

SCHOOLS LINKING ANNUAL 2022 REPORT

BACKGROUND

Schools linking was established to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the linked schools whereby UK and Malawian schools share teaching and learning practices. Over the years, school linking has had exchange visits that enhanced over 100 teachers meeting face to face and appreciating teaching pedagogies.

It has also helped in engaging learners in various projects that directly involve them. These are aimed at improving learners' skills such as literacy, numeracy, and participation amongst others. Children in the partnerships share issues that are topic based within a given timeframe. The activities help them think outside their normal classroom work and explore work done by their peers in a different country. Currently, 40 schools are in partnership.

CLEAN HANDS /HEALTH WALK

The project was launched in Malawi schools at the end of May 2021 and it stretched to December 2022. The project was designed for learners in Malawi and the UK to enlighten learners in the partnered schools through shared activities. Both schools carried out, among other things, this project whereby children in the UK and Malawi list down key things needed in school life, like toilets, water, sanitation, and things needed for them to study.

Teachers in the linked schools had lesson plans that would guide them in the delivery of the lessons in their classes and in sharing the outcomes of children's findings. The project further promoted practical activities in ensuring that the learning environment has basic needs such as clean water, soap, litter free playgrounds, etc.

In November, Katitima primary school constructed their toilet block with great assistance from its partner school Salehurst. The school did not have adequate toilets as some collapsed as a result of heavy rains. The new double toilet block will go a long way in alleviating the problems the school experienced. The toilets are fitted with doors for privacy.



Toilet block at Katitima

When schools have adequate toilets, it improves the health of the school and the community at large. Currently, Malawi has been affected by cholera. The cases are still growing. One of the key factors is poor sanitation. In areas where there are inadequate toilets, learners might defecate in open spaces. This particularly, in the rainy season, poses a significant threat.

During the 'Clean Hands/ Health Walk' Starfish Malawi distributed hand-washing facilities to over 35 schools in Salima and Kasungu. This was not only a Covid 19 preventive measure, but it also prevented other diseases that lead to absenteeism in school such as stomach-related conditions. Chikombola school had an average of 203 cases in the 2019/2020 school year and these have now reduced to 46 in the just-ended 2021/2022 school year.

THE WATER PROJECT

The Water project is to be introduced in February 2023 and is anticipated to run all year round. Learners both in Malawi and UK will share activities from their curriculums such as clean water, sources of water and how they are maintained, challenges and how these are solved, water for washing hands clean, water for toilets, and climate change, amongst others.

Teachers are expected to share notes/lesson plans of the topics shared. The greatest goal is to harness and enhance the critical thinking, problem-solving and participatory skills among learners through shared activities. Water obviously is a vital part of their day-to-day lives and plays an important role in their health. They will be encouraged to explore, brainstorm and come up with how water is used in relation to this. Furthermore, The Water Project will encourage schools to continue and reinforce the activities that were included in the 'Clean Hands' Project.



Hand Washing Facility at Msalura Primary School

Msalura school is among the schools that have a huge population of learners in the Salima District. The school reinforced measures to make sure that learners observe sanitation guides as set by the school. It remained a must-follow rule despite having no Covid 19 cases over the past few months. The school maintained washing points outside classrooms where learners were encouraged to wash their hands.



Litter Bins

The school also took further measures to reduce litter around the school by having well-designed litter bins. Litter can be hazardous to health and the environment. According to Mr Makombe the school head, school environments must be clean at all times. "We spend much of our time in school. Schools are not meant to contract diseases but to promote learning. Our sanitation and health team work tirelessly to engage learners to follow sanitation and health guides."

Msalura as a school relocated people that conduct local businesses that litter the campus as one way of improving the school surroundings. For example, mangoes, bananas, sugarcane, and popcorn are sold in thin plastic bags which were often left littered on the school grounds. Some of these were in huge quantities attracting flies that were a potential health hazard.

MLAMBE TRINITY SCHOOL BLOCK



Classroom block at Mlambe Trinity School

With help from Mission Direct in the UK, we have managed to erect the second structure at Mlambe Trinity School. This will upgrade the classes to Standards one to four. It has been a challenge for the communities for many years as their children were forced to walk a long distance to the nearby school, Ngolowindo Primary and there have been several road accidents that claimed the lives of pupils from the Moyo area. So this is a significant step for both children and their families from this area and once the block is finished, it will help decongest standards 3 and 4 at Ngolowindo primary school.