

Concern



Universal

CASE STUDY OF BELITA BAKACHELA (WOMAN DIGS AND BUILDS LATRINE)

Very few women in the country would imagine waking up one morning, equipped with a hoe, pick and shovel to dig a pit latrine let alone build one and thatch it. In the Malawian society, where traditionally women are looked upon as only capable of doing chores such as cooking, fetching water and cleaning houses, such a scenario would be dismissed as pure fiction. But, for people of Moses Village, Traditional Authority Bvumbwe in the Thyolo District, one woman has done what other men in her community are failing to do, digging the pit latrine, building the wall, and thatching the roof.

She is Belita Bakachela, a widowed mother of five, born in 1962.

"It's true I dug this pit latrine, built and roofed it. I was assisted by my 14-year-old daughter after my 20-year-old son had failed to carry out the task," Belita proudly declared when recently visited at her home. The pit latrine is three metres deep and has a san-plat installed. After digging the pit, Belita moulded the bricks for the structure, and has even gone further by beginning to construct a kitchen with additional bricks.

The woman is one of the many participants of Concern Universal's Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project in the Bvumbwe area that takes into account gender issues and concerns. Belita hailed the project as a break through, which has led to a reduction in the outbreak of diseases attributed to poor sanitation. The village head-woman Moses emphasised that the 103 families in her area are now healthier, and have more time to work in their fields and take part in community project activities. Through the project, CU is also upgrading shallow wells, rehabilitating non-functioning boreholes, and sinking new boreholes to provide safe water to the communities.



Belita Bakachela (left) in front of new latrine