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Linus Malu - Malawi October 2019

Church & Society Programme
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia
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Dear Friends in Scotland,

Warm greetings from Mzuzu, Malawi. Thank you very much for your prayers and support. In my last letter, I mentioned that national elections were held in May, 2019 in Malawi. The result of the presidential election was not accepted by the two main opposition parties. The case is currently before the constitutional court of Malawi. Also, post-election demonstrations are held occasionally to demand the resignations of the chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission. The elections are gone but the ripples created by the elections are not. Please, continue to remember the people of Malawi in your prayers during this post-election time.

In mid-2019 we started campaigns against early marriage in Malawi. Malawi has endemic child marriage problem, which has deep roots in cultural practices and poverty. The national demographic and health survey of Malawi shows that 47% of girls are married before the age of 18, and almost one in 10 are married before their 15th birthday. About 7 percent of women aged 25-49 have given birth by age 15, while 65 percent have become mothers by age 20.



In May we held an awareness programme on the dangers of early marriage and pregnancy at Chigwere, northern Malawi. Staff of legal department visited Mgonapasi primary school, Chigwere, Nkhata Bay district. In 2019, six pupils of the school were forced to leave school and forced to get married. The head teacher alerted us about the problem and invited us to campaign against it in the community. A team of three people from the Church and Society Programme visited the school, and spoke to members of the school management committee, parents, teachers, pupils and community elders, and encouraged them to resist the

pressure of sending their children to marry early before the legal age of marriage, and to report all cases of early marriage to the police or village heads. About 35 people attended the programme.

Also in June this year a staff of legal department responded to a call from the head teacher of another school to help rescue a girl who was allegedly taken away by a suitor. The 13 year old girl was allegedly taken away while she was in class by her suitor. Our staff was able to hold a meeting with village elders and the police on how to rescue the girl, prevent a repeat, and combat early marriage in the community.

In my last letter, I mentioned that we have a scholarship programme which is financed by the Church of Scotland. The central objective of the scholarship programme is to assist girls that have high risk of being victims of early marriage to continue their education. We have eight girls who are benefiting from the programme. Seven of the girls are at two High schools (Kavuzi CDSS, and Masasa CDSS). We visited Kavuzi CDSS last month and presented materials worth about £556 to

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six girls. Some of items presented are: complete set of school uniforms, school shoes, mathematical sets, scientific calculators, solar lamps, and note books. We also paid £208 for school and boarding fees for six girls at Kavuzi CDSS.



One of the girls graduated from Kavuzi CDSS in 2018 and has progressed to Mzuzu Technical College for a certificate course in community development. We paid her school fee for the one year course, examination fee for her examination in December 2019, and bought some materials for her. She is expected to graduate in June, 2020.

With your support we have continued our campaign against gender based violence (GBV) and human trafficking in northern Malawi. Despite commendable efforts from the government of Malawi, international/local NGOs and community leaders these related problems are still prevalent



in Malawi. This year we campaigned against these vices at Rumbi, Likoma, and Chitipa (all are districts in northern Malawi). On each stop we met local leaders, women groups and youths, and implored them to form local groups against the two social problems. We also listen to their stories and recommendations on how to combat them.

In order to understand the root causes of these two social problems, we conducted surveys on human trafficking and GBV in the three districts. We spoke to over 1500 respondents in Likoma, Rumbi and Chitipa and sought to know the causes of these problems, the

nature and scope of each of the problems and their recommendations on how to reduce the problems.

I mentioned in my last letter that we had a training programme for our Village Savings and Loan Association members. The Group was formed in late 2018 to promote savings/business culture amongst some victims of gender based violence in Mzuzu. In May, we disbursed a total of £1500



to eight members of the Group as loans, which will be repaid with ten percent interest within eight months. The objective of the project is to support victims of gender based violence to establish sustainable business ventures. The project is supported by the Church of Scotland through St Colm fund. I am delighted that most of the women are doing very well in their business, and have seen substantial transformation in their lives. All of them are now able and capable of taking care of their immediate problems. In September, we added three more women to the group, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to eleven (11). We disbursed the sum of £800 to the new beneficiaries.

In July this year, the Church of Scotland supported a training programme for seven staff of Church and Society Programme. We invited two lawyers from Malawi who taught them family law, criminal procedure, civil procedure, and legal drafting.

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In October, Simon Crabb, an advocate from Scotland visited us and trained about twenty staff of Church and Society Programme. He taught the following core human rights modules: rights of children, gender based violence, human trafficking, and international human rights law. He was sponsored by the Church of Scotland to visit Malawi.

Late last year we completed our booklet on gender based violence in northern Malawi. This year we are producing two booklets. One on human trafficking in northern Malawi, and the other on gender based violence. The objective of the booklets is to document the state of gender based violence and human trafficking in northern Malawi, and what the Church and Society Programme has done to combat the problems in Malawi. We hope that policy makers will implement some of the recommendations.



I also mentioned in my last letter that we have received authorisation to work with inmates in Mzuzu prison. I am happy to report that the project has started. A staff of Legal Department visits Mzuzu prison once a week. Our main objective is to help pre-trial

detainees secure bail and have their cases speedily heard. We will seek to facilitate access to justice for inmates of the Mzuzu prison, and hopefully, other prisons in northern Malawi, by linking them to appropriate government institutions, such as the Office of the DPP and the Legal Aid Bureau.



In October, we also organised some events to mark the international day for peace in Malawi. These events are a public lecture on the challenges of peace and the rule of law delivered by Simon Crabb, a panel discussion on peace building in Malawi, and an art exhibition on peace, titled "Art for Peace". The events were sponsored by the Church of Scotland and the Church and Society Programme of the CCAP.

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

1. For a successful democratic/electoral process in Malawi.
2. For peace and reconciliation in Malawi.
3. For the numerous victims of gender based violence in Malawi.
4. For all our clients at Church and Society Programme who do not have access to justice, that the government will provide more mechanisms for them to access justice.

Thanks very much for your support,
Linus