



# USAID | MALAWI

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## 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 (NPC). MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward Inc. in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

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"It is my first time to see a Standard 1 pupil reading with such precision and energy... The confidence showed that it was not staged. His teacher is doing a wonderful job." Dorothy Sinjani, Salima (*after her Standard 1 son demonstrated exceptional reading skills during a literacy fair, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2012*)

## Tribute to Dr. Absalom Phiri



*The late Dr Absalom Phiri*

IT is with great shock and sorrow that we announce the death of Dr. Absalom Phiri, who was Senior Teacher Education Advisor in the MTPDS Program. He was manager for the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) component. Dr Phiri died in a road accident near his home in Lilongwe on the morning of Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2012. MTPDS

mourns the untimely departure of a dear friend, inspiring educator and an amazing person who invested so much passion for life-long learning into development of the CPD program which is being implemented across the country. As the whole country benefited from his work, the whole country will feel his loss.

### Literacy Fairs: Taking Communities to the Classroom

ACHIEVEMENTS registered in early grades are often not accorded the recognition that they deserve. In the countryside, going to the field or gathering firewood for the next couple of days, would often be appreciated more by parents than a Standard 1 learner who has started reading a few

basic words. In Salima, literacy fairs are changing that. Literacy fairs that give opportunities to lower grade learners to demonstrate literacy skills are taking communities into the classroom to see for themselves. During the final week of the second term, schools benefiting

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## Teaching Literacy Made Simple, Interactive and Engaging



*Mrs Seda during an afternoon class at Makhanda Primary School*

38-YEAR-OLD Pamela Seda has spent the last 12 years teaching at rural schools. Mrs Seda has always stood before a class of more than 60 learners. For the last 4 years, she has been teaching in Standard 1 at Makhanda Primary School in Ntchisi, about 200 kilometers north of Lilongwe. She recounts the four years as a period of fair success in teaching literacy. She reports that only 10 out of every 50 pupils could read basic Chichewa sentences after three terms.

According to her, learners found academic content totally different from what they experience at homes.

However, a story of hope is unfolding due to USAID-funded Teacher Professional Development Support intervention targeting lower classroom teachers.

According to Mrs Seda, who is one of five teachers in the lower classes at

Makhanda Primary School, the literacy intervention is completing a gap that was left for her in the teacher training at Kasungu TTC twelve years ago. “The intervention is opening our eyes that attaining literacy is a change that starts slowly and builds upon home-based vocabulary. And key to that is Phonetics.”

The MTPDS *Maziko a Kuwerenga* program is encouraging teaching through mastering the sounds of individual letters before building them into syllables and words. “Letters like ‘b’, ‘p’ and ‘d’ often confuse learners in words. It is therefore our first crucial role to ensure they recognize their different sounds as used in any language, including Chichewa,” she affirmed

She enthusiastically teaches learners to read and write basic words and sentence. She hisses like a snake before saying ‘O’ with a quick end and hisses again and finishes with ‘A’. A group of learners gathered in the centre of her classroom follows the sound and lip movement. (siii, o, sssiii, a= *sosa* is scribbled). This is the exact sound that they hear at home. But now they also recognize the letter that goes with that particular sound.

Upon knowing those sounds, they link syllables with ease. Thrillingly 90 percent of her learners in her class cannot only write their names but write and read Chichewa sentences. “I can dictate letter sounds and they write sentences,” proudly stated the Standard 1 teacher.

Not only has the approach increased the level of participation and interest in children, it has also brought a hunger for reading. To satisfy that hunger, Mrs Seda has pasted wall charts with basic sentences on them and word trees to give them “literacy” company.

Today the classroom has been branded with literature that powerfully beckons learners to practice, practice and practice until they ask for more fresh word trees and wall charts. This teacher is succeeding in making literacy simple, interactive and fun. At least thrice during the week, they spend their afternoons practicing. Instead of running around, students now spend that time with their heads buried in books.



*Mrs. Seda attributes the success to master phonology*

## Q&A: “We need a clear career path for primary school teachers”

*Charles Gunsaru, MTPDS’s Senior Education Policy Advisor presented a ‘Concept Paper on the Career Path for Primary School Teachers’ to a Technical Working Group on Basic Education that included MoEST officials, development partners and Academics. We had an interaction with him on the paper.*

### Q: What is ‘The Concept Paper on Career Path for Primary School Teachers,’ about?

**A:** Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), with development partners, developed the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NSTED) (2008) document which identifies strategies for improving the provision of initial education, continuous professional development and management of teachers. Among other things, the NSTED document identifies shortfalls in the career path of teachers:

- Limited opportunities for promotion result in teachers working many years before being promoted
- Unclear criteria for promotions which do not recognize performance in the classroom,
- A system of promotional grades that focus on managerial rather than classroom positions.

One of the tasks of MTPDS is to work with the Ministry to redefine the career path so that teachers know what it will

take them to move up the ladder.

### Q: What has been done to address that?

**A:** Ministry has made progress in improving the career path of primary teachers by establishing various substantive positions such as the Senior Primary School Teacher (PT3), Principal Primary School Teacher (PT2), Chief Primary School Teacher – (PT1) Primary School Head teacher – HT (P8), Primary Education Advisor (PEA), Coordinating Primary Education Advisor (CPEA) and District Education Manager (DEM). However, most of these are managerial rather than classroom positions and the NSTED document recommends further improvement.

### Q: What is the purpose of presenting the concept paper at the meeting?

**A:** MTPDS developed the concept paper which proposes a number of activities that can help to improve the career path for primary school teachers. This includes:



*Charles Gunsaru*

- Increasing opportunities for promotion by creating adequate promotional grades for both classroom and managerial positions
- Establishing promotion procedures that emphasise teacher performance as opposed to interview results
- Linking career progression to continuing professional development.

The purpose of this meeting (with TWG on Basic Education) was to receive feedback on the proposed activities from members of the TWG and other stakeholders. In particular, the meeting examined the feasibility of the suggested activities and recommended the way forward for the process of clarifying the career path

## Standard 3 Textbooks Reviewed at MIE



*Members of the Standard 3 Chichewa panel hard at work*

TEXTBOOKS are a crucial input to the learning process and their quality is of the utmost importance. During March, MTPDS collaborated with Read Malawi to support MIE in conducting a comprehensive revision of all Standard 3 textbooks and teachers’ guides. This work was informed by extensive field work conducted in 2011, during which Standard 3 teachers from 120 schools in 30 districts were interviewed to provide feedback on the previous textbooks and suggestions for their improvement. For

each subject in Standard 3 a panel has been convened consisting of MIE officers, MoEST officers, college lecturers and serving teachers. These panels worked tirelessly from 19<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March to produce revised drafts of the textbooks and teacher’s guides for all 8 subjects in Standard 3. In Chichewa and English special care is being taken to ensure that the content of the books is compatible with ongoing literacy interventions being undertaken by MTPDS and Read Malawi.

## Continuous Professional Development Updates



*Participants at the workshop pose for a group photo*

MTPDS continued with its CPD activities by initiating the rolling out of the Literacy 2 module in March. One major activity was the Training of Trainers at Mponela TDC from 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> March. 18 participants were from the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), all the Education Divisions and MTPDS. This was done in readiness for the Training of Facilitators for the Cluster trainings. For the first time District Literacy Coordinators were involved in the facilitation process. This was a remarkable development as it consolidated seamless coordination between CPD and the Maziko a Kuwerenga literacy intervention. Dr. David Porcaro, traveled to Malawi from the home office in the US to provide some technical assistance and facilitate

some of the sessions.

To support this roll out exercise, 35,000 Literacy 2 Modules have been printed to support Standard 1-4 teachers in teaching literacy with emphasis on phonological awareness which MTPDS is promoting through its Literacy Intervention component..

During March, MTPDS also collaborated with DIAS, Domasi College of Education and MTPDS to refine Literacy Modules 3 and 4. The purpose of this exercise was to consolidate ideas from various draft units and come up with a module that is ready for editing. Participants to this activity were led in the refining process by David Porcaro.

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### Communities appreciate literacy intervention

from the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* early grade literacy intervention supported by USAID, invited parents, SMCs, community leaders and young people to appreciate literacy skills gained over the two terms. Learners read out loud before their parents and wrote sentences to celebrate the achievement. 40-year-old Dorothy Sinjani of Manguwe Village, Salima, walked 3 kilometers to attend and support her 10-year-old son, Benjamin Ali, a Standard 1 learner at Kaphatenga Primary School.

“It is my first time to see a Standard 1 pupil reading with such precision and energy. He has beaten his two elder brothers. The confidence showed that it was not staged. His teacher is doing a wonderful job.”

With pride Benjamin read a whole page from *PCAR Book 1*, before the biggest crowd in his life that included SMCs, parents and guardians of learners.

#### Events Calender for April 2012

1. **Policy:**  
30 April: Submit to MoEST identified policy actions
2. **CPD:**  
2-10 April: TOF for Literacy 2 (in non-Literacy intervention districts)  
23-29 April: TOF (literacy intervention districts)  
11-30 April: Literacy 2 cluster level trainings
3. **Early Grade Literacy Assessment:**  
2-5 April: Literacy Module 2 TOF (PEAs),  
9-12 April: Literacy Module 2 training of teachers
4. **Quality Teaching and Learning Materials:**  
23 April-4 May: Standard 4 Textbook revision workshop at MIE
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**  
2-10 April: Preparations for training of SMC in M&E of NPC



*Benjamin Ali giving his mother more reasons to smile*

**Note from the Editor:** MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements and success stories from the field. We are therefore inviting comments, contributions and tips for teacher professional development. Please send your contributions to the Editor, MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private bag B481, Lilongwe, Tel: (+265) 1 794 977. E-mail: [info@mtpds.rti.org](mailto:info@mtpds.rti.org), Web: [www.mtpds.rg](http://www.mtpds.rg). For useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>