


The Mlambe Project

Five Year Strategy

2021 - 2025





“Every year we were busy building temporary shelters for our pupils to learn in, but now we are not building temporary shelters at all.”

John Jackson (Chief, Chikolongo Village)



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We make a difference





Introduction

Welcome

Since 2012, The Mlambe Project (TMP) has helped rural communities in Balaka District, Malawi, improve access to education.

This strategy document, co-created with all our staff and volunteers in Malawi, the UK, the USA, and Taiwan, defines our direction for the next five years. It's a guide for our vision, values, and processes. We'll keep coming back to it as we make steady, practical progress.

In short, this will help us support more schools in need of quality school blocks, homes for teachers, and clean toilets. We can pass on sustainable building skills to the people in the communities we visit. We can provide paid employment opportunities.

It is actions like these that improve financial security, help families meet their basic needs, and allow their children to access quality education.



Supporting National Strategies

You might wonder why a UK organisation is building schools in Malawi.

The Malawian government does not have the funds necessary to construct quality school buildings. We make sure our work fits in with national plans, such as the Government of Malawi's [National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020 - 2030 \(Figures 4 & 5\)](#). We work with the government and community leaders to build schools, teachers' homes, and clean toilets where they are most needed. This increases the sense of pride in local communities.

By following the actions laid out in this Five-Year Strategy, we can look forward to:

- High-quality school blocks, teachers' houses, and toilet blocks
- Increased enrolment in all schools
- Reducing the student drop-out rate
- Shelter from adverse weather
- Fewer barriers to education for children

Communities in Malawi can look forward to a happier, better educated future.





A Message to Our Donors

Our journey is shared. It is only with the support of our donors that any of our successes have been possible.

We are so grateful to everyone who supports the work in any way – big or small. It all comes together to create a Mlambe Project community that makes a difference in children's lives,.

Thank you,

Steven Kambalame and Geoffrey Namagowa, and The Mlambe Project Trustees





Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

Every child in Malawi enjoys a meaningful education.

Our Mission

To collaborate with local communities, government, and other partners to establish Good School Ecosystems that deliver healthy learning outcomes for rural Malawi.





Our Values

Local Ownership

Everything that can be done locally will be done locally. We will identify and support national success, not import international action.

Strength in Partnerships

We will actively seek and work with like-minded partners to deliver our vision of Good School Ecosystems. To us, success doesn't mean competing to be the best. It means partnering to contribute even more to those who matter most – the children.



Sustainable Action

We will be environmentally safe, economically sound, and socially enduring.

Transparent Practice

We will work transparently, openly, and inclusively.



Who We Are

About Us

The Mlambe Project is a UK-registered charity working in partnership with the Malawi-registered non-profit organisation, The Mlambe Project Limited.

We work in close collaboration with local communities, government, and businesses to improve school learning outcomes and support community development in rural areas of greatest need. This work, such as school buildings, is owned by the local education department on completion.

We partner with communities for the long term. Our help stays relevant as communities' opportunities grow and their respective needs change.

Through our work we:

- Increase access to education
- Improve gender equality
- Improve student - teacher classroom ratios
- Raise aspirations
- Create long-term local employment
- Promote sustainable and quality building methods that endure

We also partner with other NGOs to ensure unified, cost-effective approaches that deliver better outcomes than working alone ever could.





Our pilot project, which began in 2012, supports the Mlambe Primary School in Chikolongo village, Balaka District, Southern Malawi. We built quality classrooms, offices, teachers' houses, and toilets in the school, increasing capacity to 1,130 students. We also supported the construction of a football pitch for physical health and mental wellbeing—a focal point for the sport-mad footballers in the local community.



We installed a solar-powered computer room with internet connectivity. Local community members use the facility to undertake distance learning, including the community's first-ever fully accredited tertiary education diploma programme. We support a nursery feeding programme for sixty children and run outreach programmes supporting women's empowerment. For example, we trained women "master trainers" to build and install fuel-efficient stoves in nearly every household in Chikolongo. Not only did this help to reduce environmentally damaging firewood consumption, but it also cut down on the number of hours women and children spend collecting it by 66 per cent.



In 2018 we expanded our work to Nankhono school where we have provided four classrooms and toilets for girls and boys. 2020 saw our engagement with the school and community of Nkhone where we built a Teachers Development Centre. In 2021 we will build classrooms at Nkhonde and our fourth community Cikoleka.

We partner very closely with local communities and government education departments to identify schools in need and use local skilled builders and labourers to undertake the construction. This develops local skills and puts cash into the local community as well as delivering the school building.

The work of The Mlambe Project is transforming the lives of marginalised children in rural Malawi. We enable equal opportunity for children and young people in Malawi by co-developing and sustaining high quality school buildings. These facilities are community-owned, and environmentally considerate. The local community, government and NGO partners all work together in their creation.





1. The 2020 Malawi central government budget has allocated limited money to primary school classroom construction. Without third-party intervention, it's unlikely Malawi will meet the [UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4.1](#) – ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, fair and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and useful learning outcomes by 2030.



2. Overcrowded classrooms are the norm in Malawi. The government target for student - teacher ratios is 60:1. As well as the challenges of funding there is a serious problem with capacity to build good quality school buildings. The Mlambe project has built up its own construction team in Balaka to overcome this and deliver high quality buildings at a very competitive cost.

3. While creating classrooms is essential, a learning space is only the beginning of good learning outcomes. Schools need to attract and keep outstanding teachers. For effective learning, administrators need to keep classroom numbers manageable. Girls' education needs to be a focus, not an afterthought. To facilitate low-income families' investment in education, schools need to understand and work with families' conflicting short-term priorities, such as harvesting crops.



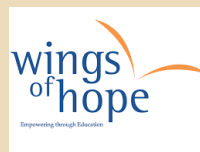



About the People We Work With and Support

The Mlambe Project serves communities in rural Malawi. Our core area of operation is Nkhonde Zone within Balaka District in Malawi's southern region. Balaka District has a population of 310,000 and is mostly rural. 57 per cent of people in rural Malawi live in poverty.

TMP indirectly supports the 10,762 children – 5,278 boys and 5,484 girls – currently enrolled in 13 primary schools across the Nkhonde Zone. We directly support 1,536 of these children and their families across three schools. We plan to expand support to 4,286 children in two or more other Nkhonde Zone schools over the next five years. This expansion will extend our reach to nearly 40 per cent of our Stage I target.

We have sourced our data directly from the government and local communities, working closely with local stakeholders, headteachers, and village chiefs.





“We, as chiefs in Malawi, appreciate your support of The Mlambe Project. Keep on helping, as our learners shall benefit, too.”

JIM BOKOSI (Chief, Bokosi Village)



What We're Aiming to Achieve



The Mlambe Project will continue to support our pilot project, Mlambe Primary School in Chikolongo, and the two other schools we have worked with since. In 2021 we will engage with the community of Chikoleka with the expectation of building a classroom block there making a total of four schools with whom we will be working.

Over the next five years we will remain focussed on the Nkhonde zone of Balaka district. There are 13 schools in the Nkhonde zone; most if not all are in desperate need of improved infrastructure.

Remaining focussed on this zone will enable us to take maximum advantage of established relationships with local government, school management, teachers and construction resources.

We recognise that “a house is not a home” and “a classroom is not an education”. The buildings we provide must be part of Good School Ecosystem that leads to strong learning outcomes.

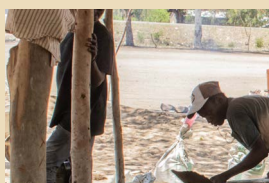
Our long term vision is to develop a consortium of partner NGOs in Malawi capable of handling large scale institutional funding – this capability is sadly lacking in malawi at present. We are supporting the development of national capacity as part of our long term exit plan.



Our Theory of Change



Collaborative Partnerships



Well Resourced Schools



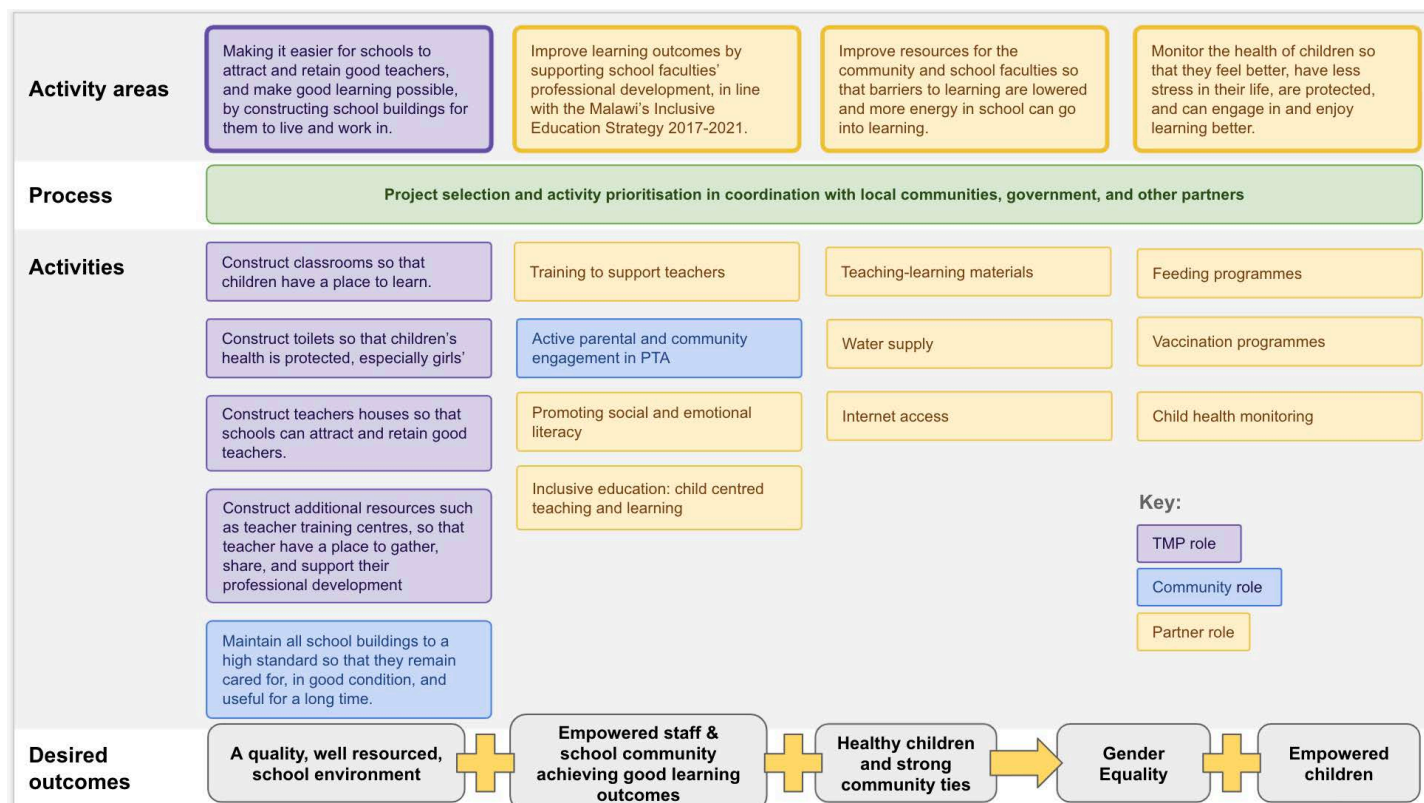
Better Learning Environments



Increased Opportunity

TMP In the School Ecosystem

September 2020





We believe we need strong **partnerships between the local community, government, and NGOs** to create **well-built, well-resourced schools** that **support and enable**. Achieving good learning outcomes, including emotional wellbeing and good physical health, is the **bedrock of empowering children** and their communities. It offers communities a significant opportunity **to lead the kinds of lives that they choose and value**.



Exit Strategy

We aspire to be a catalyst of change in the rural education landscape in Malawi. We strive to make substantial contributions in the mid-to-long term, but we won't be around forever.

We will devolve ownership and responsibility of our activities from the UK to Malawi as quickly as is sustainably possible.





What that means is:

1. We will transition to local management of operations. We have already begun this process with leadership development in Malawi.
2. In 2021 we have supported the setting up of an Independent local NGO in Balaka. The trustees include local people with experience in education and construction. This board will decide priorities and while we will initially work in an equal partnership, we will transition to full Malawi leadership and ownership.
3. At present The Mlambe Project (Malawi) is 100% funded by The Mlambe project UK. In the long term we aim to eliminate dependency by becoming a contributor to costs rather than a lifeline.

We want to make a long-term contribution to improving education in Malawi, but not have long-term ownership. For us, the best-case scenario is to help stimulate opportunity, vision, and potential in the rural education sector and then take on a supportive role.



“We all appreciate the good quality and reliable work done by The Mlambe Project for the people of Malawi.”

John Bamusi (Deputy Headteacher, Mlambe School)



Our Governance Structure

The Mlambe Project (TMP) is a charitable company registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales (21st August 2014) with the registration number 1160518.

We work with our sister organisation, The Mlambe Project Limited (TMPL). The Mlambe Project Limited is a company limited by guarantee in Malawi, which operates not-for-profit and in exclusive partnership with our UK charity.

In 2021, TMPL will go dormant. We will register TMP as a charity in Malawi with [CONGOMA](#) (Council for Non Governmental Organisations in Malawi).

We work in partnership with the Malawi Government and local community organisations to ensure the operational success of our projects. We have one UK-based part-time employee and two Malawian-based staff members.

We have an active board of voluntary trustees based in the UK and Malawi who meet quarterly. Trustees regularly visit Malawi and participate in TMP projects in the Balaka District. Our advisory board is made up of members based in the UK.





Board of Trustees



Jon Hassain
Chair of Trustees

Jon advises on our communication and marketing strategies after joining The Mlambe Project in 2019. Jon has managed various communication campaigns across the world, including work in Africa, North America, Europe, and the Caribbean. Jon's work helps develop marketing and communication approaches that support Mlambe's objectives. He was awarded an MBE for a communication campaign he managed in Europe and currently consults for various clients, including the UK Government. Jon has a long-standing interest in development, and, after an awful lot of procrastination, he is about to finish a Master's in development management.



Lucy Ifould
Trustee

Lucy has worked with The Mlambe Project in several capacities since 2014. Initially, she came to Malawi as a volunteer. She became passionate about the organisation from her time spent living and working in Chikolongo, the village in which The Mlambe Project began. After returning to the UK, she stayed actively involved as a trustee before moving out to Malawi as Chief Executive at the start of 2016, a role in which she continued until September 2018. Lucy lives in Malawi now, working for a different organisation. She has an active role in The Mlambe Project, primarily supporting Steven and Geoffrey, the Building Projects Managers. She has maintained a very close relationship with them. Thanks to her current job, TMP has some beneficial connections within the local government of Balaka District, where the project is based.



Jon Ifould
Trustee

Jon has been engaged with the Mlambe project since 2018. He brings to the charity 20 years of corporate leadership experience working in the Financial Services and Technology sectors globally. Jon also represents one of the Mlambe projects key corporate donors, the Capital Group Companies, Inc. He is based in Orange County California and connected to the Mlambe project through personal relationships with a number of the charity's volunteers, founders, and trustees past and present.



Andrew May-Miller
Trustee

Andrew spent his career at the interface between Information Technology and business objectives. He was Group Information Technology Director for the Macmillan Publishing Group for 15 years, where he also served as a director of Macmillan Distribution Ltd and Macmillan India PLC. The experience of leading numerous major business change projects has made Andrew acutely aware of the importance of clear objectives for organisations and projects and the need for robust planning, reporting, and communication during projects. Andrew's involvement in TMP started as a donor in 2017. He and his wife, Sarah, visited Malawi, spending time at Mlambe school and meeting Stella, the headmistress at Nankhono, where we have since built classrooms, toilets, and teachers' houses.

Malawi NGO



John Bamusi
Trustee of Malawi NGO

John joined the Project in 2016 while teaching at Mlambe Primary School where The Mlambe Project germinated. He joined the project as a volunteer upon seeing that the project aims at creating conducive learning environments for rural children. He wanted to be part of people developing education standards for the rural Malawians. John is now a trustee for The Mlambe Project. John is also a student of University of the People, studying BBA under the sponsorship of The Mlambe Project. He is hoping to complete his studies by the end of 2023. Currently, John works in the ministry of education (Malawi) and holds the position of Assistant Centre Coordinator.



Advisors



Andrew Proctor
Trustee

Andrew has been a Trustee of the Mlambe Project since the early days of the charity. He has worked in the voluntary sector for over 15 years, including holding senior roles at Alzheimer's Society and Asthma UK, and is currently Chief Executive of the National Eczema Society. Andrew has a long-standing interest in sustainable development, having first studied the subject at university and then later working at the Institute of Development Studies, the University of Sussex. Andrew provides governance and strategic support for The Mlambe Project, and has visited Malawi to see its work first-hand. He is inspired by the many volunteers who give their energy to TMP. Andrew is excited by the charity's ambitious plans, which will see so many more children and communities benefit from a brighter future.



Jamie Proctor
Founder and Trustee

Jamie is a founder of The Mlambe Project and has worked for the organisation in a voluntary or trustee capacity. Jamie is a digital professional who started work in tech start-ups before transitioning to digital within the UK Civil Service. He currently works for the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) as EdTech Hub Country Lead based in Tanzania. Jamie is also a member of the Friends Of Malawi Association (FOMA) committee—providing input to the organisation's grant programme.



Leanne Visser
Business Development Consultant in the African Market

Leanne has worked extensively in sub-Saharan Africa. She is responsible for raising capital to fuel the next generation of PAYG-connected assets from impact donors to deliver a positive impact for low-income, off-grid communities across Africa. Previously, Leanne owned and managed a consultancy firm called Social Solutions Management Services, which later merged with Danubia SA. The organisation served the NGO, SMME, and social enterprise industries in Sub-Saharan Africa with sustainable impact funding in the health, environment, and social services sectors.



Our Team

Partner Leadership Staff in Malawi



Steven Kambalame
Project Manager

Steven's tough childhood, which included running 40 kilometres every day to school, is one of the main reasons that he has put his heart and soul into The Mlambe Project so far. He believes that children should have easy access to education without travelling considerable distances to school. Previously a conventional builder, Steven was keen to learn about earthbag building and teach others. He has thoroughly enjoyed working with the TMP volunteers from the UK and believes that the project has a lot of potential to change Malawi's educational infrastructure.



Geoffrey Namagowa
Building Projects Manager and TMP Malawi Treasurer

Geoffrey started working with the project back in 2012 and has been integral to developing the project and training new builders ever since. He initially trained as an earthbag building expert and was keen to share his new skills. Geoffrey now supervises and teaches the other experts in the earthbag building technique and works as the Mlambe Project treasurer in Malawi.



United Kingdom Volunteers



Charlie Bowles

Volunteer Project Engineer

Charlie is a chartered structural engineer with seven years of experience working as a consultant on a mix of project sizes in London. He has worked with The Mlambe Project for six years as a building project manager and engineer. Charlie uses his structural design, technical drawing, and construction project management skills to oversee The Mlambe Project sites remotely and on the ground. He has seen the impact that well-constructed homes and buildings can have on Malawian communities and is impassioned to use his skills to provide more structures.



Magnus Karnehm

Volunteer Strategic Support

Magnus has worked with The Mlambe Project since 2015 within the university programme and, more recently, as a strategic advisor. He has worked for leading professional services firms Goldman Sachs (2014) and McKinsey (2016 - 2018) and is now working as a venture capital investor. Ever since Magnus joined the Mlambe team, he has been eager to apply his expertise in hands-on problem solving and strategic thinking to get initiatives off the ground and help anchor them in the broader Mlambe framework. He remains personally committed to the university programme that he helped establish and has been instrumental in supporting the TMP executive team on strategic planning and organisational topics.



Steve Lovejoy

Volunteer Architect

Steve is a UK-registered architect with over five years of experience working on residential, mixed-use, and public-sector projects in the UK and China. He first got involved with The Mlambe Project in 2014 while studying for his Master's degree in Manchester and spent an incredible month out in Chikolongo working with the Malawi team on some of our earliest school buildings. He now assists remotely, volunteering his architectural expertise and project management skills to advise the project teams. He looks forward to when he can return to the beautiful and friendly Malawian countryside.



Dave first became involved with The Mlambe Project in early 2015 on a trip to Malawi and has remained in close contact ever since, officially joining the team two years later. He has advised and worked on numerous projects remotely and seen first-hand the results that can be achieved while working on-site with community members. He's excited by the charity's energy and modern approach. Dave is now living in Taiwan and working as a software developer after teaching English abroad for several years.

Dave Yates

Volunteer Project Researcher and Digital Developer

Global Volunteers



Marissa started mid-2020 to help work remotely on launching the new website with other volunteers. She also worked on the 2021-2025 strategy document layout, which you are reading right now. Marissa is originally from the United States, and she currently lives in Taiwan. Marissa is now in school to learn Mandarin full-time after teaching English for over 3 years. In her spare time, she is learning new graphic design techniques in the hopes of making it a full-time career and goes to pottery classes on the weekends. She hopes to visit Malawi as soon as the opportunity arises.

Marissa Newlove

Volunteer Brand and Layout Designer



Kate Nicholson started volunteering for The Mlambe Project as a copywriter and editor in late 2020, working to help get the 2021-2025 strategy and new website online. Kate currently works full-time as a freelance journalist, copywriter, and editor for various industries in both online and print. She specialises in art, design, and architecture writing. In her spare time, she makes and sells pottery from her home studio in Taichung City, Taiwan. Originally from New Zealand, Kate has called Taiwan home for over a decade. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).

Kate Nicholson

Volunteer Copywriter and Editor

How We Do It

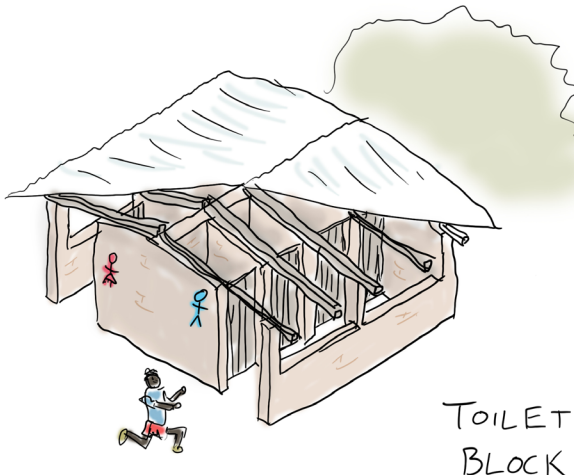
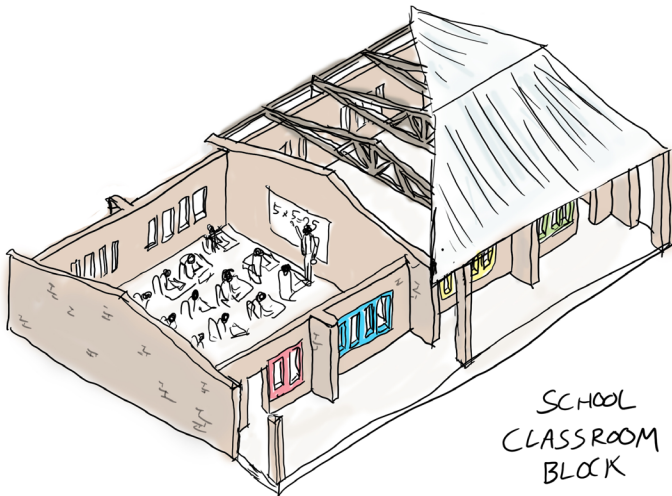
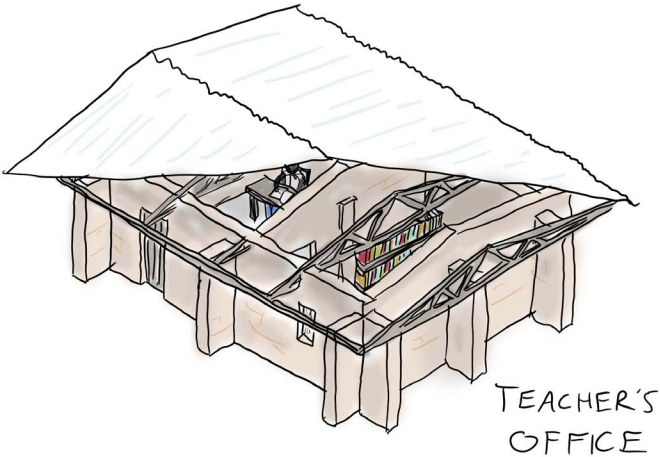
Our Core Capabilities

Construction

Our core capability is construction. It is what we have done since the very beginning.

We build to a very high standard, both in terms of the completed structure and the pioneering use of low environmental impact building techniques. Our methods are on par with or cheaper than more environmentally damaging techniques.

To meet our vision, we will maintain close relationships with the communities where we have worked. We will advise or support as needed.





Sound Investment in Quality Education

The Mlambe Project serves remote communities that the underpowered educational development sector in Malawi often cannot reach.

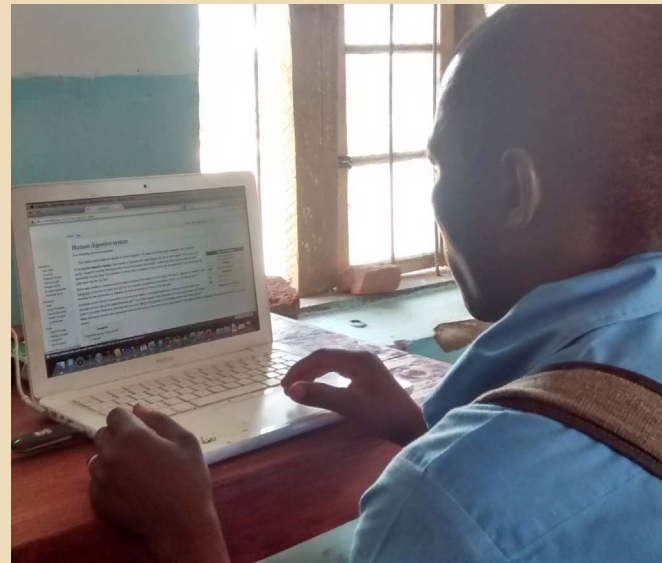
We recognise that school construction is only useful when communities use the buildings we build. Before we start a building project, we make sure that complementary services are in place.

For example, we understand the need to gain recognised schooling qualifications. To date, TMP has supported the University of the People (a tuition-free, American-accredited tertiary distance learning platform), a nursery feeding programme, and a solar-powered computer lab for accessing distance learning.

The vast majority of funds help people teach better, rather than constructing buildings to teach in. In the future, we would like to focus on what we do best, construction, and partner with another organisation that would champion the schools' qualitative development. We see this as the best way forward for improving education.

This approach fulfils the request for NGO support in the [Malawi Government's Inclusive Education Strategy 2017-22](#).

As we and our partnerships grow, we'll be able to reduce our scope to construction—all the while remaining 100 percent confident that the investment and resources have the maximum impact.





Working in the Right Places


We pay a lot of attention to working with the right people in the right places. The Mlambe Project exists to build good relationships, not complete transactions.

Unlike a lot of NGOs, we work in some of the most rural and hard-to-reach places. As a charity, it would be all too easy to work in urban and peri-urban areas. But that's not where the genuine need is.

Work begins many months before the first spade digs into the earth. We work closely with the school teachers, headteachers, Parent Teachers Association (PTA), local government, and village chiefs to build a solid foundation of need and a strong working relationship.

We only go ahead with construction when we are confident that the buildings will be owned and cared for by the people the buildings aim to serve.





**“Thank you to the
supporters of The
Mlambe Project.
Without you, we could
not have beautiful,
strong buildings.”**

**Alesi Mali (Mother's Group
Chairwoman, Nkonde School)**

Our Strategic Operations and Approach

We break our Five-Year Strategy down into sub-strategies, promotional materials, and technical plans. Each of these outlines has a goal, key considerations, catalysts, deliverables, and future considerations.

In this way, we clarify what we need to do to turn our vision into reality.

The process description ensures the Five-Year Strategy remains a living document. Future considerations allow us to be realistic about what we can do today while acting with a view to what tomorrow may bring.

The sub-strategies will keep us transparent and focussed. They will allow us to contribute significantly to the meaningful education of every child in Malawi. To access the strategy documents, visit our website. <https://thelambeproject.org/strategy-documents>

Sub-Strategies

1. School Selection Strategy
2. Government Support Strategy
3. Local Community Ownership Strategy
4. NGO Partnership Strategy
5. Localisation Strategy
6. Operational Strategy
7. Learning Outcomes Strategy
8. Fundraising Strategy

Promotion Materials

9. Model of a Good School Ecosystem
10. Vision of Why Education is Valuable
11. References from Previous Schools
12. Showcase Schools

Technical Plans

13. Sustainable Building Plan

Policies and Procedures

The Mlambe Project reviews its policies and procedures every three years to incorporate significant changes in relevant laws or guidelines. We make minor revisions as necessary within this timeframe. Information on these policies and procedures is available for download at <https://thelambeproject.org/strategy-documents>

- Comments and Complaints Policy - July 2020
 - Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Financial Control and Delegation Policy
 - Volunteering in Malawi Health and Emergency Policy
 - Malawi Employee Handbook
 - Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
 - TMPL Malawi Disciplinary Procedure
 - Volunteer Policy
 - Whistleblowing Policy
-
- Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Malawi Volunteer Handbook
 - Risk Framework
 - Safer Recruitment Policy



Our Gratitude

The Mlambe Project is a community of like-minded people living in the UK, Malawi, and throughout the globe who work to improve the lives of marginalised children in Malawi.

From modest beginnings to our humble today, we feel privileged to contribute to creating a fairer world. Without the warm welcome extended to us by Malawi communities and the generous support of volunteers, advisors, and donors, none of this would be achievable.

In this strategy document, we outline a systematic approach to quantifying and organising this need for change without reducing children's lives to numbers and performance indicators.

We are grateful for the people that have supported us along the way. Each of you has contributed tangibly, inspired us to keep going through the hard times, and given us someone to celebrate the successes with.

We are excited to say that we are building on this incredible legacy. We are taking all of that care, support, and learning and using it as a foundation to create even more outstanding opportunities for even more children in Malawi.

This process will be, we hope, self-perpetuating. The early successes, which were only achievable with your support, will lead to more significant advancements—multiplying the impact of our first donors, volunteers, and supporters.

Thank you for making The Mlambe Project possible.



A-Z of Acronyms and Definitions

- CSO - Civil Society Organization (an entity in Malawi)
- DDP - District Development Plan
- DEM - District Education Manager
- DFID - UK Government's Department For International Development
- DOW - Division of Work
- DOR - Division of Responsibility
- DPD - Director of Planning and Development
- Local - the area immediately surrounding a community where we work/have worked
- Malawi Education Department - the body governing education policy within the Malawi Government
- MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
- National - people of Malawian origin or permanently relocate to Malawi, particularly those with a deeper understanding of matters in Malawi
- NGO - Non-government Organisation
- Partner community - the communities in Malawi that TMP works with
- Partner organisation - the NGO or for-profit organizations that TMP works with
- PEA - Primary Education Advisor
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Social proof - evidence from the peers of a potential audience that verifies elements of a proposal.
- SSB - Soil Stabilised Brick
- TMP - The Mlambe Project - is used to refer in combination to the UK and Malawi registered sister organisations - for more information please refer to Our Governance structure