

EVERLAND SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE CENTRE, 2022

ANNUAL REPORT

Background

This 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 disabilities who will be educated in this centre.

Often children with special needs do not get an adequate education in Malawi for they can be discriminated against and neglected in the mainstream class due to lack of teaching staff with specialist training. In general the experience in Malawi is that children with disabilities are often hidden from society, locked up in their rooms, not well cared for, and not allowed to go to school to avoid the embarrassment of the family. Furthermore when they go to school, they may not be assisted by teachers - with their difficulty of writing and reading they are left alone to do things by themselves. Often as a result such children don't like going to school and they drop out of education early on.

In contrast the Everland Resource Centre opened its doors on 8th February 2022 to target special needs children from 6-16 years old. This facility aims to help students with behavioural problems, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities to gain quality education.

The centre has two staff members – teachers, Cecelia Mwaluwayo and Jamphry Piringu.



Everland Special Resource Centre Children

Update on progress

Everland Resource Centre received a minibus designated to help transport students who would otherwise find travelling on public transport really difficult. Most of the children at Everland use wheelchairs and have to be pushed by someone in the morning and after school back to their respective homes which can be a great burden on the carers. However, with the help of the

school bus, every child is picked up in the morning from a stage near their home and dropped off at their homes after school.

James Ma'nganda is now employed by Starfish as a full-time driver for the Everland Resource Centre to drive the new minibus. This avoids the inconveniences of sharing the Hope Clinic ambulance which they were having to do – sometimes patients had to be kept on hold as the children were dropped off.



Everland Resource Centre School bus



James Ma`nganda, Everland Resource Centre Bus Driver

The impact attending the centre has had on the students can be demonstrated clearly - children that came in and couldn't speak, move properly, write etc are now able to sound out and write letters and are more active in class where they can participate in learning with their friends. Furthermore, there has been a drastic change in behaviour – some of the children displayed aggressive behaviour with one another and threw things around the classroom, but now they can calmly sit down in a classroom and learn without any sense of fear. Clare Kathabwalika in particular was biting her friends when she first came in to the centre but now a few months later she's calm and listening attentively, following instructions and no longer aggressive in class.

This is her story...

Clara was born on 21st September 2013 at Mzuzu Hospital twinned with a boy.

When they were born her brother was underweight and had to be put in an incubator. After some time, Clare started losing weight too despite being the healthier one at the beginning.

“My name is Rose Kathabwalika and I am Clare’s mum. She started walking late - 2 years and 5 months and she couldn’t respond to her name. Each time I went to the hospital they told me she’s okay and nothing was wrong with her and in time she will bounce back. Yet each time I placed an object in front of her, she was unable to identify it or even sound out any letters.

One day some missionaries from Belgium came to Mzuzu Hospital and they sent me to St John of God where she attended and got better. However she kept spitting and punching her friends. Then when my husband got transferred to the Malawi Armed Forces College, the teacher at the local primary school there went to complain to the Headteacher that she cannot teach a child of her condition.

A few days later I got a call from the Headteacher and was told to immediately come and pick up my daughter. When I asked why, he said such children of her condition cannot be taught at the school, rather I needed to find another school for her. I was devastated to hear this but eventually, a friend introduced me to Everland Resource Centre and I can testify to say my child is well-behaved now, she doesn't fight or throw things around anymore, thank you Starfish. To people that have disabled children, let's not isolate them from their friends, love them regardless and avoid questioning God for his actions", she shared.



Clare Kathabwalika with her mother

Some children have progressed from Everland Resource Centre to Ngolowindo Primary School due to their significant improvement shown in their assessments at the centre as follows:

Name	Old class	New Class
Florence Yasini	Standard 3	Standard 4
Bayina Bilali	Standard 2	Standard 5
Ibrahim Refa	Standard 1	Standard 2

New Resources

There has been a cholera outbreak in Malawi related to poor food hygiene, lack of safe water, and low latrine coverage and usage. Records show that cholera deaths were registered in the local community even by those attending health facilities because of delays in admission and treatment.

Ngolowindo village is a highly populated area and there was a need to put measures to prevent the spread of Cholera to children at Everland such as bars of soap and buckets of water to be used each time they use the bathroom. This also prevents other diseases being spread.



Water bucket and Soap provided to Everland Resource Centre

Various learning resources were given to the teachers of Everland such as pencils and lined exercise books for children to practice writing on. This has assisted the children practice how to hold a pencil as well as learn to write letters in straight lines and to construct sentences by themselves without the help of an adult.



Exercise books and pencils given to Everland children.

Overcoming the challenges

Some of the challenges the resource centre are facing are shortage of staff members. So far the centre has 2 full-time staff members from Ngolowindo Primary School. When the centre opened these were enough staff to run the centre but now as more parents are seeing the importance of sending their children to the centre, the number has increased and 2 staff members are now inadequate to run the centre.

To tackle this issue Starfish Malawi has requested Ngolowindo Primary School Headteacher Mr Jacob Mwasiya to allocate more special needs teachers to the centre, we are now awaiting a response from the school.

Another challenge that the resource centre is facing is the mobility of some of the children around the school. Some of the children that don't have wheelchairs have to sit in class in isolation and wait until playtime is over for their friends to come back in class. This has affected them psychologically as it only reminds them of their disability. With more wheelchairs being provided every child can have a right to play.

Everland Resource Centre teacher

Jamphry Piringu, Everland Resource Centre teacher



Jamphry Piringu, an Everland Resource Centre teacher shared, “When I started working with Everland Resource Centre I used to get angry at the children because of their behaviour - some used to spit on me and throw things at me, but with time I learnt to understand them and have patience. Being a special needs teacher has taught me to love regardless, for we are all God's children and created in his image.

I've had to become a caretaker to some of the children but am proud of my job, many teachers in Malawi don't train to become special needs teachers because they think it's too much work, I can agree, but it's the most beautiful job in the world.

Being a part of a child's journey from a time they could read, speak or hold a pencil in their hands to a time when they can sound out words is the most amazing job anyone can do. Everland Resource Centre has impacted a lot of children across Ngolowindo community as many more parents are now seeing the importance of sending their children to school. Also the help of the Everland minibus has made it easier for parents who live in distant locations to send their child to school without any difficulties of transportation.

I am proud to be a special needs teacher and thank you Starfish for an impacting initiative.”