



Photo: Memory Banda/Save the Children

MALAWI COUNTRY OFFICE - STORIES OF CHANGE, SEP 2023 SPOTLIGHT ON 'SHIFT'



Save the Children

What is 'SHIFT'?

Shift is a Save the Children campaign accelerator designed to support young activists to design and deliver public campaigns for social or environmental change. In Malawi, since April 2022, the youth campaigners are taking lead in addressing critical issues such as waste management, school dropouts, and child marriages across three districts of Lilongwe, Ntcheu and Neno.

We believe that by shifting power and embracing localized approaches, we can better respond to increasingly dynamic development and humanitarian challenges.

Story of Change: Arts Teacher Makes Impact with Recycled Costumes

Shifter **Desiree Namachotsa**, is leading a silent revolution in the realm of education and sustainability. As an actress, a sustainable fashion designer, a climate justice advocate, and an educator, she has seamlessly woven together her passions to create a unique and impactful teaching methodology that is changing the lives of her students and making a positive contribution to the environment. [Read more](#) and watch this [video](#).



Shifter Desiree



Desiree (Standing) and students making costumes for literature lessons

'Shifters' Soar High with Drones to Revolutionize Waste Management

In Lilongwe, Malawi's Capital, "Shifters" have taken the fight against waste mismanagement to new heights, quite literally. Armed with cutting-edge drone technology, the Shifters embarked on a mission to map and tackle the waste crisis plaguing **Chinsapo Market**.

"Drones reach where humans can't," proudly states Uppeh Asedi, one of the Shifter, emphasizing the innovative approach they adopted to address the waste issue.

Dedicated to tackle environmental sustainability, the Shifters underwent specialized training in drone operation, with Save the Children support. Collaborating with **Wind Ride Aeros**, a local drone service provider, they set out to comprehensively map out the waste management challenges in Chinsapo Market.

With precision and efficiency, the drones quickly revealed the gravity of the situation. They pinpointed illegal waste disposal hotspots, identified the exact number of waste bins required, and demonstrated how improper waste disposal was polluting the nearby Lilongwe River.

Armed with these results, the Shifters swung into action. They procured a range of waste disposal items including bins, shovels, wheelbarrows, and other essential tools. They distributed these items to Chinsapo Market, aiming to empower local vendors and residents to take control of their waste management practices.

The Shifters used the drone-acquired data to engage with district and city council officials and market leadership to make a compelling case for change. Lilongwe District Council recognized the importance of the Shifters' work and allocated additional resources to improve waste management infrastructure and services within the market. [More in this story.](#)



Shifter Uppeh Asedi briefs US Ambassador (David Young) to Malawi, highlighting Shifters accomplishments of the during a pavilion tour at the launch of Malawi's National Youth Ambassador. And below, Uppeh briefs The Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco to Malawi His Excellency Abdelkader Naji and Lilongwe City Mayor Richard Banda at the same event



Shifter Uppeh Asedi (Right) captured with The Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco to Malawi His Excellency Abdelkader Naji



Shifters Uppeh Asedi (Left) and Chimwemwe Banda mount a pavilion to showcase their work during launch of National Youth Policy in Lilongwe



Shifters engage Ministry of Water and Sanitation on waste management in Lilongwe during a meeting initiated by Minister Abida Mia



Shifters Waste Management Revolution Wins Hearts, High-Level Support

In a game-changing success, Lilongwe District Shifters have not only transformed waste management at Chinsapo Market but have also won the admiration of influential decision-makers. The Mayor of Lilongwe City Council and the Commissioner for Lilongwe district have become fervent ambassadors for The Shifters, impressed by their innovative approach to waste management.


Recently, The Shifters made waves at the National Launch of the Youth Policy, showcasing their impactful work at their dedicated pavilion. Their efforts caught the eye of His Excellency Abdelkader Naji, the Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco to Malawi, who was so impressed that he extended an invitation to a prestigious Green March Reception at the Moroccan Embassy.

At the reception, The Shifters engaged with various government cabinet ministers, including the Minister of Water and Sanitation Hon Abida Mia. The Minister, deeply moved by The Shifters' initiatives, facilitated introductions to directors within her ministry. This connection has led to subsequent meetings where The Shifters have been asked to submit their 2024 plan, as the Ministry expresses eagerness to collaborate and support their impactful efforts in waste management.

The Shifters' journey from local champions to national collaborators showcases the transformative power of youth-led initiatives, leaving an indelible mark on policy and decision-makers who are now fully aligned with their vision for a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Watch this [video](#) see Lilongwe City Mayor talk about Shift

The Inspiring Journey of Shifters - Ntcheu District



Shifters, in Ntcheu district, have been writing a compelling story of change, resilience, and empowerment. Their journey unfolds through distinct but interconnected chapters, each marked by remarkable achievements. Look at some of the chapters.

Photo: Lawrent Kumchenga/Save the Children

Triumph in Bringing School Dropouts Back

In Ntcheu District, “Shifters” have become beacons of hope, demonstrating that when young people come together with determination and purpose, they can create lasting positive change in their communities. Their focus has been a campaign to bring back learners who had dropped out of school.

They identified and addressed a range of challenges contributing to the high dropout rates.

According to the district education manager, Ntcheu has an average drop out of 5%. However, in Machira II Village, the drop out rate has been above average: 160 learners dropped out of school in 2022.

The shifters have influenced the return of 115 and their campaign continues, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that children have the opportunity to receive an education.

The story of 16-year-old Kupatsa exemplifies the impact of the Shifters' work:

“After my parents' divorce, my father stopped providing financial support towards my education, leading to my withdrawal from school. I was placed under the care of my mother. However, when the Shifters reached out to him, he reinstated his support and as a result, I have returned to school. I now concentrate on my studies without worrying about my future,” he says.

The campaign has also had a positive ripple effect on the local school, Machira Primary. Enrolment has significantly increased from 355 to 685, and this has translated into tangible benefits for the school. The school headteacher, Aaron Phalula, shared that they are now receiving more funding from the Ministry of Education, as funding is proportional to the number of learners in the school.

Recognizing the youth's valuable contribution, the school took a bold step and co-opted two Shifters into the school management committee. This decision immediately bore fruit. The school had long struggled to mobilize community support for constructing teachers' houses. However, with the Shifters' involvement, they successfully rallied the local youth, who form a majority in the community. Construction is progressing well, and the headteacher is hopeful that the houses will be completed by the end of 2023. [Watch this video.](#)

'Shifters' Take on Child Marriage Issue at Chief's Request

Shifters' passion and commitment have captured the attention and trust of the local leaders. This trust has now led to a new and important mission – ending child marriages in the area.

The Shifters, well-known for their relentless efforts in tackling educational challenges, are gearing up to expand their horizon. Village Headman Mzewe, a respected leader in Traditional Authority Kwataine, recognized the tremendous potential of these young activists and reached out to them for assistance in addressing the escalating problem of child marriages in his jurisdiction.

The Shifters, inspired by the chief's faith in their abilities, have taken up the challenge with a renewed sense of purpose. They are currently in the process of strategizing and developing a comprehensive plan to address child marriages.

Transforming Own Futures

While bringing positive change to their communities, Ntcheu Shifters have also discovered the power within themselves to pursue personal growth and prosperity.

The Shifters, initially united by their common goal of driving change in their communities, have embarked on a journey of self-discovery that has brought about remarkable transformations in their own lives. Many of them, having completed secondary school had limited opportunities, spending their days at home with unfulfilled aspirations. However, their collective effort and shared determination have opened doors to new possibilities.

Recognizing that their united efforts could yield more than just community improvements, the Shifters decided to pool their resources and talents together. They set their sights on agriculture, seeing it as a means to not only generate income but also contribute to food security in their communities. Today, their farms flourish with a variety of crops.

A Tune into the Future



Artists: Mike (Left) and Chimango

A vibrant life-changing rhythm is pulsating through the efforts of two Neno district Shifters - Chimango and Mike. They are proving that the power of music knows no bounds, as their song reverberates with conviction that the youth can be the catalysts for change.

Chimango, speaking about their musical endeavor, explained, "Our song has reached places where the shifters have not. It's incredible how music can transcend boundaries and bring people together. We've received calls and had many youth visiting us, eager to learn more about 'Shift' and its partnership with Save the Children, as they saw its logos in the video." Watch the [music video](#).

Shifting Horizons: One Girl's Story of Rescued Dreams

Takondwa's dream to become a nurse hit a snag in 2022 when her parents failed to continue paying for her school when she was in Form 2 at Chiwale Community Day Secondary School in Neno district. She ended up dropping out of school.

Future of the 17-years-old girl who hails from Donda village Traditional Authority Chekucheku was at crossroads and the only bright road which she saw was leading to marriage.

"I found a man to get married to because that was the only option that was left of me. I thought I would get peace and freedom in marriage. I was planning this on my own without my parents' knowledge," she said.

News of Takondwa's intentions landed onto the ears of Neno Shifters who approached her and told her the dangers of early marriages.

"I was convinced with what the shifters told me. I changed my mind and resuscitated my dream of becoming a nurse. I restarted school and the shifters are supporting me with some basic needs for my education among others. I terminated the relationship with that man and all my mind now are on school," Takondwa said.

Neno Shifters, Mayamiko Amos, says their interventions have saved more children from the jaws of early marriages in the district.

"In 2021, 10 cases of child marriages were recorded in my village. In 2022, eight cases were recorded and this year, 2023, only one case has been recorded. This is evidence that more people in the district are becoming aware of the dangers of early marriages," he says. Watch this [video](#).

Ripple Effect: Shifters Inspire Youth Across Districts to Run Campaigns

Shifters have set off a remarkable ripple effect. Their impactful work spanning the three districts has sparked an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm for creating change. Youth from distant corners of these districts are flocking to meet the Shifters, eager to learn about campaign design and execution. These inspired youth have been replicating the Shifters' efforts, resulting in the emergence of "Shift Chapters". A prime example of this is in Lilongwe, where a group of youth sought guidance from the Shifters on waste management in markets. Now, they are taking the initiative to manage waste in bus depots, demonstrating the contagious spirit of positive change and community leadership.

Shift and Generation Hope Campaign

The Shifters have taken a pivotal role in shaping our Generation Hope Campaign – a campaign for and with children, calling for urgent action on climate change and inequality. The Shifter supported campaign strategy design and working hand in hand with us, they have successfully crafted an action plan for the campaign's implementation.

Shift and Save the Children Localisation Drive

Shifters have displayed their remarkable capabilities for a potential localization partner for through a series of impressive successes. Recognizing their effectiveness, Save the Children has taken proactive steps to formalize their role as localization partners in Neno district.

Challenges and Lessons from Implementing the Shift Concept

- **Funding Management Challenge:** One significant challenge in implementing the Shift concept has been the management of funding. Since Shift has not been a formal structure to manage funding independently, Save the Children has been responsible for fund management. This has required dedicating staff to oversee activities, and it's been challenging because staff also have other roles. This has led to delayed implementation and frustration among the Shifters. A key emerging lesson is the importance of either linking Shifters with a local partner capable of managing funds or formalizing the structure and providing youth with support to handle financial aspects effectively. Shifters have demonstrated strong capabilities in successfully running campaigns and should be trusted to manage funding.
- **Short Campaign Duration:** The initial design for Shift was a one-year campaign. However, one key emerging lesson is that this timeframe is too short to create a sustained impact. To achieve lasting change, it is essential to consider designing multi-year campaigns, spanning three to five years, to ensure continued and meaningful impact on the targeted issues.
- **Shift is Effective Transition Platform for Children:** Shift has proven to be a powerful platform for transitioning children who have participated in child-oriented platforms such as child parliaments. Save the Children has invested significantly in empowering children through various programs, but when these children reach the age of 18, it becomes challenging to decide how to continue engaging them effectively. Shift has emerged as a robust solution to address this challenge, providing a seamless transition platform for these young adults to continue their engagement in meaningful ways and contribute to their communities.