

'He For She'

Photo Documentary Exhibition to mark the

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence 2015

This is an initiative of the Irish Agencies in Malawi - as members of
the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

against gender based violence

The 16 Days of Activism is an international advocacy campaign that aims to raise awareness of gender based violence (GBV) against women. It draws together civil society, government, international organisations and more, to unite with one voice on the need to end violence against women and girls globally.

In 2014 UN Women initiated a solidarity campaign for gender equality with a goal to engage men and boys as advocates and stakeholders, to break the silence, raise their voices and take action for the achievement of gender equality. In recent years there has been increasing recognition of the need for male involvement, for positive male role models who are prepared to make a difference in their communities.

Combining these two international campaigns, this photographic exhibition profiles some of the gender work of five Irish international organisations based in Malawi: Concern Worldwide, Goal, Trócaire, Self help Africa and Action Aid. In collaboration with the embassy of Ireland and the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence it aims to showcase and celebrate the work of men and boys as agents of change to both Irish and Malawian audiences.

This exhibition allows men and boys and women and girls who have been supported by male change agents to tell their stories. These stories represent courage, perseverance and determination to make a change in a world where women are often subjugated and fail to enjoy their rights, simply because they are women. The subjects of our case studies have chosen to stand up and stand out, to speak up and speak out. They believe that together men and women can make a difference.

We invite you to hear their voices.



“We believe that one of the most important ways to change the lives of women and girls for the better is to influence the attitudes and behaviours of men, and when good men stand up and lead by example others will follow”.

Irish Agencies in Malawi (as members of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence)

ALFRED

Alfred Chisale, a husband and father of two daughters, leads a team of 29 people, including 17 women, producing Chitetezo Mbaula clay cookstoves; simple but quietly transforming the lives of women and children on a daily basis.

Thousands of women around Malawi prefer the safer, cleaner and quicker cookstove. It is portable and saves firewood as wood is sourced less often. Chitetezo users are exposed to less smoke in the cooking place, reducing respiratory infections amongst women and children. Women are saving money through buying less charcoal, and they feel they contribute to protecting their local environment. More than 40,000 are benefiting from stoves produced by Alfred's team.

Mrs. Effie Sambani is one of the 17 women who have benefited from Alfred's company, "I started producing Chitetezo Mbaula [cookstoves] in 2012. Since then my life has been much better. I am able to use the money I save to pay school fees and buy food items". Effie was awarded Best Producer and received a cash prize at Malawi's Cleaner Cooking Camp in 2015 having produced 1,101 stoves in 2014.



BOSTON

Boston Kaluwa (34) is married with three daughters. Perhaps this inspired his work as a volunteer educating his community about equality for women. Women in Boston's community are vulnerable to violence, are being married off as children for dowries and being taken out of school earlier than boys to provide household labour. Boston is working with the community to end these traditions and the behaviours that support them.

For example "until recently it was not done for a husband and wife to walk together side by side in public". Boston says "this was viewed as a weakness on the part of the man; that he was under his woman's control. Breaking through these stereotypes was a big breakthrough for me". Breaking through stereotypes like this is a first step towards ending traditions that disempower women and girls.

Increasingly, violence and attacks on women are being reported through Boston to community authorities and the police and nineteen cases have been referred in the last two months. Boston is proud of what has been achieved. At home, his wife Mercy is much happier. "Recently she hugged me and thanked me for being a role model in our community, the highest form of praise I could receive!"



CHIMWAVI

Chimwavi has held his Chieftainship position for fifteen years and presides over 600 households in twelve villages of Salima, Central Malawi.

He first became aware of the issues facing women five years ago. Today Chimwavi declares “many women are experiencing violence through cultural and religious practises in the area, but in my role as a leader and as a Chief I have a responsibility to ensure that such practises end.”

It is clear that Chimwavi has been taking his responsibility seriously. Over the past five years Chimwavi’s community has been very proactive in tackling destructive traditions such as violence in the home, child marriage and traditional initiation ceremonies for boys. More recently there was a successful education drive to end the practice of evicting a woman and her family from their home when her husband has died.

In the past Chimwavi had the power to adjudicate over even the most serious of gender based violence cases but he has passed this power to the authorities. “We know our role,” he says “I no longer handle cases of rape or sexual violence; these need to go through formal legal agencies. This not a threat to my authority. I feel good that justice is being served.”



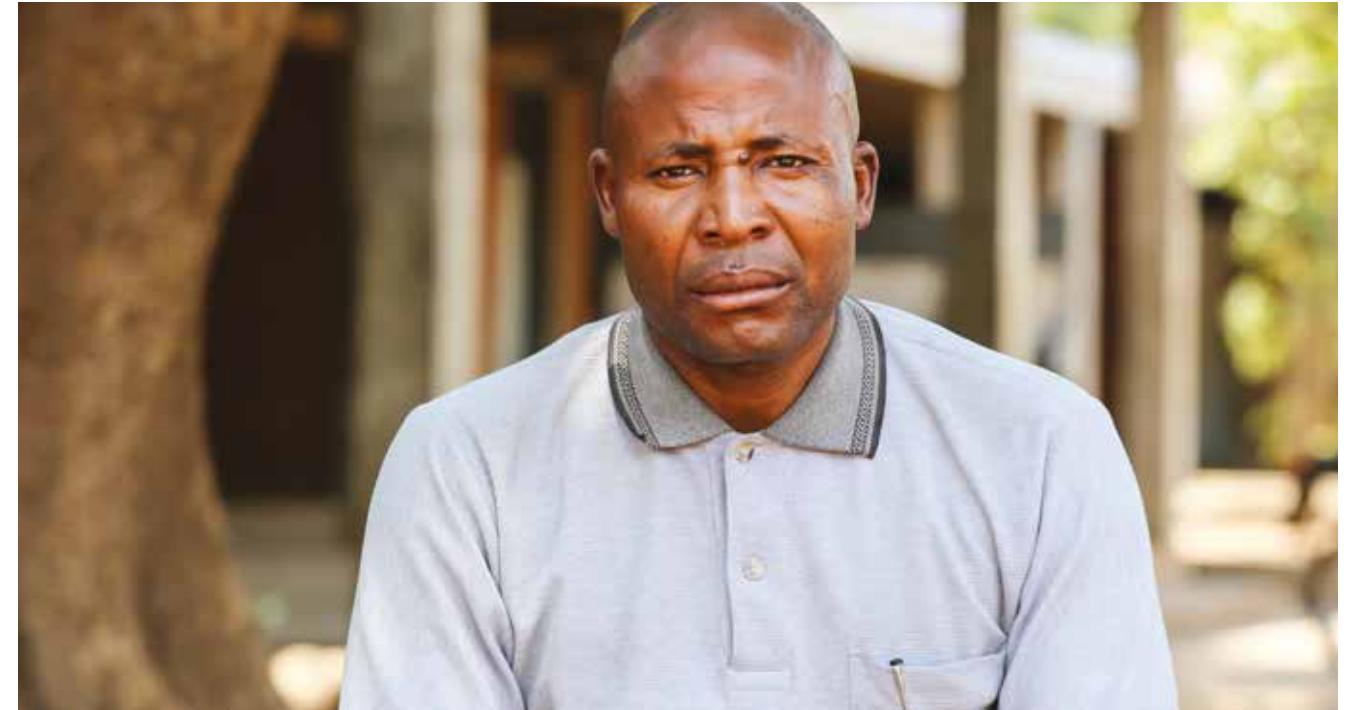
T/A MAGANGA

T/A Maganga (46) has been a Traditional Authority for four years and presides over 46,000 people in 62 villages in Salima district (Central Malawi).

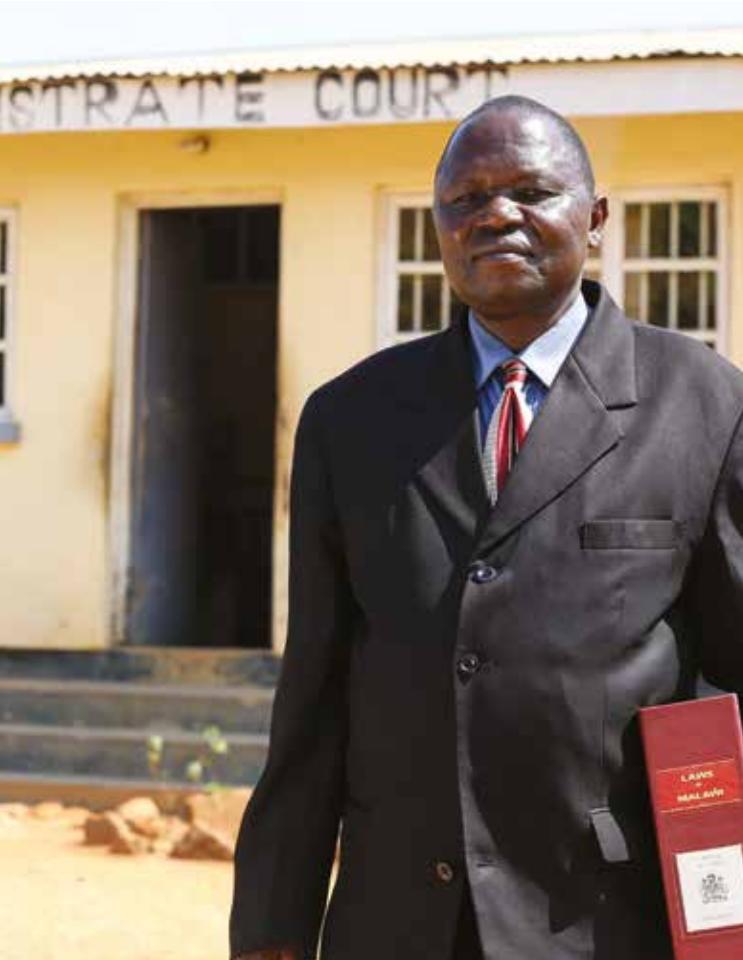
Maganga states that “in the past women were viewed as minor beings with no rights who existed to be subservient to men. Times are changing and we must change with them. We must share ideas, we must work together if there is to be equality”.

Maganga has worked with his junior chiefs and the communities to bring about this change and to promote gender equality. Community Parliaments have been established to formulate by-laws which modify or eliminate practises that are harmful to the wellbeing of the community. The Child Marriage Law is also upheld and girls who are married illegally are returned to their families.

According to Maganga, “Inequality is often promoted in the name of culture, however where our culture does more harm than good we must change it. It’s not easy for people, we grew up like this, but times are changing and we must change too.”



JULIUS KALAMBO



Elsion Banda is a Group Village Head in T/A Nchemba, Chiradzulu. He is highly motivated to ensure violence against women is ended in his village. He teaches women what their rights are and supports women to report cases to the police and the health clinics.

Elsion's work also involves counselling men to change traditional attitudes and behaviours that support violence against women.

Women in Elsion's village are now voicing opinions, making decisions and standing up for their rights - including their property rights. Elsion has set an example for others in his community encouraging more men to speak out to end violence against women and girls. Florence Kamwana, a leader for the women's movement in the village states "Having positive peer pressure from Elsion to the other men in the village is working for the enhancement of women's rights here, as now his behaviour is seen as being progressive and hence there are more men that are emulating his positive example".

He has shown great leadership to end Gender Based Violence and has helped several families. Elsion says "for me, whether one is a man or a woman, rights ought to be respected; women are human beings and like men they deserve their rights to be fully respected".

OSWARD NAKHAYA

"I like working with women because I do not want them to be victimised in any way".

Osward Nakhaya supports the Salima Gender Network to advocate for women's rights in his area. He has been with this network since 2005 and has supported them in all of their activities, including the construction of a local resource centre for women.

The network also assists women and girls who have suffered violence to access services such as counselling and mediation, and refers them on to the police and health clinics. Elizabeth Phiri, of SAWEG (Salima Gender Network) states that "Osward Nakhaya is a long-time friend on advocating for women's rights and he has greatly assisted in women's rights work especially in Traditional Authority Pemba. His work as a women's rights advocate has greatly inspired other men who were stigmatising women's rights as a women's issue, rather than it being everyone's concern". Salima Gender Network has noted that working on women's rights without including men may make progress in terms of some women realising their rights, however it leaves other women behind. It is now deemed alien to not involve the perpetrators, as this would allow men to turn a deaf ear on the issues raised at community awareness meetings.

"Having men on our side demystifies the concept that women are equal to men and deserve their rights to be respected in the same way as men do".



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Lenason Dinyero is a 34 year old farmer from Dinyero village in Misamvu, Nsanje district in southern Malawi. He is also chairperson of Nyantchiri School Fathers' Group. Lenason tells the story of Daliyesi Mozhenti, a 14 year old girl who was on the verge of being married off to a 19 year old man from Bangula.

'As a 'fathers' group' we work to protect and rescue vulnerable children, especially girls, from harmful cultural practices including early or forced marriages.'

Upon receiving information that Daliyesi was to get married, the fathers' group started investigations. They realized that the parents of both the girl and the young man had arranged the marriage.

After initial mediation with the parents failed, the father's group informed the authorities, because under the new Marriage Act (2015), the legal minimum age for marriage is 18. The police and child protection workers became involved. The parents subsequently ended the arrangement. They were fined two goats per family under local by-laws.

Daliyesi stayed in school and she has since passed Standard 5 and moved on to Standard 6. "A literate generation will benefit the entire community," said Lenason. "We have had some success and we are working hard on it."



ESAU KAMWENDO

As a boy, Esau Kamwendo frequently witnessed instances of domestic violence. “My father would beat my mother regularly,” he says. “It was just what men believed - if you don’t beat your wife she will not behave.” Of the seven children in his family, he was the only one to get an education. “One of my sisters died while giving birth at the age of fourteen. These things affected me very much.”

By 2007 Esau had joined the Malawi Police Service and was assigned to the Victim Support Unit (VSU). “I was with the VSU in Nkhotakota for seven years,” he says. “We did awareness meetings and counselling with communities. But I saw there was a gap – our unit could not reach many of the people. We decided to partner with NGOs, community organisations, and youth groups... and our data shows that people are responding.”

Today Esau is cautiously optimistic for the future. “If the new marriage law is enforced then the next generation has hope,” he says. “I myself have two boys and one girl and I am trying hard to make sure they do not suffer the same disadvantages we did in the past.”



SMART MINEZHI

Smart Minezhi (64) is married to Mage Smart (59) and is a role model to a lot of families because of the way he supports his wife. Since they married 40 years ago, Smart has always supported Mage with the household tasks traditionally seen as being the role of the woman, such as washing clothes, cooking, cleaning utensils and going to the maize mill.

Mage is involved in small livestock production and conservation agriculture. She lost her sight in one eye three years ago. Mage’s poor eyesight makes it very difficult for her to perform many of these tasks so the support from Smart is now critically important.

While Smart is an inspiration to most people in the community, some men criticise him. ‘Although most of my friends laugh at me this does not demotivate me since I am doing this in order for my house to live a better life, and I think its high time we change how we think and start treating women equally’, he says.





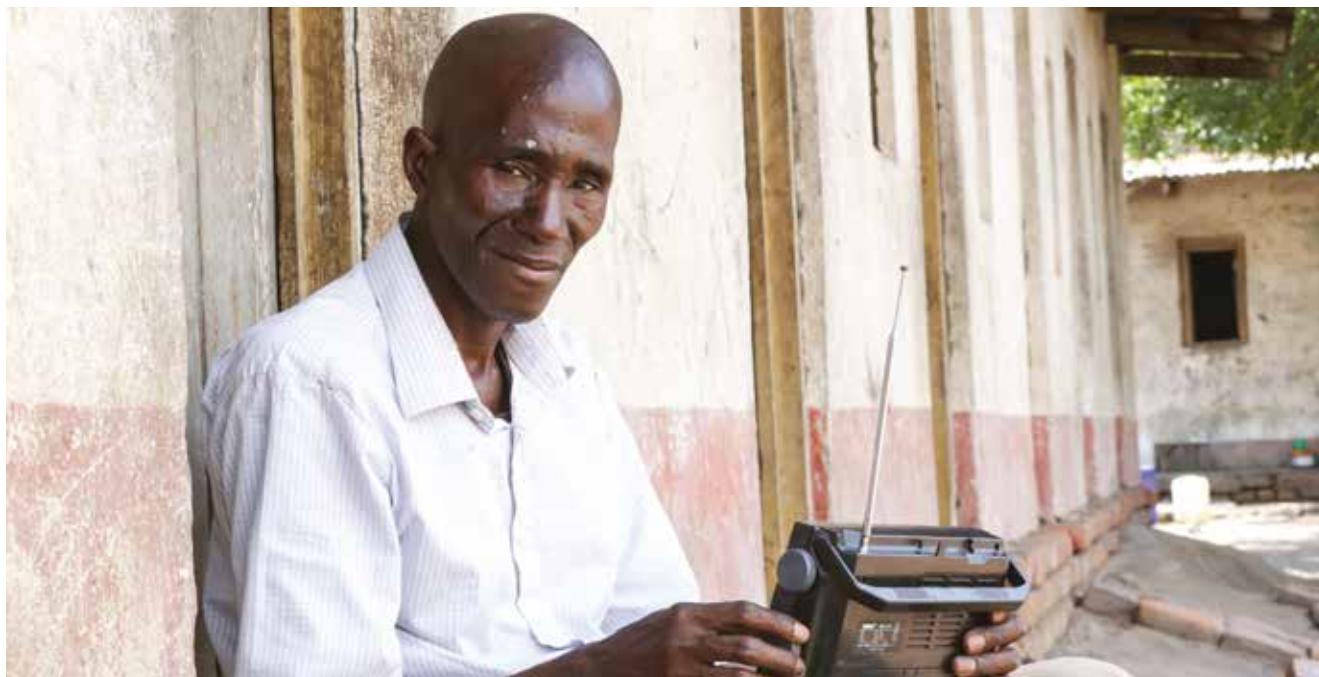
SMART

Smart is married with seven children. He is the secretary of an Area Civil Protection Committee (ACPC) in Nsanje district and was one of four ACPC members who participated in the GOAL nutrition training focusing on malnutrition and child development.

During the training Smart suddenly realised that unequal gender relations in households was resulting in unequal distribution of food, leading to child malnutrition in his own community. He saw for the first time that women did not have the power within their homes to distribute household food evenly between their husbands and their children and that this was putting children at risk of malnutrition.

Following the training Smart took it upon himself to mobilise the ACPC to respond to this issue and to lead on conducting trainings across the community. Together they began with information meetings about the importance of nutrition to encourage equal distribution of food. They also began to address power dynamics within households and to encourage joint decision making, both on food distribution but also more generally.

Thanks to these meetings women have been empowered in household decision making and food is now distributed more evenly improving the child nutrition levels, including for Smart's seven children.



BONIFACE

Boniface is a 55 year old farmer and is married with six children. He is a keen advocate for the rights of oppressed groups and is particularly frustrated by how badly women are treated. As secretary of his Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) he has actively tried to reach out to women in the villages but 'it was very difficult to reach out to many as they were so spread out'

In January 2015 heavy floods forced 2,300 households into temporary shelter at Bitilinyu Evacuation Camp. Out of this crisis came the opportunity for Boniface to intensify his work to support women's rights 'When floods came ... I seized the opportunity to reach out to women who were being ill-treated.' Boniface mobilised fellow VCPC members and they held meetings at the camp on women's rights and the importance of women's participation in decision-making.

At one meeting, three women were particularly interested and Boniface began mentoring them on human rights, advocacy and support for vulnerable groups. The women went on to set up the Camp Victim Support Unit, primarily for women and children who were considered the most vulnerable to abuse in the camp.

The female leadership in this unit encouraged women to come forward and use the facility and it has been a beacon of hope for many.





SYLVESTER ALUBANO

Sylvester Alubano is 41 years old and lives with his wife and four children. He is proud of his wife and how she has transformed their family life since she joined a Village Savings group.

VSL groups are community savings and lending groups where members save money and are given an opportunity to access loans to purchase items or pursue small-scale businesses.

Sylvester states, 'My wife worked hard in her group, and money she borrowed from the group was used to start a grocery business. She now buys clothes, school materials and food for the children'. Consequently everyone in the family is eating better and is healthier.

She is also taking the lead on managing their livestock at home too "it was her decision to build a brick fence around our home, already 20,000 bricks have been made to build this wall" says Sylvester proudly.

Sylvester now enjoys making decisions about their expenditure alongside his wife.



MUSSA



Through community Dialogue meetings, Mussa became aware of the gender inequality in his community and its effect on women. While the women were doing most of the work to produce food for the family, often they did not have a voice, choice or control in decisions about how this food or the income from it was used in their homes.

To address this inequality, Mussa reaches out to women to support their participation through his work in a seed programme. By providing women with a 'loan' of seeds, it allows families to broaden their harvests and strengthen their income. Mussa also continues with community dialogues to change the traditional norms that do not allow for women to participate in decisions.

Economic empowerment is a stepping stone to facilitate women to claim their power in society.

Ethel has learned about the initiative through one of Mussa's awareness meetings. Ethel now grows a range of crops, some of which the family eats and some of which she sells for extra income. Ethel feels more confident and is happy that she can share in making decisions with her husband for her family. Ethel Says 'I can now grow groundnuts and I am able to make decisions on how to use that money. Life is better in our family and we no longer quarrel over money issues.'



YOHANE MALUWATA

In recent years Yohane Maluwata has participated in awareness raising trainings that look at the roles of men and women in farming, and in the community. These training have helped Yohanne change his view of women and the roles women can play in the home and in the community. These changes in attitude have helped improve home life for Yohane's wife Zione and their family. While Zione said her husband "used to be against equality in everything," now she is proud of her husband. "My husband and I work together to share the workload during agricultural production. Previously I was doing it alone and my husband was just involved in marketing the produce."

Yohane has been trained as an advocate to reach out to others in his community. He encourages husbands and wives to work together sharing the workload, and sharing in decisions, and is happy to see they are following his example. His experience in reaching out to couples has been encouraging as well as worthwhile. "Men are now more willing to share workloads and household responsibilities with their wives, and to share in decision making, bringing more equality and harmony to the household."



SAMSON MSAMBALA

Samson Msambala became chairperson of Mtekera feeding group after the training he received in nutrition education helped his young son to gain weight.

As a result Samson started cooking food for their 24 month old boy who was underweight at that time. This was seen as 'women's work' but he took it on willingly. 'My husband still does this at home. He buys the food, helps me with cooking as well as feeding the child. When the child is sick we go to the hospital together,' says his wife Elenesi. 'This has increased the harmony in the household as a result of the support my husband is giving me. We no longer fight as workload is shared.' After his experience, Samson decided to share nutrition and cooking information with other households in the community, including men.

He met Mr Kesten and Mrs Elenesi Msiska whose four year old boy was underweight. Thanks to his support the child gained 2 kilograms over twelve days. Kesten now has become involved in cooking and feeding his child

Samson has reached out to 16 couples so far and his work continues today.





“We should be respectful but we must also have the courage to stop harmful practices that impoverish girls, women and their communities.”
Graca Machel

act:onaid

CONCERN
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Working for a just world.



Ambasáid na hÉireann
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**Self Help
Africa**
Food and a future



Irish Aid
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MOVING
BEYOND
FEAR

