



NEWSLETTER



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year. It is with heartfelt gratitude that I welcome you to the final edition of the WESNET newsletter for the year 2024. Reflecting on our journey as a sector, I am proud to acknowledge the significant milestones we have achieved. Together, we continue to make progress in our mission to provide quality WASH services and move in the right direction toward a healthier and more sustainable Malawi.

Despite these accomplishments, the WASH sector in Malawi continues to face persistent challenges. Inadequate funding and high vacancy rates remain barriers that hinder effective operations and the delivery of essential services to our communities. However, I am encouraged by the government's commitment to prioritizing WASH issues, which is a critical step forward.

As members of the WASH constituency, I urge all of us to strengthen our collaboration and support the government, particularly our sector Ministries, to ensure that we collectively build a better Malawi.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all organizations and institutions that have contributed reports toward the National Joint Sector Review (JSR), as well as to those regions that successfully conducted their regional JSRs. However, it is concerning that the number of reports submitted does not fully reflect the extensive work we do to amplify the sector. I appeal to those who have not yet reported to step forward and fulfill this responsibility. Accountability must remain a cornerstone of our work.

As Malawi approaches the 2025 elections, let us seize this moment to advocate for universal access to water and sanitation. We must encourage political aspirants—from the local council level to the highest offices—to prioritize WASH issues in their manifestos. True justice begins with us, and the people of Malawi deserve consistent access to safe and potable water.

Finally, I encourage everyone to actively participate in and support upcoming sector events. In particular, I call upon you to join hands in the commemorations for World Water Day in March and Menstrual Hygiene Management Day in May. These events are critical in raising awareness and advancing our shared goals.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the WASH sector. I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter and remain committed to making a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Warm regards,

Willies Mwandira

Executive Director, WESNET



ASSOCIATION EXPECT TO BOOST LIVELIHOODS FOR LOCAL MECHANICS IN DEDZA



Members of DWAMA pausing a group photo

By: Edward Chikwanda

In a move to drive away challenges faced by local pump mechanics commonly known as “area mechanics” an organization called BASEDA embarked on a project of coming up with an association aiming to boost livelihoods among locals by making sure that area mechanics are working in collaboration in order to deal with water challenges by maintaining and rehabilitating boreholes in the district.

Reports are showing that; four many years local mechanics were working independently and that led to poor service delivery to the community when maintaining boreholes which is the only source of water in most rural areas.

One of the members of Dedza Water Point Area Mechanic Association (DWAMA) Matias Nelson testifies on how the association has improved his life since the introduction of the project in the district.

“ by time we used to work independently, a number of organizations were not fully trusting us because we had no any other mother body, but this time around we have seen a very big improvement due to the existence of this association”

“ the presence of this association has helped me to start working with a number of organizations whose aim is to make sure that people are accessing safe and portable water, for instance am working with total land care to maintain different boreholes



since last year” Nelson told Africa brief

“ we have also managed to create bank accounts that will assist in keeping finances that will help the association in its daily activities” Nelson added.

Commenting on the development, Vice Chairperson for DWAMA Silvester Singo echoed by highlighting that in the past things were moving in slow pace because local mechanics were working independently without involvement of other mechanics.

“ we our working hand in hand by making sure that a lot of boreholes are rehabilitated in dealing with water challenges in the district”

“ we are able to generate income from boreholes committees for smooth running of the association, and BASEDA has been there to train us and giving us knowledge

on how things should be run in daily bases” Singo said.

Speaking on Monday, Project coordinator for Basic Services Development Agency (BASEDA) Lebium Katuku stated that, DWAMA intends to develop partnership with other development partners in the water sector such as charitable organizations and individuals of good will.

“ as an organization, we are there to facilitate training with local mechanics by providing them with managerial skills and train them on how to source funds for the smooth running of the association” Katuku said.

It is expected that DWAMA is going to repair and maintain services to all water points in the district with 60% of the water point committees entering into formal services contracts with area mechanics by the end of 2026.

Beyond Water Resuscitates Mbingwa Health Centre



By Herbert Chawinga

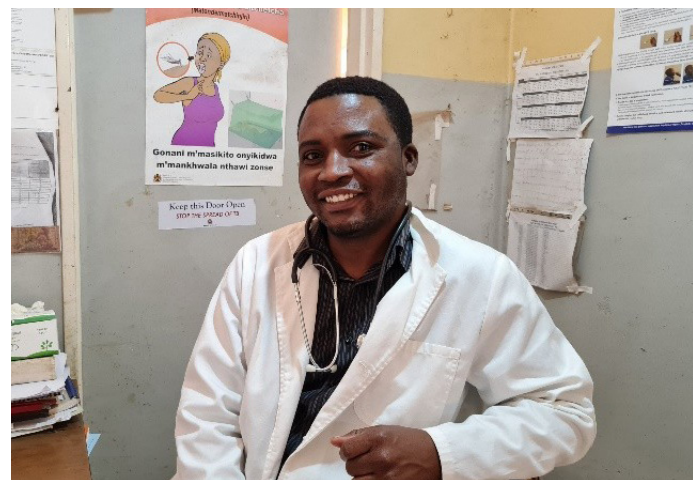
Mbingwa Health Center is located in the Area of Senior Chief Kayembe in Dowa District.

The center was closed for 3 weeks because the only water point at the facility, an Afridev pump broke down.

According to the In-charge of Health Center Reuben Banda, the borehole broke down because of lack of professional skills in the volunteers identified by the Health Center Management Committee to repair the Pump. The borehole started malfunctioning when the initial solar powered pump that was installed by the government as the main source of water to the center broke down in 2021. It was never repaired, rendering the burden to the Afridev Pump which was also being used by the surrounding communities. This led to poor functionality, costly weekly repairs, eventually resulting in a major breakdown in August 2024.

Life became unbearable for patients and guardians as the latter were forced to walk for long distances to draw water from boreholes from other villages.

Mbingwa Health Centre - Dowa



Banda – In charge of Mbingwa Health Centre

Members of staff too had to hire pieceworkers who were charging huge amounts of money to get them water from those distant water points.

Banda, who is also a Medical Technician, said: “We had to suspend most operations because a huge part of our work at the center depends on availability of clean



Fixed & Functional - A guardian drawing water from the health center borehole

water. We couldn't sterilize medical equipment with little water, or water from the river. We struggled a lot to keep the maternity wing running because of the big demand for clean and safe water. It was hard for patients to take the first dosages that are prescribed to be taken at the center, subsequently at home. Hygiene and sanitation was compromised too as floors were left unmopped, putting lives around at high risk of contracting contagious diseases and infections."

The situation compelled health authorities to suspend most services, remaining with only critical ones like emergency cases and deliveries.

One of the residents from the neighboring Mkwela village Alfosina Julayi recalls the expenses villagers used to incur following the closure of the government health facility. "We were forced to go to private clinics where we were paying up to K40,000.00 for treatment, in contrast to free health care services we were getting at the government owned health center

that was closed because of lack of safe water." July said.

A resident of Mbingwa village Horace Bryson said business was also affected at the nearby trading center as people doing business there also depend on the waterpoint for drinking, restaurant operations and general hygiene and sanitation.

The urgent need for water at the center prompted the management committee to enter Premium Direct Contract at K150,000.00 per year with Beyond Water for the repair and maintenance services of the borehole. Monetary contributions were made by the center staff and the community.

The borehole has been repaired, leading to the reopening of the health center with all services back to full operation.

Mbingwa Health Center serves 34000 people that benefit from the waterpoint through the facility.

From Sickness to Health: The Transformative Power of Chlorine Dispensers in Rural Lives



Banda – In charge of Mbingwa Health Centre

By Meclina Chirwa

In the rural village of Nyenje, nestled in the rolling hills of Mangochi, access to clean drinking water was a luxury few could afford. For years, villagers relied on contaminated water sources, leading to a perpetual cycle of waterborne illnesses that plagued the community.

But all that changed with the introduction of chlorine dispensers, installed by Evidence Action, an organization dedicated to promoting hygiene and reducing waterborne diseases.

For 27-year-old Trinity Chimtengo, a mother of two, the chlorine dispenser has been a game-changer. Trinity's youngest child, 5-year-old Chikondi, had been suffering from chronic diarrhea and stomach pains, which Trinity suspected was due to the contaminated water they were drinking.

"I was worried sick about my child's health," Trinity recalls. "We would spend a lot of money on medication, but the illnesses would keep coming back."

But since the chlorine dispenser



outcomes. It has also had a significant impact on the local economy.

With fewer people falling ill, villagers are able to work more productively, and children are able to attend school more regularly.

Program Manager for Evidence Action, Moses Chisangwala, emphasized the importance of the chlorine program in combating waterborne diseases.

“The chlorine program is a vital investment in human capital, yielding significant economic returns, thereby demonstrating the potential for improved health and prosperity,” Chisangwala said.

He added that preventing waterborne diseases through the distribution of chlorine increases productivity, reduces healthcare costs, boosts education, supports entrepreneurship, and enhances economic stability.

“Waterborne diseases cause inconveniences to people both economically and socially. If a household spends more money on hospital bills, that erodes their financial resources. So by preventing these waterborne diseases, it means the money spent for hospital bills would be used for other important things. But again, on the long run, if a child has diarrhea, there are a lot of absenteeism in schools, and therefore, it has a long run effect on their lives, and their education is affected,” Chisangwala explained.

Scaling Up the Initiative

Evidence Action plans to expand its chlorine dispenser program to more rural communities in Malawi. The organization is implementing the initiative in eight districts of Blantyre rural, Zomba, Neno, Mwanza, Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, and Chiradzulu.

The organization is also working with local leaders and community members

was installed in their village, Trinity says Chikondi’s health has improved dramatically.

“My child no longer suffers from diarrhea and stomach pains,” Trinity says with a smile. “The chlorine dispenser has brought us so much relief.”

Impact on the Community

The chlorine dispenser is a simple, yet effective solution to the problem of contaminated water. The dispenser is installed at a borehole or any other water source in a central location in the village.

According to Evidence Action’s Program Officer, Ibrahim Muhammad, the chlorine dispenser has been a huge success in reducing waterborne illnesses in the village.

“We’ve seen a significant decrease in the number of cases of diarrhea, cholera, and other waterborne diseases,” Muhammad says.

Economic Benefits

But the impact of the chlorine dispenser goes beyond just improving health

to promote hygiene and sanitation practices, and to educate people about the importance of clean drinking water.

National Impact

National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordinator in the Ministry of Health, Hollystone Maumsamatha Kafanikhale, praised the initiative, saying:

“The success of the chlorine dispenser initiative is a testament to the power of partnership and collaboration. We are grateful to Evidence Action for the initiative, and we look forward to continuing to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens.”

Evidence Action invests USD 2.9 million annually for the safe water initiative, being implemented in the districts of Blantyre rural, Chiradzulu, Neno, Zomba, Balaka, Machinga, Mwanza and Mangochi.

The organization has installed 16240 chlorine dispensers, reached out to over 2 million people with 32,004 volunteers.

According to the World Health Organization,

844 million people worldwide lack access to clean drinking water.

In Malawi, 34% of the population lacks access to improved sanitation facilities, according to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program).

The ministry of health in Malawi says waterborne diseases are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Malawi, particularly among children under the age of five.

The installation of chlorine dispensers in rural communities is a critical step towards addressing these challenges and improving the health and wellbeing of rural communities in Malawi.

As Evidence Action continues to scale up its initiatives, it is clear that the impact of the chlorine dispenser program will be felt for generations to come.

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Children are now able to access safe drinking water with the presence of dispensers

Snapshots of Events

MHM DAY

In July, stakeholders in the WASH sector commemorated the World Menstrual Hygiene Management Day which falls on 28 May every year. Celebrated under the theme “together for a period friendly world,” the event took place at Pinda Primary School in Mchinji district. Minister of Water and Sanitation, Honourable Abida Sidik Mia, MP graced the occasion which is dedicated to breaking taboos and raising awareness about the importance of good menstrual hygiene management.



Sanitation Week Launch and Global Handwashing Day



Minister of Water and Sanitation honourable Abida Sidik Mia, MP in September launched the first ever Sanitation and Hygiene Week in Malawi.

Celebrated under the theme “Sanitation and Hygiene for Health and Smart Communities,” the Sanitation and Hygiene Week aims at improving sanitation and hygiene in the country.



In her official launching remarks, Mia said the event came at a crucial time when the country has for the past two years struggled to contain Cholera, one of the hygiene related diseases.

She also asked stakeholders in the sector on the need for introducing and implementing interventions that will ensure increased access to safely managed sanitation for all Malawians.

Mia also encouraged everyone to adopt improved hygiene practices, construct improved latrines and use them properly, construct and install handwashing facilities and use those facilities and finally she asked people to manage waste properly. WESNET Executive Director Willies Mwandira applauded the Ministry for introducing the Sanitation and Hygiene Week citing it will promote sanitation and hygiene issues in various communities.

He, however, asked various members of WESNET and WASH other stakeholders at district level to help in profiling the Sanitation and Hygiene Week whilst making sure that activities that aim at promoting sanitation and hygiene are implemented beyond the Sanitation and Hygiene Week.

By launching the Sanitation and Hygiene Week, Malawi also joined the rest of the world in commemorating the Global Handwashing Day which falls on 15 October every year.

World Toilet Day Commemorations



Ministry of Water and Sanitation in November led Malawians in commemorating the World Toilet Day, which is celebrated on 19 November, every year since 2013.

The 2024 theme "Toilets: A Place for Peace" emphasised that billions of people face heightened threats to sanitation due to conflict, climate change, natural disasters and systemic neglect.

Among others, the day inspires action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and reach the 3.5 billion people still living without safely managed sanitation.

This day has been dedicated to emphasising the importance of safe and accessible toilet facilities as part of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensuring water and sanitation for all by 2030.

2024 WASH Innovation Fair and Symposium

WESNET in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation in October hosted the 2024 WASH Innovation Fair and Symposium.

The two-day event was celebrated under the theme “Harmonising WASH Efforts for a Sustainable Malawi” which is a reflection of the collective commitment of all key players in the sector to sustainable and resilient development.



During the official opening of the event, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Elias Chimulambe urged participants to brainstorm on sustainable ways of serving the rural areas who need to be reached with safe water, sanitation and hygiene services and make sure that they are served adequately.

He also asked the key players in the sector to renew and reflect on their commitment to the sector in quest to combat waterborne diseases and continue enhancing collaborative efforts to ensure a healthier and prosperous Malawi.



Various presentations from NGOs, Academia and Statutory Corporations highlighting key issues on Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene and general WASH were part and parcel of the activities under day 1.

On the second day, there were exhibitions on various WASH innovations and technologies at the Gateway Mall in Lilongwe.

Moses Kambani Kamchedzera from MUBAS won the 3rd National WASH Fair and Symposium Innovation Prize in the Student/Individual category and his innovation, Plastic Waste Pyrolysis, converts plastic waste into: Diesel; Petrol; Propane gas and Grease. World Vision Malawi won the prize under the NGO category.





Regional Joint Sector Review Meetings

As part of preparations for the upcoming National Joint Sector Review (JSR) Meeting, WESNET in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation facilitated regional JSRs thus North, South and Central in December



Transforming Education and Hygiene: The Impact of Clean Water Access at Kapesi Primary School



By Ethel Majawa

It is knock off time at Kapesi Primary School in Dedza District, in Traditional Authority (T/A) Kachere. As soon as learners step out of the classroom, some make a beeline for a borehole situated right in the middle of the school blocks. Chattering joyously and giggling along, they take turns to wash their hands and drink water before heading home. A few of the learners accompany their teacher to inspect a school garden and irrigate some vegetables that they recently sowed. Accessing potable water is now very easy for the pupils at the school, however, it is a development they only dreamt about for so many years.

Before Welthungerhilfe (WHH) constructed a borehole at the school, school children relied on unsafe water from a well for drinking and washing hands. Looking at how the children jostled with people from the surrounding community for water at the well was worrisome for the head teacher, Joseph Mtalimanja. Even though a thought of having tap water from the

government water supply body, Central Water Board, would cross his mind, the idea was a non-starter. This was owing to how expensive it would be for the school to sustain tap water. As an interim solution, the head teacher would ask children to get drinking water from their homes. However, this temporary remedy had its repercussions.

“When the school had no borehole, absenteeism was high. I would ask learners to carry drinking water from their homes; however, those with no bottles for carrying water absconded classes as it meant that they would not have water to drink. If they came to school without water, they would spend a lot of time fetching water at the well instead of reporting for classes on time,” recalled Mtalimanja.

This glaring lack of water to drink meant that even finding sufficient water to wash hands, clean classrooms and toilets was a hassle for the children. Madalo Kadulo is a School Health and Nutrition (SHN) teacher at Kapesi Primary School. A School Health

Club (SHC) is led by two SHN teachers and has 30 learners' members who join the club voluntarily. They share knowledge on good hygiene and nutrition practices following a SHC manual. Madalo and members of the SHC act as agents of change by disseminating messages of hygiene and sanitation as well as nutrition to learners and nearby communities.



Madalo Kadulo – SHN teacher

Together with the pupils in a SCH, Madalo ensures that children are not littering around the school premises; and that toilets and classrooms are always clean. She also encourages personal hygiene, ensuring that children develop the habit of washing their hands after using the toilet, as well as before and after eating. Furthermore, Madalo teaches girls of age on how to take good care of themselves through Menstrual Management Hygiene lessons. Some of the lessons in the SCH include eating a balanced diet which consists of vegetables. As a way of inspiring the children to understand the importance of owning home vegetable gardens, SHC has its own garden where Madalo and the children grow crops like mustard leaves, beans, cowpeas and pumpkin leaves.

Managing the SCH club would have been such a difficult task for Madalo, if there was no borehole at the school. Having taught at the school during a time the school was relying on water from a community well, Madalo boasts on how the newly drilled borehole has augmented personal hygiene and sanitation at the school.

“This water has made our classrooms and toilets clean and smart. Learners frequently wash their hands. This has reduced the number of diarrhea cases. Our SHC has also been using the same water for irrigating vegetables and our fruit trees,” said Madalo.

Hanwell Raphael, a Standard 8 learner at the school is grateful. To Hanwell having water close-by means that he can go to school without carrying a bucket of water from home, as was the case before. He also saves time by spending the 15 minutes break time within the school premises and return to class on time.

“Before this borehole was constructed, we would walk for 10 minutes to get drinking water from the well, utilizing the regular 15 minutes break time that we have. As a result, we would go back to class late. Sometimes, the head teacher would ask us to carry a 10-litre bucket of water when coming to school,” said Hanwell.

He added, “Now the water source is very close, just outside the classroom. When we need water for washing hands, drinking and mopping, we just walk a few steps to the borehole,”.



Hanwell washing hands at the borehole

WHH constructed the borehole at Kapesi primary school in 2020 under the Post Implementation Monitoring project. The project was funded by Krombacher. The borehole currently serves 1300 learners.

Breaking Stereotypes - Mapilisi's Journey to Championing WASH and Equality in Mangochi



By Henry Ngulinga

In many communities across the globe, sanitation and hygiene practices are seen as women's responsibilities. These deep-rooted cultural norms not only limit the roles of men in the household but also deny them the chance to contribute to a healthy, harmonious home. But in the heart of Mtonda Village, Mangochi district, one man's journey proved that breaking these stereotypes could lead to stronger families, healthier communities, and, most importantly, a better future for all.

Mapilisi Makalani, a 54-year-old father and husband, shattered the expectations placed upon him. His story is one of transformation, courage, and leadership, proving that true change starts with one individual's decision to challenge the status quo. Today, Mapilisi is not only a

Mapilisi helping his wife with household chores

champion of hygiene and gender equality, but a beacon of hope for communities striving for a better tomorrow in sanitation and hygiene.

Like many men in Mtonda, Mapilisi grew up with a rigid understanding of gender roles. Men worked outside, while women took care of the household. Household chores including cleaning, cooking, and managing waste, were solely women's work. For years, Mapilisi believed these chores were beneath men, so he stayed firmly within the confines of what was expected of him. But that all began to change when he took part in the Wali-Wali Clean Campaign, a hygiene behaviour-change initiative by WaterAid Malawi, a component of the Titukulane project.



Mapilisi is an advocate of change in his community

During the training, Mapilisi's worldview shifted. He learned that hygiene is not just about clean water or soap, it is also about shared responsibility. Both men and women play an equal role in keeping a clean, healthy, and safe household. He realized that true health, physical, emotional, and environmental, is built when all genders contribute equally. Inspired by this knowledge, Mapilisi took the first step in reshaping his family's future.

Empowered by the belief that health is a family's collective responsibility, Mapilisi began sharing household duties with his wife ranging from cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, and caring for the children among many others. His active involvement did not just ease his wife's burden, it strengthened their partnership. They no longer saw themselves as two individuals living under one roof, but they became equal partners, united in their mission to create a healthy, supportive home.

Mapilisi's commitment was not just personal, but transformational as well.

Despite mockery from peers, he stood firm. His actions were not only breaking stereotypes but also breaking barriers in his community. He began encouraging other men to take responsibility for household chores and hygiene, emphasizing that gender equality in the home leads to healthier families and stronger communities.

Mapilisi's leadership extended far beyond his home but was also elected a chairperson for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Male Champions. As a chairperson of the male champions in senior chief Chowe, he spearheaded workshops, outreach programs, and mentorship sessions aimed at educating men about the shared responsibility of household chores and hygiene practices. His efforts were not just about promoting gender equality but also about transforming how the community views issues of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

Mapilisi also played an integral role in the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), which is normally female-

dominated initiative. By encouraging male participation, he broke another barrier and proved that men, too, can play an active role in community development specifically in being members of the VSLAs. It is also there where Mapilisi preached on the need to make WASH equal to everyone.

The impact of Mapilisi's leadership has been profound. Over 78 men have been trained as male champions in the community, spreading the message that hygiene and sanitation are not women's work. They are everyone's responsibility. The shift in attitudes is clear, men who were once hesitant to help with hygiene and sanitation practices are now actively involved. They now understand that a clean home is not just about tidying up, but about protecting the health and well-being of their families.

The broader community is seeing healthier living conditions, stronger relationships, and a cultural shift toward gender equality. Pilira Miseleni is the Gender Coordinator for the Titukulane Project, and she says: "The Wali-Wali clean campaign has been a revelation. It has helped both men and women realize that hygiene is a shared responsibility. When all genders collaborate, we build healthier, stronger communities."



Mapilisi sweeping his compound

Today, Mapilisi's family is thriving. His relationship with his wife is stronger, his children have learned the power of equality and cooperation, and his community is healthier. His journey proves that one person, one decision to challenge tradition, can spark a revolution in WASH issues.

Mapilisi is a living example of the change that is needed to promote gender equality, especially in hygiene practices. It is also a reminder that change begins in our homes and that everyone has a role to play in ensuring a clean, healthy environment for our families. Mapilisi is a beacon of courage and leadership that can challenge norms and advocate for shared responsibilities in WASH to build a world where every home is clean, every person is healthy, and every family thrives



Mapilisi sweeping his compound



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