

Building Educational Foundations through Innovation & Technology (BEFIT) Malawi Scale-Up Program Overview

“We hope that more partners will walk with us on this transformative journey to build strong educational foundations.”

Hon. Agnes Nyalonje
Malawi Minister of Education

Challenge

Since the introduction of free primary education in 1994, the Government of Malawi 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, shortage of trained teachers, and high student-to-teacher ratios. As a result, only 10% of children achieve reading proficiency by the age of 10.

Opportunity

Through **BEFIT**, the Government of Malawi is committing to improve the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of all learners in standards 1–4. BEFIT is massively scalable, evidence-based, and will serve 3.5 million children across 5,770 public primary schools. This ground-breaking program will be led by the government and supported by a consortium of partners including Imagine Worldwide, onebillion, VSO and other local implementing organizations. **Post implementation phase, the program will be fully sustained by the government, operationally and financially.**

This model has already been successfully implemented in over 250 schools across Malawi since 2014, serving 225,000 children via the Unlocking Talent program.



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 \$6-\$8 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
Percentage Served	10%	25%	45%	75%	90%	100%
Cumulative Schools	577	1443	2597	4040	5194	5771
Cumulative Learners	344,619	861,547	1,550,785	2,412,332	3,101,570	3,446,189

Program Coordination

A consortium made up of Imagine Worldwide, VSO, onebillion, and other organizations will work together to ensure success of the government's scale plan. A Malawian-staffed subsidiary dedicated to **BEFIT** has been named the exclusive distributor of the onebillion software and will offer it royalty-free in perpetuity for use in the Malawi scale program.

Robust Evidence

Multiple rigorous studies in Malawi have shown positive and meaningful learning impacts in literacy and numeracy. Children's excitement about school, attendance, and confidence as learners also improved. Recent results from Imagine's two-year randomized control trial (RCT) show:

4.2 months

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

72%

attained emergent or fluent mathematics status

50%

more children advanced on national literacy benchmarks

gender parity

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

The consortium is raising capital to fund the first two phases comprising 1,500 schools serving 850,000 learners per year.

\$18.5mm out of \$45mm for Phases 1+2 has been secured.

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

Sustainable Approach

Government Owned

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

Strengthens Local Capacity and Infrastructure

A hybrid digital/in-person training model will ensure that educators in every district, zone, and school level are successfully trained on the intervention. Program infrastructure, such as solar charging systems, have an extended lifespan and will utilize local capacity for maintenance, benefitting children, communities, and the Malawian education system for decades.

Attractive Unit-level and Ongoing Costs

The proposed implementation model costs \$6-\$8 USD per child per year to provide a program proven to improve educational outcomes significantly. Costs are expected to decline over time as lessons are learned and economies of scale are realized.