

Country Brief: Malawi

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EdTech Hub's most recent focus country (formally added in February 2023), Malawi, faces deep challenges when it comes to learning. [The Ministry of Education's data](#) shows that nearly 90% of learners are not achieving basic literacy competencies by Standard 4, and one in four are not achieving them in numeracy. In the most recent [Education Sector Plan, NESIP 2020–2030](#), improvement of education quality and relevance is prioritised as the key area of policy reform in all education sub-sectors.

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and in partnership with FCDO and the Ministry of Education, EdTech Hub has recently begun to engage in Malawi. The focus is on unlocking the impact of national, tech-enhanced interventions aiming to improve foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN). The Hub's work in Malawi began through a brief assessment of the teacher continuous professional development (TCPD) and EdTech needs of the FCDO-funded [National Numeracy Programme](#). It is currently being implemented in over 1,000+ primary schools in Malawi with the goal of improving foundational numeracy outcomes. This early scoping research has led to a more in-depth engagement, with the Hub team conducting design-based implementation research (DBIR) in primary schools to refine the programme's approach to TCPD. The Hub has also expanded collaboration to address data for decision-making and policy coordination challenges related to FLN.

Work in Malawi focuses on the following three thematic pillars:

1. **Support the government to strengthen tech-enabled TCPD** for FLN programmes, focusing on teacher learning circles for the NNP.
2. **Strengthen the use of data for decision-making** on the teaching and learning of FLN.
3. **Strengthen the coordination of technology-supported programmes** for improved foundational learning and service delivery.

From the start of our engagement in 2022 to the present, the Hub team has established itself as a core partner to the NNP and a close partner to the Ministry of Education's directorate of Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL). As work progresses across the three pillars listed above, the Hub expects to continue playing a key role in facilitating and coordinating effective technology use for improvements in FLN.

EdTech Hub's Helpdesk in Malawi

EdTech Hub has responded to four Helpdesk requests in Malawi. Two were for the World Bank, and two were for FCDO. These requests covered various topics, such as girls' education and technology, data for decision-making, and TCPD (Teacher Continuous Professional Development).

Examples

- [Designing and monitoring distance teaching and learning interventions: A guide for projects and implementers](#)
- [Distance Teaching and Learning Framework Workshop with the GEC](#)

EdTech Hub's work in Malawi

Activity	Description
Scoping research focused on the National Numeracy Programme (NNP) Small 30k	EdTech Hub conducted a brief scoping research visit to assess the continuous professional development (CPD) and EdTech needs of the NNP. This was done in response to a Helpdesk request and led to a series of recommendations regarding refinements that could be made to the TCPD model. Examples are the inclusion of a revised teacher learning circle approach and the extent to which tech-enabled approaches, such as a coaching app, should be pursued.
Design-based implementation research (DBIR), testing, refinement of teacher learning circles (TLC) model, and content for the NNP (Ongoing) Large GBP 400k	Design-based implementation research continued, specifically focused on the development and testing of a TLC model. A TLC approach was co-created with teachers and tested in 20 primary schools. The approach focused on fostering practice-oriented and reflective professional development, allowing teachers to engage with content from the NNP curriculum along with their peers and develop structured lesson plans.
Development of data platform for classroom observations (Ongoing) Medium GBP 50k–75k	The Hub team has developed a platform to host and illustrate data from its classroom observation tool. This tool was developed with the NNP management in mind and in partnership with the programme's monitoring, evaluation, and learning team. This tool helps assess NNP teachers' performance in the classroom, including determining whether they adequately implement a lesson plan, make connections between numeracy instruction activities, and check for mistakes and misconceptions. It also helps capture whether learners are engaged in lessons and learning and can be disaggregated by zone, district, standard, and topic to help address challenging areas of the NNP with further teacher professional development. Moving forward, classroom observations will be undertaken in about 20% of the NNP's schools, and data will be monitored via this platform.

<p>Policy Coordination with Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL)</p> <p>(Ongoing)</p> <p>Medium GBP 100k–250k</p>	<p>EdTech Hub has contributed to a number of policy coordination sessions in Malawi, focused on fostering synergy among tech-enabled foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) programmes. This has included contributing to a session on developing a national EdTech strategy at the foundational learning steering committee. In addition, the Hub is playing a key role in the Malawi EdTech Coalition, supporting the subgroups related to continuous professional development, quality control and monitoring, and technology development. Moving forward, the Hub's Malawi country lead will collaborate closely with ODeL on further coordination among FLN programmes (including NNP, NextGen, and BEFIT).</p>
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Examples illustrating the impact of the Hub's work in Malawi

DBIR inputs integrated into the National Numeracy Programme implementation

EdTech Hub's collaboration with Malawi's National Numeracy Programme (NNP) began as a two-week scoping research and related recommendations about ways to refine its approach to teacher continuous professional development (TCPD). Following that engagement, the Hub embarked on a phase of design-based implementation research (DBIR) for a new approach to teacher learning circles (TLCs) intended to foster effective classroom instruction and peer reflection, all aligned with the NNP curriculum.

The TLC model was developed in consultation with teachers and tested in 20 schools starting in January 2023. TLC guides were developed to enable facilitators to walk through relevant content with teachers, discuss the numeracy skills to be addressed in their lesson plans, and practise and reflect on how to most effectively bring those skills to learners. Insights from the original round of 20 schools shaped revisions to TLCs, which were ultimately re-tested in in-depth engagements with six primary schools. Ultimately, final TLC guides were produced to tie directly into the NPP curriculum, tackle those topics and instructional components which seemed most challenging to teachers, and ensure progression and effective lesson planning. In August 2023, the TLC model developed and tested by the Hub team was included in national and master trainer workshops to be incorporated into the teacher training that will reach 1,100 (around 20% of all) primary schools across Malawi.

A second key input of the Hub team's work into the next phase of the NNP was the development of a classroom observation tool and data platform. As a part of our DBIR work, the Hub team developed a tool to assess and track classroom instruction and learning. This tool was ultimately embraced by the NNP's monitoring, evaluation, and learning team as an additional way to monitor their programme's outcomes. Since its creation, the tool has been used to observe teachers in 70 NNP schools. In the 2023 school year, the tool will be used to monitor 210 schools, a sample of nearly 20% of schools implementing the NNP. In addition to the observation tool itself, the Hub team has developed a data platform which allows classroom observation findings to be easily displayed and visualised by NNP decision-makers.
