

DEDZA SERVICE CENTRE, MALAWI

A PROFILE OF OUR WORK IN 2019

THE CONTEXT

Malawi is a largely agricultural country, making efforts to overcome decades of underdevelopment. Most Malawians rely on subsistence farming, but food supply is inconsistent and the country is prone to natural disasters of both extremes - from drought to heavy rainfalls. Children are especially vulnerable in Malawi, and suffer from a lack of basic services. A dismal 2% of children are registered when they are born, reflecting the lack of government support for its people. Girls are especially vulnerable: approximately 90% of girls will start the first grade of primary school, but only 40% will start the first grade of secondary school, and only 10% will remain. This is partly due to 50% of girls being married by age 18, and 35% giving birth by the same age. Health care is a serious challenge in Malawi. The country has the fifth highest rate in the world of people living with HIV, and 48% of children in Malawi suffer from stunted growth due to malnutrition.



THE TEAM

Royie – Coordinator
 Violet – Field Coordinator
 Prince – Bookkeeper
 Tanazio – Field Coordinator
 Butwell – Field Coordinator
 Richard – Field Coordinator
 Symon – Field Coordinator / Projects Coordinator
 Ivy – Field Coordinator
 Sara – Service Centre Support

DEVELOPING THE SERVICE CENTRE TEAM

In 2019, several new challenges confronted the Dedza Service Centre (SC) team. Alongside their work of engaging and mobilising the local church to care for the most vulnerable, the SC team also supported two of their largest Community Based Organisations (CBO) who were each caring for 200 children, to divide into separate Care Points to serve children living close by. The Dedza SC now support six CBOs. Additionally, a major challenge was the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai, which hit south-eastern Africa in mid-March. Though it did not directly hit Malawi, a massive amount of rainfall came in its wake and caused widespread damage to homes and crops. The Dedza SC team have spent much time in 2019 assessing home structures and repairing or even completely rebuilding homes which were most badly damaged.

In 2019, several training opportunities were given to the Dedza SC team. Beginning in January, four members of the team - Royie, Violet, Prince and Symon, travelled to neighbouring Zambia to join other SC teams and hear the Hands at Work Watchword. This guiding scripture was then revisited every week during Watchword study times. The Watchword in Zambia was then followed by the first Hands at Work Bible School where George Snyman delved deep into the structure, themes and message of the Bible. In March, field and projects coordinator Symon travelled to Mozambique to join a diverse group of African leaders for training, with a variety of 'Hands' topics discussed, including discipleship, kingdom culture and how we care for the most vulnerable. In October, Royie, Violet, Symon, Richard and Tanazio were also part of the annual gathering of leaders in Zambia where 2019 was reviewed and celebrated, and plans for 2020 made.

Royie and his team have also grown in their technical and skills capacity in 2019. Richard has undertaken motorbike lessons and gained a license to enable easier access to visit communities, and Tanazio has developed key skills in supporting local Care Workers with Income Generation Activities in their communities. Lastly, the property in Dedza from which the SC are based has seen a couple of renovations and upgrades, including a new garage door installed to create an enclosed storage space, as well as new blankets for the bedrooms where visiting teams and partners stay.

DEVELOPING LIFE CENTRES

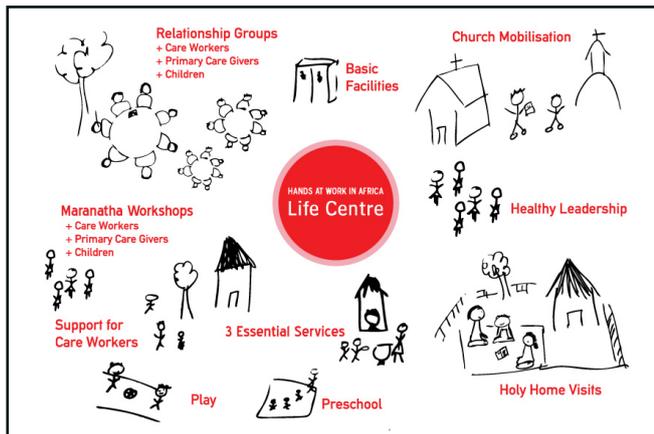
800 CHILDREN
CARED FOR
IN 2018



850
CHILDREN
CARED FOR
IN 2019



6
COMMUNITY BASED
ORGANISATIONS



Key areas of Life Centre growth for the Dedza SC in 2019:

Pre-school: In all the CBOs supported by the Dedza SC, a pre-school is functioning and going well. The pre-school teachers have been equipped with basic supplies and run simple programs for children aged under five years.

Relationship Groups: Weekly Relationship Groups (RG) take place in most of the CBOs being supported by Dedza. The SC facilitates many of these, with the goal to raise up RG champions who will be able to facilitate and support their own groups.

Healthy Leadership: The Dedza SC provide consistent support for their CBO coordinators and acknowledge their humility and servant leadership. One example seen in 2019 of healthy leadership was in Maonde. The previous coordinator confessed to an extra-marital affair and was asked to step down by the wider group of Care Workers. After he confessed and sought forgiveness, he was welcomed back as a Care Worker, with Loveness stepping up as the new coordinator, and doing very well in this role.



Non-negotiables of Providing Food Security

A key focus for Hands at Work in 2019 was caring for the holistic healthcare needs amongst the children. Hands at Work recognised that due to the dysfunction in the communities, together with generational cultural norms, even fundamental principles of health and hygiene were not always being followed.

Successes in 2019:

The Dedza SC have made significant progress in implementing the nine non-negotiables of food security. In 2019, they have ensured that all six of their communities have access to rubbish pits, that dishes are washed with hot water, and that the Care Workers never run out of food needed for the children each day. Food portions are of a good size and vitamin powder is being used consistently to ensure the children have access to the right vitamins and minerals in their meals. Regular deworming is also happening consistently across the six communities being supported by the Dedza SC.

Focus areas for 2020:

In 2020, the Dedza SC will focus on ensuring that the vitamin powder used in the communities is monitored and replenished in a timely way, to prevent gaps in the children receiving this with their daily meals. Although toilets are present in each community, several are 'temporary' and in need of being replaced with facilities that are stronger and safer for the children, as well as more hygienic.

Making it Personal in 2019

Across Hands at Work, reaching the most vulnerable children must be a deeply personal commitment for each leader. Inspiring highlights from 2019 included:

Adopting Children as Our Own: Tanazio and his Care Worker wife, Chisomo, have made personal commitments to reaching and caring for the most vulnerable. Together with their own two young children, they have also taken in a young girl who lost her parents and are committed to raising her as their own daughter.

Deny our own culture: The Dedza SC team share that this is a very difficult commitment for them, and that there is still growth to happen. However, they also want to lead by example, particularly in the role that men play within the community. In several of the CBOs, men now play key leadership roles, but not in title only. Men have begun bathing children who come to the Life Centre, and help in story-telling to these precious children. Though seemingly small acts, they challenge a culture around them and encourage holistic care for the most vulnerable.

Run towards the problem: When Butwell and Prince heard of a young girl from the community of Chinku who had been trafficked across the border into Mozambique, they followed her and brought her back home to her family.



ENGAGING AND EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

The Local Church: The local church in Dedza supports the work of Hands by providing volunteer Care Workers from amongst their congregations to serve the most vulnerable. Additionally, three Care Points; Mphunzi, Fosa and Chinku main are operated out of local church buildings and there are toilet facilities also accessible to the CBO. However, beyond this support are under-mobilised local churches with very little involvement in the day to day running of the CBO. This will be a key focus for the Dedza SC team in 2020.

The Church on the Hill: The SC team have engaged with a Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Dedza who donate soap, sugar and maize to the Life Centre in Mngwere. Additionally, the Sunrise Academy School in Dedza often go to the community of Maonde to pray with the children and have donated clothing.

The International Church: In 2019, the Dedza SC hosted 6 partner teams from Canada, South Africa, Germany and the US, including 2 Nurses for Africa teams providing healthcare to Mpata and Chinku communities. The impact of the International Church was felt strongly by the Dedza SC team in 2019. The Grace Alameda team from the US brought deep spiritual investment to the Care Workers in Mcheneke, praying and worshipping together. One particular highlight for the Dedza SC team was this team encouraging the children to pray for their Care Workers!

The Sinani team from South Africa were able to visit many homes of those badly affected by the rains following Cyclone Idai and helped to mould bricks for home rebuilds. This display of unity in a time of great challenge was a real example to the Dedza SC team and to the wider community of Maonde.
