

## Mike Zywina (Events Manager) – Our work in Malawi

There's nothing like a trip to one of our project countries to help you fully understand the influence that our unique approach to education is having on teachers, pupils and communities alike.

On my trip, I witnessed how large-scale projects such as our School Performance Review are having a profound impact in a very local context. I'm fully aware of the benefits of this project across the five African countries where we work, but speaking to individual Headteachers about the benefits for their school really helped bring it home to me.

On the other hand, our Mother Groups project is specific to Malawi, but the benefits are just as real. It was amazing to see how effective it can be when inspired and confident community members take pride in their local school, and show a determination to change things for the better. More about that one in our special photo case study here.

I could talk all day about our projects, but here are four things that really jumped out at me while in Malawi that I think that you as fundraisers would like to hear:

### 1. **Our work is truly appreciated by the people that matter.**

I met so many people in Malawi who were **full of praise and gratitude** for LCD's work. From district staff who have worked with LCD for a number of years and have seen big improvements as a result of our efforts, to Headteachers whose schools have improved dramatically with our help.

Two out of the three LCD offices in Malawi are actually based within the District Education Offices themselves. We get the spaces rent-free because the district staff are so keen to work closely with us. They feel privileged that we have chosen to work in their districts, because they see the benefits of our work on a daily basis, and they know that their colleagues elsewhere in the country often don't have the same level of support.

### 2. **Our staff are extremely dedicated and motivated.**

The staff I met firmly believe in the value of our work and are hugely committed to the cause. Despite having to regularly deal with problems such as power cuts, slow Internet connections and flooded roads in rainy season, they work long hours and are truly **proud to work for LCD**. They approach each day, whether it is spent in the office or on the road visiting schools, with **a permanent smile on their faces**.

### 3. **There is lots more still to be accomplished...**

Despite the progress we are making in Malawi, real change takes time, and our limited resources mean that we can't help every school at once. Many primary school classes are too large to be effective, and many children are dropping out of school because there simply aren't enough resources available to support them.

Each year, the rainy season brings new problems as children are unable to get to school on waterlogged roads, or catch diseases, or suffer because of leaky classroom roofs – that's if they get to study in a classroom in the first place.

The **enthusiasm and commitment** shown by the Mother Groups is just one cause for inspiration and optimism for the future. But this has to be matched by belief, dedication and – ultimately – funding back here in the UK. Which leads to my final point...

**4. Your support is absolutely crucial to our future success.**

Our staff in Malawi are full of admiration for the contribution made by all our Hitchers. The importance of the money you raise can sometimes be forgotten amidst the excitement felt about the journey to Prague or Morocco itself, but that's not the case for those staff working for LCD in Africa. **They feel the benefits of your support every day.**

If we want to continue improving education in sub-Saharan Africa, we must keep raising money to match the ambition and belief on show in Malawi. That's why your support means so much to us, and why the Hitch is such an important part of what we do here in London.