

## Making a Difference

Citizen's and their organisations and networks contributing to change  
OWA PPA 2008-9: Case study 11

<b>Title of Case Study:</b>	<b>ALICE CHIMODZIMODZI</b>
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<b>1. PPA partner name</b>	<b>One World Action</b>
<b>2. Countries highlighted in case study</b>	<b>Malawi</b>

### **ALICE CHIMODZIMODZI**

Headwoman of Duwizi village, Chikolorere Area, Dedza District, Malawi



Alice Chimodzimidzi has been headwoman of Duwizi village for the past 4 years. She had always been known for her just decision-making and conflict resolution abilities and has always been a person who people looked up to. So when her brother who was village headman passed away she was chosen by the people of her village to be their next leader.

Southern Malawi is largely matrilineal and women inherit land. Despite this it is not common practice for them to become headwomen, although it is more acceptable in Southern Malawi. As Alice is from the royal family it was easier for her to become headwoman and break the traditional mould.

Dedza district has 8 Traditional Authorities (TA) one of which is a woman, Teresa Kachindamoto from the Chikolorere Area. She has 22 village headpersons and 1 group headman under her jurisdiction. Alice Chimodzimodzi is one of the 3 headwomen in the Chikolorere Area and smiles ruefully when she speaks of how she was intimidated by the male village heads when she first joined the Area Council. *“There is a lot of stigma attached to village heads who are women, mostly instigated by men. It is commonly believed that headwomen will bewitch people”.*

Alice faced quite a challenge in overcoming her own fears and convincing people in her village to continue supporting her. She found it rather difficult in the beginning but slowly built up her confidence and established herself within the Area Council. *“It is important to keep fighting for what you believe and not give up when it is difficult”.* She drew a lot of strength from the fact that the TA was a woman who encouraged women to play an active role in the Area Council. Now a days even male village heads come to her for advice.

The 3 headwomen and the TA have formed an informal women’s caucus within the Area Council and have been able to consistently address the needs of women in the Chikolorere Area. They have specially promoted women farmers and have ensured that they receive the fertilizer coupons in time. If coupons have been insufficient, they have shared it out equally among women farmers. They have also consistently encouraged and supported women from the HIV/AIDS support groups and have seen to it that land belonging to women living with HIV/AIDS is safeguarded. The Chikolorere area has largely dry land and food security is a constant problem faced by everybody in the area and is a big challenge for all headpersons.

Cases of violence against women have fallen sharply as police complaints have been lodged against culprits. Because of their success many headmen are also taking their lead regarding the issue of violence against women.

Alice Chimodzomodzi has become a symbol of strength to other women in the Chikolorere Area and believes that it is important to build the confidence of women so that they can voice their concerns, fight for their rights and participate in politics. *“The voices of women and issues of women are being heard in the Area council and this is only because of the village headwomen and the TA. It is important for women to be in these positions so that they can find solutions for problems and issues that are important to women”.*