

Getting it right for every child (Girfec) – SHANARRI indicators

Report by Levison Mlambya, Co Founder of The William Stewart Hope for the Hopeless Foundation, Malawi and Sarah Black, Development Manager for the Foundation. (March 2019)

INTRODUCTION

The William Stewart Hope for the Hopeless Foundation is an NGO operating initially in the northern part of Malawi. It was registered as an NGO by the Ministry of Justice and Constitution Affairs in 2017. The Foundation was established to provide an organisation through which the poor and vulnerable living rurally can be fed, educated and learn life skills and have their lives greatly transformed through the following:

- * Ensure active participation of all marginalized and hopeless people in society in various socio-economical activities
- * Cultivate and strengthen the spiritual lives of the hopeless people in society
- * Promote the rights of marginalised and hopeless people in various societies and communities
- * Receiving and administering any contributions, grants or any other assistance which may be received by The Registered Trustees of The Foundation.
- * The establishment and management of community schools and orphanages in community areas
- * Educating and training of both children and adults in life skills
- * Cooperate with other organisations which include among their aims, the furtherance of these objectives

This document will narrate the situation of orphaned and under-privileged children in Ibuluma-Chitipa using the Getting it Right for Every Child (Girfec) approach used in Scotland (where Sarah Black lives). The SHANARRI indicators look at different aspects of the child's life. This will help the reader understand in more detail the environment in which the orphans live, the difficulties they face,

what has been achieved so far and the importance of including the orphans in decision making to help them achieve and live healthier lives. Levison Mlambya, Co Founder of the Foundation, writes in blue and Sarah Black, Development Manager, writes in red.

SHANARRI is an acronym for; Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included.

Safe

Safety, as well as a basic need for shelter, includes being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury.

In Ibuluma village, and Malawi as a whole, orphaned and under-privileged children are prone to a number of situations and conditions that put their lives at risk. In Ibuluma, orphaned and under-privileged children are in dire poverty which means they have no access to food, money and many other basic needs. These children are forced into harmful work, sexual exploitation and abuse, physical or mental violence. These children do not go to school or spend very little time at school.

Due to poverty, orphaned and under-privileged children, especially girls, engage in child prostitution which results in them getting infected with HIV/Aids and some have teenage pregnancies which can lead them to untimely deaths. Boys engage in robbery and drug and substance abuse. This leads to arrests and expulsion from school.

Most of these orphaned and under-privileged children live in dilapidated houses. Just last year some children died after the walls of their houses fell in on them. Most of our orphaned and under-privileged children are sleeping in deadly environments, exposed to the elements. For those who go to school, they are seen walking barefoot. They walk long distances and pass through dangerous forests. They reach the school tired. These children, especially the girls, are sometimes sexually harassed by older men who rape them.

As they go to school, due to being thirsty, they drink water from rivers which animals such as cattle are also using. Due to hunger, the children eat wild fruits

some of which are poisonous. Just last year a child died after taking the water that was used for soaking cassava thinking that it was milk. It can get extremely cold at night and the orphans do not have adequate protection from the elements. Some are still so cold when they get to school the next morning they cannot write until they have warmed up.

Another challenge for vulnerable girls is when they experience their monthly periods. Due to lack of sanitary pads, most of them remain absent from school during this time.

The William Stewart Hope for the Hopeless Foundation supports about 300 children in Ibuluma and surrounding villages by giving them shoes, flip-flops, raincoats, clothes, torches and umbrellas so that they are safe from rains.

The Foundation is also teaching the children some life skills on how to be good citizens by giving them moral skills and also teaching them ways of becoming aware of how they can prevent and protect themselves from contracting HIV/Aids.

In Malawi there is a misconception that bones or body parts of people with albinism can be used for rituals and to make some people rich. We have known of many people with albinism who have been butchered by cruel, heartless people. This situation has led to people with albinism being fearful in their own homes. In Chitipa, a woman with albinism had her hands chopped off by evil minded people.

Though the government has tried to tighten security to protect the people with albinism, there is a need for the NGOs like us to go throughout Malawi to teach people of the evil of killing people with albinism. As an organisation we believe every person has a right to life. These people need attitudes to change in order that they feel safe in their own communities.

Due to lack of resources, we are unable to reach all the people with albinism in Chitipa and other districts. An appeal can therefore be made for the project to reach out these people with albinism in Chitipa.

Safe

Most of the orphans are not safe as they live in very dilapidated houses/shacks which are in need of vital repairs. Children walk long distances to school and are tired. The orphans, especially the girls, are at risk of sexual abuse whilst travelling back from school.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (A Theory of Human Motivation, 1943. Wikipedia) states that humans' requirement for basic needs (food, water, warmth and rest and security and safety) must be met before being able to form relationships, achieving potential and self-esteem.

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. (Article 27, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF.org.uk)

We have a great deal to do to be able to change things for these vulnerable children. Education will help, as children are taught how to respect themselves and others; however, safer accommodation is a necessity. Hopefully, as the Foundation grows, we will be able to begin to address this problem. Their houses are exposed to the elements and it can be extremely cold at night. Blankets have been donated and sent to the Foundation, though there aren't enough for each child yet. It is hoped to supply more blankets so the orphans have some warmth. A recent appeal for hats and gloves was successful but, again, there are far more children than hats and gloves. Children have a right to be safe and warm.

The fact that the children are learning skills like building and carpentry will enable them to make repairs and gain employment in the future. Reusable sanitary products can be made now the Foundation has been gifted two hand turn Singer sewing machines, fabric and other sewing equipment.

Healthy

The health status of the child has an effect on his or her social, moral and intellectual development. Only a healthy child is expected to perform well in school.

Some of the orphans being supported by the Foundation were born with HIV/Aids. As a requirement some of them are taking ART drugs which help to reduce the multiplication of the HIV virus. It is also a requirement for the HIV positive children to have enough nutritious food.

Due to lack of money, most of these children die early due to poor nutrition and, of course, lack of food.

Due to poor hygiene, most of the orphans' homes are infected by lice and bedbugs which cause skin infections. These children do not have mosquito nets making them extremely vulnerable to Malaria. Malaria is one of the most deadly diseases claiming many children's lives in Malawi. Since children are very young and live with their grandparents, who are too old to build latrines, most of these children squat under bushes to answer the call of nature, therefore contributing to high rates of water and food borne diseases.

The Foundation introduced a farming programme that includes livestock and crops which helps the foundation to feed about 300 children. Different crops like maize, soybeans, groundnuts, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and different vegetables are grown in the Foundation farm. The Foundation has recently started keeping goats and chickens that can bring in money and also supplement food for the children.

The William Stewart Hope for the Hopeless Foundation also introduced a feeding programme to about 300 children in Ibuluma and surrounding villages. Children are fed twice a week. Children are given nsima with beans, soya pieces, vegetables, tea and snacks. In addition to providing the children with some food, the Foundation also teaches the children good hygiene and, to portray a good example, the Foundation has built decent latrines with funds donated by friends of the Foundation. Children are taught how best to use the latrines or toilets and the importance of hand washing. This has helped to increase children's attendance in school and improve children's health.

Healthy

Facts: over 70 per cent of the population live below the income poverty line. Child marriage is 46.7 per cent before age of 18. Only 58.5 per cent of schoolgoing children finish the first 4 years of school. 65 per cent of girls and 35 per cent of boys experience child abuse in their lifetime. 23 per cent of all child deaths in Malawi are related to under-nutrition. Stunting (being too short for one's age) affects 37 per cent of children in Malawi. Number of children (0-14) living with HIV 110,000. (UNICEF.org)

As the William Stewart Foundation had a very successful first harvest and due to some monetary donations, over 200 orphans turn up to be fed each Saturday and Sunday. This has made a difference to their health, strength and concentration at school. Latrines have been built and good hygiene is being taught and followed ie washing hands after visiting the latrines and before eating. The next crops have been planted and goats and chickens have been purchased following a very successful appeal at Christmas. So goats milk and eggs can be added to the children's diets, enabling them to have more nutrients. Any surplus eggs can be sold/exchanged. Many of the orphans are HIV positive and on medication. Their mental health has suffered from the traumas they have faced due to ill health, parental deaths and trying to survive in the harshest conditions. They have, until recently, felt abandoned and uncared for; older children doing their best for their younger siblings but failing to be able to provide food, warmth and proper shelter. These children have missed out on their childhoods. The William Stewart Foundation has started to give these children hope; improving their mental health as well as providing for their physical health. We recognise that children who have had to assume responsibilities beyond their years will possibly want to play with resources for younger children. Levison has counselling skills so he can help the orphans process some of their trauma. This is part of our therapeutic approach and we want children to form positive attachments and begin to trust that things will improve and to finally have hope instead of feeling that their lives were totally hopeless.

Active

The William Stewart Hope for the Hopeless Foundation is engaged in helping orphaned and underprivileged children be as active as possible by providing team sports and learning life skills. The children walk long distances each day, so already are active, but we want to support their mental health as well as their physical health.

Whenever children are at the resource centre they are engaged in different activities like singing, playing sports, reading and life skill classes. All this is done to stimulate them mentally as well as being physically active children.

We believe that engaging them in different activities can also help them be physically fit children; building muscles and using gross and fine motor skills.

It is our wish to involve them in different activities but we lack some resources like uniforms, boots, balls and nets. Most of these materials are improvised so, whilst the children are enjoying playing games, having proper equipment would help the children's skills improve and make them more interested in getting involved. An appeal is therefore made to well-wishers who can help with providing and sending out sports equipment as well as school resources.

Active

We know that the orphans are physically active as they walk long distances every day out of necessity. However, is there typically fun in their daily activity? By providing sports equipment, the Foundation is encouraging fun activities and promoting teamwork. The orphans have missed out on a big part of childhood due to the traumas and hardship they have endured. Whilst being involved in games, sports and learning physical skills like carpentry and farming, the orphans will hopefully be able to forget their situations and enjoy positive experiences and have fun with their peers. This will help their self-esteem, their self confidence and overall mental health.

Already the head teacher at Chambo school has reported positive changes in the orphans. The Foundation has a good relationship with the staff at the school and who will continue to monitor and report on the orphans' progress.

'Research shows that regular physical activity can boost our self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, making us less prone to stress, depression and dementia. Regular exercise has lots of health benefits for children and young people, such as; improving fitness, providing an opportunity to socialise, increasing concentration, improving academic scores, building a stronger heart, bones and healthier muscles, encouraging healthy growth and development, improving self-esteem, improving posture and balance, lowering stress, encouraging a better night's sleep. (gosh.nhs.uk)

Nurtured

Most of the orphans we are looking after come from very poor home environments and, due to lack of resources, we cannot manage to prepare a good living place for each and every child. The Foundation has created a site which can act as a meeting place for all the 200 plus children. At our resource centre we have good latrines, a kitchen, a multipurpose shed and playing grounds. We also have better materials and equipment which are used by the children in all their activities. This attracts them to come to the resource centre twice in a week when schools are open and four times a week during school holidays. Providing a safe place where they can all be together also helps them to interact with one another and share their experiences. In short, whenever they are at the resource centre, they feel at home and amongst friends. The orphans also know that people care about them.

Kindly volunteers also contribute to the joyful and happy faces of the orphans at the resource centre. One child said, "One day I will not go home as I feel safe and happy when am here at the resource centre."

It is, therefore, our wish, as an organisation, to continue to support these orphans to feel happy and safe at the resource centre. As funds allow, in future, we would hope to be able to do more to help these orphans to be safe within their communities.

Nurtured

Definition: to care for and protect someone while they are growing. To bring up, care for, provide for, take care of, attend to, look after, rear, support, raise, foster, parent, feed, nourish, encourage, promote, stimulate, develop, further, advance, assist, help, strengthen, cherish (Google dictionary)

Looking at the above definitions of the word 'nurture', the Foundation has had this as a core value of how to support the orphans.

We can ask ourselves the following question about each of the above meanings; 'how are we providing for the orphans?' 'how are we encouraging the orphans?' etc. Also the question what more can we do to.....?' so we are regularly reflecting and evaluating our work and best use of resources for the orphans.

As can be seen from regular photo updates, the orphans are now being fed at weekends, have been given clothes (thanks to very generous donations) and have started learning new skills. They have hope now that they understand people care about them. The orphans are beginning to feel stronger (physically and emotionally) since they have been supported by the Foundation. We hope that, over time, we continue to see positive changes as the children benefit from the help being provided.

Achieving

Chatting with children in Ibuluma is interesting and they tell me what they want to achieve in life. They have aspirations; becoming doctors, presidents, international football and netball players, teachers and many more. The question is; “will these orphans really achieve their goals?”

Over 200 children that gather at the Margaret and Jean Stewart Resource Centre are involved in different activities. They are able to explore their talents and interests. Activities provided so far include; tailoring, bricklaying, crop farming, sports, knitting, singing, cooking and animal husbandry.

We have discovered that some children are multitalented. We believe, once the children’s skills are supported, they can be valuable citizens in their respective communities. The older children can begin to pass their skills on to the younger ones.

It has been observed that those children who have nothing to do and whose basic needs (like food, clothing and soap) have not been met are engaged in deviant behaviours like fighting, smoking, drinking, stealing, sexual abuse. They may end up going to prison or being expelled from school. Therefore, they fail to achieve their goals. Life seems hopeless for them.

It is a wish of the Foundation to continue supporting the orphans so that they have hope, achieve their goals and become successful citizens in Malawi.

Achieving

Now that the orphans have seen that people care about them and they are being fed and clothed, the orphans are doing better at school. Their attendance is better, they are able to concentrate more and their self-esteem is growing. The Foundation has already been teaching some of the orphans to knit and play games and they listen to bible stories and sing. There are plans for them, in addition to their schooling, to learn life skills like farming, animal husbandry,

sewing, knitting, cooking, carpentry – some of these skills have already begun to be taught to the orphans.

We need to continue to support these orphans to reach their potential, have a sense of achievement and to enable them to have a better quality of life. This will then have a ripple effect in the local community with people learning skills, gaining employment and being able to provide for their families.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include; death or illness of loved one, abuse (physical, sexual, verbal), neglect (physical or emotional), growing up with domestic violence, alcohol, drug abuse, mental health problems or parents' separation. Additionally, poverty and community adversities have a huge effect.

Consideration of ACEs is, therefore, crucial to thinking about how to improve the lives of children and young people, to support better transitions into adulthood, and achieve good outcomes for all (<https://www.gov.scot/publications>

Respected

As a Foundation we are proud of ourselves for the contribution we have made so far in enabling the children to become respected citizens in our communities. We recognise that this is still the beginning of a long process with lots of work still to do.

Some years ago, many people perceived that an orphan is not a person to bother helping or to be valued. For those orphans who are HIV positive or for those orphans whose parents died due to HIV/Aids they were considered to be cursed. But now, whenever they are at the resource centre, they are taken care of by warm hearted volunteers making them feel at home and respected and important.

We are planning to spread our works to different villages as soon as funding allow us.

Respected

'one of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say' (unknown)

'when you practise gratefulness, there is a sense of respect towards others' (Dalai Lama)

'A new commandment I give unto you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (The Bible; NIV, John 13 v 34)

'There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children' (Nelson Mandela)

The orphans are treated with respect and they are listened to and their voices heard. Over time, their self-respect and self-worth should increase as they realise they are valued and are being supported and people care about them. As they learn new skills and values, their respect for themselves and others should grow. Again, this will be monitored and information sought from teachers at school.

Responsible

Whenever our children are at the resource centre they are included in some planning and are asked what they feel the Foundation should do so that it can continue to thrive and support them. Children put forward their suggestions and feel like they have responsibility to help one another. For example, we had a shortage of firewood at the resource centre. Children were asked how best we can solve the problem and they agreed whenever they come to the resource centre they (the eldest children) should bring with them a bundle of firewood and a bucket of water. In short this makes them feel identified and recognized and a responsible part of the team.

They also supported the idea of keeping livestock at the resource centre and some children are encouraged and taught to learn to care for them.

We try our best whenever they ask for assistance, we help them accordingly. For example, when one child comes and says he or she is hungry and thirsty, we quickly prepare some food for him or her. If they say they have problems in their main school, we make a quick and systematic follow-up to make sure they are safe in every environment. For example, many children especially girls complain they are sexually harassed in school. We then go and talk to their teachers and other children about respect for their peers and responsible behaviours.

Responsible

'Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community and, where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision and being involved in decisions that affect them.'
(<https://www.scot.gov>)

'The potential possibilities of any child are the most intriguing and stimulating in all creation' (Ray L Wilbur, Stanford University President)

Children are our most valuable resource' (Herbert Hoover, 31st President of USA)

The orphans have had more responsibility for their own lives than most children have but have they previously had a say in decision making? The Foundation is giving the orphans new skills to be able to provide for themselves and their families. Now that the orphans are receiving some regular meals from the Foundation, they are attending school regularly. They are also taking some responsibility in helping out with chores for the Foundation. Children have volunteered to carry bricks, organise games and help with crops etc.

We are hoping that the orphans will be able to show other ways of being responsible citizens in their community. One idea is that the orphans can knit blankets for babies. Whenever a baby is born in the community, a blanket could be gifted helping to ensure that each baby is warm. If this could be done, in conjunction with the local health centre, it would give an opportunity for mother and baby to have a health check. Unfortunately, lack of funding is curtailing plans such as these at the moment.

Included

In Malawi many people, especially in the rural areas, believe females are always inferior to males and cannot do most of the jobs done by men. For example they believe; females cannot do as well in science subjects as their male counterparts, females cannot do jobs like taking care of livestock, bricklaying and tailoring and males cannot do work like cooking, knitting etc. There is also a misconception that females cannot play football and males cannot play netball. The Foundation has challenged all these misconceptions by making sure that boys and girls participate in all the activities together irrespective of their gender.

Should resources allow in future, the Foundation will reach all the communities in the rural settings of Chitipa district to raise the topic of gender issues.

The Foundation has also included people with **disabilities** in their activities as well as outreach. We have children and elderly people who have mobility problems whom to other people seem to be cursed. In the rural setting whenever a woman gives birth to a child with some disability, they are blamed and said to have offended the gods; the disabled child is a punishment to them and therefore not important to society. We have a lot of people with disabilities who need some support and funds are the limiting factor in the Foundation being able to provide help.

People with different **illnesses** like HIV/Aids are welcomed by the Foundation. Volunteers visit people with long illnesses and give them different resources like soap, food and clothes. Visiting people suffering from different diseases helps to make them feel included and sometimes helps them to get healed faster (psychotherapy). It is our plan in future to have different outreaches where we can treat people from different complications like wounds and toothache.

Included

As the orphans' strength, concentration and self-esteem grow, there is less difference between them and their peers at school.

The orphans are included in decision making with regard to activities and plans and know that the Foundation has been set up for them by people who care about them. They can now begin to have hopes and dreams like other children. The Foundation will continue to include children in consultation, listening to their concerns, opinions and wishes. As they learn new skills, they can become an integral part of teaching the younger orphans new skills and ensuring that everyone feels included, important and an individual.

Boys and girls are treated equally and learn all skills. Gender is not a barrier. Also those who are infirm or disabled are visited and gifts of food, soap and clothes delivered to them, along with bibles for those who request them.

Vygotsky's theory on the Zone of Proximal Development is based on the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can do with an adult 'scaffolding' their learning. (<https://www.open.edu>) Therefore, children of different ages and abilities will all need to be seen as individuals and who require varying levels of support to be included and to succeed.'

'I continue to believe that if children are given the necessary tools to succeed, they will succeed beyond their wildest dreams' (David Vitter, former US senator)

'Safety and security don't just happen, they are a result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear' (Nelson Mandela, Former president South Africa)