

PARTNERPLAN

Linus Malu - Malawi September 2021

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Dear Friends,

Thank you for your prayers and support. I am delighted to report that our work has almost returned to normal. We now run our full office programmes and activities in almost all our main areas of work. We have also started a project on early marriage, which will run till next year. Though there are still concerns that the vaccination programme is not reaching many people, the number of cases is increasingly dropping, which gives hope that the future is bright for the country. However, we still keep most of the preventive measures in the office.

Resumption of the Prison Visitation Project

The prison visitation project was conceived in 2018. In 2019 we received an approval from the head office of Malawi Prisons Service. The project could not take off fully as planned because of the 2019 post-election demonstrations, and the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in 2021 we re-started the project. The aim of the project is to assist those on remand to access justice. We visit the Mzuzu prison once a week, and bring the plight of some of those on remand in prison to the attention of relevant offices (the court, the police, the Legal Aid, and the Office of Public Prosecutor).

Developments in the Scholarship Programme



I am happy to report that three girls in our scholarship programme will graduate from High School this year. The girls are: Mzilahowa Rose, Chiumia Ruth, and Nkolongo Grace Msongwe. In 2020, five girls graduated from the programme: Dyna Nkoma, Sabina Mkandawire, Naomi Msissa and Queen Mchelenje, and Maggi Chiwanga. We are currently recruiting new intakes for the programme for next year. I visited the school in July to see how



the current students are preparing for their Malawi School Certificate Examination and to interview some of the incoming students. We expect to have six-eight girls in the programme next year. The overarching objective of the programme is to prevent early marriage by encouraging young girls to complete secondary school. Through the project, we hope to contribute to the campaign against early marriage in practical ways. The project identifies vulnerable girls who are orphans or very poor, and are interested in continuing their education, and assists them to develop their career.

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Database of Cases



We are re-designing our database of cases to make it functional. In 2018 we created a database of all cases reported to our offices. The database contains information on the number of cases reported to us, the names of the parties, how the case was resolved, and the officer that resolved the case. In 2021 we are upgrading the database to an electronic database. Each staff at our Mzuzu office can register his/her cases directly in the electronic database. Besides the database, we still have manual registers of cases.

Early Marriage Project



We have a new project on early marriage. The project examines the problem of early marriage in Northern Malawi, and will make recommendations on how to reduce cases of early marriage in the country. Presently it consists of four components: survey, consultations with stakeholders, payment of court fees for early marriage cases, and public awareness programmes. Malawi has an endemic child marriage problem: the country has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world with a rating of 12th highest prevalence. The national demographic and health survey of Malawi shows that 47% of girls are married before the age of 18, and almost 1 in 10 are married before their 15th birthday. The main causes of early marriage in Malawi are: poverty, early pregnancy, lack of education or job opportunities for girls, and some customary practices that encourage early marriage. Early marriage in most cases impacts negatively on

girls' development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation. It could also result in interruption of schooling, thereby reducing their chances of career and vocational development. There are also links between early marriage and gender-based violence: girls that marry early are prone to gender-based violence. In most cases, they are subjected to serious abuses by their husbands because of their age, limited financial capacity and little or no education.

Cases in Court

We currently have forty-nine cases in court. The cases are on gender-based violence, labour, tort, child maintenance and contract. In 2021, we are focusing on processing cases already in courts, by ensuring that these cases are diligently prosecuted. We have continued to pay for some of the court related fees for some of the clients who cannot pay for them and who have urgent need to access the court. As part of the early marriage prevention project, we are devoting time to early marriage cases. We have created a new database for our early marriage cases, and will process more early marriage cases during the duration of the project.

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Thank you very much for your prayers. Please pray for us on the following points:

1. For humanity and all victims of COVID 19, and those experiencing difficult times because of the pandemic.
2. For a successful vaccination programme in Malawi.
3. For our clients, many of whom have limited access to justice, so that the government will provide more windows of justice to them.
4. For victims of gender-based violence and trafficking in persons.

Sincerely,
Linus