

Interviewed by Janine Mitchell at Likhubula on Wednesday 14.06.2023.

Interviewee: Akimu Maula

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My name is Akimu Maula and I live here in the Likhubula community. I was born here. It's so lovely. I'm working here also. My job right away, which is keeping me daily is all about working with the RFH, known as Riders for Health, working with the Mulanje District hospital. It's all about the sample transportation. We are doing great. I joined this job since 2016, up to date. So that's the job that is keeping me with a daily living. But in the other way around. I'm also one of the Likhubula Dunblane Partnership members and I have a role in this partnership. Actually, I'm the communications officer. Normally my work as a communications officer is all about linking people from my community, that is Likhubula, to the community of Dunblane, with whatsoever necessary is needed to be communicated and linked. So the fact is that I joined the Likhubula Dunblane partnership in August, that was on 9th August 2009. We went through the elections on a ground where there were chiefs and all the group members, village members had to be selected right away there. Normally, my role in this partnership is all about taking different minutes during the meeting, or group meeting, and also involve myself in sending emails to the Dunblane community, linking the committee and committee. So that's my role. I really joined this partnership with a very happiness life, simply because I really knew the role I am of this partnership, that it is all about making sure that our community is well cared of in terms of education, healthy living, and even a social and the kind of social work. So I really joined in order to render my services, to render my knowledge to the partnership. So I've been doing this work, almost now 14 years since I joined. It is so lovely that for myself, I feel very good, because there's a very big positive impact to myself, simply because that was on September 13th 2018 when I was one of the representatives to be selected to represent the community right away in Dunblane community. I had to flew with my colleagues, we were three of us. So I had to flew to Scotland in a way of exchange visit. It was so lovely to be involved in that flight. And during the arrival, we had to say, what's this country like? Look, we left Malawi very, very hot, and everything was very wet.

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We travelled a lot. We visited different places. We had to visit the nursery schools, primary schools, secondary schools, even the universities. We also extended to visit to the farms, we also went to Parliament, we were all involved in this kind of different activities just to learn, to know how our friends are earning a living, how our friends there are they are trying to develop their country. There are different kinds of developments that are being done there. So I admired a lot how they can generate electricity, the way they're doing their farming, the way they're taking care of their kids right away from the nursery school. The nursery school is the only place where the young ones can interact. And they can know well in advance what they will do in the future by exposing different kinds of things for them to do: engineering, whether home economics. They are doing everything on the computer, numbers and whatever. The parents have their own free time to do the kind of job whatever they need and developing the community developing; the country itself. So I really admired and I learned a lot during that visit.

Another fact is that there's a very positive impact of this partnership to myself. This time around my own twin son, Edward, was considered to be one of the bursars. On my own I could not manage I could not afford. Look, what I do earn from my salary with the extended family that I'm taking care of is a very big family of almost six children. All of them are growing old. I have my son Emanuel, who is now at university. I have to take care of him, pay the school fees. The rest of my kids, my twins Edward and Ernest, there's Hendrina, who is my last-born daughter, they're all at primary school. But Edward, he was selected to go to secondary school whereby I could not manage to pay the fees for him. The coming of Dunblane is another kind of relief. I have been relieved, because his school fees are being paid by the partnership. So I feel really good. I'm very interested with this. The fact is that I have also the nieces, the other one is finishing this year, Shakira, she is in form Four. So the fees is all for myself. I could not manage to afford Edward's fees, so I'm really pleased with Dunblane partnership. So I can feel at least the ease because of the partnership, because Edward has been considered so that's the impact that I feel.

Yeah. Right. There's a very good impact of this partnership to the community at large. Likhubula is really blessed. Because you know, both Likhubula and Dunblane have an open relationship whereby, as I said, I flew to Scotland. There was a very good easy communication between myself and the people in Scotland. That's a very, very good kind of development that is happening. You know what, there is Nansato school that has been taken care of by the partnership, there is a very good reliable water system at Nansato school. People surrounding and even the learners are using this kind of reliable water, which doesn't stop, whether come dry season, we can still have the water. This kind of development, this kind of projects was done by the partnership of Dunblane Likhubula community. And they were also

having a very standard toilets. We have very standard toilets, for both girls and boys. All from the partnership. And the learners are enjoying using this. You know, we have Pasani school. So both Pasani school is a primary school. Both Pasani primary school and Nansato school that are also in the community of Likhubula are being well taken care of. There's a very good painted school at Pasani and also at Nansato. Well decorated classrooms, whereby we can have and look that they are all beautifully constructed. There is a very beautiful constructed school block at Pasani. All of these are happening because of this partnership. The community is really benefiting because we can have a lot of now young ones learners going to these schools. Other times they were able to go further long distance whereby it was interrupting their lessons. There's a dairy feeding project. The learners are eating porridge in these schools. This is all happening because there's this partnership. There's Mary's Meals which is linking with the Dunblane community, helping the community, the community here with porridge so the community is being sponsored. So another fact is that since 2010, to date, our youth from the Likhubula community have been sponsored to do both secondary and tertiary education. We have so far a total number of 68 bursars who have been sponsored, in which almost mostly we can state now that we have ten of them who were graduated under tertiary education, and they are doing good in their life. So all these are happening because there's this kind of partnership. These tertiary graduates are now able to support their families. Life is now good.

Another fact is that there's a very good food aid during the disasters. You know, we had cyclone Freddy. But before this cyclone Freddy we have been facing different floodings. We've been facing different kinds of disasters, whether drought, and it has been maybe interrupting the harvest. So we've been supported by the partnership of Dunblane Likhubula with the food we ate, different kinds of food items for our lives to be good. The fact is that also we were hit by the COVID-19. The COVID-19, after it came, people had to suffer. There was a need of PPE, for the PPE to be provided right here like masks, hand sanitizers, buckets of water, soap to wash hands in schools, our partnership had to support us. So we feel loved. And we feel very good, because everything is now changing because of this partnership.

And I have a very good memory and a very good recall from the beginning. Our community, especially the needy, have been supported to be practicing Goat rearing farming. The partnership has been providing the community with skills. And at the end, there is a support of a Goat breeding. So we have been having this kind of farming here, whereby the community has been able to raise some goats with the funding from the partnership. I also remember that we had some time in the past Mvano, our Mvano here has been raising chickens. They were supported by the partnership of Dunblane Likhubula, such that we've been seeing a lot of different kinds of development. Women have been interacting in this way like rearing chickens, and the outcome is supporting their families, such a way. It's all about partnership. And during every year, agriculture-wise here because the fact is that our soils have been overused and they have been degraded, fertility has been vanished.

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So we tend to use the fertilisers, whereby we can automatically use the manure, but there is a need of boosting the yields. In such a way we need to boost the yields. So fertilisers have to be used. But in our community, apart from the people who can access fertilisers on their own, they also some other needy, like elders. In such a way, it's only partnership with Likhubula Dunblane that can assist and help these needy to buy the fertilisers: NPK for growth and Urea for the cobs to be bigger. So the support has been coming from the Dunblane Likhubula partnership. We really thank our friends in Dunblane. Another fact of positive impact of this partnership is that our community in 2015 was hit by the big flood, such that dwelling houses were damaged. Even also those for the elders were also badly affected, damaged. We saw a very kind heart from our friends in Dunblane, such that when we reported about the disaster, they felt pity. And they couldn't, you couldn't do otherwise than to support. They rendered their support, especially to the elderly, who could not afford who could not manage to reconstruct their shelters. You know, we selected from our villages, the community of Likhubula, we selected six elders, whose their houses were badly damaged, for their houses to be reconstructed. And you will have these houses now being in use, since that 2015, up to date. Another fact is that these houses were not only to help the elders right away at a clan, but even also the rest of the relative members. Why? There are some other elders who already passed away, may their souls rest in peace. The elder's grandchildren are the ones who are remaining staying in these houses, such that we can see that oh, if there could not be that kind of structure on this clan, then the other remainings would suffer. So we feel taken care of by the partnership.

There's a very good news, there's a very good story, that I can share from all these benefits, because there's a need of a story that what is a very good story that I can share out. I feel that from the beginning of my flight to Scotland is a very good success story. Because for myself, to have that chance of flying to Scotland, I've been feeling like, be honoured. Even the community at large were talking about me like, oh, he's flying to Scotland, what a very special event to him. So that's a very good success story I can share, because I learned a lot.

People are now no longer struggling to get piped water at the school. For us, for myself, to mean is a very good success story. Because to fetch water from far distance from your home from your house, is a very good example of struggling. So the children, especially the learners, they're able to access water right away at school, even the people surrounding they are able to access this kind of potable water right away

at school. That's a good success news of the partnership, because other people by then were able to go a distance to source water. This time around we're able to see different learners are all around who were not able to go to further schools, they're able to access their education right away at the closest primary schools. We are able to see different learners who were disadvantaged, their parents, their guardians could not afford to pay their school fees, but they are able to access secondary school education, even tertiary with the support of the Likhubula Dunblane partnership.

First and foremost, I would like to put a comment on the education matter. For this to continue and at least to produce a lot of graduates in different kinds of skills, say like technical skills, or academic at large, but I prefer these technical issues. They're just a very fast, productive, like Green Malata college whereby youth can go there and access the technical skills. Because in just a year, one can still be able to stand on his own or her own. So in the future, and for the time being, I would comment that it's really better to continue with the education sector, because the only one that will promote and will make sure that we will develop our community. Because whenever everyone is able to access whatever kind of skill and be able to produce, our community will not remain the same.

Because my aim, always, my expectation is that to see a very upcoming youth to be productive. Because we were able to say that we are feeling poor kind of life, simply because there are lots of people who are not productive. So we need to see more and more people to be productive in the near future with this partnership. Of course, yes, I would manage to say that there has to be other kinds of projects in the near future. There has to be some of the constructions of some other school blocks, renovation of the classrooms, considering such kind of projects in order to motivate, even also the school feeding project, in order to motivate a lot of young ones to go and be learning.

Education is the only key to success. Because in everything, there has to be education.