

EVERLAND SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE CENTRE MID **YEAR REPORT 2022**

Background

Everland Resource Centre opened its doors on 8th February 2022 to special needs children from 6-16 years old, now totaling 17.

Special needs centres are established to help students with behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities to get quality education. Special needs children do not get an adequate education in Malawi, as they are usually discriminated against and not encouraged to attend the local schools due to mobility issues, ability to focus and understanding.

Often in Malawi children with disabilities tend to be hidden from society, sometimes locked up in their rooms, not well cared for, and not allowed to go to school to avoid the embarrassment of the family. Furthermore, at school they are usually left unassisted by teachers who are already coping with very poor teacher-student ratios. As a result most children with special needs do not attend school at all and disabled children in the Ngolowindo area had no opportunities to learn.

Therefore, the Everlands Resource Centre based at the Glad Tidings location was opened and 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 at the centre.

The centre has 2 staff members, Cecelia Mwaluwayo and Hanipher Pilingu.



Everland Special Resource Centre

Update on Progress

Although the Centre started operating in January 2022, it wasn't officially opened until 8th February 2022, which involved the Salima District Council, the District Education Manager, and the community of Ngolowindo. Since this official opening, more people have been made aware of this resource and have responded positively by bringing their children to learn. The children

are collected from their homes (or a nearby point if the Starfish ambulance is not able to gain access) and then taken home at the end of the school day.

Now that more people are aware of the centre, Starfish Malawi hopes that people living in the community of Ngolowindo will be able to see the importance of sending their children to school, even with a disability – we believe that everyone deserves education no matter what their limitations are.

Now more students are being enrolled at the centre and children are finding it a very positive and welcoming experience – very different to previous - which is reflected in the excellent attendance rates.

Most of the children when they first came to the centre did not know how to behave appropriately and frequently were fighting, swearing and throwing tantrums.

However, after a period of learning at the Everlands Centre, such behaviours have significantly reduced. Thus, not only are the children learning to read and write, but also improve in their social skills whereby they will be more readily accepted by their families and communities.

Resources

The students at the Everland Special Needs Centre received adjustable shoes and schools bags from Starfish CEO, Chris Knott and Starfish trustee, Peter Bell during their visit to Malawi. The children were so happy to receive these and this brought a real sense of love and appreciation as it is rare for them to receive gifts.



Centre after receiving bags and shoes

Other resources provided on the first day of opening were games, crayons, balls, charts, mattresses, mats.

Response from the Community

The community of Ngolowindo has responded very positively and frequently parents are bringing new children to be registered, having observed its impact. The centre first registered 6 children, now 5 months later they have 17 children. The minimum enrolment age is 6 years in Malawi therefore many are waiting to enrol their young children.



Due to there being only 2 teachers, the centre can only cater for a maximum of 25 children to maintain the standards of education currently being achieved.

The parents are very relieved and have more time to do other things such as income generation business, etc., which again makes a difference to the children's quality of life.

What difference are we making?



“My name is **Cecelia Mwaluwayo**, a special needs teacher at Everland Special Needs Resource Centre at Ngolowindo. Most people think my job is difficult, well it is, but I love my job. The good thing about working as a special needs teacher is making a difference in someone’s life. Having the privilege of seeing a child improve in their skills, whether be it mentally or physically is the best feeling anyone can ever experience.

I feel proud that every day I can wake up and come to work, for I thought that I wouldn't manage, considering the children’s conditions. But now am happy that our children are learning different skills every day. Some of the children who began with us had no speech yet are now able to murmur a few words. Some that were unable to hold a pen to write a single letter are now able to hold a pen firmly and scribble a few words. It's heart-melting to see a smile on a child's face and be able to see the child improve in learning, I wouldn't ask for a better job.

Knowing that these children rely on you to keep them safe, to educate, feed, and take care of them at school is good - some of them have had traumatic memories of teachers beating them and being discriminated against by other adults and children at school.”

“My name is **Iyana Banali** and I thank God for Starfish Malawi in establishing the beautiful Special Needs Resource Centre, Everland. My child Yakini Twain never used to be able to sound out letters, actually, he never used to speak at all and he would isolate himself not wanting to play with other children as he was having difficulty in speech. Ever since he started going to the Everland Resource Centre he’s been more than happy to play with his friends and is making an effort in learning how to speak. When he comes back from school, he tries to share what he has learned in class, though it's still not very clear, yet I am still proud that he's making an effort in speaking.



With the help of the resource centre, he received a wheelchair, which as a family we had been unable to afford. So now we can take him to the market and educate him on different fruits and vegetables as he loves learning about the different foods displayed at the market. Also, he can now move around the house more easily and we don’t have to carry him all the time.

I thank God for Starfish’s ambulance that comes to pick him up every morning and drop him back after school. I used to carry him on my back and walk for a long distance to the school and later in the day go and pick him up in the afternoon. Honestly this was very hard for me, especially in the days when I wasn't feeling well, I still had to make an effort and pick him up.”



“My name is **Samuda Soumaila** and I am a single parent, a mother of 6 children - 5 girls and 1 boy. My husband left for South Africa in 2003 and has been out of the country since then. He used to send me money for the first few months for child support but then he disappeared. I tried to reach out to his family but they shun me and didn’t want to help me raise the children.

I was finding it hard to go and do business in the market as well as take care of my daughter at home, as a result, some of the elder kids had to drop out of school to take care of their sister while I was working. Now that my child goes to the Everland Resource Centre I’ve been able to go back to my business of selling tomatoes in the market, knowing my child is being taken care of by well-trained teachers. The rest of my children have also been able to get back in to school. Esther has received different items from the centre such as a bag, shoes and books which she has been using at home every day, I am glad that my child is now eager to learn, despite her condition.”

The 17 Registered Children at the Centre

| Name | Sex | Age | Disability |
|------------------------|--------|-----|--------------------------------|
| Umali Sabiti | Male | 9 | Learning, speech and ADHD |
| Masautso Steven | Male | 11 | Learning, speech and epilepsy |
| Raphael Thokozan | Male | 11 | Speech and epilepsy |
| Ngaule Adam | Female | 8 | Speech and epilepsy |
| Baina Binali | Female | 12 | Downs Syndrome |
| Sulaya Chikhandakhanda | Female | 13 | Learning and speech |
| Ivy Fredrick | Female | 8 | Learning, physical and speech |
| Hamida Life | Female | 14 | Learning and physical |
| Sadiya Ngola | Female | 13 | Learning, dyspraxia and speech |
| Hawa Suwani | Female | 15 | Learning, speech and epilepsy |
| Florence Yasini | Female | 14 | Speech and deaf |
| Faith Kaliwo | Female | 13 | Downs Syndrome |
| Yakini Twaibu | Male | 6 | Learning, physical and speech |
| Shamima Wisiki | Female | 15 | Learning, physical and speech |
| Maimuna Mwamadi | Female | 10 | Learning and physical |
| Ibrahim Lifa | Male | 10 | Poor vision |
| Rahim Ibrahim | Male | 12 | Learning, speech and epilepsy |