

Improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in the Namalaka Health Center in Mangochi, Malawi

A REPORT FOR PROVIDENCE: OCTOBER 1, 2021—JANUARY 31, 2022

YOUR IMPACT

Twenty-four-year-old Anita Jussab had been to the Namalaka Health Center before when she delivered her first child. But now, having just given birth to her second healthy baby, Anita recalls how much nicer and more sanitary it was bathing there afterward. This difference is due to a new shower, installed through the generosity of Providence. “It was even more comfortable to bathe at the center than at home,” she says. **“I’m grateful to Providence for this, and I will encourage other women to come to the center for their deliveries.”**

Anita is just one of more than 21,000 people served by the Namalaka Health Center in Malawi. The center, which is more than 36 miles from the town of Mangochi, serves one of the hardest to reach communities in the district, especially during the rainy season. It is also one of several health facilities under the proprietorship of the Diocese of Mangochi, which participated in the assessment conducted by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Global Water initiative. Mangochi was identified for this initiative because its health facilities urgently needed support to improve water, sanitation and hygiene conditions.



Dickson Pemba, administrator for the Namalaka Health Center, in front of cinder blocks used to build and improve water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure.



Dickson stands outside the center, extending his thanks to Providence for the improvements you made possible. Photos by CRS staff

“This support came at a time when we had problems with our sanitation and water system,” says Dickson Pemba, administrator for the Namalaka Health Center. “The facility had only one five-cubic meter tank [equal to about 1,300 gallons], which was not adequate to supply our water. We had to rely on a hand pump for water, which made it a challenge to prevent and control infections.”

“We had only one dilapidated latrine for pregnant women and the postnatal ward, which hugely compromised their hygiene and privacy. Worse still, toilets were not disability-friendly, which discouraged some community members from visiting us,” he says.

Once support from Providence reached the center, however, things changed. Numerous infrastructure improvements were made, including showers—rare in the district’s rural health facilities—and the addition of a second water tank that can serve the center for more than three days. “Now, the patients have very good facilities. The community is very impressed and happy,” he says. Thank you, Providence, for making this possible.



A newly constructed medical waste pit stands in the foreground. Behind it, the old pit is no longer usable. Photo by CRS staff

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Namalaka Health Center in Malawi was built in the 1970s. Over time, its infrastructure became dilapidated. Most affected were the water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. A shortage of running water and poor sanitation facilities compromised effective infection and disease prevention. Beyond the lack of private and sanitary showers and latrines, major challenges included the lack of an ash pit or functioning incinerator to dispose of medical waste.

Instead, medical waste was disposed of on open grounds, which was hazardous to the safety of staff, patients and neighboring families. As another example of sorely needed improvements, the center had one standpipe for outpatients to wash their hands, and it was located far from the center itself. This discouraged people from washing their hands.

Through support from Providence, CRS set out to address the most urgent water, sanitation and hygiene gaps at the center by building and repairing related infrastructure. These efforts have since improved the center greatly—and are improving the health of the 21,693 people served by the center. Community members even report an increased willingness to visit the center to seek treatment. Below are further details about the project’s goals and achievements.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

With a generous gift from Providence, CRS had two main project objectives for the Namalaka Health center:

- To provide the center with access to clean water and water storage.
- To improve hygiene practices at the center through new or repaired sanitation facilities.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

IMPROVED ACCESS TO WATER

Your grant enabled CRS to improve the water supply of the center’s 32 staff members and the 21,693 people it serves. This was achieved by building and repairing its water supply infrastructure, ensuring the center could provide access to safe water at all times. Major additions included installing a new five-cubic meter water tank, as well as a six-meter tank stand to support it. We also built a new standpipe system, including the piping and accessories such as gate valves.

IMPROVED HYGIENE AND SANITATION

Your grant improved hygiene and sanitation at the center by allowing for the building or repair of hygiene and sanitation infrastructure. For example, we built one new three-room shower facility and also rehabilitated two existing shower rooms that had fallen into disrepair—one in the labor ward and one in the postnatal ward. Similarly, we built one new two-room latrine with flushing toilets and repaired two more. In addition, we excavated nine new pit latrines in total, comprised of one five-hole latrine and one four-hole latrine.

Table 1 shows the total improvements for all water, hygiene and sanitation infrastructure supported by the project:

INFRASTRUCTURE	EXISTING BEFORE	REPAIRED OR NEWLY INSTALLED	NEW TOTAL
6-meter tank stand	1	1 newly installed	2
5-cubic meter water tank	1	1 newly installed	2
Standpipes	1	2 newly installed	3
Pit latrines	2	9 newly installed	11
Flush toilets	2	3 (2 renovated, 1 newly installed)	3
Shower facilities	2	3 (2 renovated, 1 newly installed)	3
Medical Waste (Placenta) Pit	1	1 renovated	1
Incinerator	0*	1 newly installed	1
Ash pit	0	1 newly installed	1
Waste bins	0	5 newly installed	5

TABLE 1

**One existing incinerator was completely nonfunctional and could not be renovated.*

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The project faced two primary challenges:

- The area is generally sandy. Due to unstable soil, some excavated pits collapsed. Thus, the contractor had to re-excavate a couple of the latrine sub-structures.
- During the rainy season, the access road was impassable. This delayed the delivery of building materials.

THANK YOU

Because of you, the Namalaka Health Center has improved its water supply and hygiene practices—and with it, also improved the health of an entire community. Thousands of people in the Diocese of Mangochi are deeply grateful for your support.

BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS

Below is a selection of photos demonstrating the impact your support made possible.



Left: A metal water tank stand, which existed before the project but did not meet water supply needs alone.

Right: A new, second water tank stand, that will allow the center to have complete access to safe, clean water.

Photos by CRS staff



Left: A shower room from the labor ward prior to the project.

Right: Part of the labor ward's improved shower room. *Photos by CRS staff*



Left: The only bathroom block that existed before the project.

Right: A newly constructed shower facility block. *Photos by CRS staff*