

## 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 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

### Executive Summary

The main goal of the WASH program in Kasese is to enhance public health by improving access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services, with the ultimate aim of decreasing morbidity and mortality rates. This effort concentrates on four key areas: Water supply, operation and maintenance of WASH infrastructure, advocating for sanitation in communities and schools, and collaborating with stakeholders. This month of May, the program conducted several activities aligned with these key implementation areas. Therefore, this report outlines the monthly progress, beginning with a summary and followed by a thorough description of accomplishments

### Summary of Monthly Achievements

The following milestones were achieved during the month;

- Supported **19** water point repairs (Service/preventive: **17**; major repairs: **1**; Rehabilitation; **1**)
- Attended Dowa District Strategic Investment Plan launch
- Conducted review Meetings with Area Mechanics (AMs)
- Conducted Sanitation sensitization meeting with Community leaders



- Conducted a learning visit to Innovation Africa and Water Aid
- Distribution of bicycles and work suits for Area Mechanics

Details of the key activities carried in the month are as follows;

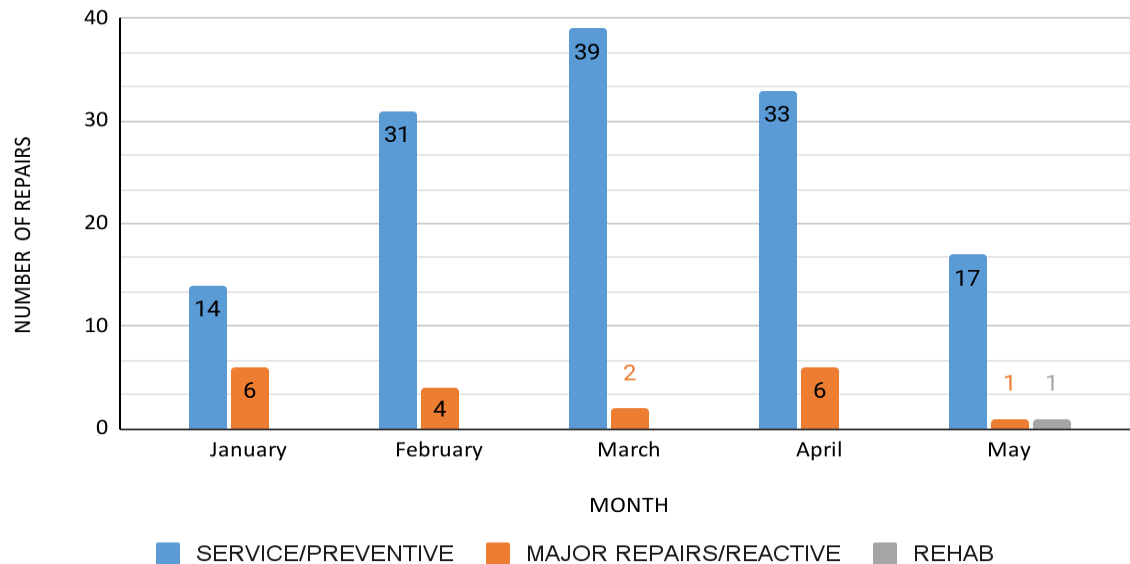
## Water point/borehole repairs and rehabilitations



*Water point repair session at Mkuyu Primary School during the month*

To ensure the sustainability of water points, the WASH program conducts water point repairs. In this initiative, the WASH program conducts preventive and reactive maintenance of Afridev hand pumps. Apart from these two maintenance approaches the WASH program also conducts rehabilitation of boreholes. 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 the month, the program supported **17** preventive maintenance, **1** rehabilitation and **1** major repair of water points. In total, the program supported repairs of **18** water points. From January to May 2024, the WASH program has repaired **18** out of the annual target of **58** which represents that 32% of the annual target has been achieved. Similarly, the program has serviced **135** water points out of the annual target of **300** which represents that **45%** of the annual target has been achieved. These figures just show that the borehole repair program is on track since the objective is to reduce major repairs and increase preventive maintenance.

## WATER POINT REPAIRS 2024



### Dowa District DSIP Launch

The WASH program was invited to attend the Dowa District Strategic Investment Plan launch at Linde Hotel in Mponela. The DSIP is a strategic document which highlights the status and implementation gaps of WASH services in the district thereby acting as a road map for relevant stakeholders. The DSIP launch was organised by the Dowa district council with support from WASH NGOs in the district (OCA included). The event was graced by the Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation, Honourable Liana Kakhobwe Chiponda. More importantly, the event was also attended by representatives of WASH NGOs, and relevant government departments. During the event, OCA was among the NGOs who showcased their interventions in pavilions and also received a copy of the printed DSIP document.



*Left - NGO representatives posing after receiving DSIP booklets during the launch, Right- OCA WASH program Manager explaining how the OCA implements its WASH program to the delegates during the DSIP launch*

## Review Meetings with Area Mechanics (AMs)



*A round table discussion during a review meeting with Area Mechanics (AMs)*

To ensure continued stakeholder engagement the WASH program conducts review meetings and feedback sessions with program stakeholders. During the month, the program organized a bi-annual borehole operation and maintenance review with Area Mechanics (AMs). AMs are government-trained local artisans who are responsible for the maintenance of boreholes, especially Afridev pumps. The key agenda for the meeting was to review progress and share reports for 2023 and 2024 in borehole maintenance. In attendance during the meeting were the 5 AMs from the Kasese catchment area. The key outcome of the meeting is the revision of targets for preventive and reactive maintenance.

## Sanitation Sensitization Meeting with Community Leaders



*A section of participants during the sanitation sensitization meeting with community leaders*

The WASH program organized a sanitation sensitization meeting with community leaders from the Kasese catchment. The meeting was organised in response to the low adoption of sanitation and hygiene services as indicated in the recent OCA survey results. The meeting was organized to formulate bi-laws which govern the implementation of OCA sanitation interventions in the Kasese catchment. In attendance during the meeting were Senior Chief Chakhadza, Group Village Heads (GVHs), Health Surveillance

Assistants (HSAs), Area Mechanics (AMs), and Sanitation Promoters/entrepreneurs. The key outcome of the meeting was a declaration of a 2 months campaign to construct latrines in the Kasese catchment for those who are yet to have latrines. During the meeting, stakeholders agreed that every household without a latrine should construct a latrine before the 31st of July, 2024 deadline. It was further agreed that for those without latrines the Senior Chief and other chiefs would institute punishments according to community laws.

### **Learning Visit to Innovation Africa and Water Aid**

In May, the WASH program in collaboration with the Business Development (BD) program organized a learning visit to Innovation Africa (IA) and WaterAid in Zomba district. At IA the WASH program went to learn about sustainability and implementation of community solar piped water schemes. At WaterAid, the WASH program learned about Borehole Village Saving Loans (VSLs) which is a sustainability measure for boreholes. During the visit, the WASH program visited the Nankwenya-Chibade solar piped water project. At Nankwenya the WASH program learnt about how the community and IA worked together to implement a magnificent solar piped water system which is supplying water to over 3000 people. Similarly, at WaterAid, the WASH program visited Dick village water point within the Titukulane project. Dick Village received a new water point from WaterAid in 2023. To ensure the sustained availability of funds for borehole maintenance, the water point committee for Dick with the help of water aid established a village's Saving Loans group. Following the meeting, the WASH program is geared up towards implementing a piped water system similar to the one implemented by IA in Zomba. Furthermore, the WASH program in collaboration with the BD program is equally geared towards implementing borehole VSLs on a pilot basis



*Left - A Focus Group Discussion during a visit to Dick village in Zomba, Right - Delegates appreciating a water tower during the learning visit to Innovation Africa in Zomba.*



## Distribution of Bicycles and Work suits for Area Mechanics (AMs)



*Area Mechanics posing in their new bicycles donated by OCA*

To improve the safety and service delivery of AMs the WASH program distributed Work Suits and bicycles to 5 AMs from the Kasese catchment area. The bicycles are expected to ease transport challenges for AMs when going to the field to repair and monitor water points thereby increasing their productivity in terms of preventive and major repairs. On the other hand, work suits are part of protective wear for AM when they are carrying out their duties. The work suits will also improve the identification of AMs and the visibility of the WASH program in the community since they are branded with the OCA logo and the name of the program.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this monthly report was to review the progress, challenges, and achievements of the WASH Program for May 2024. This month, the program made substantial progress in borehole repairs, stakeholder coordination and capacity building for the program staff. However, the program faced challenges related to transportation due breakdown of program vehicles. To address this challenge, the facilities department is working towards fixing the program vehicle and purchasing extra vehicles to support the program implementation. Moving forward, the WASH program is excited about the impending borehole drilling season which is among the key interventions of the program.

# 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;

### Maize shelling

Maize shelling is the critical step in maize processing that affects the efficiency, quality and economic outcomes of the maize production. The term Maize shelling means the process of removing the kernels from the cob. Shelling process was carried out on OCA harvested produce to reduce postharvest losses. Maize shelling is an essential process as it makes kernels ready for storage, consumption and further processing. The shelling process used mechanization as it enhances productivity and reduces labor costs. Due to challenges of drought the area faced; the yield has been poor compared to last year's harvest hence more attention was employed to minimize postharvest losses.



*Shelling of Maize using Machine*

## **Program Meetings**

### **Nutritious Corn Soya Blend Flour meetings**

Meetings were done with Blessings and St Gabriel hospitals for potential partnership for the fortified foods, especially Corn-Soya blend flour for making porridge (Likuni phala). Fortified foods are essential in combating malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. These foods are enriched with vitamins and minerals to improve the nutritional value. The discussions focused on current practices and future collaborations to enhance the fortification process for OCA Health Center. The meetings were more fruitful as the feedback was given on the possibility of collaboration. With the current practices at St Gabriel hospital, there is a high probability of collaborating with them for the supply of Corn-Soya blend flour compared to Blessings hospital as they have a specific group of people whom they produce for. St Gabriel gives access to anyone to buy from them.

### **Warehouse planning meetings**

Another meeting was held on the construction of a warehouse for OCA. Warehouse is a critical component of supply chain management, providing storage and distribution solutions for various industries. Efficient warehouse construction ensures optimal storage, smooth operations and cost-effectiveness. The meeting focused on design considerations and collaboration opportunities. Three companies were visited for further discussions on the possibility of constructing warehouses. Currently the contractors visited are working on design features that enhance efficiency and sustainability. The selection of the contractors to construct the warehouse will be done in the month of June after submitting their design features and bill of quantities (BOQ).

## Maize planting in Irrigation Clubs

As the area had challenges with drought during the rainy season, it resulted in poor harvest for most smallholder farmers hence going for irrigation farming has been seen as ideal. Irrigation clubs of Kambalani and Madzimayela were planting Maize for irrigation farming during the reporting month. The objectives of employing irrigation in maize farming were to reduce dependence on erratic rainfall and mitigate the effects of drought, allow for multiple cropping cycles in a year by managing water availability and ensuring consistent water supply to maximize maize yield. These irrigation clubs use furrow irrigation where water is directed into furrows between crop rows using solar powered pumps. With the use of solar powered pumps, there is reduced production costs hence farmers are expecting more profits from the planted maize crops.

## Staking or Mulching of Tomatoes

Tomatoes at Matchedza irrigation club are on a fruiting stage where staking and mulching is recommended to ensure cleaner and healthier tomato fruits are harvested. Tomato fruits have to be controlled from going off the ground or soil and have to be hoarded up the ground to avoid pests and diseases from penetrating into tomato fruits. The materials used for Mulching were dried grasses which are readily available to the community. Staking is also recommended which will provide a better place for tomato fruits to rest on. Staked or mulched tomatoes have some advantages as they can be easily sprayed with chemicals to prevent the fruits from pests and diseases attack.



*Mulching tomato field*

## Sucker's removal in Tomatoes

Matchedza irrigation club is practicing tomato production where sucker removal was done. Suckers in tomato production have negative impacts on the harvest. Suckers in tomato production have to be controlled for bumper harvest and quality tomato

production. Suckers removal in tomatoes was done to maximize the efficiency of photosynthesis and minimize the risk of pests and disease. Farmers were advised to conduct pruning using knives to reduce problems of wounds to the plant which can also be regarded as entry points of pests and disease



*Suckers removal on tomato plants*

## **Business and Financial Empowerment Microloans (FEM)**

### **Executive Summary**

The Business development through its FEM program strives to contribute to the reduction of rural poverty by providing microloans and financial literacy to women entrepreneurs. The aim is to boost existing local businesses and create employment for other women so that they can ably provide for their families. The efforts are directed towards the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) specifically goal number 5 and 8. The program is also contributing to pillar number 2 of the Malawi vision 63 agenda on industrialization specifically on increased access to affordable finance thus OCA loans are interest free in nature. In the month of May, the FEM program conducted a number of activities as narrated below.

### **Learning Visit**

The business development program, in collaboration with the WASH program carried out an exchange visit to Innovation Africa and Water aid in Zomba. One of the focus areas for the BD is to develop financial sustainability strategies for the groups that OCA works

with, thus according to OCAs strategy for 2024-2026. Hence, the main interest for the BD was to learn and appreciate the element of borehole village savings and loans that the said organizations are implementing. At WaterAid, we first had a debrief at their offices before proceeding to visit Dick water point committee in Dick Village. From the visit, we learnt how water point committees (WPCs) can utilise VSL groups in increasing funds for borehole maintenance. The lessons drawn will help OCA to integrate VSLs in WPCs hence ensuring sustainability.

Aside from the VSLs, it was also learnt that the WPC have incorporated a group business initiative for the boreholes as another way of increasing borehole maintenance funds. The members achieve this end by cultivating a vegetable garden and a seed bank for other crops which they resale at a later point. To influence community members to participate in these activities, those that do not take part have to buy the products at a higher rate whereas those who partake in the farm activities are given discounts.



*Meeting with Dick WPC members*



*OCA and WaterAid staff during a debrief session*

## Village Savings and Loan groups meetings

VSLs are an essential part of the business program as they instill a saving culture as well as strengthening collaboration among our program beneficiaries. The FEM women entrepreneurs continue to meet for their weekly savings. The Mtambalika groups usually meet on Tuesdays whereas the Tikondane and Takondwa meet on Thursdays and Tiyanjane members meet on Fridays. As it was previously difficult for some of the women entrepreneurs to keep records, the members agreed to also be sharing and recording their weekly proceeds when they meet. This initiative has really helped in keeping group records as well as help record business records for women entrepreneurs who cannot manage to write.



*Tikondane (L) and Tiyanjane (R) members during a "banker" session*

## Loan recovery

As projected, the month of May was supposed to be the last month for loan repayments for Takondwa, Tithandizane and Tamandani. Through the payments which were made through mobile money wallet, OCA managed to recover 94 percent for Takondwa, 80 percent for Tithandizane and 74 percent for Tamandani of their respective loan amounts. For the remaining groups, thus Tikondane and Tiyanjane, they still have four months to be able to settle their loan balances.

## Monitoring visits

During the month, 15 individual businesses were monitored with the aim of assessing business progress. From the women entrepreneurs who were visited, it was noted that they are still in business but the capital levels are going down. This has been a challenge which has been attributed to the poor harvests hence the women are heavily depending on the business for survival. The businesses also tend to be slow and not giving them enough revenues hence the end up tapping form the capital. As of mid-May, the inflation

rate was at 32.3 percent registering a slight increase of 0.5 percent from the previous month of April.



*Ruth from Tithandizane FEM group and Rachel from Takondwa FEM group*

## **Conclusion**

The FEM program works tirelessly to ensure the wellbeing of the community it serves. In the month under review, the outcomes of the activities carried out are believed to impact the women entrepreneurs hence contributing to the overall program goal.

# **Education Support Program**

## **Executive Summary**

In Malawi, there is a serious shortage of high-quality education, especially in rural areas. There are numerous obstacles that prevent students from finishing their education, such as the high rate of child marriage, inadequate government support, and difficult access to educational resources. Because of this, a large number of children in Malawi wind up trapped in a cycle of low life, poverty, and restricted access to high-quality education. As such OCA tries to address these and other problems. OCA seeks to increase children's and youth's access to high-quality education, providing them with the tools and resources they need to achieve their goals, enhance their quality of life, and eventually aid in Malawi's national development. The Orant 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. Activities carried out by the education program in May 2024 included the following;

### **School monitoring visits and distribution of supplies**

The education department visited **69** secondary students in **12** schools (Madisi, Lilongwe girls, Likuni girls, Dzenza, Rise Malawi, Ngara, Chayamba, Natola, Chamkango, Loyola, Kasungu and Nkhamenya) throughout the month of May, 2024. OCA is happy to see so many students making academic progress. This is a result of OCA's ongoing encouragement and support for the students.

The visits were intended to keep an eye on the academic progress of the students, motivate them to put in extra effort, and give them material assistance. Supplies from OCA were distributed to all 69 students over the month. Hardcover books, pencils, pens, sugar, sanitary pads, body lotion, tooth paste, bath and laundry detergent, and other supplies were provided to the students. Students receive these educational materials once a term, or three times a year. The purpose of providing these materials to the students is to keep them enrolled 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 Lilongwe girls (left) and Ngara CDSS (right) being visited by OCA

The students' progress reports were reviewed during the visits, and the findings indicated that while some students still needed to improve, the majority of them were doing well academically. To succeed and reach their objectives, the students were urged to put forth

extra effort in their studies. The students also received behavior counseling in addition to that. The importance of excellent behavior in school was stressed to the students, as it lays the groundwork for their future success. It is a lifelong ability that can lead to a variety of positive outcomes, including success in the workplace through maintaining one's health and attention. Students who behave well in class perform well in the classroom.



Lastly, the education program delivered a special package to students writing the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) and MSCE exams from 7 schools (Madisi, Likuni girls, Natola, Loyola, Kasungu, Ngara and Nkhamenya). The package included mathematical instruments and scientific calculators which will help them during the exams. The scientific calculators will give the students an opportunity to try out various approaches to solving a given mathematical problem. The JCE exams will start on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 while the MSCE exams will start on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2024. OCA has 31 students writing JCE and 28 students writing MSCE this year.



JCE students from Nkhamenya(left) and Madisi (right) secondary schools showing off their exam writing materials given by Orant



MSCE students from Likuni (left) and Natola (right) secondary school after receiving exam writing materials from OCA

## Education Survey Data Analysis

In the reporting month, the education program attended a data analysis exercise for the school survey assessment which was conducted earlier this year. The exercise was conducted by six people (The education program manager and officer, the Data officer and assistant, the agriculture program manager and data clerk) for 3 days in Salima district.

The aim was to analyze the data which was collected in the schools (20 primary schools & 4 secondary schools) and find out the top schools which we can start a partnership with and for possible interventions. The data also helped us in making better decisions by identifying schools with the least scores according to the categories which were focused. For example; Infrastructure, teaching and learning materials e.t.c.

It was a very successful exercise whereby findings, recommendations as well as challenges were analyzed. From the findings, it was discovered that most schools have similar challenges like insufficient class rooms, lack of teaching and learning materials, no reliable energy source, in-balanced teacher/student ratio e.t.c. Recommendations were made to start interventions in the schools with the lowest score and these interventions will be based on OCA capacity and the school needs. Additionally, the education program will lobby with other stakeholders to assist in addressing the school challenges.



OCA Education program analyzing the school assessment survey data

## **Conclusion**

The Education Program continues to support students to become self-reliant in the future. We believe that the survey results will help in making informed decisions about interventions we can do in schools. We are now approaching the mid-year and we believe we are on track in achieving program outcomes.