

The Challenge

Since the introduction of free primary education in 1994, the Malawi Government has significantly improved access and equity in its primary schools. However, the education system still faces significant challenges including overcrowding in classrooms, lack of learning materials, and a shortage of trained teachers. As a result, only 19% of children ages 7 to 14 have foundational reading skills and 13% have foundational numeracy skills.

The Opportunity

The Malawi Government has committed to improving the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of all primary school learners in Standards 1–4 through the **BEFIT** program. BEFIT is massively scalable, evidence-based, and closely aligned with Malawi’s official vision plan, “**Malawi 2063**,” which focuses on foundational learning for youth and digital skill development for students and teachers. **BEFIT:**

- ▶ Will serve over **3.8 million children** across more than 6,000 public primary schools per year at scale
- ▶ Is **led by the government** and temporarily supported by a consortium of partners, including Imagine Worldwide, onebillion, VSO and others
- ▶ Is **embedded within the national curriculum** and school timetables
- ▶ Introduces **solar power**, provides **ICT training**, **upskills** communities, and catalyzes **job creation**
- ▶ Will be **fully sustained** by the government, operationally and financially, post implementation



The EdTech Intervention

Child-directed, adaptive learning is delivered to the student on a tablet. The model overcomes systemic barriers and is highly scalable because of:



ACCESS

Tablets work without internet or grid power. Learning is at the right level for each child.



EFFICACY

onebillion’s software provides a complete, evidence-based curriculum/pedagogy and has consistently shown strong learning gains.



AFFORDABILITY

Attractive unit-level costs of <\$7 per child/year that continue to decline with economies of scale.

Implementation Year	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	Sept 2025	Sept 2026	Sept 2027	Sept 2028	Sept 2029
Percentage of Schools Served	8.0%	16%	37%	58%	79%	100%	100% (6,000 schools)
Learners Served	316,500	641,500	1,455,900	2,278,800	3,101,700	3,924,600	11,000,000+ (cumulative)
Teachers Trained / Year	5,400	5,400	12,528	12,528	12,528	16,383	All BEFIT teachers trained
Solar Installations	500	460	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300	All schools electrified

Robust Evidence

This model was successfully piloted in 250 schools across Malawi from 2014–2023, serving 225,000 children via the Unlocking Talent program.

Multiple rigorous studies have shown **strong learning gains** in literacy and numeracy. Children’s excitement about school, attendance, and confidence as learners also improved. Results from Imagine Worldwide’s two-year randomized controlled trial (RCT) show:

4.2 months

of additional learning in literacy after using the tablets for 13 months, despite COVID disruptions

72%

attained emergent or fluent mathematics status which was more than 1.4x the control group

50%

more children advanced on national literacy benchmarks compared to the control group

gender parity

girls benefited at least as much as boys in contrast to standard classroom practice



A solar panel installation. Photo courtesy of Rising Academy Network.

Malawi is one of the first nations to scale a digital personalized learning solution countrywide. BEFIT will serve millions of children in Malawi and create a roadmap for other countries to follow.

Transformational Impacts

BEFIT will not only improve children’s lives but also help transform Malawi’s education system and accelerate innovation across the country.

ICT Capacity

Currently only 0.7% of the teachers in Malawi have ICT training. BEFIT will provide **technology training at every level** of the education system (school, district, and national). As a result, the entire country will be in a significantly stronger position to embrace future innovations across the education sector.

Solar Infrastructure

According to the World Bank, only 11% of Malawians have access to electricity. BEFIT will establish solar power systems in all primary schools in Malawi, providing **renewable energy for 20+ years**. Research shows that introducing electricity/power in schools can have multiplier effects such as extending studying hours, improving girls’ attendance and academic performance, and creating opportunities for community education.

Workforce Upskilling and Jobs

Malawi has a huge youth population with almost three quarters of its citizens aged 30 or younger. BEFIT is stimulating demand for an **ecosystem of service providers** to deliver troubleshooting, maintenance, and ICT support services specifically focused on solar power supply systems, tablets, and accessories. The digital upskilling component of BEFIT is strongly aligned with Malawi’s Digital Economy Strategy (2021–2026).

Sustainable Approach

Government Owned

The program is owned by the Ministry of Education's Directorate of Basic Education (DBE) and supported by other Ministry directorates. It **utilizes existing government resources**, is aligned to the national curriculum, and is embedded within school timetables. The software is in the local language of Chichewa and supplements existing teacher-led instruction. Each durable tablet is used by an average of five students for an hour each per day.

Attractive Unit-level and Ongoing Costs

The implementation model costs **<\$7 USD per child per year** (assuming amortization over the useful life of the equipment).

Philanthropy and aid fund the upfront infrastructure over the first six years. The government funds all recurring costs after the upfront investments, estimated to be **<\$5 per child per year**.



BEFIT Phase 1 Updates

(Academic Year '23/'24)

Program Updates

- ▶ Program launched in **500 initial schools**, serving over **300,000 students** across 18 districts — delivered on time and on budget
- ▶ **80k tablets** and accessories were procured and delivered and **500 solar power systems** were installed
- ▶ Six local **Implementation Support Providers** (training, monitoring, capacity building) and four **Technical Support Providers** (charging/security/storage cage fabricators) were retained, and national and district-level **trainings completed**
- ▶ The Ministry of Education's **Program Implementation Management Unit** (in charge of system-strengthening) was established
- ▶ **onebillion** provided a perpetual **royalty-free license** of its adaptive learning software
- ▶ A **digital eAssessment** in the local language of Chichewa was created by RTI for ongoing monitoring of program impact
- ▶ Imagine Worldwide established a dedicated Malawian NGO (Imagine LTD) to act as **ecosystem coordinator** for the BEFIT program
- ▶ Phase 2 of BEFIT (academic year '24/'25) is on track to reach an additional **460 schools** across the remaining 16 districts, serving over **640,000 students**

Funding Updates

- ▶ **\$30.4mm** has been raised to fully fund Phase 2 of BEFIT and part of Phase 3, via the **Global Partnership for Education** multiplier (50% GPE/World Bank and 50% philanthropy)– Imagine Worldwide will be the fiduciary grant agent for the funds

Join us in helping millions of children in Malawi reach their full potential!