



EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

Voices of citizens who have been trained and empowered to demand improved public services from the duty-bearers through the Citizen Voice and Action Model



TO EMPOWER CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES

We believe in the power of the citizen voice - citizen's awareness of their rights, citizens ability to demand for improved public services, transparency, and inclusive governance. We empower communities across the world to call for what is right, what is fair and what is just – holding duty bearers at all levels accountable. Through the citizen empowerment, communities participate in influencing policy decisions and ensure that resources are allocated more effectively by creating platforms where they express their concerns, needs and aspirations. We believe citizens should be listened to, valued and involved in decisions that affect them. When they are listened to, they are more likely to contribute constructively, leading to a more resilient and responsive public service system. We believe that citizen empowerment is the ideal methodology for promoting trust in government and sustainable development. At the local, national, regional and international levels we work to change unjust policies, practices, and structures affecting the most vulnerable children.

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About the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA)

In World Vision (WV), advocacy is an essential component of our theory of change. Our understanding of justice is guided by a prophetic and Biblical vision of the life in all its fullness that God desires for every child. We believe that advocating for justice for children will transform the lives of children, their families and communities, our supporters, our partners and ourselves. In addition, advocacy is regarded as one of the indicators of sustainability since our stay in an Area Program is only temporary.

The CVA model is a social accountability and advocacy approach at the local level that promotes communication between communities and the government to enhance services such as livelihoods, education, health care, and child protection that affect children and their families' day to day lives.

In CVA, we build the capacity of the local communities on the rights using a set of tools that are used for engaging in local level advocacy.

This process begins by orienting the communities on fundamental human and child rights and how these are reflected within our own local law. This forms the first phase that is called enabling citizen engagement.

Thereafter, the communities work together with the government and service providers to compare how well the reality matches against the standard that was established by the government itself. In this process, the communities rate governments performance of the commitments against the criteria that they themselves generate. This forms the second phase that is known as engagement via community gathering.

Finally, communities work with other stakeholders to persuade decision-makers to improve services, using a simple set of basic advocacy tools. As government services improve, so does the well-being of children. This is the last phase of the model that is known as the improving services and influencing policy.

The primary objective of CVA is to increase dialogue and accountability between three groups: citizens, public service providers and government officials (political and administration) to improve the delivery of public services.

These stories serve as a testament to the good that an empowered community can accomplish for their own communities when given a voice.

FOREWORD



Francis Dube
National Director

Dear reader

I am pleased to share with you the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) impact stories for the year 2024. This is a compilation of the impact of the citizen empowerment in selected impact areas where we work in Malawi. We aim to present this impact as a testament of the power of citizen voice in driving meaningful change. These stories cut across all the sectors of Health & Nutrition, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Child Protection, Education and Livelihoods. Through this impact, over 180,000 children including more than 50,000 Most Vulnerable children (MVCs) continue to benefit.

In this booklet, you will read stories demonstrating what an empowered community can achieve. Through these stories you will learn that sustainable development must go hand in hand with citizen empowerment. You will also read about how individuals and communities gathered courage to speak out and their efforts bore fruits. The fruits range from access to schools, efficient health services, increased access to water and sanitation services and access to justice for children among others.

The impact of these initiatives is also reflected in the transformed lives of people and particularly children who can now learn in safe and inclusive environments, patients who receive timely care, and communities that thrive because their resources are used effectively.

As you read through these pages, I encourage you to reflect on the lessons and possibilities they offer. Let them serve as a call to action to strengthen our collective efforts in promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Together, we can create a world where empowered voices lead to transformative change. The stories should inspire us to continue working towards a society where every voice is valued, and every individual has the opportunity to live a life of dignity.

While we celebrate this impact, a special appreciation should go to the communities, chiefs, faith leaders, parents and children who shared their experiences with us. I also acknowledge the advocacy and child protection team for their efforts in scaling up the CVA model.



CVA initiative solves persistent water problems in Mbonechera AP

Shakira Julius, 14, has had to endure difficult times going to school due to persistent water problems in Mbonechera Area Program in Machinga district.

For many years there was only one borehole in the village. The

community resorted to drawing water from the river, a few kilometers away from the village.

Shakira and her friends at Kambewa Primary School in the village used to report late at school because they spent more time fetching water in the morning.

“Before the borehole came, we used to walk long distances to fetch water to bath and for domestic purposes. As a result, we would report late to school. But now it is easier because water is just nearby,” she says.

Catherine James 32, a mother of three children, also concurs with Shakira saying it was hard before the borehole came because drinking water from the river was not safe.

“The water from the river was not safe. Occasionally there were cholera infections due to drinking unsafe water from the river. Now we enjoy the luxury of safe water nearby which is Cholera free. Sometimes even our husbands were jealous



asking too many questions because we came late from fetching water," she says.

An old lady, Nangalame Robert 70, speaking on behalf of the Village Headman Nsawajila thanked the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) committee for helping to bring safe drinking water closer to the people through the borehole in Nsawajila village.

Sevason Tayali the CVA chairperson says although their Committee is just a few years old, they have achieved a number of success in health and sanitation and education.

"In terms of improving availability of safe drinking water, we have now lobbied and installed six boreholes that are functioning in this area. Currently, three more boreholes are being sunk in this

area alone which will bring the total number to nine," he says.

Tayali thanked World Vision International for training the CVA to understand the government's approved standards of social services and development in areas of education, health and social services.

"We now know the standard of social services the government is mandated to provide to its citizens in all areas. We take careful observation in our area to identify any deficiencies and lapses so that we can demand provision from government and other concerned stakeholders" he concludes ●

"Before the borehole came, we used to walk long distances to fetch water to bath and for domestic purposes. As a result, we would report late to school. But now it is easier because water is just nearby"



Chiwalo CVA improves maternal health in Phalombe

In Dindi Area Program, in Phalombe district, Malawi, a grassroots advocacy initiative known as the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) is tirelessly working to improve local healthcare services for expectant mothers and the whole community.

According to Chairperson for

Chiwalo CVA, Gracious Kulanga, this community-driven approach empowers citizens to advocate for better public services, such as healthcare and education.

Explains Kulanga: “Recently, Chiwalo CVA successfully advocated for posting of 10 additional Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) from

the government, and the construction of a new placenta pit to replace the old, overflowing one that posed health risks to patients and nearby residents.

The placenta pit initiative supported by the Inter-Aide organization addressed the immediate health hazard but also aligned with cultural norms that

discourage improper disposal of the placenta in open spaces.”

Although a placenta pit may appear like just a mere facility for disposing of medical wastes, an interaction with expectant women at Nambazo Health Centre reveals that due to cultural beliefs, the unavailability of secure placenta pits may discourage other pregnant women from rural areas to give birth at a health facility.

Charity Luciano concurs with Kulanga and recalls the stench she and her guardian endured in the past when she came to Nambazo Health Centre to deliver.

“Before the intervention, the stench from the old pit was unbearable, so it was a relief to see the community take action to safeguard our health and dignity,” she says.

Chikondi Chinthenga, a Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) in the area, emphasizes the critical impact of the new pit.

“The old pit attracted flies and posed a risk of cholera and other diseases, the new pit has significantly improved hygiene standards, ensuring a safer environment for all, we are grateful to the efforts made by the CVA which brought us the development through Inter-Aid,” says Chinthenga.

However, CVA Chairperson, Kulanga, refuses to take all the credit alone.

“The success of Chiwalo CVA is due to the support we receive from World Vision Malawi, which provides essential resources such as advocacy training, bicycles for outreach, and tools like scorecards,” he says.

He adds: “World Vision’s support has been instrumental, it has enabled us to amplify our voices and hold authorities accountable for delivering on their commitments to the community.

Through collaborative dialogue and non-confrontational advocacy, we will continue our efforts to enhance the accessibility and quality of healthcare but also encourage other community members to take collective responsibility for their well-being.”

Chiwalo CVA was formed in 2019 and it has four committees responsible for child protection and education issues, environmental issues, health issues and agriculture and food security issues ●

‘World Vision’s support has been instrumental, it has enabled us to amplify our voices and hold authorities accountable for delivering on their commitment’s to the community.’



CVA helping curb health woes in Mbonechera

Patrick Chikolongo is Senior Health Surveillance Assistance (HSA) for Mbonechera Health Center in Mbonechera Area Program in Machinga district. He has been in service for over 29 years. He, however, admits that his work is often constrained by shortage of resources. Chikolongo cites the absence of running water, shortage of toilets and drugs at Mbonechera Health Center as one of the many challenges they have been facing.



“We have always had the challenges and it is always a concern in the provision of quality health care. For example, this facility had at one point in time no running water, only two toilets and so many other challenges,” he explains.

But World Vision through Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) has brought down a considerable number of challenges to extinction now.

Mbonechera CVA chair, Sevison Tayali, says his group started in 2023 following several challenges the community was facing.

When World Vision came to the community, the CVA members got trained on standard identification on public service provision, resource mobilization

as well as running advocacy works in the community with all requisite development partners.

Today, the CVA has facilitated the rehabilitation of the only borehole at the health centre, construction of two additional toilets and construction of an additional health post which is currently under way in the community.

“AS CVA, we have made it possible for our health Centre to have running water since the borehole broke down, and has now been fixed.”

“AS CVA, we have made it possible for our health Centre to have running water since the borehole broke down, and has now been fixed. We also have two additional toilets to ease the pressure for toilet

usage at the facility and we will continue holding our authorities accountable to bring the much-needed positive change in this community,” says Tayali.

The Mbonechera CVA has also advocated for the formation of a Health Center Management Committee (HCMC), which according to Chikolongo is crucial to the running of the facility.

“Previously, we did not have the HCMC and in a way we were challenged as a facility and the institution lacked community ownership. But with the committee in place now, the community is now aware of the business conduct of the facility, and through local leadership, they can provide the required support anytime needed,” says Chikolongo.

36-year-old Eneless John, a mother of five children, says she is happy that now she can come to the health center without having to pick a water bucket from her home.

“Previously, to come to the health center to access medical care, we had to carry a bottle of water or even a bucket since there was no running water here. We also had toilet challenge which was another issue of concern. But today I am happy to see that we have two extra toilets and the borehole has just been fixed. I am so glad that the CVA could do that to ease our predicament in this community,” she says ●

2 toilets & running water restored.



No more losing children because of long distance to hospital

Catherine Chiwaya, 29, from Mposa Area Program in Machinga district, lost her under-five child because she could not get to the hospital soon enough due to long distance.

From her Village to the nearest hospital, the distance is 17km, which is more than the government's stipulated distance that no one should walk over 8km to find a hospital.

But Chiwaya now smiles because through efforts done by the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), a clinic for under-five children and maternity cases has been constructed just behind her house.

"I will no longer have to travel long distances access medical services for my children. The clinic is just behind my house," she says.

The clinic which will be the first government Health Centre in area was constructed with

funding from the Constituency Development Fund at a cost of K54 million. There is also a borehole drilled to the tune of 7 million kwacha and a pit latrine.

George Jamali chairperson of the Citizen Voice and Action committee in the area said although the clinic is complete it has not yet started operating because there is no equipment inside. He says they expect to get equipment very soon and before the year ends.

Jamali says the government is expected to provide the equipment.

Jamali adds that in their efforts to improve health services around area, his committee has not only advocated for the establishment of the clinic but also for increasing the number of Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs).

"Before now we used to have only two HSAs which was not enough. The government requirement is that one HSA should serve 1000 people. But in this area, one HSA was responsible for 2000 or more people which was not good. But we have now lobbied for more and we now have six HSAs," says Jamali ●



"I will no longer have to travel long distances access medical services for my children. The clinic is just behind my house"



Njema CVA commits to SGD 3

Yonder the imposing Mulanje Mountain, at the tip of Malawi and Mozambique lies Njema Area Program in Mulanje district.

The border community has access to health care at Muloza Community Health Centre. However, provision of crucial health care at the facility was marred by a number of shortfalls, among which were the absence of a water point, staff shortage,

shortage of ablution as well as medical supplies.

20-year-old Yankho from the Area Program says it was worrisome to come to the health center for health care where people had no access to potable water and scrambled for toilets, a development which made the spot another health threat.

“This facility did not have enough toilets, we only had two and we had to scramble to access

them as there are always too many people seeking services. Secondly, there was no running water, so one could imagine if this was a place where you could expect to get medical care,” explains Yankho.

But when Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) in the area noted the concerns, they sat down with local leaders to map some way forward to eradicate the challenges.

The 14-member CVA chaired by Kelvin Makono called for an interface meeting to discuss the Muloza Health Center concern.

Among others, it was noted that there was a lean staff at the facility, no power as the main power transformer bloated out





“I was happy when I came for delivery to note that we now have a functional borehole, new toilets and some new nurses”, - Yankho

including a broken borehole and toilet shortage.

Makono says their effort brought relief as currently the borehole has been fixed, extra toilets erected as well as construction of a placenta pit which is now fully functional.

“As CVA we worked tirelessly to relieve this community from the health challenges. We banged heads with all stakeholders including the district council to ensure that as a community we put Sustainable Development Goal number 3 on health into action. So we are happy things have now improved,” says Makono.

Cornelius Muhama, Environmental Health Officer for Muloza Health Center acknowledges the challenges the facility faced, and he commends the efforts by the CVA in advocating for the much-needed relief.

“Before CVA intervened, we had so many challenges. For example, we did not have placenta pit, no running water, fewer toilets, a lean staff, all these were the main issues. But since CVA’s efforts, we now have had two additional nurses, we have a borehole and now the power has been restored as well as two additional toilets, so we are so grateful to World Vision for capacitating this

advocacy group,” says Muhama.

Yankho, now a mother of a bouncy six-month-old baby girl says she is thrilled to have given birth at the facility now that the problems have been rectified.

“I was happy when I came for delivery to note that we now have a functional borehole, new toilets and some new nurses. I must thank CVA for being our voice in getting authorities together to solve the problems, and thanks to World Vision Malawi for giving the group the most relevant capacity to do its advocacy work,” adds Yankho ●

Muloza Health Centre had only 2 toilets for all patients and staff before CVA intervention.



CVA ends communication and transport woes in Dindi

Namichimba Bridge at Nambazo trading centre in Dindi Area Program in Phalombe district is crucial to school-going children as well as business people on either side of the bridge at the trading centre.

However, for some time, crossing the bridge became a nightmare as it collapsed, enabling pedestrians to cross only during the dry season.

When the rainy season approached, school children at Nambazo School, that relied on the bridge, were forced to be absent.

12 year-old Yasintha who is in grade four felt her dream to be a doctor was on the verge of collapse as she often got absent from school due to the condition of the bridge.

“The bridge became impassable as its supporting pillars fell off, rendering it unusable. During the dry season, we found ways to cross to get to school, but during the rainy season, we had no option as there were rapid

water flows in the river,” says Yasinta.

Concerned with recurring reports of school absenteeism and loss of business at the trading center by some community members, Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) in the area chaired by Gracious Kulanga did not watch things go out of hand.

His CVA collaborated with local leaders to deliberate immediate action to mitigate the transportation challenges that rocked the area.

Kulanga, with full support of local leaders sent for Member of Parliament for the area, Denis Namachekecha Phiri to help solve the issue.

After briefing Bokosi, funds were sourced and a local contractor was identified to fix the bridge.

Today, young learners like Yasintha go to school often as

“The bridge became impassable as its supporting pillars fell off, rendering it unusable. During the dry season, we found ways to cross to get to school, but during the rainy season, we had no option as there were rapid water flows in the river,”

the bridge now stands strong throughout all seasons.

Kulanga says he is satisfied with the coordination so far within his CVA.

“Our CVA thrives on coordination among members as well as with the community and other stakeholders. Through that, we have been able to advocate for so many things in this community. We are glad that through the capacity we got from World

“Our CVA thrives on coordination among members as well as with the community and other stakeholders. Through that, we have been able to advocate for so many things in this community.”



Vision, we are empowered to bring much-needed change in this community. We can hold duty bearers to account, he says”

Smart Sungani is a maize mill operator at Nambazo Trading Center. His maize mill is on the other side of the bridge.

He says when the bridge fell, his business was affected as customers from the other side which has a higher population could not patronize his maize mill, as such, he could not make enough money.

“My maize mill is on the other side of the bridge but a larger population of this community comes from the other end. So with the bridge in a dilapidated state, I could not make enough money and I also struggled to support my family. I am so happy that CVA made things possible and business is now back to normal,” says Sungani.

Apart from advocating for fixing the bridge, the CVA also facilitated the relocation of a network transmitter from its former location which rendered the community to have intermittent network coverage.

Through advocacy, the CVA liaised with network providers and other stakeholders who then made a decision to move the network tower to a higher land, a situation which has since fixed the network problem in the community●

Long Walk to Secure A Future



“I am happy that there is now class 8 here. This motivated me to work hard as I didn’t have to walk a long distance to access education.”

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This means children in hard-to-reach areas should not face barriers to accessing education which would in future help them harness skills and knowledge to self-dependency and in turn ensure national development.

However, this could be far from the truth for standard 8 learners living in Chabwera Village in Kapeni Area Program in Ntcheu District who had to travel close to 10 kilometers on school days

to access education at Ntonda Primary School. Chabwera village is hard to reach as it is situated in a mountainous area with very bad roads and rough terrain.

Prior to 2018, Chabwera Primary School had only standards (grades) 1 to 6 and in 2019, standard (grade) 7 was added. This did nothing to motivate children in the area to continue with their education as they would still have to travel long

distances to access education despite them having worked hard in the lower classes.

This was the case for Mphatso Mega, aged 21 and his friend Harrison Brighton, who is also 21 years of age. They both sat for their standard 8 examinations at Ntonda Primary School in 2020 and 2022, respectively.

“I had to travel long distances during school days as there was no standard 8 here at that time.



From 10km to 5km less for students to walk to school.

This meant walking for close to one hour and thirty minutes just to get there. I kept sleeping in class as I was just too tired to concentrate. I didn't pass my examinations because of this," Mphatso explains.

And Harrison concurs with Mphatso, saying he too was constantly tired as he would get home very late and also adds that his legs would constantly hurt.

"The situation was worse during the rainy season as the roads became impassable. This meant not attending classes on some days." Says Harrison.

Headteacher at Chabwera Primary School, Jonathan Mpingiza, attests to the fact that the school which now has 462 learners had a dropout rate of about 40% at the time.

"The students were just not feeling motivated because they knew that once they sat for their standard (grade) 7 examinations, they would have to start walking long distances to access standard (grade) 8," Mpingiza says.

But thanks to the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) model, now the situation has improved after communities were sensitised

on their rights and the rights of children.

Having children walk for over an hour to access education which is a basic right was a clear indication that their rights were being infringed upon and after the CVA was introduced in the area, communities began demanding that Chabwera Primary School have Standard 8 added so that children could complete their primary education at the school.

This was also a clear violation of the government's guidelines that a child should not have to walk over a distance of 5 kms to access education.

During an interface with duty bearers in 2022, communities and school children narrated their ordeal and after the meeting,



the government established standard 8 at the school in 2023.

Eunice Fayiti, 16 years, is part of the first cohort that sat for the 2023-2024 Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) examinations at Chabwera Primary School. Eunice is happy to have learnt at the school which is closer to her home.

"I am happy that there is now class 8 here. This motivated me to work hard as I didn't have to walk a long distance to access education. I know that many girls will now be motivated to work hard as well. I am confident that I will pass because I was able to study properly," says Eunice who aspires to become a doctor.

This is also a relief for parents who used to worry over the

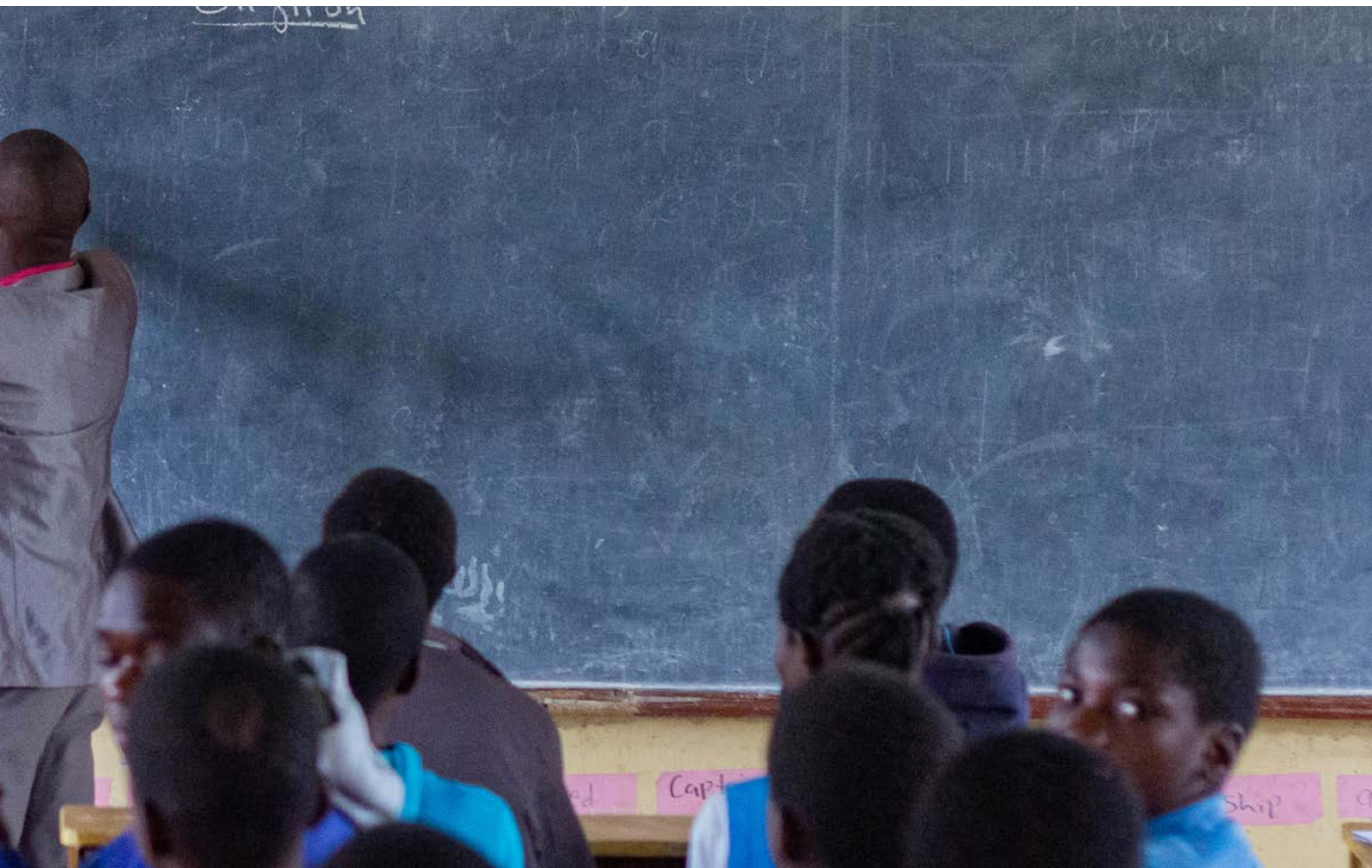
safety of their children due to the long distances, with some having had to make difficult decisions to ensure that their children complete their primary education.

Kapeni CVA treasurer, Zomba Banda commended the unity between communities and all stakeholders in bringing change at the school.

"After empowering communities on their rights, we came together and wrote a letter to the District Education Manager (DEM) asking for an interface. During that meeting, students together with community members and chiefs explained how difficult it was for the children to access education and we got positive feedback from the DEM," Says Banda.

"We were then told to fulfill several requirements for class 8 to be established at Chabwera Primary School which we achieved and after officials came to assess the situation, they were satisfied and later came and established the additional class to make it a complete primary school," Banda says.

He said this will now improve access to education in the area. However, communities are now lobbying for a secondary school to also be established within the area so that once the learners complete their primary education, they also have a secondary school close by ●



CVA secures improved education at Chilim'bondo

The setting up of the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) model has made a great impact by informing citizens on their rights in critical sectors such as education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene and child protection, among others. The model has also empowered the citizenry to engage duty-bearers at local level to enforce their rights.

In Neno District, the CVA model has made strides in improving education standards in the

district which has a myriad of challenges in the provision of education.


Sonnex Likhaluwe is the Chief Education Officer for Neno district. Sonnex says the major factors such as inadequate classroom blocks, teachers and teaching materials as well as early marriages and high dropout rates are affecting the education standards in the district.

"We are close to Mozambique and many learners drop out once they reach standards (grades

7 and 8 to look for work there. Others travel to South Africa. This has contributed to high dropouts as many communities in the district do not value education due to high poverty levels," Sonnex says.

He, however, says the situation has improved, since the introduction of CVA intervention by World Vision in the area.

"Through the education service committee at the council, we partnered with stakeholders to hold awareness campaigns



3.5%
dropout rate
from 4.7 %.

and now we have registered improvement. The dropout rate was around 4.7 percent but now it has dropped to 3.5 percent” Sonnex says says.

Alex Symon Dotolo is Chairperson for Dambe CVA and attests to the fact that many children were dropping out in the 14 schools in the area due to different reasons.

He says during the evaluation of development projects by the CVA, it transpired that many children were dropping out because they were not learning effectively during the rainy season due to inadequate school blocks, toilets and insufficient teachers.

“Communities took duty bearers to task on these hurdles during an interface in February and since then the government has sent 6 teachers to some of the primary schools in our area. We have also been told that 6 schools will benefit from school blocks under the Malawi Education Reform Programme (MERP),” Symon says.

Sonnex confirms this development, saying a total of 12 school blocks will be constructed in the area.

Another positive outcome from the interface is that the government has also provided desks in some schools one of which is Chilim'bondo Primary School in Chilim'bondo Area Program. The school has received 60 desks.

“Through the education service committee at the council, we partnered with stakeholders to hold awareness campaigns and now we have registered improvement. The dropout rate was around 4.7 percent but now it has dropped to 3.5 percent”.



Maria Harrison from Senjerani Village, T/A Dambe is in standard 7 and says the desks have improved her education and was thankful. The government also sent 2 more child protection officers in the area to support children.

Initially, the area had only one child protection officer who was having challenges traveling long distances to reach out to all

the villages to sensitize on child rights and child protection issues.

“During the interface, the district social welfare officer for Neno promised to send 2 more child protection workers and now they are here. This will help to address challenges children face and also encourage them to remain in school,” Symon says in conclusion ●

Tambala CVA advocates for development projects in Dedza

Tambala Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) committee says the past year was positive towards enhancing of community development projects in the area of Tchetsa and Chitundu Area Programs in Dedza district. The committee in cooperation with Area Development Committee (ADC) and other stakeholders has managed to bring service providers (duty bearers) and rights holders (Citizens) to engage into an interface meeting on development needs of people focusing on road infrastructure, child rights, health, education and agriculture among others.

According Tambala Citizen Voice and Action Group Chairperson Ayami Soda, since 2019, Sagawa primary school class block project stalled and recently came to completion after three years of abandonment.

“We followed up the issue of Sagawa primary school block with Dedza District council, after noticing that the project was abandoned. We are pleased to report that now it has come to its completion,” Soda says.

Sagawa primary school, Deputy Head teacher, Samuel Nyambo, says the school project was abandoned, but with support from Citizen Voice and Action group construction works resumed and the project is now complete.

He further says that Standard (grade) three and four learners are using the new classroom block. The committee seeks to continue registering success as they manage to end child marriages, and advocate for Mayani Health Center to be a community hospital, Nkhoma - Mayani road to turn into a tarmac road among the developments in 2024. ●


After a 3-year standstill, the Sagawa primary school project was revived and completed through CVA committee intervention.





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