



Strength in Partnership

Protecting Childhood in Zambia

For nearly five decades, Senior Chief Chinyaku has carried the responsibility of leading and protecting the Kanyanja community in Zambia. As a community leader, he has long worked to preserve what is good in his culture while confronting the challenges that threaten children's well-being.

Over the years, he watched poverty, alcohol abuse, early marriage and gender-based violence interrupt childhood and place girls at particular risk. Too many children were growing up too fast. Too many girls were leaving school before they had the chance to dream about their futures. And too many families were carrying burdens they could not overcome alone.

Chief Chinyaku did everything he could to address these problems. He called parents to account, reinforced community expectations and worked to discourage harmful practices. But he knew that lasting change would require more than he could do alone.

So the chief met with Pastor Shem from Compassion's local church partner, speaking honestly about the realities facing his community. Children were not safe enough. Girls were dropping out of school. Early marriages were robbing families of hope and daughters of opportunity.

Rather than offering a temporary solution, the church listened. Together with the chief and other community leaders, they identified a practical and lasting response: the establishment of a Gender-Based Violence Center in the community.

“I tried my level best, but my efforts were not enough to fix all the ills in my community.”

– SENIOR CHIEF CHINYAKU

“Our relationship with the chief has opened the door for partnership as we depend on one another. If the chief needs something, he reaches out to us, and we do the same as a church.” – PASTOR SHEM

Thanks to their collaboration, the center has become far more than a building. It is a visible sign that abuse will not be ignored and that children matter deeply. It has strengthened accountability, created a place where cases can be addressed and helped shift community attitudes about what is acceptable. Where harmful practices were once tolerated or hidden, families now know there is support, accountability and a growing network of protection for their children.

This transformation did not happen overnight. But over time, Compassion’s partnership with the local church helped strengthen the community’s response to violence, and the community began to change for the better. Families received support and guidance

that increased their ability to keep children in school and protect them from exploitation. Together, everyone began working side by side, creating a more unified effort to restore dignity and safety.

For girls, especially, the impact has been profound. Chief Chinyaku has seen a future open up that once felt out of reach. Where early marriage once interrupted education, girls are now more able to finish secondary school and even continue to tertiary education.

That kind of progress changes more than one child’s life. It changes the expectations of an entire community. When a girl stays in school, she gains time, protection and possibility. She is more free to become who God created her to be.



Today, the chief sees evidence of change all around him. He sees girls staying in school. He sees stronger accountability. He sees families with renewed hope. And perhaps most meaningfully, he sees children playing freely again. What may seem like a simple picture is, for him, a powerful sign of restoration. Children play when they feel safe. They dream when they believe tomorrow can be better than today.

This is the impact of partnership. Because of the generosity of donors and the leadership of community champions like Senior Chief Chinyaku, children in Kanyanja are experiencing greater protection and a stronger future.

Compassion did not step into the community with a one-size-fits-all answer. Instead, it came alongside a trusted leader, listened to the needs of the community and helped build a response rooted in local ownership and lasting care.

The partnership has not only addressed protection but also practical needs. During difficult seasons, especially before harvest, vulnerable families receive food support, including maize, rice, sugar and cooking oil. Older adults, people living with disabilities, and children are included.



“The Compassion church has lessened the burden on the people in my chieftdom.”

– SENIOR CHIEF CHINYAKU

This story is a reminder that your support makes partnerships like this possible. Your generosity helps equip local churches to stand with communities, protect children and create pathways toward hope.

In Kanyanja, that support helped establish a Gender-Based Violence Center and strengthen a community-wide commitment to safeguarding children. And because of that, more boys and girls are growing up with the freedom to learn, to play and to imagine a different future.



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