Current situation in Malawi

Malawi is not in any easier situation than one year ago when the World Bank pressured to depreciate the Malawi Kwacha from 160 to 330 per dollar. It was done under the threat of stopped support to the Malawian budget. Since then the exchange rate has risen up to 435 Kwacha per dollar and is likely to continue rising. Prices of food and other items have gone up while salaries have stayed the same or increased to minimal effect.

To make the situation yet more complicated the Malawi ‘Cash-gate”, a corruption scandal, was revealed with millions of US dollars missing from the national budget. As a result a big part of the western donors, who provide about 40% of the country’s budget, froze their support. That will lead to further inflation and rise in the cost of living, and most probably acute fuel shortages again. Many people, including several Ministers, were arrested and a british audit team was hired to investigate all government ministries and departments.

The Cash-gate scandal has heavily undermined Joyce Banda’s effort to win back donors' confidence. The May 2014 presidential elections will show if Banda, one of the two female presidents in Africa, will stand this test..

BoNGO in 2013

BoNGO continues to successfully work and grow. The biggest project is the Happy Classrooms Project which has, since 2011, reached over 800 classrooms. BoNGO’s Model Childcare Centers Umodzi-Mbame and Mango are also striving, giving high-quality education to preschool children and continuously building the capacity of their teachers. The latest project, B’ella - the film, is in the final stages of post-production with the Malawian premiere scheduled for the first quarter of 2014.

BoNGO’s constitution is in the process of amendment as the organization’s mission and goals have changed in a major way since its beginnings in 2007. BoNGO is currently identifying new office bearers for the Board of Trustees ...
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 Centers 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 Youth Clubs at the Model Childcare Centers.

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.
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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. This ratio allows for work in small groups and individual attention paid to children who require it. In January 2014 the Umodzi teachers are going to start a one and a half year Montessori training facilitated by Ruth Libuda, a qualified Montessori teacher from Austria. The training will be happening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, with Ruth monitoring the teachers in the mornings and facilitating the trainings in the afternoon. Since March as part of the training program an attached workspace will be established where local youths will be trained in basic carpentry and the production of the Montessori materials needed at the school.

Before the Christmas holiday a little celebration was organized during which parents had a chance to witness their children’s activities.

Thank you to Mai Aisha Trust which has been supporting operational expenses of the Umodzi-Mbame and Mango centers regularly every months since March 2010.
The Happy Classrooms project successfully continues to bring children a more stimulating learning experience through syllabus-related paintings on the walls. In April 2013 boNGO started to paint also the third grade classrooms in primary schools. A new set of decorations, quite different from those in grade 1 and 2, have been developed together with teachers and Primary Education Advisors in Blantyre City.

boNGO has now partnered with the international charitable organization, Concern Worldwide, that has contracted boNGO to paint 150 classrooms in the southern-most district of Malawi, Nsanje. boNGO hopes to continue finding more partners to support this project so that it can reach primary schools all over Malawi.

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

PRODUCTION OF AWARENESS-RAISING FILMS

A new film ‘B’ella’
The film ‘B’ella’ was shot in November and December 2012, and some reshoots were done in February 2013, in co-operation with the Malawian organization Dikamawoko Arts. It 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 a girl’s path to self-determination and showcases her family values, friendships and first love. We also highlight the sexual discrepancies that exist between male teachers and girl learners in Malawian schools. B’ella aims to champion girl empowerment by promoting self-assertiveness amongst girls and has a predominantly female driven cast.

Editing the film has proven a challenge but it is finally coming to the end and February 2014 should see the film finished. An unofficial trailer can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW-zsP4u3B8.

In an international perspective the film aims to tell a Malawian story from a Malawian point of view with the result of showing Africa in its organic form. It is to be shown at various international film festivals and can be used in schools as an effective tool for development education.

In Malawi a project B’ella in schools is planned that could see showcasing of B’ella in secondary schools across the country.

boNGO has applied for a grant from the Malawian National Aids Commission (NAC) to start showing the film Zione, a 2010 boNGO production, in secondary schools. The trailer can be seen on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FUxOKI_UZE.

B’ella and Kalilole - the main female characters
boNGO volunteers

Since 2010 boNGO has hosted several volunteers from abroad who came to work in boNGO’s project and at the same time experience life in Malawi. Here are the volunteers from 2013.

Isolde Gollowitsch (February - June 2013) concentrated on work with children and teachers at the Umodzi-Mbame preschool. She also led the after-school activities of the local youth club and together they build a wonderful playground at the preschool.

Vera Hofer (August 2012 - February 2013) was actively involved in linking the Umodzi-Mbame preschool with the Mini-me Montessori preschool and helped to start the Montessori teacher-training at Umodzi. She also co-produced a short film about the project (German and English versions at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1dYg25O5vl and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DbIEkce0oE)

Johan Vanhoutte (January 2013 to date) has been leading a youth music club and has always been available whenever some building activities needed leadership or advice. Currently he is in the process of starting a carpentry workshop at Umodzi-Mbame with the aim of teaching the youths basic carpentry skills and the production of Montessori teaching materials.

Theresa Geuke who arrived in October 2013 is the first volunteer in the Happy Classrooms voluntary program. Her main tasks are monitoring how teachers use the wall decorations and exploring with them new ways of their utilizing. She also participates in the actual painting of the classrooms.
Thank you for your support

in 2013 boNGO programs have been supported by ... (in chronological order)

Karel Janecek (Czech Republic)
Ryalls hotel (Malawi)
Sunbird hotel (Malawi)
Mayi Aisha Trust (Malawi)
Agrofert Foundation (Czech Republic)
Bonjour Steers (Malawi)
Siku Transport (Malawi)
Mapeto tyres (Malawi)
Isolde Golowitsch (Austria)
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SDV (Malawi)
United General Insurance (Malawi)
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St. Andrews primary school (Malawi)
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Concern Worldwide (Malawi)
Universal Industries (Malawi)
Airtel (Malawi)
Theresa Geuke (Switzerland)
Illovo Sugar (Malawi)
St. Mary Adderbury church (UK)
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boNGO’s accounts for the last financial year were audited by the Certified Public Accountants Peter Giles & Wallace.

on behalf of boNGO

Tereza Mirovičová
Managing Director

www.bongoworldwide.org