



Scotland Malawi Partnership case study: Watson's Malawi Partnership

SMP video: <https://youtu.be/kpAfPSyz6dk>

The Watson's Malawi Partnership draws on the resources of the George Watson's College community to build on our long-standing relationship with Malawi.

In keeping with the ethos of 'dignified partnerships' put forward by the Scotland Malawi Partnership, our programme focuses on four areas where we can help to relieve and prevent poverty amongst young people in Malawi on a sustainable basis.

These focus on the advancement of:

- education of young people and teachers
- health and well-being for all
- public participation in sports and culture and
- environmental protection and improvement in relation to all our activities.

Our partnership began in 2012 when a group of teachers, parents and friends of George Watson's College first recognised the potential for creating something really special for the people of Watson's and Malawi by drawing on all the connections we have between our two countries.

The hope was that by working together on the alleviation of poverty and hardship in Malawi, we can build awareness, respect and relationships on both sides that will endure for a lifetime.

More about history here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Our history \(google.com\)](#)

Since then, the programme has evolved from being a simple school visit to becoming a registered Scottish Charitable Organisation (SCN SCO50890), espousing the values of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and with Sir Andrew Cubie as our patron.

More about our governance here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Programme governance \(google.com\)](#)

About our partners/programmes/highlights

Within our education workstream, we believe that our relationship with Malawi offers our partner schools useful connections and access to essential material and teacher training while providing Watson's students with an interest that could enrich the rest of their lives. We have strong relationships with village primary schools in Mangochi (Bolera Palms and Thom's Colourful Classrooms) and Kuti Village as well as with Malawi Children's Village and STEKA secondary schools and the British Council's Connecting Classrooms Cluster. We are also very committed to our work with Tina Pads where we fund, distribute and challenge the taboo of washable sanitary pads to help girls stay at school for longer. More about our education programme here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Education \(google.com\)](#)

Within our health & wellbeing workstream, we provide life-saving support to clinics and vulnerable children.

Through our partners, Open Arms, we fund the care of children like Grace and Israel who were abandoned in Blantyre and Mangochi until they can rejoin their villages. We are a long-standing supporter of Charity Salima's clinic in Achikondi, funding essential equipment from something as simple as a washing machine to reduce the spread of Covid amongst patients to a mobile thermal ablation device to help reduce the incidence of cervical cancer. More about health & wellbeing programme here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Health & well-being \(google.com\)](#)

We believe *public participation in sport and culture* brings joy and the opportunity to build relations through the universal language of sport.

Thanks to the generosity of sports clubs in Edinburgh, we have been able to equip cricket, football and netball enthusiasts to play their favourite sports and through our partners, Netball for All, we are helping more girls and young women to enjoy netball in Malawi by securing the necessary equipment, sports kit, coaching and training grounds. And no school visit would be complete without a dance-off and a sing-along! More about the sports & culture programme here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Sports & culture \(google.com\)](#)

We recognise the environmental cost of our school trip and work closely with Zomba TREEZ – and increasingly Mulanje Conservation Trust and Kuti Wildlife Reserve – to find meaningful and sustainable ways to off-set our carbon footprint and *to protect and improve the environment* everywhere.

More about the environment programme here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Environment \(google.com\)](#)

Highlights

The highlight for all of us is being able to visit our partners in Malawi each year to share in their success, identify new opportunities for support and discuss some of the issues that are common to us all.

Our two-week, 900km round-trip takes us through Lilongwe to meet Charity at Achikondi Clinic and Open Arms, down to Blantyre to meet the children at Open Arms and catch up with the students at STEKA and with Trinitas of Tina Pads. We get to see the seedlings we have funded grow into trees at Mulanje and Zomba, read with the children at Thom and Rita's schools in Mangochi and visit the sewing school at Malawi Children's Village. We also manage to squeeze in a visit to the village chief in Blantyre, enjoy some safari at Mvuu and Kuti, climb up Zomba and Mulanje, rest up at Lake Malawi, indulge in some retail at the renowned Dedza pottery and local markets and challenge the football and netball legends of Lilongwe.

More about our school trip here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Guided tour \(google.com\)](#)

Challenges and help

Securing the funds for the growing number of programmes we would like to support is one of our greatest challenges – such as extending our support to include the village schools around Kuti Wildlife and the reforestation programmes on Mount Mulanje. The school trip is a fantastic way to stimulate fund-raising initiatives, but with the collapse of international travel brought on by the pandemic, we have had to find more creative, digital ways to raise awareness and resources for the partnership. These have included tours of Malawi, wine-tasting, horse-racing and auctions – all delivered online!

Another, nicer, challenge to have is managing the growing interest in the partnership and a desire to meet our partners in Malawi. Thankfully, we now have a wonderful network of people in Malawi to help us transport, feed and accommodate 50 pupils safely and considerately around southern Malawi each year.

Many pictures to choose from here: [Watson's Malawi Partnership - Annual school visit \(google.com\)](#)

The educational value of this programme

From an educational perspective, George Watson's College has benefited enormously.

- Charitable initiatives are an important part of the school's philosophy: ex corde caritas – love from the heart.
- The school trip is a highlight of their school career for participating students
- Our relationship provides an interesting way to learn about issues that affect us all – culture, environment, health, education
- The programme provides an opportunity for the whole of the George Watson's College community to rally around.

There is no doubt that the partnership requires time to identify and arrange support for the programmes that matter to us as well as organising and participating in the school trip, but we have learned that many hands make light work and are extremely grateful to our network of parents, teachers, community volunteers and friends from other Edinburgh schools, similarly interested in Malawi, for giving their time to make the partnership work.

What would you say to someone considering a partnership?

Start small and you'll be surprised by how many friends you will make on the way