



Global Teacher Case Study

CASE STUDIES

We asked Jane McClounan of Shawlands Primary School in Glasgow, a Global Teacher in 2007, to reflect on her experiences.



1. Why did you decide to apply for the Global Teachers Programme?

I decided to apply after hearing about LCD from a friend. Having looked at the website, the idea of helping 'in a real way' appealed to me. I have done some voluntary work in Britain and found it very rewarding, I lived and worked abroad off and on for about 8 years but settled back here about 6 years ago, so I wanted to avoid becoming stale, and to escape the British climate (I am always looking for a new adventure). I felt that I could give up 5 weeks of one of my summer holidays without too much trouble!

2. How did you prepare for your placement in Malawi both professionally and personally?

With lots and lots of lists! In terms of professional preparation I thought long and hard about what to take to help me with my work in school but without a crystal ball it was hard. LCD gave lots of very useful advice and tips, and nearer the time we got a rough idea of what our schools wanted help with. I only took out things that were sustainable and not too heavy. I took our school development plan (past and present) as well as some other relevant documents and found them really helpful when working with the headteacher on a school action plan but, really most of what you need, you already have in your head!

Self-preparation was a long process, starting after our first training weekend. You do have a lot to fundraise, raise awareness and plan as well as continue your job and life, so I made lists and worked my way through them. One of the other Global Teachers had a Malawi box which she just kept adding to from when she found out she was going, which I thought was a good idea, but I had to keep reminding myself that everything had to fit into my luggage. I arranged all my injections in plenty of time and kept an eye out for good deals on sunscreen, wipes, mosquito repellent etc. 'Primark' was a godsend for cheap clothes and I planned to leave most of my clothes, towels and effects with my host family meaning I had plenty of space to bring back Malawian bits and pieces. I invested in 3 vital items – a good sleeping bag, the best rechargeable batteries (and charger) and a head torch. I also got a couple of large memory cards for my camera and I bought some gifts for

the family and school (calendars, flags, playing cards, footballs, a parachute, postcards, mini games, bubbles, balloons, hot chocolate and shortbread). I also packed a photo album with some shots of my life in Scotland – (my house, school, family, friends) and bought a cheap MP3 player with speakers and downloaded loads of Scottish music, from pipes and drums and the Proclaimers to Lulu and The Fratellis – the photos and music were a big success!

3. How did you fundraise for the Global Teacher fee?

I didn't find it too hard to raise the money; the EIS contributed, friends and family were willing to sponsor me and I held a Eurovision competition amongst the staff in my school with local businesses donating prizes. I wrote to my MPs, I got no reply from my MSP and a very nice letter from my MP wishing me good luck and donating a bottle of House of Commons whisky. We also had a 'Bring and Buy' sale at school, which took me over my target, so I used the money to buy books for my Malawian school (sourced in Malawi so the content was appropriate).

4. What did you do during your 5 week placement in Malawi? What support did you receive from the LCD staff there?

The first few days were spent getting to know staff, pupils and observing/ joining in lessons. At an early staff meeting I confirmed (from a long list) what we would be focusing on during my time at Chilanga School. I led staff in-service meetings looking at resources, assessment, Teaching for Effective Learning, using reading books as well as working with the infant staff looking at phonics. I worked with the Headteacher to devise a staff monitoring system with the focus on positive feedback. The Headteacher and I put together an Action Plan focusing on some of the above as well as the very real issue of improving punctuality and attendance (staff and pupils). I also did a bit of incidental teaching (P.E. lessons using parachute and football, Scottish dancing and songs, and lessons about Scotland). My future class in Scotland had made 'Getting to Know You' books with every other page blank. The Standard 7s in Malawi loved reading about my children and drawing and writing about themselves, and my class equally loved the fact that their books had been to Malawi and back and completed by their Global partners!



LCD staff visited on a number of occasions and gave practical and reassuring advice, as well as helping us during sessions on our middle weekend 'get together' in Dedza.

Away from school I thoroughly enjoyed my time with my host family. I was treated as one of the family, mucking in with the cooking – one of my favourite times of day was sitting in the outdoor kitchen, holding a candle for Mabel (my 'Mum') while she cooked, and staring up at the amazing night skies. I think they thought I was a bit mad as I kept on marvelling about the stars (no light pollution so truly stunning!) I went to church (for 5 hours but an amazing experience, have never heard singing like it), visited local markets, attended local events (e.g. funeral, met the Village headmen), played with the children and had a long running game of cards with Mabel. Arnold the 'Dad' had a great sense of humour so we spent a lot of time laughing!

5. What were the highlights of your placement? What aspects did you find the most challenging?

Being involved with the children at school and getting to know them was an experience I will never forget. Being able to share skills and learn from my Malawian colleagues was a privilege and the warm, accepting way I was welcomed was humbling. The thought that I might even be able to help a little was amazing and I learned a lot about children who are motivated and inspired to learn despite being in the most basic learning environment!

The challenges were the short length of time we had in schools, sometimes it felt a bit overwhelming as you wanted to do so much, and as it was near the end of term there was a lot going on - end of term exams, National Education Day etc. I also got upset sometimes at the poverty of the children and school, but far from feeling pity I have the utmost respect at the dignified way Malawian people live their lives and their sense of pride and community. Another challenge was the lack of time I got to be on my own. I was with someone every minute of the day. Even walking home from school, from nowhere, 20 or 30 children would appear wanting to carry my things and talk which was lovely but sometimes it felt like I was on show and if I felt a bit grumpy I couldn't show it. It was actually quite nice when the candles went out, to retire under my mosquito net to write my diary and read with my trusty head torch!



6. Since you've returned from your placement in Malawi, what impact do you think the visit had on:

- Your school
- Your placement school in Malawi
- Your CPD and outlook on life

Your school:

My school, and in particular my P7 class, have really enjoyed finding out about life in Malawi. It has been an extremely valuable way to learn about a different country, its cultures and customs in a real context. Their respect and understanding have grown and I can see a change in their outlook regarding issues such as Fairtrade, and the fact that we waste so much and put too much value on material things. We have done a topic on Malawi; some amazing Malawi related art work and we are currently planning a 'Malawi Museum' which the whole school will attend as well as parents and the wider educational community. My class is very proud to be involved with my follow-up work and I am sure it will have a positive, long lasting effect on them.

Your placement school in Malawi:

I was delighted to find out that some of the areas I worked on with the Chilanga staff are continuing to develop. From the feedback LCD provided I got a real sense that the school ethos has improved – attendance and punctuality are much better and the wider community is more actively involved. I think having a visitor from Scotland raised the school profile and helped improve their sense of pride and self worth. They seem more focused and I am sure their hard work will continue to reap benefits.

Your CPD and outlook on life:

I certainly don't have to worry about fulfilling my CPD time commitment! I have learned a lot and have definitely developed both personally and professionally. I have gained experience in leading

meetings and staff initiatives, making presentations, planning a topic, giving talks and have increased confidence as a teacher. I think my time in Malawi, seeing how people live their lives, taught me to be more content with my own life; from them, I learned to focus more on the positive, family and friends, and to be happy with what I have.

7. What do you think makes the Global Teachers Programme so successful?

It is so successful because the focus is on partnerships, working together to share skills and develop together, rather than only giving money or trying to do what we *think* the Malawian schools need. The overall aim is to enable the schools to develop and improve in a sustainable and ultimately independent way. Also LCD is extremely well organised and tuned in to the best ways to work and maximise the benefits of the Global Teachers' involvement in schools.

8. Lastly, do you have any advice for next year's Global Teachers?

Listen to the advice LCD gives you (especially about what to take/ not to take to your schools). It is so tempting to want to cram your suitcase full of things but so much of it will be a waste. Find space to take a couple of warm jumpers and a jacket, it is cool in the evenings even for us Scots who are used to the cold.

Don't take too many photos... I had over 1000 and it took literally hours, if not days to sort them out to be able to use some of them in Slide Shows etc. Less is more and what you have missed one of the other Global Teachers will be able to share with you. Enjoy every minute as it will be over so quickly – I'm jealous of you. Good Luck!



Pupils at Chilanga School