

Chikombola- Lamberhurst

On the 23rd March, we visited Chikombola again to find out how they were getting on. Grant had malaria so was not at school, malaria cases are at their highest at this time of year, however, Joshua and Beatrice were there to warmly welcome us. Joshua said that your two schools communicate well with each other using emails and messages.

At the moment, it is exam week so some of the teachers were marking exams under the tree whilst the Standard 1 class, having just finished a Chichewa test, were playing games and running races.



Standard 1 letting off steam



Marking!

Joshua reported that the solar panel was still working well and that a local church, Assemblies of God, have built a girls' toilet and changing area.



The new girls' toilet

There are currently 500 pupils at Chikombola. Joshua said more learners had dropped out for various reasons. For the last year, girls in Standard 7 and 8 have received a cash payment of 8,000k each term from the government to encourage them to stay in school. They must attend regularly to receive this payment. Joshua said this has made a big difference to girls' attendance. Last month, Starfish also distributed a number of reusable hygiene kits to girls at Chikombola to help them attend school when they have their periods. Research shows that girls can miss up to 18 days a term because of mensuration and that these kits can almost completely prevent this.



Some of the girls receiving their kits

One of the biggest challenges in Malawi education is learners' understanding of English. As you know, previously, pupils were taught in Chichewa until Standard 4, then all subjects were taught in English (apart from Chichewa). Two years ago, the Malawi government decided that all subjects in all standards must be taught in English. Many young pupils have found this hard particularly in the rural areas where they have less exposure to English. In practice, schools like Chikombola continue to teach many subjects in Chichewa until learners have more understanding of the English language. USAID, in conjunction with the Malawian government, launched "The Reading Programme" a couple of years ago. This is aimed at improving reading and understanding English at Standards 1, 2 and 3. Joshua said this has made a big difference and hopes that by the time these learners reach Standard 8 they will have a much better grasp of English and be able to learn and understand more.

In addition to the pigs we met last time we visited Chikombola, they have two more. These were donated by Sportsreach, a team that visited Malawi in November last year. They held a number of sporting events and shared the gospel. One of the schools that took part in this was Chikombola so Sportsreach wanted to show their appreciation by donating two pigs. Once they have bred, they will sell the piglets to provide resources for the school.



The two new pigs waiting to be fed

Joshua outside the piggery



Everyone at Chikombola sends their greetings to Lamberhurst and wishes you all well.