Project Malawi 2018 Initiative

In 2017, a team from the School of Computer Science ran a pilot project to take staff, students and teachers to Central Africa to teach in schools. In 2018, a full team, including members from the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, was assembled to visit Malawi over a longer period (five weeks). Malawi has an impoverished education system with little, or no, opportunity for children to learn about computing and technological subjects. In this visit, we transported advanced technologies to Malawi, including programmable vehicles, robots and aerial drones. The team taught in both Primary and Secondary schools in northern Malawi, taking children from not having seen a computer, to writing programs to control these various devices. The team also delivered courses to Malawian teachers, and donated the equipment, aiming to establish a lasting impact. In addition, we made special efforts to address the gender imbalance by including girls’ schools in our outreach. Few girls in Malawi engage in Secondary education, and women are not encouraged in technological subjects. The response from all children and teachers was enthusiastic and Project Malawi 2018 was a great success, undertaken in very difficult circumstances in a remote area of the world. The Project was part-funded by the Faculty of Science and Engineering’s Social Responsibility funding and the School of Computer Science.

How the Project Malawi Team has made a difference

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. The quality of the education in a country is a major factor in its prosperity. Project Malawi 2018 is the first time that the university has achieved a full educational programme in computing in northern Malawi, teaching not only schoolchildren but, more importantly, schoolteachers. Schoolchildren ended the course being able to program a range of devices. Teachers in Malawi received training, classroom materials and equipment that now enables them to teach computing themselves. The experience of teaching in Africa was transformative for many members of the team from The University of Manchester.

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