

SPONSORSHIP MID - YEAR 2021 REPORT

Background

In 2005, Starfish introduced Secondary School Sponsorship in the Salima and Kasungu districts in Malawi. The programme aims to help students who are orphans and those living in extreme poverty. These students would not have been able to attend secondary school without this support. During the first five years, only a few students were sponsored.

In 2009 a U.K Sponsorship Officer was appointed and together with an assistant they shared the need with churches and various groups. Thanks to the amazing response of kind, caring and committed people the work grew through the years and today our UK Sponsorship Team of three and the team in Malawi work together to ensure that the Sponsorship Programme brings opportunity and change in the lives of our students.

We are indebted to our wonderful sponsors, who give so faithfully, providing financial support, friendship, and encouragement to promising students. Without their commitment secondary education would be an impossible dream for these less privileged young people.

Update on Progress

Currently we have about **155 students** being sponsored in different secondary schools and about 34 students in different universities and colleges in the country. At first, the sponsorship was only limited to students in the secondary school, but now we have had students continuing their studies in Universities, Colleges, and Vocational Training. Some are now serving their country in the government and NGO sectors. We keep a list of ex-students many of whom have gone onto becoming teachers and nurses.

Students are given pocket money and transport to school. They are also provided with a mosquito net, torch light, scientific calculators, English dictionaries, and the girls are also given the GATEWAY sanitary kit and pants.

Stories from Students

Meet Lakina Milanzi, a first year student at Mzuzu University. She was sponsored through secondary school by Starfish. This is what Lakina had to say on how Starfish sponsorship has helped her,

Lakina Milanzi from Mzuzu University



“Sponsorship has helped me a great deal. Just the fact that I am here at Mzuzu University pursuing an honours degree in Optometry is all thanks to the scholarship.

My journey as a beneficiary of Starfish scholarship programme started way back in 2015 in the month of October when I was at the verge of dropping out of schools due to failure to pay school fees.

My sponsors through Starfish came into my life like angels sent from above. Through this scholarship I managed to complete my secondary school education without financial struggles. This helped me to maintain a stress free mind which contributed to my better MSCE results. Not just that, the youth week camps that

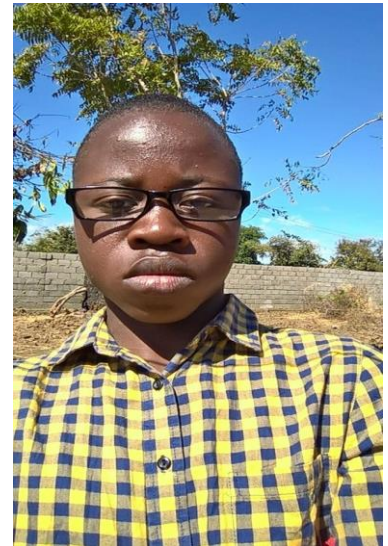
Starfish organises every year made me a wise, confident and disciplined young woman with integrity.

I’m able to stand for my rights now because this scholarship gave me a voice by educating me and teaching me how to handle different aspects of life. I’m grateful to my Sponsors and Starfish for great the work done to me.”

Gracious Yona from Loyola Jesuit Secondary School.

Meet Gracious Yona, a form four student at Loyola Jesuit Secondary School. He is being sponsored by Starfish. This is what Gracious had to say on how Starfish sponsorship is making a difference in his life,

“There are a lot of ways through which sponsorship has manifested significant changes in my life. It has improved the concentration I have in my studies. This has been achieved through the career talks during the youth week camps and the encouragements during students’ meetings every term. Through these programmes, I have realised who I am and the place I take up in the world of careers and dreams.



Sponsorship has also helped me not to worry of being sent home for lack of school fees.

Lastly, Sponsorship has connected me to my amazing sponsor - it feels good to communicate with through letters. All in all, I am thankful for the opportunity given to me.”

COVID 19 IMPACT.

COVID-19 has put on hold some activities that Starfish organises for the students.

After the closure of each term we hold a Students' Meeting where we encourage, advise and interact with our students.

However, due to COVID-19, we are unable to hold such meetings. Also, once every year we hold a Students' Week, where we invite persons of different professions to serve as motivational speakers and role models to our students. This has helped our students to work hard and aim high.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to provide this provision for two years due to the restrictions. Overall, school closures due to COVID-19 have brought significant disruption to education. Many of our sponsored students are struggling to catch up in their studies and many of the have sadly scored poor exam grades for the past two terms.

Conclusion

Starfish Sponsorship is doing a tremendous work in the lives of young girls and boys in different secondary schools and colleges in Malawi. Most of these students were disadvantaged for having no one to pay their school fees. Most of them could have dropped out of school and have their future shattered. Starfish continues to make great effort in finding new sponsors for these deserving children.