

Student Name: Novilhelha Moleni

School Name: Skidmore College

Partner Institution: Ndodani Orphanage led by Temwani Chilenga

Project Duration: May 28th to July 1st 2022

Country: Malawi

Title of Project: Creative solutions for sustainable designs

Background

Malawi is ranked 172 out of 189 in the United Nations' Human Development Index, with over 71% of Malawians living below the poverty line¹. Poverty in Malawi is very high, and it manifests itself in various indicators, such as in the economy, education, and healthcare, rendering it one of Africa's poorest nations. In addition to the fact that an estimated 1 million² Malawians are living with HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS has caused so many deaths in Malawi, leaving children parentless without a home sometimes. Having lived seeing many people including family and friends suffer from HIV/AIDS, it has always been a passion of mine to create a future for the children who are left homeless and show them that the world is their oyster. I would like to see children who are orphans grow and fulfil their dreams in Malawi.

The Rationale Behind Setting up a creative centre for sustainable design

I propose to create a centre for sustainable designs for orphans in Lilongwe. This will be a vocational learning space where the children will be able to learn how to design clothes and use African fabric to make clothes for themselves, learn design skills which will be an additional skill set for them and very valuable in Malawi. This will be an extra-curricular learning activity and will be open to the children who are interested in sewing. Since the orphanage does not have a donor, the children struggle to survive. The Creative Centre for sustainable design will allow the children to make clothes for themselves, reuse fabric and design clothes.

I am going to be implementing this at Ndodani Orphanage. This is an orphanage that has 95 children aged between 6 to 18 years old. The orphanage is run by Temwani Chilenga and located in my city, Lilongwe. One of the challenges the children face is lack of food, and clothing and sometimes writing equipment for school. Currently the orphanage does not offer any extracurricular activities. The Centre for sustainable design will be the first to offer a huge learning opportunity for the children to opt in and learn a new skill and teach each other how to design clothes using local fabric.

The centre for sustainable designs will be a space that will be built and fully equipped with 12 tailoring machines, fabric, and drawing materials. Where the children can learn how to design clothes. The orphans will be able to make clothes for themselves. Temwani already has a volunteer who is a designer, who will be teaching the children how to make clothes. The children will opt in voluntarily. The children will also be able to make traditional Malawian clothes which will be used to teach them about some of the indigenous Malawi traditions.

I have been in touch with Temwani the orphanage owner (*Letter of approval to work together attached*). I will work closely with Temwani in ensuring that the facility is built and equipped with the appropriate materials.

Having studied at the United World College Red Cross Nordic in Norway and then spending the past 4 years of my life here at Skidmore College, I have learnt that Malawians we have a rich culture which is in fact being eroded by Globalization. I would like to also take time to teach the children some ancient Malawi dress codes such as "Chilundu". The children will also use the learning centre to make some of these clothes, which will be very beneficial in their learning about their Malawi heritage.

Qualifications

In 2018, I was awarded the Go make Difference award in UWC, Red Cross Nordic. Where I went to back to Malawi and renovated classroom blocks that had been left dilapidated for several years, at Ntenjela Primary school the year prior to that, I built a new girl friendly toilet as many girls at the school, were dropping out because of missing so

¹ 2022. [online] Available at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview#1>> [Accessed 20 January 2022].

² Avert. 2022. *HIV and AIDS in Malawi*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/malawi>> [Accessed 20 January 2022].

many classes during their monthly menstruation. The school did not have girls' toilets, so my project encouraged girls to stay in school. These two projects at Ntenjela primary school in Malawi, exposed me to project management and fostered my passion in working towards poverty reduction in my country.

Personal Values

Growing up, I saw many children my age in the streets, begging for food, my mother was a primary school teacher just like Temwani, who taught at the Malawi government schools. Every Christmas we run clothes drive and shared clothes with the students who were taught by my mother. These children never had a home, many even dropped out of school because they came to school on an empty stomach. I want to help these children who are supported by Ndodani Orphanage to create a bright future for themselves by ensuring that they have a space after school where they can acquire design skills. In addition, children in Malawi need to wear school uniforms when going to school, they will be able to make their own school uniforms and ensure that they have well-fitting clothes at all times.

Educational Goals and Sustainability

The orphanage currently has one tailoring machine and there is a local tailor who teaches the children how to make clothes. With an addition of 12 sewing machines, the children will be able to use second-hand clothes to redesign their own clothes, use new fabric to make their own school uniforms.

The orphans, at Ndonani, will be able to make clothes and dress themselves for school, I want to highlight that many Malawians, buy second hand clothes known as "Kaunjika". Kaunjika is imported second-hand clothes, usually these clothes come from the US, China, UK and is sold at cheaper prices which benefits many Malawians as brand new clothes are expensive. However, due to the pandemic, Kaunjika is limited as there is minimal imports. Which has made buying clothes very expensive in Malawi. This has also affected the orphans at Ndodani. They cannot afford to buy clothes. The centre for sustainable designs will enable the children to make new clothes that fit them and they will not have to worry about the impact of imports due to the COVID pandemic in Malawi. Most importantly designing and making clothes is a skill the children can have forever, in the event were they are older and have left the orphanage, they will be able to use the skill and even earn an income from it. This centre will serve the current orphans and all the other orphans who are coming in the near future.

Project timeline

May 28th to June 13th

- Travel to Malawi
- During this time, I will be working with two builders to construct the centre. I will be buying the materials from Area 25, where the orphanage is located. I will hire a car to help us transport bulky items such as cement, bricks, wood and the chairs. The total cost of the whole construction is

June 14th to June 20th

- Allow the building to dry before we furnish it. Because we use bricks to build in Malawi.
- During this time, I will be meeting with the children for two hours daily to explore the Malawi culture dress codes mainly by utilizing the local library and inviting Historians from the University of Malawi in Lilongwe whom I have already connected. This will be very fundamental for the design centre because we not only just want to make clothes or learn how to be tailors, we want this to be a learning space about our Malawi culture that is at threat because of globalization.

June 20th – July 1st

- Furnish the building with chairs, sewing machines, and fabric.

Following July 1st:

- Since this centre will be an extra-curricular, the students interested in using the centre will be allowed to use the machines after 2 Pm that is when classes are over. The designer will be coming during the weekend to teach the students. After that, the students who have performed well, will then partner with another student who is willing to learn and then they will be teaching each other. For the children's safety there will always be an adult supervising the students between 2Pm and 5Pm every day.

During the weekend the centre will be open from 10AM to 5PM. The children interested will be scheduled for the weekend this is when the designer will come and during the week will be their practicing time. Once every quarter, the orphanage will be hosting a social event known as "Culture day" where Temwani and her colleague at work will be teaching the children the history of several other African tradition outfits.

Budget:

I will not use the Davis Funds for accommodation and food because I will be living with family members in Lilongwe. However, I will use \$1900 from the budget for my flight and my daily commute to the orphanage. The orphanage center has land available for us to build the center on with water very near to help in building the center. In order for us to have a well-built building, we will need to hire two professional local builder who will be building the center. The center will be used for teaching orphans how to design clothes. All the materials will be bought in Lilongwe and local transport will be used to transport to the orphanage. The construction is projected to last for approximately five weeks.

I believe my project is the next pathway to helping orphans become independent. In addition, we are fostering peace by allowing the orphans to move past their traumas of not having the care of parents. I believe that my project will build leaders in the Malawi community that will not just be educated academically but will be skillful to will live up to Nelson Mandela “ I dream of the realization of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve the problems of this continent.”

Project Expenses	Total Cost	Student Expenses	Total Cost
Construction: <i>these will be bought from local shops</i>	\$	Travel:	\$
Bricks	750	Student Airfare	1600
Cement	610	Student travel to project site	300
Paint (400		
Paint brushes	15		
Iron Sheets	450		
Nails	100		
Tiles for the floor	500		
Wood	75		
Door and Door Frame	475		
Hiring cost of the vehicle to transport building materials	100		
Labor for the 2 builders	200		
Tailoring Furnishing:			
Chairs (From Local carpenters)	550		
Sewing Machines (12 machines)	2000		
Fabric (Cotton and silk fabric)	750		
Tailoring essentials (Thread, needles ect)	300		
Learning Materials:			
Drawing notebooks	25		
Pencils / pens	20		
Color pencils	30		
Design Magazines	30		
	8100		1900
	Total Cost : \$10,000		

Note; *The Malawi exchange rate is at 1\$: 818 Malawi Kwacha.
Temwani will provide us with all COVID protective gear*

From: [Temwa Chilenga](#)
To: [Novilhelha Moleni](#)
Subject: ASKING FOR ASSISTANCE OF SEWING MACHINES
Date: Saturday, January 1, 2022 1:38:39 PM

You don't often get email from temwachi9@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Novilhelha

I'm a primary school teacher in lilongwe rural west in malawi and apart from teaching, I take care of 95 learners who are orphans. The children were identified right there at school in 2018 when I was posted at chambu primary school. Most of them were coming to school with bare feet and dirty clothes and they looked so hungry so after finding out, I found out that they were orphans and others were homeless.

The children who were identified had siblings who were street kids so I took them off the streets and together I have 95 children. 55 girls and 40 boys. After asking for some donations from well wishers, we built homes for them on a land that was freely given by the chief at ndodani village.

The children face different challenges like lack of food and other basic needs and sometimes no one donates to the kids so we had an idea of teaching sewing to some children who don't do well in school. They learnt sewing from a friend and I managed to find one machine which they use now but we still wish if there was a chance of having more so after partnering with Novilhelha, she thought if we could have more sewing machines and what she thought was exactly what we wish to have.

Having more sewing machines is a great and rare opportunity and it's our dream everyday because the children can gain more skills, make their own clothes, sew clothes in the community and get some income to buy what is needed for orphans. It also promotes unity when working together and when the children grow up, they'll use the skill and make their own money to support themselves. Having someone like Novilhelha thinking of the orphans means so much to the whole community and it brings hope. The community is ready to help with anything like bulding something where the kids will be learning the skills and as a teacher seeing children learning such skills makes me feel at peace. I hope to hear from you again.

Yours

Temwani Chilenga.