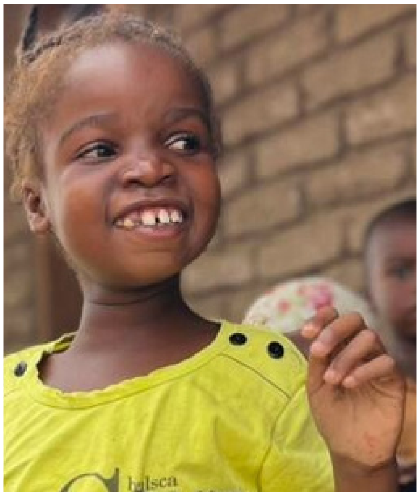
EVERY CHILD MAKES A DIFFERENCE

2025 SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM | Malawi Children's Village



Thanks to Dr Bente, Family Medicine doctor at Mangochi District Hospital, for her untiring energy to set up numerous Integrated Management Teams in the Mangochi area for the treatment of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP). The CP Clinic at MCV was the 1st she initiated. She has done research on health issues in children with CP. Her research found that a total of more than 50% of these children have moderate or severe Malnutrition.

In seeing these malnourished children in the villages around MCV and at the CP Clinic, this is what I have noticed that affects their daily lives: failure to thrive with babies, prominent bones, decreased muscle strength, fatigue, lack of appetite, cognitive delays. These physical and mental challenges complicate the development of the child who has CP. Malnutrition in itself is a cause for brain damage, with resultant CP.

Lusanne, a boy with CP, used to walk to school. I have watched him for over 10 years, learn to take his first steps and go to school. This past year, I found him having a hard time sitting for more than 3 minutes, so couldn't walk and attend school. His family has not had money for food so he is malnourished. What I have learned is that these children need their health before any physiotherapy. With Dr Bente's guidance, health education training is ongoing for health care workers, food supplements are offered to families, nutrition and diet options are offered. Sometimes the best care is a full meal; that is some of the work we have been doing in the CP clinic with thanks to the guidance of Dr. Bente.

SUCCESS LAST YEAR

- **411** clinic visits
- **213** total clients
- **18** wheelchairs / tricycles
- 12 kids supported in special needs school
- 30 kids supported in early development schools

COSTS

- **$1,200**: Family home
- **$230:** Tricycle Wheelchair
- **$160:** Manual Wheelchair
- **$75:** Accessibility ramps for schools or homes
- **$50:** Wooden Stander
- **$50:** Wooden Adapted Chair
- **$42:** Walker
- **$27:** School Uniform

A DAY IN THE THE CP CLINIC

This day is for their child, their child with special abilities. The families come early and wait under the mango tree; they talk about their child. Each child has a story that is shared. The families walk long distances or take a local matola, squished between many other people, a chicken or two and maybe a goat. But for these families they are looking forward to this day, this day is for their child.

A brightly painted room with colorful cloths awaits each family as they enter the CP (Cerebral Palsy) clinic. This clinic is a comfortable place, a place of acknowledgment for their child with special abilities.

The doctors listen to the parents, paying attention to their child's medical concerns. The parents feel accepted, recognized for their child's special abilities. If the child is too sick, they may be sent to the hospital. For these families, their child is finally getting supported.

The nutritionist weighs and measures the child's height; arm circumference is taken to ensure the child is growing as needed. The social worker listens to the parents concerns about their child's daily living patterns, providing support and acceptance for the family.

The physiotherapist attends to the child, observing their movements, while listening to the parent talk about their child's challenges or maybe ongoing successes over the last week or two. The physio teaches the parent on how to guide their child to roll, come to sitting or sit by themselves. Maybe they take their first step on this day. The parents practice what they have learned. If special equipment is needed to support the child in sitting, standing or walking, measurements will be taken and equipment provided at the next clinic.

Porridge has been prepared and given to each child out on the ground in front of the clinic. If the child needs support in learning how to chew or swallow, there is a therapist there to help each child, each parent. Parents talk to each other, sharing their child's stories, supporting one another.

This day is for their child.
And for them.

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

YOU CAN DONATE ONLINE OR WRITE A CHECK

Donate online:
MalawiChildrensVillage.org
Designate for
Special Needs Program

Write checks payable to:
"MCV Special Needs"

Mail to:
Mary Pomeroy
10420 Lone Tree Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99507

As I walked into a village, I met a little girl who couldn't get up from the ground and needed assist to walk. Upon seeing this child and family waiting, I sat down and started playing with her. I put a cup on my head; the whole family laughed. I put the cup on her head; it fell numerous times until she understood that she had to sit tall and not wiggle to have the cup stay on her head. Success! She needed to learn balance. I provided a light touch on her shoulders; she came to stand with the cup still on her head. The whole family clapped, as did she, and the cup fell off. After several successful trials, I walked away and this little girl was proudly standing straight up, by herself, with a cup on her head.

MOTHERS TELLING THEIR STORIES

Every child makes a difference. Every mother has a story to tell, especially when their child has a disability. A young mother with a beautiful baby who has a hard time eating, unable to sit or move on the ground, but is held tenderly with loving arms. The child's eyes are bright and knowing, but she is unable to move.

A mother with a beautiful scarf draping over her head and shoulders, a sad look in her eyes, her hand telling an animated story about the worries for her child: will she be able to talk and go to school. The child's eyes wonder the same things.

A frightened mother with an older girl on her lap is at her first CP Clinic. Her child is not walking so can't go to school. She has seen a "metal thing" being pushed by another child who is walking. The mother had to drop out of school to help out at home; she wants a different future for her daughter.

As a physiotherapist visiting these mothers, I search for one salient offer to them that will make a difference in their lives.

VASTINA'S STORY by Vincent Sisya, Deputy Director MCV

Vastina Chisi was born a healthy, joyful baby on the 4th of July 4, 2012. For eight years, her life in her small family—her mother, Mercy, and her siblings—was filled with the normal rhythms of childhood: learning, playing, and helping her mother, a divorced woman who worked tirelessly at community piece jobs to provide for them.

One Sunday morning, she suddenly collapsed. Rushed to the hospital, there was no detectable sickness, yet she was paralyzed. Her life was now confined to a bed, her education and dreams suddenly out of reach.

Days turned into weeks of despair. A return visit to the hospital confirmed no diagnosis; the only path forward was to begin physiotherapy to regain her skills. Slowly, with immense effort, Vastina regained the use of her hands, though every movement was a struggle.

MCV special needs program took up her cause, sending her twice to Queen's Hospital in Blantyre for advanced diagnosis. The mystery remained; all tests returned as normal. MCV ensured that she could get to school every day by providing a bicycle taxi.

Today, Vastina is in grade 6. Her hands, once weak, now work very well. She can cook, wash her clothes, and, most importantly, hold a pen to write, so that she can continue her learning. With her rollator (walker), she can stand and be mobile. At school, her friends help her as she needs it. These small acts of kindness help her each day.

Her mother, Mercy, speaks from a heart full of gratitude: "I never thought my daughter would be able to use her hands and stand without using any support. The physiotherapists at the MCV Special Needs program have given us hope for a brighter future. From our hearts, we sincerely say thank you." Vastina's journey is not over, but it is no longer defined by despair, but by resilience, kindness and the promise of the ability to have an education.

My husband and I will be returning to Malawi in Ocober. Donations are accepted at anytime! Know that many children with special needs are now going to school or walking for the first time because you care.

Zikomo Kwambiri (Thank you very much),
Mary Pomeroy