



Chilomoni Victim Support Unit

Chilomoni, Blantyre



Location

Chilomoni Police Station, Chilomoni, Blantyre, Malawi

Type

Support Unit

Year of Construction

2010 - 2011

Project Architect

Noella Chikuse

Total Development Area (Approx. GEA)

51m²

Construction Cost

N/A

Cost per m²

N/A

“It is good that the building’s layout was well-thought of during the design process; now it can accommodate victims for a night or so.”

(Hannah Kagona, MTCC Outreach Family Support Team Leader)

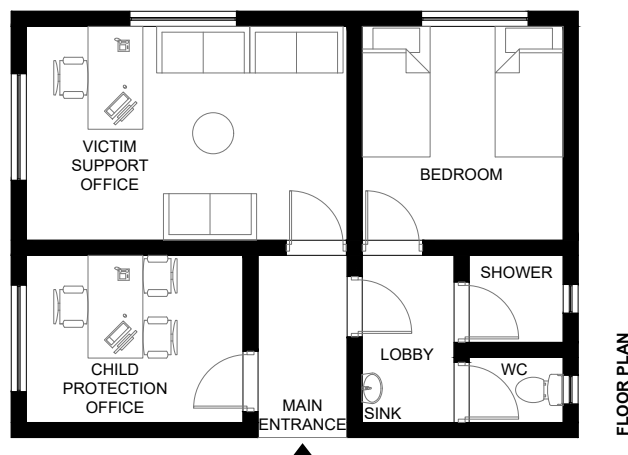
“In Malawi, the prevalence of domestic violence among... married women perpetrated by their current or most recent spouse (physical, sexual, or emotional) is estimated as 42%, higher than the global estimate of intimate partner violence.”

(National Statistics Office Malawi & DHS Program, 2017)

Much like other deprived parts of the country, the township of Chilomoni, just outside the city of Blantyre in Malawi, has historically seen a high prevalence of gender-based violence case numbers. Facilities and treatment for victims was previously very limited in the area, to the point where sometimes both victim and offenders would be held in the same small building while claims were being investigated.

The community of Chilomoni approached Beehive, who had already funded and constructed several other community buildings in the area, to request the provision of a much-needed support facility for domestic violence victims. Aware of an assault which has taken place on one of its female members of staff, Beehive obliged.

The result was a simple, single-storey structure, located adjacent to Chilomoni Police Station; in this way, victims and offenders could be kept completely separate from one another in the event of an assault. The building is designed to accommodate victims and their children who may be unable to return to their homes for several days following an assault; it therefore contains two offices for consultation and investigation (one for adult victims and one for child victims), a bedroom large enough to accommodate up to four people, and



a bathroom with shower. The “living” space has deliberately been separated from the public office space, through the use of a small Lobby, in order to respect the users’ privacy.

The building has been constructed from Beehive’s site-made Hydraform blocks, used in a loadbearing capacity in order to remove the need for reinforced concrete framing. Steel roof sheets supported by timber rafters form a simple, functional monopitch roof. Unlike many homes in the surrounding area, the Victim Support Unit has running water and electricity throughout, provided for the comfort of the users. Bright, bold signage on the building’s exterior proudly proclaims the function of the building, inviting women to access the service when required.

Gender

based violence training is undertaken with local churches



1 Cook has been employed full time at the VSU to prepare food for victims and existing staff.



Catholic Community Support

The VSU educates the local community on gender based violence through

Campaigns



5 Children per week are assisted by the VSU

3 Women per day are assisted by the VSU



Quality Education

Supporting the Vulnerable

Social Impact

The Victim Support Unit offers a place of refuge for those that have been abused. As many as 3 women come to the unit per day and an average of 5 children a week are supported by the team. Abandoned children are also often left at the unit - 3 children were left over the course of 2020, and the team works with local partners to ensure they are found a safe and secure home. The VSU team works closely with each victim, to help them get the support they need, whether that's temporary accommodation and food at the unit or on-going counseling. The unit works closely with the Outreach team at MTCC in case management, as well as raising awareness in the community through campaigns. These focus on increasing awareness about Gender Based Violence, as well as Child Marriages. They work closely with local Churches, as some violence has been perpetuated by religious beliefs that promote male chauvinistic values. Since the establishment of the VSU, there has been a great reduction in child related crimes and child marriages in Chilomoni, compared to surrounding areas.

'People are confident in reporting their cases to the Victim Support Unit now, as they know they will meet the right people, ensuring complete confidentiality. Previously victims would report to whomever was on reception at the police station.'

(Hannah Kagona, MTCC Outreach Family Support Leader)

