

BRIDGING THE LEARNING GAP



The second year of Reading Club has come to an end and it has been a year full of opportunity for the students and for the teaching team.

During the Academic Year we offered weekly afternoon classes, run by Ellen, in five different villages to help bridge the English-learning gap for students mainly in Standards 1 to 4 at Primary School.

Alongside learning phonics, students had the opportunity to explore books and listen to stories. The enrolment was slightly lower this year as the students had a better understanding of what the sessions were about and the commitment they needed to give. Also, in the first year more pre-school children came which caused disruption when the older children were trying to learn.

Some of the students who shared why they enjoyed attending this year are Anita, Augustin and Yesaya, and Peter.

Anita said, "My favourite part of reading club is learning English because I want to be a teacher when I grow up. My favourite book is The Special Guest."

Thirteen-year-old Peter is in Standard 7 at Primary School, and he loves to read. Although Reading Club is aimed at the younger groups, Peter has asked to attend so he can keep learning and practising his English.

While waiting for the class to start, he picked up the Eggs and Chicks book. He looked up and said, "I like birds. I go looking for birds' nests in the forested areas, and I take grasshoppers and other insects to the baby birds."



Augustin and Yesaya are brothers. Augustin loves to read. It is his second year attending the class and the 10-year-old feels confident reading. He is hoping to improve his writing in English as he wants to be a mechanic when he is older.

Yesaya is 14 and in Standard 6 at Primary School. He is Augustin's older brother and only joined Reading Club this year after hearing and seeing how much his brother loved the group. He is not sure what he will do when he leaves school. Lacking confidence, we are hopeful that Reading Club will give him focus and encouragement.



Across the year it was encouraging to see consistent attendance at four of the Reading Clubs averaging 70% attendance each week. However, Mwaya Reading Club had quite low attendance, especially during Term Two due to teacher illness. This Club has always faced the challenge of low enrolment, despite there being a Primary School nearby.

Watston, our Education Coordinator, said, "English is a complex subject in Malawi when it comes to reading but this project helps students learn to read, pronounce words and make sentences.

"For two years Ellen was the only teacher running four reading clubs but for the 2025/26 Academic Year, we have a new curriculum, a new schedule, and a new teacher."

We are fortunate to have funding that allows us to employ a second teacher and purchase new phonics books for the students. Ellen will remain as one of the teachers and we welcome Khumbo to the team as the second teacher.

Ellen will be teaching at two Reading Clubs twice per week with Khumbo teaching at the other two twice per week. We hope that by offering two lessons per week at each location, the children will have more opportunities to practice what they learn, making a bigger difference to their progress.

Whilst we recorded an average improvement rate of 77% for the students attending our Reading Clubs, this summer we welcomed back Brandon, an education specialist, who returned for his second volunteer trip with us in Malawi.

The main focus for Brandon during his summer placement with us was assessing our Reading Clubs, providing advice and support as to how to improve them, and provide training to Ellen and Khumbo.

Following his trip, he has created an improved system to measure students' progress, and we have a new lesson plan for the two sessions per week.

Having been the sole teacher for two years, Ellen is looking forward to working alongside Khumbo and being able to focus her teaching on two Reading Clubs and having a measureable way to assess the impact the sessions are making.

Watson said, "There is some improvement in pronunciation, reading, and sentence construction. However, there are still challenges to overcome and Brandon has introduced new ways to help the teachers overcome these challenges."

Brandon also spent time creating new resources including phonics cards that are relevant to Malawi.

The students will also be working on a special project which we look forward to sharing in 2026 but for now, we are grateful to have had another year of teaching and learning, and to be equipped with a new and improved teaching plan for the year ahead.

Thank you very much to from our Education team and the students for your support.

