement and promises of good life that have come with the new millennium.

Her sister Grace, aged 65, also chips in: “We shared water with dogs, cattle, goats and even pigs.”



Boreholes are providing clean water all year round

The biggest risk of the water, however, was seen in their children's lives and girls' education, to be specific.

"Getting water is a girl's responsibility", says Diana, "So if it was being late to school, it was always the girls who suffered that". Gracious Malata, health surveillance assistant for Senzani Community, says that water-borne diseases were a very big issue, not just in Matale but across all communities that did not have access to clean water. "The most affected were children whose growth rate was affected a great deal," says Gracious.

When World Vision hired Billy Kaunda Drilling Contractors to construct a borehole in Diana's village, the whole community came out to make a road for the machinery to pass. This was the first big car to come in their village.

"Men cut trees as women cleared the bush", says Nyambo. "It was as if the president or some high dignitary was coming".

But immediately the work began, the machine developed a fault. It could not continue with the work. When the engineers told the community that they were going and would return, the community refused.

"We thought they would never come back and they would go with our dream of clean water", says Diana. The community offered to look after the machinery and the engineers.

When new machines arrived and blew the ground open, sprinkling the skies with fresh ground water, the entire village sang praises. Women ululated as men whistled. All in praise of their new found hope.

Five kilometres from Diana's village is another community called Likudzi. While their villages have different names, their struggle was the same. Every day was a nightmare for women and girls, on whom the responsibility of fetching water falls on. A beautiful community, seen from the top of Likudzi hills, with its expansive view of tiny grass thatched and mud decorated houses, Mable Chingota says they drunk from the river as well.

Unique for them, Chingota says they had to cover five kilometers in a round trip to get the precious commodity. Just like their neighbours in Matale, Lusinja got clean water in 2014.

"We could cover a distance of about five kilometres to find water. The problem was bigger during the dry season when it was hard just to get a 10-litre pail of water." Since the borehole arrived in Lusinja Village, life has not been the same. Chingota says that the water has strengthened their families. "Most of the families here were affected because men were thinking that we were sleeping around with other men considering the time we spent on our way to and from the river to fetch water", she says to a greeting of ululations from other women. "Many women lost their marriages and this

affected raising of children in a significant way," adds Chingota.

Most affected were not women and children only, but the men as well, as testified by 52-year-old Hanreck Jimu.

"It was a tall order to mould bricks and let alone construct a brick-walled house considering the distance to the nearest water sources. As a result, we resorted to living in grass-walled houses which exposed children to the cold", recalls Jimu.

Looking back to where they are coming from, Diana sees God in their water and in the way World Vision saved them. Today, 75 families in Matale 3 and 27 in Lusinja have access to clean water.

"World Vision made us believe that there's a God who listens and has His time for everything," she says with emphasis. "Some people wanted to deny us the joy of clean water by saying that we were only a few families. But World Vision insisted on giving us water, saying that our children, like all other children across the country, deserve the best and we will remain forever grateful." Today, the people of this area have not only said goodbye to the water-borne diseases, but the boreholes have also enabled them to establish vegetable gardens that have tremendously improved the health and nutrition status of their children and whole families.



We gave up after passing standard 4 exams

Schools of hope

Matchereza was—before 1992 when World Vision made some interventions—the nearest Junior Primary School for people from and around Mpochera Village, which is located in the south-western part of Ntcheu District in the area of Sub-TA Tsikulamowa.

Unfortunately, Matchereza Primary School only had classes from Standard 1 to Standard 4, which meant that after passing the Standard 4 class final examination, the pupils had to walk a prohibitive distance of about 20 kilometres to the nearest primary school at Phalula.

“It wasn’t easy walking from here (Mpochera Village) to Matchereza”, recounts 38-year-old Clement William who now sells second-hand shoes at the village market. He gets them from Blantyre, one of Malawi’s cities. From his words, the experience was just harsh for a six to 10-year-old child, braving the hot sunny days of summer to walk to and from school. No wonder, Clement and many of his peers failed to proceed with their education.

“We simply gave up after passing Standard 4 examinations,” he says.

“It was unthinkable for me, a 10-year-old by then, to cover a distance of almost 20 kilometres to Phalula,” he says, pointing in the direction of Phalula as he speaks. “Those who tried failed miserably as they had to start off as early as 3am so as to reach Phalula by 8am.”

But the danger was not only in the distance, adds 47-year-old Alex Gadinala, a peer to Clement.

“They could sometimes be chased by hyenas, among other wild animals, as the road to Phalula used to be sort of a forest then”. “Mpochera community, by then, was more of a farming land surrounded by a big forest,

to make it to school on time; children had to take a route which cut through the forest to a main road that went straight to Phalula. Their parents always told them to be extra careful because often times they trekked on their own,” explains Gadinala in a downcast tone.

For those who went on to go to Phalula, he says, because they always left home early, they never got a chance to have breakfast. Instead, such children depended on the supper they had the night before to help them endure the next day at school.

Apart from wild animals, there was Lisungwi River to be thought of. On its fiercest days, nobody could cross over to the other side and education often suffered for the few brave children of the community.

“In some instances, we had to wait for days or weeks for the water levels to go down for us to go to school,” goes on Gadinala, now a father of three.

And for Harry Jamali, he has fond memories of his days.

“We finished classes without any rains. But when we got to Lisungwi, we found it swollen,” he recounts. “That day we slept there on empty stomachs till morning to be sure that all the water was gone”. To be safe, adds Jamali, they abandoned classes as soon as rains started so they could cross over Lisungwi to their homes

before her swelling.

Such was life until in 1992 when World Vision constructed some four school blocks of two classrooms each at Mokhotho Primary School that eased the challenge for school-going children in Mpochera Village.

“It was a dream come true for many of us as we enrolled at Mokhotho Primary School which was constructed within our village,” says Chris Howa who started his school at Mokhotho. “That is why our mothers danced and ululated the day this dream became a reality.”

To further make life better, World Vision constructed a 12-metre long bridge across Lisungwi to connect the villages to other parts of the community, benefiting children’s education in the process.

To this far, their Group Village Headman is lost for words to thank World Vision for its intervention.

“It feels as in dreams that we have a school of our own where our children can go during any time of the year to access education without any problem. For this, we can’t thank World Vision enough for the great thing it has done to us.



Long distance to school; breaking a life of failure with school blocks

Whether that was the worst day or not, Steven cannot remember very well. But whatever happened, he vividly recalls. This has been his story, known and told with familiarity like the inside of his palm.

He arrived in school when the sun was up. It was hot. In a community whose temperatures go as high as 38 degrees, it was one of those days.

“I had my uniform over my left shoulder and I had been running for an hour,” says Steven.

At 10, he was older for Grade 1. But that was the best thing that could happen. No six-year-old, recommended age for enrolling in Grade 1 in Malawi, would walk for a round trip of 10 kilometres to and from Matala Primary School from Steven’s Senzani Village which had no school.

“Parents who had bicycles would help reduce the distance by dropping their children in the nearby village of Chidokowe so they could walk the remaining distance,” recalls Steven. But for many others like him, walking was the option, hence they often started late.

Back to ‘that day’, Steven arrived in class sweating and found a mathematics lesson almost gone.

“We went straight into an exercise on the pretext that whoever did not get all answers right would remain in school for a punishment after classes,” he says.

The odds were against him and a few other late comers like him from Senzani Village. He failed miserably and was made to sweep the school yard.

That day, Steven hated school. And he did not go back.

There was a slight change in his fortunes when the Seventh Day Adventist opened a school at its church on the upper part of his village and they learnt inside the church. “That was slightly close to two kilometers but it was better,” he says.

Later on, the school moved to his village where World Vision constructed the first-ever school block. Grade 1 to 4 students began learning close to home with those in 5 up to 8 braving the distance to Matala. Steven took another shot at education, pushing himself up to secondary school

but never attained the Malawi School Certificate of Education.

“I am happy to be able to read and write,” he says smiling confidently.

“But if you want to look at the impact of those school blocks, look at my brothers and cousins who have gone through this school, from Grade 1 all the way to senior primary,” he says, before adding, “they have made a life. They are a lucky generation.” World Vision came back to Senzani and added three more blocks over the years, making Senzani a model primary school for the community. By this time, they also added blocks to other schools like Matala, Chitale, Namisu, Mamboma, Bamba, Matchereza and Mingongomwa.

“I cannot imagine what it was like covering all that distance,” says Gift Namondwe, a Bio-Medical specialist about to graduate from Malawi’s Mzuzu University.

“Of course, I started my education under a tree until World Vision gave us extra school blocks, but having the school right in our village was a game changer for us and our aspirations,” he says.

Since its opening, the school has seen thousands of children walk its corridors to secondary schools and colleges, with others pursuing vocational skills.

“We cannot thank World Vision enough for what they did,” says Village Headman Mataka. “They gave our children an opportunity at a life and those who had the commitment and support of their parents are better off.” He, however, says that because as communities, they made contributions to the construction work, through labour provision, moulding of bricks, sand provision and all, it is a fact that they will keep taking care of the investment so that other children benefit in future.

“We built these schools on the agreement that as a community we brought in what we would and World Vision procured items that we could not produce in the village like iron sheets and cement,” adds Mataka.



Chimwemwe's story

Under a tree in Senzani, children learn to read and write. This is part of after-school activities that reinforce their reading skills.

Chimwemwe attends a reading camp in her village. Her teachers attribute her great leap in literacy skills as a direct result of access to multiple reading materials available at the reading camp. These locally made study materials are created by community members using simple publishing software.

turn around the learner's potential and motivate them to get good grades.

Chimwemwe's generation has come at a time when the community has embraced its role in children's education following a series of trainings on story writing and publishing, giving hope to learners and teachers alike.

This tool—and the new books—was introduced through the Literacy Boost Programme that World Vision is implementing in Chimwemwe's village, and in other communities in Malawi.

Creating books helps students learn and teachers teach. Attending a school that has an enrolment of over 2,500 children, compounded by a nearly non-functional school library, there were fears that like many students before her, Chimwemwe and her peers would not be able to learn to read, let alone write at their appropriate grade level.

In the past, even for those who attended the school regularly, lack of reading materials slowed literacy skills development so students performed poorly at school, according to head teacher John Mkandawire.

"The school had no books, save for a few that we get from the Ministry of Education and they are not enough for all learners," says Mkandawire.

As teachers, we thought we just had to keep on working hard in the classrooms. We had no idea how we could

"As teachers, we thought we just had to keep on working hard in the classrooms. We had no idea how we could turn around the learner's potential and motivate them to get good grades," says Mkandawire, adding that even teachers were frustrated with trying to teach a lesson with less than 10 books in a class with over 40 students.

While providing new teaching skills to the teachers through several teacher training sessions held across the community's education zones, World Vision—through Literacy Boost Programme—has also responded to proven research findings that providing children with a variety of reading materials in their local language contributes to their literacy development.

Fostering love of reading in the community
It is through this approach that Chimwemwe has accomplished so much. As soon as reading camps and

local books and learning materials were introduced, she became a frequent client at the reading camp “book bank” which keeps and takes care of all books used at the camp.

“Chimwemwe fell in love with the new books,” says Margret, a reading camp volunteer. “Since they began producing the books, children have been very happy and they always borrow them so much that they often have no books in their library.” Chimwemwe fell in love with the new books. Francis Maganga, one of the teachers at a neighbouring primary school, says that the coming in of the new locally-created books has complemented their resources and given learners something to be working on even when they are at home.

“We could never let the children borrow our books from the school since they are just too few,” he says. “And we are now

happy that with the new books, this is not an issue. The more our learners are getting exposed to that literature, the more they are improving.”

This is only the beginning of Chimwemwe’s story

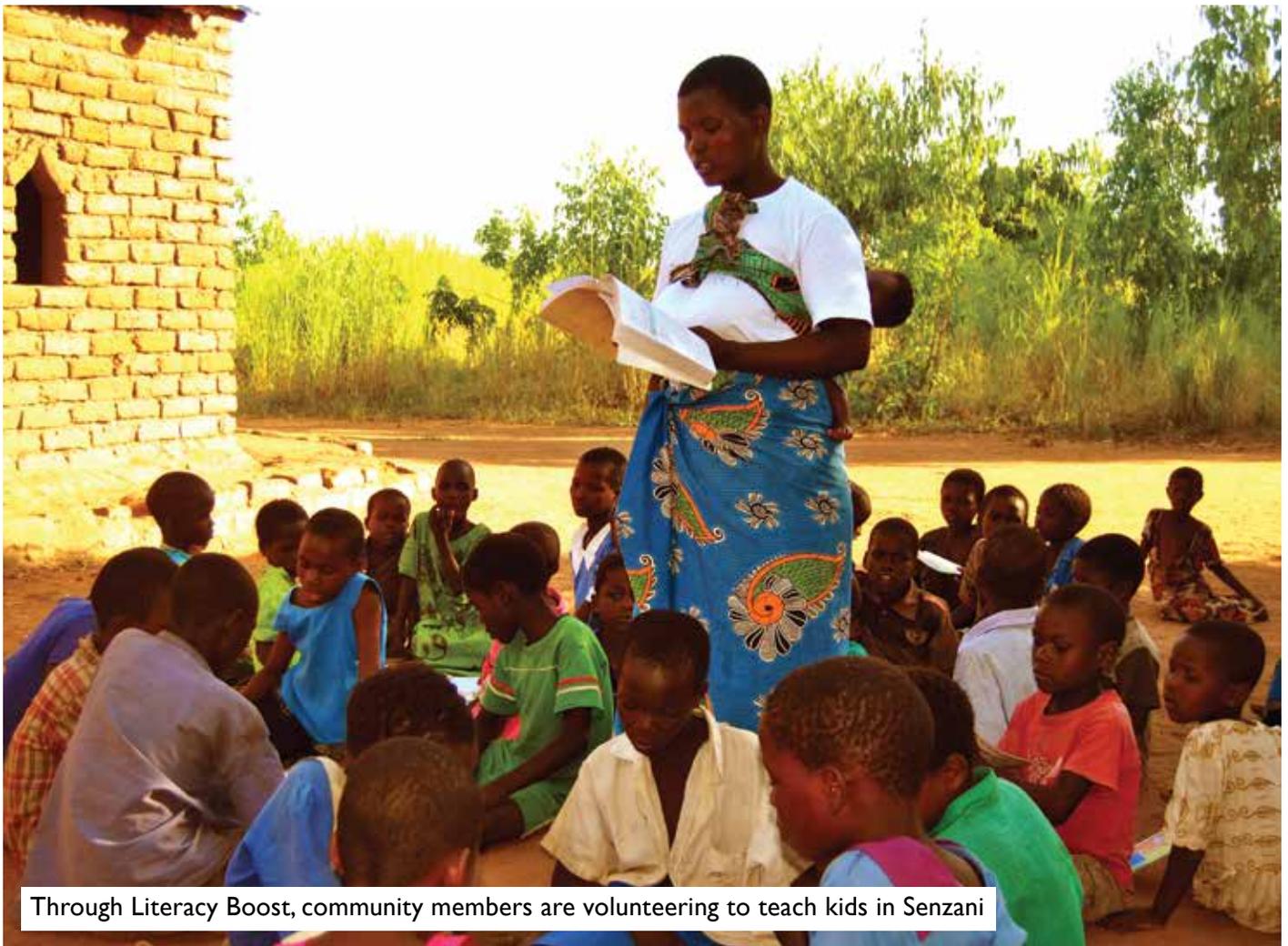
Chimwemwe loves the story titled ‘Nkhuku yasochema’ (‘The Chicken has Gone Missing’ in English) that was authored by one of the community’s members who used to burn charcoal, hence used the new book creating software as a medium to communicate deforestation harms to the children.

“I love the pictures of Mr. Lyton and his wife making charcoal,” says Chimwemwe who has read the book five times along with many other titles. She adds that the fact that the children read about people who they know and see in their daily life makes the stories more lively and compelling.

Chimwemwe, who aspires to be a teacher, is among hundreds of children from her village who have participated in Literacy Boost as a gateway to academic excellence. She now has the opportunity to continue learning, reading and helping other students achieve academic success.

According to a 2015 report by World Vision, there is a global learning crisis. The report further stresses that even with greater access to schools, 250 million children are completing Grade 4 without basic literacy and numeracy skills.

“Children who do not develop reading skills are on a lifetime trajectory of limited educational progress and limited economic opportunities. The economic growth rate of a country’s population is directly correlated to its educational achievement,” reads part of the report.



Through Literacy Boost, community members are volunteering to teach kids in Senzani



How an HTC centre is enabling a new HIV-free generation in Senzani

Counsellor Tracy Ziyaya, is always busy at her work place. Trained in Lilongwe at Light House Trust, she was attached to Senzani Seventh Day Adventist Health Centre where together with health surveillance assistants; they service a population of over 75,000 people. She also has the support of 15 volunteers trained by Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF).

Staying in this community, at her clinic some 200 births are delivered annually.

“A majority opts to go to Kankao Health Centre—20 kilometres from here—where antenatal services are free,” she says.

The clinic serves the largest township in Senzani, Traditional Authority Phambala of close to 70,000 people. The area once had a higher HIV prevalence that was around 10-11% infection rate. Currently, the clinic has 479 people with HIV routinely served

with antiretroviral therapy, including 357 women.

The clinic provides universal treatment to all mothers, most of whom are tested for HIV when they are pregnant.

A few years ago, HIV caused a great challenge to the community, threatening its children and future.

“The closest health centre with services around HIV/AIDS was 22 kilometres away in Mikoke and it was so difficult for people to get support and counselling even when they were diagnosed,” says Ziyaya.

But the problem was far much worse for children born of mothers with HIV.

“Because of the distances, most mothers could not travel all the way to Mikoke for ARVs or to even be counselled time and again as it is needed,” further reveals Ziyaya. Thanks to WorldVision, an HIV Testing and Counselling (HTC) Centre constructed with support from the people of Japan has brought in a new era of hope and optimism to the community in the fight for an HIV-free generation.

While the whole site is often busy, it is efficiently operating, thanks to the approach called “Mother-Infant” pair treatment which is helping to ensure that babies born from mothers who are HIV positive live and thrive like anyone else.

Here most people with HIV are tested and enrolled on treatment as early as possible under the guidance of the counsellors and community health volunteers.

HIV positive pregnant women are offered ARV therapy as soon as they are diagnosed and then receive home visits over the following weeks and months to ensure they are following treatment correctly.

The health centre manages to catch most mothers who are pregnant to start ARVs. In fact, most of their babies are born without HIV, thanks to the universal treatment for all pregnant women with HIV.

Nelesi, 33, quit school early and has no job. She depends on farming. In 2009, when she had two children, Nelesi was diagnosed with HIV at Senzani Health Centre. Her husband, hearing the news, dumped her. She does not know if he went for an HIV test himself.

Nelesi did not anticipate this turn of events and lived in denial for a year.

“A few years later, I was getting often sick and I had to accept it to start receiving help,” she says.

In August 2014, while pregnant for three months, Nelesi went to Senzani Health Centre to get enrolled for antenatal care. This time, she got married to a new man. Knowing she was HIV positive, she was immediately put on treatment.

“I was put on ARVs and soon my baby was born on 12 March 2015 without HIV,” she says, smiling.

“It would have been sad if my baby was born with HIV,” says Nelesi, “I would have regretted it the rest of my life”.

Baby Martha, not her real name, was also immediately put on ART. She was being given bactrim and every six months, was being tested of HIV at the HTC centre under the ‘Infant-Mother-Pair’ arrangement. After two years, Baby Martha went for her final test on 12 March 2017 which further proved she was HIV negative and eventually graduated from the programme.

During that period, 22 other mothers graduated from the programme.

“It was the happiest day of my life,” says Nelesi. “She is my fourth born child (with a boy and two other girls), but her circumstances made me love her the most.

“Even if I was pained to discover my HIV infection first, I feel fine now on treatment. It is better to know and start treatment earlier before getting sick,” she says.

Today, she is collecting antiretroviral drugs for her husband who is at work to feed the family.

Currently, the centre has 73 Mother-Infant pairs that are being managed and Tracy is hopeful that they, too, will go on to graduate well.

Nurse Ziyaya says that such is the difference that Senzani HTC Centre is becoming since it was constructed in 2004.

The fact that there is an HTC centre close to the people, she says, means that they monitor mothers and all people on treatment with utmost ease since they come for support.

“It has allowed us to have a place and a home from which to administer our low cost innovations in fighting the pandemic by tapping into community members who are already knowledgeable of the virus through the great sensitisation work done by WorldVision in the recent past,” she says. Today, the hospital is also successfully implementing the ‘Treat-all’ approach promoted by World Health Organisation. This is in sharp contrast to the old model which waited on people to have a lower CD4 count of 200 to be on ARVs.

With that, a lot of people were often sick by the time they started treatment.

“Putting patients earlier on treatment has ensured that people are far much healthier and the service is run at a lower cost since the people are able to come at the centre on their own without being visited which is beneficial to the family and community in general,” says Cameron Chakhaza, a senior health surveillance assistant working at Senzani HTC Centre.



Maluwa - She became a face of the fight against HIV

Empowering the voiceless pillars of Malawi's economy

The iron shutters of Anne Alex's tailoring shop rattle as they open. She starts her daily ritual by sweeping up the strips of cloth and threads left behind after yesterday's stitching.



Anne has moved from strength to strength, thanks to World Vision and her hard work

Anne from Piyo Village, T/A Phambala, paddles swiftly with her feet, the sole energy source of her sewing machine, as she sets the pace of the needle etching a pattern on the cloth. Anne is a story of hope and optimism in the midst

of nothingness. Deep in poverty, Anne's father was unable to support a family of nine children. In return, she dropped out of school in Grade Seven. She then got married to Loti who did not go beyond high school too. Together,

they have been blessed with four children. Short of education, opportunities were also short for the family and poverty was very apparent. Not only was finding food very hard for them but being a woman and the mother in the family, the burden fell on her.

“More often my husband was out and the children would cry out to me for food,” says Anne.

In her Mokhotho community, like many other communities in Malawi, women remain at the receiving end of the pie when it comes to economic benefits. This is despite their dominance in population.

In both 1998 and 2008 censuses, the female population exceeded the male population in rural areas at 51.5 and 51.7 percent, respectively.

“My father was unable to provide for the family as a result he couldn’t even support me and my younger sisters. So I stepped in to help my sister and the family,” says Anne as she fixes her machine, ready for sewing. In 1995, she started working at a maize mill owned by someone in her village as a cashier and she was being paid K200 per month, recalls Anne.

From 9am to 8pm, she worked in the maize mill, receiving people who came for milling their maize, charged them and received money. Education became the least of her priorities as she focused on helping the family,” says Anne, now 45 years old. As if dropping from school was not enough, her father forced her into marriage at 24.

“I don’t know what my father and the man agreed,” she says, crestfallen.

All efforts to reason with him failed. The next day, her things were packed and she was given to a man.

If her father thought marrying her off would be a long-term solution for poverty, time soon proved him wrong. Her husband’s business failed, the family plunged into debt. With limited resources, she fell prey to another daunting dilemma for survival. By this time, she had already adopted the stereotypical role for woman in her community—cleaning, cooking and caring for the young was entrusted to her.

Anne struggled to keep pace with the expectations of society. But liberation came

in 2007. World Vision decided to conduct vocational courses for girls and women. Tailoring classes were the most valued.

Anne was among 13 women from her village who received basic training in tailoring at Gangawako Resource Centre. For many, it was their first exposure to vocational skills outside the solitary confinement of their homes.

“At the end of the month-long training, World Vision gave me one sewing machine,” she says.

Of the 13 who were learning, only 8 passed examinations administered and Anne was one of the best.

Immediately, she opened her own tailoring space, close to a grocery owned by her husband’s brother.

“I had pride in me the first day I came back here to start my shop,” she says. “I felt independent and supportive to my husband who was more often troubled and struggling with needs,” she says, before adding that her husband was equally proud of this new found hope.

Business was slowly picking up. People often came with clothes to their one and only tailor in the whole village. Earning around K15,000 kwacha (USD50) a month in 2009, she decided to move from her brother-in-law’s shop and have her own small place to sell groceries.

With her husband, they built their own place and started with a few soap tablets. Today, it is one of the most reliable canteens at their trading centre, selling sugar and all the much-needed items in such a rural setup. It is now her husband who manages the shop as she is busy sewing on the other side.

“I am able to get tenders from schools to make school uniforms, sometimes worth K30,000 which is good money here in the village,” she says.

With a radiant glow on her face, Anne says, “I am not less than any fashion designer. Ask me to make any design or outfit, I will make it. I carry this skill and confidence





with me wherever I go.”

Taking a break from her shop, which is situated just a few metres from her home, Anne switches back to the role of mother as her children return from school. Teaching her seven children to dream big, Anne vows to educate and empower them to be what they want to be.

Two of her children are in Form 4 at Phalula Community Day Secondary School, with three others at Likudzi Community Day Secondary School and another 2 in Standard 8.

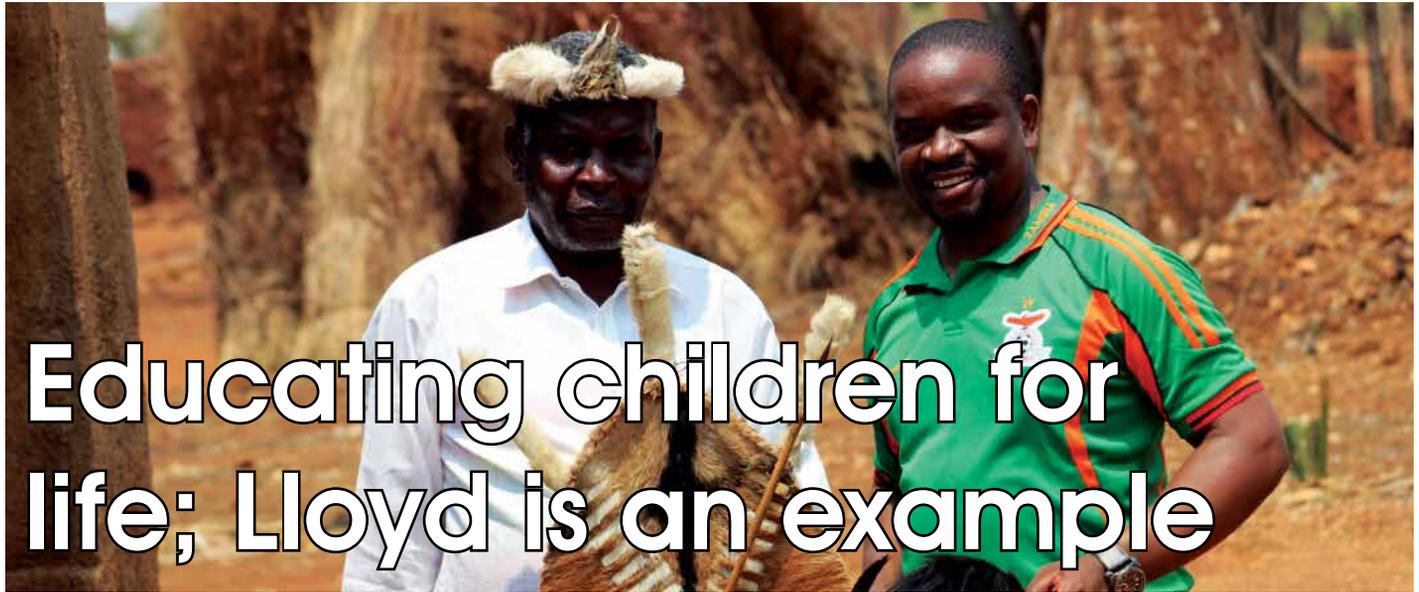
Owing her competence to World Vision, Anne has made it her mission to motivate others through the power of a stitch. In the afternoon, her shop turns into a training centre for young girls.

“I hope someday they will work, too. In our community, the attitude towards women working is poor. People talk about women being someone else’s property, but fail to realize that women are the bearers of life. Without women, the world will not grow. My hope is that these girls become more confident and empowered,” says Anne.

Just like yarn that has different compositions but serves one purpose, Anne, and other women like her, hail from different backgrounds, but intertwine to constitute one perfect ensemble: the garment of empowerment.

To ensure that the training centres established across the community live beyond the test of time, World Vision has courted TEVETA, a local statutory body that trains and certifies people in vocational skills.

Through agriculture, families have ventured into business



Educating children for life; Lloyd is an example

Turn on the television in the city of Blantyre—the major commercial centre of the southern African country of Malawi—and you may see the bright face and hear the melodious voice of Lloyd Phiri reading the news or discussing issues of importance in Malawi.

Lloyd is the Head of News and Current Affairs at Matindi, a private-owned television station. Before that Lloyd was with MIJ (Malawi Institute of Journalism) Radio, a non-governmental station that hones the skills of the country's best up-and-coming journalists.

It is an impressive resume for a man who has just turned 30.

What makes Lloyd's rise even more stunning is the humble circumstances in which he grew up.

He was born to a single mother in an impoverished village called Senzani in central Malawi. His mother supported Lloyd and his younger brother, Dalitso, through small-scale farming that did not always go their way. Times were tough.

Lloyd remembers growing up in a tiny hut thatched with grass that would leak during the rainy season. The trio survived mainly by eating nsima—Malawi's staple food made from maize flour.

Lloyd recalls that the family could seldom afford the traditional meat or fish accompaniment for the meal.

“Hard memories that stand out include sleeping on an empty stomach because of lack of food,” he says. “I was determined to work extra hard so that I attained a good life in future.”

There wasn't a great deal of entertainment in Senzani, but Lloyd loved listening to the radio. He hoped one day to emulate some of his favourite Malawian radio presenters. Later, he acquired a taste for news and current affairs after long hours of listening to the BBC World Service.

Lloyd's ambitions were helped enormously after WorldVision built several schools in Senzani area, and he became a sponsored child. Before that, he had to walk more than four miles to get to Matala Primary School before his village had one.

But he refused to let this hold him back, especially as WorldVision was giving further support through the provision of school supplies and a school uniform. He says that he was also sustained by his Christian faith. “Being raised in a Christian family helped me to attain faith in Christ. It is God's grace that has enabled me to pass through all the challenges,” he says.

In addition to schooling, Lloyd recalls how sponsorship-funded programmes assisted his community in many other ways, such as bridge-building and the drilling of boreholes so villagers could access clean water. He says the boreholes helped reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases in the community. After finishing high school, Lloyd was accepted into Malawi Polytechnic—one of the best colleges in the country. He eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in journalism.

“Without sponsorship, I could not have gone to secondary school, and this enabled me to pursue a degree in journalism. It is because of this degree that I am able to acquire employment,” Lloyd says of his sponsorship with World Vision.

It's led to more than just a promising career. About two years ago, Lloyd worked briefly at another radio station, where he met and fell in love with announcer Grace Phiri. The couple married in 2012 and is blessed with two children.

Apart from Lloyd, several other children in Senzani were supported to attain vocational skills in tailoring, construction, carpentry and many other fields.

Cattle give families life in Senzani

It is mid-morning. The sun is out and the sound of cattle bleating can be heard some distance from the village, a community located more than 30 kilometres from the nearest paved road.

This village is home to Magret Mulomba, a mother to three children from Senzani Village, T/A Tsikulamowa in Ntcheu District. For the people in this area, the sound of animals is a happy sound — one of prosperity and hope.

“Fifteen years ago, you would not hear all these sounds from our house,” says Magret. “We had a few cattle only owned by well to do people.”

The change for her family began in 2010 with a gift of one cow, given to her by World Vision.

Magret not only received livestock, but also

training on proper care and treatment of the animals.

“Things got better when the cows started to multiply. From the sale [of the offsprings] we got back to our feet. I began to afford buying farm inputs and hiring people to help me in the farm,” she says.

She also managed to pass on one cow to another family as per laws set by the community at the start of this pass on programme. Through this, the first she-offspring of the heifer is passed on to another family in the community, enabling more people to benefit.

Thanks to the cattle as a natural source of fertilizer, her harvests improved and multiplied and the herd continues to grow. The 42-year-old says she now harvests over 1,000 kilogrammes of maize from the 450 she previously managed.

“Now, I have four cows,” she says, acknowledging they would have been more than that but she has sold some to invest in other things.

“Without all this, life would have been unbearable,” she says.

With the cows as a source of fertilizer, Magret has diversified her crops to include



Cows have given us hope - Mulomba

vegetables — providing additional income and nutrition in their diet.

“Without the cows, I wouldn’t have managed to educate my children today,” she says, referring to her third daughter who is now at Malawi Institute of Tourism in Blantyre. She says that with food available, other resources earned by the family are being invested in their children.

However, it is not only Magret who has benefited from the pass-on programme as Stella Chingota is another beneficiary. A few years earlier, Chingota, from Lusinja Village, T/A Tsikulamowa in Ntcheu, did not feel so hopeful.

Erratic rains and droughts causing crop-failure had been a constant feature for many farmers in Lusinja.

Chingota’s situation was so bad that sometimes the family would go without food. “Before, my children could go to school on empty stomach and it was hard for them to concentrate in class,” remarks Chingota, who has two children.

His first born son is at Mzuzu University, while the other one is in Form I at New Vision Private Secondary School in the same community.

Since receiving a heifer on loan through World Vision’s ‘Cow Pass On’ scheme, Chingota has tripled her herd and through milk sales, she is not only providing enough food for her family, but also paying school fees for her son at Mzuzu University.

“It has always been my dream to build a decent home for my family. I am in the process of building a bigger house and I have plans to rent out the first one,” says Chingota.

She further says that the milk has also improved the children’s health, and provided her with manure to help increase their small agricultural harvest.

“In addition, it has increased the household income as the excess milk not drunk by the family is then sold, and the profits are used to pay for food, healthcare and other household necessities,” she says. Group Village Headman Senzani commends

World Vision for the entire time they have been working in Senzani area, saying many families have benefited from the Cow Pass On Programme.

“Many people have gained skills in various development interventions, for instance, in livestock because we have seen a number of cows in our area generated from a single cow distributed to families,” says Senzani. He, however, was quick to stress that they will continue where WVI had left since they were already empowered with the cows and training.

“We have 124 households that attended livestock training and received cows provided by World Vision that have significantly changed their lives for the better.”

The traditional leader went on to say that this has enabled them to live better lives than ever before, something nobody ever expected.

“I am very thankful to World Vision for bringing changes in my area and making many lives become meaningful,” says the chief.

Inspiring a generation of hope through Sponsorship

When Charles Kabena lost his father in 2003, a few weeks to his future-defining examinations, life went upside down. As if that was not enough, he became homeless as his only surviving uncle sold his place and property. He became homeless in his own community.

With support from the community and persistent push from his mother and teachers, he stayed on and pulled a surprise. Charles was selected to Ntcheu Secondary School—the first from his village to write such a history.

“It gave me great joy and self confidence,” says Charles. “Against all that I was going through, coming up with the grades that I did was very encouraging.”

While this was good news, Charles recalls that 21st day of December like no other. It was all about his mother. The news of his selection to secondary school, good as it was, confused his mother, Margret, who did not know how to save her son’s future.

“A lot of people had come home to congratulate me and my mother for such an achievement. But when I looked at my mother, it was the saddest face I had seen on her since I was born. And in that, she communicated a very true message,” recounts Charles.

For him, he says, it was a reminder of poverty and hardship and he realized that even though he had the potential, he would not proceed with going to high school as his single mother could not afford the costs.

World Vision changes people's stories

But thanks to Child Sponsorship, World Vision was working with his community. Immediately the news of Charles' performance was known, his head teacher went to talk with community leaders who work hand in hand with World Vision to decide on how to invest money that was coming into the community through Sponsorship.

“I convinced them to talk to World Vision and create a special fund that would go into supporting needy children like Charles who had the potential but circumstances were playing against them,” says David Mhone, head teacher at Charles' primary school in Senzani, his home village.

Advised by the community and in a true testimony to the organisation's vision, Charles was given school fees for his education at Ntcheu Secondary School from where he went on to go to The Polytechnic where he studied journalism.

“When I was in university, I started corresponding for local and other regional media houses before I even graduated,” says Charles. “And it was then that I realized that World Vision had supported me far much.”

He went on to finish his Bachelors degree in Journalism and years later joined World Vision where he serves as Communications Officer for Programmes in Southern Malawi.

“I love working for World Vision because that's where my story started. My work gives me an opportunity to share the bigger vision and reach out to children. I love going to communities, and talking to children and their families. It gives me joy. At university I learned how to use my storytelling skills to bring justice to those who are marginalized,” he says.

Apart from work, he also founded his own consultancy, Zakwathu Communications, which provides media-related services. He is also currently studying for a Master's Degree in International Relations and Diplomacy.

World Visions ripple effect

Knowing where he comes from and the children he meets every day—children that have big dreams who want to do something with their lives, but they are trapped in situations with financial struggles like himself—Charles is helping 15 children with their high school fees at his community's Likudzi Community Day Secondary School and his own high school, Ntcheu.

“I realized that investing in me was for a divine purpose,” he says. “And I found this to be one of the least of things to do in giving back to my community what was also given to me by strangers through World Vision.”



What can we learn from working in Senzani?

- Local level advocacy through the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach should be introduced right at the start of a programme in order to yield intended outcomes. In Senzani, CVA was only introduced at a later stage, thereby creating gaps on ownership of some interventions.
- From programme designing phase, interventions need to be planned to attain broader and greater impact that includes targeting more people.
- With WV Programming approach of long-term commitment working in a given community such as an ADP, there is need to plan and implement an effective information management system at different levels.





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