

Connecting lives



Thanks to Eagles, poor communities have tripled their harvest of crops.

Welcome to Connecting Lives! Eagles equips people in Malawi with the attitudes and skills to transform their own lives in some of the poorest communities in the world. In this edition, we see how a community-built bridge brings life-saving hospital access and how a village ends child labour. We also discover how effective irrigation projects enable families to eat for the whole year. Check-out **'A Spotlight on Eagles' Approach'**, to learn more about how Eagles works and why!

What do you see as 'priceless'?

Eagles' training in 'Church and Community Mobilisation' had had a significant impact on two villages in Central Malawi, Kachira and Chifuka. The health, social relationships and livelihoods of the communities have radically improved, as well as the care for the vulnerable. Church membership has doubled.

"This is a priceless thing that we have received in our community! What Eagles has started here, let it spread everywhere!" (*Village Chief*)

Eagles first catalysed the churches to work with their communities through Bible studies that turned their view of God upside-down as they understood His command to bring justice. According to one pastor, **"We now know the truth about the character of God...what really pleases God is caring for those in need."**

Village members now see the churches in a new light, attracted to their vision and passion to care for others. People mixed up in witchcraft left their old lives to find out more about the God that motivated such love and generosity.

Through the mobilisation, disparate groups of church, community and local government united to work together. People understood their responsibility for their own development and discovered the talents and assets they already had in their communities could make a real difference. As the Village Chief said:

"We have learned to make the most of our resources. Things we used to think were useless, we now use to develop ourselves. We have learned to be self-reliant."

(cont. p3)

An end to child labour



Daniel is overjoyed to attend school now.

Unable to attend school, Daniel's future looked bleak. But now he has hope: **"I am so happy!"** he says joyfully, swinging round the pole on the veranda of the new village school.

Before Eagles began working with Alawe village, very few children could attend school as it was so far away. Instead, many had to work, often labouring long hours shepherding goats and other animals. Challenged by Eagles' training in God's heart for the most vulnerable, an innovative group of pastors determined to end child labour and ensure every boy and girl has an education. **"Now they are all in school!"** announces Effie Phiri, a church member, delighted with their achievement.

The village had begged the government for years to build a school but without success. Dispirited and disillusioned, they did not know where to turn. However, Eagles used Bible studies to challenge and transform their thinking. Pastor Chidule says:

"From the Bible studies, we learned we could use resources that we have in our community. We also learned how important it is to help the needy. We learned from Eagles how to work together as a church and community."

Effie adds:

"Instead of doing nothing, we asked ourselves, 'How long will we wait? Let's do what we can!'"

One church lent its building to provide a temporary school and in 2016 community volunteers began teaching the 275 primary-age children! Meanwhile, all the churches and villages around joined together to build their own school. They contributed sand, moulded bricks and their own labour, while the church generously raised money for other materials. Local government began to help, once they saw the villages' commitment. They sent people to give advice on the building and promised to supply the school with government teachers once it was completed. Effie says passionately.

**"In the future, we'll have educated children because of our school!
They will be able to find jobs and to take care of their own lives!"**

With the surrounding villages and churches, they have also established an adult literacy class, stopped deforestation, planted forests, cleared roads, and created a support group for those living with HIV – previously stigmatised and isolated.

According to Pastor Chidule,

"The Bible studies empowered us to take care of the vulnerable and the needy. We now construct houses and work in the fields of the elderly and provide food and clothes to orphans."



"Now all the children are in school!" Effie Phiri

What do you see as 'priceless'?

(cont. from p1)

For years Chifuka village desperately needed a bridge and road to reach their nearest hospital and market—but no action took place. Less than a year after Eagles began its “priceless” church and community mobilisation process, the community achieved both entirely using their own resources.

Without the bridge, people were almost cut off from the hospital, having to struggle across a river—which was life-threatening when seriously ill or pregnant. Without a road, they also could not get to market to sell the little extra farm produce that they harvested. They waited for years for the government or some charity to fix this for them. But after training from Eagles helped them break that culture of dependency and make a plan, the village took immediate action. The Area Development Committee Chair said:

“This process is really helping us here and changing the mindsets of the people...We used to expect people from town to come and do things for us; now we do things for ourselves.”



Village children celebrate their community-built bridge that links them to hospital and market.

The church now also supports widows, orphans, the elderly and others who struggle to care for themselves. Despite their own poverty, church members all contribute the little that they have to help the most vulnerable. The pastor explains:

“We are poor and we used to think that it was impossible to help others. But now we use the little that we do have.”

A spotlight on our approach

An overview of Church and Community Mobilisation (CCMP)

As vital partners, we think you should know more about the way we work and why! These are the basic stages of CCMP in which Eagles trains churches and their leaders:

Church awakening: Bible studies help churches understand the Biblical mandate for justice.

Community entry: Church leaders build relationships with community leaders so that they are willing to call the whole community together for a development meeting.

Community attitude change: The church uses participatory activities to break the mindset of dependency.

Community discovery: Other CCMP activities enable the community to identify the changes they want to achieve in their lives and the resources they already have that they can use.

Community analysis and action: Community and church prioritise their issues and take action to address them, using their resources and also lobbying government to play its part.

Monitoring and evaluating: Analysing their experiences regularly enables communities and churches to celebrate success, learn from mistakes and improve their work together.

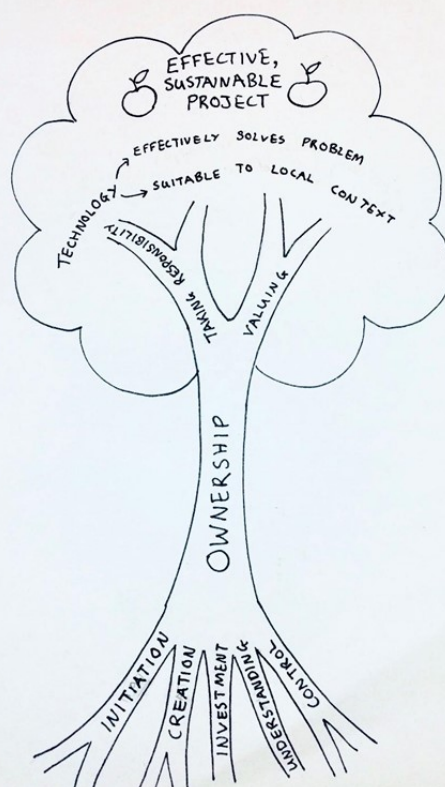
No more 'white elephants'

So much technology in developing countries ends up as a 'white elephant' - broken and unused. Yet relevant and appropriate technology is much needed. Jonathan Kemp, an Eagles staff member, carried out research to work out what makes an irrigation project successful, learning from communities, academic research and other non-government organisations (NGOs).

"Starvation caused by drought and irregular rain is a major and increasing issue for farmers in Malawi. Many NGOs are investing lots of money in irrigation, but lots of projects do not last after the NGO has left. I want to see farmers able to feed their families for the whole year and to stop this waste of resources. So I needed to discover what works best in irrigation for communities and how we can make sure projects last." explains Jonathan.

He found that community ownership is the key to lasting change—provided the technology works and is adapted to the local context. He therefore created a scale that enables NGOs to assess and to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of any technology project. Now Eagles and others can make sure it lasts:

"I identified seven elements of community ownership—how much the community: initiate the project; create the technology (the idea, design and building); invest in its construction and maintenance; understand how it works; have decision-making control; actively take responsibility for it; and value its usefulness."



Community ownership is the key to effective technology—the tree shows the seven elements.

Meet Frank Kowera

Eagles Community Facilitator

Why did you join Eagles?

I joined Eagles because I had a passion to contribute to holistic development among vulnerable communities.

What do you most enjoy about work?

I most enjoy seeing local people testifying about the transformation that they have experienced through my service.

What are the biggest challenges you face?

High dependency and low literacy among community members. This slows the transformation process.

Tell us about your family

I am ninth born in a family of ten children! I am married to Tendai and God has blessed us with three kids (all boys) called Goodness, Greatness and Gospel.

