

Video exercise: Young people's mental wellbeing in Malawi and Finland

Description

In this exercise, we hear two Malawian young people's thoughts about mental wellbeing. In the video, they consider what influences mental wellbeing and how young people can make an impact in Malawian youth groups. In the exercise we consider the causes and consequences of challenges, young people's experiences and ways of making a difference.

Duration: 20 min. You can use more time for the exercise as well as the debrief.

Group size: Suitable for all group sizes.

Age recommendation: Secondary and upper secondary level.

How Are You Doing? is Taksvärkki's campaign in 2025–2026: www.taksvarkki.fi/kampanja2025/en/

Goal

- Discussing mental wellbeing and related ways of making a difference.
- Recognizing global perspectives, such as young people's similar and different experiences in Malawi and Finland.
- Understanding the comprehensiveness of mental wellbeing and root causes for young people's challenges in Malawi.
- Forming and sharing perspectives in pairs, writing down key points and participating in discussion if one so wishes.

Equipment

- Video: link for the video in YouTube: youtu.be/qfi80SNJ2IM
- Powerpoint-slideshow: [ppt-file](#), you can also find the file at www.taksvarkki.fi/kampanja2025/en/for-teachers/
- Paper and pens.

Information about the video:

This video has been filmed in Salima, Malawi, on a project trip in the autumn of 2024. On the video, you can see members of the youth groups organized by the Malawian youth organization CYECE. CYECE (*Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education*) is Taksvärkki's partner organization, whose work Taksvärkki supports with the earnings of the Taksvärkki fundraising campaign, for example. Read more about our collaboration: www.taksvarkki.fi/en/development-cooperation.

Instructions

Open the slideshow and video. Check that the video, audio and subtitles are working. You can turn on the subtitles on YouTube by clicking on the white square in the bottom right corner of the video. When you click the cog icon under Subtitles, you can change the language of the subtitles (Finnish, Swedish, English or plain Finnish) as well as adjust the size of the letters and background color. Plain language (only in Finnish) is under the title 'aimara', as YouTube's language selection does not have the option for plain language.

Show and read out loud the instructions for the exercise. Then watch the video together. After the video, show and read out loud the questions and the instructions for the thumb voting. During the discussion, give each pair a paper and pen for making notes. Show and read out loud questions a-c. Debrief the exercise by discussing with the whole group question by question so that anyone can answer.

Alternatives for facilitation:

The exercise can also be performed in small groups.

Exercise instructions for students (same as in the presentation)

Video exercise: Young people's mental wellbeing in Malawi and Finland

Next, we will watch a video where two young people talk about challenges related to mental wellbeing and ways of making a difference in youth groups. The young people in the video are called Wilford and Sumiya. They live in a district called Salima in Malawi. After the video, we will discuss it in pairs.

Starting questions: Talk with the person next to you.

What are your thoughts after watching the video? What stuck in your mind?

Thumb voting: Do you agree or disagree? Use your thumb to show your opinion.

In the video, Wilford says: “I like doing house chores, like yardwork, washing dishes and going to the market to buy groceries.”

In the video, Sumiya says: “When a young person keeps secrets to themselves, they suffer a lot.”

Thoughts and additional questions for debriefing the thumb voting:

- Voting about Wilford’s comment can be quite funny.
- Still, the comment relates to wellbeing. House chores are important everyday skills. They can strengthen mental wellbeing and the feeling of being involved in a community.

- If there is time, you can ask additional questions:

- How is Wilford’s comment related to mental wellbeing?
- Sumiya encourages you to tell a friend or reliable adults if you have something on your mind.

Young people aren’t always willing or able to tell anyone if they feel unwell. Why can this be?

- Sumiya also brings up the important matter of reporting injustices: Where can you report if you have experienced violence, for example from your parents, friends or teachers? It is important to also report to authorities such as the police if needed.

Discuss in pairs. Write down a few key points for each question:

a) How do mental wellbeing **challenges appear** in young people’s life in Malawi?

Are the challenges similar as in Finland?

b) What are the **causes of mental wellbeing challenges**, according to young people?

c) What **action** do young people take to strengthen mental wellbeing in Malawi?

Which of these actions could work in your own school as well?

- Answers can be short. The most important thing is to write down some key points.

Ideas for debriefing

What weakens young people’s mental wellbeing?

Youth groups have brought up the theme in Taksvärkki and in CYECE in Malawi. According to the youth, in Malawi people do not talk about mental wellbeing very much. The youth want to change this and make an impact in their own village communities. In Malawi and Finland, youth experience that many young people are unwell. People do not talk enough about mental wellbeing, and adults downplay the issue as well.

The following points may come up in the answers (directly from the video):

a) + b) Challenges and their causes

- Mental well-being is not talked about, and young people do not share their worries.
- Challenges related to mental well-being appear as isolation from friends or dropping out of school.
- Discrimination.
- Negative comments from teachers.
- Lack of money for school fees causes stress.
- Domestic violence.
- Unplanned pregnancies among young girls.

c) Ways to strengthen mental well-being

- Spending time with friends.
- Talking with friends about challenges related to mental well-being.
- Youth groups speak at events such as parties or church gatherings, sharing information with other young people.
- Young people can report issues such as stress or violence to the youth group.
- The youth group talks with and guides young people in life and organizes joint activities.
- It is important that adults and community leaders speak publicly about mental well-being, for example with parents, so that they can talk with their children.

Lists of causes and solutions mentioned by both Malawian and Finnish young people have also been added to the presentation slides.

Here are some causes identified by youth in Salima:

- Discrimination
- Silence about issues
- Poverty

- Difficult situation at home, forced marriage
- HIV/AIDS

Here are some causes identified by Finnish youth in the Challengers group:

- Discrimination, bullying
- Silence about issues
- Difficult situation at home
- Pressure: society, school, social media
- Climate change

- The Salima youth also listed: Related to poverty, lack of food and inability to pay school fees.

Related to difficult situation at home, parents' death and abuse. Unwanted pregnancy. Negative comments from teachers.

- The Challengers youth also listed: Harassment. Insecurity about the future. Making big choices.

- Naturally, there are differences in root causes because the countries, societies and cultures are different.

- The Salima youth's answers show that the youth group members are from the countryside and poor families, and some of them have dropped out of school. Covering children's school fees is challenging for poor families, where children and young people also play a significant role as part of the workforce.

- In Malawi and Finland, there are also commonalities, such as discrimination and difficult conditions at home. In the video the youth also mentioned lack of communication and lack of support from adults.

How could challenges be solved according to young people?

Youth groups have brought up the theme in Taksvärkki and in CYECE. There are many similarities in the solutions. Young people's wishes: 1) safe spaces to be and talk, 2) adults must listen to young people in decision-making, 3) enough mental health services, information and support.

Here are some solutions identified by youth in Salima:

- Talking and praying

- Professional help
- Youth groups
- Music, sports, movies

Here are some solutions identified by Finnish youth in the Challengers group:

- Talking and empathy
- Professional help (better access)
- Less pressure
- Close people and pets

- The Challengers youth also listed: Facing problems, openness and awareness. Freedom of taking time, choose and try out. Routines.

Contents and presentation of the exercise: Eeva Kemppainen. Translation: Jiko Kylén. Campaign visuals: Vilma Kartano ja Pamela Aranen. Photos: Harison Nkhoma, CYECE. Copyright: Taksvärkki ry (2025). The material may be copied, transmitted, distributed, and displayed for non-commercial use. The source must be credited. The material may not be modified without permission. www.taksvarkki.fi/en/taksvarkki-home



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