

Operational Strategy

Sub - Strategy



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1. Building plans

If funds allow we will undertake the following building work in the sequence given.

This plan is subject to change by The Mlambe Project Malawi (TMPMW) board.

Where	What	Est. Cost	When
Nankhono	Toilet - Done	£9,873	2020
Nkhonde	TDC office (to release a classroom) Done	£24,120	2020
Chikoleka	Classroom block 1 - In progress	£26,681	2021
Nkhonde	Classroom block 1 - Done	£26,681	2021
Chikoleka	Classroom block 2	£26,681	2022
Nkhonde	Classroom block 2	£26,681	2022

The planned sequence of building projects ensures we are always engaged with two communities so that if unforeseen circumstances halt work at one location we can redirect resources to the other.

Our plan also aims to do a single project in a new community to test engagement and other issues at that location before committing to more extensive work.

Furthermore, it aims to be looking ahead to working with new partner communities each year.

The default construction material will be SSBs (not earthbag techniques).

2. Community partnerships

The engagement of the local community is essential. Both for the practical success for the building project and as evidence that the community will make good use of the facilities provided. For this reason, we refer to the communities we work with as partner communities. We're not here to build classrooms per se, we're here to support communities that want to increase their access to quality education. The need to build comes from them, not us.

Our engagement with the Mlambe school community built organically and Lucy had a lot of involvement with Nankhono over a long period following introductions from Steven and Geoffrey. We are unlikely to have the luxury of so much time to get to know future



communities. To mitigate the risk of investing resources with a community with which we find it difficult to work, our initial engagement should always be for a single building to test relationships and practicalities.

A minimum level of practical engagement would be the community clearing the land for the building.

3. Needs analysis

Our focus now, and for the foreseeable future, is on Nkhonde zone, Balaka district. It is easier to maintain strong working relationships with a few key decision makers. Also lower transport costs and easier movement between sites allowing us to use people already trained at other sites.

There are 13 primary schools in this zone. We are partnered with four of them. We are likely to engage with other communities under the guidance of TMPMW.

We need good needs assessment to make sure we are partnering with the right communities and building in the right places to get maximum short and long-term value from our efforts. A robust and unburdensome needs assessment approach is required to shape our decision taking on this.

For 2020 and 2021, we will keep needs assessment light and use good judgement and experience to decide priorities.

In future years the TMPMW board will guide us on priorities. The excellent mix of education professionals and local leaders on the board will be able to make good decisions based on in depth local knowledge.

4. Impact assessment

How do we know we are achieving what we want to achieve?

Robust data is needed to demonstrate the value of our activities to ourselves and others, help take better informed decisions and raise greater support.

At a minimum, we should endeavour to do pre-, post-, and follow-up data collection on something similar the following factors for each partner community:

Quantitative*	Qualitative (primarily for media/campaign use)
<p>School Information Form - to be completed before each construction cycle</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student enrolment (boy girl split) • Average attendance (boy girl split) • Number of classrooms / school blocks • Number of classes (and which standard each is) • Number of classes taught in classrooms • Number of classes taught under tree • Number of classes taught under temp shelter • Number of classes with no shelter, no tree • Number and type of latrines • Number of teachers houses • Number of teachers • Number of offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was life like before the construction/ implementation of [X]? • How has life changed for you since [X] was completed?

*much of this can be provided by Balaka district government or the individual schools.

By looking at the changes in these indicators, we can understand how we are helping shape access to education in our partner communities. We would want to check these on an annual basis, to assess the long term value our activities have.

None of these indicators measure the quality of education, they all assume a change. To verifiably demonstrate increasing access to quality education, we will need to measure change in learning outcomes or child development.

For 2020 and 2021, we will keep impact assessment light and use readily available information. We will not attempt to measure the quality of education.

5. Building maintenance

In 2020 we have no plan, expectation or commitment to the maintenance of buildings either by TMPL or by the local community. In future we will need to review this.

We should include building maintenance as a part of MOUs with partner organisations



as a way to have a clear approach to support longer term value from our builds. We may find that we are discouraged from doing further construction with a partner community if there are early indications that previous support is not being adequately maintained.

6. Resource constraints

Making blocks is very time consuming and labour intensive. Careful planning is required to make sure we press on with block making in parallel with construction to have blocks ready for the next build. We need to establish when we will need a second block making machine, or if we need to source blocks externally.

TMPMW is capable of understanding needs and setting priorities.

The building team is capable of building at least four buildings each year which is as many as we expect to be able to fund for the next few years. We should support TMPMW in planning for increased capacity.

Building skills within TMPMW remains an objective. Geoffery will undertake training to increase his accounting skills.

7. Construction partnerships

Today - March 2020 - TMPL is our single preferred supplier of construction services. This will remain the case through 2022 and 2023.

Beyond 2023 we must consider whether this should continue to be the case.

Ensuring TMPL gives value for money is essential. We have detailed costings so we have good visibility and we received a quote from another builder in early 2021 which was nearly double what TMPL cost.

Our medium term aim is to max out TMPL's construction capacity, have a packed work schedule for the dry season and have plans in place with subsequent communities for the following dry season.

8. Risk assessment

Risk	Risk mitigation actions
Infrastructure we build is repurposed by individual/ community for purpose not consistent with our objectives.	The TMPMW board is aware of activities and will be aware of this type of abuse.
Our ability to grow is hampered because our costs get too high.	UK costs were high but now running on volunteer team.
Hard to manage cost inflation because we pay people day rates, not task rates.	
Dependency on full capacity block production, but can be affected by sickness, workers' other priorities, etc.	Labourers can easily be replaced and SG will be monitoring output.
Problem with block production speed caused by delay in getting cement on site.	
Rate of construction assumptions based on 1,920 blocks produced per week.	Steven and Geoffrey tendency to be cautious with their estimations. Slightly over estimated number of blocks required for each building errs us on side of caution.
Construction delay caused by financial flow delay.	<p>Plan construction further out, transfer money ahead of time*. Activation speed is very fast - max of three days between money being sent and block production starting.</p> <p>*Make 2020 financial situation a blip by better financial preparedness going ahead.</p>
Delay in work due to moving SSB manufacturing machine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter to be built in advance in next site, so work can start as soon as SSB machine moved Moving the machine itself a quick process - just an hour between Nkhonde and Chikoloka, plus the time it takes for the concrete it is set in to go off
Not getting full capacity out of existing SSB machines, reducing block production rate unnecessarily.	
Constructing a building of the wrong size (Nankhono 2019).	
Wrong budget is prepared for designs/wrong designs used.	
Lack of contract/ weak contract leading to confusion and related time delays/cost increases	
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