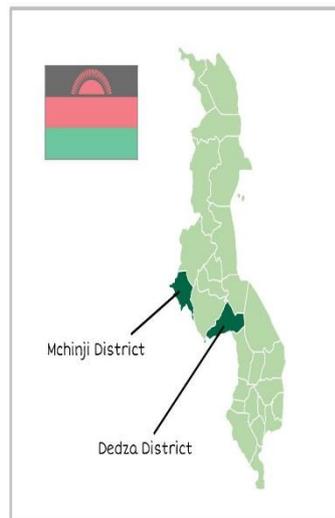




“Previously learners reached standard 8 without being able to read and write. Now standard 1 can do it”
(parent in Dedza District)



KEY FACTS

- Link has been working in Malawi since 2006
- Link Malawi works in Dedza and Mchinji Districts
- Link developed the first National Education Standards in August 2015
- We are leading the community engagement component of Malawi's Early Reading Improvement project
- We are developing a school report card system
- We have written new guidelines and trained inspectors and advisors on school improvement
- Our projects are sustainable – we work with government at all levels and ensure our interventions align with government policy

Summary

Link Community Development has been working in Malawi since 2006 with funding from DfID, USAID, the Scottish Government, Comic Relief, Oxford University Press amongst others. Highlights include developing the first National Education Standards to be used in every primary and secondary school in the country; delivering a community engagement model that improves reading skills of young children; and demonstrating our school improvement model in a new district to show that it works.

Background

Currently only 38% of students reach and complete the final Grade of primary school (grade 8). Education quality is a major barrier to progression and completion of the primary school cycle. In Malawi the proportion of Standard 4 learners able to demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade-level text is 15.4%. Girls continue to underperform compared to boys. The Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education pass rates have been declining from 74.4% in 2006 to 68.9% in 2011. Boys have been performing better than girls and the gap between the two is wider in 2012 than it was in 2006. It is against this backdrop that Link supports schools and the government to provide quality education to all children. [Sources of figures - *Education Sector Improvement Plan II p.20-23*]

A snap shot of our projects

Supporting School Improvement in Malawi (SSIM), 2012-2015

Link worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in Malawi to develop 17 **School Performance Review (SPR)** indicators. District Education Officers used these to assess the performance of all **236 schools** in Dedza through a participatory process involving school staff, learners and community members. **Social Accountability Monitoring** via School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAM) led to production of their School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Support to the Inspection and Advisory Service (SIAS), 2013-2016

Building on the 17 SPR indicators, the SIAS project supported the Ministry of Education to develop the **National Education Standards (NES)**, outlining the basic minimum standards (26 in total) which all schools in Malawi must

achieve. The NES focus on the achievement of three strategic outcomes: improved performance of students at primary, secondary and teacher education levels; improved teaching at primary, secondary and teacher education levels; and improved leadership and management at primary, secondary and teacher education levels. Consultation with a senior official from the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS) confirmed that the two primary components of the SIAS project - the development of the NES and the review of the inspection process - have a strong fit with the strategic goals of the department. This has been achieved through a “superb” relationship with Link characterised by a well-developed partnership approach and regular consultation so that DIAS and Link “moved together” in shaping the nature of the project (DIAS official, 2016).

Integrated School Performance Improvement Review and Engagement (INSPIRE), 2015-2018

INSPIRE supports MoEST to develop and demonstrate a consolidated district school monitoring and support system using the NES and Link's SPR process in a district where Link has not worked previously. **217 schools** in Mchinji District will benefit from this cycle and we will demonstrate that the process can be rolled out by government within their available resources thus ensuring sustainability. The project will focus on developing systems and processes for storing, sharing and using data at school, district and national levels to inform school improvement. *“In this training I have acquired a lot ... I am now able to understand the National Education Standards (NES) requirements and its levels of achievements. My performance as an advisor will be based on three types of evidence, Observation, Interviews and data before making judgement”*, said Christina Malele, a Key Teacher at the end of the Professional Development for Advisory Services training course in Mchinji, 2016.

Family Literacy Project (FLP), 2013 – 2015 and Malawi Early Reading Improvement (MERIT), 2015-2020



MERIT aims to improve literacy for learners in Standards 1–4 across Malawi through a holistic approach, including curriculum development, teacher training and community mobilisation. Link is responsible for the community mobilisation and engagement section of the intervention, which aims to create opportunities outside of school for young learners to practice literacy skills; to build parents' understanding of the importance of learning to read early, and how they can support this in school and at home; and to enable parents to understand how well their children are learning to read in school. This approach is based on our learning from our FLP which demonstrated that this approach improved the reading skills of 35,000 learners as well as almost 2,000 adults.

Complementary Basic Education (CBE), 2013 - 2015

Link Malawi has been a partner in delivering the Ministry of Education's Complementary Basic Education project in Dedza District. This project fast tracks children who have dropped out of school and enables them to return to mainstream education or ensures they have the life skills to succeed. One 15 year old student said “with the skills I gained from CBE I will be able to run my business and earn something which in turn I will be able to support myself.”

Delivery Partner



Ministry of
Education, Science
and Technology



Please see our Biennial review (2013-2015) for more information