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The MTPDS Monthly Newsletter

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) is a 3 year USAID funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum.

May 2011 Issue

Standard 2 textbook review begins at Malawi Institute of Education.



Literacy writers' panel in session at MIE

To improve the quality of teaching and learning materials that are available to learners, MTPDS continues to support the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) with the revision of the National Primary Curriculum materials. From 17th to 27th May 2011, the MoEST through the Malawi Institute of Education organized a two-week workshop to review the

Standard 2 materials at MIE in Domasi. Participants comprised of MIE curriculum specialists, lecturers from Teacher Training Colleges, Domasi College of Education and Chancellor College and Standard 2 teachers from various primary schools.

The Director for MIE Dr. William Susuwele Banda opened the workshop. In his opening remarks, he thanked the participants for responding to the invitation. He reminded participants that the Standard 1 materials were reviewed from 4th to 21st April. He encouraged the practicing primary school teachers to be forthcoming in their contributions as they will be the end users of the materials.

He asked all participants to critically discuss the research findings during their work. He thanked the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support and CIDA for co-funding the process and asked them to continue supporting it. The next step will be to



Illustrations for Literacy learner's books for Standard 2

refine both the Standard 1 and 2 materials. This will begin when illustrators have completed the illustrations in the 14 textbooks.

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MTPDS continues to support MoEST and MIE with the revision of lower primary teaching and learning materials.

Continuous



Primary school teachers at a numeracy cluster training

The last week of May saw the finalization of Numeracy module 1 cluster trainings that started on 22nd April 2011. Prior to the cluster trainings, 950 facilitators were trained, who included Primary Education Advisers and Key teachers (a minimum of 2 from each zone). Each district in the country received training materials for all teachers in the 1444 clusters where trainings took place.

Teachers have found the ideas included in the numeracy modules very helpful. They confirm that the training has enlightened them about things such as how to use the Spike abacus, the use of games in teaching mathematics, and how to introduce numbers by modeling their

meanings using basic local resources. Many of the teachers also said that CPD training has allowed them to learn new ideas from fellow teachers. Such information came out from the monitoring activities that were done by MTPDS team comprising of the Teacher Training Specialists, and the six Divisional Teacher Training Coordinators. A few facilitators needed support in carrying out their duties because some concepts in the module challenged them. Hence, the CPD brought growth to both facilitators and teachers alike.

Teacher appreciate CPD and the majority recommended that it should be an increase in the future. Such interest is reflected in their attendance which was almost 100% in rural areas and above 95 % in Urban areas for trainings done during week-ends. Reported cases of absenteeism were due to spiritual reasons, funerals and sickness of teachers or their relations. About 29000 Standard 1-4 teachers across the country were trained.

Meanwhile, preparations are underway to finalize Life skills Module 1 and Literacy Module 2 and Leadership Module 3. Literacy and Leadership modules will be conducted in the long school holidays, just before schools begin. This arrangement will ensure that all teachers can use knowledge gained from CPD right from the beginning of the term. That way, it

CPD training has enlightened us on how we can effectively use the spike abacus in teaching numeracy

will be possible to monitor how such knowledge impacts learning in the classrooms.



Female teachers attending a numeracy cluster training

ICT Pilot for Open and Distance Learning students



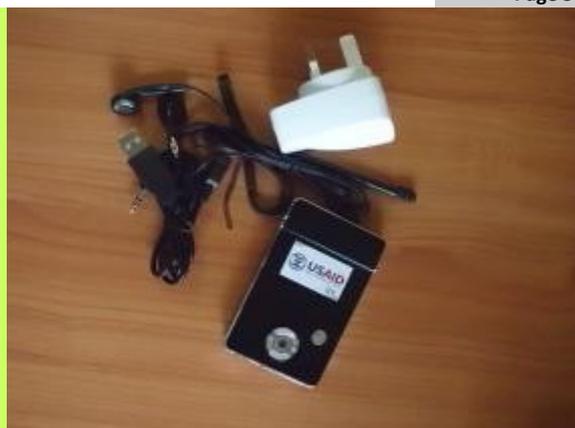
Ms. Mzama helping an ODL teacher student

Between May 12 and 13, 2011, the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) team followed up on the ICT pilot in Waliranji, Ludzi and Kamwendo Zones in Mchinji district. The team was composed of Ms. Mzama of Lilongwe Teacher Training College and Mr. Polepole of MTPDS. Twenty-three learners out of 26 were visited. It was encouraging to note that most learners were on track in the use of the MP3 players. Ms. Mzama took time to deal with academic issues and also managed to talk to Head teachers regarding use of these gadgets by the learners. She commented that these ‘teachers’ are learners and as such it is important for us and school management to support them so that they can excel in their studies. She

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remarked that if these learners fail, then we would lose valuable teachers and therefore the help that these 'teachers' are providing would also be lost.

MTPDS is piloting the use of MP3 players (illustrated here) to deliver learning content to ODL students in the field. This pilot has been spearheaded by MTPDS working with teacher students from Lilongwe TTC and St. Joseph TTC in Bembeke, Dedza district. The pilot was commenced on 18th April by Matthew Finholt-Daniel an IT Consultant from Seward Inc.

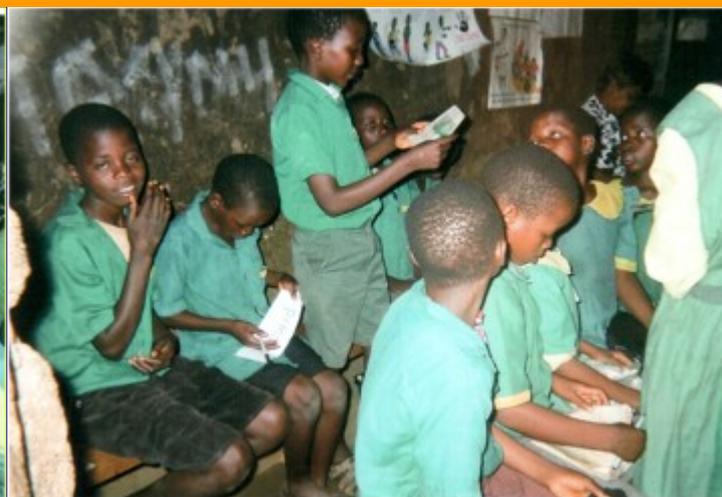


One of the MP3 players being used by ODL student teachers

Success never comes late for Madziabango Primary School.



Madziabango learners with their teacher Veronica Mithi during a literacy lesson.



Standard 4 learners at Madziabango Primary School in Blantyre during a literacy lesson.

Teaching and learning literacy had been a problem to both teachers and learners of Madziabango Primary School in Blantyre Rural district. It had not been easy for Veronica Mithi, who teaches standard 4. After the introduction of PCAR some 5 years ago, she still had problems in teaching English and Chichewa su. She often used teacher-centred methods; hardly used teaching and learning resources and had difficulties in writing lesson plans. This led to many learners to have difficulties in reading fluently which resulted in high absenteeism and drop-out rate.

Towards the end of 2010, MTPDS funded by USAID, brought a sigh of relief to Madziabango School with its CPD trainings in literacy at cluster level, where Standard 1 to 4 teachers shared ideas and experiences on how literacy lessons can effectively be delivered in addition to PCAR strategies.

Veronica started practicing the skills she learnt in her class, such as participatory methods; having a print-rich environment; adequate lesson preparation and planning; providing daily home-study and introducing a reading club every Wednesday afternoon. Veronica is now able to offer remedial work to her learners, use group leaders to support slow learners, and has greatly improved on the use of TALULAR (Teaching And Learning Using Locally Available Resources). This has positively improved the performance of learners in her classroom. Regular visits by the Primary Education Advisor and the Head teacher also provide support. Learners in her class are able to read fluently and have developed a reading culture.

Plans are underway for the school to have a literacy fair before the end of 2011, where parents and members of the community would be able to appreciate the successes their children have achieved in literacy subjects.

Salima and Ntchisi SMC/PTAs sensitized about the Literacy Intervention pilot



Members of SMC/PTA at Yambe Primary School during the sensitization meeting

Members of the School Management Committee and Parents and Teachers Association from Salima and Ntchisi districts were sensitized about the literacy intervention pilot taking place in all schools. When Martha Myava, District Literacy Coordinator for MTPDS visited some schools in Salima, she noted that there was high absenteeism rates especially at Yambe Zone. Learners from these schools were missing out a lot on the pilot literacy lessons being taught in their schools. This called for an intervention to

sensitize the parents and outline their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that absenteeism was lowered. The Head teacher of Yambe Primary School Mr. Telex Mazenga asked parents to make sure that their children are attending classes every day by checking learner's notebooks. Parents were also asked to help schools by bringing old newspapers and books to be used in opening small libraries and book clubs. SMC and PTA members also pledged support by providing basic teaching and learning resources. Eluby Foster who is the Vice Chairperson for PTA at Domira Bay Primary School promised that together with members from her committee, they would monitor report cards for their children and would also observe literacy lessons regularly. Foster praised MTPDS for the intervention because it has helped some slow learners know how to read and write. A lot of learners are now able to write their names by third term of Standard 1.



A STD1 pupil at Yambe Primary school is now able to write 'amay' thanks to the intervention

Events Calendar

Ongoing Activities

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- Nationwide monitoring of implementation of Numeracy CPD (Ongoing throughout June)

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

- Finalize preparations for the launch of SMS pilot in 3 Teacher Training Colleges.

Early Grade Reading and Mathematics

- Monitoring and supporting SMS/PTA sensitization meetings in Salima and Ntchisi

Planned Events

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- From 2nd July– Rolling out of leadership Module 2.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

- 6-10 June—Evaluation of CPD MP3 pilot in Waliranji, Kamwendo and Ludzi zones.
- 20-21 June—Training of Teacher Training College Desk Officers on data management and handover of computers.

Early Grade Reading and Mathematics (EGRA/EGMA)

- 7-8 June—Video shooting of literacy trial lessons at Kambwiri and Chimweta Primary Schools in Salima.

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Useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/cpd-manuals>