



ActionAid imparts Vocational Skills in Young Women

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There is a lot of remarkable artisanship hidden among young women which can only come to light when they are given a chance to display it. Such talent has been identified among Chisomo Young Women Club from GVH Mdala, Traditional Authority (TA) Chilipa in Mangochi district.

The club comprises of 36 members of ages between 18 and 24. The group was established under the Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Project that ActionAid Malawi is implementing in seven TAs of Mangochi district through World Vision Malawi, with support from the Global Fund.

The AGYW Project aims at reducing HIV incidences amongst adolescent girls and young women aged 10-24. The module facilitates establishment of in-school and out-of-school girls' clubs where different key interventions are implemented targeting increased awareness of AGYW in HIV and AIDS, reduced school drop-out rate, reduced incidences of gender-based violence (GBV), but also economic empowerment activities.

According to the ActionAid Malawi AGYW Programme Coordinator, Gladson Mopiwa, under the AGYW Program, out-of-school girls are trained in vocational skills where they are trained in different skills that are relevant in their communities like baking, tailoring and farming. These girls are also trained in economic empowerment through village savings and loans (VSL) where they are enlightened on how they can save and utilize the little money they earn from small-scale businesses which they are encouraged to establish individually or as a group.

The purpose of training the girls in these skills is to empower them economically so that they do not engage in transactional sex, thereby preventing them from contracting or spreading HIV.

On the other hand, the project encourages the club members to reach out to their peers with the information they learn from the club, but also help the needy within their community in kind or materially according to their capacity. For Chisomo Club members, they



One of the members of Chisomo Girls Club carrying a wooden doll as a display of what they make

have ventured into production of various artisanal works which society mostly associates to be men's job. The club sells and earns money from wooden motors and pestles, wooden dolls, wooded cooking sticks, earthen pots, mats and brooms among other things.

"Apart from buying our individual and group's basic needs, we use part of the money to support the education of needy learners, the elderly, and those who are chronically ill in our community," explains the club's Peer Educator, Memory Dzuwa, who also said that the club generates income through crops, such as maize and groundnuts that they grow as a group.

Memory said they taught each other on how to manage their time for doing household chores, groups artistic work, farming and weekly meetings where peer educators lead in HIV and GBV sessions among other topics. Through the information they share in the club, Memory said all club member have gone for HIV testing and know their HIV statuses. She also said they encourage their friends and relatives to go for HIV testing.

"We no longer have time to move around aimlessly because apart from the group activities, we also have individual businesses to run. This prevent us from engaging in other activities that would expose us to HIV whilst on the other hand we



Some of the other material that the members of the club make in their club

earn a little something for our daily basic needs," she continued.

Chisomo Young Women Club started in 2016. By March 2020, some of the members have constructed houses with iron sheets, some have established reliable businesses, whilst some of them have gone back to school after receiving counsel. With the help of Mother Group members, the club has also encouraged many children that dropped out of school to go back.

The Young Women's entrepreneurial activities haven't gone unnoticed by their GVH Mdala who says he stands tall and proud of the Club. "I am very proud of what

these young women are doing and the impact of their activities on the lives of people in my area. I'm really grateful to World Vision for bringing these women together and for the trainings it provided to them," she said.

ActionAid Malawi under the Joint TB/HIV Global Fund Programme is implementing the AGYW Project in five districts of Lilongwe Peri-Urban through Plan International, Mulanje through Christian Aid, Thyolo through Dignitas International, Chikwawa through Norwegian Church Aid and Mangochi through World Vision Malawi.