

Walira Mvula, Walira Matope



Chidzanja Bridge damaged by the floods

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Psalm 46:1-3)

There is a Chewa proverb, “Walira mvula, walira matope” (he who cries for rain, cries for mud). In a place where no rain falls from May to October, the beginning of the rainy season means new life and a fresh crop of food. Malawian farmers view rain as one of God’s greatest blessings; however, the rainy season presents a significant challenge for city planners trying to manage the flow of water through heavily populated urban areas.

On 10 January 2019 heavy rains in Malawi’s capital city of

Lilongwe led to flash flooding that killed two people and damaged the homes of 984 people. Several bridges were severely damaged. The hardest hit areas of the city included the campus of the Lutheran Bible Institute, where we are training the future pastors of the Lutheran Church in Central Africa.



Part of the wall around LBI that collapsed from the rain

The LBI campus is located on the slope of a hill and is surrounded by a brick security wall that is about 10 feet tall. Although the wall has several drainage outlets, several of them were blocked with trash and debris. After three hours of non-stop rain, a portion of the wall collapsed. This released a tidal wave of water that gushed down the campus slope towards the homes of the people who live adjacent to our campus, including the home of LCCA pastor Kesten Chinyanga.

At the request of the community's traditional headman, LBI faculty members visited the affected people and delivered gifts of money and maize (corn) to people who had suffered the greatest losses. Our visitors were somewhat surprised to hear accusations that someone had intentionally broken to wall to

cause destruction to our neighbors' homes.

Three days later, representatives from the LBI met a second time with the headman and members of the community. At that time we learned that some members of the community threatened to hold a vigil in protest against the LBI. Our representatives assured the community leaders about our solidarity with them during this difficult time, and took them on a walking tour around the campus to show them what steps we have taken to control the flow of water across our property.



Kawale bridge damaged by the floods

Working together with our neighbors in love and humility, the LBI faculty listened to the community leaders' suggestions on further steps we can take to mitigate flooding in the future. One proposal is to construct of a large drainage ditch that will shunt water away from our neighbors' homes. In fact, a drainage system has already been designed by Gary Evans, one of the current CAMM staff members in Malawi and a civil engineer by profession.

Even in the midst of suffering, God continues to hold his protecting hand over us and our community. This recent natural calamity has given us the opportunity to demonstrate Christian love and compassion for our neighbors, and to witness to them about the "fountain filled with blood drawn

from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains" (CW 112, v1).

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