



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## CASE STUDY

# High quality books improve literacy in learners

A tale from Alexander Masamba -Malawi



PHOTO: Gemini Kamteme, courtesy of Zomba CCAP Primary School

Alexander Masamba, (standard 2) at home reading a book borrowed from their class library –Zomba CCAP Primary School –Malawi

***“The USAID-funded Read Malawi campaign has contributed a lot to learners’ reading skills. Right now I have a class of over 120 and 60-70% of these are able to read especially ‘Chichewa’ books.”***

Mrs J Jawali, a standard 2 teacher at Zomba CCAP Primary School explaining how the books have impacted on learners in her class

**Telling Our Story**  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-1000  
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

“I WAS UNABLE to read before the introduction of these books to our class!” Exclaimed an enthused 8-year old Alexander Masamba who is now doing standard 2 at a Presbyterian Church-owned primary school –Zomba in the south-eastern region of Malawi.

Over 70% learners in junior and infant classes face challenges in adapting both accelerated reading and numeracy skills. It is and has been a common sight for such challenges in many schools which have been attributed to various reasons ranging from inadequate teaching and learning materials through low-learner attitude to poor teacher service delivery.

However, since the inception of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) program through Read Malawi campaign in 2010 the situation at Zomba Primary School has improved. The program which aimed at complementing other literacy development initiatives on the ground introduced both quality reading resources and capacity building for teachers. Asked on the impact of these books in her class, Mrs J Jawali, a standard 2 teacher at the school explained as follows:

“The USAID-funded Read Malawi campaign has contributed a lot to learners reading skills. Right now I have a class of over 120 and 60-70% of these are able to read especially ‘Chichewa’ books.” Jawali had at some point attended a training workshop under the same Read Malawi program which helped her to acquire more teaching skills on reading.

As expected by many, these learners could not read the whole first school term until after being intensively exposed to the program books. Most of the learners find these books very interesting and helpful: Some say because of their illustrations they are able to vividly recall and understand the stories more; while others say the techniques used are easier to follow. For example, when the teacher reads aloud a story to us, it becomes easy to grasp and follow it through synchronization of the pictures and words. Finally there is this ‘word wall’ technique –which lets the children match given words on the wall against some alphabets. On the overall, the pictures seem to play a critical role as they create human interest in the learners and in turn the learners recall the words which they now read and possibly write.

Asked what he would want to see in them, if more books were to be printed, Alexander was quick to say, “People herding cattle and goats...because I like their stories! And also another one illustrating more boys doing household chores like; cooking *nsima*, clearing the surrounding and playing games!”

Alexander is one among many pupils in standard 2 who have come out half-way through the project and have shown some great strides in mustering reading skills. Under the Read Malawi program, learners at Zomba CCAP Primary School are now enjoying stories read to them from the books more than before and look forward to full mustering when they get to standard 3.