



## **ST JOHN OF GOD INSTITUTE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING; A CENTRE FOR TOTAL TRANSFORMATION**

*By Vitumbiko Andrew Ngwira (Institute of Vocational Training and Child Development Centre social worker)*



*Cynthia Chirwa outside her new house*

The Institute of Vocational Training Centre is place where transformation is created and advanced. When I say transformation I refer to the total development on the human person. Apart from training learners in home management, tailoring, bricklaying, carpentry and horticulture, the institute offers a very conducive environment for learning. Students have counselling services, pastoral care, and access to the St John of God clinic. Since its establishment the institute has trained hundreds of poor women and men who are now living independent lives.

22 years old Cynthia Chirwa has a story to tell about the Institute of vocational Training. I followed Cynthia at her working place in NKhatabay, which is about 47 kilometres from Mzuzu. Coming from a very deprived family, Cynthia could not complete her secondary school education. Like many other poor girls and boys in Malawi, this meant that her future was blurred and promised very little. Cynthia never saw her dad; he died while she was a baby. Her mum has struggled to raise Cynthia and her elder sisters and brothers, without any job or stable business. Even a millionaire would find raising 7 children not an easy task. What about a jobless and poor woman?

Having tried many options in life, Cynthia decided to pursue a course in home management and catering at St John of God Institute of Vocational Training. This decision would be the beginning of her better days. The decision was taken because she could not afford to go to any college in Malawi due to lack of school fees. St John of God provided, the only option. For her this was an opportunity to utilize with total dedication.

Cynthia began her training in 2012, which lasted to 2014. The two years of her training went very fast and Cynthia recalls the day of graduation as the most significant day in her life. She not only achieved a certificate in Home management but also acquired values of hospitality, dignity, respect, compassion and excellence. Her life would be based on these values from then onwards.

Well, one might ask, ‘what you do with a certificate of Home management while others have degrees and diplomas in the same field?’ It doesn’t matter which college you went to or what type of degree you have. How you manage your life is the most important thing in life.

After the completion of her studies, Cynthia got a job with the Mzuzu diocesan pastoral centre as a chef. Her hard work and commitment to work is a huge motivation to her work mates. A chat with the centre’s Director revealed that Cynthia is an important asset to their work force. She is reliable and works with great passion. The director also said that Cynthia has made a good name for the Institute of Vocational Training.



*Cynthia with the Director of the pastoral centre*

Cynthia is a happy woman. She cannot live a day without praying for girls and boys who are facing many challenges in their lives just like she did. She wishes for more institutions like St John of God that would bring hope to many poor people. She says that her life wouldn't be the same without St John of God Institute of Vocational Training. Because of her current job, she is able to support her mum.

Her certificate in Home management is not the end of her dreams. She plans to make some savings and advance her education. She believes that one can only achieve his or her dream by showing great commitment in their present task and having realistic goals. I have no doubt that Cynthia will reach her goals. She is not only an encouragement for poor young people, but also she is also a source of hope and pride to the St John of God, especially, the Institute of Vocational Training.



*Cynthia offers a soft drink to Andrew during his visit*