



GATEWAY ANNUAL 2022 REPORT

Background

Education is the key to success, and pursuing education is the best option to achieve one's goals in life. In making sure that everyone gets adequate education Starfish Malawi established a programme to distribute washable sanitary kits to young adolescent girls. Usually, a girl is absent in Malawi 4-5 days a month during their menses which totals up to 15 to 18 days per term because they cannot afford to buy sanitary pads for protection.

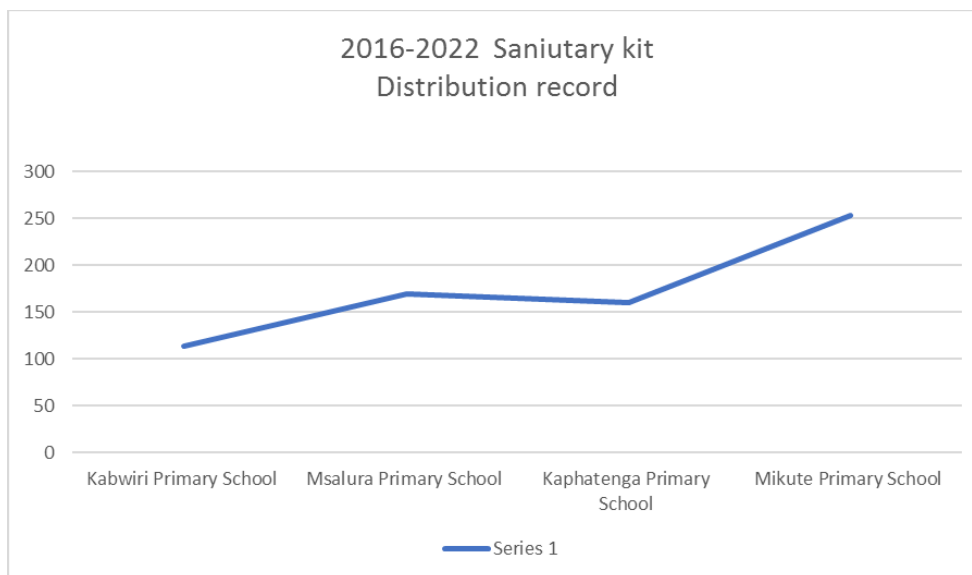
Not having sanitary supplies means days without school and not leaving their homes. It also means girls using unhealthy materials such as cloth, paper, leaves, mattress stuffing, corn cobs or anything they think can be used to manage the menses.

This affects the academic performance of these girls and eventually many drop out of school. GATEWAY provides girls with a reusable sanitary hygiene kit, which is a bag holding 2 sewn pad holders to fix into the pants, 5 cotton cloths, and 2 pairs of pants. This is to encourage the girls to continue to attend school during their period and ultimately complete their education.

Therefore the core activities that Gateway engages in are:

1. To establish and supply materials and payment to sewing groups which produce the kits in order to enable women to learn sewing skills, earn income and develop a spirit of independence.
2. To empower women and encourage gender equality by enabling girls to complete their education, despite physical and cultural barriers, through the provision of reusable sanitary hygiene kits.

The programme started in 2016 and 7 years down the line it has proven to be an effective intervention in helping young girls stay in school.



In 2016 Gateway distributed 160 sanitary kits to Kaphatenga Primary school and the number of girls receiving sanitary kits there has now increased to 253 girls.

The total number of girls that received sanitary kits in 2022 is 1314 and from 2016 to 2022 the program has distributed a total of 10,741 kits to girls in Primary Schools across the district of Salima.

Every week the programme coordinator Phyllis Banda visits schools across the District of Salima to distribute kits and ensure education is ongoing for all girls. Teachers usually volunteer in helping distribute the sanitary kits to students during the presentation by Phyllis.

During distribution at a school, girls are first told to write their names, and class for easy identification, and then a short career guidance talk is given to encourage and motivate girls to consider goals for their lives. After this activity, the distribution then begins with a brief explanation with instruction on how to use the items in the kit bag.

In a school where there are more than 30 adolescent girls in a class, the presentation is divided into two groups to ensure a better understanding of the use of the kits.

Update on Progress.

After a long break due to Covid-19 as groups were not allowed to meet together, all sewing groups will resume for production to continue as the stock had decreased. So in October 2022, production resumed and the first group to receive resources was Glad Tidings Orphan Care. Fortunately, the sewing group was given an ample supply and produced plenty and production will continue with the other sewing centres from January 2023 and distribution to schools will follow.



G.T.O.C sewing group receiving sewing materials

Kits Production Record

The number of kits produced since Gateway started

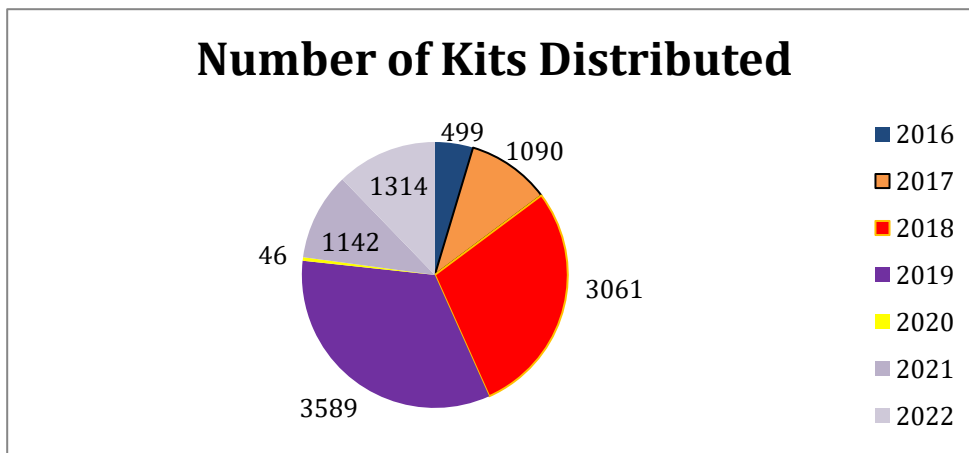
Year	Number of kits produced
2016	1168
2017	1428
2018	3700
2019	3240
2020	1500
2021	750
2022	1195

Lenia Chiweyo has been chairing the Glad Tidings sewing group since 2016, a group that started with 10 members and now has 14 active members.

She says, “Many ladies now have an interest in joining the sewing group looking at how much impact it has in the community. Ladies at the sewing group have also started a village bank to which everyone contributes a small amount of money each time they are paid. The money is kept to use for emergencies among the group such as funerals and in times of sickness.

I am very happy that the sewing group has started again, the time that we didn't have the group we used to rely on our volunteer allowance from our work with the children and nothing else, honestly life got a bit tough for us and we made sure that any money we got we should spend it wisely. However, now that the programme has resumed and we have extra money to use for our households, we are grateful to Starfish for starting the programme again. The sewing group not only helps us financially but also with our mental health.’

Kits distribution records



Since the programme started in 2016, the demand for sanitary kits has grown. Unfortunately, the pandemic disturbed things, the chart above shows a decrease in the distribution of sanitary kits in 2020 because schools were closed in March 2020 and only re-opened in March 2021, but we were able to resume in July 2021.

Although Gateway is considered to be a women’s programme there is one man in the GTOC sewing group, Peter Khudze, who joined in 2010 to help the ladies with cutting the materials to use when sewing sanitary kits. He is a tailor by profession and sews at home in his free time. When the programme started Lenia Chiweyo asked the Starfish Country Director if he could join the group and help with cutting materials such as pieces of cloth for bags, pockets, shields and waterproofs. This was agreed and he has been a great asset to the group due to his tailoring experience – cutting now takes half the time!



Peter Khudze

He shares, “The programme has helped me sustain my family for the past years, with any money that comes in after production, I use that money to pay for my children’s education and buy food for my household. The time the programme stopped due to the pandemic I struggled to sustain my household as I didn’t have an extra income. Thank you for bringing back the programme, this will help me in improving my tailoring skills and be able to sustain my family.”

New resources provided.

In October 2022 Starfish provided the Gateway program with the following sewing materials so that production of sewing should resume in all sewing groups.

Item	Quantity
Press buttons	1471
Pieces of cloth	6 boxes
Microfiber tea towels	7 boxes
Machine oil	1 litre
Thread	10
Needles	10
Waterproof protector	2 boxes

Impact of Gateway Program in Malawi - Absenteeism Records 2022

Kaphatenga Primary School

Absenteeism records of girls before receiving sanitary kits

Class	Number of pupils
Std 4	18
Std 5	29
Std 6	33
Std 7	27
Std 8	36

Absenteeism records of girls after receiving sanitary kits

Class	Number of pupils
Std 4	4
Std 5	3
Std 6	5
Std 7	4
Std 8	3

Kapiri Primary School

Absenteeism records of girls before and after receiving sanitary kits

Class	# Of girls 2021	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	# Of girls 2022	January	February	March	April	May	June
Std 8	21	3	5	3	4	3	5	6	2	3	1	4	3	19	2	2	1	1	1	2
Std 7	37	7	9	4	5	6	2	5	3	4	2	4	5	45	4	2	2	3	4	2
Std 6	48	6	8	3	9	11	3	4	7	5	6	9	4	52	4	3	6	9	1	3
Std 5	63	9	14	6	10	9	5	12	4	6	5	8	6	57	3	1	6	3	4	2
Std 4	82	15	12	9	8	14	6	5	11	9	5	4	16	88	7	6	9	4	3	5
Std 3	89	11	14	8	6	16	11	4	6	7	10	7	8	88	4	3	4	5	2	1
Total	340	62	62	33	42	59	32	36	33	34	29	36	42	349	24	17	28	25	15	15

This table indicates absenteeism records of girls at Kapiri Primary School for one academic calendar. It was in July 2021 when Gateway project coordinator went to distribute sanitary kits. The table indicates a decrease in the number of girls being absent from school after receiving the resources.

The Head Teacher at Kapiri Primary School shared, “Gateway project has been a success at Kapiri Primary School as most adolescent girls attend school every day despite being in their periods. The performance rate of girls has been seen to improve drastically based on the past PSLCE results where 18 girls out of 19 passed representing 94.7%. As they have reusable sanitary kits they no longer need to miss a class due to leakages from inadequate protection. The mother group at Kapiri Primary School has also benefitted from the programme as they were trained in sewing which has given them an opportunity not only to sew sanitary kits but also start small tailoring businesses in their own homes. This has given the women of Kapiri village a sense of independence.”



Mr. Msakatila, Head Teacher of Kapiri Primary School

Kabwiri Primary School



Kabwiri Primary School girls after receiving their sanitary kits

Absenteeism records of girls before receiving sanitary kits

Class	Number of pupils
Std 5	15
Std 6	20
Std 7	29
Std 8	9

Absenteeism records of girls after receiving sanitary kits

Class	Number of pupils
Std 5	7
Std 6	11
Std 7	19
Std 8	3

Life-impacting Stories from Kits Distribution

This is the story of Cynthia Gama born on 13/09/2008, a 14-year-old from T/A Ngolowindo in Salima who studies at Ngolowindo Primary School.

Phyllis writes, “In 2021 when I visited Ngolowindo Primary School to distribute sanitary kits, Cynthia was sick during the time I visited the school and unfortunately did not receive a sanitary kit. She reported to the Headteacher that she was sick and asked if he could inform Starfish of her absenteeism. However, the Headteacher failed to let us know so she continued living her life without a kit.

I caught up with her to see the difference in how life is like for a person who received a sanitary kit and a person who didn't receive a sanitary kit from Starfish.”

Cynthia shared with Phyllis, “I miss school days while on my period due to fear of discrimination from other students, am usually absent many days from school every cycle, not being able to have a sanitary kits made me stay at home during my menstrual days. I am uncomfortable attending school, doing household chores, or playing with my friends at that time. During my period days I use a cloth that I fold twice and place on my underwear to stop the leaks although this doesn't help on my heavy days. Also the disadvantage of wearing a piece of cloth is that it moves around.

When I stain my uniform, I leave the school campus and go home to clean up, the problem with going home though is that by the time am done cleaning up at home and ready to go back to school, I usually find that classes are finished and I find it hard to catch up with my lessons.” Thankfully, Lenia Chiweyo from GTOC met with Cynthia Gama at her home to give her a sanitary kit so that she can continue with her education without any disturbances.

Cynthia Banda a student at Ngolowindo primary school and Lenia Chiweyo



We look forward to working with young girls like Cynthia in 2023 and offering them much-needed support to continue their education.