

Positivo Annual Report

Jan- Dec 2024



Audio recording of STEM for Girls Project. We brought the studio to schools.





Executive summary

What an exciting year it has been! With the generous support of the Hilden Charitable Fund for the second year Positivo embarked on a transformative journey to inspire girls in Malawi to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects during 2023 and 2024.

The *STEM for Girls* project brought together students from Machinga and Songani Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) to produce two powerful and motivational songs. This initiative was a highly participatory exercise where students delved into discussions about the challenges and perceptions surrounding girls in STEM, exploring why these subjects are often seen as male domains and brainstorming innovative ways to motivate more girls to break these stereotypes.

Students participated in all areas of production – from the messaging to writing the lyrics, from singing behind the microphones to dancing before cameras. The result was two audio and two video songs.

The creation process was truly unique and engaging. Instead of taking students to a studio, Positivo brought the audio and visual recording studios to the schools, ensuring that every student could actively participate. The result was two compelling songs that carry strong messages encouraging girls to embrace STEM education.

Our target was to screen the songs to 50 schools but we ended up reaching 51. The aim is to screen and then follow up with discussions, motivational talks and engagement with students.

We believe strongly in doing things even when we have no funding from our traditional donors. As such in this report you will also find our non-funded projects which are so dear to us that we will struggle to make sure that they continue even in the absence of funding.

Welcome! Takulandirani!

- *Positivo Team*

Profile of Positivo

Positivo is a non-governmental organisation registered in Malawi. We seek to work with the most marginalised people in Malawi including the youth and in particular girls, the LGBTI community and other key populations, women and people living with disabilities. Our focus is a holistic approach towards issues on HIV/AIDS, gender and the rights of all persons to enjoy full human rights regardless of their sexual orientation, social status, gender or other stratifications. We believe strongly in giving a voice to the voiceless. We also believe strongly that communities have the potential to become catalysts of change as long as their latent potentials are fanned to life.

Our most successful projects have included Schools Musical Projects where through innovative workshops students come together and compose their own songs with social messages.. We have worked with girls in particular to come up with issues that affect them such as poor facilities for menstruating girls as hindrance to education and gender based violence.

The Malawi Film Festival and Malawi Rural Mobile Cinema also remain among our flagship projects. The two bring to rural communities messages that are not just entertainingly delivered but are also highly beneficial to the communities. This is done through screening of films with important messages using huge screens. The communities discuss the films, relate the issues raised to those of their own and finally come up with Community Action Plans. These are blue prints owned by the communities on how they intend to address the issues raised. Some of the issues that have been raised include the rights of minorities, climate change, child labour, gender dynamics and marginalization of women.

Our approach is successful because we highly engage local stakeholders including traditional chiefs, religious and secular leaders, government organs and departments and community based organisations working in the grassroots.

See our work at our through this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/373489123503870/>

Our Projects in the year 2023-2024



Machinga CDSS students perform during the video shoots

STEM for Girls Project Report

1. Introduction

The *STEM for Girls* project, funded by the Hilden Charitable Fund, aimed to motivate and encourage girls in Malawi to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects. Implemented by Positivo in 2023 and 2024, the project involved producing two compelling songs by students from Machinga CDSS and Songani CDSS. These songs aimed to address the perception of STEM as male-dominated fields and inspire girls to embrace these subjects.

2. Project Objectives

1. To engage students in discussions about the challenges and perceptions surrounding girls in STEM.
2. To create motivational songs that encourage girls to pursue STEM subjects.
3. To screen the produced songs in 50 schools across Malawi.

3. Project Implementation

Participatory Discussions

during Production Stage:

- The project began with students engaging in discussions about why girls view STEM as boys' subjects and how to motivate more girls to take up these subjects.
- Students from Machinga CDSS and Songani CDSS actively participated in these sessions, sharing their insights and experiences.

Song Creation:

- Following the discussions, students collaborated to develop the messaging, lyrics, and genres for the songs.
- Both audio and visual recording studios were set up directly in the schools, making the recording process accessible and inclusive for all students.



Songani CDSS students during the video shoots.

Screening and Outreach:

- The completed video songs were screened in 51 schools across Malawi to maximize their impact. The screening involved debates and motivational talks.

4. Key Achievements

1. Engagement and Participation:

- Over 100 students from Machinga CDSS and Songani CDSS actively participated in the project.
- Students contributed to meaningful discussions and the creative process, enhancing their understanding and interest in STEM.

2. Production of Motivational Songs:

- Two powerful and motivational songs were produced, addressing the importance of girls in STEM.
- The songs carry strong, positive messages encouraging girls to break stereotypes and pursue STEM education.

3. Videos screened to 51 schools with debates, motivational talks and participatory activities by students carried out

Increased Interest in STEM:

- The project sparked a significant increase in interest in STEM subjects among girls in the participating schools.
- Many girls expressed newfound confidence and motivation to pursue STEM education and careers.

Empowerment and Confidence:

- Participating in the discussions and song creation process empowered girls, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.
- Girls felt more encouraged to voice their opinions and take leadership roles in their educational journeys.

Community Support:

- The project fostered greater community support for girls' education and involvement in STEM.
- Parents, teachers, and community leaders showed increased awareness and encouragement towards girls pursuing STEM subjects.

6. Challenges and Lessons Learned.

Lessons Learned:

- Early and continuous engagement with community stakeholders is crucial to overcome resistance and ensure project success.
- Bringing recording studios to schools was an effective strategy to ensure inclusivity and active participation.

7. Sustainability and Future Directions

Sustainability:

- The project's success has laid a strong foundation for continued efforts to promote STEM education for girls in Malawi.
- Positivo plans to build on this momentum by integrating STEM promotion into its ongoing and future



initiatives.

Future Directions:

- Expanding the screening of the motivational songs to other schools and beyond.
- Developing additional projects that further encourage girls to pursue STEM education and careers.



Rough country roads and a car loaded with equipment including a heavy generator meant damage to our vehicles many times.

8. Conclusion

The "STEM for Girls" project has made significant strides in challenging gender stereotypes and promoting STEM education among girls in Malawi. By engaging students in meaningful discussions and creative processes, the project has inspired and empowered girls to embrace STEM subjects with confidence. Positivo remains committed to its mission of empowering marginalized communities and will continue to advocate for and support girls' education in STEM fields.

Non donor supported projects

We are glad that there are some projects that we were able to carry out throughout even though they are not donor supported. These include our animal welfare where we sensitise communities on treatment of oxen and dogs. Many people are ignorant of animal feelings but once they are sensitized attitudes change. We have seen this in Songani (oxen) and Malosa (dogs). We use our own dogs as models on treatment of dogs and so many people are happy to get advice on how to treat their dogs in a better manner.



Snoopy came to our place in this condition but we treated her and now she is a healthy and happy dog.

Our other project that is currently not supported by donors is the library project. As many people will testify the reading culture in Malawi is very poor not because people do not love to read but because in many cases books are simply not available or are too expensive to afford. Our library is a little gem that attracts kids and adults alike. We are grateful to people who contribute books to

the library. The largest selection comes from former Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) volunteers who have at one time or another worked in Malawi.

This is a project that we want to expand in future through outreaches so that the books are not just available at our offices but are also available in other rural places. We will transport the books and pitch tent in remote places where communities can access books and periodicals with ease, thus enhancing the culture of reading.

The Photography Master Class is a unique project that enables marginalized rural communities to tell their own stories using still photography. We are delighted that the project has been received very well and many people now realize that they have a potential to tell their own stories. The increased use of devices with cameras, such as mobile phones means that many people even in the rural areas are capable of capturing moments that reflect their own lives.



Images captured by community members during a practical session in the Photography Master Class featuring motor bike transport in Malawi.

Our Finances and donor support

Donor	Amount(s) in Malawi Kwacha	Year supported
UNAIDS	US \$ 102,083	2013-2015
Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	US \$226,832	2013-2015
Southern Africa AIDS Trust	US \$ 38,285	2013-2015
GIZ (Germany)	US \$ 8,564	2015
Movies That Matter (MTM)	Euros 6500, Euros 4000	2018-2019
InterPride Solidarity Fund	US \$2,000	2021
Civicus	US \$10,000	2021
CTAP	US \$25,000 and then \$62,245.95	2021-2022
Hilden Charitable Fund	British £ 7,000	2023-2024