

EVERLAND SPECIAL NEEDS CENTRE ANNUAL **REPORT 2023**

BACKGROUND

The Everland Special Needs Centre helps children with different educational needs (disabilities) to attain education. Ever since the Resource Centre opened its doors in February 2022 it has been offering pre-school activities which are aimed at preparing children with diverse educational needs (special needs) and various physical and mental disabilities, to mix well with other children at in the mainstream when transferred there.

The Resource Centre is dedicated to Michael Jackson for his tireless pursuit of healing our world, starting with children, and uniting people through love, compassion and entertainment.

His legacy of love will continue to be felt in Malawi by the children with different disabilities who will use the facilities and be educated at the centre. The Centre accommodates children from 6 to 16 years old and so far, the centre has 12 children of which 7 are girls and 5 are boys.

The Centre has three qualified teachers, one female teacher and two male teachers. The classes start at 8am, then at 10.30am the children eat porridge provided by the school and afterwards they are transported to their respective homes by the minibus.

The Resource Centre is very important to the children as it helps them to attain equal education as they need extra help with schooling. The teachers at the Resource Centre choose suitable ways to help each child learn. The Everland Special Needs Centre has been helpful to families that are in the area of Chief Ngolowindo and further afield.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The impact of the Everland Special Needs Centre has increased and in the 2023 eight learners were promoted to the mainstream primary school of which 5 are boys and 3 are girls. They are still receiving assistance from the programme.

Learners who were promoted to the mainstream primary school have been welcomed by teachers and they are now co-existing with their fellow learners. No learners have been sent back from the mainstream primary school. They are now able to read and write. However, two learners, who are unable to write because of their conditions, are able to give correct answers at the mainstream orally.

Teachers at the mainstream school have also noticed that children that were on the programme at Everland are able to cope up with classroom environment in the mainstream, compared to those, with learning difficulties and disabilities, that were unable to attend lessons at Everlands Resource Centre.

We have seen a commitment from parents, as there is now a reduced rate of the previous absenteeism. Parents prepare the children for school in good time and some take the children to school themselves – especially when the bus is late or it is engaged with other duties.

A teacher's house is under construction at the resource centre, window frames have been installed, floor laid and it is to be completed soon.



Teachers house on the right, under construction at Everland

NEW RESOURCES PROVIDED

Starfish provided the Resource Centre some teaching and learning resources. These included toys, soap, toilet papers, buckets and basins. These items will be of great help at the resource centre as they will make teaching easier and they will also promote hygiene.



Everland teacher with some students after receiving materials from Starfish.

We also received learning and teaching materials from the Chisombezi Deaf and Blind Centre, Salima, inclusive Education Project. These materials were given to the mainstream to support teachers who come from the Everland Resource Centre. Some of the materials include paper charts, glue, Pentel markers - just to mention a few.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

In the table below are some of the challenges that are faced at the resource centre and we are tackling these to find solutions.

CHALLENGES	HOW WE ARE TACKLING THEM TO FIND SOLUTIONS
Lack of Knowledge by the mainstream teachers to handle learners (for example learners who have hearing problems)	Right now, one of the teachers from the resource centre visits the mainstream to help the students but there is need to conduct an in-service training with support from Starfish for teachers at the mainstream.
Absenteeism - because of the distance from home to where the bus picks up and drops some students before and after school.	Parents have been advised to provide alternative transport for their children to a place where the bus picks up and drops them. At present some children are not picked up from home as they live a long distance away. Great consideration needs to be given to these children who need to be conveyed to and from their homes. They come from a long distance but there is need to consider that such learners be picked up and dropped at their homes.
Lack of assessment tools (hearing and vision tools)	Observation is used, but there is need to get tools that teachers will use to assess such disabilities

What difference are we making?

Clara Kathabwalika, is the only child in her family and she is 10 years old. Clara was born with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and it has never been easy for her parents to raise her. Clara would run away from home and break anything with which she came into contact with.

Jacob Kathabwalika, Clara`s father explains how the resource centre has made a difference in his daughter's life.

“Raising Clara has never been easy especially when it comes to education as no school would accept her saying she is violent to other children even teachers That is when we made a decision that she will never go back to school. But this decision changed when my wife was informed by her friend about Everland. Clara has been attending Everland for 2 years now. A lot has changed as she is no longer violent, she is able to stay in one place, do house chores like cleaning the dishes, arrange things properly and she can even dance!”,



shared Jacob - with a smile on his face.

He went on to say that they will be happy if Clara will make it to the mainstream primary school in the next academic year. As Jacob explained,

“The only challenge that we face right now is transportation from Mafco, where we stay, to Mafco turn off where the bus picks and drops Clara. It is about 8kms, and we pay 25,000 kwacha per month for a motorcycle to pick and drop her there which is a challenge to us. But we are thankful to Starfish for the wonderful work that it is doing in helping children with disabilities and also providing transportation to school and food at school for them. We are also thankful to Clara’s teachers for their love and positive attitude towards Clara and her classmates which encourages the children to go to school.”

Story of Prince Enock.

Prince Enock is the second born in a family of 3. He was born deaf-mute. His parents divorced when he was 5 years old and now, he is 7 years old.

Fatima Immran, Prince’s mother shares his story.

“My first born who is 12 years old was also born deaf-mute, having 2 children with such disabilities has been a huge challenge to me being a single mother as I was unable to communicate with them through sign language as I do not know much about it. People used to mock me that my children will never get educated like me because of their disabilities, I gave up on my 1st born and I sent him to the village.

When I moved to Ngolowindo I came to know about Everland. I enrolled Prince at the school in September 2023.

I was surprised when I received the news from his teacher that he has been promoted to the mainstream and now he is in standard 1. He was just at the school for a few months. Now I am a happy mother knowing that Prince will be educated and he will bring to shame all that used to look down on us. I pray that Prince will in the future finally make it to university,”

shared Prince’s mother.



Prince and his Mother.