

ANNUAL LITERACY LEADERS PROJECT REPORT FOR 2022

BACKGROUND

Literacy Leaders is a Starfish-funded literacy development project implemented within the Ngolowindo Zone of the Salima district. The project seeks to impart teachers with skills in vocabulary, grammar, phonics, pedagogy and classroom management, to improve their service delivery. 5 primary schools are the targets within the zone, namely: Lifuwu, Mikute, Ngolowindo, Demera, and Maganga. Ultimately, learners' performances at both national and school exams are expected to improve. The Literacy Leaders project initially targeted 15 teachers, 3 from each school who are now acting as lead teachers of the project as the delivery mode has moved to school-based to incorporate more teachers from schools. Approximately 40 teachers are now participating, with project sessions taking place within schools every fortnight.

UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS

After lockdown, the Literacy Leaders project moved from conducting sessions and activities at Ngolowindo Teacher Development Centre to running everything on the individual school sites.

In addition, participants from Demera and Mikute proposed an arrangement for exchange visits where at times sessions should be done at one school jointly; Demera teachers have so far visited Mikute twice and vice versa. The leaders prepare plans for sessions in liaison with Jean, who provides overall guidance and coordination. The conduction of activities within schools has achieved the aim of increasing reach and participation by teachers. It has also provided more opportunity for those who have been involved longest to share their expertise with others.

Demera has 12 teachers who have attended the sessions while Mikute and Lifuwu each have 10 and Maganga has 8. The increase can be attributed to the localization of the sessions.

PROJECT OUTCOME

The outcome of the project is shown in the increased confidence of teachers and engagement of learners and ultimately through the progress that the schools are making at national examinations. The impact of the pandemic means that this has been less marked than in previous years but we hope the project has helped as a resilience factor.

PROGRESS AT EXAMINATIONS

The positive impact that the Literacy Leaders project has been making in the schools within the Ngolowindo zone requires mention. Schools have managed to send learners to the preferred conventional secondary schools as well as community day secondary schools in 2022. Going through the trends, there seems to be a decline in the number of learners who have been selected for national secondary schools which has been attributed largely to the effects of Covid-19, manifesting in the compression of the school academic calendar in Malawi.

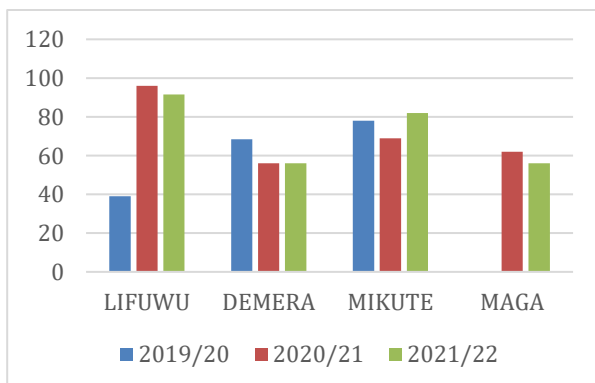
In the academic year 2020/21, 88 learners at Mikute Primary school sat for the national examinations at standard 8. Of these, 61 passed, representing a pass rate of 69%. 3 of the learners got selected to conventional schools and 33 were selected to community day secondary schools. In the 2021/2022 school year, Mikute had 83 learners enrolled. 68 of these passed the examinations representing a pass rate of 82%. This is very close to the national average of 84%, which is fantastic, given that these schools were originally selected for the project due to their significant underperformance. From Mikute, 1 girl got selected for Lilongwe Girls Secondary School, which is a national secondary school. 2 girls were selected to Chipoka and Salima Secondary Schools respectively while 1 boy went to Salima Secondary School. 15 learners got selected to Parachute Battalion Secondary School.

In the 2020/2021 school year, Demera primary school had 46 learners who were entered but only 39 sat for the exams. Out of these, 22 passed, representing a 56.4% pass rate. Of those that passed, 14 were selected to community day secondary schools. In 2021/2022, Demera enrolled 30 learners as candidates for standard 8 examinations. Out of these, 14 passed, representing 47%. All the candidates that passed were selected for Maganga Secondary School. Demera has had a change of head-teacher in 2021 at a time when the pandemic had already been causing disruption and all of our original Literacy Leaders from that school moved on, so it is perhaps not surprising that some of the previous gains pre-pandemic seem to have been lost. We hope that the inter-school work with Mikute will help.

At Lifuwu Primary School in the 2020/21 academic year, 73 sat for the exams and 71 passed, representing a fantastic 96% pass rate. 7 of those that passed were selected to Chipoka and Salima secondary schools respectively, while 34 went to Kachulu Community secondary school. In the 2021/2022 school year, 70 learners sat for the exams. Out of these, 63 passed, representing a still high 91.5 % pass rate, notably higher than the national average, despite being a rural school (there is huge rural-urban disparity in Malawi). Of those that passed, 1 boy was selected to a national secondary school in Dedza, 4 were selected to a conventional secondary school, 3 went to the district secondary school, and 14 to community day secondary school.

Maganga has 96 learners that sat for the 2020/21 national examinations. Out of these, 60 passed, representing a pass rate of 62%. In 2021/2022, 100 learners sat for the national examinations at Maganga Primary School. 56 of those that sat for the exams passed representing a 56% pass rate. 2 boys were selected for Chipoka Secondary School and 2 others went to Salima Secondary School. The rest were selected for Maganga secondary school. Maganga suffered particularly badly from the floods in early 2022.

Below is a graph, showing 3-year exam results for schools



RESCOURCES PROVIDED

Again, Starfish has been providing resources for the implementation of the project. These range from writing pads and pens, flip charts and markers to masking tape, plain paper for printing, ink cartridges, chalk, and more. Additional resources provided are funds for transport for both Jean and inter-school visits, airtime for session planning and communication, and refreshments for all teachers attending sessions.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

As a result of Covid 19, the school calendar was shortened in Malawi. School terms were made for 8 weeks which made teachers busier in catching up and meeting the demands. As a result, sessions were limited to periods when there was availability of teachers to attend.