

## PARTNERPLAN

# Linus Malu - Malawi March 2022

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Dear Friends,

I am delighted to report that we started 2022 on a good note. Thank you for prayers, support and friendship. We hope to continue to serve our clients with diligence in 2022, and to continue to provide legal services, mediation, and counselling to needy Malawians. We will also conduct research and undertake advocacy campaigns on early marriage.

### Karonga Office of Church and Society Programme



The Church and Society Programme has three offices in northern Malawi: Mzuzu, Karonga and Kavuzi. I have my office at the Synod office in Mzuzu but worked from the Karonga office on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021. I visited the office to work and encourage our officers there, and to assess the state of the office. The Karonga office is located at the CCAP Synod office in the town with two officers attached to it. They do similar things as other staff at the head office, which is to assist Malawians to seek justice. Thus, they provide para legal advice, assist clients to access the courts, mediate cases, conduct research, and undertake advocacy campaigns on human rights. The main areas of strength of the office are mediation, paralegal advice and community advocacy. During my visit, I held capacity building meetings with members of

staff, discussed some of the cases in court, and assessed the state of the office. Some of the major challenges of the office are: inadequate office space, and limited funds for basic office equipment/needs (photocopying, stationery, transportation, etc). Karonga is an old border town in northern Malawi with a population of about 61,000. It is known for its beaches (Lake Malawi) and trade, particularly between Malawi and Tanzania. The town's museum has interesting exhibits depicting its history, culture and archaeological finds of dinosaur and hominid bones. In 2022, we will continue to build the capacity of members of staff at the office and promote access to justice and human rights in the area.

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## Database of Cases

We started 2022 with a new database of cases, marking the beginning of the process of digitalising our work. The new legal database of cases has most of the cases that were reported to our office from 2018 to date. 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. Each staff at our Mzuzu office can register his/her cases

directly at both the manual register and the electronic database. The electronic database will promote record keeping, and help to ensure that our clients have access to high standard of justice.

## Early Marriage Project

The new project on early marriage has successfully started. Hopefully we will be able to execute all components of the project before the end of 2022. 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. The survey was done in June 2021, while other segments of the project are in progress. Malawi has an endemic child marriage problem with one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.

## Cases in Court

Assisting indigent persons to access the court is one of our priorities for several reasons. The first is the high rates of gender-based violence, and labour rights violations. Other reasons are that there are few lawyers in the northern region of Malawi with a population of more than two million people, and the high cost of litigation in the country. In 2022 we will continue to assist needy persons to access the court. In 2021, we focused on processing cases already in courts, by ensuring that these cases are diligently completed. We have continued to pay for some of the court related fees for some clients who cannot pay the fees, but have urgent and compelling need to access the court. As at January, 2022 the number of cases filed in court by our office is one hundred and twenty-seven. Sixty-four of the cases have been decided while sixty-three are pending.

## New Booklet on Gender Based Violence

We have completed our booklet on "Preventing and Managing Gender Based Violence in Northern Malawi". The 100-page booklet examines the problems of gender-based violence in northern Malawi from different perspectives. The booklet is the second by the Church and Society Programme. The first was published in 2018 and focused on GBV in three districts of northern Malawi. This second edition focuses on GBV in two districts: Likoma and Chitipa. It is part of the advocacy programme of Church and Society Programme on GBV, which is supported by Church of Scotland.

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

- For humanity and all victims of COVID 19, and those experiencing difficult times because of the pandemic.
- For the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian for God's guidance in its work and evangelism.
- For our clients, many of whom have limited access to justice, so that the government will provide more windows of justice to them.
- For victims of early marriage and gender-based violence.

Sincerely,  
Linus