

REPORT ON THE ORCHARD PROGRAMME 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Earth Child Ngolowindo Orchard Programme is an initiative by Starfish Malawi and funded by Michael Jackson's Legacy that was established to have a space where fruits will be cultivated and nurtured to provide nutritional value and supplements to the children learning at the Glad Tidings Orphan Care (GTOC). The centre comprises four nursery schools with toddlers of varied age groups from the surrounding communities at different levels, under the care and management of Starfish Malawi, and the target population of the kids who access the Orchard stands approximately at 150.



The signpost at the Orchard the gardener, with Richard Gavanala.

PROGRESS OF THE PROGRAMME

The Orchard has a variety of trees namely Mango, Guava, and Banana that continue to flourish. There were also Granadillas present but were removed since the place they were planted is where Hope Clinic Maternity stands now. However, a single tree has survived on the far end, which is not enough and so additions are needed. Richard Gavanala has expressed the desire to replant them because he believes there are gaps prevalent in the orchard which would be ideal for other fruits.

He also wishes to have a Sukari variety of Bananas planted to supplement those that are available, as these are a sweet type and scarce. He is currently sourcing the Sukari young suckers. There is also the desire to plant vegetables when the rainy season is over, to add to the list of fruits in the Orchard.



Guava fruit contains nutrients including Vitamin C and Potassium which support the heart, digestion, and other body systems. These trees are doing well in the Orchard.

BENEFITS OF THE ORCHARD PROGRAMME

Fruits are vital to human health and that is why they are listed among the six food groups required for daily consumption in Malawi. The fruits contain vitamins A (Beta-carotene, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Magnesium, Zinc, Phosphorous and Folic acids which are also essential to children's development.

The Orchard provides these for the children at GTOC and the surrounding communities. The nutritional values that the fruits bring will continue to assist in their health, well-being and growth. The orchard further assist parents in providing balanced diets to their children, since fruits are one of the 6 food groups required to be taken per day as recommended by the health authorities in Malawi.



Other fruits available in the Orchard are Mangoes and they are prevalent for the nutritional value of the children at GTOC.

CHALLENGES

The Orchard has faced challenges too over the previous year. One such is the plucking of the fruits by intruders including children on Sundays since there is no one at the site, as the gardener is usually off duty. They break through the garden fence and pluck fruits without consent, especially guavas. The breaking of the fence also gives opportunity for animals like goats and cattle to enter through and graze.

Right now the fence is under renovation to mitigate this problem.

"I am happy now that the garden fence is being renovated which will make it difficult for encroachers to pluck the fruits unwarranted. It will also help in nurturing the vegetables we are planning to cultivate,"

said **Richard Gavanala**.