

PARTNERPLAN

Linus Malu - Malawi March 2021

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Dear Friends,

Greetings from Malawi. Thank you for your prayers and support for our work. Things are looking relatively good in Malawi. The country has recently started reporting fewer cases of COVID 19 per day. Like most countries in Africa, Malawi commenced its vaccination programme with the arrival of the vaccine in March. However, mass vaccination will not start soon because the country only received 360,000 doses, which will probably be reserved for the elderly and healthcare workers.

Impact of COVID 19 on our Work in 2021

Like in 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic is having a negative impact on our work in 2021. The “second wave” of the pandemic started in Malawi in December 2020, and by January 2021 the number of new cases was rising very rapidly. The government announced new protective measures to combat it. At the office, we took more stringent measures to protect ourselves while we continued to provide our core services. In 2020, we received over 800 clients in our offices. We expect to receive a similar number of clients in 2021.

School Programme and Early Marriage

Our school project that provides scholarships to teenage girls who are prone to early marriage reached a landmark late last year. Five of the girls in the programme graduated from different schools. Maggi Chiwanga graduated with an intermediate diploma from Mzuzu Technical College. She had earlier graduated from Kavuzi Community Secondary School in 2018 and spent another one year at Mzuzu Technical College earning a diploma in community development. The other girls that graduated from High School are, Dyna Nkoma, Sabina Mkandawire, Naomi Msissa and Queen Mchelenje.



The objective of the programme is to prevent early marriage by encouraging young girls to complete secondary school. The project pays school fees and boarding fees for the girls, buys school materials for them, and provides mentoring assistance. The project was started in 2015 at Kavuzi Community Day Secondary School. The initiators of the project believe that girls should be encouraged to attend school, and not lured out of school. Through the project, we hope to contribute to the campaign against early marriage in practical ways. The project identifies vulnerable girls of 14 and 17 years who are orphans or very poor and are interested in continuing their education, and helps them with career development.

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Mediation Services in 2019 and 2020.

The Church and Society Programme between January 2019 and October 2020 mediated 1,202 cases. The total number of cases in 2019 is 450 while in 2020 we had 752 cases. The main reason for the increase in the number cases mediated in 2020 is the COVID 19 pandemic. The cases mediated by the office during this period are employment disputes, GBV, land cases, tort and contract. In 2019, a total of 450 cases were mediated, and out of this number, 123 (23%), are GBV cases or GBV related cases, including physical, sexual and psychological violence. 271(60%) are employment disputes, mostly workers that alleged they were unjustly dismissed, workers who were paid wages below the government minimum wage, those who did not receive terminal benefits, and employers who defaulted in the payment of wages. It also includes reports by employers of different types of conducts by employees, such as stealing, abscondment from duty and poor performance.

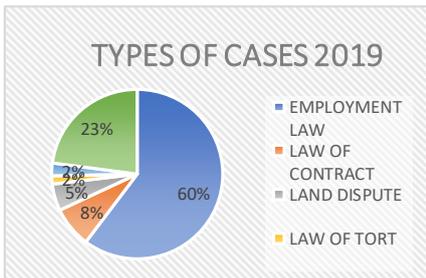


Figure 1: Total number of cases mediated in 2019

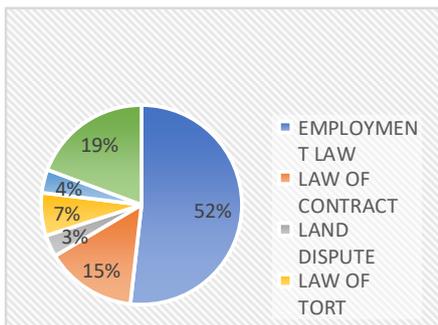
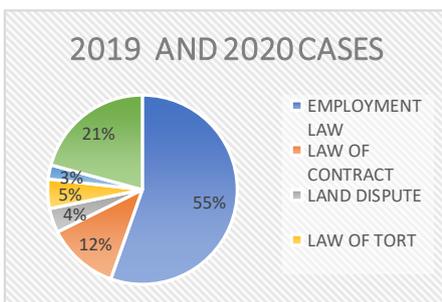


Figure 2: Total number of cases mediated in 2020



The Department also mediated 23 (5%) land cases, including property grabbing, defined here as forceful takeover of lands that belong to other people. During this period, 35 (8%) contract disputes were reported to the office, mostly breach of business contracts. There were also 7 (2%) cases of civil wrongs(tort) reported and mediated by the office, mostly negligence and nuisance.

In 2020, as shown in Figure 2 below, the office mediated 752 cases, and out of this number, 395 are employment disputes (52%), 112 are breach of contract cases (15%), 27 (4%) are land disputes, 53(7%) cases are civil wrongs(tort), 18(3%) are criminal matters that were referred to the police, or already with the police, while 147(19%) are GBV cases.

In 2019 and 2020, the office mediated six hundred and sixty-six employment cases representing fifty five percent of all cases in the two years. Also, the office mediated two hundred and fifty GBV cases within this period representing twenty one percent of all cases mediated by our office. Another category of cases that were reported to the office were contract, which means all types of contract except marriage and land contracts. The common type is commercial contract. We mediated one hundred and forty-seven of such cases, representing twelve percent of cases in 2019 and 2020. Civil wrongs(tort) were also common, as sixty of such cases were mediated, accounting for five percent of cases, while fifty land disputes were mediated accounting for four percent of all cases. Twenty-nine criminal cases, representing three percent were reported to the police.

Cases in Court

In 2021, we are focusing on processing cases already in court, by ensuring that these cases are diligently prosecuted. We have also sent some cases to our partner lawyer for assistance. We have continued to pay for some of the court related fees for some clients who cannot pay for them and who have urgent need to access the court. We currently have forty-seven cases in court. The cases are on gender-based violence, tort, child maintenance,

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contract, and employment disputes. Employment disputes remain the main issues we take to court in 2021.

Gender Based Violence Programme

Gender-based violence is a big problem in northern Malawi. Thus, combating GBV is an important aspect of our work. We prevent and combat GBV through mediation of GBV disputes, public enlightenment in communities, participation in the programmes of the “One Stop Center”, research, publication of our booklet, and helping victims to access the court. In 2019 and 2020 we mediated 250 GBV cases representing twenty one percent of all cases mediated by our office. As shown in figure 4 the common types of GBV cases mediated in 2019 and 2020 were: defilement 7(3%) physical assault 39 (16%), abandonment 88(33%), forced divorce 6 (2%), abduction 3 (1%), child neglect 8 (3%), eviction 14 (6%) property grabbing 9(4%), wife grabbing 1(1%), separation 2 (1.1%) and refusal to provide maintenance fund 78 (31%).



The 2021 booklet on preventing and managing gender-based violence is now ready. The first edition was published in December, 2018. This edition focuses on two districts of northern Malawi we did not cover in the first edition, and also discusses other GBV problems we did not cover in our first edition. In 2019 we visited Chitipa and Likoma and held awareness programmes on GBV and also conducted surveys on GBV. The reports of these awareness programmes and surveys are included in this new edition of the booklet.

Thank you very much for your prayers. In the following weeks, please pray for us on the following points:

1. For the government and people of Malawi for courage and God's grace in the fight against COVID 19 in the country.
2. For those on the frontlines in the fight against COVID 19 in the world.
3. For humanity and all victims of COVID 19, and those experiencing difficult times because of the pandemic.
4. For a successful vaccination programme in Malawi.

Sincerely,

Linus