



Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support

The 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 (MoEST)

EGRA 2011 data collection successfully completed nationwide

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is the centerpiece of the MTPDS program’s strategy for improving literacy skills. In November 2010, 1000 randomly selected standard 2 and 4 learners nationwide were tested for their reading ability. Now, a year later, MTPDS has returned to the field to follow up on learner achievement. This year a total of 3,000 learners from a 150 schools, 25 from each division, were assessed. 20 learners per school were randomly selected, 10 from Std. 2 and 10 from Std. 4, with 5 girls and 5 boys in each class. The sample will allow the comparison of reading skills by standard, gender, division, and urban versus rural. The results will inform MTPDS intervention and MoEST policy on early literacy and teacher education. Results will also show whether there has been improvement since the baseline in 2010.



Primary Education Advisor collecting data in Machinga.

The exercise served to build the capacity of MoEST in preparation for the continued implementation of EGRA beyond the project’s end in 2013. Data was collected by 24 enumerators, comprised of 21 Primary Education Advisers (PEAs) and 3 Teacher Training College (TTC) lecturers. The 12 MoEST officers who supervised the exercise were drawn from various bodies including DIAS, TTCs, MANEB, and Domasi College of Education. Learners were assessed on basic Chichewa literacy skills: letter naming, syllable segmentation, syllable reading, initial letter sound recognition, familiar word reading, non-familiar word reading, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. Learners were also asked for demographic information including: amenities in their homes, languages spoken at home, availability of reading materials, school attendance, whether they had attended pre-school and the education level of their parents.

The committed EGRA teams woke up at dawn each day to reach a school by 6.30am. They crossed rivers, scaled mountains and walked through forests to reach inaccessible schools. But teams overcame every challenge that was thrown in their path to successfully complete the exercise. All 150 sampled schools were visited, and all 3,000 sampled learners were assessed. The next steps are to enter, clean and verify the data, ready for analysis.

MTPDS would like to thank all those who participated nationwide.



A team hires a boat to reach Malambwe School, Phalombe

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“Learning has long been the neglected promise of Education for All. What we need is a renewed commitment to Learning for All”. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate writing in the foreword to ‘EGRA: Applications and Interventions to Improve Basic literacy (2011).

Continuous Professional Development Update: CPD goes school-based



A teacher demonstrates to colleagues during school-based CPD

November saw an increase in the intensity of school-based CPD activity in education divisions across the country. Several schools reported their plans to conduct school-based CPD sessions in order to conclude the first term's CPD action plans. Requests for observation visits came from Mbuka and Chioko Primary Schools in Lilongwe, and Police and Chikowi Primary Schools in Zomba. These exemplary schools wanted to display what they are doing to MoEST officials and MTPDS staff.

MTPDS officers visited Mbuka Primary School in Lilongwe Urban District on 25th November 2011. The head teacher had worked together with the school CPD mentor and consulted with staff to identify specific teaching issues to be addressed. These needs included: (i) improving the quality of teaching and learning materials made by teachers (ii) improving the ability of teachers to assist learners to associate words to pictures or

concrete objects when teaching reading (iii) optimizing the pace of delivery when teaching reading (iv) creating a positive atmosphere for learning.

The headteacher and CPD mentor approached the most skilled teachers, who were good at dealing with the identified issues, to act as resource persons. At the CPD event all 18 teachers came together to share strategies in the teaching of reading in English and Chichewa. 5 teachers demonstrated and modeled best-practice approaches in teaching early literacy. The classroom used for the meeting was exemplary in that it was print-rich; clad with teaching and learning resources. The walls glittered with print and word-trees, supplemented by concrete objects associated with names of objects.

When asked to talk about the impact of the recently-introduced MoEST policy to reduce teacher: pupil ratio to 1:60, teachers revealed that there are still problems in adhering to this ratio because of a shortage of both classrooms and numbers of teachers. Hence, some lower classes are still as big as 120 learners and instruction and marking remain a challenge. It was also noted that many of the teachers present in the CPD session are new to the lower classes and did not attend the first Literacy MTPDS CPD trainings at cluster level. The teachers who previously attended Literacy Module 1 need to share their knowledge with these newly allocated teachers.

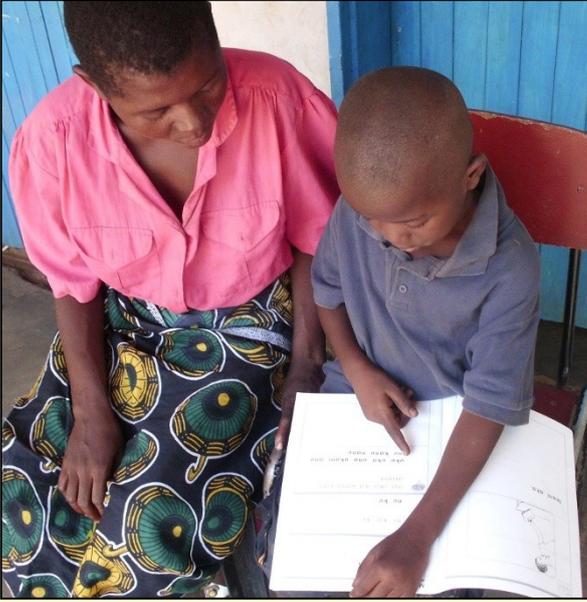
The teachers of Mbuka Primary School must be commended for their dedication professionalism and initiative in drafting and implementing their school-based CPD plan. This spirit of self-help is essential if progress is to be made where resources are in short supply.

The MTPDS staff who attended felt honored to witness these efforts. The teachers at Mbuka School are a shining example of how to implement the school-based CPD model, based on locally identified needs, as envisaged by MTPDS and laid out in Leadership Module 1.



...while colleagues observe attentively

Voices from the field: Six-year old impresses by reading in first term



Six-year old Chikondi reads aloud to his mother

Chikondi Samute (not real name) is a six-year old boy learning in Std. 1 at Msalura Primary School in Salima District. Within the first 4 weeks of this new school year, he made a lasting impression on his parents and teachers, as he quickly picked up reading skills and displayed those skills at home after school. No learner at Msalura School had ever learnt to read so quickly before, indeed many in the same school still struggle even in standard 4. How did this happen? Chikondi is surely a bright child, but that is not the whole story. Behind this story lies a successful team effort by educators and parents

After undergoing the MTPDS's CPD Leadership Module 1 training in 2010, the headteacher Mrs. Febie Chiumia led her school in a need-assessment activity.

The standard one class, which had 194 learners (102 boys and 92 girls) was split into three sections to make the teacher-pupil ratio more manageable. After the standard 1 teachers attended literacy CPD, the headteacher followed up to support implementation of training.

Parents were sensitized on the importance of early grade reading and on how they could support the school in its efforts to teach reading. The need for an extra hour of literacy instruction in the early grades was explained. Parents also initiated a number of activities. They helped children cover their copies of the *Nditha Kuwerenga* reader and helped to write name cards for their children to wear in school. They also agreed to take an interest in their children's reading at home.

This is where Chikondi Samute showed his brilliance. Chikondi's mother was surprised at what he could read and teach others when at home. She sought advice from the headteacher on how to support



Headteacher Mrs Febie Chiumia (second from left) explains to a visiting District Literacy Coordinator how she motivates her teachers

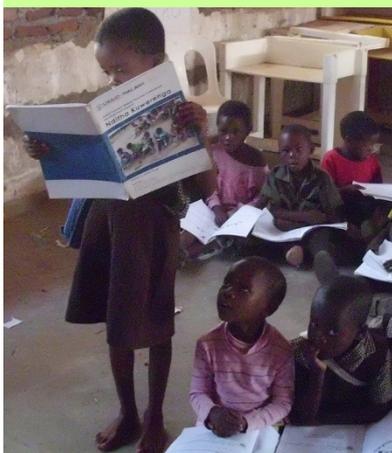
Chikondi with supplementary readers, to satisfy his growing appetite for books. Mrs Samute had no reading materials at home, so the school lent her some books for Chikondi to practice on.

This story illustrates what can be achieved when a headteacher, teachers and parents work together as a team.

Chikondi's amazing progress offers one small success story. But for him it is an enormous achievement that will make a huge difference for the rest of his life.

"Reading is the single most important skill in early education and provides a child with an opening to a world of knowledge and greater economic and developmental opportunities," Richard Whelden, Director of the USAID Office of Education (quoted in Frontlines, September/October 2011).

Nditha Kuwerenga—I Can Read



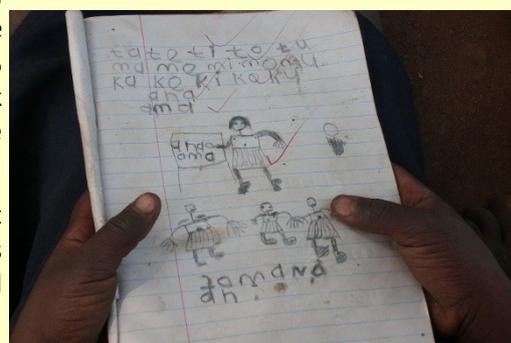
A Std. 1 learner able to read in the first term

When teachers at Buzi School, in Ntchisi put into practice the literacy intervention skills acquired during MTPDS trainings, the Std. 1 learners didn't take long to display achievements. They started recognizing letter sounds and letter names, identifying new words in a story, and could answer oral comprehension questions using the *Nditha Kuwerenga* reader. Mrs. Aullivier Mwale teaches Std 1 at Buzi FP School. She has 67 learners enrolled in her class (37 boys, 30 girls), but on the day she was observed, attendance was at 50 (24 boys, 26 girls).

Mrs Mwale had this to say: "When I compare the Std 1 learners I had last year, and the ones I have this year, without being biased, I would clearly say that I am a proud Std. 1 teacher this year. This is because as early as this first term, I have some learners in my class who can read. They can also write words from letter sounds produced by the teacher. This was not the case last year. This has been made possible because of the literacy skills training given to me by MTPDS Programme, which has enabled me to positively change the

Std. 1 achievement levels. I am sure that by the end of this school session 75% of the class will be able to read with good pacing. This is very good work MTPDS, keep it up! I am now enjoying my work as a Std 1 teacher because learners are doing what I, as a teacher, and as a parent expect them to do."

As USAID's new education strategy singles out reading as the most important skill for children to have, Malawian learners are benefitting from USAID's focus on literacy through MTPDS. USAID has set a target of 100 million primary school children worldwide to be able to read by 2015. The MTPDS program is contributing directly to realizing this target.



A Standard 1 learner able to write in the first term

Events Calendar for December 2011

Ongoing USAID funded MTPDS Program Activities

Early Grade Reading Assessment

- Clean, verify and enter data from national data collection exercise
- Support implementation of SMC/PTA action plans for the reading intervention programme

Enhanced Quality of Teaching and Learning Materials

- Work with MIE, DIAS and MANEB to finalize Continuous Assessment guidelines and criteria for literacy in standards 1-4.

PCAR Monitoring and Evaluation

- Work with DIAS on planning PCAR M&E training and implementation in schools
- Plan intervention to involve school management committees and PTAs in monitoring learner performance and teacher support.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- Print CPD Leadership Module 3 and prepare for its delivery

Planned Events under the USAID funded MTPDS Program

Teacher Education Policy Support

- December 6: Stakeholders meeting on roles and responsibilities of departments and institutions of MoEST involved in teacher education, professional development and management
- December 7: Extraordinary meeting of the Teacher Education Technical Working Group to present the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NSTED) policy framework and implementation guidelines

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- December 13-18: training of trainers for Leadership Module 3.
- December 19-22: training of facilitators for Leadership Module 3

Early Grade Reading Assessment

December 7-9: Literacy Fairs and Open Days in Salima and Ntchisi schools

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.

Please send your contributions to: The Editor, USAID-funded MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private Bag B481, Lilongwe. Tel: +265 1 794 977, Email: info@mtpds.rti.org Web: www.mtpds.org Useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>

Wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!