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Annual Report FY 2013

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Acronyms

AA	Accounts Assistant
ACOR	Acting Contracting Officer's Representative
BC	Braille Cup
BPG	Brattle Publishing Group
bTG	blueTree Group
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CERT	Center for Educational Research and Training
CM	Community Mobilization
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRECCOM	Creative Center for Community Mobilization
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DC	Divisional Coordinator
DCE	Domasi College of Education
DCM	District Community Mobilization Officer
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DEMs	District Education Managers
DEOs	District Education Offices
DEP	Department of Education Planning
DERG	Disability Education Resource Guide
DGVP	Disability, Gender, and Vulnerable Populations
DIAS	Department of Inspectorate and Advisory Services
DME	District Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
DSNE	Department of Special Needs Education
DTC	District Training Coordinator
DTED	Department of Teacher Education and Development
EDM	Education Divisional Manager
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Activity
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
FY	fiscal year
GoM	Government of Malawi
GUCs	Grants Under Contract
HOCAI	Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument

HT	Head Teacher
IEPs	Individualized Education Plans
LAT	learner assessment tool
LCD	Local Capacity Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MaK	Maziko a Kuwerenga
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
MID	Mission-Integrated District
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MT	Mother Tongue
MTPDS	Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support Program
n/a	not available
NLS	National Library Service
NTC	National Training Coordinator
NUPAS	Non-US Organization Pre-Award Survey
OAI	O'Brien and Associates International
PCAR	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform
PEAs	Primary Education Advisors
PMEP	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PS	Principal Secretary for Basic and Secondary Education
PSSP	Primary School Support Program
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SI, S2, S3	Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3
SEMA	Senior Education Methods Advisor
SI	Social Impact
SIP	School Improvement Plans
SMC	School Management Committee
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SOW	statement of work
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TA	Paraprofessional Teaching Assistants
TBD	to be determined

TDC	Teacher Development Center
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
TLMC	Teaching and Learning Materials Coordinator
TOF	training of facilitators
TTC	Teacher Training College
TWG	Technical Working Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

This Annual Report provides an update on the progress of work toward planned tasks and activities under the Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) during the period from June 17, 2013 to September 30, 2013. The Annual Report is structured according to the headings listed below:

- **Introduction** sets out the aims and structure of the document.
- **Activity Summary** briefly describes and lists the intended Components and Tasks of the Activity.
- **Overall Progress of the Activity from June 17, 2013 to September 30, 2013** provides a general overview of progress made under EGRA during the year, including a summary of progress for each Component and Crosscutting issue.
- **Progress by Component** provides a detailed description of activities and accomplishments made under each Component and Crosscutting issue. For each Component the following is presented:
 - A *narrative* section describing activities and progress under the component
 - A *summary table* detailing the status of activities under each task and subtask within the component.
- **Progress toward Targets** explains the progress that EGRA has made towards meeting the targets established for each indicator under the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP). Also includes sections updating status on deliverables to USAID.
- **Management Issues** describes the major management issues dealt with during the FY and how they were managed.
- **Challenges, Solutions, and Actions Taken** discusses significant challenges faces by the Activity during the FY and explains how these challenges were addressed.

Activity Summary

EGRA is a three-year, four-month USAID activity designed to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in improving the reading performance of Malawian learners in Standards 1–3. EGRA's goals include improving the quality and availability of pedagogical materials in the area of early grade reading; providing training to teacher trainers, teachers, and school administrators in the effective use of those materials; equipping parents and communities with the knowledge and tools to support school-based reading programming; and supporting efforts to build a policy environment conducive to improving early grade reading. EGRA is composed of the following components:

- Component 1: Provide Quality Reading Instruction for Early Grade Students
- Component 2: Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials for Reading
- Component 3: Increasing Parental and Community Engagement to Support Reading
- Component 4: Improving Policy Environment to Support Early Grade Reading
- Monitoring and Evaluation and Crosscutting Issues

Table 1. Early Grade Reading Activity Components and Tasks

Component 1: Provide Quality Reading Instruction for Early Grade Students
Task 1-1: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Standard 1–3 Teachers in Teaching Reading
Task 1-2: Teaching Practicum as Part of In-Service Training
Task 1-3: Scripted Lesson Plans and Related Reading Materials
Task 1-4: Consistent In-Service Teacher Support and Mentoring
Task 1-5: Rewarding Performing Teachers and Schools
Component 2: Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials for Reading
Task 2-1: Develop and Distribute Decodable and Leveled Books
Task 2-2: Develop and Distribute Story Cards for Home Use
Task 2-3: Develop and Distribute Letter Cards
Task 2-4: Production and Distribution of Chalk Slates
Task 2-5: Supply of Mobile, Lockable Bookcases/Cabinets and Registers
Component 3: Increasing Parental and Community Engagement to Support Reading
Task 3-1: Reading Fairs
Task 3-2: Parental/Caregiver and Community Support for Reading
Task 3-3: Provide Classroom Level and School Support for Reading
Component 4: Improving Policy Environment to Support Early Grade Reading
Task 4-1: Attend MoEST Technical Working Groups Relevant to Early Grade Reading
Task 4-2: Develop Memoranda of Understanding
Task 4-3: Facilitate Extension of Reading Instruction Time
Task 4-4: Identify Common Language of Instruction
Monitoring and Evaluation and Crosscutting Issues
ME-1: Internal Activity Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
ME-2: Coordinating with External Evaluator for baseline and midterm assessments
ME-3: Regular Ongoing Reporting
XC-1: Local Capacity Development
XC-2: Students with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities
XC-3: Grants Under Contract (GUCs)
XC-4: Geographic Coverage
XC-5: Public-Private Partnerships
XC-6: Gender Equality

Overall Progress of the Activity from June 17, 2013, to September 30, 2013

Start-up

The Early Grade Reading Activity officially started on June 17, 2013 upon which the start-up team from the home office of RTI International, composed of EGRA Home Office Technical Manager and EGRA Project Administration Specialist, immediately traveled to Lilongwe to begin making logistical and administrative arrangements for beginning the Activity.

During their first weeks in Malawi the start-up team conducted the following activities:

- recruited and hired essential administrative staff,
- located and established office space for the Activity,
- processed the handover of equipment from USAID inherited from the Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) activity,
- initiated the recruiting and bringing onboard of key technical staff required to begin implementing activities as soon as possible, and
- held introductory meetings with key stakeholders at MoEST and other education partners to begin establishing relationships and common understandings on the goals and objectives of the Activity in supporting the Ministry in improving early grade reading.

An official introductory meeting was held on July 16, 2013 where USAID introduced the Early Grade Reading Activity to the MoEST senior management. During this meeting it was established that EGRA should work with the directors of the Department of Inspectorate and Advisory Services (DIAS), Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), and Department of Education Planning (DEP) as it plans and implements its activities in collaboration with MoEST. It was also established that the Principal Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education (PS) would meet with USAID, EGRA management, and the identified MoEST directors on a quarterly basis to review progress of the Activity.

Soon after the EGRA office was established and the official introduction to MoEST had taken place, the Chief of Party (COP), traveled with the EGRA Senior Education Policy Advisor, and MoEST counterparts to meet with each of the District Education Managers (DEMs) of the 11 education districts in which EGRA will be implemented. During these introductory meetings, EGRA and MoEST provided an overview of the Activity's goals and objectives and explained to the DEMs the phased rollout plan of implementation wherein only half of the zones in each district would receive the intervention during the first school year of the Activity. These meetings also provided the DEMs with an opportunity to provide their initial input and ask questions about the activities and interventions planned for their districts.

While foundational work was being conducted on the ground in Malawi to start up the EGRA office and establish working relationships with MoEST and other educational partners, the EGRA home office also worked on formalizing the contractual relationships with each of the five subcontractors for the Activity—namely, Creative Center for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM), Brattle Publishing Group (BPG), Perkins International, blue Tree Group (BTG), and O'Brien and Associates International (OAI). Each of these subcontractors began mobilizing to implement their planned activities as soon as possible.

Overview of Activities by Component

The following lists provide a general overview of the main activities which were conducted under each component. Greater details of the activities listed below are provided under the relevant sections for each component.

Component I: Provide Quality Reading Instruction for Early Grade Students

- Agreed with USAID and MoEST that the initial trainings in August would be conducted only in the four new intervention districts of Balaka, Machinga, Lilongwe Rural East, and Lilongwe Rural West in order to bring them up to speed with what the seven other “MTPDS legacy” districts had received under the *Maziko a Kuwerenga (MaK)* reading intervention under MTPDS.
- Reviewed and modified the *MaK* materials for the August teacher trainings.
- Printed and distributed 3,250 copies of the training manual and 1,200 copies of the teachers’ guide for the teachers, as well as 85,000 copies of *Nditha Kuwerenga* for learners in schools in the four new intervention districts.
- Equipped twenty-seven (27) expert trainers (12 female, 15 male) from MoEST, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) during a two-day training to provide training to facilitators who would in turn train the teachers at the zonal level.
- Trained a total of 68 (18 female, 50 male) facilitators during training of facilitator (TOF) sessions conducted from August 19-22 who in turn conducted the training of teachers at the zonal level.
- Trained a total of 2,250 teachers (1,153 female, 1,097 male) and 387 head teachers (75 female, 312 male) on the *MaK* reading intervention and use of the scripted lesson plans for Term I during a five-day training which included a one-day practicum session.
- Mobilized communities to recruit children to participate in the practicum session for the zonal trainings for teachers in August.
- EGRA and BPG drafted example scope of work and prototype lessons to support MIE and MoEST in developing a SI English course that supports the national SI curriculum.
- Held a series of meetings with MIE to establish an MOU between EGRA and MIE in implementing curriculum development activities.
- bTG traveled to Malawi to conduct an initial assessment of the printing and publishing industry in Malawi as part of the development of a book chain analysis and planning for capacity building of the local printing industry.
- Conducted training on coaching and refresher meetings for PEAs in all of the intervention zones, and provided funds to the PEAs in order to ensure that coaching support is provided to schools and teachers during Term I.
- Developed and field-tested a classroom observation and coaching tool in collaboration with MoEST, MIE, and other education partners.

- Drafted the Grants Manual and submitted it to USAID in preparation for the implementation of the Grants Under Contract program under EGRA.

Component 2: Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials for Reading

- Reviewed materials produced under MTPDS and modified for use under EGRA and in preparation for the August teacher trainings.
- Began collecting supplementary reading materials from previous projects and activities to assess what is currently available and identify gaps for materials that will need to be developed.
- Began data collection for determining the number of schools that need letters painted on the walls and the number of classrooms that do not have walls and will need letter cards produced. Plans for mobilizing communities to support in painting classroom walls are being developed.
- Initiated the evaluation and exploration of options for low-cost production of chalk slates and lockable bookcases which is ongoing. The cost of locally produced materials has so far proven to be cost-prohibitive. Therefore, EGRA has also been looking into regional and international options.
- OAI conducted a preliminary desk study that will guide the activities of a planned trip early in FY 2014 to further investigate and pursue potential PPPs to support the provision of TLM and other activities under EGRA.

Component 3: Increasing Parental and Community Engagement to Support Reading

- Developed draft Community Mobilization Handbook to be used and further modified during training of EGRA staff and MoEST officers.
- Consultant Barbara Harvey traveled to Malawi to assist EGRA in developing community mobilization strategy and related handbook.
- Mobilized parents and communities to provide children to participate in the practicum sessions for August teacher trainings.
- Conducted initial discussions and plans with MoEST and district-level stakeholders on community mobilization activities, including reading fairs and recruitment of teaching assistants.

Component 4: Improving Policy Environment to Support Early Grade Reading

- Attended Technical Working Group (TWG) for Teacher Education on September 12, 2013, which was the only TWG that met during this reporting period.
- Developed a concept note for coordination of projects and activities focusing on early grade reading in Malawi.
- Held consultation meetings with MoEST directors, District Education Managers (DEMs) and other stakeholders on the development of Memoranda of Understanding for DEMs, head teachers, and school management committees.

- Held a series of meetings with MIE director and officers to establish a draft MOU for cooperation between EGRA and MIE throughout the duration of the Activity.
- Coordinated with Social Impact and consulted with DEMs in the selection of zones to be included in the first school year of EGRA interventions in order to ensure that the integrity of the research design of the external impact evaluation is maintained.
- Reviewed MoEST policies and instructions regarding extension of instructional time for reading and began discussions with MoEST and DEMs on providing additional time for reading in the intervention schools.

Crosscutting Issues

- **Monitoring & Evaluation**
 - Designed the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) in collaboration with MoEST and submitted to USAID on September 17.
 - Developed classroom level data collection instruments and field tested in collaboration with MoEST and MIE counterparts during two workshops in September.
 - Coordinated with Social Impact during the baseline assessment data collection period. The Activity continues to coordinate on zone selection and issues affecting the impact evaluation.
- **Local Capacity Development**
 - Collaboratively engaged with MoEST departments, MIE, TTCs and other education partners in planning, development of materials, and implementation of activities.
 - The blue Tree Group conducted an assessment of capacity of local printing and book publishing industry during two field visits to Malawi.
 - RTI training expert traveled to Malawi to provide capacity building training focusing on leading change and developing mentoring relationships. During the visit she helped set up a mentoring program intended to develop the capacity of EGRA's local subcontractor CRECCOM and its own staff.
- **Grants Under Contract**
 - Developed a Grants Manual and submitted to USAID on September 17, 2013.
 - Through consultations with DEMs, HTs, and teachers EGRA established a preliminary set of criteria to be used in determining "well performing schools" for the GUC program. These will be finalized through further consultations.
- **Gender Equality – EGRA agreed to use the USAID draft document *A Guide for Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials* during the review and development of materials under EGRA.**

Progress by EGRA Components and Crosscutting Issues

This section takes each Component and Task in turn and describes progress made from June 17 to September 30, 2013, toward the associated activities and their timeframes. For each

Component and Task, a narrative is provided to explain the progress made during this period followed by a corresponding table that displays the planned timeframe and status of each subtask and activity at the end of this reporting period, as of September 30, 2013. This is followed by a discussion of each crosscutting issue and how they are being addressed through the component activities.

Component I: Provide Quality Reading Instruction for Early Grade Students

Component I is composed of five tasks as listed below. Each task will be addressed in turn with its corresponding progress summary table.

Task I-1: CPD of Standard 1–3 Teachers in Teaching Reading

Task I-2: Teaching Practicum as Part of In-Service Training

Task I-3: Scripted Lesson Plans and Related Reading Materials

Task I-4: Consistent In-Service Teacher Support and Mentoring

Task I-5: Rewarding Performing Teachers and Schools

Task I-1: CPD of Standard 1–3 Teachers in Teaching Reading

During the initial start-up months of EGRA, it was decided (in collaboration with MoEST and USAID) that the first set of trainings for teachers would be conducted just prior to the school year in the four education districts of Machinga, Balaka, Lilongwe Rural East, and Lilongwe Rural West.¹ A number of factors informed this decision.

First, these four districts were not included as part of the seven reading intervention districts under MTPDS, which preceded EGRA and upon which EGRA is designed to build and expand its programs and activities. Therefore, these four education districts needed to be “caught up” with the “MTPDS legacy” districts on the content of the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* reading intervention program, which was introduced under MTPDS. Second, under the extremely tight timeframe to make preparations and develop training content and materials for a five-day training session while EGRA was still in its start-up phase, it was agreed to be most practical to use the content and materials from the MTPDS reading intervention for this initial training.

Therefore, during the initial months of the Activity, the EGRA literacy team conducted a review of the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* training materials along with their accompanying scripted lesson plans and the *Nditha Kuwerenga* learners’ book while modifying the content to be conducted under EGRA during a five-day training, including a one-day practicum session. Modified copies of the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* and *Nditha Kuwerenga* materials were developed with minor corrections made to the branding (as requested by USAID) to reflect that the materials had been modified and printed by EGRA. A total of 3,250 training manuals and 1,200 teachers’ guides were printed in preparation for the training sessions for expert trainers, training facilitators, head teachers (HTs), and teachers. In addition, 85,000 copies of *Nditha Kuwerenga* learners’ book were printed and distributed to intervention schools in the four new districts.

¹ For practical purposes, EGRA counts the two Lilongwe Rural districts (Lilongwe Rural East and Lilongwe Rural West) as separate districts because they are designated and managed as two separate education districts under MoEST structures; the contract under USAID, however, counts the Lilongwe Rural district as one district.

As part of the cascade model for training teachers, a roster of expert trainers was assembled in consultation with MoEST. The cohort of expert trainers included representatives from MoEST departments including DIAS, DTED, DBE, and other MoEST institutions, including MIE, Domasi College of Education (DCE), Center for Educational Research and Training (CERT) and TTCs. A total of 27 expert trainers (12 female, 15 male) were trained during a two-day training conducted on August 16–17 at Peter’s Lodge in Zomba. During this training, the expert trainers were prepared to conduct the training of facilitator (TOF) sessions that were to be held at the district level.

The TOF sessions were conducted at the district level during the week of August 19–22 targeting the senior education methods advisors (SEMAs) from the four districts and the primary education advisors (PEAs) and key teachers from each of the selected zones in the four districts (see Table 2 for a complete list of zones included in the initial trainings). A total of 68 participants (18 female, 50 male) were trained in preparation to facilitate the training sessions for teachers in their relative zones.

The training of teachers was conducted at the selected zones between August 27 and September 5 with the PEAs and key teachers facilitating the trainings. A total of 2,250 teachers (1,153 female, 1,097 male) and 387 head teachers (75 female, 312 male) were trained over a five-day period, which included a one-day practicum session on the final day of training wherein teachers were provided with opportunities for hands-on application of the content and skills they had reviewed during the previous four days. A roster of the teachers, head teachers, and TTC lecturers who were trained during these trainings was compiled which will be built into the Activity M&E database.

Table 2. Districts and Zones Included in Initial Trainings in August 2013

District	Zone
Balaka	Boma
	Chembera
	Mpilisi
	Phalula
	Utale
Lilongwe Rural East	Chankhandwe
	Ching'ombe
	Chowo
	Kanjeza
	Malikha
	Mitundu
	Mtentera
	Pimbiri
	Thawale
Lilongwe Rural West	Dzenza
	Kabudula
	Kabuthu
	Kalonga
	Kasiya
	Likuni
	Mpingu
	Mteza
	Mzumazi
	Njewwa
Machinga	Chikweo
	Mpombe
	Namandanje
	Ngokwe
	Nsanama
	St Therese

A workshop was planned for the end of September to begin consultations and initial planning for the next teacher training, which will be conducted during the December holidays; the workshop, however, was postponed until October due to the unavailability of many key stakeholders from MoEST departments and MIE who had prior commitments to other activities. Table 3 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 1-1.

Table 3. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 1.1

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 1.1 Continuous Professional Development of Standard 1–3 teachers in reading			
1.1.1 Evaluate existing CPD modules on teaching	1.1.1.1 Review of existing CPD content from MTPDS, PSSP,	July-October 2013	Completed August 2013

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
reading for SI-S3 learners	<i>Tikwere!</i>		
	1.1.1.2 Assessment by DGVP Specialist, Perkins STTA, and local partners of current teaching and learning materials available to schools of children with disabilities	July-September 2013	Not yet completed due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist and Perkins on board. Will be conducted during Year 2.
	1.1.2.1 Materials from prior projects collected, assessed	July-August 2013	Completed August 2013
	1.1.2.2 Requests submitted to MIE, National Library Service (NLS) to share any additional Chichewa reading materials for children that might be leveraged	August-September 2013	Completed September 2013
1.1.2 Existing materials (including supplemental materials and existing CPD modules) incorporated to maximum extent possible in implementation of teacher training	1.1.2.3 Leveling workshop facilitated by EGRA and BPG held with MIE and NLS personnel to revise Read Malawi and other source materials	October 2013	Planned
	1.1.2.4 Revised materials reviewed with Director of MIE	October 2013	Pending completion of 1.1.2.3
	1.1.2.5 Materials endorsed prior to piloting in schools	October 2013-March 2014	Pending completion of 1.1.2.3
	1.1.3.1 Initial consultation/planning meetings	September 2013	Meetings delayed until October 2013 due to unavailability of MoEST partners
	1.1.3.2 Modification of CPD content and framework to reflect role-based approach	September 2013-March 2014	Planned to begin October 2013
	1.1.3.CH Development of CPD training manuals for S2 Chichewa to accompany School Year 2 scripted lesson plans	January-March 2014	Planned, not yet started
1.1.3 Appropriate CPD training materials developed in collaboration with MoEST	1.1.3.EN Development of CPD training manuals for S1, S2 English to accompany School Year 2 scripted lesson plans	January-March 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.1.3.3 Periodic joint reviews of any materials under development	Quarterly September 2013-September 2014	Pending development of materials
	1.1.3.4 Submission of CPD training materials to MoEST for official endorsement	Quarterly September 2013-September 2014	Pending development and review of materials

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	1.1.3.5 Submission of CPD training materials to USAID for official clearance	Quarterly September 2013-September 2014	Pending development and review of materials
1.1.4 CPD trainings delivered to SI–S3 teachers and HTs	1.1.4.1 Roster of expert trainers (MoEST, TTC lecturers) assembled	July 2013	Completed July 2013
	1.1.4.2 EMIS data on # of SI–S3 Teachers, HTs in each intervention zone obtained	July 2013	Completed July 2013
	1.1.4.3 Number, names of TTC language lecturers in Intervention districts identified	July 2013	Completed July 2013
	1.1.4.4 Roster of targeted SI–S3 teachers, HTs, TTC lecturers built into Activity M&E database	July-November 2013	Completed for August 2013 trainings
	1.1.4.5. Roster of targeted SI–S3 teachers, HTs, TTC lecturers updated regularly	December 2013-April 2016	Ongoing
	1.1.4.6 Equipping of expert trainers (MoEST, TTC lecturers)	August 2013-April 2016	Completed for August 2013 training
	1.1.4.7 Expert trainers hold 5-day training sessions for PEAs and SEMAs	August 2013-April 2016	Completed for August 2013 training
	1.1.4.8 PEAs deliver 5-day training workshops for SI–S3 teachers, HTs	August 2013-April 2016	Completed for August 2013 training
1.1.5 Cost-effectiveness of providing CPD training in target zones evaluated, documented	1.1.5.1 Per-teacher cost of EGRA-style CPD training calculated from financial records	August 2013-April 2016	Completed for August 2013 training
	1.1.5.2 Cost of alternative methods modeled	May-September 2014	Planned, not yet started
1.1.6 Literacy modules adapted for inclusion in pre-service teacher-training curriculum	1.1.6.1 Consultation meetings with DTED, DBE, DIAS	September 2013-July 2016	Planned to begin October 2013
	1.1.6.2 Plan for adaptation process agreed	September 2013-July 2016	Planned to begin October 2013
	1.1.6.3 Adaptation process executed	November 2014-July 2016	Planned, pending 1.1.6.2

Task 1-2: Teaching Practicum as Part of In-Service Training

An essential component of each teacher training module conducted by EGRA is the one-day practicum session which is included as Day 5 of the trainings. As such, the teacher trainings that were conducted in August incorporated a practicum session where the methods and skills acquired could be modeled and practiced by teachers with actual learners in the classroom.

To make such practicum sessions possible, EGRA worked with the DEMs, PEAs, and HTs at the schools attached to the teacher development centers (TDCs) where the August teacher trainings were conducted to engage with the parents and other members of the community. The goal of this engagement—through the school management committees (SMCs) and parent-teacher associations (PTAs)—to identify and mobilize children to participate in the practicum sessions, was crucial because the trainings were being conducted during the school holidays, when schools were not in session.

The communities and their children were provided with the motivation and incentives in the form of recognition for supporting their teachers through participating in the practicum sessions. Although no material incentives were provided for the children during the August trainings, every TDC was able to provide sufficient numbers of children to make a productive practicum session possible, allowing for teachers to practice and reflect upon what they had learned. Table 4 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 1-2.

Table 4. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 1.2

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 1.2 Teaching Practicum as Part of In-Service Training			
1.2.1 CPD includes a practicum session where methods can be modeled and teachers can practice	1.2.1 CPD includes a practicum session where methods can be modeled and teachers can practice	August 2013-April 2016	Completed as part of August 2013 training
1.2.2 Children recruited to attend Day 5 of PEA teacher-training workshops	1.2.2.1 Parents, communities engaged to identify/mobilize children for the teaching practicum	August 2013-April 2016	Completed as part of August 2013 training
	1.2.2.2 Incentives for children's participation identified, implemented	August 2013-April 2016	Completed as part of August 2013 training
	1.2.2.3 Count of children participating recorded and transmitted to EGRA HQ	August 2013-April 2016	Completed as part of August 2013 training

Task 1-3: Scripted Lesson Plans and Related Reading Materials

During July, in preparation for the August teacher trainings, the EGRA literacy team conducted an initial review—in consultation with MoEST and MIE—of the scripted lesson plans developed under *Maziko a Kuwerenga* (including the *Nditha Kuwerenga* learner book) developed under MTPDS. The resulting materials were modified for the August trainings, and a set of scripted lesson plans for Term 1 were distributed to all Standard 1–3 teachers in the zones that participated in the August trainings.

An additional review was scheduled at the end of September in order to determine whether other revisions will be required to ensure effective integration of these resources with the MoEST's newly revised Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) Chichewa curriculum for Standard 1. This will in turn inform the development of the S2 Chichewa SLPs, which will be introduced in School Year 2 (the 2014–2015 academic year). A review of the English Standard 1 PCAR materials was also planned to take place during the same time.

As mentioned above, this revision workshop was postponed until October, due to the unavailability of key stakeholders from MoEST and MIE.

Initial discussions were initiated in August to begin determining the precise nature of collaboration between EGRA, BPG, and MIE in the development of curricular materials for English and Chichewa. Although these arrangements have yet to be finalized (because they are contingent upon a trip by BPG planned in October in which BPG will engage with MIE directly and assess their current capabilities and capacity needs for support) EGRA began in August to work with BPG in reviewing the English curriculum materials that were developed in Liberia and other countries to determine their suitability and relevance to Malawi's educational needs. As such, in September EGRA and BPG drafted an example scope and sequence for a first-year oral English course as well as prototype lesson plans to help guide MIE and MoEST in their deliberations with EGRA on how to best adapt and enhance the Standard I English course, which was designed during the PCAR revisions in 2011 and 2012.

In preparations for formalizing this collaborative relationship, EGRA held a series of consultative meetings with the director and key staff at MIE to draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with MIE. It is anticipated that the MOU will be signed within the next month or two to ensure that there is a framework for ongoing collaboration throughout the lifetime of the Activity.

In preparation for leveling and writers' workshops planned for October and November 2013, EGRA began to collect Chichewa and English reading materials developed under previous projects such as Read Malawi, the Primary School Support Program (PSSP), and Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy. These materials will be reviewed and gaps will be identified to determine which new materials need to be written. Because the Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy materials previously required royalties, the EGRA Literacy Specialist has begun negotiations with the copyright holders to see if the royalties requirement can be waived for use by MoEST and MIE.

In August and September, members of EGRA's consortium partner bTG, traveled to Malawi to conduct an analysis of the book production and distribution chain in Malawi to identify bottlenecks, weaknesses, and strengths. Their trips consisted of meetings with stakeholders, including relevant actors in the book-production sector and Government of Malawi, parastatal, and private sector entities across Lilongwe and Blantyre. They also met with MoEST officials, USAID, and other development partners to determine the needs and concerns of major players in education with regard to printing and publishing education materials.

From these meetings, bTG will produce a report that describes the process of book production in Malawi and identifies capacity gaps and areas of strength or potential growth. The report will identify any necessary technological upgrades, training needs, and entities whose capacity could most efficiently and effectively be developed to realize the goal of local production of high quality, durable books. This report is anticipated to be completed in early FY 2014.

Also at the end of August, both the director and regional coordinator of Perkins International traveled to Malawi to meet with EGRA and make initial introductions, including the Disability, Gender, and Vulnerable Populations (DGVP) Specialist, who will be joining EGRA in October. It was initially planned that the DGVP Specialist would begin working with EGRA in August, but because of some administrative and contractual issues, this start date has been pushed back to October. As a result, all of the activities under subtask I.3.6 have been delayed.

In the meantime, USAID has requested that EGRA assist in the review of the draft document *A Guide for Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials* by utilizing it in guiding a gender review of all materials reviewed and developed under EGRA. Although the DGVP Specialist will take the lead in this effort, all other EGRA technical staff have been informed of this document and advised to use it as a guide in all of their material reviews. Table 5 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 1-3.

Table 5. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 1.3

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 1.3 Scripted Lesson Plans and Related Reading Materials			
1.3.1. Timing for development, deployment of scripted lesson plans articulated	1.3.1. Timing for development, deployment of scripted lesson plans articulated	August-September 2013	Completed August 2013
1.3.2 Scripted lesson plans for Term I available by August 2013 for initial in-service training	1.3.2.1 <i>Maziko a Kuwerenga</i> (SI Chichewa) scripted lesson plans reviewed	July 2013	Completed July 2013
	1.3.2.2 Publication-ready files for first print run of teacher scripted lesson plans finalized, sent to printer	July 2013	Completed July 2013
	1.3.2.3 Teacher's Guides for SI Chichewa distributed to schools	August 2013	Completed August 2013
1.3.3 Consultation with MIE regarding development of new curricular materials	1.3.3.1 Division of labor, roles/responsibilities between EGRA, BPG, MIE discussed and agreed	July-September 2013	Ongoing; Discussions initiated August 2013
	1.3.3.2 SOWs for BPG Year 1 & 2 Task Orders developed	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Not yet finalized
	1.3.3.3 BPG Year 1 & 2 TOs issued	August-September 2013	Ongoing, not yet finalized
1.3.CH Scripted Lesson Plan Activities - Chichewa	1.3.CH.1 Review of MoEST SI Chichewa curriculum under revised primary curriculum	August-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned October 2013
	1.3.CH.2 Articulation of differences between <i>MaK</i> SI Chichewa and MoEST SI Chichewa approaches, expectations for literacy instruction	August-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned October 2013
	1.3.CH.3 Discussions held with MoEST, MIE regarding alignment needs between <i>MaK</i> and MoEST SI Chichewa	August-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned October 2013
	1.3.CH.4 Development of Scripted Lesson Plans for S2 Chichewa	January-March 2014	Not yet started

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	1.3.CH.5 Testing of S2 Chichewa Scripted Lesson Plans in 1% of intervention schools	May-June 2014	Not yet started
	1.3.EN.1 Review with MoEST, MIE expectations for S1 English instruction	August-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned October 2013
	1.3.EN.2 Review with MoEST, MIE expectations for S2 English instruction	August-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned October 2013
1.3.EN Scripted Lesson Plan Activities - English	1.3.EN.3 In collaboration with MIE and BPG, localize/adapt Liberia Grade 1 English curricular materials	September-December 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners, planned to begin October 2013
	1.3.EN.4 In collaboration with MIE and BPG, localize/adapt Liberia Grade 2 English curricular materials	January-March 2014	Not yet started
	1.3.EN.5 Testing of S1 English Scripted Lesson Plans in 1% of schools	January-February 2014	Planned
	1.3.EN.6 Testing of S2 English Scripted Lesson Plans in 1% of schools	May-June 2014	Planned
	1.3.4.1 Writers' workshops held with MIE, NLS, Malawi PEN (See also Task XC-1.1)	October-November 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.4.2 Revision of Writers' Workshop outputs by MIE, BPG	November-December 2013	Planned, not yet started
1.3.4 Development of new decodable stories for inclusion in new curricular materials	1.3.4.3 Integration of new decodable stories into new curricular materials	December 2013-January 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.4.4 Selection of decodable stories to be set aside for supplementary reading materials	December 2013-January 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.4.5 Curriculum map of relationship between story cards and SLPs developed	December 2013-February 2014	Planned, not yet started
1.3.5 blueTree Group's analysis of Malawi Book Chain/print sector	1.3.5.1 blueTree Group conducts analysis of Malawi book chain	August-October 2013	Analysis trips by bTG conducted August-September 2013; Analysis and trip reports expected October 2013
	1.3.5.2 Book chain analysis complete, report shared with Activity and MoEST,	October-December	Report expected

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	USAID stakeholders	2013	October 2013
	1.3.5.3 Ongoing blueTree Group STTA visits to provide training, guidance to private-sector printers and MoEST counterparts	January-June 2014	Planned
1.3.6 Teaching and Learning Materials accessible to children with disabilities	1.3.6.1 Identification of specific disabilities that can be effectively addressed	August-September 2013	Not yet completed due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist and Perkins on board
	1.3.6.2 Adaptation of selected materials for children with disabilities	October-November 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.3 Development of adapted material for children with disabilities	October-December 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.4 Submission of adapted material to MoEST for endorsement	December 2013	Planned
	1.3.6.5 Submission of adapted material to USAID for clearance	December 2013	Planned
	1.3.6.6 Production of materials	January-February 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.7 Distribution of adapted materials to schools and Special Needs Education Resource Units	March 2014	Planned
1.3.7 DGVP, Perkins to provide support to DSNE and schools around Individual Education Plans	1.3.7.1 Consultative meetings held between DGVP Specialist and DSNE	September 2013-April 2014	Not yet conducted due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist on board
	1.3.7.2 As appropriate, development of IEP-related training materials	October 2013-March 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.7.3 Discussions with DSNE, DTED regarding IEP-related content in pre-service training structures/programs	October 2013-April 2014	Planned

Task 1-4: Consistent In-Service Teacher Support and Mentoring

As a crucial component of support to teachers in developing their skills to effectively provide reading instruction in the classroom, EGRA has made efforts to continue and build upon the coaching that was conducted under MTPDS. As such, soon after the school year began, EGRA provided coaching/refresher trainings to the PEAs in all of the zones where the intervention is being implemented during the first school year. For those districts that were under the MPTDS intervention, these trainings were a refresher of what they had already been trained to do under MTPDS. The PEAs were advised to continue to use the coaching manual developed under MTPDS and asked to provide feedback on its utility and shortcomings during the first term of the school year. EGRA plans to incorporate this

feedback from PEAs into a revised coaching manual that will be improved and printed for the December trainings.

The PEAs in implementation zones in the four new districts also received coaching training. But because this was their first time to receive such training, they were provided with a copy of the coaching manual that was slightly modified to include branding under EGRA. The PEAs were provided with a one-day training where they were instructed on how to provide effective coaching to teachers as they implement the reading intervention, including conducting classroom observations, providing useful feedback, and modeling best instructional practices to teachers in their classrooms.

A key component of coaching is classroom observations, which help to inform PEAs on what type of support each teacher is in need of. The classroom observation instrument used under MTPDS was deemed to be too general in nature and required some refinement to focus more specifically on reading instruction. Therefore, EGRA conducted a workshop from August 27 to 28 to work with the relevant MoEST departments and MIE to develop a more focused classroom observation instrument and a learner assessment tool (LAT). A draft instrument was developed and then tested by MoEST and MIE officers, PEAs, and EGRA staff from September 23 to 27. During their coaching refresher training, the PEAs were provided with the classroom observation instrument for PEAs to provide further feedback on their utility during the first term of the school year.

Although coaching is already part of a PEA's regular job description, and PEAs are provided with limited resources by MoEST to make coaching visits to schools, it was discovered under MTPDS that the resources provided were often not enough for PEAs to reach as many schools as would be preferred. Therefore, in September EGRA continued the implementation of providing extra funds for fuel to PEAs to support them in conducting coaching visits to schools. Under the program, PEAs must develop a coaching-visit schedule and provide coaching observation reports as evidence of their coaching to receive funds for the next period. This program was introduced to PEAs during the coaching refresher trainings in September and was implemented at the end of the same month. PEAs will turn in their first reports at the end of October.

As EGRA is planning to develop and implement an SMS Gateway system, it began to develop initial discussions and plans for how the system will be designed and operated. To learn more about what has been done in other countries under similar education activities, the Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) and Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) Coordinator traveled to Nairobi on September 26–27 to attend an RTI Knowledge Sharing Meeting where representatives from various RTI education projects in Africa shared their experiences, including the design and implementation of SMS systems to support schools and teaching. EGRA will incorporate some of the shared best practices and adapt them to the Malawian context to best support teachers through SMS. A trip is planned in October for Scott Kipp, an Information Technology specialist from the RTI home office, to work with EGRA in developing the SMS Gateway system. It is also planned for the subcontractor O'Brien and Associates to travel to Malawi in November to begin negotiations with SMS service providers to establish partnerships that will leverage their support in the SMS Gateway system. Table 6 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 1-4.

Table 6. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 1.4

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 1.4 Consistent In-Service Teacher Support and Mentoring			
1.4.1 Introductory meetings between EGRA, MoEST, and USAID	1.4.1 Introductory meetings between EGRA, MoEST, and USAID	July-August 2013	Completed July 2013
1.4.2 EGRA staff meet with individual MoEST departments to define parameters, modes of collaboration	1.4.2 EGRA staff meet with individual MoEST departments to define parameters, modes of collaboration	July-August 2013	Ongoing; meetings held July-September 2013
1.4.3 Informal agreements (precursors of MOUs) reached with DIAS, DBE, DTED re: roles of Division and District-level MoEST personnel	1.4.3 Informal agreements (precursors of MOUs) reached with DIAS, DBE, DTED re: roles of Division and District-level MoEST personnel	July-September 2013	Ongoing; meetings held July-September 2013
	1.4.4.1 Schedule of visitations developed	August-September 2013	Ongoing; First schedule completed September 2013
	1.4.4.2 Development and/or adaptation of Coaching Manual	August-December 2013	Ongoing; Feedback from PEAs to be incorporated November 2013
	1.4.4.3 PEAs receive training/refresher training on Coaching from DTCs	September-December 2013	Ongoing; First refresher trainings conducted September 2013
1.4.4 PEAs provide monthly or bi-monthly Coaching visits to S1-S3 teachers	1.4.4.4 Classroom observation instrument, Coach visit report forms developed, agreed upon with DIAS	August-September 2013	Ongoing, draft trial tested in September; Awaiting feedback from PEAs
	1.4.4.5 Regular Coaching of S1-S3 teachers by PEAs	August 2013-July 2016	Ongoing
	1.4.4.6 Coaching Visit Report forms completed, returned to DEOs and EGRA	September 2013-July 2016	Ongoing; First reports to be received October 2013
	1.4.4.7 PEAs hold termly experience-sharing meetings for their teachers	November 2013-July 2016	Planned, First meeting to be held November 2013
1.4.5 Provision of remote support via SMS Gateway	1.4.5.1 SMS Gateway system set up at EGRA HQ	October 2013	Planned
	1.4.5.2 Subsidized/reduced-cost SMS service negotiated with Telecoms	July-October 2013	Planned, awaiting trip from O'Brien and Associates

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	1.4.5.3 DTCs formulate responses to FAQs and interact via SMS Gateway with teachers and HTs	November 2013-July 2016	Planned, not yet started
1.4.6 Partnerships with private-sector actors developed and leveraged in support of Coaching	1.4.6 Partnerships with private-sector actors developed and leveraged in support of Coaching	October 2013-July 2016	Planned, not yet started

Task 1-5: Rewarding Performing Teachers and Schools

During the launch and introductory meetings for EGRA, the idea of developing a certificate for early grade reading was introduced to the directors of DIAS and MIE. The initial response from MoEST is that it will be difficult for the Ministry to justify providing a certificate with any attachment to merit for teachers if it comes from an intervention that is not being conducted nationwide. Therefore, their initial recommendations are to provide a certificate of participation or completion of trainings. While these discussions are ongoing, EGRA has been working with MIE to include the awarding of certificates as one of the responsibilities of MIE in the MOU that has yet to be finalized. EGRA will continue to have discussions with MoEST and MIE to finalize the certificate framework.

In anticipation of the Grants Under Contract (GUC) component of the Activity, EGRA developed a Grants Manual that was submitted to USAID on September 17, 2013. EGRA is still awaiting feedback from USAID on the manual.

As part of the Grants Manual, EGRA has been working on establishing criteria for the selection of schools that will qualify for grant awards. During the meetings with DEMs in late-July/early-August and the August trainings with PEAs and HTs, EGRA enlisted input from the different stakeholders on what constitutes a “well-performing school.” These inputs were incorporated into a draft list of criteria. EGRA will consult further with MoEST departments and district-level stakeholders to finalize these criteria before implementing the GUC program. Table 7 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 1-5.

Table 7. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 1.5

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 1.5 Rewarding Performing Teachers and Schools			
1.5.1 Collaboration with MIE, MANEB, DIAS toward development of Certificate of Early Grade Reading	1.5.1.1 Initial discussions with MoEST, MIE, MANEB regarding interest, feasibility	August 2013	Discussions initiated August 2013
	1.5.1.2 Ongoing discussions to develop framework for Certificate program	October 2013-September 2014	Ongoing
1.5.2 Grants Under Contract (GUC) incentive program implemented	1.5.2.1 Grants Manual developed, submitted to USAID for approval	July-September 2013	Grants Manual submitted to USAID September 17, 2013
	1.5.2.2 Criteria for GUC application eligibility developed in consultation with DEMs, PEAs,	August-September	Ongoing; Initial consultations held August-September

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	HTs	2013	2013
	I.5.2.3 Schools (HTs) and Communities (SMCs) notified of GUC program	October-November 2013	Planned; pending approval of Grants Manual
	I.5.2.4 Schools and communities encouraged to collaborate around learner reading (in order to meet eligibility criteria) (as in Task 3-2)	December 2013-May 2014	Planned
	I.5.2.5 GUC program competition opens	April-May 2014	Planned
	I.5.2.6 Submitted GUC applications reviewed	May 2014	Planned
	I.5.2.7 GUC incentive awardees selected, notified	June-July 2014	Planned
	I.5.2.8 GUC funds disbursed	July-August 2014	Planned
	I.5.2.9 GUC awardees' activities monitored	July 2014-July 2016	Planned
	I.5.2.10 Top-performing teachers recognized at Reading Fairs (see Task 3-1)	January 2014-July 2016	Planned
I.5.3 Coordinate with SI on evaluation of GUCs, Teacher incentive programs	I.5.3 Coordinate with SI on evaluation of GUCs, Teacher incentive programs	April-August 2013	Planned

Component 2: Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials for Reading

Component 2 is composed of five tasks as listed below. Each task will be addressed in turn with its corresponding progress summary table.

Task 2-1: Develop and Distribute Decodable and Leveled Books

Task 2-2: Develop and Distribute Story Cards for Home Use

Task 2-3: Develop and Distribute Letter Cards

Task 2-4: Production and Distribution of Chalk Slates

Task 2-5: Supply of Mobile, Lockable Bookcases/Cabinets and Registers

The development and provision of teaching and learning materials on reading is a critical complement to the teacher-focused reading intervention activities under Component 1. The design and development of supplementary reading resources is best carried out in concert with the design, development, and refinement of the curricular resources they are intended to complement. As a result, the review, writing, and design activities associated with the development of all EGRA materials have been incorporated into Component 1.

In preparation for printing and procurement of materials, EGRA's subcontractor OAI has conducted a desk study of potential public-private partnerships (PPPs) that may contribute

to the production and printing of educational materials. A draft report is being finalized in preparation for a trip by OAI anticipated in November, at which time they will conduct follow-up visits and meetings in Malawi to further pursue such PPP opportunities. Table 8 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 2-0.

Table 8. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.0

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.0 Preparation and Groundwork for Component 2 Tasks			
2.0.1 PPPs leveraged to support provision of materials to intervention schools	2.0.1 PPPs leveraged to support provision of materials to intervention schools	September 2013-June 2016	Ongoing; OAI began desk study of assessment September 2013
2.0.2 Testing of learner books that accompany scripted lesson plans (See Task 1.3)	2.0.2.1 Limited print run of new learner books produced	November 2013	Planned
	2.0.2.2 New learner books tested in 1% of schools	November-December 2013	Planned
	2.0.2.3 Review and amendment of materials based on findings of trialing	December 2013	Planned
2.0.3 Testing of decodable texts and story cards (See Task 1.3)	2.0.3.1 Limited print run of new decodable texts and story cards	November 2013	Planned
	2.0.3.2 New decodable texts and story cards tested in 1% of schools	November-December 2013	Planned
	2.0.3.3 Review and amendment of materials based on findings of trialing	December 2013	Planned

Task 2-1: Develop and Distribute Decodable and Leveled Books

In anticipation for the leveling and writing workshops discussed above under Task 1-3, EGRA began collecting all available reading materials for Standards 1–3 in Chichewa and English. These materials will be reviewed and leveled to determine the gaps and needs for additional decodable and leveled books to be written. As such, the activities under Task 2-1 have yet to begin, but plans have been put into place to begin them in October 2013 (Table 9).

Table 9. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.1

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.1 Develop and Distribute Decodable and Leveled Books			
2.1.1 Large print run of decodable books, leveled books, and story cards	2.1.1.1 Procurement sent to printers	January 2014	Planned
	2.1.1.2 Books and story cards in production	January-February 2014	Planned

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	2.1.1.3 Delivery of books and story cards to schools	March 2014	Planned

Task 2-2: Develop and Distribute Story Cards for Home Use

As was discussed under Task 1-3 above, the workshops planned for leveling and writing of books and story cards were delayed due to the unavailability of MoEST stakeholders. The structure and design of story cards will be discussed and agreed upon during these workshops beginning in October (Table 10).

Table 10. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.2

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.2 Develop and Distribute Story Cards for Home Use			
2.2.1 In conjunction with MoEST and USAID, EGRA finalizes structure/design of story cards	2.2.1 In conjunction with MoEST and USAID, EGRA finalizes structure/design of story cards	August-September 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners
2.2.2 Story cards stocked in classroom library cases for daily reading at home	2.2.2 Story cards stocked in classroom library cases for daily reading at home	April-May 2013	Planned

Task 2-3: Develop and Distribute Letter Cards

As discussed under Task 1-3 above, the workshops planned for leveling and writing of books and story cards were delayed due to the unavailability of MoEST stakeholders. The design of letter cards will be discussed and agreed upon during these workshops beginning in October.

In the meantime, EGRA field staff have begun to collect data on the number of classrooms and location of schools that require painting of letter cards on the walls and also the number of classrooms and schools that require printed letter cards to be printed (where there are no walls for painting). As these data are being collected, plans are being developed to mobilize communities to support in the painting of letters on the walls. Table 11 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 2-3.

Table 11. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.3

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.3 Develop and Distribute Letter Cards			
2.3.1 In conjunction with MoEST and USAID, EGRA finalizes design of letter cards	2.3.1 In conjunction with MoEST and USAID, EGRA finalizes design of letter cards	August-September 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners
2.3.2 BPG adapts design to fit classrooms with no walls	2.3.2 BPG adapts design to fit classrooms with no walls	September-October 2013	Delayed due to unavailability of MoEST partners
2.3.3 DEMs, PEAs consulted to	2.3.3 DEMs, PEAs consulted to	October-	Ongoing; Began

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
identify # of classrooms requiring painted letter cards, # requiring printed cards	identify # of classrooms requiring painted letter cards, # requiring printed cards	November 2013	collecting data September 2013
2.3.4 Publication-ready files for print run of letter cards finalized, sent to printers	2.3.4 Publication-ready files for print run of letter cards finalized, sent to printers	December 2013-January 2014	Planned
2.3.5 Letter cards distributed to schools where SI classrooms have no walls	2.3.5 Letter cards distributed to schools where SI classrooms have no walls	March 2014	Planned

Task 2-4: Production and Distribution of Chalk Slates

Given the volume of chalk slates to be provided, EGRA began as early as possible to identify options for low-cost, local production of these slates. Initial solicitations have so far proven to be quite cost-prohibitive for local production of the materials. Therefore, EGRA has also been investigating alternative possibilities both within the region and internationally to better gauge the price range that can be expected. In the meantime, EGRA is continuing to search for alternative options and discuss creative solutions to address this need. It is anticipated that OAI will be able to assist in these efforts as it works to identify potential PPPs that may be able to supplement or leverage some of the costs required. Table 12 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 2-4.

Table 12. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.4

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.4 Production and Distribution of Chalk Slates			
2.4.0 Evaluation of local manufacturing of chalk slates conducted	2.4.0 Evaluation of local manufacturing of chalk slates conducted	July-September 2013	Ongoing; Evaluation initiated July 2013
2.4.1 Procurement of chalk slates	2.4.1.1 RFQ for production, procurement of chalk slates developed and issued	October-November 2013	Planned
	2.4.1.2 Vendor or offeror selected	December 2013	Planned
	2.4.1.3 Chalk slates procured, shipped to Lilongwe	January-February 2014	Planned
2.4.2 Chalk slates distributed to schools	2.4.2 Chalk slates distributed to schools	March 2014	Planned
2.4.3 Schools and teachers engaged to ensure children have chalk	2.4.3 Schools and teachers engaged to ensure children have chalk	February 2014-July 2016	Planned

Task 2-5: Supply of Mobile, Lockable Bookcases/Cabinets and Registers

At the same time EGRA began to explore the possibilities of procuring or producing the chalk slates, it also looked into possibilities for procuring and producing mobile, lockable bookcases locally. Similar to the chalk slates, the cost of bookcases produced locally has

proven to be much higher than anticipated. Therefore, EGRA has been exploring options regionally and internationally. In the meantime, EGRA is continuing to search for alternative options and discuss creative solutions to address this need. It is anticipated that OAI will be able to assist in these efforts as it works to identify potential PPPs that may be able to supplement or leverage some of the costs required. Table 13 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 2-5.

Table 13. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 2.5

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 2.5 Supply of Mobile Lockable Bookcases/Cabinets and Registers			
2.5.0 Evaluation of local manufacturing capacity of bookcases/cabinets	2.5.0 Evaluation of local manufacturing capacity of bookcases/cabinets	July-October 2013	Ongoing; Evaluation initiated July 2013
2.5.1 Procurement of bookcases and registers	2.5.1.1 RFQ for production, procurement of bookcases and registers developed and issued	October-November 2013	Planned
	2.5.1.2 Vendor or offeror selected	December 2013	Planned
	2.5.1.3 Bookcases procured, shipped to Lilongwe	January-February 2014	Planned
2.5.2 Bookcases and registers distributed to schools	2.5.2 Bookcases and registers distributed to schools	March 2014	Planned
2.5.3 Indexing/registration format for tracking learner use of library reading materials developed in collaboration with school community	2.5.3 Indexing/registration format for tracking learner use of library reading materials developed in collaboration with school community	March-May 2014	Planned
2.5.4 Registers maintained by TAs, community volunteers, or classroom teachers	2.5.4 Registers maintained by TAs, community volunteers, or classroom teachers	May-June 2014	Planned

Component 3: Increasing Parental and Community Engagement to Support Student Reading

Component 3 is composed of three tasks as listed below. Each task will be addressed in turn with its corresponding progress summary table.

Task 3-1: Reading Fairs

Task 3-2: Parental/Caregiver and Community Support for Reading

Task 3-3: Provide Classroom Level and School Support for Reading

In preparation for the community mobilization (CM) component of the Activity, EGRA enlisted the technical support of the consultant Barbara Harvey to assist the Community Mobilization Specialist in the development of initial plans for CM activities and to develop an initial draft of a handbook for CM. Barbara Harvey traveled to Malawi from July 8-12 and continued to provide remote support to the CM Specialist as the work plan and handbook were under development. A resulting first draft of the CM handbook is planned to be used during trainings in November for EGRA staff and key government counterparts. During

these trainings, further revisions will be made to produce a final draft of the handbook, which will then be disseminated to the field for PEAs, Community Development Assistants (CDAs), HTs, teachers, and community members to be trained on the use of the handbooks.

The recruitment of District Community Mobilization Officers (DCMs) was delayed due to the ongoing process of finalizing the details of CRECCOM’s subcontract under EGRA. Because all of the DCMs are to be employed by CRECCOM, EGRA has supported CRECCOM in establishing job descriptions and advertising for the positions in preparation for hiring and deploying the DCMs to every intervention district. EGRA plans to conduct final interviews and complete the hiring process for the DCMs in early FY 2014 and orient and deploy them to their respective districts in November. Table 14 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 3-0.

Table 14. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 3.0

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 3.0 Preparatory Groundwork and Development of EGRA resource materials for CM			
3.0.1 Development and deployment of EGRA CM Handbooks	3.0.1.1 Consultant Barbara Harvey mobilized to assist CM Specialist in development of handbooks	June 2013	Completed; Trip Report approved by USAID September 16 2013
	3.0.1.2 Completion of CM Handbooks	August-November 2013	Ongoing; First draft completed, awaiting feedback from training before finalization
	3.0.1.3 Training of Activity staff on use of CM Handbooks	October 2013	Planned
	3.0.1.4 Training of PEAs, CDAs on use of CM Handbooks	December 2013	Planned
3.0.2 Deployment of DCMs to Districts	3.0.2.1 DCMs develop relationships with school staff, local community leaders, CDAs, MoEST District-level personnel	July 2013-August 2014	Ongoing; Delay due to continued finalization of contract for CRECCOM

Task 3-1: Reading Fairs

The DCMs and CDAs will be the key actors in encouraging communities to sponsor reading fairs on a regular basis. Therefore, activities around reading fairs have yet to get started as EGRA works on bringing the DCMs onboard and begin working closely with the CDAs. In the meantime, the CM Specialist has worked with the consultant Barbara Harvey and EGRA technical staff in developing initial ideas for the Reading Fair Planning Guide and planning for the timing and implementation of reading fairs.

Because EGRA anticipates the DGVP Specialist and Perkins International to be fully on board by early October, activities related to the development of Braille Cup have yet to get started. Initial discussions have been conducted while finalizing the scope of work for Perkins and in preparations for the DGVP Specialist to officially join the EGRA office in October. Table 15 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 3-1.

Table 15. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 3.1

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 3.1 Reading Fairs			
3.1.0 DTCs, DCMs coordinate planning for community-driven reading fairs	3.1.0.1 Development of Reading Fair Planning Guide	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Awaiting deployment of remaining DCMs to finalize
	3.1.0.2 Development of Reading Fair schedule, agenda	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Awaiting deployment of remaining DCMs to finalize
	3.1.0.3 Procurement by school of necessary materials	October 2013-April 2014	Planned
3.1.1 School-based fairs held to showcase learner reading abilities	3.1.1 School-based fairs held to showcase learner reading abilities	October 2013-June 2014	Planned
3.1.2 DGVP Specialist and Perkins International's local partners coordinate planning for, development of Braille Cup	3.1.2.1 Identification of available matching resources	September-November 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
	3.1.2.2 Development of Braille Cup outreach plan, participant scope	December 2013-February 2014	Planned
	3.1.2.3 Adaptation/Development of BC-specific testing materials	March-April 2014	Planned
3.1.3 Braille Cup implemented	3.1.3.1 Matching resources for BC mobilized	February-April 2014	Planned
	3.1.3.2 BC schedule, agenda set	March-April 2014	Planned
	3.1.3.3 BC competition held	May-June 2014	Planned
3.1.4 Evaluation of School Year 1 Reading Fairs and Braille Cup	3.1.4.1 Consolidation of Reading Fair reports from field offices	March-August 2014	Planned
	3.1.4.2 Collaboration with Social Impact (external evaluator) to establish evaluation approach	November 2013-January 2014	Planned
	3.1.4.3 Evaluation conducted	June-July 2014	Planned

Task 3-2: Parental/Caregiver and Community Support for Reading

As was discussed under Task 1-2, parents and communities were mobilized to support the August trainings by providing children for the practicum session held at each TDC. Because this was the first time that such a practicum session has been incorporated into a zonal-based CPD training, it was encouraging to see the positive response by parents and communities, with all TDCs having full participation by children, allowing for a hands-on practicum session to be included in the five-day trainings.

Because EGRA has already begun implementation in the intervention zones, communities have been sensitized about the Activity and its programs through informal discussions and mobilization efforts. In early FY 2014, EGRA plans to conduct more formal meetings wherein a larger number of community members, including SMCs and PTAs will be sensitized on specific community mobilizations efforts being promoted under EGRA. As EGRA implements its activities at schools and in communities, it is monitoring, documenting, and collecting data on promising approaches that are being conducted by parents and communities to support reading. In addition, EGRA staff are investigating other approaches that have been tried in other areas and through similar projects and activities within Malawi and throughout the region. The RTI knowledge-sharing meeting in Nairobi, as discussed under Task 1-4, is an example of these efforts. OAI is also helping EGRA to gather information about potential PPPs in supporting communities to improve reading in their schools through the desk study discussed under Component 2 above.

The majority of the other activities under Task 3-2 have yet to get started due to the delay in bringing the DCMs, DGVP Specialist, and Perkins International on board. Therefore, these are anticipated to begin in earnest in the early months of FY 2014 as the DCMs are deployed to the field and Perkins has begun implementing its activities. Table 16 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 3-2.

Table 16. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 3.2

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 3.2 Parental/Caregiver and Community Support for Reading			
3.2.0 SMCs, PTAs and community leaders engaged through SMS Gateway messaging	3.2.0 SMCs, PTAs and community leaders engaged through SMS Gateway messaging	August 2013-July 2016	Planned; Not yet started as SMS Gateway is being developed
3.2.1 Communities mobilized to support young readers	3.2.1.1 Communities encouraged to send children to participate in Day 5 of PEA training of teachers (see also Task 1.2.2)	August 2013-April 2016	Ongoing; Children participated in August 2013 training
	3.2.1.2 Children attend Day 5 of PEA training of teachers	August 2013-April 2016	Ongoing; Children participated in August 2013 training
	3.2.1.3 Community sensitization meetings held	August 2013-September 2014	Ongoing; Meetings began in August 2013
	3.2.1.4 Communities procure paint, paintbrushes to paint letter cards on walls of SI classrooms	December 2013-January 2014; September 2014	Planned
	3.2.1.5 Community classroom painting days	February 2014; September 2014	Planned
3.2.2 Promising approaches to parental support investigated	3.2.2.1 Promising approaches to parental support by non-literate parents investigated	September 2013-September 2014	Ongoing
3.2.3 Activities continuously monitored to allow for iterative improvement	3.2.3 Activities continuously monitored to allow for iterative improvement	September 2013-September 2014	Ongoing

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
3.2.4 Communities mobilized to make copies of decodable readers provided under Component 2	3.2.4.1 Interested Communities take delivery of paper, writing utensils for copying	February-April 2014	Planned
	3.2.4.2 Decodable Reader Duplication Day held	February-April 2014	Planned
	3.2.4.3 CM staff and personnel report on successes/challenges of approach	February-September 2014	Planned
3.2.5 Perkins International and local partner organizations conduct awareness-raising trainings and meetings around disability and reading	3.2.5 Perkins International and local partner organizations conduct awareness-raising trainings and meetings around disability and reading	September 2013-September 2014	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
3.2.6 Development of Disability Education Resource Guide (DERG)	3.2.6.1 Development of DERG	August-December 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
	3.2.6.2 DERG submitted to MoEST for endorsement	January 2014	Planned
	3.2.6.3 DERG submitted to USAID for clearance	January 2014	Planned
3.2.7 O'Brien and Associates International develops PPPs	3.2.7.1. Conduct initial desk study of available actors, plan possible alliance assessment and potential partnerships	July-October 2013	Ongoing; Draft of desk study completed
	3.2.7.2 Develop partnership concepts/papers, negotiate roles/responsibilities for alliances	November 2013-September 2014	Planned
	3.2.7.3 Finalize and sign MOUs/support implementation	April-September 2014	Planned

Task 3-3: Provide Classroom-Level and School Support for Reading

The idea of recruiting community volunteers as teaching assistants (TAs) was presented to MoEST directors during the introductory meetings for EGRA. This was met at first with mixed reactions as some departments were hesitant about the idea. But during further discussions it was discovered that the idea of recruiting TAs was already being promoted under the Primary School Improvement Program (under DBE). Therefore, this practice has a precedent and a mechanism that EGRA can potentially replicate.

Much of the work for identifying model schools that will utilize TAs has yet to get started as EGRA continues to prepare for the hiring and deployment of DCMs to the districts. In the meantime, EGRA will continue to have discussions with educational stakeholders on the practicalities of implementing such an idea. Table 17 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 3-3.

Table 17. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 3.3

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 3.3 Provide Classroom-level and School Support for Reading			
3.3.1 In conjunction with MoEST/DEO, identify 1 school/zone in which use of a paraprofessional teaching assistant (TA) will be modeled	3.3.1.1 Model school identified	August 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DCMs onboard
	3.3.1.2 Recruit TAs from local community	September-October 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DCMs onboard
	3.3.1.3 TAs included in PEA teacher-training workshops	November 2013	Planned
	3.3.1.4 TAs engaged in school-based activities, providing classroom-level support	December 2013-June 2014	Planned
3.3.2 Discussions held with MoEST/DTED regarding certification of paraprofessional TAs for lateral entry into teaching profession	3.3.2 Discussions held with MoEST/DTED regarding certification of paraprofessional TAs for lateral entry into teaching profession	August 2013-September 2014	Planned; Not yet started

Component 4: Improving Policy Environment to Support Early Grade Reading

Component 4 is composed of three tasks, as listed below. Each task will be addressed in turn with its corresponding progress summary table.

Task 4-1: Attend MoEST Technical Working Groups Relevant to Early Grade Reading

Task 4-2: Develop Memoranda of Understanding

Task 4-3: Facilitate Extension of Reading Instruction Time

Task 4-1: Attend MoEST Technical Working Groups Relevant to Early Grade Reading

To continue building upon the successes rendered under MTPDS and to further develop the relationships and coordination established, EGRA has worked in collaboration and consultation with MoEST from the beginning of the Activity.

One of the important mechanisms for ensuring coordination with MoEST and other education partners is active participation in the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) related to early grade reading. As such, EGRA planned to attend the TWGs for Basic Education and for Standards, Research and Development, which were all scheduled in September. But neither of these meetings took place, as both were postponed until October. The only TWG that did occur during this reporting period was the TWG for Teacher Education, which the EGRA National Training Coordinator attended.

In addition, the Senior Education Policy Advisor developed a draft concept note for the introduction of a quarterly meeting of projects and activities focusing on early grade reading. This concept note was circulated among all of the relevant organizations for their feedback

and input into the development of the concept. When a final draft is agreed upon, EGRA will submit the concept note to DIAS for their endorsement. It is proposed that the quarterly meeting will fall under the auspices of the TWG for Standards, Research and Development and will be chaired by DIAS. EGRA plans to begin implementing the working group as soon as it is endorsed by MoEST and approved by USAID. Table 18 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 4-1.

Table 18. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 4.1

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 4.1 Attend MoEST Technical Working Groups Relevant to Early Grade Reading			
4.1.1 Active participation in meetings of Technical Working Groups (TWGs) relevant to early grade reading	4.1.1 Basic Education TWG attended by EGRA representative	August 2013-October 2016	No TWG held during this period
	4.1.2 Teacher Education TWG attended by EGRA representative	August 2013-October 2016	Ongoing; Attended meeting on September 12 2013
	4.1.3 Standards, Research, and Development TWG attended by EGRA representative	August 2013-October 2016	No TWG held during this period
	4.1.4 USAID/Donor coordination group on disability attended by EGRA representative	August 2013-October 2016	Planned
	4.1.5 Quarterly implementing meetings of TWG hosted on rotating basis	August 2013-October 2016	Planned; Concept note drafted

Task 4-2: Develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

The concept of developing MOUs with DEMs, schools, and communities was presented to the MoEST directors during the initial introductory meetings. It was also discussed with the DEMs during the COP's visits to each district education office (DEO). The idea was well accepted, but it was agreed that the details would need to be developed in consultation with the stakeholders on the ground and in coordination with the relevant MoEST departments.

Through consultation meetings held from August 1 to 3 at the divisional offices, the Senior Education Policy Advisor developed a framework of issues for MOUs along with draft MOUs for DEMS, HTs, and SMCs. These were shared with DEMs and Coordinating PEAs from the intervention districts at a meeting held in Liwonde on September 6. The resulting framework and draft MOUs were presented to the Deputy Director of Basic Education on September 27 for approval.

As curriculum development is an essential component to EGRA's SOW, it was deemed necessary to establish an MOU with MIE as the institution responsible for curriculum development for MoEST. Therefore, EGRA held a number of consultation meetings with MIE to establish a common understanding of what needed to be included in the MOU with MIE. Although a few details are yet to be finalized, a common understanding has been established with MIE on the expectations of both organizations in working together toward improving

early grade reading in Malawi. The final draft of the MOU will be submitted to USAID for clearance before being signed by both parties.

To ensure that the Activity is implemented in line with the research design of the external impact evaluation being conducted by Social Impact (SI), EGRA has communicated regularly with SI in the identification of zones where the intervention will be implemented during the first year. At the time of planning for the August trainings, EGRA was provided with a list of control schools and their zones from which EGRA should not intervene during the first year. Therefore, EGRA selected from the remaining zones that did not include control schools to establish the 50% of zones in each of the four new intervention districts for the August trainings. This list of zones selected for the first year intervention in the four new districts (see Table 2 above) was shared with SI on August 12. No objections were made to this selection, so EGRA went ahead with implementation of the teacher trainings conducted later that month.

In addition, during the consultation meetings discussed above, DEMs were consulted to identify with EGRA the zones in which the intervention would be implemented during the first year of the Activity in the remaining seven districts. These selected zones were shared with SI on September 23 for SI's feedback. During this communication EGRA was informed by SI that there were two different types of non-control zones from which EGRA can select its initial intervention zones: "treatment" zones and "neutral" (non-treatment, non-control) zones. EGRA was instructed that it should first select its zones from the "treatment" category before moving into the "neutral" zones.

Based on this feedback EGRA adjusted its list to incorporate all "treatment" zones into its list of zones that will receive the first year intervention in the seven "MTPDS legacy" districts. During this selection process, it was discovered that 11 "treatment" zones were not included in the initial list of zones (see Table 2) for the four new intervention districts that was shared with SI on August 12. Therefore, a plan will need to be developed in collaboration with USAID to reach these additional 11 zones that were not included in the August trainings. These deliberations will be finalized in early FY 2014. Table 19 provides a list of zones falling under each category: "treatment", "control", and "neutral" with the zones selected for EGRA implementation during School Year 1 indicated are highlighted in bold. Those zones which were included in the August trainings are in bold with an asterisk. The 11 "treatment" zones in the four new districts that were not originally included in the August trainings, but later added to the EGRA intervention during Term 1 are highlighted in italics and bold.

Table 19. Zones by Impact Evaluation Category, as assigned by Social Impact

Treatment Zones ²	Neutral Zones	Control Zones
Balaka District (Total zones=12; School Year I EGRA zones=12)		
<i>Chendausiku</i>	Boma*	
<i>Kankao</i>	Chembera*	
<i>Maduwani</i>	Utale*	
<i>Mmanga</i>		
Mpilisi*		
<i>Mponda</i>		
<i>Nkhonde</i>		
Phalula*		
<i>Ulongwe</i>		
Lilongwe Rural East District (Total zones=19; School Year I EGRA zones=12)		
Chowo*	Chabadwa	Balang'ombe
<i>Kang'oma</i>	Chankhandwe*	Chiseka
<i>Matapila</i>	Chikanga	Kunthulu
<i>Nkhoma</i>	Ching'ombe*	Mchemani
	Kanjeza*	
	Malikha*	
	Mitundu*	
	Mtentera*	
	Nathenje	
	Pimbiri*	
	Thawale*	
Lilongwe Rural West District (Total zones=21; School Year I EGRA zones=10)		
Kabuthu*	Buwa	Chikhutu
Mteza*	Dzenza*	Kamanzi
	Kabudula*	Majiga
	Kalolo	Malembo
	Kalolo II	Malingunde
	Kalonga*	Mdzobwe
	Kasiya*	Ndaula
	Likuni*	Nyanja
	Mpingu*	
	Mzumazi*	
	Njewa*	
Machinga District (Total zones=9; School Year I EGRA zones=7)		

² Key: **Bold** = Intervention zones for School Year 1

Bold* (with asterisk) = Zones trained during the August trainings

Bold with italics = Zones that were not included in the August trainings but trained later in Term 1

Treatment Zones²	Neutral Zones	Control Zones
<i>Machinga Boma</i>	Chikweo*	Puteya
Namandanje*	Mpombe*	
St Therese*	Ngokwe*	
	Nsanama*	
	Ntaja	
Ntcheu District (Total zones=18; School Year I EGRA zones=9)		
Bilila	Ganya	Kanyimbo
Chikande	Kambilonjo	Lizulu
Gumbu	Kanyimbo	Tsangano
Matchereza	Kapalamula	
Nsipe	Kasinje	
Nsiyaludzu	Muluma	
Ntonda		
Senzani		
Sharpvale		
Blantyre Rural District (Total zones=13; School Year I EGRA zones=6)		
Dziwe		Chigumukire
Dzunga		Khombwe
Lunzu		Lirangwe
Mudi		Madziabango
Namwanje		Mdeka
Naotcha		Mpapa
		Nankumba
Mzimba North District (Total zones=21; School Year I EGRA zones=10)		
Bulala		Bwengu
Chanyama		Echilumbeni
Emcisweni		Ekwendeni
Emoneni		Engucwini
Kafukule		Enkondhlweni
Kapando		Enukweni
Lusangazi		Enyezini
Mtende		Euthini
Mzalangwe		Ezondweni
Rukuru		Mbalachanda
		Njuyu
Ntchisi District (Total zones=15; School Year I EGRA zones=7)		
Boma		Chinthembwe
Chibweya		Chiko
Kamsonga		Chinthembwe
Makanda		Kayoyo
Malambo		Malomo
Mpherere		Mbuyedziko

Treatment Zones ²	Neutral Zones	Control Zones
Mvumo		Mpalo Msumba
Salima District (Total zones=10; School Year I EGRA zones=10)		
Chipoka		
Chitala		
Kanongola		
Kaphatenga		
Katelera		
Matenje		
Msalura		
Ngolowindo		
Thavite		
Yambe		
Thyolo District (Total zones=16; School Year I EGRA zones=8)		
Folopensi		Chisawani
Gombe		Mulenga
Khonjeni		Thekerani
Masambanjati		Goliati
Molere		Konzalendo
Mpinji		Luchenza
Nansato		Mountain View
Ntambanyama		Thunga
Zomba District (Total zones=17; School Year I EGRA zones=7)		
Chikala	Namadidi	Chikomwe
Chingale		Chilipa
Namiwawa		Chimwalira
Ntulungutsi		Namapata
St Martin		Nsondole
St Michael		Ntonda
St Pauls		Chingale St Anthony

Table 20 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 4-2.

Table 20. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 4.2

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 4.2 Develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)			
4.2.1 MOUs developed	4.2.1.1 Consultative meetings held	July-	Ongoing; Meetings

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
with stakeholders in intervention districts and schools	with stakeholders, including DIAS, DBE, DEMs, PEAs, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MGCSW)	September 2013	initiated July 2013
	4.2.1.2 Work with DEMs in intervention districts to identify Zones in which Activity will operate in School Year 1	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Meetings held with DEMs August 2013
	4.2.1.3 Work with MoEST, USAID, Social Impact to identify Zones in which Activity will operate in School Year 2	January-August 2014	Ongoing
	4.2.1.4 Draft frameworks for MOUs with DEMs, PEAs, HTs and SMC chairpersons developed	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Incorporating feedback from consultation meetings
	4.2.1.5 MOU frameworks submitted to USAID for clearance	October 2013	Planned
	4.2.1.6 MOU frameworks submitted to MoEST, MGCSW for approval	November 2013	Planned
4.2.2 MOUs signed with stakeholders in intervention districts	4.2.2.1 Sensitization meetings held with stakeholders	December 2013	Planned
	4.2.2.2 MOUs submitted to stakeholders for signing	December 2013	Planned
4.2.3 Community actors leveraged to monitor school activities	4.2.3.1 Community actors trained in monitoring school activities related to EGRA	January-August 2014	Planned
	4.2.3.2 Community actors monitor school activities related to EGRA	January-September 2014	Planned
4.2.4 MOUs revisited and updated in light of School Year 1 successes and challenges	4.2.4 MOUs revisited and updated in light of School Year 1 successes and challenges	July-August 2014	Planned

Task 4-3: Facilitate Extension of Reading Instruction Time

During this reporting period, the Senior Education Policy Advisor conducted a review of MoEST policies and instructions regarding the extension of instructional time for reading. The review revealed that MoEST does not currently have any policy or formal instruction on this topic. Under MTPDS, the intervention districts were able to implement an additional hour of reading instruction under the direction of their respective DEMs. Therefore, a precedent has been set at the district level, albeit not nationally.

With this information, EGRA has begun to hold consultations with the relevant MoEST departments and the DEMs from the 11 intervention districts to begin to establish implementation guidance for extending reading time in intervention schools. This has been incorporated in the draft MOUs for DEMs and school HTs as an important component of

the cooperation between EGRA and its intervention districts and schools. Further consultations and meetings are planned to finalize and implement this guidance in the intervention zones. Additionally, EGRA will continue to discuss the matter with MoEST directors to encourage the practice to become implemented nationwide. Table 21 provides further details on the status of activities for Task 4-3.

Table 21. Progress against Planned Activities—Task 4.3

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Task 4.3 Facilitate Extension of Reading Instructional Time			
4.3.1 Review existing MoEST instructions regarding extension of instructional time for reading	4.3.1 Review existing MoEST instructions regarding extension of instructional time for reading	July 2013; August 2014	Initial consultations August 2013
4.3.2 Request submitted to USAID to facilitate policy discussion with MoEST on 1-hr extension of reading instructional time	4.3.2 Request submitted to USAID to facilitate policy discussion with MoEST on 1-hr extension of reading instructional time	August 2013	Not yet started
4.3.3 Meetings held with MoEST to obtain implementation guidance	4.3.3 Meetings held with MoEST to obtain implementation guidance	September 2013; August 2014	Ongoing; Initial consultations August 2013
4.3.4 Meetings held with DEMs, PEAs in intervention districts to share/review implementation guidance	4.3.4 Meetings held with DEMs, PEAs in intervention districts to share/review implementation guidance	September 2013; August 2014	Ongoing; Initial consultations August 2013
4.3.5 Extension of reading time implemented at district level	4.3.5 Extension of reading time implemented at district level	October 2013-September 2014	Ongoing
4.3.6 Advocacy meetings with SMCs/PTAs for school communities' use of local activities to increase time spent reading outside of school	4.3.6 Advocacy meetings with SMCs/PTAs for school communities' use of local activities to increase time spent reading outside of school	October 2013-September 2014	Planned
4.3.7 'Social contract' developed with parents and communities	4.3.7 'Social contract' developed with parents and communities	October 2013-September 2014	Planned

Task 4-4: Identify Common Language of Instruction

Although this task is included in the EGRA SOW, due to the political environment in Malawi around the issue of language of instruction in primary schools, the Activity was provided with technical direction from USAID to refrain from conducting any activities related to this task until further notice. For more information about this technical direction, refer to the Challenges section below.

Therefore, the table for Task 4-4 is not included in this report as no activities were addressed during this reporting period.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Crosscutting Issues

Monitoring and Evaluation is composed of three tasks and Crosscutting Issues are composed of six crosscutting themes as listed below. Each task and theme will be addressed in turn with its corresponding progress summary table.

ME-1: Initial Activity M&E

ME-2: Coordinating with External Evaluator for baseline and midterm assessments

- ME-3:** Regular Ongoing Reporting
- XC-1:** Local Capacity Development
- XC-2:** Students with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities
- XC-3:** Grants Under Contract (GUCs)
- XC-4:** Geographic Coverage
- XC-5:** Public-Private Partnerships
- XC-6:** Gender Equality

Certain elements of EGRA's scope of work are crosscutting and therefore do not fit wholly within one Component. M&E activities, which are by definition uniformly crosscutting, are also included here. For each of the crosscutting issues, activities are identified which have already been listed and discussed within the four Components above for which the crosscutting issue is addressed. A brief summary is provided for each crosscutting issue with a table following which lists the activities from Components 1-4 that apply to that particular crosscutting issue. Therefore, many of the activities have already been addressed above, but are listed only for illustrative purposes.

ME-1: Internal Program M&E

During the initial months of start-up for EGRA, RTI utilized STTA support from Dr. Liz Randolph to help develop the results framework and related indicators that would be the basis for the PMEP. As part of this support Dr. Randolph traveled to Malawi from July 14-21 and worked directly with the EGRA Component leaders to establish appropriate indicators and targets for the Activity. After the initial results framework and indicators were established they were shared with DIAS, DEP, and other MoEST stakeholders to receive their feedback and input into the appropriateness and relevance of the indicators to MoEST priorities. Their feedback was then incorporated into the final draft of the PMEP which was submitted to USAID on September 17, 2013.

In order to effectively track the number of teachers, HTs, PEAs and other participants that are to be trained under EGRA, the Activity will utilize a database that will keep a record of the number of trainings each participant completes. The M&E and Learning Specialist worked with Component leaders in determining the information which needs to be captured in such a database and subsequently designed training registers to capture such data. The IT Specialist began designing the database format which is still in progress.

As has already been discussed under Task 1-4, EGRA held two workshops to develop and field test the classroom observation and LAT instruments for data collection in the field. These instruments will be further utilized and refined during Term 1 of this school year. The finalized instruments will be used to conduct baseline and subsequent data collection for their relative indicators. It is planned for these instruments to be rendered into Tangerine software to be used on computer tablets by PEAs and EGRA field staff after Term 1. During September the RTI home office began the procurement of 110 tablets to be used during the first year of EGRA which are anticipated to arrive in early November. Table 22 provides further details on the status of activities for Task ME-1.

Table 22. Progress against Planned Activities—ME-I: Internal Activity M&E

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
ME-I: Internal Activity M&E			
ME-I.1 Establishment of PMEP	ME-I.1.1 Liz Randolph STTA to support development of PMEP	July 2013	Complete
	ME-I.1.2 Consultation with DIAS, other MoEST stakeholders regarding indicators	July-August 2013	Complete; Meetings held July-August 2013
	ME-I.1.3 Continued development of PMEP document	July-September 2013	Ongoing; PMEP submitted to USAID September 17, 2013, awaiting approval
	ME-I.1.4 Submission of PMEP to USAID for approval	September 2013	Submitted September 17, 2013
ME-I.2 M&E Tool Development	ME-I.2.1 Design of M&E Database	August-December 2013	Ongoing
	ME-I.2.2 Development of M&E templates, protocols, reporting tools	August-December 2013	Ongoing; Tool development workshops and field testing conducting September 2013
	ME-I.2.3 Rendering of M&E data collection forms in Tangerine	September-December 2013	Planned to be conducted in October 2013
ME-I.3 EGRA-lite instrument development	ME-I.3.1 Adaptation and/or Passage-writing workshop	September-October 2013	Ongoing; Initial passages written September 2013
	ME-I.3.2 Rendering of LAT instruments for Tangerine	October-November 2013	Planned to be conducted October 2013
	ME-I.3.3 Equating study of LAT reading passages	October-November 2013	Planned, not yet started
	ME-I.3.4 LAT deployment scheme finalized	December 2013-January 2014	Planned
ME-I.4 Procurement of Nexus tablets and accessories	ME-I.4.1 Tablets procured	September 2013-January 2014	Ongoing; Procurement initiated September 2013
	ME-I.4.2 Tablets shipped to Malawi	September-October 2013	Planned to be shipped October 2013
	ME-I.4.3 Tablets deployed for LAT equating study	October-November 2013	Planned
ME-I.5 Training of PEAs on use of Tangerine-based data collection	ME-I.5.1 Training of personnel for LAT data collection	October-November 2013	Planned

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	ME-1.5.2 Training of PEAs and DMEs on use of Tangerine for regular Classroom Observation and Coaching visit activities	December 2103; August 2014	Planned
ME-1.6 Tangerine-based M&E implemented	ME-1.6 Tangerine-based M&E implemented	January-May 2014	Planned
ME-1.7 Small-scale LAT quantitative assessments	ME-1.7 Small-scale LAT quantitative assessments	February; May 2014	Planned

ME-2: Coordinating with External Evaluator for Baseline and Midterm Assessments

As was discussed under Task 4-2, EGRA has coordinated with Social Impact the external evaluator for the baseline assessments from the inception of the Activity and will continue to do so. Challenges have arisen out of some miscommunication on the initial selection of zones for the August trainings, which will be discussed in greater detail under the **Challenges, Solutions, and Actions Taken** section of this report. Table 23 provides further details on the status of activities for Task ME-2.

Table 23. Progress against Planned Activities—ME-2: Coordinating with External Evaluator

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
ME-2: Coordinating with External Evaluator for Baseline and Midterm Assessments			
ME-2.1 Coordinate with external evaluator (Social Impact, SI) on impact assessments	ME-2.1.1 Coordinate with SI on selection of intervention Zones in light of baseline data collection	August-September 2013; May-July 2014	Ongoing
	ME-2.1.2 Coordinate with SI on end of School Year I EGR Assessment	April-May 2014	Planned

ME-3: Regular Ongoing Reporting

This report is the first of the contractually required reports to USAID. Therefore, there currently are no other quarterly or annual reports for EGRA.

EGRA has worked to keep MoEST counterparts updated on its activities during the first months of the Activity. EGRA plans to begin submitting short monthly reports to the relevant MoEST departments and MIE to keep them informed of EGRA activities and plans. Table 24 provides further details on the status of activities for Task ME-3.

Table 24. Progress against Planned Activities—ME-3: Regular Ongoing Reporting

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
ME-3: Regular Ongoing Reporting			

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
ME-3.1 Regular ongoing reporting	ME-3.1.1 Quarterly Performance Reports	October 2013-October 2016	Planned
	ME-3.1.2 Quarterly Financial Reports	October 2013-October 2016	Planned
	ME-3.1.3 Annual Report	October 2013-October 2016	Planned
	ME-3.1.4 Monthly updates to MoEST counterparts	August 2013-October 2016	Planned
	ME-3.1.5 Quarterly technical meetings with PS, Directors of MoEST and USAID	October 2013-October 2016	Planned

XC-1: Local Capacity Development (LCD)

As an essential part of the local capacity development efforts of EGRA, the Activity has worked to engage MoEST and MIE personnel in its technical work. During this reporting period, this work has included the engagement of officers from MIE, DIAS, DTED, DBE, TTCs, PEAs and other institutions as expert trainers for the August teacher trainings, in the development and field testing of data collection instruments, and in reviewing materials for use under EGRA. As discussed in Task I-1, a workshop that was scheduled for the end of September but postponed until October will begin the work of developing content and materials for the Standard I English curriculum as well as the leveling of reading materials and writing materials to address the gaps identified during the leveling activity. During these activities, MoEST and MIE personnel are provided with hands-on training and mentoring as they have opportunities for practical application of their new skills.

The findings from the STTA trips conducted by bTG during this reporting period will be compiled in a book chain analysis, which will inform future trips by bTG to provide capacity building to printers, MoEST, MIE, and other stakeholders involved in the publishing and printing of reading materials.

An important aspect of EGRA's LCD efforts is directed toward building the capacity of its local subcontractor CRECCOM. One of the major strategies in developing capacity within the organization is a peer mentoring program that will be implemented throughout the duration of the Activity. From September 16 to 23, Dr. Beatriz Coningham traveled to Malawi from the RTI home office to help facilitate the design and set-up of the peer mentoring program for EGRA. During her visit Dr. Coningham conducted trainings on leading change and peer mentoring with staff members from RTI and CRECCOM in attendance. The structure of the mentoring program was introduced and discussed with opportunities for EGRA staff members to identify mentoring needs and practice mentoring activities through role-play. The actual peer-mentoring program will be implemented once all field staff are recruited and officially deployed to their posts. Then peer-mentoring dyads will be assigned with regular mentoring meetings and reports conducted. Table 25 provides further details on the status of activities for Task XC-1.

Table 25. Progress against Planned Activities—XC-1: Local Capacity Development (LCD)

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-1: Local Capacity Development (LCD)			
XC-1.1 Local capacity is built in area of early grade reading	XC-1.1.1 MIE, NLS staff trained in leveling of reading materials	September-October 2013	Planned; Not yet started due to postponed workshop
	XC-1.1.2 MIE, NLS, Malawi PEN participate in writing workshops that include training on developing decodable stories for children (See also Task 1.3.4.1)	October-November 2013	Planned
XC-1.2 CRECCOM's capacity is built in area of project management	XC-1.2.1 Dr. Beatriz Coningham deployed to Malawi to facilitate internal conference and development of Organizational Learning and Mentorship tools	September 2013	Completed; Trip report shared with USAID October 7 2013
	XC-1.2.2 EGRA peer-mentorship program set in place	October 2013	Planned
	XC-1.2.3 Ongoing implementation of organizational learning and mentorship activities	October 2013-October 2016	Planned
	XC-1.2.4 Quarterly in-person meetings of peer mentors	October 2013-July 2016	Planned
	XC-1.2.5 RTI applies HOCAI and/or other relevant assessment instruments to evaluate CRECCOM's systems	October 2013	Planned
	XC-1.2.6 Development of CRECCOM systems-strengthening/remediation plans	November 2013	Planned
	XC-1.2.7 Implementation of CRECCOM systems-strengthening/remediation plans	December 2013-July 2016	Planned

XC-2: Students with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities

As has already been discussed under Task 1-3, Perkins International and the DGVP Specialist have not yet been fully integrated into EGRA. The director and regional manager of Perkins made an initial visit to Malawi in August to work out the logistical and administrative arrangements for making this happen. It is anticipated that the DGVP Specialist will join the EGRA main office in Lilongwe at the beginning of October 2013.

In the meantime there has been little work done under this crosscutting issue as EGRA waits for the technical expertise and resources from Perkins International and the DGVP Specialist. Table 26 provides further details on the status of activities for Task XC-2.

Table 26. Progress against Planned Activities—XC-2: Students with Special Needs

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-2: Activities from Components 1-4 that address Students with Special Needs/Learning			

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
Disabilities			
1.1.1 Evaluate existing CPD modules on teaching reading for SI-S3 learners	1.1.1.2 Assessment by DGVP Specialist, Perkins STTA, and local partners of current teaching and learning materials available to schools of children with disabilities	July-September 2013	Not yet completed due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist and Perkins on board. Will be conducted during Year 2.
	1.3.6.1 Identification of specific disabilities that can be effectively addressed	August-September 2013	Not yet completed due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist and Perkins on board
1.3.6 Teaching and Learning Materials accessible to children with disabilities	1.3.6.2 Adaptation of selected materials for children with disabilities	October-November 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.3 Development of adapted material for children with disabilities	October-December 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.4 Submission of adapted material to MoEST for endorsement	December 2013	Planned
	1.3.6.5 Submission of adapted material to USAID for clearance	December 2013	Planned
	1.3.6.6 Production of materials	January-February 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.6.7 Distribution of adapted materials to schools and Special Needs Education Resource Units	March 2014	Planned
1.3.7 DGVP, Perkins to provide support to DSNE and schools around Individual Education Plans	1.3.7.1 Consultative meetings held between DGVP Specialist and DSNE	September 2013-April 2014	Not yet conducted due to delay in bringing DGVP Specialist on board
	1.3.7.2 As appropriate, development of IEP-related training materials	October 2013-March 2014	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.7.3 Discussions with DSNE, DTED regarding IEP-related content in pre-service training structures/programs	October 2013-April 2014	Planned
3.1.2 DGVP Specialist and Perkins International's local partners coordinate planning for, development of Braille Cup	3.1.2.1 Identification of available matching resources	September-November 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
	3.1.2.2 Development of Braille Cup outreach plan, participant scope	December 2013-February 2014	Planned
	3.1.2.3 Adaptation/Development of BC-	March-April	Planned

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
	specific testing materials	2014	
3.1.3 Braille Cup implemented	3.1.3.1 Matching resources for BC mobilized	February-April 2014	Planned
	3.1.3.2 BC schedule, agenda set	March-April 2014	Planned
	3.1.3.3 BC competition held	May-June 2014	Planned
3.1.4 Evaluation of School Year I Reading Fairs and Braille Cup	3.1.4.3 Evaluation conducted	June-July 2014	Planned
3.2.5 Perkins International and local partner organizations conduct awareness-raising trainings and meetings around disability and reading	3.2.5 Perkins International and local partner organizations conduct awareness-raising trainings and meetings around disability and reading	September 2013-September 2014	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
3.2.6 Development of Disability Education Resource Guide (DERG)	3.2.6.1 Development of DERG	August-December 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
	3.2.6.2 DERG submitted to MoEST for endorsement	January 2014	Planned
	3.2.6.3 DERG submitted to USAID for clearance	January 2014	Planned
4.1.1 Active participation in meetings of Technical Working Groups (TWGs) relevant to early grade reading	4.1.4 USAID/Donor coordination group on disability attended by EGRA representative	August 2013-October 2016	Planned

Note: This table is meant to be illustrative of how this issue cuts across all four Components of EGRA. Therefore, all activities listed in this table have been copied directly from the tables for Components 1-4. They do not represent additional activities but are repeated here for illustrative purposes only.

XC-3: Grants Under Contract

Activities related to this crosscutting issue have already been discussed under Task 1.5 above. Table 27 provides further details on the status of activities for Task VC-3.

Table 27. Progress against Planned Activities—Task XC-3: Grants Under Contract (GUCs)

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-3: Activities from Components 1-4 that address Grants Under Contract (GUCs)			
1.5.2 Grants Under Contract (GUC) incentive program	1.5.2.1 Grants Manual developed,	July-September	Grants Manual

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
implemented	submitted to USAID for approval	2013	submitted to USAID September 17, 2013
	1.5.2.2 Criteria for GUC application eligibility developed in consultation with DEMs, PEAs, HTs	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Initial consultations held August-September 2013
	1.5.2.3 Schools (HTs) and Communities (SMCs) notified of GUC program	October-November 2013	Planned; pending approval of Grants Manual
	1.5.2.4 Schools and communities encouraged to collaborate around learner reading (in order to meet eligibility criteria) (as in Task 3-2)	December 2013-May 2014	Planned
	1.5.2.5 GUC program competition opens	April-May 2014	Planned
	1.5.2.6 Submitted GUC applications reviewed	May 2014	Planned
	1.5.2.7 GUC incentive awardees selected, notified	June-July 2014	Planned
	1.5.2.8 GUC funds disbursed	July-August 2014	Planned
	1.5.2.9 GUC awardees' activities monitored	July 2014-July 2016	Planned
	1.5.2.10 Top-performing teachers recognized at Reading Fairs (see Task 3-1)	January 2014-July 2016	Planned
1.5.3 Coordinate with SI on evaluation of GUCs, Teacher incentive programs	1.5.3 Coordinate with SI on evaluation of GUCs, Teacher incentive programs	April-August 2013	Planned

Note: This table is meant to be illustrative of how this issue cuts across all four Components of EGRA. Therefore, all activities listed in this table have been copied directly from the tables for Components 1-4. They do not represent additional activities but are repeated here for illustrative purposes only.

XC-4: Geographic Coverage

EGRA's roll-out plan was designed to conduct the intervention during the first school year in 50% of the zones in the 11 education districts covered by the Activity. As was discussed under Component 1, the first activities under EGRA were conducted during the teacher trainings held in August in the four new education districts that were not part of the MTPDS intervention districts. The purpose of the August trainings was to bring the new districts "up to speed" with the "MTPDS legacy" districts on the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* reading program.

Half of the zones in these districts were identified, in consultation with MoEST counterparts and with Social Impact, to receive the August trainings before the school year began.

Shortly after the school year began, EGRA conducted coaching training in the intervention zones of the four new districts and coaching refresher trainings in 50% of the zones in the remaining seven MTPDS legacy districts. The list of zones to be included in the seven MTPDS legacy districts was shared with Social Impact, who proposed some modifications in the list to ensure that all “treatment” zones and schools were included in School Year 1 of the intervention. During these consultations it was discovered that some of the “treatment” zones in the four new districts were not included in the August trainings. Therefore, EGRA is in discussion with USAID and Social Impact on how to also include these zones in the same trainings and interventions as soon as possible. This means that during School Year 1, EGRA will be implementing the intervention in more than 50% of zones, which is more than what was originally planned and budgeted for. EGRA will continue to consult with USAID and Social Impact on the best way forward to ensure the integrity of the impact evaluation without compromising the quality of the intervention. Table 28 provides further details on the status of activities for Task XC-4.

Table 28. Progress against Planned Activities—Task XC-4: Geographic Coverage

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-4: Activities from Components 1-4 that address Geographic Coverage			
	4.2.1.1 Consultative meetings held with stakeholders, including DIAS, DBE, DEMs, PEAs, MGCSW	July-September 2013	Ongoing; Meetings initiated July 2013
4.2.1 MOUs developed with stakeholders in intervention districts and schools	4.2.1.2 Work with DEMs in intervention districts to identify Zones in which Activity will operate in School Year 1	August-September 2013	Ongoing; Meetings held with DEMs July 2013
	4.2.1.3 Work with MoEST, USAID, Social Impact to identify Zones in which Activity will operate in School Year 2	January-August 2014	Ongoing

Note: This table is meant to be illustrative of how this issue cuts across all four Components of EGRA. Therefore, all activities listed in this table have been copied directly from the tables for Components 1-4. They do not represent additional activities but are repeated here for illustrative purposes only.

XC-5: Public-Private Partnerships

Much of the work on PPPs has not yet started on the ground for EGRA. As discussed earlier, OAI has conducted a desk study that will inform an STTA trip planned in November, during which OAI will assist EGRA in identifying and leveraging support from PPPs. Table 29 provides further details on the status of activities for Task XC-5.

Table 29. Progress against Planned Activities—Task XC-5: Public-Private Partnerships

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-5: Activities from Components 1-4 that address Public-Private Partnerships			
1.4.5 Provision of remote support via SMS Gateway	1.4.5.2 Subsidized/reduced-cost SMS service negotiated with Telecoms	July-October 2013	Ongoing
1.4.6 Partnerships with private-sector actors developed and leveraged in support of Coaching	1.4.6 Partnerships with private-sector actors developed and leveraged in support of Coaching	October 2013-July 2016	Planned, not yet started
2.0.1 PPPs leveraged to support provision of materials to intervention schools	2.0.1 PPPs leveraged to support provision of materials to intervention schools	September 2013-June 2016	Ongoing; OAI began desk study of assessment September 2013
3.1.2 DGVP Specialist and Perkins International's local partners coordinate planning for, development of Braille Cup	3.1.2.1 Identification of available matching resources	September-November 2013	Not yet started due to delay in bringing DGVP and Perkins on board
3.1.3 Braille Cup implemented	3.1.3.1 Matching resources for BC mobilized	February-April 2014	Planned
3.2.7 O'Brien and Associates International develops PPPs	3.2.7.1. Conduct initial desk study of available actors, plan possible alliance assessment and potential partnerships	July-October 2013	Ongoing; Draft of desk study completed
	3.2.7.2 Develop partnership concepts/papers, negotiate roles/responsibilities for alliances	November 2013-September 2014	Planned
	3.2.7.3 Finalize and sign MOUs/support implementation	April-September 2014	Planned

Note: This table is meant to be illustrative of how this issue cuts across all four Components of EGRA. Therefore, all activities listed in this table have been copied directly from the tables for Components 1-4. They do not represent additional activities but are repeated here for illustrative purposes only.

XC-6: Gender Equality

As an issue that cuts across all Components, gender considerations have been integrated throughout the planning and implementation of EGRA activities. During the review and development of curriculum and training materials, EGRA has agreed to use the USAID draft document *A Guide for Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials* and provide feedback to USAID on its utility. The review of gender equality and inclusiveness has been incorporated into the plans for the curriculum development and reading materials leveling workshops that were planned at the end of September but postponed until October. The DGVP Specialist will take the lead in making sure that gender issues are systematically included in the review and development of all materials.

During the development of EGRA data collection instruments, information on gender is included to ensure that data on gender equality and inclusiveness can be tracked. During all EGRA workshops and trainings, registration data are collected and disaggregated by gender. Table 30 provides further details on the status of activities for Task XC-6.

Table 30. Progress against Planned Activities—Task XC-6: Gender Equality

Subtasks	Activities	Planned Timeframe	Status
XC-6: Activities from Components 1-4 that address Gender Equality			
1.1.1 Evaluate existing CPD modules on teaching reading for SI-S3 learners	1.1.1.1 Review of existing CPD content from MTPDS, PSSP, <i>Tikwere!</i>	July-October 2013	Completed August 2013
1.1.2 Existing materials (including supplemental materials and existing CPD modules) incorporated to maximum extent possible in implementation of teacher training	1.1.2.3 Leveling workshop facilitated by EGRA and BPG held with MIE and NLS personnel to revise Read Malawi and other source materials	October 2013	Planned
	1.1.2.4 Revised materials reviewed with Director of MIE	October 2013	Pending completion of 1.1.2.3
1.1.3 Appropriate CPD training materials developed in collaboration with MoEST	1.1.3.3 Periodic joint reviews of any materials under development	Quarterly September 2013-September 2014	Pending development of materials
1.3.4 Development of new decodable stories for inclusion in new curricular materials	1.3.4.1 Writers' workshops held with MIE, NLS, Malawi PEN (<i>See also Task XC-1.1</i>)	October-November 2013	Planned, not yet started
	1.3.4.2 Revision of Writers' Workshop outputs by MIE, BPG	November-December 2013	Planned, not yet started

Note: This table is meant to be illustrative of how this issue cuts across all four Components of EGRA. Therefore, all activities listed in this table have been copied directly from the tables for Components 1-4. They do not represent additional activities but are repeated here for illustrative purposes only.

Progress towards Targets

Table 31 summarizes current progress towards EGRA targets for each indicator in the draft PMP, as of September 30, 2013. The Year 1 targets are meant to be reached at the end of FY 2014, one year from now. There were no targets set for the first four months of the Activity, therefore, none of the targets have been reached at this point in time. For most of the indicators no data is yet available due to it still being in the early stages of the Activity. For those indicators where data is available, the numbers represent the total as of September 30, 2013.

Table 31. Current Status of Programmatic Deliverables Submitted to USAID

Indicator	Targets		
	Baseline	Year 1 (FY 13-14)	Actual as of September 30, 2013

Indicator	Targets		
	Baseline	Year 1 (FY 13-14)	Actual as of September 30, 2013
AO1 Proportion (%) of pupils who, by the end of two years of schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text	Conducted by external impact evaluator	5% over baseline	n/a
AO2 Learning gains on core early grade pre-reading and reading tasks as measured by regularly administered reading assessments compared to baseline	To be conducted Term I, Year I	ORF: 7 cwpm	n/a
		Comprehension: 5%	n/a
OC1 Proportion (%) of Standard 1–3 teachers demonstrating essential skills in teaching reading	To be conducted Term I, Year I	40%	n/a
OC1.1A Proportion (%) of Standard 1–3 teachers implementing core literacy CPD content in the classroom	To be conducted Term I, Year I	40%	n/a
OC1.1B Proportion (%) of teachers who complete expected number of lessons in Terms 1–3, Standards 1–3	n/a	40%	n/a
OPI.1a Number of pupils receiving reading interventions in Standards 1–3	0	419,231	n/a
OPI.1b Number of teachers, head teachers, and teaching assistants who successfully complete in-service training	0	2,951	2,637
OPI.1c Number of administrators and officials successfully trained with USG support	n/a	175	95
OPI.1d Proportion (%) of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support	n/a	40%	n/a
OPI.1e Proportion (%) of schools receiving at least one coaching/support visit per term	n/a	75%	n/a
OPI.1f Number of performance awards provided to teachers and schools	n/a	50 (five per target district)	n/a
OC1.2A Proportion (%) of learners in intervention districts and target grades that take home and use a book or other reading materials at home	n/a	25%	n/a
OC1.2B Proportion (%) of children in intervention districts and target grades that interact with text on a daily basis	n/a	65%	n/a
OPI.2a Number of lesson plans designed, tested, revised, and approved by the MoEST and USAID for Terms 1–3 for Standards 1–3 that support the use of local language instruction in target districts	n/a	Selected and agreed	n/a
OPI.2b Number of schools that have received the appropriate number of full sets of materials and equipment (decodable leveled books, story cards, home-use story cards, letter cards, slates, storage cabinets, materials registers)	0	Sets of reading materials: 1,054	n/a
	0	Slates: 1,054	n/a
	0	Cabinets: 1,054	n/a
OPI.2c Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provided with USG support	n/a	1,556,054	89,450
OC2 Number of community, local government, and/or private sector–led advocacy activities conducted to support increased reading skills in primary schools	n/a	316	n/a
OC2.1 Proportion (%) of schools in intervention districts with MOUs or social contracts on reading	0%	60%	0%

Indicator	Targets		
	Baseline	Year 1 (FY 13-14)	Actual as of September 30, 2013
OP2.1a Number of reading fairs hosted by school communities or clusters	n/a	211	0
OP2.1b Number of stakeholders consulted to establish and review MOUs	n/a	60	n/a
OC2.2 Proportion (%) of schools with community, local government, and/or private sector-led initiatives supporting early grade reading	n/a	60%	n/a
OP2.2a Number of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported by USG	n/a	1,054	n/a
OP2.2b Number of schools applying for grants to support early grade reading	n/a	632	n/a
OP2.2c Proportion (%) of school grant applications that meet minimum requirements for award	n/a	50%	n/a
OC3 Standards for reading outcomes formally established for Standards 1–3 by MoEST	Proposed by MoEST EGRA Coordinating Committee	Drafted	n/a
OC3.1A Proportion (%) of teachers who stay in the early grades after initial training	n/a	75%	n/a
OC3.1B Proportion (%) of children in intervention districts and target grades receiving average one hour time-on-task reading instruction per day	n/a	75%	n/a
OP3.1a Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve primary grade reading programs or increase equitable access	n/a	2	0
OP3.1b Number of teachers in Special Needs Schools supported in the application of adapted early grade reading materials for special needs pupils	n/a	0	0
OC3.2A Improved institutional capacity for supporting reading by local NGO	To be conducted Term I, Year I	Major deficiencies identified	n/a
OC3.2B Number of public-private partnerships supporting early grade reading	n/a	2–5 identified	0
OP3.2a Number of mentoring and training meetings conducted	n/a	50	0
OP3.2b Number of meetings held with private organizations to establish potential PPPs	n/a	10	0

EGRA Management Outputs and Deliverables

Table 32 includes the deliverables that are listed in the reporting schedule of the EGRA Scope of Work.

Table 32. Deliverables Listed in the Reporting Schedule of the EGRA Scope of Work

Deliverable	Status
Initial Work Plan: June–September 2013	Submitted September 5, 2103; Approved by USAID September 10, 2013
Annual Work Plan: June–September 2014	Initial draft submitted August 1, 2013 to USAID; Revised draft submitted September 13, 2013; Received feedback from USAID September 19, 2013

Deliverable	Status
Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	Initial draft submitted September 17, 2013 to USAID; Awaiting feedback as of September 30, 2013
Quarterly Progress Reports	Included in this report as only one quarter applies to this year
Quarterly Financial Reports	Submitted as required
Grants Manual	Initial draft submitted September 17, 2013 to USAID; Awaiting feedback as of September 30, 2013
Consultant Reports	See Table 31 below
Annual Report	This report
Final Report	N/A this reporting period

Status of Programmatic Deliverables

Table 33 summarizes the current status of programmatic deliverables that have been submitted to USAID, organized by date of submission.

Table 33. Current Status of Programmatic Deliverables Submitted to USAID

Title	Author	Component	Date Submitted	Status
Branding and Marking Plan			Initial draft submitted July 16, 2013;	Feedback received from USAID August 13, 2013
			Revised draft submitted September 14, 2013	Feedback received from USAID September 26, 2013
STTA Trip Report, July 8–12, 2013		3	September 11, 2013	Approved September 16, 2013

Management Issues

Coordination with USAID and the US Embassy

EGRA personnel have coordinated technical and administrative activities with USAID throughout the period of the Activity's startup. Following official notice of award on June 15, 2013, a technical conference call was held between EGRA's management team and USAID personnel including Education Chief Christine Djondo, MTPDS' outgoing COR John Collins, EGRA COR Ramsey Sosola, and future EGRA COR Kevin Roberts.

EGRA's US-based management team of Tim Slade and Anna Dick arrived in Lilongwe on June 23. The following day Mr. Sosola and ACOR Mr. Chikondi Maleta facilitated an introduction between Mr. Slade, Ms. Dick, Dr. Backman, and the Social Impact management team of Dr. Joanne Capper and Ms. Melissa Chiappetta. During the meeting it was agreed that while RTI and Social Impact must work closely together to coordinate their activities, it would not be necessary for USAID to be copied on all discussions. (Following some miscommunication between RTI and SI, USAID provided technical direction that all communications between the implementation activity and the evaluation activity should include USAID. See the section **Challenges, Solutions, and Actions Taken** for details.)

Mr. Sosola requested that RTI refrain from direct contact with MoEST Directors or the MIE until after USAID could formally introduce RTI as the awardee of the EGRA contract. To accommodate the schedule of the PS, the formal introduction was scheduled for the afternoon of July 16. In the interim, Mr. Sosola assisted RTI in scheduling a meeting with MIE Director Dr. Susuwele-Banda in Domasi during a planned visit to Zomba for meetings with consortium partner CRECCOM as well as CERT and the Centre for Language Studies.

The USAID-RTI Post Award Orientation was held on July 2, 2013. USAID participants included CO Patrick Kollars, Senior A&A Specialist Mr. Yamak, Mr. Sosola, Mr. Maleta, and their colleagues from the Contracting and Development Outreach Communication offices. RTI participants, and RTI Contracting Officer (by telephone).

On July 16, 2013, USAID formally presented RTI to the PS (Dr. Oponyo) and MoEST Directors as the awardee of the EGRA contract. Following USAID's introduction, RTI presented an overview of its scope of work as well as a request to establish regular communications between the Activity, the heads of the MoEST directorates, and USAID. It was agreed that quarterly meetings could be held between the three groups, with the next meeting scheduled for October 16, 2013. In the meantime, EGRA's senior managers would meet with their counterparts at the various departments to clarify expectations, identify mechanisms for collaboration, and receive input into work planning issues.

On September 3, 2013, Kevin Roberts was officially designated COR, with Ramsey Sosola moving into the ACOR role. Since that time, frequent meetings have been held between USAID and EGRA management.

Coordination with MoEST

In consultation with MoEST, EGRA component leaders have been assigned counterparts with whom to coordinate technical activities, as shown in Table 34. Meetings between EGRA staff and their counterparts occur on a regular basis.

Table 34. EGRA Component Leaders and Assigned MoEST Counterparts

Component	Component Leader	MoEST Counterparts	Dept.
1 Provide Quality Reading Instruction for Early Grades Students	(Literacy Specialist)	Mrs. E.D. Namaona	DTED
		Mr. V. Mdangwe	
		Mrs. E. Chinguwo	MIE
2 Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials on Reading	(Teaching and Learning Materials Coordinator)	Mrs. D. Yasini	DIAS
		Mr. J. Kamkuza	
		Mrs. E.D. Namaona	DTED
3 Increasing Parental and Community Engagement to Support Reading	(Community Mobilization Specialist)	Mr. V. Mdangwe	
		Mrs. D. Yasini	DIAS
		Mr. J. Kamkuza	
4 Improving Policy Environment to Support Early Grade	(Senior Education Policy)	Mr. D. Kaambankadzanja	MIE
		Mrs. L. Daka	DBE
		Mr. M. Kalanda	MGCSW
		Dr. W. Susuwele-Banda	MIE
		Mr. R. Agabu	DIAS

Component	Component Leader	MoEST Counterparts	Dept.
Reading	Advisor)	Mrs. D. Mbewe	DTED
		Mr. P. Themu	
		Mrs. G. Milner	DEP
		Mrs. H. Kulemeka Mrs. L. Daka	DBE
5 Crosscutting issues Disability/Students with Special Needs Monitoring and Evaluation	(Disability, Gender, and Vulnerable Populations Specialist)	Mr. C. Mazinga	DSHNA
		Mr. D. Njaidi	DSNE
	(M&E and Learning Specialist)	Mr. J. Kayira	DIAS
		Mr. V. Lungu Mr. L. Nyirongo	DEP

EGRA has begun to participate actively in MoEST TWGs. Such meetings provide an opportunity for MTPDS to disseminate its work on policy support. As reported under Task 4.1, only the TWG for Teacher Education met during this reporting period; this meeting was held on September 12, 2013, and included participation from EGRA.

Divisional Offices

The original district-level staffing plan called for EGRA personnel to be co-located with the MoEST's District Education Offices in the 10 intervention districts as indicated by USAID on the RFP. The size of the Lilongwe Rural District, however, and its division into two District Education Offices (East and West) required a reshuffling of the district-level staffing plan to accommodate 11 education districts on the ground. EGRA staff are now deployed according to the schema outlined in Table 34.

Table 34. District Staffing Structure

EGRA Division	Office Location	Divisional Staff	District	Location	District Staff
North	Ekwendeni	DC and AA	Mzimba North	Ekwendeni DEM (sharing with North Division)	DME and DCM
Central West	Lilongwe EDM	DC and AA	Lilongwe Rural West	Lilongwe Rural West DEM (sharing with Division)	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Lilongwe Rural East	Lilongwe Rural East DEM	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Ntchisi	Ntchisi DEM	DME, DCM, and DTC
Central East	Balaka	DC and AA	Balaka	Balaka DEM (Sharing with Division)	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Ntcheu	Ntcheu DEM	DME, DCM,

EGRA Division	Office Location	Divisional Staff	District	Location	District Staff
					and DTC
			Salima	Salima DEM	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Machinga	Machinga DEM	DME, DCM, and DTC
South	Zomba EDM	DC and AA	Zomba Rural	Zomba EDM (sharing with Division)	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Blantyre Rural	Blantyre EDM	DME, DCM, and DTC
			Thyolo	Thyolo DEM	DME, DCM, and DTC

AA = Accounts Assistant; DC = Divisional Coordinator; DCM = District Community Mobilizer; DEM = District Education Manager's office; DME = District M&E Officer; DTC = District Training Coordinator; EDM = Education Division Manager's office

Reporting

Throughout fiscal year (FY) 2013 the following reporting obligations were met promptly: initial Year 1 Annual Work Plan, Grants Manual, Progress Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, and financial reports.

Communications

An initial draft of the Branding and Marking Plan was submitted to USAID on July 16, 2013, with feedback received on August 13. Revisions to the Branding and Marking Plan were then submitted on September 14, 2013, with feedback received from USAID on September 26, 2013. Changes will be made in the beginning of FY 2014.

Human Resources/Personnel

The majority of EGRA's core technical personnel also served under MTPDS. Table 35 lists Activity staff; their titles, gender, date of hire, and work location; and whether they participated in MTPDS. EGRA currently employs 37 full-time staff in Malawi. All current employees, in order of their recruitment, are included in the table.

Table 35. Staffing in Country as of September 30, 2013, in Order of Commencement of Employment

Name	Title/Relationship	Gender	Start Date	Work Location
	Human Resource Manager	M	June 26, 2013	Lilongwe
	IT Manager	M	June 26, 2013	Lilongwe
	Office Manager	F	June 26, 2013	Lilongwe
	Senior Education Policy Advisor	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe

Name	Title/Relationship	Gender	Start Date	Work Location
	Finance and Administration Manager	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	National Training Coordinator	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Teaching and Learning Materials Coordinator	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	M&E and Learning Specialist	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Community Mobilization Specialist	M	July 8, 2013	Lilongwe
	Literacy Specialist	F	July 23, 2013	Lilongwe
	Accounts Assistant	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Driver	M	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Program Receptionist	F	July 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Chief of Party	M	July 8, 2013	Lilongwe
	Deputy Chief of Party	M	July 15, 2013	Lilongwe
	Divisional Coordinator	F	July 22, 2013	Lilongwe
	Divisional Coordinator	M	July 22, 2013	Mzimba North
	Divisional Coordinator	M	July 22, 2013	Balaka
	Divisional Coordinator	F	July 22, 2013	Zomba
	Driver	M	July 22, 2013	Lilongwe
	District Training Coordinator	F	Aug 7, 2013	Thyolo
	District Training Coordinator	F	Aug 7, 2013	Blantyre
	District Training Coordinator	F	Aug 7, 2013	Lilongwe
	District Training Coordinator	M	Aug 7, 2013	Ntcheu
	Driver	M	Sep 9, 2013	Mzimba North
	Driver	M	Sep 9, 2013	Balaka
	Driver	M	Sep 9, 2013	Zomba
	District M&E Officer	M	Oct 1, 2013	Zomba
	District M&E Officer	M	Oct 1, 2013	Machinga
	District M&E Officer	F	Oct 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	District M&E Officer	F	Oct 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	District M&E Officer	M	Oct 1, 2013	Mzimba North
	Accounts Assistant	M	Oct 1, 2013	Zomba
	Accounts Assistant	M	Oct 1, 2013	Balaka
	Accounts Assistant	M	Oct 1, 2013	Mzimba North
	Accounts Assistant	F	Oct 1, 2013	Lilongwe
	Disability and Gender Specialist	M	Oct 7, 2013	Lilongwe

Challenges, Solutions, and Actions Taken

Technical Direction on Mother-Tongue Issues

The education policy environment in Malawi has evolved since the original design of the Activity. During this time, some of the priorities of USAID that were articulated in the original scope of work have become too sensitive to engage as designed. The most notable of these is the set of activities regarding vernacular languages, including Tumbuka and Yao. The contract's scope of work included the development of curricular and supplementary reading materials in both languages (in addition to English and Chichewa), as well as the identification of the single language of instruction at each school in areas where Yao or Tumbuka are in widespread use.

During EGRA startup, an op-ed was published in the local newspaper that was harshly critical of any attempt to educate children in vernacular languages. The PS, Dr. Oponyo, likewise expressed strong displeasure at the prospect of any work being done around any language of instruction other than English or Chichewa. Following consultation with MoEST, USAID provided technical direction to remove any Yao- or Tumbuka-related activities from the Year 1 Annual Work Plan.

Coordination with Social Impact

EGRA must coordinate its intervention with Social Impact, the external evaluator, with the aim of allowing for a rigorous evaluation of the intervention's impact. Following the June 24 meeting between Social Impact and EGRA, Social Impact provided a document detailing its sampling design and the schools it had sampled for the Baseline assessment it conducted in June of 2013.

EGRA used this list of schools to identify which zones would be available for its own intervention. EGRA elected to avoid intervening in any zones which contained Social Impact's control schools, but did not preferentially select Social Impact's intervention zones. (This was due to an unstated assumption that Social Impact was planning to redraw a random sample at each assessment period. It had not been explicitly stated in the design document that Social Impact would be following schools and students longitudinally over the lifetime of the intervention.)

An e-mail with a full list of EGRA's planned intervention zones was sent to Social Impact on August 12, one week prior to the planned equipping of Master Trainers and two weeks prior to the planned training of PEAs in the new Level 1 districts of Lilongwe Rural, Machinga, and Balaka. Social Impact made no comments, therefore EGRA moved forward with conducting the trainings in the selected zones.

On September 17, EGRA reached out to Social Impact to initiate discussions about selecting intervention zones in those districts that were considered "MTPDS Legacy" districts. A conference call between EGRA management and Social Impact management was scheduled for September 23, ahead of which EGRA submitted a complete list of all planned intervention zones for School Year 1 of the activity. On September 26 Social Impact reverted a list of zones and how they would prefer that these be categorized. On October 2, following attempts to harmonize the list, Social Impact notified their COR of concerns that their impact evaluation had been compromised. Subsequently technical direction was provided by EGRA's COR to include additional zones of intervention for School Year 1 in

addition to the 50% which had already been selected for the Level 1 schools, plus the remaining zones in Salima District as it is the only Level 3 district for the impact evaluation.

In response to the COR's technical direction, EGRA has drafted a budget that highlights the expected impact of realigning the intervention with Social Impact's preferred sample structure, as well as adding in extra zones in Salima. Plans are being made to provide training to the PEAs in those additional zones as soon as possible.

Logistics and Transportation

Transportation of EGRA staff and their MoEST counterparts has proven to be problematic as the Activity has established offices in all 11 intervention districts. During the finalization of the EGRA contract with USAID, it was communicated that EGRA would inherit the eight four-wheel-drive vehicles and eight motorbikes from MTPDS. RTI expressed its concerns that this may not be sufficient, since EGRA will be covering four more education districts than MTPDS without any additional vehicles. At the time, USAID suggested that there might be a possibility of other vehicles becoming available through USAID. In discussions with the COR about this challenge, it was suggested that EGRA should work to maximize its transportation with the resources it has been allocated and assess whether additional vehicles will be required along with the additional costs that would entail. The COR instructed EGRA if it deems it necessary to request for additional vehicles then EGRA should submit a formal request to USAID which identifies where in the budget EGRA can pay for the costs that would be incurred for operating and maintaining the extra vehicles (e.g., fuel, repairs, and maintenance). As the field staff become fully deployed in early FY 2014 EGRA will closely monitor the transportation needs of the Activity and communicate accordingly with USAID.

Competing Demands and Per Diem Issues with MoEST and MIE Counterparts

A persistent challenge that was registered under MTPDS was the difficulty in maintaining high levels of collaboration with MoEST and MIE counterparts due to competing demands and interests. This has already proven to be a difficult challenge during the first few months of EGRA implementation. Although the MoEST departments and MIE have expressed their desire to collaborate and fully contribute to the efforts to improve early grade reading, they are often pulled in many different directions, making key counterparts unavailable during crucial workshops, trainings, and other activities. EGRA is working to mitigate these problems by developing clear expectations with MoEST and MIE, including regular meetings and sharing of plans.

An additional challenge that continues to magnify is the issue of per diems and allowances provided to activity participants. This is especially true as the value of the Kwacha becomes further devalued and inflation continues to increase. While the spending power of the Kwacha continues to decrease, donor-funded activities like EGRA are restricted to providing allowances at rates that were agreed upon by the donor partners in an October 11, 2011, letter to the Government of Malawi. These rates have increasingly proved to be insufficient to compensate for accommodation, meals, and incidentals for activity participants. As a result, EGRA has already experienced on two different occasions refusals from MoEST and other government officials to attend Activity workshops, including one occasion where some of the Ministry officers left a five-day workshop after the first day due to their grievances over insufficient allowances. EGRA has communicated this challenge to USAID and requested that the issue be raised with the donor group. USAID informed EGRA that this

has been an issue which has been discussed with the donors and assured that they will continue to do all they can to work with the other donors to address this issue. At the same time, EGRA management has communicated these concerns and developments to the relevant directors and continues to explore options and possibilities that will maximize the potential for government officials to participate fully in EGRA activities while addressing their grievances within the regulations and restrictions that apply to allowances.

