

Gateway Report July 2020

From 2015 until now, Starfish Malawi continues the production and distribution of sanitary kits to girls in primary and some secondary schools in Salima, Lilongwe and Kasungu. We are very much encouraged by the progress of the Gateway programme over the years. It has been wonderful to see that the kits are not only improving attendance, but also increasing the confidence of girls when they are in school during their periods. We have also seen women in our sewing groups improving their own sewing skills and are now sewing other items to sell to increase their income. Furthermore, our programme has also provided training for other organisations across Malawi.

Production Update

From 2016 to date, 10,284 kits have been produced by our 10 sewing groups in Salima and Kasungu.

Glad Tidings Orphan Care Sewing Group



“I am Mrs Khudze from the Glad Tidings Orphan Care sewing group. I joined this group back in 2015 to sew Gateway sanitary kits. Since I joined the group, my life has changed in different ways. Firstly, I learned how to sew, a thing I never thought I could do in life. As well as sanitary kits, I have learnt how to sew school uniforms, face masks etc. Secondly, the money I get from sewing the Gateway kits has helped me to pay for my son’s school fees and buy some basic needs for home. During the past farming season, I bought bags of fertilizer with the money and it brought me a high yield of maize. I am very grateful to Starfish for introducing this programme, it has really opened my eyes.”

Left: Mrs Khudze, a member of GTOC women sewing group

Distribution Update

From 2016 to date, 8281 kits have been distributed to more than 75 schools. Through the use of the Gateway kits, many girls are now able to concentrate more and feel more confident to interact with both boys and male teachers during their periods. School records show that there is less absence amongst girls due to the provision of kits and there is also a strong indication that exam performance amongst girls has improved.

Case Studies

Right: Fyness Khombe “Sometimes I could stay at home for seven days during my period”



Yambe Primary is a school we distributed the Gateway kits to. In attendance were 42 girls from standard 4 to 7. Here, as we have found in other schools, the girls used old pieces of clothes, making it difficult for the girls to stay in school as most of them didn't feel comfortable to be around boys and male teachers. Most of the girls preferred staying at home during their period - some of them for seven days or more.



Jessie Kabisa is among the girls who received the kits 2016 at Kaputu Primary school when she was in standard 8. She told us her story in the February 2017 report. She was a brilliant girl in her junior classes but her good performance started going down when she started her periods in standard 7 and had no protection. After receiving the kit, Jessie was always in school and worked hard, she was then selected to go to a National Secondary School. Jessie is now in form 3; she said she is proud to say her Gateway kit contributed to her good performance in school and she's confident that she will achieve her goal of becoming a Medical Doctor one day.

Left: Jessie Kabisa, "I am proud to say the kit has contributed to my good performance in school"

Chikowa Primary School

Mrs Mwale is a member of the Mother Group at Chikowa Primary School; this is the group of women that oversee the welfare of girls at this school. She explained that this group was formed after the concerns from teachers that girls were unreasonably absent from school. When they gathered the girls, they found out that the main reason was menstruation. The other reasons mentioned were having to remain at home to do household chores, farming, and parents lacking an interest/understanding in education. The mother group then decided to start contributing money monthly to buy disposable sanitary for the girls in school. They started doing it but it didn't help much because these pads were only given to girls when they start their periods at school, therefore they had nothing to use when they went back home and this made them absent the following days. It was also difficult for some women to contribute money for the sanitary pads as their families couldn't afford. With this regard, the programme did not go well and the girls continued to be absent from school during their periods. After they received the kits in June 2019, the mother group and the teachers noticed a change, most girls were always in school and their performance improved. They are thankful to Starfish for coming to their rescue.



Right: Mrs Mwale, member of the Mother Group at Chikowa. "We are thankful to Starfish for coming to our rescue."

Girl's absence records from some of the schools where Gateway kits were distributed

Girl's absenteeism records were collected from some of the schools where the Gateway kits were distributed. The results show a reduced rate of absence which indicates that the kits have significantly made a positive impact. See the results below:

Girl's Absence Record for Kaphirintiwa CDSS School.

Std	Girls Absent per month (before kits)	Girls Absent per month (after kits June 2020)
1	28	11
2	22	10
3	15	9
4	25	6
Total	90	40

At Kaphirintiwa Community Day Secondary School, Gateway kits were distributed in May 2019 and in June 2020 absence records were obtained. These figures reflected the reduction - 50 less girls absent per month after the Gateway distribution, representing a 55.6% decrease in absenteeism.

Girl's Absence Record for Chikowa Primary School.

Std	Girls Absent per month (before kits)	Girls Absent/month (after kits Jan 2019)
4	5	1
5	13	4
6	15	5
7	20	6
8	23	9
Total	76	25

Gateway kits were distributed in May 2019 and in June 2020 absence records were obtained. The figures had dropped with 51 less girls' absent days per month after the Gateway distribution, representing 67.1% decrease in absenteeism.

Girl's Absence Record for Chibwira Primary School.

Std	Girls Absent per month (before kits)	Girls Absent/month (after kits Jan 2019)
4	7	3
5	15	2
6	31	12
7	28	10
8	19	6
Total	101	33

Gateway kits were distributed in May 2019 and in June 2020 absence records were obtained. The figures had dropped with 68 less girls' absent days per month after the Gateway distribution, representing 67.3% decrease in absenteeism.

Response to COVID-19

Sadly, the Gateway project has had to be put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Distribution and production of sanitary kits were suspended in March 2020 due to the closure of schools and the ban of public gatherings by the government to contain the spread of the virus.

However, The Glad Tidings sewing group are now focusing on making face masks and have produced almost 5000 which are being distributed to children and adults in the community and also to health workers running the outreach clinics.

Left: Women producing face masks at the Glad Tidings Sewing Group



Right: Health Staff member, Felix Achekatakazuwa and guardian using the face masks given at the Glad Tidings Centre Clinic



Left: Local children provided with face masks made by the Glad Tidings Sewing Group



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