Prudence Chavula has certainly packed a lot into her 24 years. Not only has she achieved a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration from the University of Malawi, but in 2015 she set up her own youth-led, girl-focused NGO, Go Fund a Girl and she is leading on a massive gender-based violence campaign. She has placed the girl child and young women at the center of her work and activism.

“I am passionate about girl child education and the empowerment of rural young women in particular, that’s why I set up Go Fund a Girl. I wanted to create positive community transformation for not only the Mangochi district, where I hail from, but for all communities where girls and young women are being impacted by teenage pregnancies, early child marriage, school drop outs and GBV.” These are the challenges and hardships that she has seen and experienced first-hand in her home district, which holds the unfortunate title as the district with the highest rates of teenage pregnancies and child marriage in all of Malawi. Her passion has been honed from her teenage years, where she started her activism journey by volunteering for CAMFED, a NGO that supports young girls to go to school by providing scholarships and bursaries. “I guess that’s where I got the inspiration for Go Fund a Girl. Our aim is to provide an enabling environment for the girl child and young women, so that they themselves become powerful agents for social and economic development in our society.” The also organisation provides much needed information and support on issues such as GBV, HIV/AIDS, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and importantly SRHR for adolescent and young people in Malawi. To date, Go Fund a Girls has supported 60 girls to go back to school, provided other needed forms of financial support, given away over 1,000 school uniforms, and embarked upon a hygiene management project where 3,000 girls and young women were trained on the importance of menstrual hygiene and were provided reusable sanitary pads! Although to many this would seem to be a massive achievement, Prudence is driven to expand her projects to reach many more girls and young women. “The need is just so big in our country that we will be looking at finding more partners and funding to ramp up our efforts.” However funding for youth-led organisations remains a challenge, but she is not deterred as she knows that Go Fund a Girl is the right model that will change the trajectory of the girl child and young women in Malawi.

The bigger challenge for Prudence is trying to tackle the deep rooted causes that lead to the high numbers of early child marriage, teenage pregnancies and violence that has become a part of everyday life and something that some believe “they just have to live with. “Patriarchy and our cultural beliefs and norms have a big role in why we see this deficit in the value of a girl child versus a boy child. And why boys and men believe that a girl or young women is there to serve their needs and why they believe they need to dominate.” She says that this stems from the initiation ceremonies that boys are sent to take part in, from the very early ages of 4 years, 5 years or 6 years-old. For girls, they attend these ceremonies later on, between the ages of 9, 10 and 11 years of age. It is here that Prudence says the importance and approach that will finally start to make inroads into the ecosystem of adolescent girls and young women. “The need is just so big in our country that we will be looking at finding more partners and funding to ramp up our efforts.” However funding for youth-led organisations remains a challenge, but she is not deterred as she knows that Go Fund a Girl is the right model that will change the trajectory of the girl child and young women in Malawi.
tackle these issues, just doing it with girls alone was not going to change habits.”

Prudence knew that if she wanted to make an impact, she needed male and female champions. She says that they needed to better understand the reasons behind this behaviour and to find good male role models in the community who could drive conversations and challenge behaviours. “We also realised that boys and young men were feeling left out because there were so many interventions that targeted young girls and women, they were feeling excluded and this led to resentment of girls, which I guess was an unintentional consequence of girl empowerment. That is why when we were putting this project together we knew that we had to find a way the capitalise on the power of youth clubs and youth-led organisations, to create a unified voice against GBV, where young brave girls could share their stories without fear of stigma or victim shaming and their stories could challenge the status quo and hopefully lead to a change in behaviour.” Prudence decided to approach the Honourable Mambo Adams, the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, who had shown herself to be a great champion of gender issues in Malawi. The Second Deputy Speaker was so enthralled with the idea, that she reached out to her networks and secured funding from UN Women for the project. So, as part of 16 Days of Activism Against Violence towards Women and Children last year, she launched, ‘Not Under My Watch: Towards a Zero GBV Generation’. “The campaign basically aims at building the capacity of adolescent girls and young women and youth networks, to an extent that they are able to act as whistle blowers, by reporting GBV cases happening on the ground. They must become the champions of their futures without the fear of victim shaming or stigma.” Since starting the project last year, it has helped 35 girls who had been married off and became pregnant during the marriage to go back to school. “During Covid-19 we saw a massive spike in early marriages and pregnancies, but through this campaign we have helped quite a few girls reclaim their lives and futures and we will continue to find these young girls and women and offer them the appropriate solutions to get back into education and be empowered to be able to make choices for themselves.” Prudence is optimistic that this unified approach to impact the whole ecosystem of adolescent girls and young women is the right approach that will finally start to make inroads into the challenges that impede the empowerment and progress of adolescent girls and young women.

Prudence is part of the growing groundswell of action where young people across Africa have found their voice and their power and are staying to all stakeholders, ‘There is nothing for us without us.’

Follow Prudence on:
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- Instagram: @prudence_chavula
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You can also follow the organisation she works with:
- Go Fund a Girl Child
  - Facebook: Go Fund A Girl Child