



## USAID Funded MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

**Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3 year USAID funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum. MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward, Inc, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology**

### USAID celebrates International Day of Literacy in Lilongwe



*Demonstration CPD training session by MTPDS*

Learning to read is fundamental for success in school and life. Yet in Malawi and many other developing countries, too few students are learning to read during the critical first years of school. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 all USAID-funded education projects jointly celebrated World Literacy Day at Lilongwe TTC Demonstration Primary School.

The event was attended by the Public Affairs Officer at the United States Embassy, Mr. Ben Canavan and the Principal Secretary for Education Science and Technology, Dr Simeon Hau. The Guests of Honor began by

visiting pavilions displayed by the **USAID funded MTPDS program**, Tikwere IRI, Read Malawi and the Education Unit at US Embassy. Guests also visited Standard 1 classrooms where they observed demonstration lessons conducted by Tikwere and Read Malawi. During the lesson conducted by Tikwere both teacher and learners enthusiastically engaged with a high quality radio broadcast which conveyed key early literacy skills in a way that makes learning fun and appealing. In a second lesson learners demonstrated their independent reading abilities using supplementary readers produced by Read Malawi. The **USAID funded MTPDS program** showcased a literacy Continuous Professional Development (CPD) teacher-training session during which teachers shared ideas on techniques to make learning literacy more effective and engaging for learners.

Mr. Canavan thanked all the USAID funded education programs for contributing to the event. He affirmed that the US government is committed to supporting improved education standards and that there is an unambiguous link between education and economic development. He also quoted President Barack Obama in saying "Education and innovation are the currency of the 21st Century". Mr. Canavan emphasized the commitment of MTPDS, Tikwere, and Read Malawi in working together to support the 3.6 million Malawian learners and to improve their literacy levels.

Dr Simeon Hau emphasized said that the government is targeting continued effort in ensuring that the illiteracy rate is reduced from 36% to 15% by 2015. The Ministry's expectation is that a targeted focus on reading in the early grades will help eradicate illiteracy in society, making change from the bottom up. Dr. Hau thanked the US government for their continued support in early grade education.



*US Embassy, USAID, MoEST officials observe a literacy demonstration lesson by Read Malawi.*

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**"Education and innovation are the currency of the 21st century"**  
*Barack Obama*

## Continuous Professional Development Update



*Training of facilitators for Leadership 2 at Chankhanga TDC in Kasungu*

During September, the **USAID-funded MTPDS program** completed the roll-out of the second Leadership CPD module to more than 10,000 head teachers and deputies nationwide. MTPDS would like to thank all the trainers for their excellent work and ongoing commitment.

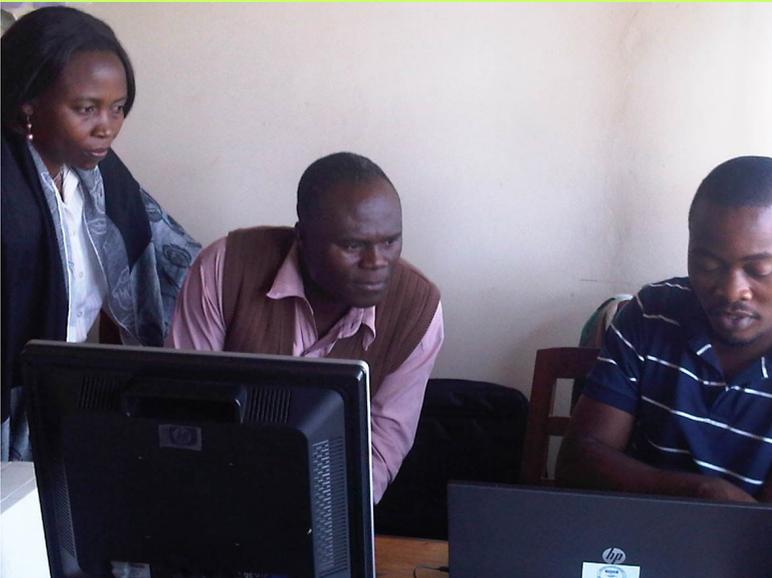
During September, the **USAID Funded MTPDS Program** team also worked in collaboration with MoEST specialists to refine two CPD modules (Literacy module 2 and Leadership module 3). The CPD will be delivered country-wide during the 2nd half of October and November by the **USAID Funded MTPDS Program** in collaboration with MoEST Officials. The forthcoming Literacy module 2 will further assist standard 1-4 teachers to lay a solid foundation for introduction of activity-based learning. In addition to strengthening the basic

literacy skills the module will be packaged into two Units of Chichewa and two units of English, respectively: Mutu 1: Kuphunzitsa malembo, maliwu ndi maphatikizo mopatsa chidwi, Kuyesa maluso a kayankhula, kumvetsera, kuwerenga ndi kulemba, (c) Unit 1: Enhancing reading skills and (d) Unit 2: improving learners' reading fluency.

The value of continuous assessment to the PCAR curriculum cannot be overstated. It is central and foundational. However, many teachers still face difficulties in implementing ongoing assessment with learners. This module will familiarize teachers with techniques for assessing important literacy skills which can be transferred to other learning areas. It incorporates techniques developed through the literacy intervention MTPDS is currently piloting in Ntchisi and Salima which uses assessment as a tool for improving literacy instruction.

The forthcoming leadership 3 module will focus on promoting gender equality in schools and promoting community participation in support of learning. It is critical that all schools address both issues if they are to foster an environment in which children can flourish as active learners.

## Enhancing support for ODL students through SMS and database systems



*ODL Desk Officers at Kasungu Teacher's Training College being trained*

The **USAID funded MTPDS program** aims to enhance the quality of support received by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students in the field through the application of innovative technologies.

To enhance the management of student data, in July **USAID Funded MTPDS program** installed a new database system for each Teacher Training College (TTC). Since the database was installed all ODL Desk Officers have used the system to crosscheck information on ODL learners. Now there is a second cohort of over 6,000 ODS students and the Department for Teacher Education and Development (DTED) has uploaded the details of all students into the system for use by the Desk Officers.

Building upon this database system, **USAID Funded MTPDS program** is developing an SMS text messaging system to radically improve two-way communication between desk officers and ODL students in the field. It will enable colleges to communicate information, including teaching tips, assignments marks, and dates of important events. In turn, students will be able to respond

and communicate queries directly to their tutors.

During September, the Divisional Team Leader and the Senior IT Specialist visited five out of six TTCs to update the database and install frontline SMS client software. The Senior IT Specialist trained the ODL Desk Officer and their deputies (in some TTCs) on how to access internet and how to use **USAID Funded MTPDS program** website. Training was also conducted on how to enter phone numbers into the system and how to organize files. The functioning of the text message system was also demonstrated.

At the end of the session, Desk Officers were required to enter phone numbers for all ODL learners and their lecturers into the system so that they can start broadcasting messages. The Desk Officer welcomed the SMS system and commented positively on its user-friendliness.

## Voices from the field: A flying start in literacy for Standard 1 learners



Mary Ndilowe in action under the trees

In our August newsletter we reported that all 870 Standard 1 teachers in Salima and Ntchisi had been trained in literacy teaching methods during August by the **USAID-Funded MTPDS Program**. They had also been provided with a complete set of lesson plans for term 1 and sufficient copies of the 'Nditha Kuwerenga' reader for each child. On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September a field trip to Salima District was conducted to follow up on implementation at school level. **USAID Funded MTPDS program's** charismatic District Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator (DLNC), Martha Myava, toured two schools with the visitors to show where she has been coaching teachers and monitoring progress. What I witnessed was remarkable and unprecedented.

At Chigombe School almost 300 Standard 1 learners were seated on the ground under the trees. A well-structured and engaging lesson led by Mary Ndilowe was conducted with varied and well-paced activities. Learners correctly identified the sounds of letters and matched letter sounds with their shapes. They also practiced tracing the shape of letters and built the letters into syllables and short words. The children answered some of the questions through 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs

down' hand signals which they clearly enjoyed and this helped to keep all learners participating actively. There was visible excitement when it was time to use the readers. Books belong in the hands of children, yet for many of these children, handling books it is still a new and welcome pleasure.

Much has been said about the difficulties faced by Malawian children in learning to read. In Salima, after little more than 2 weeks of schooling at the beginning of Standard 1, there was already real evidence of progress. Children were now recognizing letters and building them into short words. They were clearly making a "flying start" in reading.



Thumbs up for literacy

During a subsequent visit at Senga Bay school, another excellent lesson was given by Annie Mlaleya with all 60 learners in Standard 1A. They were seated on the floor of a dusty classroom where it had become both hot and windy. Nevertheless, the learners sustained their engagement in a series of varied literacy activities for a full hour. These children beamed proudly when the readers were disseminated. Learners proudly wore their names tags to help teachers and other children learn their names at the beginning of the new school year. Visiting colleague Melinda Taylor identified a beautiful moment of active learning –one which might be termed a 'Eureka moment'. As the children were practicing writing the letters 'a' and 'n, one child's face suddenly lit up. Her name was Hanna

and this was the moment when she recognized that the letters that she was practicing made up part of her name. They belonged to her.

Through **USAID-funded MTPDS program**, teachers are being equipped with a clear model for early literacy teaching, which is appropriate and effective, even in the very-challenging circumstances found in most government primary schools. Learners are being equipped with skills to decode words and unlock boundless possibilities of knowledge.

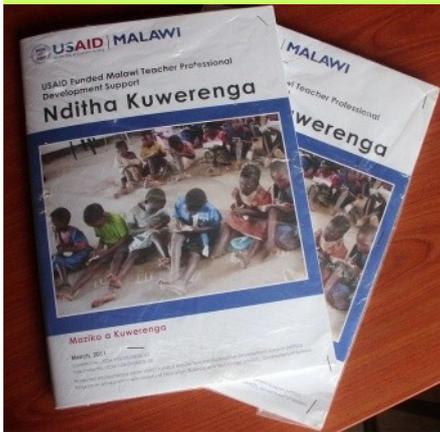


Books belong in children's hands



Eureka! A child recognizes letters that make up part of her name

## SMC/PTA sensitization meetings motivate community support for education



Parents can help learners to cover their books

School Management Committee and Parents Teacher Association meetings in Salima and Ntchisi districts organized by **USAID-funded MTPDS program** have helped promote good educational practices. During the meetings, parents and teachers are sensitized on the importance of supporting their schools, and encouraged to take action, for example by providing locally available teaching and learning resources and providing their Standard 1 children with name tags.

Yohane Kanyenda the Head-teacher at Matenje Primary School in Salima who attended some sensitization meetings expressed his happiness at the support his school is getting from community members. "I held a meeting with parents to ask them to support us by covering learner's books with plastic and producing name cards for their Standard 1 children. The response we got as a school is "overwhelming." He further noted the name cards have enabled the learners to recognize letters more quickly than previously expected of Standard 1 learners who have been in school for only three weeks. Many parents covered their children's textbooks and notebooks which has greatly enhanced their durability.



A learner with a name card

## Events Calendar for October 2011

### **Ongoing USAID funded MTPDS Program Activities** **Teacher Education Policy Support**

- Supporting NSTED implementation

### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- Printing of Literacy 2 and Leadership 3 modules
- Refining Numeracy Module 2

### **Open and Distance Learning (ODL)**

- Planning launch of the SMS pilot for ODL students.

### **Early Grade Reading and Mathematics**

- Working with MoEST to develop literacy strategy

### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

- Reviewing material for supplementary readers

### **PCAR Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Finalize PCAR M&E Strategy document

### **Planned Events under the USAID funded MTPDS Program**

#### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- **20 Oct-onwards:** Rolling out of Literacy 2 and Leadership 3

#### **Open and Distance Learning (ODL)**

- **3-7 Oct:** Install system software for SMS intervention at Karonga TTC
- **10-14 Oct:** Broadcasting messages to learners.

#### **Early Grade Reading and Mathematics**

- **26-27 Oct:** Proposed dates of EGRA/EGMA Technical Review Coordinating Committee meeting
- **18-25 Oct: Training of enumerators and their supervisors**
- **31 Oct-11 Nov:** EGRA/EGMA data collection in 6 divisions

**Editor's Corner:** The USAID funded MTPDS newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements, and success stories from the field. We are inviting readers to send their comments, contributions and questions or tips for teacher professional development.

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