



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN AIDS AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS

Written by Mike Mkwala



Beneficiaries of the project singing ASUD, Egmont yo yo yo (a local praise song)

In Mzimba district in Malawi, households affected by AIDS are often among the poorest and most vulnerable.

These households struggle to meet basic needs such as food and health care, and children in these households are particularly at risk of malnutrition, poverty and lack of education.

This is why the Action for Sustainable Development (ASUD) with support from Egmont Trust is supporting over 500 children in AIDS affected households by distributing water cans, seeds, fruit

seedlings, banana suckers and pigs among others to the affected families. ASUD also conducts different sustainable food production skills, outreach nutrition education and cookery demonstrations to raise awareness on food values and enhance diet diversification.

This is designed to help families grow more food, which in turn helps to improve nutrition and reduce the risk of malnutrition in children.



The Mzima family, beneficiaries of the project, poses with ASUD Executive Director Thomas Ngwira

Meet Patriciah Mzima, a mother of 3 children living at Engucwini in Mzimba in Malisawa Nyirenda Village, Traditional Authority Mtwalo.

She narrates that through the project her family is a proud owner of 2 pigs. Trained by ASUD they use organic manure collected from the pig kraal to apply to their farm.



Patriciah Mzima showing her green maize field courtesy of the project

“We’ve been using pig manure to fertilize our crops and it has been a great help in providing for the family. The proceeds from our harvest have been enough to pay school fees and school development fund for our three children and provide us with six groups of food every week”, said Mzima.

Also benefiting from the project in a similar way is Kenneth Nyirenda from the same village. He is a father of 2 children.



Kenneth Nyirenda – a beneficiary of the project

His family too got one pig, courtesy of the project ASUD is implementing, which has given his family four piglets



The four piglets in Nyirenda's kraal

“Raising the pigs will provide us with steady income with a possibility of selling the pigs for a profit. There are also additional benefits that the pigs bring to the farm such as providing natural fertilizer for the crops. From one pig to four pigs now, we will work hard so that they multiply more”, said Nyirenda.

The family of Village Head Malisawa is also beneficiaries of the project.



The Andrew Nyirenda (Village Head Malisawa) family

The family has got four children, one of which is in secondary school.

A visit to their house shows how the family, as leaders of the community, is living exemplary.

The family has got a backyard garden, courtesy of permaculture supervision from ASUD. The family produces a variety of fresh produce that helps to supplement their otherwise limited diet.



Wife to Village Head Malisawa in their family backyard garden

“We can now have fresh vegetables all year round, which help us to stay healthy and gives us energy. Not only has the garden provided the family with a source of nutrition, but it has had a positive effect on the overall quality of life. We sell extra vegetables at the local market and we get the much needed income to buy other needs”, said Fanny Munthali, wife to Village Head Malisawa.



Village Head Malisawa’s wife making a way for the livestock

Andrew Nyirenda (Village Head Malisawa) adds that the garden has been a life saver in more than one way.

“Through the income generated from the backyard garden we have been able to buy a variety of livestock like chickens, guinea fowls, ducks and pigeons, so that we have a stable income base. In addition the income we earn helps up to buy cooking oil and extra food such as fish and meatl”, said Nyirenda.

Almost each and every house in this village has got a backyard garden now.



Women plucking vegetables in a backyard garden



Time to sort the vegetables

A unique approach is used to support children affected by AIDS directly or indirectly through health centre based teen clubs established through the project.

The clubs are organized and run by the teens themselves, with the goal of providing a safe space for the children and adolescents who have been impacted by HIV directly or indirectly through a variety of activities and services including mentorship, peer-support, educational and recreational activities.



Engucwini teen club members playing a game during one of their monthly meetings

ASUD has provided play materials for the children courtesy of the project.

Each last Saturday of the month, the children come for the teen club meetings.

Apart from facilitating medical support and socialization of the children, ASUD also supports the children in other areas like providing food, clothing's, blankets as well as school fees.



Ngwira of ASUD and Mzuma Ngwira presenting a blanket to one of the teen club members

On Saturday, 25 February 2023, ASUD Executive Director, Thomas Ngwira, in the company of the District Medical Officer for Mzimba North District Health Office, Shadreck Mzuma Ngwira, paid a surprise visit to Engucwini Health Centre to appreciate the impact of the teen clubs.

Among others, the Executive Director of ASUD donated blankets to all the children that came for the meeting.

“What we are doing is to support a child holistically, for instance we are talking about providing lunch at every monthly meeting for the children, we are also providing school fees to children from most vulnerable households and today we brought blankets.



Ngwira of ASUD stressing a point to the members of Engucwini teen club and health personnel

“As you know many of the children are coming from very poor families that fail to afford buying proper blankets for the children to cover themselves at night”, said Ngwira.

Mzimba North District health office has called for establishment of more teen club to help in supporting children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

District Medical Officer for Mzimba, Shadreck Mzuma Ngwira, says currently out of 27 health facilities only 5 have got teen clubs that are offering this kind of service in Mzimba north.



Shadreck Mzuma Ngwira – District Medical Officer for Mzimba North

“We wish these services could extend or roll out to other health facilities because teen clubs help a lot. It is where we experience significant increased number of adolescents with good uptake of medication and integration”, said Mzuma Ngwira.



Teen members listening attentively to health personnel at the monthly meeting

The teen club at Engucwini has over 40 members and numbers keep growing each and every month, as the children take the club as a haven for support, encouragement and socialization. Currently, ASUD is also supporting another teen club at Nkhorongo Health Centre in the same Mzimba district with grant from Egmont Trust.