

Temwa Bursary Scheme - Mid-Year Report for 2023/24

Bursary Scheme Project Summary

We are pleased to report the progress made under Temwa's secondary school bursary scheme during the first half of the 2023-2024 academic year, which started in October 2023. Through the scheme, 25 gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to attend secondary school for 4 years, while an additional student is funded by an individual sponsor.

Secondary school education in Malawi is not free, and the fees and associated costs of uniforms and learning essentials are often unaffordable for families with little household income. In turn, school dropout rates are very high. This scheme ensures that students can benefit from secondary school education, reaching their potential and expanding their future opportunities.



Activities and support provided

Financial and material support – At the start of the new school year, all of the student's tuition fees were paid, and boarding support was provided to 13 beneficiaries. We have seen a significant improvement in the female bursary beneficiaries' concentration levels. We have also seen a huge decrease in cases of absenteeism, and boarding has meant that the girls are supervised by their teachers, increasing their discipline.

This year, the Usisya Hostel is now providing full-time boarding services, meaning the beneficiaries will be served food by the school rather than needing to prepare food for themselves. The budget allocation for boarding support will remain the same.

Female beneficiaries are also now being supported with sanitary pads to help them with menstrual hygiene. This support also helped to reduce absenteeism among beneficiaries. Previously, at least one female bursary beneficiary was reported to be absent from school each month due to lack of proper methods of handling their period. With provision of sanitary pads, female students are able to attend classes and participate in other school activities comfortably without feeling nervous.

At the same time, Temwa supported all the students with school uniforms as well as writing materials and stationary. Each student now has notebooks, pens, and a maths set, so they are able to complete their studies properly.

Performance monitoring – Temwa's Project Officer for Education, Blessings Nyirongo, has continued to conduct regular school visits to assess the performance and wellbeing of the bursary learners.

In 2024, we have seen a significant improvement in attendance and concentration levels among bursary beneficiaries, particularly for the female students. As mentioned above, the boarding support is helping



ensure the female students do not have large distances to travel and have more time to study. The girls also have a conducive home environment to attend extra classes and engage in group discussions after school.

In terms of academic performance, the Term 2 examinations have shown steady progress from the bursary students. Out of the 25 learners supported by Temwa, 92% (23 students) passed their exams having achieved the average pass mark. 44% (11) of students even surpassed the recommended pass mark with at least 50 marks.

Home visits - In March, Temwa conducted home visits to 12 of the bursary beneficiaries' households in order to assess their current welfare, as well as the impact of the scheme's interventions.

The visits established a number of challenges in the households of new bursary beneficiaries. For instance, more than 50% of households had poor sources of light for studying and a lack of access to safe and clean water. Many of the students are travelling long distances to get to school, and frequently attend school on an empty stomach. These challenges particularly impact the male students, who do not benefit from the boarding support.

Complementary support – Temwa continues to provide complementary support to the students, either as part of monitoring visits or through funding from other donors. This includes:

- **Motivational talks:** Blessings has continued holding talks with the bursary students to discuss their academic performance and any challenges the students are facing. These talks encourage students to set their own personal goals to reach throughout the year.
- **Library support:** The bursary students continue to benefit from the learning resources at the Usisya Community Library. So far in 2024, there have been 1,957 recorded visits to the Usisya Community Library, with 970 of those visits made by secondary school children. Students benefit from accessing curriculum books and the constructive learning environment, as many of them do not have adequate space or facilities to study at home.



Success Stories

Veronica and Jubilee have graduated to further education

Jubilee (pictured here) and Veronica are former beneficiaries of Temwa's bursary scheme who graduated from Chipunga Secondary School having passed their leaving certificate exams in August 2023. The students share similarly difficult family circumstances, and both lived with grandparents who could not afford their school fees.

On the bursary scheme, they benefited from consistent motivation visits from Temwa, as well as material support. They consistently performed well in their classes and graduated with credits and distinctions in their final



national exams. In December 2023, both girls were selected to attend the Malawi Institute of tourism (MIT) where they will be doing a diploma in tourism and hospitality.

Pius now has the resources to continue his education



Pius lives with his elderly grandparents who are subsistence farmers, and two siblings in Kayuni Village. Pius is the oldest of his siblings, so the family relies on him to source food and other necessities. He often has to attend school without having eaten proper meals and his family struggled to pay the school fees.

“I used to be absent from school several weeks a term due to failure to pay fees in time and I used to work long hours in people's fields to raise school fees. I didn't have a school uniform and hardly found enough notebooks and pens for taking notes and writing assignments. I used poor sources of lights such as candles and battery torches but could barely raise enough resources to buy the batteries and candles. Hence my study time at home was very limited since I prefer to study at night.”

Under Temwa's bursary scheme, there's a guarantee that Pius' tuition fees are paid on time and he will no longer struggle to have access to writing materials.

Pius wishes to finish his studies and become a lawyer and MP for his constituency so he can contribute towards developing his community. He would also like to help his brother and sister and other children who come from a similar background.

“I sincerely thank Temwa for the support it provides not only to bursary beneficiaries but also in other development initiatives such as health and agriculture. My community does not take this for granted.”

Lessons Learnt and Meeting Challenges

Below is a summary of the key lessons learnt so far this academic year:

Inflation - The Malawi Kwacha was drastically devalued in November 2023. This meant that, as the new school year began, the cost of all materials increased massively compared to our original budget. For example, the cost of one pair of shoes increased by 150% between July 2023 and January 2024. Likewise, tuition fees increased by at least 25% across all the schools. The team has continually tried to find the least expensive sources for all the materials needed in order to tackle this.

Transport – Despite having purchased new 4X4 vehicles, the worsening climate crisis continues to make the roads to the schools and students' homes impassable during periods of heavy rainfall. In March, heavy rains delayed provision of sanitary pads to the female beneficiaries.

Teenage Pregnancy- In Nkhata Bay North, many parents encourage their teenage daughters to marry at a young age due to economic constraints. This means many young girls drop out of school early and leads to high cases of teenage pregnancy. Temwa's boarding support has helped to decrease the number of beneficiaries who drop out due to child marriages and pregnancies, and we currently have had no drop outs this year. In comparison, poor sexual reproductive health and early marriages remain a major risk to the education of female students not on the scheme. Seven students dropped out of school so far this year due to either early marriage or pregnancy.