## Current situation in Malawi

During 2014 a lot has happened. In a long election process a new president, Peter Mutharika was chosen (brother to the late Bingu Mutharika who held the presidential post since 2004 to 2012). The work of the new regime in government is yet to be appreciated.

The economical situation continues being difficult. The Malawi Kwacha hit a historical minimum of 490 for american dollar in November 2014. As always the situation is expected to improve a bit with tobacco sales in May, which will bring the much needed foreign currency. According to the World Bank, Malawi is the poorest country in the world.

Urban Malawi has been experiencing extreme shortages of water and electricity.

With the new year, as usually, Malawi was hit with floods, this time in a more massive and tragic way than previous years. Many people have lost their homes and even their loved ones. Luckily the rains have currently ceased but the consequences of the floods will continue to affect the country as many crops have been swept away and water related diseases have started spreading.

Many organizations and private people have come together to support the affected areas with distribution of food and goods as well as medical care. The nation of Malawi shows a lot of help and support to one another.

## boNGO in 2014

boNGO continues to positively affect lives of children in Malawi.

Since 2006 almost 2000 children aged 3 - 6 have attended the preschool education offered by boNGO’s Model Childcare Centers. Its quality continues to improve thanks to ongoing training, these years with emphasis on Montessori teaching methods. In March 2014 a carpentry workshop in one of the Centers was started and aims to become a place for professional production of Montessori teaching materials.

The number of Happy Classrooms painted since 2011 will see approximately 1 500 000 children benefiting from the project in the next 10 years!

Our film B’ella made for youth education both in Malawi and the economically developed worlds has been screened at eight international film festivals and more are coming. We plan to start screening the film in Malawian secondary schools later in 2015.

boNGO is still rather small in terms of number of employees and management is asked to multitask. But that, with the exponential growth of the Happy Classrooms project, will have to change. The administration will have to adopt new strategies in line with our partnerships with big international NGOs. In spite of that we promise to stay faithful to our name and continue being - based on Need-driven Grassroots Ownership.

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Tereza Mirovičová - Managing Director
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Overview of boNGO’s work

boNGO is a non-profit non-governmental organization in Malawi, Africa, established in 2007 with the aim of raising the standards of education in the country. boNGO works within:

1. **Early Childhood Education**: Establishing and working with Model Childcare Centres that provide quality education to children aged 3-6 years; and give training opportunities to teachers.
2. **Primary education**: Improving the learning environments in primary schools through syllabus-related decoration of the classroom walls - Happy Classrooms project.
3. **Youth and Adult Education**: Producing and spreading awareness-raising films for both African and non-African audiences (film B’ella and film Zione); and working with youths in Vocational Training.

boNGO stands for “based on Need-driven Grassroots Ownership” – expressing the importance of a self-help approach of the people at the grassroots which boNGO sees as fundamental for participatory and sustainable development.

Since 2009 boNGO has been active in the Czech Republic and Switzerland, home countries of two boNGO directors, where it does development education and raises funds for projects in Malawi.

boNGO Team – the three directors founded boNGO in 2007 after their practical experience from developing the first Model Childcare Center Umodzi-Mbame in the South of Malawi.

**Mission** - To develop and implement innovative and low-cost educational concepts that can be replicated in various communities across the world in order to raise the standards of education.

**Vision** - Malawian children and youths that are capable of logical thinking and independent reasoning, with a good foundation of knowledge that allows for healthy development of the nation.
Both Model Childcare Centers - *Umodzi-Mbame* and *Mango* - continue to provide exemplary education to a total of 150 children aged 3 to 6 years with the help of 16 teachers. Throughout the year 2014 the teachers at Umodzi underwent an intense Montessori training led by a qualified Montessori teacher, Ruth Libuda, who monitored the teachers in the mornings and facilitated the trainings in the afternoons. The teachers are now in the process of producing their own Montessori teaching materials as part of the training program. The final exam will take place in June 2015.

The Umodzi teachers are committed to further spread the Montessori activities they have been introduced to. From August 2015 they will be facilitating training for their colleagues in the Mango Model Childcare Center.

The Mai Aisha Trust has been supporting operational expenses of both centers since March 2010 with 350 $ monthly.
In March 2014 a carpentry workshop was started at the premises of the Umodzi-Mbame Model Chidcare Center with the aim of teaching the local youths a trade, and producing quality Montessori teaching materials that can be used at both Umodzi and Mango Centers. As the Montessori method starts to be very popular in the Malawian urban pre-schools it is also an idea to use the production for income generation. At the moment funds are being raised to bring electricity to the workshop which would allow for using power-tools.

In the process of learning the participants already produced many useful things - hammers, boxes, candle sticks, cooking sticks, stools, tables and benches. Johan Vanhoutte is in charge of the training.

Another idea behind the workshop is to invent products made with minimum of wood. On the picture a bookshelf/cupboard adapted to a village house, hanging between the roof beams.

The female participants showing their skills of using carpentry tools.
The Happy Classrooms project is nowadays well known all over Malawi thanks to many articles in the newspapers, dozens of companies that have supported the project and especially the more than 1000 painted Happy Classrooms which will have approximately 1,500,000 students attending them in the next 10 years. The project is very popular amongst the children, amongst the teachers as well as its supporters. The biggest advantages are that nobody can “steal” the paintings, they stay beautiful for many years and it costs only about 0.3$ per child (500 $ per classroom). In short, the stimulating learning experience reached through syllabus-related paintings on the walls is an excellent idea. These days we are painting classrooms of Std 1-4 and employ about 20 painters.

A 3-minute film about the Happy Classrooms project at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRiI3cyagnU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRiI3cyagnU)


boNGO directors continuously monitor the quality of painters’ work and encourage teachers to bring in their own ideas.

PTC, a Malawian chain of supermarkets, has already supported 50 Happy Classrooms in the city of Blantyre.

Illovo Sugar has supported 62 classrooms in primary schools at their sugar plantations.

Since 2013 the international NGO Concern Worldwide has contracted boNGO to paint 220 classrooms.

With support from Concern Worldwide we have also painted children wards in 7 hospitals across the country.

A new partner - mining company Mkango Ltd. has committed to support during 2015 painting of 23 classrooms in their catchment area in Phalombe.
PRODUCTION OF AWARENESS-RAISING FILMS

A new film ‘B’ella’

Due to unforeseen problems including too many power cuts in Blantyre, finishing B’ella has taken much longer than expected. But finally in April 2014 the film was premiered in Blantyre and from there has been screened at eight international film festivals, so far, with more to come. boNGO is a producer of the film, while the local Dikamawoko Arts organization is behind the actual shooting. Thanks to the success of the film other projects are being started contributing to the cultural diversity in Malawi - a film school, and an international film festival.

B’ella is a coming of age film about a 17-year old girl, B’ella, living in the outskirts of the city of Blantyre. The film depicts her path to self-determination and showcases her family values, friendships and first love. B’ella aims to champion girl empowerment by promoting self-assertiveness amongst girls and has a predominantly female driven cast.

The film is to be screened in Malawi secondary schools later in 2015 (depending on funds available), which we call the B’ella in Malawi schools project. While the B’ella in European schools project is already starting in Scotland after the film’s participation in the Africa in Motion Film Festival.

Trailer at http://youtu.be/7CtyGxmO5oM
boNGO managed to source some funding to support the flood victims. We chose the affected village, Mulilima, in the south of Malawi. So far we have been able to distribute survival packages with food, blankets and kitchen utensils to 209 households. With the remaining donations we want to fund rebuilding of some of the more than 65 completely destroyed houses. We also plan that when the most basic needs are met we will support the Mulilima Village with a playground and a Happy Classroom.
Thank you for your support!!!

in 2014 boNGO programs have been financially and materially supported by ...

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