

A YEAR OF LEARNING FOR ALL



September marked the end of the first year of our Reading Club and it has been an opportunity not only for the children attending our sessions, but for our team too as they develop and the sessions evolve.

In line with the academic year we introduced weekly afternoon classes in five different villages in September 2023. The aim was to provide an additional learning space to bridge the English-learning gap for predominantly those in Standards 1 to 4. It is also an opportunity to encourage children to explore books.

Each afternoon session is split into four activities including phonics, story-telling, speaking and a game, and across the year we have welcomed 287 students.

Ellen, the project lead, keeps a register for attendance and for progress which has been really useful in planning this upcoming year. As the groups have become more established, enrolment numbers have increased, and at the start of Term Three, we swapped one location to another in the hills.

Interestingly, more children came during Term Three which we believe was partly because of exam revision but also the addition of a UK volunteer teacher, Clare.

Clare is a primary school teacher and spent three months with us in Malawi volunteering at the local primary schools as well as at our pre-schools and English Reading Club. During her time in Malawi, Clare supported and helped build Ellen's confidence on teaching phonics.

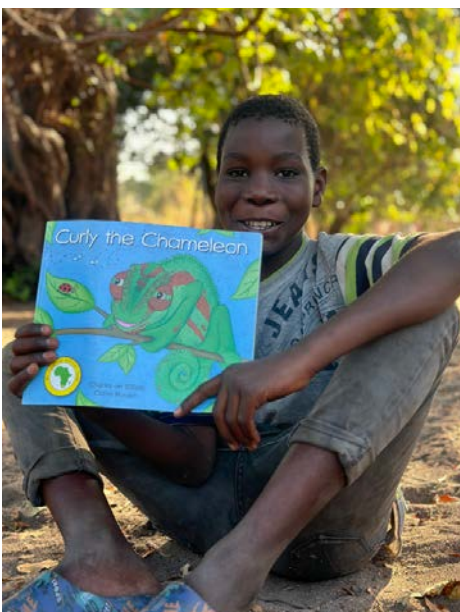


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We have had consistent sessions running out of Mwaya Library, and Mazembe, Matete 1, and Chitungulu Pre-schools. Matete 2 was the new location added during Term Three to support those children living in the hills.

Across the first four groups where sessions took place all year, the attendance and progress is as follows:

- Mwaya had an average attendance rate of 46%, and 56% of students improved throughout the year.
- Students attending Matete 1 had an average attendance rate of 65%, and an improvement rate of 72%.
- The average attendance rate for Mazembe was 64%, and 67% of students there are improving.
- Despite a lower average attendance rate of 57%, Chitungulu still had a positive improvement rate of 70%.



Justin is 13 years old and this September started Standard 6 at primary school. He comes as often as he can to learn English but sometimes he has to help his family in the fields but said, "I would rather be with my friends reading books."

His favourite part is learning phonics as learning the sound of the letters has helped him with his spelling.

Justin continued, "We do not have books at home but my father will read the newspaper and magazines to my siblings and me when he can bring them home. When I am older, I would like to be a teacher."



Seven-year-old Tobia is super excited about attending Reading Club. Running down the track, her four friends follow, ready for their phonics session and a chance to look at and read books.

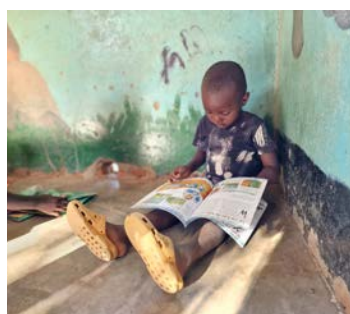
Tobia tells us that she was the one who told her friends about the reading group and told them to come with her. She said, "I enjoy books that have animals in them, especially monkeys."

Ellen said, "Tobia never misses a session. She is a very bright girl and I am proud of her hard work and keenness to want to learn to read."

Eleven year old Bright attends the reading group every Monday at Matete 1 Pre-school. Before the reading group was officially established, a previous volunteer held reading sessions at the pre-school and Bright was always there.

Despite his initial shyness, Bright's confidence in English has grown. Ellen said, "He may still be quiet but his knowledge of spelling and pronunciation is always correct in the phonic sessions."

Bright was eager to look at books from the start, and he was often caught drawing pictures in the sand, taking inspiration from images he had seen in the books.



With all of the learning that we have been able to do this past year, we are now looking forward to continuing these important after-school sessions, encouraging and improving attendance and performance, and potentially offering revision classes during Term Three to help the students ahead of their end of year exams.

From our team and the students, thank you very much for your support.