

**ORANT CHARITIES AFRICA
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MONTHLY
REPORT**



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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ADC	-	Area Development Committee
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 Trustees 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 March 2024 in our WASH program, Education, Agriculture and Business Development;

Water and Sanitation Program



Water well repairs in progress with Community Participation

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 March, the program carried out various activities in line with these objectives. Thus, this report presents the progress made during March

2024, starting with an overview, followed by a detailed account of achievements, plans for the upcoming month, and concluding remarks.

Summary of Monthly Achievements

- Supported **41** water point repairs (Service/preventive: **39**; major repairs: **2**)
- Community-Based Management (CBM) training for Tsambewu and Chidya Water Point Committees (WPCs)
- Review Meeting with Chiefs
- Supporting DCT meeting

The WASH program carried out the following key activities in March 2024;

Water point/borehole repairs and rehabilitations



Afridev pump Area Mechanics performing borehole repairs during the month

Water point repairs are one of the focal activities for the WASH program. Under this initiative the WASH program services/preventive maintenance and major repairs water points to ensure sustainable access to potable water for the people of Kasese. In 2024, the WASH program will continue to promote water point services or preventive maintenance, which can potentially reduce costly major water repairs. Area Mechanics conducts the preventive maintenance of water points. In March, the program supported repairs of **41** water point repairs. Of the 41 water points repaired, **39** were preventive maintenance and **2** were major repairs. From January to March 2024, the WASH program has repaired **12** out of the annual target of **58**. Similarly, the program has serviced 84 water points out of the annual target of **300**.

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

The WASH program conducted two CBM training for Tsambewu and Chidya 2 WPCs. Both the water points in Tsambewu and Chidya 2 were drilled in December 2023. In each WPC, 11 participants attended the training. The training was facilitated by OCA WASH program staff in collaboration with the Dowa district Water office, Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA), and Area Mechanic. The training in these two villages focused on minor repairs of Afridev pumps, fundraising for water point maintenance, household water handling, sanitation, and hygiene. Currently, the water point in Tsambewu Village is supplying potable water to approximately **260** people while the one in Chidya 2 Village is supporting **230** people.



Left -Group discussion during Tsambewu CBM training, Right- A practical session during Chidya 2 CBM training

Review Meeting with Chiefs

During the month the program also conducted a review meeting with Chiefs from the OCA WASH committee. There 5 chiefs who act as representatives of other chiefs and these form a committee which assists the WASH program in coordinating its initiative at the community level. The meeting was organized to review progress in 2023 and 2024 plans. During the meeting, the agenda for the new solar piped water scheme took centre stage. The chiefs were very excited about this new project and pledged to support OCA in all stages of the project.

Supporting District Coordinating Team (DCT) Meeting



OCA WASH program manager presenting the 2023 program report during the DCT meeting in Dowa

In March, the WASH program financially supported a DCT meeting in Dowa. DCT is a forum for WASH NGOs and government departments at the district level. The agenda for the DCT meeting was to review 2023-2024 project implementation reports for NGOs. During the meeting, the WASH program was privileged to present its 2023 progress report and 2024 plans. Apart from the OCA WASH program, Self Help Africa (SHA) also made their progress report presentation.

Conclusion

The Month of March provides a perfect opportunity to reflect on the progress made by the WASH program as it is the end of the first quarter of 2024. The program is excited about the significant progress made so far in borehole repairs, water point committee training and stakeholder coordination. Therefore, the WASH program is very optimistic as the second quarter of 2024 begins.

Agriculture and Business

Agriculture Program

Executive Summary

Our Agriculture program respond 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.



Agriculture Field day

Through the demonstration farms which are held around OCA farm on Kasese campus, field day was conducted with the aim of showcasing sustainable agricultural practices, promoting biodiversity, and fostering community engagement in agroecology. The field day attracted more than 397 people from sections of Kachala, Karonga, Katalima and Mphamba within Madisi EPA. The event brought together farmers, agricultural experts, chiefs, and members of the community to learn, exchange ideas, and celebrate the

achievements of agroecological farming. The field day showcased best practices in agroecology including organic farming, biodiversity conservation and soil health management. Guided tours of agroecological farms were organized, allowing participants to see successful examples of agroecology in practice. Despite farmers' learning on agroecology farming, farmers were also taken through Bayer demonstration plots where they learnt about several seed varieties and other products which Bayer company produces. Farmers shared their experiences, challenges, and successes in transitioning to sustainable farming methods. The field day provided a platform for community members to come together, exchange ideas, and celebrate the rich diversity of local food and farming traditions. Cultural performances and music added to the festive atmosphere of the event. The Field Day served as a platform for celebrating the successes and potentials of agroecological farming in promoting sustainable food systems and resilient communities.



Participants learning different farming methods through field day

Agroecology farm harvesting

The agroecology farm which was established last year 2023 at Kasese campus embarked on a journey to integrate sustainable agriculture practices, focusing on agroecology principles. Among various crops cultivated, papaya fruit was chosen due to its adaptability to agroecological systems, healthy benefits and its potential economic benefits. During the reporting month, the Papaya plants gave out its first ripened fruits. The papaya trees have reached maturity within 6 months from the month of planting with healthy foliage, strong stems and abundant fruit set. The harvested papaya fruits were established using organic soil amendments and compost to enhance soil fertility and promote healthy plant growth. The successful first harvest of papaya at the

agroecology farm demonstrated the feasibility and potential of integrating papaya cultivation into agroecological systems. The agroecology farm's first harvest of papaya represents a milestone in the journey towards sustainable and regenerative agriculture.



Ripen papaya fruit from OCA Agroecology farm

Program Meetings

A meeting with lead farmers was convened in preparation for an upcoming field day event aimed at showcasing best agricultural practices and innovations. The meeting served as a platform for Lead Farmers to collaborate, plan and coordinate activities to ensure the success of the field day. During the meeting, the lead farmers were assigned responsibilities and tasks to perform including event coordination, logistics management, participant registration, catering arrangements and publicity. Lead farmers identified demonstration plots to showcase best agricultural practices, innovative technologies, and successful crop varieties. Presentations on topics such as sustainable farming techniques, pest and disease management, and soil fertility were planned. The challenges or concerns related to the organization of the field day were addressed during the meeting. The lead farmers meeting served as a pivotal moment in the planning and organization of the upcoming field day event. Through collaborative efforts, coordination, and dedication, lead farmers are poised to deliver a dynamic and informative experience that showcases the achievements and potentials of agricultural innovation.



Lead farmers attending meeting in preparation for field day

Irrigation farming

In response to changing climatic conditions and the need to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience, the 2024 irrigation farming has commenced. The irrigation clubs such as Mantchedza, Chigona and Kambalani have started irrigation farming. Due to changing precipitation patterns and increasing frequency of drought have underscored the necessity of adopting irrigation farming as a sustainable water management strategy. Irrigation offers a reliable water supply, reducing dependence on rainfall and mitigating risks associated with water scarcity during critical stages of crop growth. Crop selection for irrigation farming has been carefully planned to maximize productivity, profitability and resource use efficiency. The initiation of irrigation farming in 2024 is expected to lead to increased agricultural productivity, yield stability and income generation for farmers.



Planted tomato plants in response to poor rainfall season due to poor rains

VSL initiative

After training irrigation clubs of Madzimayela, Kambalani and madula on village savings and loan (VSL), members from these irrigation clubs have started practicing the VSL activities. Currently these clubs have introduced VSL in their irrigation clubs with good servings. The members will be strengthened in social cohesion, mutual trust, and collaboration among irrigation club members, fostering a supportive environment for collective action and economic empowerment. They will also be supported in development of loan policies and procedures tailored to the needs and preferences of club members, including eligibility criteria and loan utilization guidelines.

Pests and disease attack

In the 2023-2024 growing season, OCA cultivated Maize, Soya and Groundnuts. The cultivated crops especially Groundnuts was attacked with rosette and Maize was attacked with Witchweed which are a serious viral infection in these crops. Rosette disease has symptoms such as stunted growth, chlorosis of leaves and abnormal development of foliage. The infected plants may fail to produce pods or produce undersized and poorly filled pods leading to significant yield losses. Witchweed has a large swollen root system which attaches to host plant roots. Due to the parasitic nature of witchweed, the host plant symptoms are seen before the witchweed emerges from the ground. Host plant symptoms including yellowing leaves, wilting and stunted growth. These diseases reduce the market value of affected groundnuts due to poor quality and yield, leading to economic losses for farmers and the agricultural industry. The diseases have attacked severely around the catchment area due to prolonged dry spell. The rosette and witchweed disease has brought a great threat to farmers as they may experience high yield loss in both plants.



Rainfed plants attacked with disease

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 within the month of March. Below is an outline of the activities implemented.

Monitoring visits

To ensure that women entrepreneurs are following good business practices that they were taught, monitoring visits to individual businesses were conducted. The visits also help us to track if the women are still in business, document the challenges they are facing and advise them on how best to overcome the challenges. With the new groups, the women entrepreneurs that were visited, it was noted that they were still finding it hard to calculate and differentiate revenues from profits. We believe that with the frequent visits, the women entrepreneurs will be able to grasp the concept.



The monitoring visits also helped in tracking loan repayment for the members. By March end, over 17% of the loans disbursed had been recovered. It should also be noted that the new groups are performing extremely well in terms of repayment. However there is assurance that all the groups will be able to repay their loans as all the women entrepreneurs are still in business. Failure to Repay the monthly installment can be partly attributed to the 3% devaluation of kwacha as the women were also trying to adjust to the new market price fluctuations and the current business landscape.



Elizabeth Nkhoma (L) in her tea room and Eliza Tsonga baking Africa cup cakes (Zigumu)

FEM group Review meetings

Tikondane and Tiyanjane FEM group members had a review meeting to review the progress of their knitting project. In 2023, Tikondane and Tiyanjane members ventured in a knitting project whose aim was to raise group funds that will sustain them after the project life cycle. Towards the end of 2023, the group had agreed to cultivate groundnuts which will be resold. In this way the group fund will be increasing and they will be able to continue loaning each other money beyond the program life cycle. With the drought that we experienced in the last rainy season, the women entrepreneurs did not cultivate the groundnuts hence the meeting to re-strategize. During the meeting, it was agreed that the money should be used to buy Maize for sale. Each member has been assigned to source at least 100 kilograms of maize at the beginning of the harvest season. This maize will be kept and will be sold when prices are better.



Tikondane and Tiyanjane FEM women after the knitting review meeting

Business/ entrepreneurial training

Gender inclusion training was organized for Takondwa FEM members. The aim of the training was to orient women entrepreneurs and their spouses on how to strike a balance in managing their businesses and families. The training came as a response in trying to minimize inequalities in the families of the FEM members that were recurrent in the past. Through these training, we believe that the women entrepreneurs may be more successful in their business ventures as they have physical and emotional support from their spouses.



Takondwa FEM members during Training session (L) and group deliberations (R)

Village Savings and lending group meetings

As per norm, the FEM groups continue to meet for their local savings and lending groups. These groups are proving to be helpful as we see members benefiting from them to achieve their visions. Through these savings, members are cushioning themselves from the economic shocks presented by the devaluation of the Kwacha. In addition, the meetings are pertinent for strengthening group relationships.



Tikondane and Tiyanjane FEM members during VSL meetings

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 performance. 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. The following were the activities which were accomplished by the Education program in the month of March, 2024;



OCA Sponsorship Program

A total of **105** students are now supported by the OCA education program. There are 95 secondary school students, 1 primary school student, and 9 university students (8 with Ulemu scholarships and 1 under non-ulemu scholarship). These students are supported from three different categories of sponsorship; OCA sponsorship (mainly individual donors), Geo-shack sponsorship and the Ulemu scholarship. Geo-Shack is sponsoring only secondary school students, whereas OCA, despite sponsoring secondary students, is also sponsoring some students in primary and university. Ulemu only supports students in universities / colleges. The Table below depicts a summary of current OCA sponsored students

Level	OCA	Geoshack	Ulemu Scholarship	Total
Primary	1	0	0	1
Secondary	65	30	0	95
University	1	0	8	9
TOTAL	67	30	8	105

School monitoring visits and distribution of supplies

The OCA education program visited students in 4 schools to monitor their performance, encouragement and support. Students' progress reports were reviewed, and it was discovered that while some students still needed to improve, the majority of the students are doing well academically. To succeed and reach their objectives, the students were urged to put forth extra effort in their studies.

During the same time frame, OCA provided supplies to a total of 27 students from the secondary schools in Nkhamenya (24), Loyola (1), Chayamba (1), and Kasungu (1). A variety of supplies were provided to the students, such as sanitary pads, hardcover books, pens, pencils, and bath and laundry detergent. Students receive their educational materials once a term, or three times a year. The purpose of providing these materials to the students is to keep them in school and enable them to perform better because their basic requirements are being satisfied. Students do not receive these resources from the school, and because of their poverty, their parents are unable to provide for them.



Students from Loyola (left) & Kasungu (right) secondary with supplies given by OCA



Students from Nkhamenya (left) receiving their supplies from OCA

Students And Donor Correspondence

At total of 39 Students from various schools (Natola, St. Chavara, St. Peters, Tchawale CDSS, Likuni, and Nkhamenya secondary schools) wrote letters to the OCA education program donors within the month. Since the students come from three distinct sponsor groups; Geoshack, Individual Donor, and OCA, these letters were from the students to their individual donors. In order to foster a relationship that has the potential to change students' lives and raise their self-esteem, it is recommended that students correspond with their sponsors by letter at least once a term. Additionally, the sponsors view communication as a crucial component of their support.

Conclusion

Students who have financial difficulties and are unable to finance their studies on their own are eligible for OCA education sponsorship. Students can obtain primary, secondary, and even university-level education with the support of OCA donors. OCA adheres to several basic qualifying requirements in order to sponsor students, which include being a poor orphan, coming from a low-income or extremely poor household, and having a strong desire to study.