



# ABLE TO THRIVE

## Final Report on Phase 1

October 2023 through September 2025

## TRANSFORMING LIVES

The Able to Thrive Phase I project has unlocked new possibilities—and even entire worlds—for children with disabilities, their families, and the communities that support them in Malawi, Rwanda, and a growing number of countries globally.

## CHILD AND FAMILY TRANSFORMATION

Because the Bible teaches that all people are created in the image of God and have inherent value, World Vision recognizes the incredible potential in every child. In the first phase of Able to Thrive, we have been able to work closely with 5,042 children, 61% of whom had never had a diagnosis of disability. Even among those diagnosed, most had received no long-term treatment or assistive devices. Once Able to Thrive arrived in communities, more than 91% of children supported by the project showed gains in their ability to do the things they want.

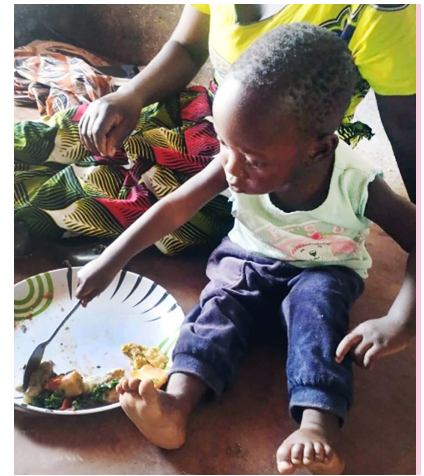
Additionally, 25% of children and 20% of caregivers reported improved overall well-being. More than 30% of children experienced a better home environment, including greater involvement in decision-making and participation in family and community life. Seventy percent of parents said they are now better equipped to meet their child's learning, health, and other needs, thanks largely to workshops and parent support groups.

Children also were empowered with life-changing tools, such as 1,026 wheelchairs, 160 pairs of glasses, 120 standing frames, 65 cerebral palsy chairs, 49 prosthetics and orthotics, 50 adaptive chairs (which provide proper posture, positioning, and support), 19 walkers, and 11 tricycles. These devices didn't just improve mobility—they opened doors to communication, learning, and greater independence. For many, they marked a turning point toward fuller participation in all facets of life.

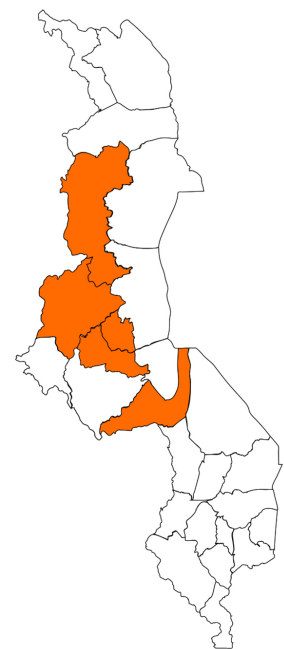
While many lives have been improved, some have been saved—literally. One 12-year-old boy whose right hand had been amputated was found to have an aggressive infection. He was immediately admitted to the nearest hospital, where he stayed for a month to recover.

## SERVICE PROVIDER TRANSFORMATION IN MALAWI

In rural areas of Malawi and other countries, access to disability services is limited. Able to Thrive has focused on developing and testing a scalable model that can be expanded in Malawi and elsewhere. By empowering church leaders, government officials, nongovernmental organization partners, and other service providers, we've demonstrated that cost-effective, impactful support for children with disabilities is possible—even in the most remote communities.



*Lughano was born with cerebral palsy (CP) and could not sit up or stand by himself. Able to Thrive introduced his mother to nutrition sessions and physical therapy specifically designed for children with CP. He gained weight, strength, and the ability to sit up on his own, and his family is optimistic about his future.*



*Able to Thrive has been helping children in Malawi's Dedza, Dowa, Kasungu, Mzimba, and Ntchisi districts.*

## Technology improves performance

Using real-time data from the digital CommCare case management system, service providers improved the efficiency of community rehabilitation clinics and medical screenings. This helped better identify and respond to the needs of children and their families and offer timely support whenever possible.

## Service providers are empowered to reach more children

World Vision supported partner organization CURE Malawi in transporting children for screenings and conducting screenings in schools. “[This support] has enabled CURE to reach out to many children across the nation, and our services have been improved in terms of efficient use of operation rooms and wards,” said Davie Singewa of CURE International. “We have been able to surpass our annual targets because the hospital is seeing and supporting many children regularly.”

Mvula, an audiologist with African Bible College (ABC) Audiology Clinic, noted similar improvements. “Prior to partnering on Able to Thrive, ABC Clinic assisted nine children with hearing aids who were referred. ABC aims to assist as many children [as possible], because the problem of hearing impairment is huge among communities.” After Able to Thrive supported screenings in a community in Mchinji, ABC identified 166 children with hearing impairment, he said.

## Screening clinics and joint planning processes enable comprehensive responses at reduced costs

“The Able to Thrive project has created an effective partnership for disability programming in the country. I believe this will help establish comprehensive support for underprivileged children with disabilities,” said Titus Mwanjabe, former CEO of partner organization Sandi Thandiza. “Through disability screenings, we’ve created a ‘one-stop center.’ Malawi Against Physical Disability supports physical disability screenings, African Bible College Audiology Clinic addresses hearing challenges, and Sandi Thandiza assesses cognitive and spiritual aspects of child development. The support is truly comprehensive,” he said.

## Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) collaboration extends reach

MACODA, a government service provider, strengthened its ability to deliver comprehensive support for children with disabilities in rural communities while partnering with Able to Thrive.

“Previously, disability work was being done, but not to the recommended standard,” said William Mseteka, MACODA’s Kasungu District manager.



*Access to home latrines also has been improved for some families, like Victoria’s. Her mother, Lusiya, is thrilled with the improvement. Without access to a latrine or toilet, Victoria—who can’t walk and uses a wheelchair—usually had to soil herself, which stole her dignity and created considerable work for her mother.*

*“She now has a disability-friendly toilet, which she uses. Our job is simple now; just to help push the wheelchair to the toilet,” Lusiya enthused.*



*Screening events like this one identify physical and cognitive challenges faced by children in project communities.*

“But now, the coming in of World Vision has greatly improved output. We are talking about early identification for children with disabilities, among others; things that were not there. What World Vision has done is like giving me extra staff to ease up my work by capacitating community volunteers who work at the village level. Referrals were so hard to make, as it took some bureaucratic channels, like from district health offices, central hospitals ... But our partnership with World Vision has created shortcuts, as referrals are now made directly to institutions like Beit CURE. Recently, 25 children from Kasungu got referred to Beit CURE for physiotherapy and now are all [doing] well,” he added.

### Pastors are empowered to create parent support groups

Parent support groups significantly strengthen caregivers’ ability to support their children. Parents who participate are 57% more likely to report improved well-being, and their children are 42% more likely to attend school compared to children whose parents don’t participate.

Gerald Muwando, a local pastor, supports a group that meets at Chisepo Health Centre in Dowa. He opens group sessions with John 9:1–3 (NIV):

*As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

*“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”*

Mr. Muwando shared that biblical teachings offer vital moral support to parents of children with disabilities, while also challenging harmful misconceptions in the community. Priscilla, a mother and support group member, agrees.

“Able to Thrive has encouraged us to be part of a group where I meet with friends and discuss how we can take care of the children—giving them proper food, helping them in diverse ways,” she said. “We encourage each other there. Even those who thought the discussions were useless are now with us and encouraging each other, trying to cope with our anxieties.”

### AIMING FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

As a global organization, World Vision is applying lessons learned in Malawi through Able to Thrive to improve services for children with disabilities in other countries.

With donor support, Able to Thrive provided seed funding to four countries—Zambia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia—helping to launch and strengthen programs for children with disabilities.



When Constance was enrolled in first grade at the Chilanga Inclusive School for the visually impaired, it was believed he was completely blind, and teachers recommended he learn how to read braille. But when Able to Thrive hosted a screening event, a thorough exam showed Constance suffered from a severe cataract. Surgery removed the cataract, and he can now read and distinguish colors. Today, he uses standard textbooks in his studies.

Head teacher Chikondano Kamphandira said World Vision provided the school with laptops, projectors, and other tools, such as a technical platform to help teachers interact with blind students using braille displays. He also pointed out that students who passed government exams soared from 50% to 90% since the school began partnering with Able to Thrive.

These World Vision offices reached 1,363 children and 2,756 family members, and distributed 476 wheelchairs. More importantly, these funds laid the groundwork for lasting inclusion and continued support for children with disabilities. Several national offices have committed 2026 funding, with Rwanda pledging more than \$300,000.

World Vision also leveraged this expertise and funding to support programs in Guatemala, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines.

- In Guatemala, we worked with local government to open five centers where children with disabilities can receive specialized therapy and engage in play with others.
- In Mozambique, World Vision registered 282 children in the case management system and provided them with medical and rehabilitation services.
- In Nepal, World Vision will support more than 1,000 children with disabilities in 2026.

Able to Thrive Phase I successfully built a strong foundation for World Vision to serve children with disabilities globally. The project now has a validated technical approach, a clear theory of change, expanded global partnerships, and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. Demand is growing to integrate Able to Thrive in countries that have struggled to support children with disabilities. World Vision is increasingly recognized as an innovator in delivering cost-effective, sustainable solutions for children with disabilities in rural and underserved areas, which will support future expansion efforts.

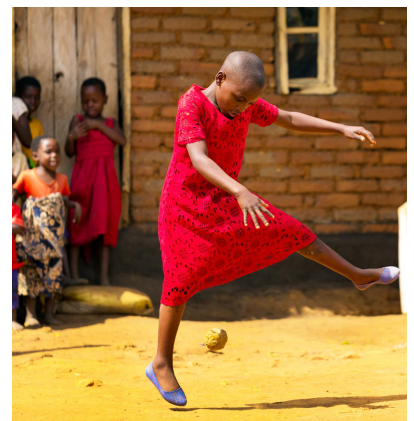
## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

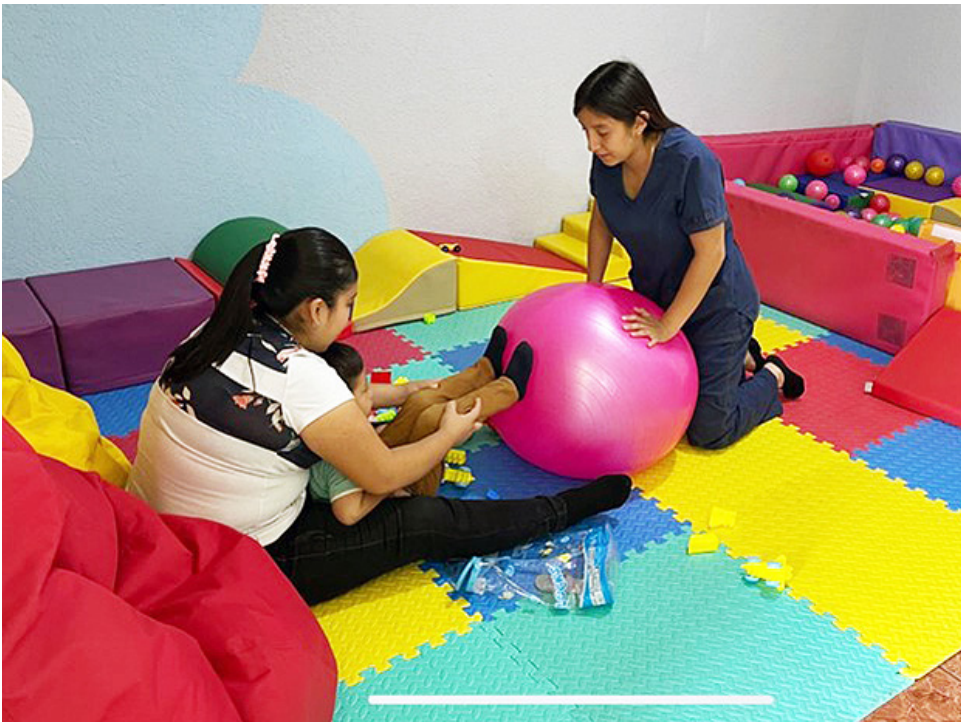
With continued donor support for Phase II, we aim to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, deepen partnerships, and drive innovation, further refining our approach to transform lives in remote, underserved communities where we already have programming.



*As Deborah grew, her parents noticed her legs weren't developing as they should. Through Able to Thrive, she was accurately diagnosed and underwent two operations at Beit CURE International Children's Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi. Today, she runs and plays with her friends.*

*"Without this project ... we could not have afforded the cost of the surgeries," said her mother, Chikadza.*





This is one of five centers for children with disabilities in Guatemala that offers therapy and a place for play. World Vision provides the equipment, and local government pays for the space, staffing, and utilities.

## TESTEMONIES OF LIVES CHANGED, HOPE RESTORED

To see more examples of how Able to Thrive is making a difference, enjoy the additional stories of transformation below and on the following pages.

*Yamikani was born with one leg shorter than the other. Watch the video at the link here to see how he—and his mother—were able to overcome stigma and rejection to enjoy lives filled with strength, hope, and dignity.*



Workshops and seminars are empowering local pastors to establish and lead support groups for parents and caregivers of children living with disabilities. As trusted leaders in their communities, their messages of inclusion and value for all children are making a difference.

## SURGERY HAS RESTORED JOY AND HOPE TO PRINCESS

When Princess was born, she was well-developed and healthy, but at 3 years, she began having difficulty walking because her left leg turned inward, said her mother, Maggie.

“When I took her to the hospital, I was told her bones in the leg had some space, and this was causing the problem,” she said.

Despite an operation, Princess’ condition did not improve, and she still had a limp when walking. At school, her classmates teased her about the limp, and she retreated into herself and lost confidence.

“I did not like going to school, as my friends sneered at me. They said I could not walk properly even in my adulthood,” Princess said.

Despite school being an unfriendly place, Princess worked hard and placed in the top five to 10 spots in her class.

When World Vision came to the community with the Able to Thrive project, children like Princess participated in health screenings, which recommended she have another operation on her leg.

“After the second surgery, she has had a massive improvement,” Maggie said, joyfully. “Today, Princess no longer limps when walking. She can walk just as properly as any other child,” she added.

Her daughter is thrilled as well. “I am now so happy that I can walk just as perfectly as my friends. This has given me confidence, as now I am able to socialize with friends and concentrate so much in class,” said Princess, who aspires to be a doctor.

It looks like she will get there. Now 7 and in third grade, she is an academic star and routinely places in the top three in most of her exams.



*Princess, center, has begun to thrive in school after life-changing surgery gave her the ability to walk and run. It also restored her confidence, helping her make friends and excel in school.*

“Just last term, Princess scooped position one, and since she got the operation, she has had a massive academic improvement. Her confidence has improved, and this has made her interact with friends better than before, when she had low self-esteem,” said Nelson Chiumia, Princess’ teacher.

“I am so happy because of the support World Vision has given us towards Princess,” Maggie said. “This is a motivation that not every disability is permanent, and World Vision, with the Able to Thrive project, is proving that,” she said.

Maggie was so inspired by the project she now works as a volunteer for the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs in her community, where she helps identify children with disabilities and provides guidance on the support they need.

“Under the Able to Thrive project, we learned that all children are equal, and we need to give them equal amount of support to reach their potential,” Maggie said.



## CHANCY HAS A NEW OUTLOOK

When he was 9 months old, Chancy was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, a condition that causes excess fluid to accumulate in the brain. Surgery was not an option, but his mother took him to regular physical therapy sessions, and he learned to sit and crawl. She carried him to school every day.

When Able to Thrive came to their community, Chancy received a wheelchair, which has greatly improved his mobility and independence. He is thriving physically and cognitively. "He can now interact with his peers ... I can go to the farm without worry," his mother said.



## TDALA AND HER MOM BOTH BENEFIT FROM THE PROJECT

Tdala was born with cerebral palsy and didn't walk until she was 6. With therapy and a new wheelchair, the 10-year-old is going places. She happily shows a visitor how she can stand and walk on her own.

When classmates shunned her because of her disabilities, her parents took her out of school. But through the project, she was enrolled in Mzandu Community-Based Childcare Centre, where she enjoys learning activities and playing with other children.

Tdala's mother also faced stigma and rejection, but she now is benefiting from the camaraderie and emotional support provided through a caregiver support group in her village. "My attitude changed and [I felt] accepted," she said.



P.O. Box 9716  
Federal Way, WA 98063-9716

**75 YEARS OF BELIEF**



World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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