



## Malawi Teachers Use Rainbows to Get Results



Photo: IEQ/Staff

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Following the declaration of free primary education in 1994, more than 1.2 million additional children in Malawi began attending school. Many girls, traditionally excluded from education opportunities, also now attend school due in part to a USAID-supported campaign in the 1990's. As a result of the new influx of children seeking education, the system became ill-equipped to meet these growing needs. Teachers typically have three months or less of training, and face class sizes of 50-70 students or more.

USAID is responding to this problem by focusing its programs on improving the quality of education, especially through teacher training. In 2002, USAID and the Malawi government launched an innovative, locally developed teacher-training program, affectionately called 'Rainbows and Coconuts.' The pilot program trained more than 100 teachers and administrators in twenty-one public schools to apply effective methods of assessment that promote learning. Teachers developed friendly, individualized assessments tools such as the rainbow chart, a brightly-colored display used to track and record each student's progress.

The Rainbows and Coconuts program showed immediate gains in students' scores, as well as increased interest of both teachers and students in school. Students in the pilot program gained 54% in their reading scores during one school term, compared to only a 19% gain of a comparison group. Now, as a result of the success, teacher-training colleges use continuous assessments tools, and the methodology is now included in the nation's new curriculum for primary schools.

Photo & Caption

