

# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



## Aims

Rural communities in Malawi face significant challenges in accessing clean and reliable water sources, this case study examines the impact of limited water access has on daily life in a rural village in Malawi



## Age

Age +12



## Time

30 minutes



## Materials

Story Cards

## Section One – Challenges

Activity also available as a pdf on our Tree of Justice.

### Step 01:

Split the group up into groups of three or four. Cut out the following set of day in the life cards and distribute one set to each group. Cut out and copy the challenge card and the solution card giving ten of each to each group. Copy and distribute one definition card to each group for reference (see below for all cards).

### Step 02:

Ask the young people to arrange the cards in order, showing the day in the life of a family in Malawi. See below for the correct order.

### Step 03:

Once the order is correct, ask the young people to identify as many challenges as possible that Malita and her family face during the day. These challenges can be both related and unrelated to water justice

issues. Write the challenges down on the challenge cards, and position them at the appropriate point in the day. Discuss these challenges as a group s and allow groups to identify what challenges they may have missed. Which of the challenges do they feel are related to climate change? See below for ten possible challenges the students to young people may identify.

### Step 04:

Everyone has the right to **available; accessible; affordable, safe and acceptable water**. Refer the young people to their definition card. Write these five words on flipchart and ask the young people to link the challenges they have identified, to these five elements of the right to water and sanitation. After this is complete, ask the young people the following question – **Is the right of Malita and her family to water and sanitation being protected, or taken away?**

## Section Two – Solutions

### Step 01:

Ask the groups to address each challenge with a potential solution. Ask them to write their suggestions on the solution cards. Encourage the young people to think about factors linked to the solution, like cost, the availability of materials, technical expertise, etc. Ask them to rank how realistic the solutions they have suggested are (groups may not be able to come up with solutions to all the identified challenges, this is ok. Perhaps discuss the more difficult challenges as a whole group).

### Step 02:

Discuss with the young people the importance of finding local solutions to local problems if possible,

and that local people are the leaders in this process. Encourage the young people to express their opinions on this, and to apply it to their own lives. How would they feel if there was a disaster or crisis in their community, and people from other countries came in and took the lead in dealing with the problems faced by the communities? What do they think is the best approach to situations like this? Is there a way to have a balanced approach, and involve everyone who needs to be involved and can help, whilst ensuring local people remain fully in control? Which of their potential solutions can be implemented locally, and which require some outside help?



## Cards

### DAY IN THE LIFE

When we get back home, we use the water to wash and for cooking breakfast if we have enough food to cook. After that I send the children to school. I am lucky I have enough money now to pay their fees. It is 1000kw (€1/71p) per child per term and there are 3 school terms a year.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

We fill up a 20-litre container of water which I carry back and two smaller containers of 10 litres which the children carry. We would try to carry more but the distance is too far. It's a 4km/2.5 miles round trip to the well.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

I wake up at 6am, I light the fire and wake the children, then go to the well to get the first water of the day. This is for washing and it takes about an hour to fetch it. We go early so that we can get there before the animals, who contaminate the water. In the dry season the well dries up and we must walk to the spring further up the mountain which add another hour to the trip.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

The children walk 4km/2.5 miles to school where there is a bore hole, so they have access to water and get some porridge to eat. I try to make sure they go everyday but sometimes they are sick from the dirty water and must go to hospital. And other times they don't go to school because they are too tired from fetching water all the time.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

When the children leave for school, I go straight back up to the well to get more water. We need water for lots of different things so keep having to make the trip to the well sometimes up to 5 times a day. When I am on my own, I will try to carry two 20 litre containers instead of one, but this is very heavy and very tiring.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

The children water the crops unless there has been a flood like when cyclone Freddy hit the area and the rain was so heavy it washed away half our maize crop. After they finish with the crops the children cook dinner while I go to fetch firewood or make charcoal, which I bring to the trading centre to sell roughly twice a week.

## Day in the Life Cards



### DAY IN THE LIFE

When the children come back from the well in the afternoon sometimes the water has been contaminated from the animals. When this happens, we need to use chlorine tablets if we have them from the government to treat some of the water for drinking. The rest of the water goes on the crops. The crops need a lot of water especially when there is a drought.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

The children come home from school at around 1.30pm. They do their homework first if there is time and then there are lots of chores to do around the house and some work in the field. We grow maize, casava, millet and pigeon peas which we use to feed the family and we grow tomatoes, Chinese leaves, and mustard that we eat and sell. Then I send the children back to the well for more water.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

When I get back from the well, while the children are still at school. I will use the water for our animals. We have chickens' goats and rabbits which are a source of food and income for the family. I managed to buy the animals with the money I have made from gathering and selling firewood and making charcoal. I get 2000kw (€2/£1.40) for a bundle of firewood and 5000kw (€5/£3.50) for a bag of charcoal.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

After dinner if it's still early enough I will go again to the well to get more water. Sometimes I have no choice to do this because the water has been contaminated by the animals. I must make sure I can get back before dark because once dusk arrives wild foxes and other animals become a danger.

### DAY IN THE LIFE

When it gets dark it's time for bed. If the children have not had time to finish their homework, they will try to do it before bed, but the light from the lamp is very bad, so sometimes they don't get their homework finished.

## Challenge and solution cards



### Definition Card – The Right to Water and Sanitation



Access to safe drinking water and sanitation are internationally recognized human rights, derived from the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

**Key elements of the rights to water and sanitation are: Availability, Accessibility, Affordability, Quality & Safety, and Acceptability**

## Correct order of story cards

<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>I wake up at 6am, I light the fire and wake the children, then go to the well to get the first water of the day. This is for washing and it takes about an hour to fetch it. We go early so that we can get there before the animals, who contaminate the water. In the dry season the well dries up and we must walk to the spring further up the mountain which add another hour to the trip.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>We fill up a 20-litre container of water which I carry back and two smaller containers of 10 litres which the children carry. We would try to carry more but the distance is too far. It's a 4km/2.5 miles round trip to the well.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>When we get back home, we use the water to wash and for cooking breakfast if we have enough food to cook. After that I send the children to school. I am lucky I have enough money now to pay their fees. It is 1000kw (€1/71p) per child per term and there are 3 school terms a year.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>The children walk 4km/2.5 miles to school where there is a bore hole, so they have access to water and get some porridge to eat. I try to make sure they go everyday but sometimes they are sick from the dirty water and must go to hospital. And other times they don't go to school because they are too tired from fetching water all the time.</p>
<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>When the children leave for school, I go straight back up to the well to get more water. We need water for lots of different things so keep having to make the trip to the well sometimes up to 5 times a day. When I am on my own, I will try to carry two 20 litre containers instead of one, but this is very heavy and very tiring.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>When the children come back from the well in the afternoon sometimes the water has been contaminated from the animals. When this happens, we need to use chlorine tablets if we have them from the government to treat some of the water for drinking. The rest of the water goes on the crops. The crops need a lot of water especially when there is a drought.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>The children come home from school at around 1.30pm. They do their homework first if there is time and then there are lots of chores to do around the house and some work in the field. We grow maize, casava, millet and pigeon peas which we use to feed the family and we grow tomatoes, Chinese leaves, and mustard that we eat and sell. Then I send the children back to the well for more water.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>When I get back from the well, while the children are still at school. I will use the water for our animals. We have chickens' goats and rabbits which are a source of food and income for the family. I managed to buy the animals with the money I have made from gathering and selling firewood and making charcoal. I get 2000kw (€2/£1.40) for a bundle of firewood and 5000kw (€5/£3.50) for a bag of charcoal.</p>
<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>The children water the crops unless there has been a flood like when cyclone Freddy hit the area and the rain was so heavy it washed away half our maize crop. After they finish with the crops the children cook dinner while I go to fetch firewood or make charcoal, which I bring to the trading centre to sell roughly twice a week.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>After dinner if it's still early enough I will go again to the well to get more water. Sometimes I have no choice to do this because the water has been contaminated by the animals. I must make sure I can get back before dark because once dusk arrives wild foxes and other animals become a danger.</p>	<p><b>DAY IN THE LIFE</b></p> <p>When it gets dark it's time for bed. If the children have not had time to finish their homework, they will try to do it before bed, but the light from the lamp is very bad, so sometimes they don't get their homework finished.</p>	

## Possible challenges

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Get up early to go fetch water in the morning.</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Water contamination by animals</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Distance to the water sources</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Weight of the water they have to carry back to their home</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Need to make money to pay for essentials like school fees</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>Having to go a number of times to the well (up to 5 times a day)</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>Not enough chlorine tablets</b></p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>Drought</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p><b>Floods and extreme weather</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p><b>Safety while fetching water</b></p>

## Possible solutions

<b>Community-Led Water Committees</b>	Many rural communities in Malawi have established water committees composed of local volunteers. These committees are responsible for the maintenance and management of water sources, such as wells and boreholes. They oversee repairs, collect fees, and ensure equitable distribution of water resources.
<b>Borehole Installation</b>	NGOs and government agencies collaborate with communities to drill boreholes, providing a more reliable and safer source of water. These boreholes are often strategically located to serve multiple villages.
<b>Water Source Protection</b>	Communities are engaged in efforts to protect and preserve their water sources. This includes tree planting to prevent erosion, installing fences to keep livestock away from water sources, and maintaining cleanliness to prevent contamination.
<b>Hygiene and Sanitation Education</b>	NGOs conduct hygiene and sanitation education programs within rural communities. These programs raise awareness about the importance of proper sanitation practices and safe water handling.
<b>Rainwater Harvesting</b>	In areas with irregular access to groundwater, rainwater harvesting systems are promoted. Communities are trained in the construction and maintenance of rainwater collection tanks and systems.
<b>Women's Empowerment</b>	Women often bear the responsibility of fetching water for their households. Community initiatives are aimed at empowering women and girls, including providing training and resources for income-generating activities to reduce their water-fetching burden.
<b>Partnerships with NGOs</b>	Many rural communities partner with NGOs specialising in water and sanitation projects. These organisations provide technical expertise, funding, and resources to improve water access in partnership with community organisations.



### Summary:

Access to clean water and the effects of climate change are deeply intertwined in rural Malawi. Climate change means that local water sources dry up for longer periods, and also increasingly extreme weather leads to more storms and flooding which can contaminate water sources and damage homes and crops. Limited access to safe water sources exacerbates the vulnerability of communities to the impacts of climate change, creating a cycle of hardship. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach, including improved water infrastructure, climate-resilient agricultural practices, and community education on climate adaptation strategies. International cooperation and support are also crucial to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change in rural Malawi.