



MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

The Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3-year USAID 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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MoEST and stakeholders meet for national conference on literacy



Minister of Education Eunice Kazembe (center) posing with delegates to a literacy conference

ON 17TH OCTOBER 2012, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and stakeholders met in Lilongwe for a national conference on early grade literacy under the theme *'Together we can build a literate nation: It starts with you'*.

The conference, which was sponsored by Save the Children and World Vision, was presided over by the honorable Minister of Education Eunice Kazembe, and brought together more than 200 participants from MoEST, international and local organizations, private and public schools and academic institutions to share experiences of early grade reading interventions implemented in the country and explore best practices to improve literacy outcomes in Malawi.

While delivering her keynote speech, the

Minister acknowledged the poor reading outcomes of primary schools in Malawi and emphasized the great need to improve reading instruction for young learners.

She referred to the unacceptable results of the baseline assessments conducted through the MTPDS-supported Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and by Save the Children's Literacy Boost project which show that many children move on from the early grades without being able to read. She noted that the conference comes at the right time as the Ministry is embracing the promotion of early grade literacy as a top priority.

The forum provided MTPDS with an excellent opportunity to share its experiences in implementing the Maziko a Kuwerenga literacy intervention while highlighting best

"A man who does not read has no advantage over the man who can read"

Mark Twain

PEA takes initiative to provide zonal CPD



Teachers during the zonal CPD INSET

ALTHOUGH THE MAZIKO a Kuwerenga (MaK) literacy activity began in the five new intervention districts less than a year ago, many district and school-level stakeholders are already showing ownership of the activity by taking their own actions to ensure the intervention succeeds and is continually improving. One such stakeholder is Mr. Miles Kaliati, the Primary Education Advisor (PEA) for the Chimwalira Zone in the Zomba Rural District.

During the beginning of the current school year, Mr. Kaliati noticed some gaps in the implementation of the MaK intervention in his zone which needed to be addressed. While conducting regular supervision and monitoring visits he observed that many of the teachers who had been trained last year in early grade reading methods had been reallocated to teach in upper primary classes where their early grade reading training no longer applied. In addition, he realized that many of the previously trained Standard 1 teachers needed a refresher on the use of the MaK Teachers' Guide for Term 1 while teachers handling Standard 2 classes needed literacy teaching skills to

consolidate gains made at Standard 1. In his own words, Mr. Kaliati remarked, "Such observations made us realize that some were behind and threatened to wipe out the successes in reading outcomes registered last academic year."

Rather than waiting for MTPDS or the Ministry to address these issues, Mr. Kaliati took matters into his own hands. Taking advantage of the Zonal Improvement Grant (ZIG) funds, the zone settled for an activity that would improve learning outcomes in the early grades by organizing a two-day Zonal CPD INSET for Standards 1 and 2 teachers in the zone.

The topics covered in the INSET training included, types of lessons (phunziro lachirendo, loyesera, lozamitsa), the five reading components, the MaK lesson cycle and teaching routines. Various methods were used during the training, including group work and plenary sessions. Teachers eagerly and happily demonstrated the lessons and shared best practices.

Although the divisional MTPDS team was called in to support the training, the PEA and key teacher were the chief facilitators. This is an encouraging sign that the sustainability of the project intervention is in good hands when the project is over.

Summing up why his zone decided to take such action, the PEA commented, "It is our hope that teachers are charged and ready to deliver in class."

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practices and lessons learned from the activity. MTPDS's EGRA Manager, Mr. Odala Banda, presented on the key components of the literacy intervention and reviewed assessment results showing significant improvements in reading scores in the intervention districts. MTPDS was also able to share recommendations for future interventions on early grade reading and ways to build upon lessons learned.

The conference included presentations by Save the Children and World Vision International sharing their experiences implementing the Literacy Boost program along with plans to expand the activity into more zones and districts.

The Director of Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Mr. Raphael Agabu, presented a comprehensive paper laying out the major policy issues and recommendations for the improvement of early grade reading instruction in primary schools.

A panel that featured the directors of Basic Education and Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), the USAID education team leader and other development partners and academics discussed issues arising from the conference and explored ways to build upon international best practices while working to improve the current situation in Malawi.

The session concluded with breakout group discussions that looked at the challenges and proposed possible solutions across the areas of teacher continuous professional development, continuous assessment in primary schools and community involvement in school management.

The Director of DIAS closed the workshop by acknowledging the great support MoEST is receiving from its partners and promised that the Ministry will take heed of concerns, recommendations and comments from the workshop.

Preparing for another round of EGRA using 'Tangerine' technology

IT IS TIME again for yet another round of the national Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) data collection activity. Since the beginning of the project, MTPDS has supported the MoEST at this time of the year to conduct the internationally recognized reading assessment activity. But this time around there is an added twist to the preparations as the entire data collection will be conducted digitally through the use of tablet computers equipped with 'Tangerine' software.

In order to be prepared for this large undertaking while utilizing the new

technology, MTPDS supported the Ministry through the training of trainers and enumerators who will span the nation assessing learners in schools for a period of three weeks. A total of 45 enumerators were drawn from various MoEST departments and partners. During the training workshop in Mponela enumerators practiced using the tablets to assess learners in nearby schools. By the end of the workshop, over 90% of the participants had reached or surpassed the mark required to become a competent enumerator. This speaks volumes of the facilitation skills of our Ministry partners.

CPD Update

Strengthening community ownership of schools

PEAs during a Training of facilitators in Mzimba

IN THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, MTPDS rolled out Leadership CPD Module 4. As a departure from previous leadership modules which typically focused on head teachers and CPD mentors, this module was developed particularly for School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).

The module aims to strengthen the role of communities in monitoring, evaluating and supporting their schools, particularly in the areas of early literacy. It builds upon the national strategy for community participation, while looking to facilitate the role of parents and guardians in the implementation of the three national goals of education: a) improving quality and relevance, b) expanding equitable access, and c) improving governance and management of the primary education system.

Leadership Module 4 intends to change the way communities look at education in Malawi by helping them to recognize the central role they play in supporting and monitoring teaching and learning in their schools. After reviewing the national CPD initiative and the M&E Framework of the MoEST, the module focuses on laying out the roles and responsibilities of communities in supporting teaching and learning at their schools.

The most important aspect of Leadership Module 4 is the School Assessment Tool. The tool is developed to provide SMCs with a simple and effective way to collect data about teaching, learning and assessment from teachers, head teachers and directly from the classroom and school records.

The relevant data collected through this tool include school enrollment, attendance and punctuality of learners and teachers, availability of teaching and learning resources, support given to teachers, and the community's role in supporting the school.

The School Assessment Tool is designed to be implemented collaboratively by the SMCs and the school staff to provide both with evidence of how the school is performing academically.

This approach of SMCs monitoring schools is expected to strengthen the community's ownership of their school along with increasing their cooperation with the teaching staff. The data collected by SMCs is expected to inform the School Improvement Plan (SIP) so that the community can decide how best to support the school's academic performance.

During the end of October and beginning of November, PEAs will conduct zonal trainings of head teachers, CPD mentors, and representatives of SMCs and PTAs across the country in an effort to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the community in supporting teaching, learning and evaluation in their schools. SMCs and PTAs are expected to observe gender equity in sending representatives to the trainings, and to share the information with their respective members.

When teachers understand that parents are playing a meaningful role in supporting teaching and learning, teachers are more likely to cooperate with them. For their part, parents are expected to be respectful and mindful of the important role teachers' play in educating their children. When all parties agree on their roles and responsibilities in improving education in Malawi, schools can assume their rightful place as centers of community development.



Trained PEAs will train SMC members and head teachers

Maziko a Kuwerenga CPD trainings completed in intervention districts



Standard 1 teachers during Maziko a Kuwerenga Module 3 training

OVER THE FIRST couple of weekends of October, the training of the third, and final, module of MTPDS's Maziko a Kuwerenga (The Foundations of Reading) Literacy CPD series was completed in all seven of the intervention districts. The Maziko a Kuwerenga program is designed to equip teachers with the best current

approaches to teaching literacy with a focus on early grade reading. The zonal trainings were facilitated by PEAs and key teachers in order to equip Standard 1 teachers with literacy assessment skills and provide them with a refresher on foundational literacy skills via appropriate teaching

routines.

Through the previous two modules, the teachers were already trained in improving pre-reading skills and providing instruction that focuses on the five fundamental skills of reading. Building on these, Module 3 seeks to reinforce the teaching methods and literacy skills while extending the teachers' understanding of how to use continuous assessment to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

The Module 3 training workshops were enthusiastically facilitated by the PEAs and key teachers, while being well received by the teachers who appreciated the opportunity to refresh and improve upon their skills. All in all over 1,310 head teachers and 2,440 Standard 1 teachers were trained during these two-day workshops.

Now that the Literacy CPD series has been completed, MTPDS will concentrate on supporting schools throughout the intervention districts through coaching support, materials provision and monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that ensure that teachers practice the skills that they have acquired and learners continue to improve their reading performance.

Events Calendar for November 2012

1. **Policy:**
 - 1-15 Nov.: Distribution of NSTED Guidelines to EDMs and DEMs
 - 6-7 Nov.: Orientation for CPEAs in TDC registers
2. **CPD:**
 - 1-24 Nov.: Distribution of Literacy 4 modules
 - 25-30 Nov: Literacy 4 Training of Trainers
3. **Early Grade Literacy Assessment:**
 - 30 Oct-16 Nov: EGRA 2012 data collection
 - 19-30 Nov.: Sensitization meetings with SMCs on supporting reading
4. **Quality Teaching and Learning Materials:**
 - 22 Nov: Continuous Assessment Guidelines field testing workshop
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - 19-23 Nov: Annual classroom observation
 - 26-30 Nov: EGRA-Lite

Welcome

MTPDS welcomes Ezekiel Makalani to its team who joined at the end of September as Divisional Accounts Officer for Shire Highlands Education Division. Previously, he worked as an accountant for Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDA).

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, Web: www.mtpds.org. For useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>