



## 2025: a big year

This has been a big year for Keep Girls in School. We have had our most successful fundraising year to date, allowing us to plan confidently for the future. Thanks to everyone who has contributed – your generosity has changed the life chances of 200 girls in Malawi.

It has been a significant year for many of the students. Half the scholars sat their Junior Certificate exams which they needed to pass to progress to Year 3, and 28 students sat their Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education, their final national examinations. To support the girls, we introduced two new initiatives: extra tuition in advance of the national exams and Second Chance to Learn which allows those who failed their exams the chance to resit them in 2026.

The world is in an even more fragile state than it was last year. Conflict affects all of us, directly or indirectly. Rich countries are cutting overseas development aid even though it is needed more than ever. Increasingly it is up to us as citizens to do what we can to make the world a better place. Thank you for your support in 2025.

**Lord Jack McConnell, Chairperson**

## DID YOU KNOW?:

- Keep Girls in School supports **200 girls** in **8 schools** in **4 districts** in rural Malawi
- Our partner **WOLREC** is Malawi's leading women's rights NGO
- Across sub-Saharan Africa, **34 million adolescent girls are out of school**
- If all girls completed secondary school, **child marriage would drop by 68 per cent** (UNESCO)
- A child born in Malawi today will reach only **41 per cent of its full potential** (UNESCO)
- Experts estimate household **buying power** in Malawi has **HALVED** in last 18 months.



“The scholarship income helps the whole school because it gives my team and I some financial security and allow us to plan better”.

**PATRICK MKWEZALAMBA  
HEADTEACHER,  
NAMANG’AZI CDSS**

“No other donor allows girls a second chance to repeat a year so that they can resit their national exams. It’s life changing.”

**JAMES MENARD,  
HEADTEACHER,  
CHEMBERA CDSS**

IMPACT

## Beating national average

This was a big year for the 100 scholars in the Ntichisi and Zomba Rural districts who sat their national Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) exams in June, which a girl must pass if she is to progress to Year 3.

Once again MIF scholars exceeded the national average pass rate. The results showed that 88 girls passed – 89 per cent of our scholars, compared to a national pass rate for girls of 73.5 per cent. The overall national pass rate was 77.6 per cent.

## Challenging tradition

Four girls in Year 2 dropped out, 4 per cent compared to the annual average rate of 10 per cent (UNICEF). Three were from Kaulatsitsi CDSS, a new school, only opened four years ago, in a traditional rural community.

Headteacher Ellen Chinawa explains that girls are expected to give up education at the end of primary school as there is no value attached to a secondary education. In 2026, MIF and WOLREC will work with Ms Chinawa, parents and community leaders to change views.

## Changing lives

We support 100 girls at schools in Balaka and Salima Districts. These girls range from year 1 students to year 4. This year, 28 girls sat their national Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education exams (MCSE) after four years of secondary education, with 12 passing.

Each additional year a girl stays in secondary education can increase her future earnings by up to 20 per cent. An education is never wasted – it stays with a girl for the rest of her life.

KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL

# A second chance to learn

When Keep Girls in School was established in late 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Foundation was determined that the programme would respond to the real live challenges the students face in completing four years of secondary education.

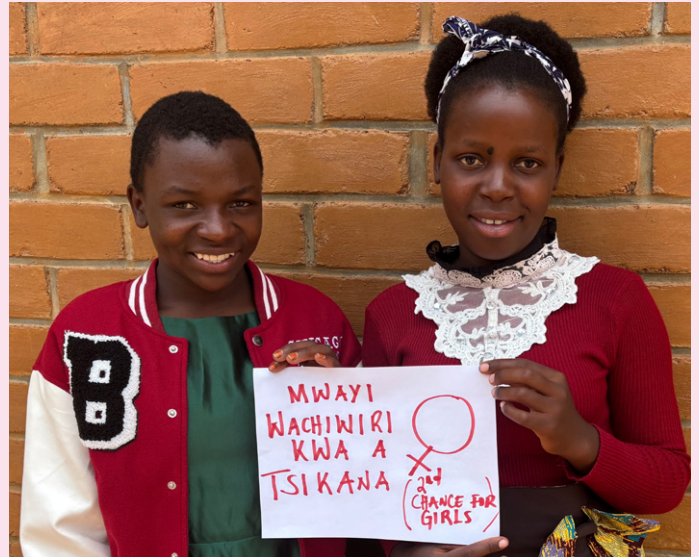
The attainment gap in Malawi between the national and district boarding schools, attended by children who perform best in primary school attend, and the community day secondary schools (CDSS) we support is significant.

The pass rate for boarding schools is around 90 per cent, compared to just over 50 per cent for CDSSs. Education expert Benedicto Kondowe told the Nation newspaper recently that the gulf exposes the deep systemic inequalities tied to resources, teacher capacity and learning environments in Malawi.

He said: "The results are not merely a reflection of learners' effort; they are a mirror of systemic inequities that, if unaddressed, will continue to limit Malawi's human capital development and its aspirations under SDG 4 and Malawi 2063."

This is why this year we introduced weekend study classes for those students sitting their Year 2 and Year 4 national examinations. This extra tuition covered general tips such as managing exam stress as well as focusing on key subjects, including English, Maths and Chichewa.

We also started our Second Chance to Learn programme, where a student who fails her national exams can repeat Year 2 or Year 4 so that she can resit them in 2026. One headteacher describes this approach as a "unique intervention by a donor".



Margret (L) with Debora. Two of the students who will repeat Year 4 thanks to the Foundation's Second Chance to Learn programme (Mwayi Wachiwiri Kwa A Tsikana).



Students at Namang'azi CDSS during their weekend study classes in May 2025.

## Elida is off to university

Last year, one of our scholars Saina Bwanali won a place at Mzuzu University to study Nursing and Midwifery. She is doing well and is about to start the second year of her studies.

Elida Chithumba (17), who like Saina was a MIF scholar at Chembera CDSS, hopes to follow in her footsteps. Her excellent MCSE results should secure her a place at one of Malawi's public universities as well as a student loan to help her fulfill her dream of studying for a degree.



# WHERE THEY BELONG!

# Raising funds in 2025

Fundraising is essential to our Keep Girls in School programme. The Foundation would like to thank our supporters – old and new – who have helped make 2025 our most successful to date.

In March we hosted a very special performance of Scotland's best known children's show, the Singing Kettle. Thanks to the generosity of Artie, who started the show with his wife Cilla more than 40 years ago, our sell-out show at Edinburgh's St Bride's Community Centre raised more than £1,500 for our Keep Girls in School programme. We hope to bring you news soon of our 2026 show.

The centrepiece of our annual fundraising efforts is now the Edinburgh Kiltwalk, held each September. Our 2025 team was twice the size of last year's and their efforts raised an amazing £17,500. This was DOUBLED thanks to the generosity of one of Scotland's leading entrepreneurs, David Mouldsdale. If you would like to join our 2026 team, email us at [mcconnellintfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:mcconnellintfoundation@gmail.com) and put KILTWALK 2026 in the subject field.

## Girl power



You can give a girl the power to change her life by supporting our Keep Girls in School programme.

Girls who complete her secondary education will:

- Earn more during her lifetime
- Help boost Malawi's national earnings through her productivity
- Have fewer children, so helping reduce national poverty rates
- Be at less risk of teenage pregnancy or early marriage
- Enjoy better health. Girls who complete secondary education are at less risk of maternal death, HIV infection and domestic abuse
- Raise healthier children.

In October we took part in the Big Give's Women and Girls' campaign which ran from October 8 for seven days. We were delighted to exceed our target of £5,000, with the help of some of our regular donors and several new supporters, as well as match funding from the Big Give.

Our chairperson, Lord Jack McConnell gave a keynote address at both Rotary International's Scottish conferences this year, the first in Strathclyde Park in March and the second in Dunfermline in October. In 2026, The Foundation hopes to build on its links with this fantastic network which does amazing work both at home and across the world.



## Our partners

We are grateful to our partners and supporters for making Keep Girls in School happen.

If you would like to talk to us about how you can support our work, you can email us at :

[mcconnellintfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:mcconnellintfoundation@gmail.com)



**KCA.**  
KEEP A CHILD ALIVE

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