

ORANT CHARITIES AFRICA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MONTHLY REPORT



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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ADC	-	Area Development Committee
AM	-	Area Mechanic
CBM	-	Community Based Management
CDSS	-	Community Day Secondary School
CONGOMA	-	Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi
DCT	-	District Coordination Team
EPA	-	Extension Planning Area
FEM	-	Financial Empowerment Microloan
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NGORA	-	Non-Governmental Organization Regulatory Authority
OCA	-	Orant Charities Africa
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
VSL	-	Village Savings and Loans
WASH	-	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WPC	-	Water Point Committees

Introduction

Orant Charities Africa (OCA) is a non-governmental organization serving in rural communities of Malawi. It was registered as an NGO in Malawi in 2014. OCA is registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act and also with both NGORA and CONGOMA regulatory authorities. OCA serves in Malawi through healthcare and implementing development programs. It operates in the following thematic areas; Healthcare, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Education, Agriculture, Business Development, and Energy and Environment. This monthly report outlines milestones from the month of April 2024 in our WASH program, Education, Agriculture and Business Development;

Water and Sanitation Program

Executive Summary

The primary aim of the WASH program in Kasese is to enhance public health by improving access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services, ultimately reducing illness and death rates. This is inline SDG number 6 of *Clean Water and Sanitation*. This initiative focuses on four main areas: ensuring water availability, maintaining and operating WASH facilities, promoting sanitation in communities and schools, and coordinating with stakeholders. In April, the program carried out various activities in line with these objectives. Thus, this report presents the progress made, starting with an overview, followed by a detailed account of achievements, and finally plans for next month.

Summary of Monthly Achievements

In April the following milestones were achieved;

- Supported **39** water point repairs (Service/preventive: **33**; major repairs: **6**)
- Community-Based Management (CBM) training for Mzaka Water Point Committee (WPC)
- Review Meetings with Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs)
- Review Meeting with Area Development Committee (ADC)
- School WASH Review Meeting with Teachers

The WASH program carried out the following key activities;

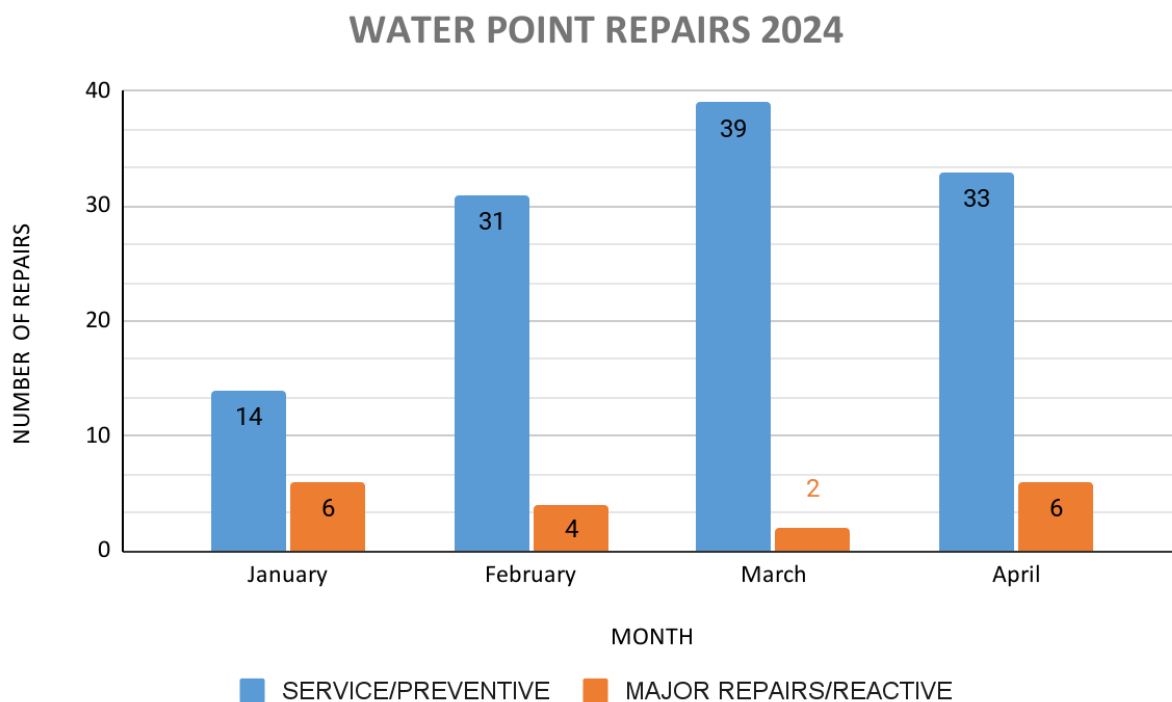
Water point/borehole repairs and rehabilitations



Left - Area Mechanic conducting preventive maintenance of Afridev pump in Shawa village during the month, Right- Preventive maintenance in Ntanda village

Water point repairs are one of the key activities for the WASH program. In this initiative, the WASH program conducts preventive and reactive maintenance of Afridev hand pumps. Preventive maintenance involves the routine monitoring and replacement of fast-wearing parts before a major breakdown of the hand pump. On the other hand, reactive maintenance involves the maintenance of the hand pump as a result of a breakdown. Reactive maintenance or major repairs are costly as compared to preventive maintenance. Therefore, the WASH program promotes preventive maintenance to avoid major reactive maintenance. In April, the program supported **33** preventive maintenance and **6** major repairs of water points. In total, the program supported repairs of **39** water points. From January to April 2024, the WASH program has repaired **18** out of the annual target of **58**.

Similarly, the program has serviced **117** water points out of the annual target of **300**.



Community-Based Management (CBM) training for Water Point Committees (WPCs)

The WASH program conducted one CBM training for Mzaka WPC. CBM training is meant to capacitate WPCs with borehole management skills which are key for the sustainability of water points. Mzaka CBM training was facilitated by OCA WASH program staff in collaboration with the Dowa district Water office, Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA), Community Development Assistant and Area Mechanics. In total 11 participants attended the training. The participants were trained in preventive maintenance of Afridev pumps, fundraising for water point maintenance, household water handling, sanitation, and hygiene. The water point in Mzaka was drilled in August 2024 by OCA and currently supplying potable water to approximately **250** people. Cumulatively, in 2024 the WASH program has trained 6 WPCs.



A Community Development Assistant (CDA) delivering a lesson on fundraising for borehole maintenance during Mzaka CBM training

Review Meetings with Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs)



The OCA WASH program Field Assistant delivering a speech during the review meeting with HSAs

During the month the program also conducted a review meeting with HSAs. HSAs are government extension workers and they help the WASH in the promotion of good sanitation and hygiene practices in the Kasese catchment area. The agenda for the review meeting was to discuss progress made by the WASH program in 2023 as well as review plans for 2024. In total **21** HSAs attended the meeting. During the review meeting, it was noticed that the Kasese catchment is still having

challenges with access to sanitation. This is more substantiated by data from the 2023 OCA house survey which indicates that only **68%** of households have access to basic latrines. With as low as **11%** of people in Kasese having access to hand washing facilities with soap and water. In response to this development, it was resolved that the HSAs together with the OCA WASH program should invite Chiefs from around the catchment for a sensitization campaign on sanitation. It is envisaged that the meeting with the Chiefs would lead to the development of bi-laws to govern the promotion of sanitation in the catchment area.

Review Meeting With Area Development Committee (ADC)

The WASH program conducted a review meeting with ADC for the Chakhadza area. ADCs are a local development forum which consists of representatives from villages around Chakhadza in which the WASH program operates. ADCs are responsible for appraising and proposing development in their catchment area. The ADC meeting was attended by over **30** participants from all over the catchment area. During the ADC meeting, the WASH program made a presentation on the 2023 program and 2024 implementation plans. During the meeting, it was noticed that the ADC for Chakhadza was a newly elected committee and was yet to be trained on how to carry out its duties.



OCA WASH Program Manager presenting the 2023 program report during the ADC meeting at Madisi Agricultural Hall

School WASH Review Meeting

Schools are among the key strategic entry points for the OCA WASH program in the promotion of good WASH practices in the Kasese catchment. It is a common belief that good practices and behaviour learned in schools can be easily practiced and adopted in homes. It is in line with this belief that OCA promotes sanitation in schools. More importantly, the promotion of sanitation creates a good and healthy learning environment for school-going children hence promoting access to quality education.

During the month, the WASH program organized a 1-day review meeting for school WASH stakeholders at Katalima Teachers' Development Centre (TDC). The meeting aimed to review the progress of WASH interventions in the past year and strategize new interventions for 2024. Headteachers and School Health and Nutrition (SHN) teachers from **10** schools around Kasese attended the meeting. Also in attendance during the meeting were representatives from the Dowa district water office, the SHN Coordinator from the Dowa district education Office and the Primary Education Advisor (PEA) for the Katalima education zone.

During the meeting, it was agreed that all schools should ensure that their water point committees have signed preventive maintenance contracts with Area Mechanics to ensure that their boreholes are being serviced regularly. It was also agreed that the WASH program will begin monitoring school sanitation clubs in the **5** primary schools around Kasese as a pilot which can be scaled up to other schools later in the year. Following the meeting, stakeholders expressed their gratitude for the interventions the WASH program is implementing in the schools.



Left - Cross-section of participants during the school WASH review meeting at Katalima TDC during the month, Right -A group photo of participants after the school WASH review meeting

Proposed Plans/Activities For May 2024

- Pump repairs and rehabilitations
- School WASH Review Meeting with teachers
- Review meeting with HSAs
- Review meeting with Area Mechanics
- Purchase and distribute AM tools
- Attending the Dowa WASH DSIP launch
- Sensitization meeting on sanitation
- Solar piped water schemes learning visit to Innovation Africa
- Visits to school WASH clubs
- Assessment of borehole drilling sites
- Borehole drilling and construction

Conclusion

The month of April was a big success for the WASH program as it can also be noted from the different activities conducted. April is the beginning of the second quarter of the WASH program implementation in 2024. The second quarter promises to be another busy period for the program with the impending borehole drilling season, latrine construction and the beginning of the solar piped water project.

Agriculture and Business

Agriculture Program

Executive Summary

Our Agriculture program responds to the following SDGs; SDG1- End poverty, SDG2 which is dedicated to ending hunger, improving food security and nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture, SDG 8 of Decent work and Economic growth. Farming is one of the important activities which builds the economy of Malawi. Smallholder farmers depend on farming to improve their economic status and feed their families. OCA supports smallholder farmers in



equipping them with knowledge on commercial farming. The activities are done in both irrigation and rainfed farming through provision of farm inputs as microloans and agriculture expertise. Some of the activities conducted during the reporting month have been explained below;

Agroecology farming

The OCA agroecology farm, which emphasizes sustainable and holistic practices, planted several crops, including maize, during the rainfed season. This production process has enhanced soil health through organic amendments and reduced chemical inputs. The plots were mulched using organic materials to retain soil moisture and regulate temperature. Cultural practices such as crop rotation, intercropping, and habitat management were implemented to reduce pest pressure. Maize production, relying on organic farming methods, has been successful on the agroecology farm. Practices such as reduced use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and increased use of manure and cultural techniques, have led to a good-quality maize harvest. This sustainable farming method ensures stable and reliable maize production, contributing to food security, and has reduced input costs by utilizing locally available, low-cost materials, thus increasing farm profitability. Additionally, fruits such as pawpaw are growing vigorously and will

soon reach peak harvesting. This type of farming can help alleviate economic challenges among smallholder farmers.



Good quality Maize from agroecology farm

Harvesting of Crops

As the rainy season comes to an end and crops begin to dry, harvesting has resumed for all crops cultivated on OCA farms. OCA and Mwayiwathu farm clubs have been harvesting maize, soya, and groundnuts. However, the growing season was affected by drought, which has compromised the quality and quantity of harvested crops due to stunted growth. Despite the drought, groundnuts were further impacted by a fungal disease known as Rosette, which struck during the late flowering stage, significantly affecting yields. The disease's severity was exacerbated by the lack of sufficient rains, which could have otherwise improved plant vigor. Currently, the harvesting program is ongoing and is expected to be completed by the end of next month. This year's crop yields are anticipated to be lower than last year's due to the combined effects of drought and disease.



Harvesting on OCA Farm

Postharvest Handling

Postharvest handling is crucial for maintaining quality, ensuring food safety, and reducing losses. During the harvest period, measures were taken to minimize physical damage, spoilage, and contamination of crops affected by drought. Proper drying, using sun-drying methods, was employed to reduce moisture content, preventing mold growth and spoilage. These processes are expected to increase the market value of the harvested crops.

Irrigation Clubs

To continue training smallholder farmers in commercial production, several activities took place during the reporting period to help farmers achieve higher profits. Irrigation clubs such as Ndalusa and Matchedza were involved in applying manure, fertilizers, and pesticides to boost harvest percentages. Other clubs, including Kambalani and Madzimayela, were engaged in advanced stages of land preparation. These processes have been beneficial to club members, promoting vigorous plant sprouting and ensuring good crop stands.



Good crop stand applied with manure

Program Meetings

A review meeting with lead farmers was conducted to assess the importance of the 2024 field day to the community and to identify areas for improvement for future field days. The 2024 field day was highly successful, providing farmers with the opportunity to learn new agricultural skills, such as agroecology farming. This inspired many attendees, offering solutions to smallholder farmers' challenges, such as the high cost of farm inputs.

Agroecology farming reduces this burden by enabling farmers to cultivate their staple crops using manure and cultural practices for pest and disease control.

During the field day, smallholder farmers expressed concerns about accessing reliable markets for their cash crops, such as soya and groundnuts. Establishing connections with local and regional markets to ensure fair prices for their produce was identified as a crucial need. Promoting value addition opportunities, such as producing peanut butter, was also seen as a solution to market challenges, enhancing the profitability of farm products.



Lead farmers attending field day review meeting

Crop Theft

Crop theft is a significant issue impacting agricultural productivity and farm profitability. Incidents of crop theft at the farm primarily occur during the night. Theft has been reported in various sections of the OCA farm, with high incidence in poorly lit areas. Maize, being a staple food with high market value, is the most affected crop. Currently, the farm has no fence and limited staff, leading to the employment of temporary laborers to provide security during the night until the harvest period is over. Theft poses challenges to farm operations, affecting productivity, profitability, and food security

Business and Financial Empowerment Microloans (FEM)

Executive Summary

The FEM program is under Business Development which is line with SDG number 8 and also SDG 5 of Gender Equality. In an effort to bridge the unemployment gap, the FEM program works to support women entrepreneurs with microloans and financial literacy as well as business classes. These efforts have been seen to directly and indirectly improve livelihoods of the program participants as well as the community as a whole.

To achieve the program goal of empowering women to become self reliant, a number of initiatives were carried out as outlined below;

Monitoring visits

The business landscape has not yet healed from the economic shocks that the country is undergoing. The dry spell that Malawi experienced has also significantly affected the women entrepreneurs. From the monitoring visits, it was learnt that over 40% of our women had invested in groundnuts, Soya and maize for commercial purposes but unfortunately they did not harvest as expected. Those running tea-rooms and baking businesses have also been affected by the scarcity of sugar which has resulted in price fluctuation for the available sugar on the market. A packet of sugar costs about MWK 2300 but with the scarcity, it is being sold at as high as MWK 4000. In retaliation to the increase in price of commodities, the women entrepreneurs had to adjust their price causing a demand decrease for their businesses hence making them go out of business or look for substitute businesses.



Picture 1 & 2 Some of the member from Kambaloni irrigation club and Ketrina, a member of Tamandanj with her sons on her business post

Group monitoring visits were conducted for the VS&L groups that were recently trained. The aim of these visits was to track progress on how they have started on their saving plan. Books for recording progress were also distributed to the groups that have managed to start and are doing well on their savings.



Pic 3 Florence, washing her customer's hair

Loan recovery

The aftermath of the current business landscape has been witnessed by the failure to repay loans by the women entrepreneurs. In the reporting month, we had managed to recover 36 percent of the required monthly installment of MWK 4.9 Million. It is worth noting that the women entrepreneurs are working hard so that they complete their balances in due course. For Takondwa, Tithandizane and Tamandani are expected to wrap up the loan period in May whereas Tikondane and Tiyanjane will finish repayment in September, 2024.

Village Savings and Loan groups

Weekly VSL meetings continue to take place on a monthly basis for all the FEM groups. Aside from helping the women entrepreneurs in making weekly savings, the meetings have also contributed in keeping track of loan repayments and helping the women in maintaining businesses. During the meetings, women entrepreneurs are able to share their business experiences, record their sales revenues and profits realized for the week.

Loan installments settled are also recorded which helps those that have not yet paid to be on their toes so as not to inconvenience other members who are doing quite well.

Umodzi Village Business manual (UVBM)

The UVBM is a business manual designed to build the capacity of women entrepreneurs in the Kasese catchment area and beyond. Since the production of the first folio, eighty copies of the manual have been printed awaiting to be distributed to women entrepreneurs. OCA plans to distribute the manual copies to educate masses on good business practices that may in turn contribute to enhanced business profitability.

A planning meeting with committee members for the Umodzi Village business manual was also facilitated. The aim was to strategize on the second Folio which is to be written and translated before year end. As planned, the second folio will have two main chapters where we will be introducing the concepts of bookkeeping, decision making and financing. From the deliberations, individual tasks were assigned so that by the end of the month of May, 2024 everyone should have written their part and submitted for compilation and editing.

Education Support Program

Executive Summary

The goal of the Orant Education initiative is to raise the standard of education services provided in Malawi so that more boys and girls can successfully finish secondary school and achieve quantifiable gains in their academic journey. Regardless of their circumstances, we believe every child deserves unrestricted access to education and a happy, healthy, and safe upbringing. The Education program contributes to SDG 4 of Quality Education and also SDG number 5 of Gender Equality.

Orant Charities Africa (OCA) covers the tuition for students enrolled in Malawi's primary, secondary, and university systems. The program also involves mentorship, counseling, and performance monitoring. All primary and secondary students began a new term (their third term) in April, 2024. The following are the activities that happened this month;

School monitoring visits and distribution of supplies

Only one school (Madisi secondary school) was visited by the OCA education program to observe students' achievement and provide encouragement and assistance. After reviewing the progress reports of the students, it was found that most of them are performing academically well, even though some still needed to improve. The students were encouraged to work extra hard in their studies in order to excel and meet their goals.



OCA encouraging students at Madisi Sec school (left) & student pose with supplies given by OCA (right)

A total of 10 students from the school received supplies from OCA during the visit. The students received a wide range of materials, including sanitary pads, hardcovers, pencils, pens, and laundry and bath soap. Three times a year, or once a term, students receive their course materials. Without the right supplies for the classroom, students cannot succeed. Research has demonstrated that when children own their school supplies, they behave better in the classroom, get better grades, and are more enthusiastic about studying. The absence of school supplies has a significant impact on a child's social, physical, and mental development.

Review meeting with parents

The education program attended a review meeting with parents and sponsored students who live within the Kasese catchment area. The attendance involved a total of 65 participants (40 parents and 25 students).

The aim of the meeting was to review what we discussed in our previous meeting about the importance of education and the role of parents in their children's education. From the views, it showed that a lot of parents are getting involved in their children's education and also welfare. A lot of them are able to check the progress reports of their children and encourage them to work hard. Most importantly, the parents also take the role in giving

advice to their children so that they do not get carried away with things that will lead them to dropping out of school.



OCA Education program meeting with parents & students within Kasese catchment area

At the end of the meeting, the OCA Education Program Manager appreciated the parents for all the things they are doing and also in working hand in hand with Orant in order to help the children excel. Additionally, the education Program Manager urged parents who do not show interest in their children's education to start taking a role. The parents thanked Orant for supporting their (children's) education and also for providing them with basic needs at school. They also promised to continue encouraging their children so that we work toward achieving the same goal of improving access to quality education. The students promised to work extra hard so that they are able to help their parents in future.

Library visit

Education program visited the Ngala CDSS library in the month of April, 2024 in order to see the progress of the library. The purpose for visiting the library is to monitor the progress of the library and discuss ways to improve it so that students are making good use of it.

During the visit, it was noted that the library is improving. For example, the library has implemented new rules which include a penalty fee for lost or damaged books. This will encourage the students to take care of the books and also to use the library according to the rules. In addition, the number of students borrowing the books which Orant donated to the school is increasing. This means that the books are very important and they are helping the students a lot.



OCA visit to Ngala CDSS library-Interacting with the Librarians

It was a great visit and the OCA education program appreciated the Ngala CDSS librarians for the good job they are doing and for taking good care of the library, especially the books. However, the librarians were also asked to check and amend on a few things like; to have proper records for the attendance of students in the library, follow up on students who do not check out books when due, have a solution to the torn out books, so that they do not get completely damaged e.t.c.

Meeting on books donation

The Education program committee conducted a review meeting on books we received as a donation from Peach Tree Tubepoka organization. The donated books are 874 in total and they are all supplementary books. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the way forward of the books and it was agreed that the books should be used at the Orant future library since supplementary books are not part of the Curriculum. It has been observed that most students in surrounding schools rely on curriculum books so we shouldn't donate them to the schools but rather use them at the Annex. The books will not only benefit Orant sponsored students but also the community since they are of different sectors be it health, agriculture, science, economics, mathematics and many more.

During the meeting we also discussed the donated primary children's books from Orant Charities US. The committee suggested that we should introduce reading clubs in primary schools in order to promote a reading culture among the kids. The idea of starting reading clubs was brought up because we thought that the primary school children cannot have the time to read the books but they will be motivated through the clubs. However, it was discussed that within the clubs students should be borrowing the books and read them thereafter narrate what they read. Those who narrate will be receiving a reward from OCA as a way of motivating them. The rewards will include, exercise books, pens, pencils, mathematical instruments e.t.c. Focal teachers for the reading clubs will be selected within the schools.