



Save the Children

Bring Me A Book Foundation's Malawi Literacy Project 2008
Save the Children – Final Report September 2008
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I. Introduction and Background

Save the Children (SC) has implemented a reading program at six primary schools in the Balaka District of Malawi, including a training program to enable teachers to teach reading to children of the area and to encourage the involvement of the children's parents in those efforts. The Bring Me a Book (BMAB) foundation identified six rural village communities in Balaka District (M'manga, Naliswe, Chiyendausiku, Chinkhumbe, Ng'onga and Kabango) (the "Villages") whose primary schools are in need of reading materials and resources to support their teaching and educational efforts.

Save the Children, in collaboration with BMAB and the Balaka District Education Manager, designed the Malawi Literacy Project to be implemented between January 2008 to June 2008 to address this need. The project was designed to have three linked elements: development and use of school community libraries; excellent books for children; and other reading materials provided by U.S. partners to foster a broader culture of reading among young people and community members. The project built the capacity of the community structures such as head-teachers, teachers, librarians, teacher aides, parents and other interested persons in the villages taking responsibility of the initiative and for its communication with minimal intervention by any outside organization.

II. Project Goal and Objectives

Goal: To establish community interactive libraries that instill a reading culture in children within the the identified six rural village communities in the Balaka District of Malawi.

Objectives:

- Form community interactive libraries at six schools
- Identify a skilled librarian to train village librarians
- Train librarians to assume the responsibility of daily library operations
- Build the capacity of community members to manage the libraries and mobilize community members to produce additional reading materials.
- Build the capacity of community interactive "literacy mentors" to organize reading groups and inspire children to read.

III. Project Sites

The Project, which ran from January 2008 to June 2008 was implemented in six schools of Chiendausiku, Ng'onga, M'manga, Naliswe, Kabango and Chinkhumbe, in Balaka district.

IV. Project Activities

In this timeframe, the project has accomplished the following activities:

A. Project Operations and Management

The Malawi Literacy Project management oversight was done by the Save the Children Director of Education, Lester Namathaka, Save the Children Education Finance Manager, Khumbo Phiri and Education DM&E Officer, Francis Mabeti. A full time Project Facilitator, David Banda, was hired to implement the project directly. The Project Facilitator directly supervised and ensured the capacity building of community leaders and government partners to run project activities, ensuring sustainability and long term impact.

B. Formation of Project Structures and Partnerships

District Partnerships

Save the Children staff worked closely with the Balaka District Education Manager to identify clear roles and responsibilities and to establish ownership and sustainability within our government partners.

Library Management Committees

A six member Library management committee was formed for each of the six schools. Membership included the School Management Committee, the Parent Teacher Association, and a Representative of the Community Leaders (Village Headman).

The roles of the Library Management Committee consisted of:

- Ensuring the security of the community libraries
- Mobilizing additional reading materials
- Finding solutions to problems that the library may experience during its operations

Librarians

Six Librarians for each school were appointed. The composition included four learners, the head-teacher, one teacher, and one teacher aide appointed by the parents. The librarians are responsible for daily operation of the libraries.

Literacy Community Mentors

Each school selected and mobilized parents who volunteered to help the learners with reading at home after classes. The number of mentors depended upon the number of reading groups and number of learners in each village.

Reading Groups

Reading groups of children were formed in each community. These reading groups would meet afterschool with the Literacy Community Mentors. Each group has at least ten learners. The aim is to let learners interact with friends and mentors to develop their reading skills and Culture.

C. Provision of Library Supplies and Materials

The following library materials was supplied to each of the schools.

Security Measures

Metal door and window protectors were supplied and fixed to all the doors and windows of the six community libraries to ensure the security of the books and other library equipment.

Bookcases and Shelves

Each Community Library was supplied with two large wooden bookcases constructed locally by carpenters and shelves.

Stationery

Library stationery was bought and supplied to all community libraries. The stationery that was supplied to each school included; 1 numbering machine, a pair of scissors, 1 date stamp, 4 A4 hardcover exercise books, 1 eraser and 1 ream of A4 paper.

Books

BMAB books were supplied to each school according to the number of children in the village school – 2000 books altogether. Additional reading materials from Books for Africa were also supplied and each school got 30 tubs of Daily & Weakly Readers, 1 Box of encyclopedias and 1 box containing 72 Student Webster Dictionaries.

Book Bags

157 book bags were made and bought locally, and distributed to the six community libraries. The number of bags per school depended upon the enrolment of each school. The school with the lowest enrolment (Kabango) got 20 bags and with the highest enrolment (M'manga) got 33 bags. Children are encouraged to sign up to check out books to read with mentors and others away from school and they carry their books in the book bags to these places.

D. Capacity Building

Many activities were carried out under capacity building:

Identification of Librarian Consultant

Mr. Martin Thawani from the Polytechnic College, University of Malawi, was identified as Librarian Trainer in this Project.

Training of Librarians

24 learners, six teachers, six teacher Aides, six head teachers and three Primary Education Advisors were trained in library skills during a 3-day training where

every person selected from their village attended – 100% attendance was recorded all three days for every attendee. The Primary Education Advisors were included to enable them to supervise activities of the Project.

Training of School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and Village Headmen (Traditional Leaders)

Nineteen community members of each school were trained in skills to manage their library. They were also taught the roles of the librarians, literacy community mentors, and management committee. This arrangement enabled them to assist each group involved in library activities appropriately when need arises.

Training of Community Literacy Mentors

A total of 60 literacy community mentors from six schools were trained. The training enabled them to know their roles; gain skills in motivating the children to read fluently and counsel and guide the truants.

Training on Production of Reading Materials

Teachers and five parents from each school were trained to organize reading campaigns focusing on production and procurement of reading materials. The training output included:

- Knowledge of locally available resources to be used in the production of reading materials.
- Collaboration between teachers and parents to enhance children's reading.
- Skills in procurement and production of quality reading materials.

Training of Teachers on Library Utilization

This training was done to enable teachers to:

- Locate books in the library easily
- Help learners get the right books from the library
- Use the library books in the classroom.

V. Project Visitors

Bring Me A Book recruited the Miller Family from Seattle Washington to visit Malawi and see the Project. They were accompanied by the Malawi Country Office Deputy Director to see the Malawi Literacy Project at Mmanga School on July 17, 2008. The visitors were impressed with set up of the library and how the children, teachers and community members use the library books and how they appreciated to have such a facility in their community.

VI. Documentation and Media Coverage

Malawi Television (TVM) did a video documentation of the project on May 26 to 28. At the time of this report, TVM is still in the process of final production. However, the TVM had been featuring the BMAB activities in its “Good Morning Malawi Program“ twice a week in months of May and June, 2008.

Project reports were also developed by the SC Director of Education when requested by the BMAB foundation and were submitted to the BMAB Foundation along with photographs of project activities.

VII. Project Monitoring and Evaluation

An evaluation visit was done by the Save the Children Education Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The visit aimed at assessing progress and quality of the BMAB initiatives. The visit also looked at the impact of the project and was able to observe the training sessions on producing reading campaigns organized by the BMAB Education Facilitator. The monitoring process deployed interviews with teachers, head-teachers, students and District Primary Education Advisors.

The Malawi Literacy Project directly benefited over 5,000 students and about 60 teachers. Tables 1 and 2 below illustrate data on enrolment and staffing position

Table 1. School Enrolment

No	School	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Mmanga	784	862	1,646
2	Naliswe	435	431	866
3	Chinkhumbe	285	294	579
4	Ng'onga	329	347	676
5	Chiendausiku	499	571	1,070
6	Kabango	174	139	313
Total		2,506	2,644	5,150

Table 2. Staffing Position

No	School	Male	Female	Total
1	Mmanga	10	10	20
2	Naliswe	9	4	13
3	Chinkhumbe	2	0	2
4	Ng'onga	3	5	8
5	Chiendausiku	8	4	12
6	Kabango	3	1	4
Total		35	24	59

VIII. Summary of End of Project Findings

- ◆ Training of all stakeholders: school librarians (both teachers and students), Primary Education Advisors and Library Management Committees was effective. The stakeholders are running the libraries professionally and properly. Students in all the six schools are reading the books in libraries.
- ◆ The use of a skilled librarian consultant from the University of Malawi has ensured quality in the upkeep of the libraries in the project.
- ◆ Although the schools do not have adequate number of rooms, the head-teachers and management committees have identified a place to set up their library. For example, at Chiendausiku School the Primary Education Adviser has helped the school to create a library in the Teacher Development Centre.

- ◆ All libraries in the project are fitted with metal window and door protectors in order to ensure the security of the libraries.
- ◆ Some of the School Management Committees have set up a mechanism of raising funds to pay a wage for a watchman they have hired.
- ◆ The Project has instilled a reading culture in many children in the schools.
- ◆ Library records are properly kept by the librarians. The records include Stock books, registers, record of library regulations, etc.
- ◆ Formation of reading groups of students in respective villages supervised by trained mentors has helped develop students reading habits.
- ◆ Utilization of the library by the students and the teachers is recorded and records kept by the librarian.
- ◆ Monitoring of pupils reading progress at home by some of the teachers and the librarian continues.
- ◆ Training of Library Management Committees comprising teachers, PTA members, SMC Members, parents and Village Heads has ensured active participation of the committees and it has also assisted to instil ownership of the school libraries.
- ◆ Involvement of the District Education Manager and Primary Education Advisors right from the beginning has assisted in proper monitoring and supervision of the program.
- ◆ Setting up of library rules in all the schools has ensured care and proper sharing of the limited stock of books.

Testimonies

During the interviews the students applauded the library initiative by Save the Children and BMAB. Some of the extracts from the students' interviews are as follows:

Lusungu Ambali, a girl in Standard 7 at M'manga FP School says: "Before the library initiative started, we did not have reading materials. Thanks to Save the Children and Bring Me A Book for providing us with books in our school". When asked which book she liked best amongst the ones she read Lusungu cited "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters" by John Steptoe. Lusungu said the book is about two girls. One of the girls thought she was more beautiful than the other and thought that she would be married to a king. But when she grew up things did not work that way, as the one who was thought to be less beautiful was the one who was married by a king.

Blessing Chimwaza, a 12 year old boy of Chiendausiku School says, "The library has made a difference in our school life. There is a lot to read now. With the shortage of teachers, anytime our teacher goes to another class to teach we just read our library books. Thanks to Save the Children and BMAB." Blessings has read a number of books from the library but he enjoyed most reading *The Frog and Toad are friends* by Arnold Lobel. From this book, Blessings told me the story that one day a frog was sick and a toad came to cheer him up. The frog asked the toad to narrate a story to him, but the toad failed. Instead, the frog narrated his story to the toad.

IX. Challenges

The costs of book shelves and bags were very high and approval for additional funds to the two budget line items took a long time. As for the book bags, only 157 bags were purchased instead of 240 bags because the budget could not afford to purchase the estimated figure of 240.

X. Conclusion

The project has been welcomed by all stakeholders in all the respective schools. This was evidenced by the response of the teachers, students and community members at large who said that the impact of the project could be seen by the keenness and enthusiasm of the children in using the libraries. Children read the library books at home or in class as most of the schools in the district have a shortage of teachers. Some community members are so resourceful that they try to contact other organizations to donate books to expand their libraries. For example, the Anglican Diocese of Upper Shire donated 590 assorted books to M'manga School Library. This shows that the communities like the idea of having libraries in schools. The project is a great success. The achievements are very striking and are beyond expectations. Many people who have seen the libraries like the BMAB/SC Library model. The District Education Manager has now asked each village library to "adopt" a neighbour village in order to share their books and to teach that village about their experience of creating an "interactive village library."