

NEW SCHOOLS OPEN ACROSS MALAWI



What's the sound of a pencil writing on a table? The sound of happiness, for thousands of Malawian children writing on new tables in new classrooms. Over the last year, the Malawi Ministry of Education, supported by DFID (the British Department for International Development), has been constructing 30 classrooms a week throughout the country. Beginning in January 2005 and over the next few months, 1,500 new school classrooms will be completed. They are child-friendly places, environmentally sound, and school committees are supporting them.

Until recently at Mkwawanjovu Primary School in Ntchisi, 270 children in standards 1-5 were learning in one small thatched structure. Holes in the roof and walls meant constant water during the rainy season; the dirt floor had deep holes and there were no desks.

Mkwawanjovu Primary School, Ntchisi District

Watching the bright faces in Mrs. E.M. Banda's standard 2 classroom, it was evident this is a child-friendly place. Primary colours on the windows and trim. Suitably sized tables and benches permanent and arranged for large group work. Lots of blackboard space and hooks on which to hang things.



When the question was posed, “what do you like best about your new school?”, fingers snapped and eyes lit up.

“ I like writing—before we didn’t have a place to write,” said Lifineti, Standard 2.

“In the whole district, we’re the first school opened like this, we have the best school,” said Movart, Standard 4.

Mrs. Banda’s room is filled with materials through the Malawi government’s new pilot Breakthrough to Literacy programme, which uses pictures and individualised learning to introduce reading in Chichewa in Standard 2.

“I’m teaching here freely!” said Mrs. Banda. “The children have a place to sit on and even to write peacefully.”

The schools are built with local labour by small building contractors, like Kabros in Ntchisi, so that the national construction industry and the communities benefit. School committees received training in how



St 1 and St 2 children, Mkwawwanjobvu. The old school is to the right, back.

to improve their schools and monitor construction, so parents and community leaders have been involved from the start. At Mkwawwanjobvu their sense of pride and ownership is evident as they look after their new classrooms and they are already planning how they can improve the school even more.

The Ministry of Education / DFID school construction will continue in rural areas and expand to urban districts in 2005. Thousands more teachers and children will be saying, “We love our new school!”



“Everyone wants a school like ours!” says Vincent, St 4.

Note: School construction is just one way that DFID aims to support the Malawi government's efforts to increase access for all children to an equitable and high quality education. DFID also supported Malawi's 316 teacher development centres, community-based centres that provide ongoing teacher development in all districts.

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