

DISABILITY PROJECT PROGRAMME JANUARY 2021 REPORT

DISABILITY PROJECTS PROGRAMME REPORT 2020 Including Disability Transport and Special Educational Needs

1. The Disability Transport Programme

is a Project that Starfish is doing in conjunction with Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), a Government Agency that is responsible for disability programmes. Twice a year they conduct assessments at the Salima District Hospital for those with disabilities, to find the best way of helping them. This will be through different medical and procedures and operations done at Bette Cure in Blantyre and at Kamuzu Central Hospital in Lilongwe, the Capital of Malawi.

Starfish is helping those with disabilities, mainly children, by giving them transport money to go to their referred Hospital from Salima. For some this will include a chaperone as well. To date we assisted 35 clients from different localities in Salima. Before Starfish became involved, many people were not able to visit the hospitals due to lack of financial support and therefore were not able to have their operations. Starfish has become a bridge between the clients and the health facilities. Starfish depends on funds from their supporters for this to continue to happen.

Effects of COVID-19

In 2020, the programme was badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the following ways;

- The restrictions on public transport
- Limiting numbers of people visiting health facilities caused disabled patients to have to wait for space, as hospitals were busy attending to patients who needed urgent attention.
- Starfish took the decision to pause the programme to avoid unnecessary risk of infection on non-urgent surgery cases.



Photo 1. Peter Kauma before the hospital visit.

Photo 2. Peter Kauma after the procedure

Here are two examples of how the programme helped people in 2019.

Harriet is a young girl aged 12 years from Chipuza Village in Salima. She was involved in a fire accident and her arm suffered serious burns, so much so, that the hospital had to amputate almost half the thumb and the second and third fingers became bent. She was assessed and referred to Cure Hospital to straighten the fingers.

After the surgery, her mother said, "God sent Starfish to rescue me and my child because she couldn't manage to find money for transport to Cure Hospital in Blantyre. God should bless the well-wishers who gave the money that people are using to visit the hospitals". The following photos show Harriet before and after surgery.



Before



After

Ishmael is a 12-year-old boy from Kafandikhale Village in Salima who had his first two fingers of his right hand stuck together and a wide gap between the other fingers. Due to this condition, he was referred to Cure Hospital in Blantyre to reconstruct and separate his fingers.

The procedure has now been done and his mother said, "She is very happy that her child is well, and the operation was successful as she had deep concerns of the outcome. She then thanked those who contributed the funds for her child to go to Cure for the help he received".

The following photos show Ishmael before and after surgery.



Before



After

The Future Plans.

- The plan for 2021 is to prioritise the assistance of those who failed to attend hospital for surgery in the past year. This will depend on the availability of funds.
- MACOHA will conduct a new assessment for the programme in March and it will start making referrals in April 2021. This means the number of clients to be assisted could increase, as many did not receive their operations and medical procedures last year.

2. The Special Educational Needs Project

Is twofold. Starfish Malawi remain committed to enhance the welfare and education of those children who have disabilities which do not enable them to achieve well in mainstream education due to several issues, one of which is the large class sizes in Malawian schools, which does not allow the teacher to assist disabled children with more one to one teaching.

- a. Starfish have formed a partnership with the Kudimba Foundation who run a special educational needs centre for vulnerable children and young adults in Lifuwu, Salima in 2019. It was set up by a Belgian volunteer, Maaïke Bruynooghe, who also set up Kunyumba Trust, a day care Centre for vulnerable children in Senga Bay in 2008. Their core values are “normalisation and socialisation”. We wish to help them to develop this centre so that it can meet the educational needs of disabled children. They are currently seeking to increase the staff numbers, refurbish the centre and equip their staff office with better equipment. Starfish hope to raise funds to help with this.
- b. One of the future plans that Starfish had was to construct a special needs educational resource centre near to their Glad Tidings Orphan Care Centre. We have been so delighted that Michael Jackson’s Legacy who support the orchard at Ngolowindo, advised us last year that they wished to raise the funds to construct this centre. It is now going to be a reality with building work starting in April/May this year. This will mean that there will be a two classroom block, office and storeroom constructed near to the GTOC building and only a few minutes walk away from Ngolowindo primary school.