

Connecting Lives



No houses remain here in the path of Cyclone Freddy in Manja, Blantyre city. Hundreds of people are still missing. This avalanche of mud swept down Soche mountain on 13th March, burying anything in its way. And this is just one area. The cyclone smashed through 14 districts of southern Malawi, wreaking physical, emotional and spiritual devastation.

Welcome to Connecting Lives!

In this issue, we focus on mental health—still a taboo subject in much of Malawi. Yet Eagles' work strengthens people's resilience and courage to find a way forward.

[Evidence](#) shows that, while professional help is critical, creating safe spaces and a sense of belonging can help to improve wellbeing and enhance quality of life.

How do we regain hope?

In Mpyupyu, Zomba district in southern Malawi, people at a makeshift camp are sleeping on the concrete floor of the local church. Ekhayi, a 27-year-old Muslim single mother of three describes their experience:

"The rain began on 11th March. It rained all night and continued for three days. Then on the 12th, heavy winds started to blow and we were so afraid. The wind drove the rain into the house and battered the walls, soaking them. It blew the roof off my house. We didn't know where to go, but we had to leave. I escaped with my baby on my back, a toddler on the shoulders, another in one hand and holding my granny with the other hand. When the rain eventually stopped, we went to see what was left. We found our houses had fallen down and our fields were washed away. Life is so difficult. Everything we had is destroyed."

Eagles is helping people find hope and practical ways forward—see back page.

Emotional healing, physical transformation

We often discuss how 'mindset change' is at the heart of Eagles' 'Church and Community Mobilisation' approach (CCM). As people come to understand who they are and the gifts and resources they already have, they find the confidence and capacity to change the world around them.

Bible studies help people to see that God has made them creative and innovative and that He has given them responsibility to care for the world—especially those who are vulnerable—and help to heal broken relationships with self, each other and the environment. Four wonderful women in Kamkwenu, Central Malawi, dressed in their farmer's cooperative uniform, share their emotional journeys.



My household has changed a lot since the Eagles' training. Before, I was not a happy person - I was very stressed due to the lack of things to feed my family. Now I have enough to meet my family's needs, I am a happy person. I harvest a lot from my garden and am able to feed my family balanced food.

Lucy

Things have really changed from how I used to be. Before, I was unable to speak in public. But now I can stand and speak of God's goodness, because of the training we received about breaking dependency and relying on ourselves. My whole household has changed too. I remember the Bible study of the widow whose husband died and left a lot of debt. I learned, no matter how poor you are, you have something. Although I am very poor, I too have something.

Lenia





Since I began the training, my mindset has completely changed. Before, I couldn't even think about the future. Now I can plan for the future of my family and my children. I can now plant fruit trees and make sure my family has enough food. It takes our action to bring out the things inside of us. The training has transformed our faith too—now we are united with God and with each other.

Charity



Before, there was no future for me. I could just find my daily bread, I had no idea how I would survive tomorrow. Whatever I got, I would eat that day. I had no plan for my future. Since Eagles has come, we have changed the way we're feeding our families. I have learned to plant different types of crops to provide food for my family, like beans or fruit. Now I am very hopeful for my future. I can plan for my family. When I sell groundnuts and soya beans, I know my future is bright .



Liveness



Regaining hope

Ekhayi has not given up, despite all the challenges she faces:



I find hope in reading the Bible. I remember that Jesus gave up his life for us. I've been reflecting on the story of Job—he lost everything but he held onto his family in God and He restored everything. So he can also restore everything for me.



Practical and emotional recovery

Eagles is helping with immediate needs, galvanising churches and partners to provide immediate life-saving and life-sustaining help, including shelter, food, basic household items, and health and hygiene support. But Eagles is one of few organisations also working towards medium and longer-term recovery. Eagles has already trained local church and community leaders in psycho-social counselling in 2022, working through government health professionals. Now those who have lost loved ones need the greatest possible emotional and spiritual support to help cope with their unimaginable loss.

Can Eagles' training help in the midst of disaster?

We asked people in Mpyupyu and Govala, Zomba district, if it really made any difference that Eagles had trained them in the past. All their amazing work was destroyed: they had diversified food sources by growing different types of crops; they had built bridges and set up under-five childcare centres.

They told us that they would never have worked together like this before Eagles' training: leaders from over 15 different denominations of churches meet regularly with Islamic and traditional village leaders in Mpyupyu. They plan together, pool their few resources to repair houses and to rebuild those destroyed. They have opened up their premises for people to shelter in. The trees they planted saved homes and lives. And, even in the mist of such difficult times, they are still running ten child-care centres as a community.



Your donations to the cyclone response are providing seed for people in Govala and Myupyu to plant now for food and other life-giving help that strengthens, not undermines, their resilience and creativity.