



**WRITING HER CHILDREN'S FUTURE MODESTA'S STORY  
OF EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT IN MCHINJI**

Modesta Heneliko, a woman whose spirit is as strong as the Malawian sun, lives in a village of Lirarini Group Village Head Chimphamba in the Mchinji District with her three children. Education, she knows, is their lifeline, their ticket to a brighter future. So, even though life in the village presents its own set of challenges, Modesta always finds a way to carve out time to support her children's learning. She believes in the power of small steps, that even the simplest efforts can make a big difference.

Modesta attended a training session at Ludzi, organized under the Tikakwanilitse ndikuteteza ma Ufulu A Ana (TiKuMA) project. This initiative, building on the previous Norad framework, aims to ensure that all children enjoy their right to education and are protected through strong community and government systems by 2028. Sitting amongst other parents, listening to the educators share their wisdom, Modesta felt a surge of recognition. "That's what I've been doing!" she thought, a smile spreading across her face. But the training didn't just validate her instincts; it opened her eyes to new possibilities, new ways to help her children excel in math and reading, using the resources right there in their own village.

TiKuMA project, in partnership with Save the Children (SC) funded by Sco and GAYO along with other partners, is creating hubs of excellence in the districts of Balaka and Mchinji. These hubs focus on three interrelated thematic areas: Child Rights Governance, Child Protection, and Education. The goal is to generate experience and evidence for replication and scale, ensuring that children access and complete quality basic inclusive education with improved competencies in foundational literacy and numeracy.

During the training, Modesta and other parents were taught innovative methods to support their children's learning. They learned how to use charcoal as a substitute for petal markers to write numbers and letters on cartons, saving them the trouble of finding and purchasing expensive markers. The trainers also showed them how to make their own ink using readily available charcoal. Additionally, they were taught how to create small marbles out of clay for math problems such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The importance of utilizing everyday household items was emphasized, particularly kitchen utensils like measuring cups. By marking these with numbers or letters, parents can instruct their children to bring a specific cup or plate based on the number

or letter given, reinforcing lessons learned both at school and at home.

According to Modesta, her children's academic performance has greatly improved, especially for the younger ones in

lower classes. She proudly shared that they can now easily solve math problems by using the stones provided to count numbers and even use their fingers to multiply or add. They have also learned how to read and form sentences by using the letters written on cartons. Modesta is dedicated to ensuring that her children are able to not only read and write but also comprehend what they see.



Picture 1. Modestar Daughter carrying a cartoon with numbers written



Picture 2. Modestar Son carrying cartons with letters written

Having completed her training and honed her skills at Ludzi, Modesta has successfully spread the knowledge to other parents in her village. They too are now actively involved in their children's education, often sending them to her house for joint learning sessions with her own children. The TiKuMA project's situation analysis, which included consultations with 250 children, 16 of whom have disabilities, across four districts, has highlighted the need for such community-driven initiatives.

Modesta's voice rang out with determination as she expressed her deepest wish: to see her children excel in their studies. She spoke of the importance of parents in her community being trained to support and guide their children, just as she had been taught. Sadly, she knew that not all parents understood the value of investing in their child's education. Many believed that teaching was solely the responsibility of school teachers, unaware of the powerful impact they could have on their child's academic growth. Modesta understood this and was determined to change it for the better. As she spoke, her passion and conviction filled the room, inspiring others to join her cause.



*Picture 3. Modesta helping her two children to read what is written on the cartons*

## **conclusion**

Modesta Heneliko's journey is a shining example of how community-led education initiatives can bring about profound change. Her involvement in the TiKuMA project has not only transformed her life but has also sparked a movement of educational support within her village, igniting a flame of knowledge and empowerment. The project's ambitious vision, to ensure that every child in the Mchinji District has access to education and protection, is gradually becoming a tangible reality. Modesta's story serves as a powerful reminder that even the smallest actions can have a ripple effect, creating a chain reaction of positive change.

Through her tireless dedication and the support of her community, Modesta has become a beacon of hope, inspiring others to join the cause and contribute to the project's success. Her journey highlights the importance of grassroots efforts and the impact they can have on individuals and communities. As Modesta continues to flourish and grow, she stands as a living testament to the project's mission, proving that with determination and collective effort, we can create a future where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential and soar to great heights