

Malawi 2013 Report



The ACCESS Malawi Team spent 2 weeks during September 2013 in various locations in Malawi carrying out a number of IT Projects and Training to improve the community and helping them become more self-sustainable. The team have collated a full account below of what they got up to while they were there including some interesting travel stories!

Day one Sunday

The ACCESS Malawi team flew out on Sunday 8 September to spend 2 weeks delivering a number of ICT projects and training. Sammy Birnie, Maria Quintas Zon, and newbies Ashley Bickerstaff and Robert McPhee met at Glasgow Airport at 2pm and were greeted by fellow travellers Brian Kelly, Project Director and Gillian Walsh from the council's International Office and volunteers from City Building who were going out to renovate a City Centre Clinic.

Bad luck had caused the London bound flight to be delayed so they spent over an hour sitting on the tarmac in the plane waiting to take off. Finally the team arrived in London only to be given some "good" news; their booked flight to Johannesburg had left without them. So a night in a London airport courtesy of BA was to be had, and they were handed their goodie bag which consisted of some miniature toiletries and some SUPER SIZE T-shirts. So the SUPER SIZE team went off to catch some shut eye.

Day two Monday

After the team filled their stomachs at the breakfast buffet they headed to the airport to collect all of their misplaced luggage, (yes the airport even managed to misplace their luggage). They were informed that they now had to travel from London to Nairobi to Lilongwe via Zambia instead of a direct flight which meant a full day of travelling ahead. This didn't put off the team who were determined to get to Malawi to complete the work they had planned.

Day three Tuesday

When they landed at Nairobi airport, they found out that the airport had recently had a major fire (nothing to do with them, honest!) and was extremely busy. Once they got through security they were directed towards a large "Red Cross" tent which had been set up after the fire as a temporary departure lounge. The team were quickly shuttled to the aircraft. Things were looking up as their flight left on time but poor Ashley on the other hand was looking rather green. The rest of the journey was smooth and they arrived at their first hotel, 2 days after they first started their journey.

The team were there and raring to go and were greeted at the airport by Mr Vitto Mulula of Lilongwe City Council. When they arrived at the hotel they were told there was no room at the inn (and it wasn't even Christmas) so Gillian Walsh's quick thinking managed to organise alternative accommodation - well done!

After 1 hour's rest Sammy, Robert and Ashley were collected by a driver from the City Council and the plan was to get sight of the equipment which they believed was at the Civic Offices(Civic). Mirriam Manyozo who is the Head of IT in Lilongwe informed them the equipment was not at the civic but at a nearby store. Once arriving at the store the team arranged to have the equipment transported to the Civic that evening. Mirriam arranged for 3 pickups to assist in the transfer of the equipment and we completed transferring the equipment in 4 hours. The final two hours of box handling was carried out in the dark after experiencing the first of this year's power cuts. Mirriam informed the team that a Civic Reception had been arranged for them that evening. After a quick change at the hotel, they headed to the reception and the meal was attended by Mr Richard Hara, the CEO, and his Deputy Mr Vitto Mulula and local Malawian Press. Mr Vitto Mulula made a brief speech followed by Professor Brian Kelly who thanked the Lilongwe City Council for their assistance, hosting and hospitality.

Day four Wednesday

Work started at 8:30am, where they visited the Civic HQ and commenced the following tasks; un-boxing, testing, installing screensaver, setting wallpaper, installing security software and running the data capture utility. Once the first batch of PCs were ready Maria and Ashley visited Wenela Training Centre, where they installed the PCs and returned faulty PCs to the City Council to be repaired by Robert, Sammy and Dalitso, who is a member of the Lilongwe IT Team. Robert and Sammy remained in the civic all day, un-boxing and preparing the PCs for installation.



The Police Commissioner, teachers and Robert

A batch of PCs had been boxed for Unicef in Blantyre as requested, 5 boxes of clothing had also been set aside for collection at 8:00am Thursday. Ashley and Maria visited three schools which had never had any I.T. equipment before. The teachers were extremely grateful for the work that had been carried out that day. After a full day of work the team returned to the hotel at 5:30pm to check out. Once checked out they proceeded to check in to the originally planned hotel. Robert,

Ashley and Sammy completed one last task while sipping on a cup of coffee; confirming that they had received all of the equipment as per the shipping list.

Day five Thursday

The team had another early start with commencing work at 8am and visited the Civic where they identified PCs for all the projects and prepared site visits for schools that already had IT equipment from previous years.

Once the school boxes were ready Ashley, Maria and Robert Banda visited and installed IT equipment in the following schools:

- Chimitu L.E.A School
- Chiuzimbi L.E.A school
- Chinsapo L.E.A School
- Mtsilriza L.E.A School
- Mphungu L.E.A School
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Robert Banda, one of the Wenela trainers arranged with the teachers to attend training for the following week.

Unicef boxes were collected by Patrick Choloma in the morning. This included IT equipment and a large quantity of seized donated clothing (these clothes are used to protect the IT equipment during transit). Several more boxes of clothing were prepared for Dzaleka refugee camp and the IPCC (Interdenominational Pastoral Care Centre).

Sammy and Robert remained at the Civic un-boxing, testing, installing screensavers, setting wallpaper, installing security software and running the data capture utility for PCs destined for Dzaleka Refugee camp, Dae Yang Luke Hospital, Kumuzu Central Hospital, the IPCC, College of Health Science, the Children of the blessing Trust and the new City Council Clinic. Boxes containing the anti-surge protection bars arrived late. This was a relief as the team don't set up PC's unless they have an anti-surge protected plug bar as Lilongwe suffers from power outages occasionally and surges can destroy equipment.



Maria, Robert, Sammy and Ashley in the Civic Room

In the afternoon Ashley installed a PC and handed over a laptop to Kathy Bowler, who runs the Children of the Blessing Trust. Maria, Sammy and Robert boxed up the equipment to be transported to Dedza on Friday. We provided Mirriam Manyozo the Head of IT in the City Council with two laptops. Ashley and Sammy visited the new Council Clinic to identify the networking requirements.

After working tirelessly till 7pm they had caught up with the initial loss of a day due to their travels and are back on schedule.

Day six Friday

The team visited the City Council where they split up in two. One team was formed by Sammy and Robert who had arranged to meet Hilda Katema from Dzaleka Refugee Camp at the Civic. The boxes containing IT equipment and clothes were

loaded into the back of two pickups. They drove to RSD Unit Area 3 where the IT equipment was to be stored temporarily prior to being installed at the Refugee camp. Esther Kurz informed them that the camp has increased capacity this year by 10% and now houses 19000 refugees of which 9000 are children. The equipment is to be used for adult education.

They then went to Dae Yang Luke Mission Hospital where they met Mr Godfred Soko. PCs were installed in several locations including an operating ward, a pharmacy and a nursing station. Data was migrated from existing PCs to the new PCs. There is a new library being built which will utilise previously donated IT equipment.

After spending time in Dae Yang Luke Mission Hospital they went to the newly refurbished City Council Clinic to plan the Comms installation to be carried out by Dalitso from the City Council IT who has kindly agreed to carry out the installation starting the 15th of September.



Sammy, Mr Godfred Soko and Robert



Chris and Dalitso

Dalitso was given a site induction by Scott McEwan, site manager, and introduced to Chris Devlin, the electrician he will be working with. In the afternoon they went back to the Civic where they repaired faulty PCs and carried out stock management of the remaining IT equipment.

While of this was happening, a lorry arrived from Dedza to collect 28 boxes of IT equipment to be installed the following week in Dedza.

Team two was formed by Maria and Ashley who headed up to Kamuzu Central Hospital Complex. Ashley and Maria went to the 500 Miles Prosthetic Clinic where they met Evelyne Huizinga. This clinic was built 3 years ago by City Building and has since helped dramatically improve the lives of over 3000 Malawians by providing prosthetic limbs. An assessment was carried out of their current IT issues that included:

- Missing share between Reception and Manager's PC
- All printing issues affecting, Manager's, Reception's and Workshop Area
- Workshop PC replacement
- Scanner issue
- Antivirus installation and updates
- Back up and performance on Manager's PC

Maria and Ashley resolved all of the above issues. Maria arranged a meeting with Eric Chongwe to carry out the set up of the new lab. Unfortunately the location was used by auditors and was not available. The current lab was re-designed to accommodate 12 extra computers that would allow over 24 people to be trained at a time. To achieve this two people would be sharing a PC.

IT equipment was delivered to the College of Health Sciences where we met Dr Masache, the Director. Interdenominational Pastoral Care Centre(IPCC) was visited

in the afternoon where they met father Silvester Kachinje. IT equipment was installed and 3 boxes of clothes delivered. One of the current roles carried out by the IPCC was to provide training to support workers to assist people diagnosed with HIV.

The team returned to their hotel late in the evening to get some sleep before their next day which was full of project work.

Day seven Saturday

Work started at 9:00am, where the team visited the City Council. The following tasks were carried out:

- Asset management
- Setting up a training room with 16 PCs in the Committee room at the Civic as Wenela has power cuts which could compromise training. Teachers will be attending training courses and will gain knowledge of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Advance Word, Excel and Powerpoint training sessions are now planned in, including sessions on the internet.
- Repairs were carried out on the remaining faulty PCs
- IT equipment was boxed for the 5 remaining schools, Kamuzu Central Hospital, 500 Miles and the IPCC
- Installed hard drives into the 2 external back up devices; these were handed to Mirriam of the City Council.
- Room was cleared and made ready for training.



Training!

The team finished at 6pm and looked forward to a day off on the Sunday.....

Day eight Sunday

Day off, but Ashley and Sammy travelled to Dedza.

Day nine Monday

Lilongwe Team – Maria and Robert

Again it was an early start for the team who visited the City Council and picked up computer equipment for each of the following schools; Mlodza, Lilongwe LEA, Nankhaka, Bini LEA and Kukul. Nankhaka and Bini LEA are two new schools while the other ones were replacing existing broken equipment. Bini was not completed due to the room not being fit for purpose (power points were blocked by timber and shelving).

Next it was off to Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) Complex where the team visited the KCH computer lab, the surgical library and 500 Miles Prosthetics Clinic. The surgical library requires additional equipment after 4 monitors and 3 PCs were faulty. The Prosthetics Clinic required several tasks as a result of a PC failure including data transfers, share set up, hardware installation, scanning, printing and internet set up. We returned to the Civic to test printers and finalise the training suite.

Dedza Team – Ashley and Sammy

We went to the BOMA building where they met Gloria the IT manager. It was verified that all boxes of IT equipment had been transported to Dedza from Lilongwe. Gloria requested that the first of the PCs was to be installed in the Prison followed by the Secretariat.

PCs were then installed in the following locations:

- The Electoral Office, where Mr Mapando informed them that the next election will take place on the 20th May 2014. Dedza has a population of between 400,000 and 500,000.
- Dedza District Intelligence Office, where they are responsible for the security within Dedza.
- Community Development office, where Mr Gama said that they deal with issues relating to adult literacy, community mobilization, economic empowerment and gender issues.
- Social Welfare office, where Maria and Robert met Rev Dr Kachale. His department is part of the social work section, which deals with family welfare, probation of young offenders and early child development. One of his requests was for play material for their early child development program.
- Director of Planning and Development.
- The Dedza Labour office, where Mr Nyirenda informed us that according to national statistics Dedza currently has 19% unemployment, this covers all ages between 15 to 69. He said that in Malawi a person is eligible to work from the age of 15. If working between the ages of 15 to 18 special restrictions are in place to ensure that young children are not exploited.
- Mpalae CDSS (School), where Travis Craddock was introduced who is a member of the American Peace Corp. Travis has been volunteering in Malawi for 18 months and plans on remaining for a further year. He teaches science, maths and English at the school. The village currently has no mains electricity and their only source of power is from a solar panel. This is the first IT equipment the school has had.
- Centre for Children's Aid, - Mr Nalicole was there who explained that his department fights for the rights of children who have been abused.

Day ten Tuesday

Lilongwe Team – Maria and Robert

Maria and Robert visited the City Council where teacher training was taking place. Faulty equipment was tested prior to the course starting. The training started at 8:30am and 18 teachers attended. The initial number was supposed to be 14 and 3 computers had to be shared. PowerPoint and Internet training was carried out.

There was also a site visit to Kufulu LEA school to install additional equipment and do a site check. Computer equipment was finally installed at Bini and a second visit was done to Lilongwe LEA to replace faulty equipment identified on the previous site visit. A follow up courtesy visit to the Prosthetics Clinic to confirm all was well due to the amount of work carried out the previous day. There were no outstanding issues. Server training was given to Dalitso in order to further support their current infrastructure. After all training was completed the printers were tested and prepared for site delivery. We finished work at 6:00pm.

Dedza Team – Sammy and Ashley

It had been agreed with Gloria that the team would be collected from their accommodation at the Pottery at 9:00am, unfortunately this did not happen. After many phone calls to Gloria, we finally decided to walk to BOMA which involved walking for approximately an hour along the rugged roadside. Luckily one of the Dedza City Council vehicles stopped and transported us the remaining distance to



Teachers being trained

BOMA. Roman the driver apologised for the lack of transport available and informed us that he would make the DC (District Commissioner) aware of the situation when she returns from her holiday next week. Once at BOMA the required equipment was loaded into the vehicle. Sammy and Gloria were dropped at the Training Centre where they started to carry out the necessary repairs on the faulty equipment. The majority of the equipment repaired had been donated by GCC and ACCESS in previous years, and some had been donated by Norwich City Council. Ashley proceeded to carry out an installation at the Bembeke Extension Planning Area office. He was introduced to Mrs Chigwenembe who informed him that her office deals with over 20,000 farming families, coordinating all agricultural activities throughout the Dedeza District. Once the installation was completed Ashley returned to the Training Centre to assist with IT equipment repairs. Once all repairs were completed both Sammy and Ashley returned to BOMA to record the asset details of the remaining IT equipment. Gloria would be installing this equipment at a later date. Some of this equipment is bound for other local Districts. Three boxes were filled with donated clothing that had been used as packing material during the transportation of the IT equipment. Travis Craddock of the Peace Corp was contacted, who agreed to have the clothing collected and distributed throughout the village, where he is volunteering.

Day eleven Wednesday

Lilongwe Team – Maria and Robert

Work commenced early, at 7:30am and they visited the City Council where the teacher training continued. Twenty one teachers attended this session. Further internet training took place followed by Word.

Printer issues were resolved at the following locations:

- Kufulu LEA School.
- IPCC
- Lilongwe LEA School

Server support was carried out at the Civic (guidance on permissions, security and group policy). All remaining printers were tested and were ready to be allocated.

Dedza Team – Sammy and Ashley

They went to BOMA to collect computer spare parts and then went to the Dedza Town assembly training room where they met Gloria. Gloria had additional faulty PCs that required to be repaired. They demonstrated how to re-image a PC, to fit a motherboard and other components. Travis from the Peace Core turned up and collected the boxes of clothes for the village. Finally they investigated a Comms issue between BOMA and the Town Assembly but were unable to resolve this.



Dalitso working away

It was time for Sammy and Ashley to return to Lilongwe where they met Maria and Robert at the Civic. They identified the kit required for technical training on the Thursday and Friday. Robert and Ashley stripped and prepared the equipment. Sammy and Dalitso went to the new clinic where they installed trunking, cabling and backboxes for the Comms installation.

Day twelve Thursday

The team went to City Council where the teacher training continued with eighteen teachers attending. Word training was carried out while Ashley worked at the building

site, painting until lunch time. Robert and Sammy carried out technical training where two gentleman attended from Dzaleka Refugee camp and two from the Civic. Robert continued the technical training in the afternoon while Sammy and Ashley visited the new clinic to complete the Comms installation (trunking, cabling and back boxes). They then returned to the Civic where Mirriam agreed to start work at the new clinic the following day, to terminate the network cables.

Day thirteen Friday

Ashley and Maria started reported to the new clinic at 7.30am where they assisted in painting the remaining rooms and corridor. Ashley and Dalitso installed additional network cables to facilitate network printing. Robert and Sammy ran an Introduction to Computers day for school children at the Civic. This was attended by 6 local pupils ranging in age from 11 to 18 and they were assisted by Robert Banda who works at Wenela Training Centre. The pupil who was 18 had never used a computer before. The pupils assisted in rebuilding a stripped down computer, installed a network printer driver and printed a small word document which they had created. Each pupil spent 10 minutes on the internet supervised by Robert Banda. The training was well received by all pupils who were appreciative for the opportunity to attend and each pupil received an ACCESS certificate for attending which was created before the trip. IT equipment was boxed at the request of Brian Kelly for collection from the Civic over the next week. After lunch the necessary IT equipment was transported to the new clinic for installation. The I.T. team assisted the building team with cleaning, painting and assembling furniture. Dalitso continued to terminate and test the Comms cables. The building team kindly



Pupils with their ACCESS Certificates

donated tools and a battery drill which will be stored at the Civic for use on future projects.

Day fourteen Saturday

On the last day of work the team got a lie in and didn't start work until 9:00am. The team split in two, Maria and Ashley went to the new clinic to test and complete the install of the IT equipment. Dalitso was also there to test the Comms. Sammy and Robert went to the Civic to complete final tasks on tablets, clear the room and complete the final inventory of remaining kit.

Day fifteen Sunday

Sammy, Maria, Ashley and Robert checked out at 10:00am and were picked up at 11:30am to go to the airport. The team finally waved a good bye to Malawi at 1:15pm, bound for Johannesburg. The trip back was pretty uneventful, compared to their outbound flights and hotel debacle, with them arriving back to Glasgow by 8.30am on the Monday.



Kids waving goodbye