

Connecting Lives



Welcome to Connecting Lives!

Children suffer most in times of disaster and scarcity. Evidence shows early childhood education is critical for their healthy development. It also shows we must facilitate space for their voices to be heard and for them to influence decisions at all levels.

This issue shows how Eagles' approach is helping churches and communities work together to protect and empower children.

Putting Children First

Under-five children have fun and learn together in their Community-Based Child Care Centre (above). Nedi village in Chikwawa, southern Malawi, set up this centre after Cyclone Ana destroyed their homes and livestock in 2022.

In the midst of disaster, people have understandably always focused on saving lives and meeting immediate needs. However, Eagles' approach takes the church through Bible studies that ignite people's sense of calling to the vulnerable and show the contribution children can make. Even in this disaster, the churches and their communities therefore prioritised children's development and education. Church leaders brought together other community leaders and members at the camp. They discussed children's needs and agreed together to open the Child Care Centre and provide counselling for the children and their families. Elina Fulanki, says:

It wasn't easy for me to do this because I myself was so affected by the disaster, but as a leader, I had to do it. [\(cont on p.3\)](#)

◀ I'm not worried about what the future holds ▶

In our uncertain and fragile world, it is rare to hear this from a child. How is Eagles helping this to be true?

Mpalo Impact Plus Youth Club in Nchisi District, Central Malawi, is helping children develop the skills, confidence and vision to thrive both now and in the future. Children aged 12-18 years old are inspired to excel at school and to work together to grow food and generate some income to help their families.

Eagles worked with the churches in Mpalo from 2018-21, taking them through their Church and Community Mobilisation process (CCM). CCM helps people to recognise and use the gifts and resources they already have and see themselves as agents of change in their community. The process motivated older youth to form a club. They created a fish farm (right) and then started bee-keeping and processing honey.



Inspired by this, the children have now set up their own club and enthusiastically work together. Their vision is that every child will be in school - no one will miss out because their family doesn't have enough money. They are growing maize (left) and have built fences to keep livestock out. After school, they work together in their food garden. They plan to sell the produce and use the money they earn to buy pigs and to begin beekeeping and soap-making. They also want to plant trees in the rainy season. Tionge says:

◀ Even though there are high rates of unemployment, I'm not worried about what the future holds for me. I'll invest in agriculture and make a lot of money from it. ▶

The process keeps going beyond Eagles' support! Using funds from Malawi Support, Eagles went back to visit Mpalo two years later to see how they are getting on. Not only are the projects they began then still going, but the church and community are working together on new initiatives. As well as the children's club, the women have formed a group and run a Village Savings and Loans Association which enables them to save and set up small income generating activities.





Putting Children First - linking with government (cont from p.1)

55 children (30 girls and 25 boys) are registered in the Nedi centre. These Community-Based Child Care Centres are central to the Malawi government's strategy for Early Childhood Education and Development, so Eagles and the communities work closely with government officials. Three church members, trained by the government, volunteer as care-givers at the centre. People from the Social Welfare Department also trained the church leaders in psychosocial care. This means the leaders can now offer counselling as well as prayer to children and their families who want it. Government Child Protection Officers continue to support the community activities to safeguard and help children.

Putting Children First - never giving up

In March this year, Cyclone Freddy smashed through 14 districts of southern Malawi, burying everything in its way.

It destroyed so much of the work Mpyupyu communities had done together as a result of Eagles' approach - their crops, their bridges and their homes. Yet, even in the immediate aftermath, in the midst of devastation and despair, Mpyupyu kept running the ten child care centres they had set up to help and protect the under-fives

(see photo right- a group from Mauluka village, Mpyupyu).



Safeguarding is our business

◀ I am so grateful to Eagles for helping us in Zomba with such vital information about safeguarding. Awareness has come at the right time and targeted the right people who are supposed to speak, fight for and protect vulnerable people at all times. As a church, this is our business and this is the time to rise and do everything we can, because we are the hope of the world. ▶

Rev. Josph Phiri, a church leader in Zomba in the southern region and District Secretary for the Evangelical Association of Malawi, explains what a difference Eagles' training has made to them. As Eagles continues to learn and adapt its approach, it has recognised that safeguarding training is vital for churches working with their communities. After their learning in Zomba, church leaders from a range of many different denominations, decided together to establish a safeguarding focal person and committee in each church; teach and preach in services about protecting children and vulnerable people; form a taskforce comprising leaders from all the churches; and organise a demonstration to raise awareness in the wider community. Annie Msamu from Zomba Baptist church says: "The training has been an eye-opener for me. Now I am equipped and ready to help victims and to make people aware of safeguarding and its significance so that abuse doesn't happen at all."

Meet Stan

Eagles new Programme Manager, Stanislaus Banda

◀ I joined Eagles because I believe in their mission and approach - mobilising local churches and communities to be agents of their own transformation. They are not passive recipients of aid but every community has its own 'five loaves and two fish' which they can use for sustainable development.

I enjoy helping poor communities use their locally available resources to transform their lives without destroying nature (without resorting to negative coping mechanisms like chopping down trees). I love seeing people graduate from poverty to a good relationship with nature, themselves, other people and God.

I am taking part in Eagles' online CCM course to learn new ways of working with local churches and communities. CCM is a great approach to holistic, sustainable community development.



I have been married to Mercy for 29 years now! She is a Secondary school teacher. We have five children: Modester, Kondwani, Takondwa, Thokozani and Dumisani. ▶