

Meet Tawonga, Malawi



Tawonga and her family.

Watch the [film](#).

Do you know someone who has a disability? Do they get some extra help at home or school so that they can join in games and activities with their friends?

This is a story about Tawonga, a 10-year-old girl who loves school and playing with her friends. Tawonga also has a disability – when she was born, one of her legs was weaker than the other, so now she needs crutches to help her walk. Growing up in a poor village in Malawi, Tawonga has not always been able to get the extra help she needs so she can go to school and join in with her friends. But thanks to support from Caritas Australia's partner CADECOM (Catholic Development Commission in Malawi), Tawonga is now thriving in a disability-friendly school and dreaming of becoming a nurse in the future so she can help people in her community.

Growing up with a disability is hard wherever you live, but it is extra hard if you live in a poor community. Tawonga is the youngest of six children.

Her parents are farmers, but until recently they have not been able to grow enough food to feed the family. Sometimes they would go without food for four days at a time. In Malawi, 18% of the population are undernourished.* In 2017, a Food Crisis was declared in parts of Malawi.

Tawonga often missed school due to hunger and sickness. Getting to school was also tricky. There is no bus, so children have to walk long distances to get to school. Tawonga's siblings used to push her to school in a donated wheelchair – 3km along a bumpy road.

In addition, people in Tawonga's community didn't really understand why some people were born with a disability. If you had a disability, you would often be ignored, teased or left out.

But everything changed a few years ago when Tawonga's parents heard about the A+ program, run by CADECOM. Through the program they were given fertiliser and better seeds, and they learned improved ways of farming. Thanks to the A+ program, Tawonga's parents are now able to grow three times as much food as before and provide three meals a day for their family.

Tawonga, whose name means 'thank you', says her community now has the skills to make better use of their many natural resources, rivers, fertile soil and hills. With the support of CADECOM, the community now sees their greatest resource – each other. The program has helped people to appreciate and support people living with a disability. Tawonga says, "My community now understands that my living with a disability is not inability."

The community now works together to support each other in many ways. They have dug boreholes, which means they have safe water much closer to home. They have also started a seed bank, so people can save extra seed and borrow seed for planting when needed.

Tawonga's mother has joined the village savings and loans group and has started her own small business, selling fish, rice and vegetables. The money she earns helps pay for Tawonga to attend a special live-in school with disability-friendly facilities.

Tawonga is grateful for the support of people in Australia.

Your support has brought a positive change in my family and community. 🌍
Tawonga

* Source: [World Bank](#)

TAWONGA, MALAWI

Learning Tasks

1. Read and discuss:

- a) Identify a challenge that Tawonga faced.
- b) What changed to improve Tawonga's life?
- c) How did Caritas Australia help?
- d) What have you learned from Tawonga's story?
- e) Tawonga used to not have enough food every day. Can you remember a time you have been hungry or thirsty for a long time? What physical symptoms did you experience? How did this make you feel? How long did you have to wait before you could eat again?
- f) What is one thing that has surprised you about this story? Why does it surprise you?
- g) Does this story remind you of any other issues you have learned about?
- h) Which Catholic Social Teaching principle is illustrated in this story? How?

Curriculum: English ACELY1676, ACELY1692, HASS Year 6: ACHASSK140, ACHASSK141

2. Play Ndado

Ndado is a game played by children in Malawi. Read the instructions and have a go playing it at your school.

3. RE LINK: Living the mission of Jesus

Discuss: Imagine Tawonga was a student at your school. What hardships might she face in moving around the school? In what ways is your school disability friendly for students like Tawonga, and those with other disabilities? If possible, mark them on a map of your school grounds. Speak with your teacher or principal about this.

NDADO

2 – 8 players. This may remind you of a game called Knuckles or Jacks.

This is normally played on the ground where a shallow hole is dug. Find an existing hole or you could use string to mark out a hole in ground, or use a small bowl.

A number of big seeds/stones are placed in the hole.

The first player starts the game by scattering the stones/seeds in front of them. Take one stone/seed and throw it in the air, while grabbing another single stone/seed that is on the ground. All players repeat. In the second round, players pick up two stones/seeds and so on.

The game goes on and on until all players have had their turns and the one who has not failed through her turns is declared the winner.

Instructions adapted from <http://www.foamw.org/Ta-ndado>