

SCHOOLS LINKING JULY 2021 REPORT

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 teachers meeting face to face and appreciate teaching pedagogies. It has also helped in engaging learners in various projects that directly involve them. These aim at improving learners' skills such as those of literacy, numeracy etc. Currently, 30 schools in each country are in partnership.

CLEAN HANDS LEARNING MODULE

The project was launched in Malawi schools towards the end of May this year. The Clean Hands project seeks to explore more avenues to a healthy learning environment.

Schools involved will be taking part in contributing information to the project. The gathered information will be shared across the partnership to compare and contrast experiences. Children in the schools will also share their views on how best the health walks in their schools will bring long lasting solutions.



In every health walk, children will look at their environments critically. Areas of interest will be litter, water, toilets etc. Classes will share findings over the year citing differences and planned improvements as a result of the project.

Toilet block at Kanjendere Primary School

In schools that have been recently visited, there are clear indications that some parts of the school environment such as toilets require a lot of attention to make them healthy for learners in the schools. In addition, some have rubbish pits that are inadequate and allow the contents blow around school campuses and nearby homes.

Our visits revealed that even though many schools exist, they lack adequate numbers of toilets to match the number of students. For example, Ntchentche and Chigombe primary schools have 4 toilets with an enrolment of 2000+ learners, causing inevitable health hazards to learners. The headteacher at Ntchentche, Happiness Sambala, cited that some learners opt to urinate in the nearby shrubs during school breaks as it is so

unpleasant to enter the toilets.

Also, annually the Government provide tablets to treat bilharzia, a local disease, which was infectious particularly in primary schools. The main site of infection are the toilets.

In state schools, the cleaning of toilets is done by learners without proper materials. In most cases, water and brooms are the local materials used to clean the toilets. But due to the nature of a broom it leaves water on the surfaces which takes time to dry. As a result, some learners urinate on the floors in fear of slipping on the wet floors, particularly if they do not have shoes. Proper cleaning of a toilet requires water, a broom and a squeezer mop. This dries the wet floors instantly after cleaning. It costs between £2.50 to £3. A picture below portrays a wet floor captured at Ntchetché primary school an hour after cleaning the toilet.



Wet floor as captured at Ntchetché school



Sample of a mop squeezer

Out of 11 schools, only 2 had tiny bars of soap in their washing points. To assist, we will be supplying bars of medicated soap as suggested by schools in Malawi. We previously donated 27 washing stands to various schools in Salima and Kasungu. We will continue to make sure that these have soap that will help learners to clean their hands properly as a way of preventing COVID 19.

Chalk n' Dusters

In Malawi, teaching is almost impossible without the core necessities in school such as chalk and dusters (board rubbers). Schools are provided with limited funds that must suffice for the whole school year. This forces most schools to attempt to engage communities to support through raising funds from parents, which in most cases is perceived as a burden where many struggle financially. The Chalk n' Dusters project was, therefore, founded to minimise these challenges and the project is now underway

for the second phase.

Mrs Mseka, the deputy head at Mtiya, says, 'At Mtiya primary school, we are grateful that once again you have thought of providing us with chalk. Chalk and dusters remain major teaching materials. We rely on written text on chalkboards. We struggle to get chalk most of the time. Through the donation of chalk, it will carry us through the next 8 weeks. Please convey our gratitude to Starfish”.



Mrs Mseka of Mtiya Primary School

Teachers Exchange Visit 2021

Due to the pandemic and resulting restrictions on travel, it remains unclear as to when the teachers might be able to travel again. 10 teachers from various schools in Malawi were expecting to have a reciprocal visit. However, we have recently been informed that for 2021 this sadly had to be cancelled by the British Council.