

Story of Change

WHEN HOPE FINDS A HOME.

The Life Transformation Journey of Patuma Jere

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Figure 1 Patuma Jere

In the quiet hills of Nkhatabay District, under the Lwafwa Watershed Transformation Program, a story of perseverance and restoration is unfolding, the story of Patuma Jere, a mother whose determination turned hardship into hope.

Patuma comes from Mlongozi Village, Group Village Headman Lwafwa, T/A Kabunduli. She is married and a proud mother of four, one boy and three girls. Her daughters are in secondary school, while the youngest is still in primary school.

Life, however, was far from easy. Her husband had taken a second wife and spent much of his time away, leaving Patuma and the children without reliable support, no food, no school fees, and the children spending nights studying with a dim light of battery-powered torches.

“As a mother of four, time and again I could think of ways and means of getting out of poverty,” says Patuma.

Despite the weight of her circumstances, she refused to surrender to despair. Her turning point came in 2024, when she joined the Khamalipindula Village Savings and Loan (VSL) Group, supported by Floresta in Malawi under the Lwafwa Watershed Transformation Program, funded by Plant With Purpose.

Khamalipindula VSL group had 17 members, 16 women and 1 man, all determined to build better lives through saving and lending. From her first small loan of MK 30,000, Patuma bought 5 kilograms of baking flour and began a small min-scone business in her village.

With guidance from Floresta’s Community-Based Trainer on business management, she learned how to budget, plan, and manage her sales. Her profits grew steadily, allowing her to repay her loans with interest and reinvest in her business.



Figure 2: Patuma Jere and her family members

Through the training, I learned how to manage my business well. Now I can make profits and repay my loans,” she explains.

Her small baking venture soon became a reliable source of income and a symbol of newfound independence.

When her husband returned home, the couple began to rebuild their life together. Patuma used part of her earnings to invest in a solar lamp from Dzuwa Energy, worth MK 200,000, a decision that brought literal light into their home.

“My children are now able to read under solar light, which is helping them to work hard at school,” she said proudly.”

By August 2025, she had completely repaid the solar loan through her business profits.

When her VSL group completed its first cycle in December 2025, Patuma received MK 160,000 in savings, interest, and social funds. She used the money to pay her children’s school fees and to buy three chickens, which marked the start of a small livestock venture. The chickens multiplied, and today she keeps nine, using some for food and selling others to support her household.

In January 2025, during her second VSL cycle, Patuma took a new loan of MK 150,000. She increased her baking flour stock to 25 kilograms. Together with her husband and children, they started moulding 8,000 bricks for the foundation of their dream house.

“We have agreed as a family to build a good house with iron sheets and cement,” she shared. “It is our vision for a better future.”

Beyond savings and business, Patuma has embraced Floresta’s integrated approach; she actively participates in Spiritual Renewal and Environmental Restoration activities. She takes part in nursery establishment and tree planting activities in an effort to replace cut-down trees.

“My journey of life has been miserable, but now it is being transformed through the assets I have acquired,” Patuma reiterates.”



Figure 3: Patuma Jere feeding her chickens as part of Livestock management

Patuma attended a training on energy-saving cooking stoves and built her own “Changu Changu Mbaula” at home. The new stove uses less firewood and produces less smoke, protecting her health and that of her family.

Her current savings amount to MK 98,000, and she is eagerly waiting for the group’s next share-out in December 2025, a milestone she plans to celebrate with gratitude and renewed hope.

From being abandoned and struggling to feed her children, to becoming a businesswoman, a solar energy user, and an advocate of sustainable living, Patuma’s story is one of transformation born out of faith, perseverance, and opportunity.

Her life testifies to the power of Floresta’s model, one that integrates economic empowerment, environmental restoration, and spiritual renewal to restore dignity and purpose.

Her journey from charcoal burning to tree planting has become a living testimony of what happens when faith transforms understanding.

“This journey has shown me that when you have faith and work hard, God opens new doors,” she concluded.”

And today, as the evening light glows gently from her solar lamp, illuminating her children’s faces as they study, Patuma’s hope shines just as bright, a living witness to the transformation that Floresta is planting across Malawi.

Disclaimer: This story uses a pseudonym for confidentiality.