



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MALAWI

PRIMARY SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAM: A SCHOOL FEES PILOT (PSSP: SFP)

MIDTERM REPORT

January 2006 – June 2007



July 31, 2007

This report was produced for the United States Agency for International Development under Contract No: GS 10F-0112J Order No: 690-M-00-06-00023-00. It was prepared by the American Institutes for Research in partnership with Creative Center for Community Mobilization, Malawi Institute of Education, and Miske Witt & Associates, Incorporated.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Assistant Coordinator
AEDO	Agriculture Extension Development Officer
AIR	American Institutes for Research
BLP/M	Beginning Literacy Program/Malawi
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CBCCC	Community Based Child Care Center
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DEM	District Education Manager
DOP	Desk Officer Primary
DSSP	Direct Support to Schools Program
EMAS	Education Methods and Advisory Services
FA	Forestry Assistant
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GVH	Group Village Headman
HQ	Headquarters
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
IBB	International Book Bank
ICLEP	Integrated Child Labor Elimination Program
IGA	Income Generating Activity
INSET	In-Service Teacher Training
JCE	Junior Certificate
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCM	Mobilization Corps of Malawi
MESA	Malawi Education Support Activity
MIAMI	Malawi Integrated AIDS Mitigation Initiative
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
MP	Member of Parliament
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MTL	Malawi Telecom Limited
MTTA	Malawi Teacher Training Activity
MWAI	Miske Witt and Associates Incorporated
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLS	National Library Service
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
PCAR	Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PS	Principal Secretary
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SIP	School Incentive Packages
SMC	School Management Committee
SMC-EQ	Social Mobilization Campaign for Education Quality
SWA	Social Welfare Assistant
TA	Traditional Authority
TALULAR	Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources

TDC	Teacher Development Centre
TFD	Theatre for Development
TOT	Training of Trainers
TTC	Teacher Training Colleges
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZOC	Zonal Coordinator
ZIP	Zonal Incentive Package



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Preamble.....	1
2.0	Program Description.....	2
3.0	Midterm Report Overview	2
4.0	Illustrative Results Against Project Indicators	2
5.0	Analysis of Key Project Processes and Activities	15
5.1	Project Start-up	15
5.2	Teacher Professional Development.....	17
5.3	Learning Resources and Literacy.....	22
5.4	Community Mobilization.....	25
5.5	Mass Communication.....	33
5.6	Coordination and Reporting	34
5.7	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation	37
6.0	Conclusion	42

Annexes

Annex A: PSSP: SFP Data Tables and Figures

Table A1.	Number of zones, clusters, villages, schools, teachers and pupils, January 2006
Figure A1.	Teacher Professional Qualifications (2006)
Figure A2.	Teacher Academic Qualification (2006)
Figure A3.	Teacher Academic Qualification (2007)
Figure A4.	Teacher Training Background (2007)
Table A2.	Percentage of teachers using participatory methods
Table A3.	Mean percentage of teacher attendance by year by zone
Table A4.	Number of enrolled learners per zone between February 2006 and February 2007
Table A5.	Pupil absenteeism rate for 2005 and 2006, by sex
Table A6.	Pupil dropout rate by standard for 2005 and 2006, by sex
Table A7.	Pupil repetition rate by standard for 2005 and 2006, by sex
Table A8.	Pupil completion rate by standard for 2005 and 2006, by sex
Table A9.	Pupil assessment sample size for intervention (Dowa) and comparison (Dedza) district
Table A10.	Standard 1 Chichewa - Percentage of students passing the test
Table A11.	Standard 1 Chichewa - Percentage of students passing the test by sex
Table A12.	Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on English test
Table A13.	Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on English test by sex
Table A14.	Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on Math test
Table A15.	Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on Math test by sex

Annex B: Case Studies from PSSP: SFP

Senga School awakens through exchange visits
TALULAR making a difference for the classrooms at Dowa 1
Reflective teaching at Kayembe Primary School
Mponela 1 teachers geared towards improving quality education
Kalambo's heart is big
Siyeni's future shines
Play parks improve pupil attendance
School clubs support OVCs

M'bindo school community lives up to its word
Community lobbying gives Gudyu School a new look
Mr. Mazungwi sets the pace
Mndanjiri School strikes retention with vocational skills
Invigorated community benefits from the small scale grant initiative
Longwani School Community Charged to Support OVCs
SIP encourages more children to work hard in school
Extension workers proudly support the goals of PSSP: SFP

Annex C. Performance Monitoring Indicators

1.0 PREAMBLE

Project Title: Primary School Support Program (PSSP)

Contractor: American Institutes for Research

Award No: GS 10F-0112J Order No: 690-M-00-06-00023-00

Reporting Dates: January 2006 to June 2007

Project Start Date: January 1, 2006

Project End Date: December 31, 2008

Persons responsible for compiling the report:

Simeon Mawindo

Chief of Party

P.O. Box 222

Zomba

Malawi

Tel: (265) 8-844-559

Tel/Fax: (265) 1 525-206

E-mail: smawindo@malawi.net

Cassandra Jessee

Deputy Chief of Party

PO Box 40

Mponela

Malawi

Tel: (265) 8 393-403

Fax (265) 1- 286-304

E-mail: cjessee@air.org

Heather Simpson

Project Manager

1000 Thomas Jefferson St. N.W.

Washington, DC 20007

U.S.A.

Tel: (202) 403-5980

Fax: (202) 403-5979

Email: hsimpson@air.org

2.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Government of Malawi is faced with declining quality of teaching and learning in its primary schools. Since it began its policy of free primary education in 1994, the government has seen enrollment skyrocket from 1.9 million to 3.2 million pupils. It has not been possible to provide enough trained teachers for the overcrowded classrooms. As a result, teachers who are not adequately qualified for their jobs now teach many pupils. Although the government has tried to provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers, the training has only met a small part of the need. This is where Primary School Support Program: A School Fees Pilot (PSSP: SFP) addresses the need.

PSSP: SFP is a three-year initiative funded by USAID/Malawi in collaboration with the Malawi Government. It targets all of the 226 public primary schools in Dowa district. AIR, in its lead role, is implementing PSSP: SFP in response to the need to improve the quality of education and serve as a pilot under a US Congressional mandate to develop strategies to reduce the cost of schooling that still hinders access, especially for the most vulnerable children. PSSP: SFP is jointly implemented by AIR with Creative Center for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM), Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), and Miske Witt and Associates, Incorporated (MWAI).

The core goal of PSSP: SFP is to achieve equitable access to quality basic education. To reach this goal, the project has the following objectives:

- To increase access to basic education and improve learning with special focus on orphans, vulnerable children, girls and children with special needs.
- To increase resources at the school level.
- To improve teaching and learning outcomes in schools in Dowa.

PSSP: SFP takes a holistic approach to achieving this goal. It works to improve the professional development of teachers as well as mobilize communities to become owners of the schools.

3.0 MIDTERM REPORT OVERVIEW

PSSP: SFP has just passed the midway point of its implementation period. As such, it has reflected on the strategies and activities that define the project approach, and critically reviewed these areas and determined the next steps for the second half of the project. This report shares these reflections and documents where the project is currently and where it is heading.

The report first looks each project indicator, the processes that support it and illustrative results that show progress in achieving that indicator. Subsequently each key process or activity within PSSP: SFP is explored. Each section discusses the process/activity itself, the impact of that activity, any challenges faced and how they were addressed and the way forward for the second half of the project. The annexes include success stories that provide qualitative examples of project impact, data tables which document the baseline of the project and where applicable within the data collection cycle, project impact and the performance monitoring table to document progress against project targets.

4.0 ILLUSTRATIVE RESULTS AGAINST PROJECT INDICATORS

The project has made significant impact at the school and community levels as evidenced by a range of qualitative indicators that has emerged as a result of the project's sensitization, training and mobilization activities. Recognizing the need to track progress by the project quantitative indicators, activities that support each initiative are documented and qualitative examples of project impact are organized by each indicator. This representation is hardly exhaustive; however it serves to illustrate the transformation taking place in

Dowa schools. A few success stories that provide additional context on the impact of PSSP: SFP are included in Annex A.

Result 1: Increasing access to basic education and improved learning with a special focus on orphans, vulnerable children, and girls

1. Increased percentage of pupils achieving basic literacy in Chichewa in Standard one

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1,720 (479 female, 1,241 male) teachers in early literacy principles over 4 cycles of training. These trainings were designed to lead to improved classroom instruction, which will lead to improved student learning and achievement.
- PSSP: SFP has trained 1,720 (479 female, 1,241 male) teachers on TALULAR production, care, use and establishment of TALULAR banks in schools for use during teaching and learning. The production and use of TALULAR has assisted learners to acquire basic skill and concepts in literacy.
- Mobilization Corps of Malawi members are helping organize reading groups and supporting community based literacy clubs such debate, quiz, drama and reading competitions for school going children. This is also motivating those that dropped out of school to come to school.
- PSSP: SFP and PCAR have trained PEAs and ZOCs on how to support the Standard 1 teachers and learners as a result ZOCs and PEAs are able to supervise Std 1 teachers during literacy lessons.
- PSSP: SFP has developed a comprehensive literacy program, the Beginning Literacy Program of Malawi (BLP/M). All Standard 1 teachers in 226 schools in Dowa will be trained to implement this program in their classrooms.
- PSSP: SFP has conducted validation meetings with 50 standard 1 teachers from 30 selected schools in the district sharing and practicing early literacy techniques as part of the BLP/M program and getting their feedback on the materials that have been developed.
- PSSP: SFP has also conducted a literacy needs assessment in 106 schools across the 13 zones in order to find out the type, storage of reading materials available in schools to tailor to school needs its literacy campaign strategies.
- PSSP: SFP has provided schools with teaching materials such as resource manuals for teaching English in schools, Participatory teaching methods and TALULAR making to support classroom activities in basic literacy.
- PSSP: SFP has facilitated a range of grassroots level activities in the schools and communities as part of its literacy campaign.

For example

Many schools like Malambo, Mphimbi, Aimalandiwo, Msangu, Kaomba, Windu, Msipe, Mvera, St Matias learners use manipulatives like name cards, word trees, flash cards and alphabet grid to practice reading and writing. Teachers are structuring groups by abilities to provide enrichment or remediation as appropriate.

Teachers from schools like Manondo, Chivala, Dowa 1, James, Kongwe 2, Nakondwa, Mtenthera are assessing pupils' ability to read and write and providing remediation where necessary.

At Mlengwe school, the MCM with the help of the teaches in the lower primary has formed reading club where Std 1 and 2 learners who are unable to read their names before are being assisted.

Parents and guardians from school communities like Kabulungo and Chimungu are providing reading resources like cards with words to read at home to increase their children's exposure to reading.

Teachers are finding creative ways to improve basic literacy schools like at Kapini and Mphimbi and Dowa 2 learners are given name cards to wear around their necks, read and practice writing their own names on each assignment.

2. Increased percentage of pupils achieving in English reading at Standard 6

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1,720 (479 female, 1,241 male) teachers in methodologies and strategies for teaching English in lower and upper classes of primary school in the four cycle trainings. This training equipped teachers with knowledge of handling English lessons with confidence.
- PSSP: SFP has supported teachers facilitation of school based INSETs to share knowledge, skills and ideas on how to help learners master literacy skills.
- PSSP: SFP has provided resource books for English teaching to all teachers. PSSP: SFP has also distributed library books to help teachers and learners improve their literacy skills. Reading clubs have also been formed to promote reading culture and provide a structured opportunity for pupils to write stories and poems.
- PSSP: SFP has supervised teachers in senior classes and advised and supported on the use of English as the medium of instruction.
- Mobilization Corps of Malawi Members are helping tutor learners who have problems in speaking, reading and writing skills in English by providing them with activities that promote their understanding through reading clubs, drama and quiz competitions.

For example

Teachers at schools like Malambo, James, Senga, Mponela 1, Mpatsa and Dzoole are assessing pupils and find that 70% can now read short paragraphs.

Teachers at schools such as Chimbuli, Sungeni, Bowe, Chimkoka, Ngala, Bwanyundo, Mwaza, Mduku, Mtengenji, Kaomba, St Matias, Thonje, Mvera FP, Mvera MDF, Kanyenje, teachers use a variety of strategies to enhance effective teaching and learning such as study circles, subject panels and clubs to give more opportunities to learners understand the concepts. Teachers also use a variety of TALULAR to help learners improve reading skills.

Schools like Kayembe, Kabulungo, Mlengwe, Senga and Chimungu have introduced have introduction story production competition that are helping pupils write their own stories and case studies to both include in a book that PSSP: SFP plans to publish of Dowa stories and more immediately to expand reading corners in the classroom.

MCMs in all zones, including Chimungu, Madisi and Mponela have established weekly reading clubs that are helping pupils at all levels improve their English reading skills.

Reading and debate clubs have been formed in some schools including Chimbuli in Chimbuli zone, and Mwanza school in Kamphenga zone which have assisted the learners to be fluent in speaking and reading English. This is complemented by the use of various techniques e.g. reading boards and games by the teachers. 50% of the assessed learners are able to read English properly without problems.

Most schools like Kanyenje, Chimbuli, Senga, Boma and Mvera have embarked on intensive reading TALULAR production. TALULAR banks have been introduced where such TALULAR is kept and have access.

3. Increased percentage of pupils achieving in Mathematics at Standard 6

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 (479 female, 1241 male) teachers in Mathematics content in 4 cycles of training. The training is designed to lead to improved classroom instruction which will lead to improved student learning and achievement.
- PSSP: SFP have provided schools with teaching materials to support classroom activities in Mathematics, like the resource manual for teaching mathematics in Malawian primary schools.
- Mobilization Corps of Malawi Members have tutored pupils in Mathematics and organized mathematics clubs.
- PSSP: SFP has supported teachers facilitation of school based INSETs to share knowledge, skills and ideas on how to help learners master mathematics skills.
- PSSP: SFP has supervised teachers teaching mathematics and provided strategies for more effectively teaching mathematics concepts like ratio, common denominators.

For example:

In cycle 4, rate, ratio and proportion were taught which has increased teacher confidence in tackling these topics for standard 6 mathematics. The learners are using concrete activities in introducing these mathematical concepts making the understanding easier.

Teachers are exchanging ideas during INSETs that are helping the stronger ones assist those who are struggling with certain concepts, For instance, Malambo school in Mponela zone, has a very strong standard 1 teacher who is imparting numeracy skills competently. In discussing strategies with the standard 6 teacher to establish some causes of poor skills in some mathematical basic facts.

Teachers are providing enrichment opportunities for better learners and remediation for slower learners. For instance, the standard 7 teacher at Kamwana school has instituted very effective working groups in Mathematics. Learners work together on the board with the teacher, they do the first class exercise in groups and after assessment they work individually. 90% of the learners will have understood their activities before they embark on individual work.

MCMs in all zones, including Chimbuli, Kamphenga, and Mvera have established weekly mathematics clubs that are helping pupils at all levels improve their numeracy and analytic skills.

4. Decreased pupil dropout

- PSSP: SFP sensitized 98% of the school communities on the importance of education and helped mobilize communities to implement initiatives to help pupils attend and stay in school.
- Community members developed village registers to track all school-aged children. This helps them understand which children in the community are going to school and which ones are not in school with the end goal of supporting those out-of-school youth to return to school. Community members then engage in door-to-door campaigns to re-enroll children who have dropped out of school.
- Communities have introduced school feeding programs at schools where the lack of food has been an impediment to pupils staying in school.
- PSSP: SFP trained special groups, including the Gule Wamkulu in strategies for supporting education, and they have in turn escorting children to school thus encouraging all school-aged children to attend class and not drop out.
- Schools are incorporating activities making the learning environment more attractive to local students, thus decreasing drop-out rates. For example, some are introducing competitive football teams; netball; play grounds including see-saws and swings; games such as foot races, jumping, and dumb bells; traditional dancing; vocational life skills such as tinsmithing, tailoring, pottery, carpentry, radio repairing, knitting, and sewing, among others.

- School Management Committees (SMCs), with the support of the project, have increased their skills to monitor teacher and pupil attendance, and are tracking potential drop-outs. .
- MCM members have established play parks in schools that have drawn dropouts back to classes.

For example

Schools like at Mkanile School in Kamphenga zone, Windu and Katona schools in Nalunga zone are using volunteer teachers to address the teaching shortage and teach additional lessons in vocational life skills. To date over 70% of the schools in Dowa district are engaged in life skills trainings, which has boosted pupils' interest in school and are helping them stay in school.

Most schools in Dowa have play parks and schools like Malambo school in Mponela zone, have cleared a space to create a school football playground, which has attracted pupils to attend school

As most pupils who are likely to dropout of school are OVC, efforts are being put into place to assist the OVC with school and day to day needs that will necessitate their school attendance. For example, Chinkhwiri cluster in Chimbuli zone organized Gule Wamkulu festival to raise funds for the needy pupils, yielding K11,700 was raised. A choir festival at Dzalo school in the same zone yielded over K2,800 that was used to purchase exercise books for OVC.

After Gule Wankulu councilors were trained, enrolments have increased. The Gule Wamakulu councilors are engaged in getting all school aged children back to school, including previous drop outs. and escorting children to schools For instance, Mpangiseni School January enrolment was 282 while in June, enrolment had risen to 333 pupils. This has been true for most schools in the zone.

Community members have taken their own initiatives to ensure pupils attend school. For instance, Village heads in Senga zone at Senga school ring bells at 6.00 am every morning to awaken children to start for school. Enrolment in Senga zone has risen from 13,115 to 14,166 .

5. Decreased pupil repetition

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 teachers in pedagogy; student centered learning techniques, and content knowledge in literacy and numeracy. The training is designed to lead to improved classroom instruction, which will lead to improved student learning and decreased pupil repetition rates.
- PSSP: SFP has developed an observation tool combining all MOE and PSSP indicators. With the use of this tool by both the ZOCs and PEAs, class support and monitoring will be increased thereby most teacher will be assisted, enhancing teaching and learning and reducing repetition rates.
- PSSP: SFP interventions to increased attendance and decreased dropout rates will also lead to decreased pupil repetition rates.
- The community-based interventions mentioned above affecting dropout rates also have an affect on decreasing pupil repetition rates.

For example:

PSSP: SFP has provided extra support for the volunteer teachers to ensure they are effective in their support of the classroom. This has given them more confidence and skill in teaching and the learners more confidence in their teachers resulting in more attendance and greater achievement, particularly in schools in Kanyenje and Katalima zones.

Teachers who are using TALULAR in their participatory teaching and learning are reaching more learners by providing alternative ways of learning the same thing. Chances of learners understanding what they are doing are enhanced. Chimbuli and Madisi zone schools hold weekly TALULAR making sessions to exchange ideas with their fellow teachers.

Many schools like Mwaza school in Kamphenga zone, the SMCs have introduced village attendance registers that are used to track down the attendance of pupils at school.

Nambamba school in Madisi zone and Chimbuli school in Chimbuli zone have re-introduced giving rewards to top pupils during term closing day as an incentive to boost pupils' performance.

In several schools like Kayembe School, teachers have started self reflection on their teaching. This is helping them to examine their performance in lesson preparation and delivery. This is assisting the teacher to discover and know where the learners have failed and how to assist them. So learners are able to get appropriate individual help which should reduce the need to repeat the class.

6. Increased pupil completion rates

- PSSP: SFP support and mobilization of teacher- and community-based interventions mentioned above are designed to have a positive effect on increasing pupil completion rates.

For example:

In zones such as Kamphenga, and Katalima, communities have garnered support from external donors and even undertaken their own programs for school feeding, which has seen learners in need through the lean period, greatly checking learner absenteeism and increasing chances of staying on to the end of the year.

Two schools in Senga zone, Fusani and Senga have introduced class praise boxes where class teachers collect pens, pencils and exercise notebooks which they give to learners that are working hard in class.

Schools such as St Mathias in Kanyenje, Fusani in Senga, Mondwe in Kamphenga, Gogo and Lufe in Mvera have embarked on peer observation. Teachers have become more open minded and objective in dealing with lesson delivery problems. They are able to correct each other and take advice given objectively. This has improved their teaching which in turn has improved pupil interest and performance in school, which is expected to help them pass their end of year exams.

To remedy the shortage of teachers, class overlaps have been successfully introduced at Lufe in Mvera zone and Thedze and Mtenthera in Chigudu zone. No class is left without a teacher. At least all core subjects are taught on a daily basis and learners are encouraged to come to school daily.

7. Increased percentage of girls and OVCs enrolled in primary school

- PSSP: SFP support and mobilization of teacher- and community-based interventions mentioned above are designed to have a positive effect on increasing pupil enrollment.
- PSSP: SFP has provided sustainable school supply boxes, School Incentive Packages (SIPs) that provided an infusion of supplies to support OVCs. Communities in turn have raised funds to keep those boxes replenished.
- Schools have established school gardens, selling the produce and then using the money to subsidize the education needs of girls and OVCs.
- Schools, communities, and local drama groups have engaged in interventions designed to support OVCs and girls providing them with basic items such as clothes, soap, and learning materials. These materials help pupils enroll and stay in school.
- Communities are establishing Community based Child Care Centers (CBCCCs) to watch the youngest children while older siblings are able to attend school.
- According to the Dowa district education office statistics, the overall pupil enrollment increased by 11.6% between February 2006 and February 2007. Enrollment for girls increased by 9.8% and for boys increased by 12.5%.

For Example:

In Kamphenga Zone 140 OVCs, who dropped out from school, have re-enrolled following the PSSP: SFP mobilization activities. These orphans are being supported by various key players including the Kasuntha Multicultural Group which is donating notebooks and pens to schools. Initiatives to equip the orphans with life skills such as sewing, and tinsmithing have started in the zone where the materials made will be sold for income to sustain the support to OVCs.

A Community Based Child Care Centre mostly comprising orphans and vulnerable children has been opened in Chimbuli Zone Community members raised K10,000 through piece work to purchase, maize, soya beans and sugar and to provide meals to the children at the CBCCC. Part of this money was also used to buy exercise books and pens which they donated to six orphans. This has helped reduce dropouts at Chimbuli as they pupils are no longer leaving school due to hunger or lack of resources.

Matsewa school in Chimbuli zone has re-enrolled the would be dropouts through the use of gule wamkulu who go round the villages in the morning to escort learners to school.

Many schools now have introduced life vocational skills. For instance, Chimbuli and Gudyu started tinsmithing, Kasangu introduced tailoring and Gudyu and Chinkoka introduced carpentry. At just these 5 schools there are 132 (78 girls and 54 boys) OVCs that are being assisted. All the schools received small-scale grants and the communities' have been able to realize over K67,500 from those 5 schools by the selling of the items that the children are making produce. The money is used for assisting the OVCs and other activities like renovation of teachers' houses.

Before PSSP about half the schools had no funds in their account. However, schools like Kachulu came up with vocational skills of tailoring where school uniforms are made. So far K4,405 have been realized from the sales whose proceeds have assisted 15 OVCs with exercise books and reinvested into maintaining the life skills training.

Mdabwi School in Nalunga zone embarked on weaving as vocational skill that some pupils should acquire at the school. 23 pupils including 11 OVCs are involved in this. So far the school have realized over K10,700 from the sales of winnowing baskets. Proceeds have been used to support the OVCs with exercise books and provide of sugar and salt in support of a community initiated school feeding program.

Result 2: Increased Resources at the School Level

8. Increased financial resources available at the school level

- PSSP: SFP has provided 214 schools with small grants to support initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning. Some schools are using grant money to improve school infrastructure, conduct school fundraising activities, and/or provide vocational life skills training.
- All 226 schools are engaged in school and community-based initiatives to mobilize resources to support teaching and learning.
- SMCs have initiated Income Generating Activities (IGAs) to increase the financial resources at the school.

For example

Many community members like Mbalame, Dzoole, and Fusani school communities are donating agricultural produce such as maize and tobacco leaves to the school. This produce is sold and the

proceeds used to support school activities such as OVC support initiatives, infrastructure rehabilitation and construction, pupil feeding programs, and vocational life skills training programs.

Many schools like Ngala, Nambamba, Chikwete, Chikankha, and Chunzu have initiated IGAs such as rearing and selling livestock such as rabbits, goats and pigs; establishing gardens and selling the produce; or establishing life-skills programs such as tailoring, carpentry, tinsmithing, radio repairing, bakeries, and selling products and services.

All schools have established SIP committees that raise funds for the SIP box. Communities like Maiwe in Chigudu zone contributed K2,089, 2 bags of sweet potatoes and 12 notebooks and Kalonga School in Senga zone raised over K55,000, 5 bags of beans and 60 pails of maize in SIP replenishing activities.

School communities are embarking on creative fundraising like Mponela that conducted a big walk raising over K8,500 and Chimbuli zone that held a big dance raising K11,200

Each school or cluster of schools launched their packages to a larger community, often like an open day event. During the launch in Mvera zone, the district team and field extension workers showed their appreciation of the packages. The DEM alone-contributed K3500.00 to five schools present at the function

9. Number of SMCs trained in financial management and lobbying skills

- PSSP: SFP has trained 4,710 SMC members in financial management and lobbying skills. Although PSSP: SFP has assisted only 95% schools with small grants, PSSP: SFP trained all 226 school management committees on financial management and lobbying skills. SMCs have shown they are able to manage funds given and many SMCs have been able to lobby from various individuals and organizations.

For example

SMC of Dowa I school in Boma zone has successfully lobbied for a feeding program from Scottish International Relief of Scotland. The school received 4 pots, 4 plastic basins, 1000 cups, 4 stoves, 4 pales, 4 tins, and 4 cooking sticks and also on monthly basis the school receives 176 bags of 10 kg four.

SMCs for Mdika, Nalikonda, Chigongolero, Kawale and Mkwichi schools in Kayembe zone Malambo and Mwachiswa schools in Mponela zone have successfully lobbied from their members of parliament.

SMC at Chikankha School in Kayembe zone has tracked and managed K90,000 funds that the community has raised through tobacco sales. With those funds the communities have started constructing a two-classroom block in a drive to add on infrastructure resources and the SMC is preparing to lobby more support. Carpentry has also been established, skills are being imparted and are realized.

SMC of Manondo and Chakhala in Senga zone have so far contributed over 36 bags of maize and 34 bags of maize respectively in order to support OVCs. SMCs at Chibweza School have initiated a move to raise K110, 00.00 through contribution out of 22 villages. The SMCs have so far raised over K20,000 that they are managing.

Before PSSP: SFP, about half the schools in Dowa district had no funds and those schools that had money were unable to account all the funds. In other words there was poor management of school funds and even other resources for example construction materials that donors would deploy in the

schools to support in the construction of infrastructures. After PSSP: SFP trained SMC/PTA, the situation has improved tremendously. All the SMCs reconciled the PSSP: SFP small-scale grants with minimal difficulties. Follow-up monitoring shows most schools are accounting for and utilizing their resources satisfactorily. For example, Kachulu School in Mponela zone received K89, 811 for tailing and tinsmith as well as the roofing of a teacher's house has reconciled all their money and the SMC has opened an account for the school. So far they have raised and saved over K13, 000.

10. Percentage of SMCs engaged in IGAs to support schools

- PSSP: SFP has trained 4,710 SMC members in financial management and lobbying skills.
- Thus far 70% of the SMCs have initiated Income Generating Activities (IGAs) to increase the financial resources at the school. Examples of the IGAs include rearing and selling livestock such as rabbits, goats and pigs; establishing gardens and selling the produce; establishing life-skills programs such as tailoring, carpentry, tinsmithing, radio repairing, bakeries, and selling products and services.
- PSSP: SFP trained extension workers who are providing technical support to some of the income generating activities for the schools
- Community members are teaching of vocational life skills whose proceeds are sold to further the skill training and support OVCs.

For example

Schools like Chimbuli and Chinkwili Schools in Chimbuli zone, are teaching life skills and selling the products. So far they raised over K5,000 and over K2,000 respectively from sales of tin smith products, which they are re-investing in vocational skills training.

At Chigudu School in Chigudu zone, Kachulu and Samuel Schools in Mponela zone and Mdika School in Kayembe zone have all established a bakery to serve as vocational life skill training as well as an IGA. Proceeds are being used to support the OVCs at the school.

Using community gardens, schools like Mbalame school, in Senga zone raised over K40,000 from community contribution of farm produce like maize. These proceeds have been used to support OVCs and develop a school library.

At Bwevu School, a mushroom growing IGA is raising funds to provide school supplies OVCs.

SMCs are engaging local culture to raise funds for the school. For example, Gule Wankulu festivals are one of the fundraising strategies that schools like Gogo school in Mvera zone and Mtiti and Chakhaza schools in Madisi zone are using.

11. Percentage of SMCs who lobby for funds from outside sources

- PSSP: SFP has trained over 95% of the SMCs on lobbying skills aimed at securing financial resources for the school. Thus far, 60% of the SMCs have engaged in some sort of lobbying activities.
- PSSP: SFP raised the awareness of MPs through briefings about the goals of PSSP: SFP and their role in supporting education.

For example

So far 214 schools have successfully fulfilled the requirements of lobbying for support from PSSP: SFP small grants and have been awarded the grants supporting various initiatives.

Gudyu school lobbied from the US Ambassadors Self-Help fund where K500,000 was awarded.

Dowa communities have successful sought the support from their MPs more than ever before. MPs have provided materials for school structures construction and transport to ferry items purchased

with support from the PSSP: SFP small grants. This has been particularly noticed in the constituencies of Hon. Dzombe for Katalima and Madisi zones; Hon J.C. Chilunjika for Kayembe and Mponela zones; Hon.Kadzako, for Mponela and Chimungu zones; Hon Jika, for Kanyenje and Mvera zones and the MP for Dowa North, for Chimbuli zone.

In Katalima zone Niagra school that has an acute shortage of classroom blocks has lobbied over K200,000 for the construction for the construction of classroom blocks, a library, a head teachers office, and staff room. Some of these funds were lobbied from individuals and most of the funds were lobbied from the Estate that is close to the school. The estate has also provided a tractor for the transportation of sand and bricks.

12. Percentage of SMCs and PTAs that undertake one or more physical rehabilitation or building project to support education

- PSSP: SFP has sensitized school communities on their role in supporting education including infrastructural development work.
- PSSP: SFP has provided construction grants to 70% of the schools in an effort to support community initiatives.
- All 226 SMC/PTAs have helped organize one or more physical rehabilitation or construction projects at their schools.

For example

Within the first year of PSSP: SFP 65 School blocks were constructed and roofed, providing safer environments that will help improve learning especially during rainy season. In addition, 70 teachers' houses were either constructed or renovated and 125 pit latrines built.

Current efforts still look to expand infrastructure needs. For instance, at Nyagra in Katalima zone the community is constructing two classroom blocks and an office block which includes a head teacher's office, deputy head teacher's office, library and a school library. At Chimungu School in Chimungu zone and Gogo school in Mvera zone communities have contributed iron sheets to roof teachers' houses. At Katundu School in Kanyenje zone, SMCs have spearheaded the construction of a two classroom block and digging of shallow well.

Schools are not only fixing the exterior structures but communities are improving school furniture and fixtures. For instance, at Namwili school in Mponela zone 16 benches constructed for pupils. At Bwevu school in Chigudu zone and Mponela I school in Mponela zone all broken desks have been repaired.

Creative efforts by the community to secure resources include brick molding through special groups (gule wamkulu) at Mtanila and Madisi schools in Madisi zone have already molded over 750,000 bricks.

13. Percentage of schools that receive school incentive packages (SIPs)

- PSSP: SFP procured all the materials to include in SIPs and ZIPs, including school supplies and recreational equipment
- PSSP: SFP has distributed 226 SIPs and 13 ZIPs (Zonal Incentive Packages) to schools
- PSSP: SFP has sensitized all 226 schools and communities about SIPs/ZIPs. Schools gathered their own items for including in the SIP boxes such as learning materials, clothing, and soap.
- Schools have established SIP committees to oversee the fundraising, use and care of the SIP boxes

For example

Most of the schools are replenishing their boxes and are putting their packages in use. For example, all Kamphenga zone schools have replenished their box after distributing to the needy last term. Schools are continuing to raise funds like Chisepo and Chilimmimba schools which after being given the starter packs, communities contributed K4,474 and K3,750, respectively towards sustainability of the SIP. Dzoole, Msangu, Mnkhamanga and Chikwete communities voluntarily contributed K15,194, K5,593, K6,000 and K4,000 respectively.

In Senga zone, the PEA is conducting a variety of fundraising events to raise K500,000 to keep the ZIP box sustainable after the end of PSSP: SFP.

Schools have motivated pupils, teachers, SMC, PTA by awarding badges from the SIPs/ZIPs. Schools like Kawere, Kapatomoyo, Mbindo have inspired others by using the awards for role models in their schools.

14. Number of school accessible libraries established or expanded

- PSSP: SFP has sensitized school communities about creating space for a library or expanding their existing school libraries if they had any. Schools with library books were encouraged to utilize the resources giving learners opportunity to use them.
- PSSP: SFP selected over 42,000 books from International Book Bank (IBB) donation warehouse, shipped, sorted and thus far, have distributed to 44 school libraries.
- PSSP: SFP has provided 8 learning resource titles and to all the teachers of Dowa and multiple copies of 4 cycles of training manuals to each of the schools.
- PSSP: SFP provided and oriented teachers on 2 relevant resources for managing libraries: Resource Center Guide and Use and Care of Textbooks.
- PSSP: SFP has sensitized 705 key school and community members on establishment, management and care of school libraries and books in all the 13 zones.

For example

Communities and schools have started constructing/renovating library rooms. For example, at Kayembe school in Kayembe zone, Senga, Sidze and Mbalame schools in Senga zone have started constructing where they previously had no library.

All 226 schools have formed library committees, comprise teachers, SMC, PTA, MCM, learners and community leaders to manage existing or establish new libraries in schools and the committees.

In Kayembe zone Kayembe, Mlengwe, Msokonezi and Sandulizeni schools have built new libraries to serve as learning centers for pupils.

Schools like Kongwe 1, Dowa 2, Funsani, Chivala, Simankhwala, Manondo and Mbalame, Chibanzi, Kapatamoyo have received supplementary books from PSSP: SFP which are being used enthusiastically by learners, teachers and community members.

Existing school resources have been revived at schools like Kafulu, Longwe, Katalima, Kaphiri, Ngala, Chakhaza, Simbi, whereby communities which had books previously have revitalized their use as resources in teaching and learning processes.

Result 3: Improved Teaching in Schools

15. Number of teachers trained in content and pedagogical practices

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 teachers (479 female, 1241 male) over 4 cycles of training in pedagogy, student centered learning techniques, and content knowledge in mathematics, English and literacy. This training included all the government teachers and some volunteer teachers and student teachers.
- PSSP: SFP has supported all 1720 teachers (479 female, 1241 male) with resource manuals for English, Mathematics, teachers' professional code of ethics, participatory teaching methods, TALULAR making and use that help them with skills, techniques and content knowledge for improving teaching.
- Teachers in all the 226 schools in Dowa have conducted school based INSETs to share ideas, knowledge and skills and address issues affecting their teaching and learning processes at school level.
- PSSP: SFP has supervised teachers during classroom instruction to help them apply the lessons learned from the cycles of training.

For example

Teachers at schools like Chimbuli, Madisi, Mvera, Nalunga meet to develop classroom materials and share ideas on how to improve skills and achievement among their pupils.

Teachers at schools like Chilinde, Sungeni, Bwanyundo, Katalima, Nambamba have expressed increased confidence to handle any class assigned to them after as a result of the trainings provided.

The majority of teachers in Chimungu, Chimbuli, and Madisi have created learning centers with a variety of resources such as literacy corners, library, wall newspapers, and a variety of manipulatives which are used in the classrooms for learners to understand concepts.

Most teachers from Boma, Kayembe, and Mponela zones have expressed they are using the resources provided by PSSP: SFP to support teaching and learning in schools, particularly as reference materials when planning their lessons.

16. Increased percentage of teachers using participatory teaching methods during classroom instruction

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 teachers in 4 cycles of training thus far in pedagogy, and student centered learning techniques. The training is designed to lead to improved classroom instruction.
- PSSP: SFP has supported all 1720 teachers (479 female, 1241 male) with resource manuals in particular with ones on participatory teaching methods, TALULAR making and use that help them with strategies for improving teaching.
- PSSP: SFP is promoting exchange visits between schools to share best practices and motivate teachers are doing well.
- PSSP: SFP has supported teachers facilitation of school based INSETs to share knowledge, skills and ideas on how to help learners achieve.
- PSSP: SFP has supervised teachers teaching and provided strategies for more effectively teaching using strategies like role plays, group work, pair work, etc.

For example

Some schools have established TALULAR banks with materials created by the teachers and pupils and have made the learning more interesting and practical for the pupils.

Teachers are intensifying interschool and inter-zonal visits to model schools. For example, some school heads, teachers and ZOCs from Boma zone visited Senga zone and those from Chigudu

visited Mvera zone, learning about group work and other methods for handling large classes in a child centered way.

Increasingly more schools like Kampenga School the standard 1 teacher are applying group work techniques in large classes, which has led to a more excitement among the children in their learning and improved attendance in the class. .

Teacher observations in third term 2006 showed that only 32% of the teachers were using participatory methods, but supervision results are now showing that more than half of the teachers are using participatory methods

17. Increased percentage of primary teachers trained in and applying early literacy teaching techniques in the classroom

- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 teachers (479 female, 1241 male) in 4 cycles of trainings on principles and techniques for teaching early literacy in schools. The trainings that are offered are designed to lead to better achievement and improved teaching and learning which eventually improve learners' literacy skills. These techniques are helped teacher better implement the new PCAR curriculum
- PSSP: SFP has provided all 1720 teachers (479 female, 1241 male) with resource manuals teaching English in Malawian primary schools
- PSSP: SFP has trained 1720 (479 female, 1241 male) teachers on TALULAR production, care, use and establishment of TALULAR banks in schools for use during teaching and learning. The production and use of TALULAR has assisted teachers to better apply and learners to acquire basic skill and concepts in literacy.
- PSSP: SFP and PCAR have trained PEAs and ZOCs on how to support the Standard 1 teachers and learners as a result ZOCs and PEAs are able to supervise Std 1 teachers during literacy lessons.
- PSSP: SFP has developed a comprehensive literacy program, the Beginning Literacy Program of Malawi (BLP/M). All Standard 1 teachers in 226 schools in Dowa will be trained to implement this program in their classrooms.
- PSSP: SFP has conducted validation meetings with 50 standard 1 teachers from 30 selected schools in the district sharing and practicing early literacy techniques as part of the BLP/M program and getting their feedback on the materials that have been developed.
- PSSP: SFP has supervised teachers in junior classes and advised and supported them on the applying the early literacy strategies taught during the cycles of training.

For example

At Mdabwi, St Matias, Gawamadzi, Mtengenji, Mtchakhatha, Mbira, Chimwankhuku learners in lower classes are served with cards to use in reading and writing their names at an early stage. Teachers are also using songs and stories to teach literacy skills like story telling, answering comprehension questions, predicting, reciting, speaking, reading and writing as early as possible.

At Funsani, Manondo, Mtunthama, Simankhwala, Kaputalambwe in Senga zone teachers are encouraging learners to be reading newspapers and magazines, poster, books so that they can write their own short stories.

Teachers at Lingadzimilimi started an extra class to assist learners after school who do not know how to read and write.

Schools like Chikwete Primary school teachers have made 500 word cards for pupils to practice reading during teaching and learning in a class. To foster development of literacy skills, learners are given cards to read to their parents at home and even their siblings could help them to read.

Most teachers like those at Daimoni School, have developed many types of TALULAR such as word cards, word tree, alphabet charts, reading boards, name cards to assist them in literacy teaching.

18. Change in the percentage of teacher absenteeism

- Communities have been engaged in rehabilitating and constructing homes for teachers. These structures will help decrease the travel time many teachers will have to take to get to class. This will help decrease teacher absenteeism.
- School Management Committees, with the support of PSSP: SFP, have increased their skills to monitor teacher and pupil attendance.
- PSSP: SFP has provided all 1720 teachers a resource guide and orientation on teacher ethics.
- PSSP: SFP has tracked teacher absenteeism with each school visit, which has pushed teachers to come to school as they recognize someone is monitoring the situation.
- PSSP: SFP has encouraged exchange visits and role model utilization for motivating teachers.
- PSSP: SFP has undertaken a range of motivational strategies like best attendance awards to motivate teachers

For example

Head teacher at Simankhwala School has established a teacher attendance chart posted in the head teacher's offices for all to see. This was in response to high teacher absenteeism, which has been reduced from as high as 30% to almost 5%. This has improved pupil attendance too as the teachers are their role models and being present has made going to class worthwhile. PSSP: SFP has encouraged exchange visits with Simankhwala and the attendance chart concept is spreading. For example, the head teacher at Senga School has started an attendance tree that displays the status of teachers' attendance.

In the first year, 80 teachers' houses either constructed or renovated with support from PSSP: SFP small grants. Asking some of those teachers if it has made a difference have expressed that they feel valued by the school and being close has helped them focus on their responsibility to the school.

At Kayembe school in Kayembe zone, through the community based workshops and continued monitoring by SMCs, teachers have learnt to be responsible as a result teacher attendance has greatly improved this year as compared to last year. The absenteeism rate has reduced from 20% to 8%.

SMC/PTA have been checking teacher absenteeism in Chigudu zone. At Maiwe and Chigudu schools cases of absenteeism of about 3 to 4 teachers each day have been reduced to one or 2. Those that are absent are due to illness, attending cluster or zonal education meetings unlike in the past when absenteeism was due to teachers going to Tobacco Auction Floors or to do other personal business

Teacher attendance has improved by 15% from 2006 to 2007 with now 87% of the teachers present.

19. Change in the percentage of pupil absenteeism

- PSSP: SFP's teacher training and ongoing support initiatives are designed to help teachers address the needs of pupils in their classroom. Improved classroom practices will lead to a decline in pupil absenteeism.
- Schools are incorporating activities making the learning environment more attractive to local students. For example, some are introducing competitive football teams; netball; play grounds including see-saws and swings; games such as foot races, jumping, and dumb bells; traditional dancing; vocational life skills such as tinsmithing, tailoring, pottery, carpentry, radio repairing, knitting, and sewing, among others.

- PSSP: SFP has sensitized communities and supported community based initiatives to decrease pupil absenteeism, such as Gule Wamkulu escorting all school-aged children to school or chiefs regulating the schedule of Gule Wamkulu initiations to take place during school holidays, thus curbing pupil absenteeism.
- School Management Committees, with the support of PSSP: SFP, have increased their skills to monitor teacher and pupil attendance.
- PSSP: SFP has provided attendance registers to all schools to help them monitor and record pupil attendance.
- PSSP: SFP has sensitized teachers and communities on their roles in communicating the absenteeism situation of the school and together finding solutions.

For example

Introduction of SIP boxes for people to voluntarily contribute items for OVCs are still sustained when first introduced under SMC-EQ. With re-sensitizations, schools like Mphimbi school in Mponela zone have re-invigorated contributions like clothes, soap and teaching and learning materials, which are later distributed to OVCs. This has helped improve attendance in children who were ashamed to come to school dirty.

To curb illnesses like waterborne diseases that contribute to low attendance rates schools like Chinkhwili, Chikhobwe, Gudyu, Bowe, Chimkoka and Mtsukamakoza in Chimbuli zone introduced hand washing facilities.

Thedze School in Chigudu zone has introduced a unique initiative to attract pupils to school. They have purchased two guitars to have a school band not only entertain pupils but also be used to raise awareness on education and other important issues.

Many schools in an effort to improve learning and reduce absenteeism have started to focus on classroom structures in an effort to create a conducive learning environment. For example, the community around Mphimbi School in Mponela zone fixed breeze blocks in the windows of the school blocks which reduced theft of TALULAR materials. Mponela I School was experiencing high absenteeism on Mondays. When PSSP: SFP sensitized the school on the importance of attendance, the school reviewed what was happening. They realized that because the school is close beer halls, the drunkards were using unlocked classrooms as toilets during the weekends. On Mondays, pupils were required to clean the human waste, which led to high absenteeism. Now that the doors are lockable, the act of vandalism has stopped and attendance has improved tremendously, reaching over 95% on Mondays.

Absenteeism fell from 23% to 13% between the start of term 3 in 2006 and start of term 1 in 2007.

5.0 ANALYSIS OF KEY PROJECT PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Project Start-up

Partnerships

PSSP: SFP combines a mix of local organizations and international organizations. PSSP: SFP partners AIR, CRECCOM, MIE and MWAI, with each bringing their own area of expertise. This has proved to be a strength for PSSP: SFP. AIR and MWAI bring extensive international experience and latest methodologies for improving education and CRECCOM and MIE bring their local knowledge of the on the ground issues and successful techniques for engaging communities and MOE. Multiple meetings have taken place in the US and Malawi between the partners to develop strategic plans and resolve challenges. Given the limited communication infrastructure in Dowa, some of the communication with the US colleagues has been

hampered; however alternatives were put in place like scheduled calls in Lilongwe where communication is better.

CRECCOM historically has worked nationwide from its Zomba office, however for PSSP: SFP a few staff were actually made resident in the Dowa field office. This initially created some logistical and office culture challenges for CRECCOM, however those have since been resolved and CRECCOM as an organization is changing its approach to projects to make resident more staff who are full time on a given initiative in a remote geographic location. MIE as a partner has been involved at multiple levels of project implementation beyond its PSSP: SFP project staff. They have expressed their appreciation for the capacity building opportunities provided by the project and believe the organization is stronger for its involvement. AIR in its lead role of PSSP: SFP will continue to look for opportunities for its local counterparts and support their organizational/institutional development.

Staffing

PSSP: SFP designed the project to provide counterparts, Zonal Coordinators (ZOCs), to the zonal officers in education, particularly the Primary Education Advisors (PEAs). This was in recognition of the extensive workload of PEAs and the need to provide extra support during the intensive project phase. The addition of ZOCs has proved to be a valuable resource to the project, but there are challenges to having such an extensive network of staff in the field.

They have been able to support a range of extension workers and to create the early momentum necessary for project success. Initially, there had been concern that government extension workers may see the ZOCs as rivals to their positions. From the first orientation with the ZOCs, strategies were discussed to ensure they were seen as partners in education. When meeting with PEAs and other extension workers, action plans were jointly developed. This has created the understanding needed and government field workers view the ZOCs as partners and not as threats to their position. That said, ZOCs are often undertaking the work that PEAs or other extension workers are supposed to do, especially relative to the project. If overdone, this extra work could jeopardize the sustainability of the project.

This is a delicate balance that the ZOCs and PSSP: SFP managers are aware of and will continue monitor closely and address as appropriate. To help “pass the baton” to the PEAs at this point in the project, a joint supervision tool was jointly developed with the district team that combine both the project and district monitoring aspects. With the backing of the District Education Manager (DEM), the PEAs and ZOCs will jointly supervise teachers in all schools during term 3.

Another challenge faced in the first half of PSSP: SFP was the prolonged illness and eventual passing of the PSSP: SFP Teacher Training Coordinator, Mavis Chona. This position plays a key role in leading the teacher professional development aspects of the project and her health status hindered some of the efforts to improve Dowa teachers. That said, more technical assistance from MWAI were brought in and all staff worked to fill the gap. Now PSSP: SFP has hired a new Teacher Training Coordinator who worked as the MESA’s District Training Coordinator, another USAID project with similar interventions and she has brought new vigor to this position.

Office establishment

AIR identified and secured office premises at Mponela Township. While central to the operation of the district and well situated for implementation and monitoring of the project, the rural location with limited infrastructure has proved challenging.

Power interruptions are frequent and for many months of the year the office lacked running water due to broken pumps in the town. The two telephone lines were installed but Malawi Telecommunications Limited is lacking the materials to establish the additional third line. Internet options are limited to dial-up due to the lack of switches on the towers in Mponela. Without additional phone lines, access is severely limited and

unfortunately MTL frequently breaks down leaving the office with no communication but cell phones. Nonetheless, PSSP: SFP continues to follow up regularly with both MTL and internet providers in Lilongwe. Meanwhile, alternative arrangements were used to maintain open channels as much as possible. Financial transactions require trips to Lilongwe, although several attempts were made to persuade the banks to open a mobile bank in Mponela. Administrative processes were put in place to minimize these time and fuel costs.

As Malawi continues to develop, PSSP: SFP expects the office situation to improve. Until then, the PSSP: SFP team remains dedicated to serving in Dowa District and providing the best service possible for the children of Dowa.

5.2 Teacher Professional Development

To improve teachers' professional skills in primary schools, PSSP: SFP conducts in-service trainings at district, cluster and school levels. The training uses a flattened cascade model (i.e., AIR/MIE/MWAI trainers train Zonal Coordinators (ZOCs), Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), and Assistant Coordinators (ACs) who in turn train teachers). Perhaps for the first time in Dowa, trainers are reaching the teachers in the school directly. All Dowa teachers are participating in school-based professional development activities. In addition, PSSP: SFP supports a variety of teacher professional development strategies and activities to reinforce the training to ensure that knowledge and skills are improved and attitudes are changed.

Forming clusters

Dowa was originally divided into 13 educational zones; each zone was supervised by a PEA who is also an inspector and advisor to teachers within the zone. To ensure efficient and effective supervision and support to schools, PSSP: SFP established school clusters within each educational zone. Each of the four or five school clusters per zone is comprised of approximately two to five schools and communities surrounding the schools for a total of 59 clusters.

These clusters helped facilitate coordination and communication among schools. They provided a forum to call together teachers at no significant cost to them or the project. In such forums, ideas were shared that created a ripple effect of best practices among the teachers.

However, there are challenges in the system. Because some school communities within a cluster were far apart, the community support structure was divided into 69 rather than 59 clusters. This larger number proved too large for conducting the teacher training during the limited school holiday time, so some school clusters had two community clusters. This overlap required careful monitoring. In addition, about 15 months into implementation, the Government re-drew Dowa's zones and established 19 zones. PSSP: SFP is in the progress of adjusting clusters, as appropriate. PSSP: SFP is unable to add Zonal Coordinators to the system, so the staffing allocation to a given school may be adjusted to maximize relationships with their counterparts.

PSSP: SFP did not establish cluster mentor teachers like MESA or MTTA. Instead an average of half of the teachers within a school attends trainings and were expected to serve as mentors. However, it may be that this approach provided too many mentors and the schools are experiencing a diffusion of responsibility. So while it provides a pool of resources, there is no one person that spearheads school professional development activities. PSSP: SFP will draw on the strengths of this larger number by augmenting each school's role in identifying role models and leaders in certain areas and enabling them to share their knowledge within the cluster. This will not only develop the capacity of many more leaders, but it will also institute a positive competitive spirit for recognition. Also, as PSSP: SFP progresses, it plans to implement more cluster-based initiatives to strengthen the cluster system. For example, teachers, head teachers, and schools that are exemplary in a particular practice will be utilized as a resource for other schools in the cluster. PSSP: SFP will encourage INSETs to be scheduled at cluster level, so that ideas and good practices can be shared with other schools.

Planning cycle trainings

The overall professional development in-service teacher training program was developed to improve teaching and learning outcomes and to enhance teachers' abilities to help pupils achieve literacy in Chichewa and English and Mathematics. Pedagogical practices such as TALULAR, continuous assessment, teaching strategies for large classes, and record-keeping also were addressed to provide teachers with strategies for more effective teaching. The professional development training was designed with sustainability in mind, so that the PEAs and ZOCs would be able to prepare their teachers and facilitate school-based INSETs that address teachers' and schools' needs. The trainings also were designed to be incremental, allowing teachers to practice what was learned in the training over the course of the term. The planning approach was flexible and dynamic, and lessons learned from one cycle were incorporated into the next.

The cycle 1 topics were chosen based on needs identified by the ZOCs at the beginning of the project, and based on needs identified during other similar USAID projects (e.g., Malawi Education Support Activity [MESA] and Malawi Teacher Training Activity [MTTA] trainings in the neighboring district of Kasungu). Moreover, experts from Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) identified common areas for training that are fundamental to successful teaching and learning. In the subsequent cycles, topics were developed or modified as ZOCs' and PEAs' identified teachers' needs through classroom observations and interviews. For example, trainings were made more practical so that training modules were based on specific lessons (e.g., Standard 4 English, Lesson 3) and in training demonstrations teachers observed how they could plan to teach some of their lessons that would appear in the syllabus in the subsequent term.

Each cycle developed a training manual that served as a reference to the facilitator. The planning and time that went into this reference expanded over time as it became clear that, particularly at INSET level, the facilitator needed support. These manuals have proved to be valuable resources for the facilitator as well as for the teachers and the manuals will continue to be used and even expanded with supporting information that teachers can use to create their own INSETs.

PSSP: SFP endeavors to empower the teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development. This midway point of implementation is a propitious time to consider possible new approaches that ensure ownership and sustainability. PSSP: SFP is planning to introduce teacher conferences for cycle 6 whereby teachers will identify issues and determine a capable facilitator for addressing the issues and make presentations to their colleagues in a cluster forum. PSSP: SFP is also exploring the use of Mobile Teacher Training Troupes (MTTI) as an effective intervention introduced by MTTA. PSSP: SFP is also looking at how to strengthen the capacity of head teachers as the leaders in the school, possibly through special trainings or exchanges.

Incremental teacher trainings

Flattened cascade model

Initially, the approach to the teacher training was a flattened cascade model whereby the trainers (PEAs and ZOCs) directly trained approximately half of the teachers during the school holidays. These teachers, called mentor teachers, are the head teachers, sectional heads and, in larger schools, subject specialists. These teachers in turn were expected to facilitate weekly school-based INSETs for the other teachers in their school.

Drawing on lessons learned in cycle 1, PSSP: SFP incorporated some new approaches in cycle 2. To ensure that PSSP: SFP interventions would reach all teachers, all teachers attended training at cluster level. Given the success of cycle 2 – where teachers' attitudes were changed, albeit not fully transformed – the same model from cycle 2 (i.e., training all teachers directly) was used in cycle 3. However, since the PSSP: SFP budget allows for training only half the teachers with an allowance at cluster level, teachers' professional responsibilities, such as INSET participation, were addressed during cycle 3 in preparation for cycle 4, which returned to the mentorship approach. By cycle 4, the teachers had begun to appreciate the professional

development opportunities they were receiving from PSSP: SFP, so that all teachers are now participating in INSETs, which are going on relatively smoothly.

The flattened cascade approach has proven effective, in that half of Dowa's teachers have direct access to the trainers and the content is not lost through multiple tiers of training. In the usual cascade model, a small group of experts train a handful of trainers, who usually train another level of trainers, who in turn train the majority of teachers. In addition to the flattened training approach, PSSP: SFP provides a variety of support strategies, such as direct classroom supervision, to reinforce what teachers have learned in the cascade trainings. This direct supervision approach will continue to be intensified.

INSETs

After the cluster trainings, the mentor teachers returned to schools and conducted school-based INSETs. School-based INSETs are non-funded activities that are designed to build a culture of professional development in school. They are planned as one hour per week activities where the knowledge from the cluster training is transferred to the school level and where school personnel have an opportunity to address school-related issues and needs. The INSETs were designed to create time for implementing or trying some of the suggested activities in class before tackling new topics. This new approach could lead to some very focused and fruitful professional development at schools. However, as a new innovation, it faced some hurdles.

Although by the end of the first year nearly all teachers were engaged regularly in weekly INSETs, attendance was a significant challenge in the first two cycles. All teachers should have participated in the school-based trainings; however, particularly in cycle 1, some of the mentor teachers did not see themselves as participants and did not join school-based activities. A few teachers who were not at the cluster trainings also refused to join at school level, in protest for not getting allowances. In other cases, teachers felt satisfied with their current skill level and did not feel the need for professional development. Negative attitudes related to teacher burn-out and lack of teacher accommodation was also observed. Teachers sometimes were reluctant to participate because of feeling overworked and having to walk long distances home following the school-based INSET. In addition, the district education officers faced challenges in taking full control of the district and supporting PSSP: SFP activities.

PSSP: SFP provided ongoing follow-up in schools, as well as increasing community involvement to encourage the teachers. Increased sensitizations were mounted to raise awareness that INSETs are an opportunity for professional development. Support to the district office was provided and division and headquarter MOE officials monitored sessions. Explanations were given to teachers clarifying that the trainings were for their professional development and the lunch allowance was intended to cover their lunch expense only, which was eventually accepted. Logistical mechanisms were implemented such as the establishment of an INSET Coordinator, which gave one person the responsibility to oversee this process, alternating days and times for the INSET within clusters to allow for monitoring by PSSP: SFP staff and to encourage teachers' regular participation.

By the end of PSSP: SFP first year, all schools had completed their cycle INSETs. Teachers' attitudes had also been transformed and they embraced the INSETs increasingly as an initiative that is theirs and is for their benefit. PSSP: SFP will continue to build on these lessons and increasingly will 'pass the baton' to the teachers as they develop their own topics for future INSETs that address their specific needs. PSSP: SFP will intensify its supervision of the INSETs and will work with teachers in the classroom as they apply what they learn.

Trainers

Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) is one of the partners in PSSP: SFP and it is also the curriculum development center for the nation. PSSP: SFP has not only capitalized on that expertise, but it has continued to build MIE staff capacity as education trainers and it has provided them with new insights into the

implementation of their curriculum in rural schools. MIE staff, as well as Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), University of Malawi, and Education Division officials, have served as developers of the PSSP: SFP training modules, facilitators in the training of trainers (TOT), monitors of the training, and observers of teacher performance. Including MIE and these other institutions is producing a ripple effect across the nation as practices are shared among these colleagues and lessons from within Dowa are shared in their respective institutions. This practice will be continued and other relevant organizations involved as particular needs arise.

Within the district, PSSP: SFP planned for the PEAs and ZOCs together to conduct the trainings. However, Dowa District PEAs usually are unable to participate in the cluster level trainings due to other official duties and other NGOs training commitments during the same school holiday period. To address this concern, the project included the Assistant Coordinators (ACs) in the TOT after cycle 1. With the exception of the cluster where the TDC is located, ACs generally are not trainers; however, if there is a conflict with the PEAs' obligations, ACs can step in and help with trainings. PEAs are the caretakers of the zone and it is their responsibility to oversee the teachers. It would be against MOE established protocol for the AC to serve in that capacity if the PEA is available. For the sustainability of PSSP: SFP, the PEAs need to be the training shepherds, but building the capacity of the ACs is important too since they are the second in the line of support to teachers and schools in the zone. ACs have proved to be a valuable resource for the schools, and their facilitation skills have increased. ACs will continue to be involved.

Looking forward, PSSP: SFP wants to leave Dowa with a cadre of trainers to support ongoing teacher professional development activities. PSSP: SFP is exploring options that could strengthen the capacity of trainers within clusters that has already been initiated through the project. For example, subject specialists may receive special training in their subject area and be a trainer for several schools or clusters after PSSP: SFP is completed.

Support to PCAR

As part of PSSP: SFP role in supporting the national agenda and the implementation of the Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform (PCAR) within the district of Dowa, PSSP: SFP offered support to the PCAR training of standard 1 teachers. PSSP: SFP sent all 13 ZOCs and three managers to participate in the two sessions of PCAR training of trainers for PEAs to enable PSSP: SFP to support and monitor PCAR implementation in schools.

PSSP: SFP staff supported each PCAR zonal training for at least one of the trainings days and usually for at least half the time, despite the moving timeline for PCAR trainings which coincided with PSSP: SFP trainings. During Term 1 and 2, PSSP: SFP observed standard 1 teachers in the classroom and provided them support and feedback on the implementation of PCAR. Standard 1 teachers said they felt more prepared for PCAR after the trainings and supervision provided by PSSP: SFP, and they said they better understand many of the concepts, which were incorporated into PSSP: SFP modules.

Through the observations, PSSP: SFP recognizes several strategies that may assist teacher in the roll-out of PCAR. For example, while PCAR is promoting group work, it has pre-selected four groups for a standard 1 class, which in many cases is more than 100 pupils and sometimes as large as 300 pupils. PSSP: SFP has helped teachers cope within this structure by giving ideas on how to break the four groups into sub-groups where there is a lead group and each group is led by a peer tutor. PSSP: SFP will continue to share these ideas with teachers, PEAs, and PCAR developers and will incorporate the suggestions into future cycles of training.

As PCAR moves into the next roll-out phase where Standards 2, 5, and 6 will be trained, PSSP: SFP would like to reiterate the advantages of cluster level trainings, which can help overcome the challenges associated with higher per diem allowances related to the distance teachers must travel from the training center. Further, the INSET model that Dowa teachers increasingly value could be the right model for rolling out the

Continued Professional Development (CPD) of PCAR. Certainly the allowances paid by PCAR frustrate the more sustainable models that PSSP: SFP is promoting. PSSP: SFP recommends that additional models be considered, and will continue to share these ideas and engage MOE and PCAR implementers in discussion about how to most effectively train teachers in PCAR.

Monitoring and Supervision of Teachers

PSSP: SFP believes that teachers need significant support in the classroom to effectively apply lessons taught during the trainings, especially the teachers of Dowa who largely possess the lowest professional and academic qualifications in the country. To this end, PSSP: SFP field-based ZOCs observe teachers teaching in classrooms, and they provide feedback to teachers on how to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. In addition to monitoring classrooms, ZOCs and PEAs monitor and support INSETs, giving guidance on certain concepts that may not have been clearly understood during the trainings. Senior PSSP: SFP staff and external monitors also have provided professional advice during the trainings that has promoted quality teaching. ZOCs have also used this supervision to help them identify what areas should be addressed in future trainings.

With this supervision and monitoring presence in schools and classrooms, teachers say they feel more supported. They appreciate having a resource person to help improve their teaching. As a result, teachers' attitudes toward their responsibility to the children in their class and toward the teaching profession are changing. As a key part of their responsibilities, PEAs are supposed to monitor schools; however, given other constraints they have not supervised with the frequency necessary for effective support. Recognizing this challenge, PSSP: SFP has encouraged closer collaboration between the ZOC and the PEA to ensure effective coverage within their zones so that they plan together how all schools can be supported during a term. Recently, PSSP: SFP has worked closely with the district and zonal education team to develop a joint supervision tool and record form. This will be implemented in Term 3, with the additional support of fuel to the PEAs. PSSP: SFP believes that this increased intensity of supervision will help teachers solidify the concepts and skills taught during the cycles and will improve teachers' classroom practice. In addition, this supervision will help identify exemplary teachers or schools that can lead or assist in trainings as well as identify teachers and schools that need additional support. PSSP: SFP has also recently introduced school performance diaries. Any support person who visits the school is expected to write an entry in the diary and the school is also expected to record its achievements. The diary is kept with the head teacher to provide feedback and to mark progress. These initiatives will be watched closely.

Support to Teachers

In addition to supervision, PSSP: SFP uses a range of other support strategies that complement the trainings and motivate teachers. For example, PSSP: SFP is promoting exchange visits between schools to share best practices of one school with another as well as to motivate those schools that are doing well. Increasingly Open Days are being scheduled as a mechanism for teachers and pupils to share what they are doing with the community at large. PSSP: SFP also is encouraging high profile officials and guests to visit schools in order to motivate and inspire not only the schools visited but also the surrounding schools that would also like to have visitors see their initiatives. These various strategies, including the recently distributed "best of" certificates have been effective motivators. They have promoted a ripple effect across the district as some of the best practices or creative classroom strategies have been shared. Encouraging different stakeholders has also boosted morale. PSSP: SFP will continue these practices and is considering additional strategies that can continue this trend, such as a Teacher Pride campaign.

Addressing teacher issues

Teacher qualifications

More than half of the total teachers hold a Junior Certificate (JCE) academic qualification, a certificate marking achievement halfway through secondary school. About 60% of Dowa's teachers have a PT4, the lowest grade in the teaching profession. Teachers' low academic and professional qualifications pose a challenge to the project and ultimately to the child. Dowa teachers need more supervision and monitoring

than would be the case ordinarily. Compared to other districts, it has taken teachers longer than usual to grasp and implement the skills taught in the training. The project is intensifying its supervision and support to the classroom. Also, PSSP: SFP has simplified the trainings to make them both more practical and understandable. PSSP: SFP is promoting study circles as venues for teachers to work together to upgrade their academic qualifications. These are proving effective at bolstering the skills and confidence of the teachers to sit for the MSCE exams (exams that mark the completion of the secondary school cycle). PSSP: SFP expects that by the end of the project more teachers will have achieved this higher qualification, which will benefit their learners and themselves.

Staffing situation

Most schools face serious understaffing, and one school is operating with only volunteer teachers. This negatively affects the implementation of some approaches and techniques since they require support and guidance from the teachers. PSSP: SFP has helped to provide teachers with techniques to deal with large class sizes and with related strategies (e.g., staggering sessions or multi-standard teaching) for teaching shortages. As part of the mobilization efforts, PSSP: SFP has encouraged communities to provide resource persons or volunteer teachers to support the schools. PSSP: SFP has included the volunteers in the cycle of trainings and provided additional school-based trainings for these volunteers to support the classroom effectively. Above all, PSSP: SFP has tried to lobby for additional teachers to be posted, particularly in rural areas where the shortage is most acute. In particular, PSSP: SFP has requested that new teachers who graduate this October be posted in the rural areas. The project will ensure they get the necessary professional support. PSSP: SFP continues to plead with both HQ and district officials to look at reallocating teachers within Dowa, where semi-urban schools have more teachers than they need, to the more rural schools, which desperately need more teachers.

5.3 Learning resources and literacy

5.3.1 Learning resource

Classroom and school materials are important to equipping teachers with the necessary means to instruct their pupils effectively and to make learning more interesting and relevant for the learners. PSSP: SFP bears these ideas in mind and is providing teachers and pupils with materials to enrich their teaching and learning.

Resource materials for teachers

PSSP: SFP recognizes that teachers do not have the resources available to facilitate their professional development. In an effort to maximize resources and draw on the strengths of previous USAID projects implemented by the same organizations, PSSP: SFP has re-printed eight useful teachers resources and will print additional ones in future cycles of trainings. These were distributed to all teachers during the cycle trainings as part of the support material to the topics being introduced. During the training, trainers taught teachers how to use these resources to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach effectively. Trainers referenced these resources in subsequent trainings, in an effort to strengthen teachers' familiarity with and use of these resources. A deliberate effort has also been made to engage teachers in using these resource materials during lesson planning.

One challenge to the use of these resources has been around the lack of a reading culture. Teachers are not accustomed to having professional reading resources and, hence, they do not utilize them fully, even though they now have them. PSSP: SFP deliberately has incorporated the use of these resources at both the cluster trainings and in the design at the INSET level. In recent months during class supervision, monitors ask teachers if they are using the resources and remind them of the value of these resources in the instructional process.

Another challenge has been the English reading skills of Dowa teachers. Two-thirds of the teachers are only JCE-holders. This means they have only completed half of the secondary school cycle. Some teachers have said they find the reading level in the resources too challenging. The project has been encouraging study

circles where teachers work together to improve their skills and sit for their MSCE exams. Teachers in schools such as Mtanila, Chinkoka, Senga, Mvera MDF, Kayembe, and others are actively discussing and sharing their academic challenges and together are improving each other skills. A greater focus has been put on improving English skills in the teacher trainings and school-based INSETs as well.

Efforts will be made to in the second half to ensure that all teachers use the materials and apply the strategies in them for the benefit of their children. One possibility would be to introduce a quiz program that would require teachers to do research in the materials. Others include forming debate competitions between teachers or other clubs, like in reading or mathematics where teachers can both learn and share among one another. PSSP: SFP will continue to think creatively about how to best support teachers with materials and how to build the culture of professional reading that will help teachers become better self-learners.

Resources for pupils

Schools face an acute shortage of additional reading and supplementary materials in schools apart from the curriculum books. This poses a challenge to pupils' language skills development and hampers the implementation of particular approaches to teaching literacy. This problem is exacerbated by the schools' lack of proper storage for teaching and learning materials. PSSP: SFP has tried to solve these problems through a variety of strategies. First, teachers were trained on TALULAR – using local materials to develop literacy materials to help learners read and write. Moreover, the community has been called on to support teaching and learning by providing old books, magazines, newspapers, calendars, and cartons that are print rich. The plans for BLP/M include significant infusion of classroom resources focused on literacy. PSSP: SFP is also in the process of developing a series of books that use stories from Dowa communities and children. To overcome the lack of storage for teaching and learning materials, some schools are constructing libraries for easy access to reading materials, using donated cabinets, or developing a reading corner in a classroom. Others have identified available space for storing school materials in the community. Schools have started to develop mobile TALULAR banks to share resources and keep them safe. PSSP: SFP has also provided donated supplementary books that will be distributed to every school, as will be discussed in the next section.

Providing supplementary books

To help support and expand libraries in Dowa district, PSSP: SFP has facilitated a book donation from the International Book Bank (IBB). The IBB serves as a repository of donated new books from publishers that can be sent cost effectively to developing countries. PSSP: SFP personnel selected books based on the following criteria: suitability for primary level in Malawi; content books (i.e., English, science, and mathematics, in particular); and suitability for primary teacher professional development.

The National Library Service (NLS) received over 42,000 books. The decision to use NLS was to strengthen it as a local institution and to draw on its expertise in categorizing books and training librarians. NLS processed and categorized the books to facilitate access and accountability of the books. In readiness for distribution of books to school libraries, PSSP: SFP conducted sensitization meetings in all 226 schools. Consequently, school communities completed or started to build library facilities and instituted library committees to manage the books. For schools that were ready, NLS distributed the books and provided a brief library training. However, not many schools had facilities for storing and using library books since they do not have adequate space for a classroom, much less for a library block. Those schools are now using the donated books as teaching aids or for resources to reading clubs. However, one challenge is that some books use a higher level of English vocabulary and language that learners have not yet achieved. Sincere classes are large, it is not possible for all of the learners from a particular class to access the books. To address some of these challenges, PSSP: SFP has encouraged the establishment of a library period to enable learners to have a chance to read books at their leisure. PSSP: SFP will continue to encourage the schools without adequate space to provide a library facility for the books through community mobilization and possibly through the small grants.

5.3.2 Literacy

Previous Malawi project reports have described in detail the deteriorating standards of literacy in schools. Pupils can reach Standard 5 without the basic skills of reading and writing. With this in mind PSSP: SFP is developing the Beginning Literacy Program of Malawi (BLP/M) that targets Standard 1 children. BLP/M is a thematically based literacy course filled with Chichewa songs and stories for Standard 1 learners. BLP/M is based on the concept that whatever is said can be written and whatever is written can be read. It focuses primarily on children's acquisition of basic literacy skills through reading and writing in Chichewa. The expected outcomes include enabling learners to read short familiar messages with fluency; to write simple sentences and stories; and to love reading and writing. BLP/M is a balanced approach to literacy instruction that offers deliberate and planned instruction in phonics and phonological awareness. As noted, it consists of thematically-based songs and stories, uses learners' experiences, and focuses on the essential components of reading and writing in order to build a strong literacy foundation. BLP/M has built in a formative assessment system where learners are assessed on reading and writing. In addition, high parental and community involvement is planned, including inviting them at the beginning of the term to attend a meeting to discuss ways of supporting learners' literacy development. At the end of the term, parents and communities will attend a literacy fair where pupils display what they have learnt over the term.

BLP/M supplements the PCAR curriculum and focuses more intensely on the acquisition of literacy skills. The BLP/M design includes themes that are similar to PCAR themes and cross-references PCAR as appropriate. PSSP: SFP is developing BLP/M materials for teachers and pupils, such as, a teachers' guide with lessons, song posters, theme-based posters, big books, sound/letter vocabulary cards, alphabet charts, and manipulatives.

BLP/M Development Process

BLP/M is a Malawi-owned and developed literacy program. At the outset, Malawian and US-based literacy experts developed and locally vetted a framework for the program. From this framework, lessons were developed by a team of writers from leading Malawian education institutions (i.e., MIE, TTC, DTED, and Domasi College of Education) as well as MOE officials and practicing teachers. The development process proved to take significantly longer than anticipated. The development of the framework was slowed because PCAR had not developed its lessons according to its schedule and BLP/M was trying to build upon the PCAR efforts. Also, the few in-country literacy experts were simultaneously also engaged in other curriculum development efforts, which hampered the timely development of BLP/M lessons. To help stagger the workload, the lessons were developed sequentially by term. This provided reviewers and developers adequate time (especially in face of other activities that engaged the same writers) to reflect on the lessons that had been drafted before proceeding to next term's lessons, and it helped ensure that early lessons were referenced in later ones.

All stakeholders acknowledge that developing a new literacy program requires the proper amount of time. Since PCAR was scheduled to roll out in January 2007, and since rolling out two Standard 1 programs at the same time would require too much of the same teachers, PSSP: SFP and USAID scheduled the BLP/M launch for Term 1 of 2008. Since this will allow for only one year of implementation, the full impact of BLP/M may not be realized in the life span of PSSP: SFP. However, efforts have been initiated and will continue to be made to ensure MIE and MOE ownership of the program and to promote BLP/M as a national literacy program. For example, several briefings and meetings have taken place with the MOE, MIE, PCAR, and USAID to raise stakeholder awareness about BLP/M and to coordinate its rollout with other efforts, as is appropriate, particularly PCAR. A brochure on the BLP/M was developed and distributed to participants -- including the press -- at a National Language Symposium held in December 2006 in Mangochi under the theme 'Literacy for Development: The Role of African Languages'. A presentation on BLP/M was made during this conference. These efforts have helped to raise awareness and increase buy-in for the new program.

Recognizing that early literacy development at the start of the education cycle is critical to school success, PSSP: SFP is engaged in a number of literacy activities as part of what PSSP: SFP calls a Literacy Campaign. This is discussed in the next section.

Literacy Campaign and Promotion

In support of literacy development more broadly, PSSP: SFP launched a literacy campaign that incorporated a number of literacy-based activities to promote reading among pupils. Many schools developed or planned to develop literacy centers like reading corners or even libraries. MCMs have helped establish reading clubs. Teachers and community members have gathered reading materials such as old newspapers and magazines so that pupils would have materials for their literacy lessons. As another local source of reading materials, PSSP: SFP invited community members and learners from upper classes to collect songs, write stories, and paste them on the notice board. Community members are serving as storytellers and historians in schools, promoting interest in listening to and in subsequently writing of stories. They have also contributed to the development of TALULAR for literacy lessons classroom. Halfway through the project, approximately 85% of primary schools in Dowa had developed TALULAR banks where teaching and learning materials are kept to help develop a culture of reading among pupils. As part of PSSP: SFP cycle training, teachers were equipped with basic skills to help learners master some of the early literacy skills, such as writing their own names and creating names cards, word trees, alphabet charts, and letter cards for learners to manipulate. All of these activities have contributed to an improved reading culture and have set the foundation for BLP/M in Standard 1 classes.

Engaging the community in the literacy campaign has proven to be successful. Many parents and guardians have come to realize their role in fostering literacy development of their children by providing them with adequate resources which can be made locally. However, some community members have yet to embrace this, and theft of materials is a challenge for some schools. Sensitizations are ongoing to instill a sense of responsibility in all community members in the upkeep and safety of the school and school-related materials.

Training Support for Teachers

To set the foundation for BLP/M and assist teachers while BLP/M is being developed, PSSP: SFP included approaches and principles for teaching early literacy in each of the training cycles, which have reached all teachers and most of the volunteer teacher and student teachers.

The cycle trainings conducted so far have built a strong foundation for teachers' readiness for BLP/M. Trainings have enabled teachers to acquire and practice early literacy skills for Standard 1 learners. Cycle trainings have placed a particular focus on the strategies that will be implemented through BLP/M, such as, BINGO, teacher read-alouds, songs, storytelling, "think-pair-share," and concept maps, among other learner-centered strategies. The trainings were successful, in that there was progression and build-up of ideas and skills from one cycle to the next, which enabled teachers to handle literacy lessons more competently and effectively. Key teachers who have mastered the strategies in a cluster or zone will be deployed to facilitate INSETs or conferences for teachers who are still struggling with these strategies. Also, the project will continue to promote exchange visits to share ideas across the districts.

5.4 Community Mobilization

Community mobilization begins with a four-step interactive process: research, change agent-agent sensitization and training; community sensitization and mobilization; and behavior change interventions supported by on-going mass communication interventions, role model identification and utilization, and stakeholder briefings and involvement. Combined, activities within these four steps and the support interventions have led to the desired outreach and impact – support that acknowledges the value of education for all children and recognizes the need to tackle barriers beyond basic tuition costs.

Action research and sensitization/mobilization performances

After the initial Theater for Development activities in the 5 pre-selected sites, very rich information was obtained regarding constraints to quality education in the area, namely poverty, hunger, disease, orphan hood, and cultural practices impacting negatively on education. Plans of action were developed and implemented by the communities after portrayal of the issues that aroused an in depth discussion towards solving and breaking any barriers to access and retention of children's education.

While proving a powerful mechanism for community mobilization, using university students is a costly endeavor. In order to extend the reach farther to the entire district with same resources, PSSP: SFP further consolidated and extended the influence of participatory drama performances by mobilizing and training 10 non-funded school drama groups of 168 members. These have shown to be powerful motivators for the communities and have raised their awareness and action in support of quality education. PSSP: SFP plans to encourage more drama groups, using the university students as trainers as one strategy to keep the communities' awareness of educational issues at the forefront and their commitment growing in order to achieve the equitable access to quality education.

Schools' Drama Clubs

In response to the challenges discussed with the TFD performances, PSSP: SFP is supporting school drama clubs. MCMs have established drama clubs at school and are supporting them in their respective areas. In addition, the project trained ten drama clubs to serve as grassroots level performers to sensitize and motivate communities on specific local issues impeding education. These drama clubs have proved to be powerful mechanisms for reaching communities. For example, recent performances have resulted in communities tracking pupil attendance and ensuring all school age going children are attending schools. However, these new performers do not possess the same skill level as the Chancellor College trained performers and in some cases have struggled to resolve issues that were raised during the performance. To address this, PSSP: SFP staff are made aware of and attend the performances to provide any necessary support and follow-up with the communities. To build the capacity of the groups, PSSP: SFP has taken MCM members to see two TFD performance from MIAMI project operating in Senga. PSSP: SFP has also provided training materials to the various groups and will strengthen its follow-up to the drama groups in the coming months. PSSP: SFP will also train additional drama troupes as the current groups' capacity is built.

Change agents

Change agents, for the purposes of PSSP: SFP, include the identified heads of departments and extension workers from each of the ministries: Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Human Population Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Mines, and Natural Resources and the Environment. PSSP: SFP mounted trainings for four types of change agents to achieve a strong holistic and coordinated force to combat the constraints haunting primary education in Dowa particularly that of OVCs and girls. There were four types of change agents trained:

- Core government field or extension workers from line ministries of Ministry of Education, Ministry Women and Child Development and Ministry of Health and Human Population Services.
- Support government field workers that operate within the impact areas (e.g., agricultural extension workers, forestry assistants and health surveillance assistants).
- School/local community-based change agents comprising traditional leaders, SMC/PTA members and teachers.
- Cluster community leaders.

The training centered on equipping change agents with appropriate skills and approaches so they can spearhead change and provide technical support to community members and schools as they forge ahead with project initiatives.

Drawing lessons from previous USAID funded projects, support from field workers other than those from the key line/ministries provides a depth of available resources to schools and capitalizes on specialized knowledge to support education in unique ways. They were encouraged to provide necessary technical support to both the core change agents and the community-based ones in the project implementation process. The result was overwhelming as the extension workers expressed and demonstrated great zeal and commitment to make the intervention a success. These extension workers have served as resources to schools when establishing various IGAs such as dimba gardens or orchards.

The number of PSSP: SFP key players on the ground are significant for a district project, for example the CDAs, PEAs, AEDOs, HSAs, FAs, ZOCs, MCMs and other PSSP: SFP staff are all targeting the same audience with similar issues. Having a lot of stakeholders directly reached by project is helping to enhance the multiplier effect and avoid distortion of information as it moves from one level to another. While this can be very powerful, it requires close coordination to ensure the schools and communities do not feel bombarded. In addition, there is a significant cost implication and finding that balance is important, especially when considering how PSSP: SFP could scale up from its pilot phase. Different stakeholders may bring conflicting messages regardless of training or orientation given to them by the project. It has been learned that efforts must be made to reduce duplication of activities targeting the same audience through consolidated plans and monthly zonal meeting of which each key play is a member. PSSP: SFP is also trying to guard against diffusion of responsibility issues whereby some change agents believe that others will take on the responsibility and they can relax. Using various effective change agents as role models will be intensified as PSSP: SFP continues so those agents will be even more motivated and others can learn from and be inspired by them.

Involvement of key stakeholders at the inception of the project like the briefing of MPs and all group village headmen is showing its value. More group village heads and MPs are in the forefront supporting the school initiatives. For example, the Honorable J.C. Chilunjika of Kayembe and Mponela and Dzombe of Madisi, Katalima and Kamphenga zones are but just two examples. They have supported the schools with various donations like iron roofing sheets at Nalikonda and Mkwichi schools in Kayembe zone and Nambamba school in Madisi zone respectively.

One of the main challenges, as also highlighted in the research findings, is the dependence upon tobacco and subsistence farming by most farming. The implication of this is that changes in rainfall pattern as well as poor produce prices do affect family incomes which in turn affect the education of their children. This was true for the 2006 agriculture growing season. PSSP: SFP agriculture extension workers did sensitize the communities to grow winter crops to cushion food supplies and poor tobacco sales that could have resulted into hunger and reduced pupil enrolment and high absenteeism. PSSP: SFP does also encourage these communities to engage in sustainable school feeding programs and find alternatives to help those most vulnerable. The above challenges illuminate what Dowa district faces which directly or indirectly impacts on education, and PSSP: SFP aims to help communities find solutions to these challenges.

The other daunting challenge is that government field workers are in high demand by multiple entities and often have programs that conflict with scheduled PSSP: SFP events, even when commitments are made by top district officials to participate in these scheduled PSSP: SFP events. The involvement of these field workers is vital for PSSP: SFP future sustainability. Re-planning of activities will continue where necessary to ensure PSSP: SFP goals are met and all government extension workers are involved. Fortunately, PSSP: SFP has trained and involved multiple departments, so coverage in some areas can be provided by other government workers that may not be engaged at that time. Support will continue to be sought from government officials to ensure that commitments are honored as well.

Cluster Community Leaders

A cluster leader is an elected member of a school community who voluntarily assumes a leading role in organizing and coordinating PSSP: SFP activities in approximately four school communities. Sixty-nine



cluster leaders were elected, trained and provided with bicycles. The cluster community leaders inspired various school- and community-based initiatives to support primary education in their areas. The cluster leaders are vital as they cushion the relative scarcity of the extension change agents. They have become the contact points for the PSSP: SFP staff. Most of the cluster leaders are very active and are the lead people in a range of initiatives that have sprouted out in the communities. Initiatives include construction and renovation of school structures, vocational skills training, establishment of various committees, income generating activities and advocacy on lobbying, campaigning for re-enrolment of dropouts, encouraging attendance, and supporting OVCs and children with special needs. One of the challenges is the introduction of other grassroots contact people by other stakeholder so that communities are bombarded by too many people disseminating education messages from various organizations. PSSP: SFP will continue to introduce these cluster leaders as the field/community contact people to other stakeholders in order to avoid confusing people. More coordination meetings will be held where the extension staff, community, SMCs and cluster leaders meet so as to synchronize their efforts and establish the clusters into the existing structures. PSSP: SFP will continue to educate and motivate them through exchange visits.

Change agent review and re-planning meetings

After implementation of plans of actions developed during the training of the change agents, government extension workers and cluster leaders, review and re-planning meetings were organized to share, reflect and learn on progress made, challenges met and map out way forward. They reviewed PSSP: SFP activities planned and done and re-planned for the next six months.

These meetings helped push lagging change agents and midway through the project lifespan, every school has undertaken at least 2 school initiatives. Every school has done at least one construction and maintenance of infrastructure project. Some change agents have lobbied for assistance to schools and donors like from EU, USA, Japan and Britain have supported efforts. Some cluster leaders are engaged in low cost fund raising activities dimba gardens, life skills training, big dances, etc. Additional support is being rendered to OVCs, girls, vulnerable and children with special needs. Cooperation is stronger among stakeholders, most especially MCMs and cluster leaders in most clusters

These meetings helped illuminate challenges the change agents faced. For example communities within trading centers like. Mponela and Madisi are less active in development activities but efforts continue to re-sensitize them. Change agents most especially the government extension workers are in high demand from different players on the ground which means some activities they planned did not occur. This was further frustrated by no supplemental funding for transportation. Although PSSP: SFP is supporting the work that these extension workers are supposed to do, often no fuel is cited as why they did not complete all plans. PSSP: SFP is looking into providing some supplementary fuel to the core team and working to sensitizing the rest to do the planned activities along side their other activities at a given school. Also seen during the review was the cyclical nature of participation – during the raining season, participation was low, but was reinvigorated after a busy growing season. Plans of action developed during the review and re-planning meeting will be closely monitored and supported to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness.

Special Interest Groups Trainings

Special interest groups are a major player in addressing issues and ensuring empowerment and ownership. There are critical issues affecting, attitudes, culture, traditions and practices that can not be dealt as effectively by standard target groups like SMCs or teachers. PSSP: SFP trained special interest groups from Gule Wamkulu, Akunjira and Eni Dambwe and female initiation counselors, Chisamba that were selected by their respective communities and schools.

This training proved to be fruitful in the sense that participants devised tangible plans for improving education and supporting the sick and the OVCs in their respective areas. As cited many times, the special groups have been critical in re-enrolling pupils in school and helping to improve absenteeism. PSSP: SFP encouraged the formation of zonal coordinating committees to enhance monitoring of agreed issues.

The special group's involvement was not without challenges, among which included high illiteracy levels amongst the special groups and poor relationship between special groups and school proprietors most especially the churches, but they vowed to work to address them. PSSP: SFP will continue conducting frequent follow-ups and encouragement to these groups.

Mobilization Corps of Malawi

The MCM intervention aims at inspiring volunteerism for development among youths, particularly among rural communities. The initiative started with a pilot activity of 15 MCM members in 3 of the 13 education zones who operated in the zones for four months. They went through an intensive week-long training that prepared them for work among their peers, the youth, and adult communities before taking up their positions among their own communities, generally. Each of the 15 MCMs was supplied with a bicycle to facilitate mobility in the course of their work.

Being a pilot activity, there was intensive monitoring and supervision of the volunteers with a critical review and re-planning mid-way through the period to determine how well the activity was working and to inform the main phase. The volunteers inspired a wide range of extra-curricular activities that boosted children's interest in schooling, such as vocational skills instruction, literacy/reading clubs, making of TALULAR, youth centers, and play parks.

An additional 56 youths were recruited with the full participation of their respective communities for the remaining 10 zones of the district. Like those in the pilot phase, the MCM members went through a structured and extended 15-day long training that included a field practical. They too developed attainable work plans before returning to their respective zones. Activities implemented ranged from establishment of school play parks and clubs with youths to assisting community adults with their school development programs. The grassroots level support has been tremendous and pupils, particularly the most vulnerable are being directly supported by the MCMs.

The MCM intervention promises to be an extremely productive tool to spearheading youth volunteerism for development not only in Malawi but probably for the entire continent of Africa. However there are some challenges that need to be considered when carrying out this youth program.

The communities have held unrealistic expectations that the MCM be an expert in some field. This may be emerging experiences with Peace Corp or VSO volunteer who is more educated and skilled as a teacher, tradesman, or doctor, for example. This puts pressure on the MCM who is selected from the community but with no special skills. PSSP: SFP staff have and will continue to train the MCM so that the MCM can be productive to the community. Another challenge is the terminology of "volunteer" which in Malawi context is associated with working without any pay – not even a stipend. Any discovery that the MCM is provided a stipend, the community, regard them as paid up employees, which negatively changes their attitude towards the MCMs. PSSP: SFP has continued to educate the MCMs as well as the community on the use of the stipend and the need for the communities to start thinking of how they would sustain someone who worked as an MCM in their area. While the rate is less than a dollar a day, in some cases the salaries of some government employed staff are even lower than the stipend. PSSP: SFP recognizes this challenge and will consider how to move forward for the next group of volunteers.

An additional challenge to be considered is age and hence maturity and probable misbehaviors with which the young MCMs could be found. PSSP: SFP did anticipate this and laid rules and regulations for the MCMs. PSSP: SFP did sensitize them on what was expected of them by the community as well as the project before they were deployed into the field. However, 5 MCMs have been released from service due to improper behavior. PSSP: SFP staff will continue to educate them on the accepted norms and behaviors that will enable them to fully settle in the society where they can be accepted as a catalyst for development.

Small scale grants scheme

As the communities strive to improve the quality of education in their schools, they are often hampered by lack of financial resources to complement their voluntary, non-monetary contributions. The small scale grants scheme serves to fill in this gap. PSSP: SFP conducted a series of small grants sensitization meetings. The project further provided training in financial management to core and support change agents from various government departments so that they are able to support SMCs and PTAs appropriately. Then SMC/PTA members, teachers and selected influential community members were oriented to the procedures for accessing grants. Following these preparatory activities, deserving schools were awarded the small grants, which ranged from K10, 000 to K278,791 which have been utilized to support the teaching of vocational skills and construction of infrastructure. The challenge is that Dowa is one of the districts in Malawi which had very few school classroom blocks, teachers' houses and pit latrines hence, after sensitization, most communities have been motivated to embark on infrastructure construction projects, which demand significant finances that the communities find hard to amass and has placed PSSP: SFP in a hard situation for it can not adequately support the communities' efforts. Therefore, PSSP: SFP staff have trained the communities in advocacy and lobbying skills so that the communities can lobby assistance from other resources like their Members of Parliament or other organizations. The school communities are also being encouraged to engage in more income –generating activities to supplement the small grants. PSSP: SFP is helping to direct resources from other sources, like the Clinton Hunter Foundation to support infrastructure of the neediest schools and enable the small grants to service other school support activities, like sustainable IGAs.

Role model identification and utilization

Identification and utilization of local role models is a critical aspect of meaningful and sustainable community mobilization. Changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice are a long process that differs from one place, situation and individual. Some communities will grasp the changes immediately and yet others will be slow to accept change. It is with this back ground that identifying those that have adopted the changes faster and using them to influence change in slow adopters of the changes. This process acts as a catalyst for motivation and emulation. In PSSP: SFP role model initiative is an ongoing activity and is in each and every component of the project. Role model teachers, community leaders, change agents, schools, pupils etc have been identified and utilized in many occasion including during open days, meetings and exchange visits.

PSSP: SFP does this by identifying, through the communities or change agents, the individuals or group of individuals that are successfully implementing their plans to increase access to basic education and improve learning with special focus on orphans and vulnerable children, girls and children with special needs, or increase resources at school level or improve teaching and learning outcomes in schools. The identified role models are then utilized during forums like meetings, open days o share their experiences in order to encourage others to emulate their example. The role models are also utilized by PSSP: SFP on radio broadcasts, newsletters and newspapers. PSSP: SFP will continue to utilize and plans to intensify the role model strategy in mobilizing the communities and change agents.

School and Zonal Incentive Packages

In an effort to contribute to the increase of resources at the school level, PSSP: SFP distributed School Incentive Packages (SIPs) and Zonal Incentive Packages (ZIPs). These are part of the creative mobilization strategies put in place at the grassroots level to enable the communities to learn creative lobbying skills for the mobilization of resources for the teaching and learning process while at the same time enable the community to award and recognize those that are doing very well in contributing towards the achievement of equitable access to quality basic education. SIPs and ZIPs are basically boxes containing various teaching aids supplied to schools as “starter packs” to induce the communities voluntary contribution of similar items. PSSP: SFP provided a SIP to all public schools in Dowa and ZIPs to all the original 13 education zones.

The launches were public events where several schools in close proximity came together and received the boxes and announced their plans for replenishing and sustaining the packages. Schools and their communities

formed SIP and ZIP committees that are responsible for overseeing the activities of the SIPs and ZIPs, including fundraising and replenishment.

The distribution was deliberately staggered to encourage schools to be ready for the packages for them to be able to sustain them. This proved effective as schools wanted to get their packages and put the mechanism in place to receive them. The challenge with PSSP: SFP distributed SIP and ZIP packages arises when the SIP and ZIP committees are not functional. The package becomes just another handout which is never replenished after the initial materials have been utilized. PSSP: SFP has ensured that the composition of the committees to look after the SIP and ZIP is diverse by including community leaders, SMCs/PTAs, teachers and other influential leaders and trained these committees on effective lobbying skills. The project will continue to monitor and support the committees in their efforts to sustain the SIP/ZIP packages.

Community based initiatives

Schools and communities after being sensitized by PSSP: SFP on the need to improve the quality of basic education by increasing access, improving learning with a special focus on OVCs, increasing resources at the school level and improving teaching and learning outcomes, brainstormed solutions to the constraints to achieving quality basic education they had identified and determined action plans outlining their solutions. Currently, the various target groups like SMCs/PTA, community leaders, parents, pupils, teachers, and the special groups like Gule Wamkulu are translating their ideas into practice. The translation from abstract to concrete activities has helped to foster a sense of ownership in the community, and that ensures sustainability of the project activities. The initiatives range from infrastructure development that has resulted into 13,728 pupils learning in classrooms constructed and renovated by the communities using the small grant from PSSP: SFP, to the provision of teaching and learning materials by the communities to well over a thousand OVCs and encouraging parents and pupils so that they ensure the pupils enroll and are retained in school.

One of the challenges faced by the target groups is the limited amount of resources that they can raise to complete most of their initiatives due to high poverty levels in the area. PSSP: SFP has tried to deal with this challenge through the introduction of the small grant and training of the target groups in innovative lobbying skills and widening their knowledge on the organizations and individuals they could approach when seeking assistance for their initiatives. PSSP: SFP has seen that the community based initiatives have paid dividends in increasing pupil enrollment, improving achievement in class and reducing absenteeism. PSSP: SFP will continue encouraging the communities as well as supporting the community and school initiatives.

Supervision of community-based initiatives

PSSP: SFP trained external monitors to strengthen the existing teams of district officials, field workers and project staff to provide the much needed support and guidance to school communities.

The supervision activities served multiple purposes. They, for example helped to:

- Provide much needed community support
- Provide timely feedback to the project implementation team to inform practice
- Extend the project interventions to non- PSSP: SFP districts where the external monitors came from.

One of the challenge that PSSP: SFP noted was the ability for the SMCs/PTAs and communities to follow up and evaluate the impact of their initiatives on the pupil performance in class so that they can appreciate the efforts they make towards achieving quality basic education. The situation is exasperated by high illiteracy rates amongst the community members. PSSP: SFP is bridging the gap by encouraging the schools to have more open days where the teachers will be able to show case the pupils' achievement in class. The other challenge was the narrow focus of the supervisors and helping them look holistically at the interventions and see how they contribute to PSSP: SFP goal. PSSP: SFP solved this challenge by carrying out joint partners/ extension workers field supervision and also held frequent joint meetings to share field findings and plan the

way forward. This exercise showed very positive results and will continue to be done during the remaining half of the project.

PSSP: SFP's holistic approach

The holistic development approach being implemented in PSSP: SFP is bearing fruits as the schools and communities are now benefiting from the services of Agriculture, Forestry and Health extension services since the coming in of the project. There are significantly more agriculture, forestry and health talks and visits in schools compared to pre- PSSP: SFP era. These visits are helping communities develop. For example, schools and communities have established gardens, woodlots and life-skills programs such as farming, animal rearing, and are raising funds from such initiatives to assist OVCs and education at large. These initiatives reduce the burden of hidden costs to schooling previously borne by individual parents/guardians leading to increased pupil retention and higher student learning gains. The challenge though is the large number of change agents which can be quite costly when conducting trainings and providing some logistical support to them. PSSP: SFP tackled this challenge by conducting most of its training at cluster level. PSSP: SFP will also lobby the respective Ministries through the district assembly to incorporate the project activities in their work plans thereby reducing the cost and making it sustainable.

5.5 Mass communication

Mass communication interventions keep the public informed on project activities and solicit feedback; encourage those involved in the project initiatives; and promote ripple effect for the project sustainability and expansion. These objectives are achieved through information education and communication products including print and electronic media.

Project Branding

To establish a project identity, a logo was developed and used for all PSSP: SFP publications and letters; over 2,000 copies of a project fact sheet were produced and distributed nationwide; two signposts signaling the location of PSSP: SFP Field Office were made and erected. These have promoted the project and raised awareness about our presence in Dowa. However, the higher profile has meant many requests for assistance, some of which do not fall under PSSP: SFP mandate such as request for fees for girls that have been selected to secondary school. PSSP: SFP has and will continue to sensitize the public on its goals and objectives and assist them by directing where they could obtain a particular help

Project newsletters

To highlight school and community initiatives to both motivate those who are doing well and inspire those who could do more, PSSP: SFP produced Area newsletters. The newsletter articles grouped activities 3-4 adjoining zones and shared the achievements with the entire district and the nation. These have served as an outlet to share the success from the grassroots level all the way to Ministerial level.

One challenge recently noted is that these newsletters were only being printed in English and many of the community members were not benefiting from the stories. PSSP: SFP is in the process of translating these newsletters and will be distributing them. Also, stories have largely come from the field staff and fewer are from the beneficiaries directly. More effort will be placed on getting these stories from the beneficiaries.

Media awareness campaign

As part of establishing PSSP: SFP prominence on the education scene, PSSP: SFP encouraged the media to attend some of its functions. At the start of PSSP: SFP, journalists, editors and media houses were briefed on PSSP: SFP goals, objectives, partners and donor support. This helped to ensure that messages were not incorrectly communicated and that PSSP: SFP was well understood by those reporting on it. However, despite these efforts, sometimes the media will portray the entire project the work of one partner, CRECCOM, and not mention either the rest of the team nor USAID. Ongoing sensitizations and follow-up



have tried to rectify the situation. One media house, The Nation, has not reported on PSSP: SFP activities, despite being invited several times. The editor was approached and he promised to look into the matter and PSSP: SFP will continue to follow-up the matter.

PSSP: SFP has established prominence in Malawi and is becoming a house-name not only in Dowa district but across Central Region and the entire country as well. For example, after hearing on the radio that the gule wamkulu were taking children to school in Dowa, some schools in Lilongwe started the same. The project will build on this in the second half of the project and use the media to promote some of the best practices elsewhere in the country .

5.6 Coordination and Reporting

Internal Meetings

Given the complex and multifaceted nature of PSSP: SFP, coordination among team members and technical assistance are important aspects to the project's success. To ensure a successful start to the project and sound understanding on how to precede, a series of meetings were held with partners, both at the home office and in the Malawi field office. Work plans and performance monitoring plans were jointly developed and updated quarterly. These meetings have become more formalized as the project has progressed to ensure that as the project is moving forward based on Dowa's needs.

Monthly all staff meetings were held to bring together 13 zonal coordinators, partners and field office staff to share experiences, coordinate issues, disseminate information and provide training. Management and project implementation committee meetings were held regularly to liaise across departments, plan and address any challenges as they arose. All of these mechanisms have been important for communication and planning. One challenge is ensuring that if someone is missing from a given forum that they are updated. This is particularly important as some standard communication means are unavailable. The ZOCs have no access to email and limited phone connections and the field office has limited email access. In response to this challenge, minutes of all meetings are taken and distributed. Monthly meetings are planned for the year and other meetings announced ahead of time. Agendas are also distributed ahead so if a member will be missing they know what to expect and how to contribute beforehand. PSSP: SFP will continue these forums.

Technical Assistance

PSSP: SFP has the benefit of a rich source of technical assistance and home office support in areas such as teacher professional development, literacy program development and assessment to budgeting and report writing. The support has improved the quality of the work in the field, offered alternative strategies to address various challenges and is building the capacity of the field staff. For example, as part of our teacher training, technical assistance through Miske Witt and Associates explored ways to support school based INSETs when teachers initially were not embracing them without allowances. These strategies expanded the teams' repertoire of options for supporting teachers and helped transform the teachers' perceptions of non-funded school based trainings. In the second half, PSSP: SFP will be ensuring sustainability and focusing technical assistance in areas like the research studies that will even further build the capacity of the local staff.

USAID Meetings

The implementers of PSSP: SFP and USAID have worked closely together and met frequently to maintain good open communication and ensure good visibility and success of PSSP: SFP.

After a series of initial kick-off and contractual meetings, members of the PSSP: SFP team met with USAID numerous times each quarter to discuss project implementation, refining of work plans/PMP, how to integrate with other initiatives (including PCAR), NGOs, donors or government. Several PowerPoint presentations were made for USAID/Malawi mission and USAID/Washington to inform USAID staff on the aims, goals and objectives of PSSP: SFP. PSSP: SFP attended all 6 USAID synergy meetings with the

mission director and other NGOs across sectors. These were an excellent opportunity to liaise with others working for the development of Malawi and share strategies addressing needs related to PSSP: SFP goals, as well as keep abreast of developments within USAID and US government. For example, PSSP: SFP, along with MTTA presented its approaches to sustainability at a synergy meeting held in AIR's offices in Zomba, to which other NGOs expressed their appreciation for the ideas.

The few USAID visits to the field were an inspiration to the teachers, pupils and community members, which have been motivated to work even harder for the benefit of their children. PSSP: SFP would like to encourage more field visits by USAID so they can appreciate the project's progress and the community can be encouraged.

External Meetings with Ministry, NGOs and other stakeholders

District

In the first month of the project, PSSP: SFP held an introductory meeting with Dowa district officials to ensure PSSP: SFP was owned by the district and that they were an integral part in the planning and implementation of PSSP: SFP. The early involvement of the Members of Parliament (MPs) in the project has been invaluable as most of them have contributed resources and funds to schools in their constituency and have served as advocates for quality education. Recognizing the importance of traditional structures, PSSP: SFP briefed all 7 Traditional Authorities of Dowa District and subsequently briefed Group Village Heads and Field Extension Workers (PEA/CDA/SWA, Community Nurses/Medical Assistants, HSAs, AEDOs, Forest Assistants). The inclusion of so many players in PSSP: SFP has helped ensure the success and local ownership and has set the stage for the rest of the project and sustainability beyond.

Given PSSP: SFP's close collaboration with Dowa district officials, numerous meetings and exchanges occurred over the past 18 months. The district office supported and attended the each of the cycles of teacher training, and several of the community, extension worker and school management committee trainings, which allowed fruitful exchanges of ideas and ways to support the teachers and communities of Dowa. They were included in the monitoring of training and classroom practices. Formal meetings were held with the District Education Manager to evaluate PSSP: SFP implementation and to discuss ways to improve district coordination/participation. Meetings at District level became more frequent as the project progressed and that need became clearer. This has helped build the capacity and support of the district leadership and something that PSSP: SFP will continue to foster in the second half.

Headquarters

At the ministry headquarters level, PSSP: SFP has engaged in multiple meeting and briefings, including the national launch. Early in the project, the heads of PSSP: SFP team met with PS for Education and Director of Basic Education to brief them on the project and discuss collaboration. With the support of USAID/Malawi, PSSP: SFP mounted a PowerPoint presentation to nearly 50 USAID/Malawi, MOE and donor officials at USAID/Malawi's office to share the projects goals and objectives. Regular exchanges took place with the MOE desk officer for PSSP: SFP and he in turn provided substantial support and engagement in the PSSP: SFP implementation. Additional meetings were held with EMAS department at MOE, Ministry of Women and Child Development, and Ministry of Finance. PSSP: SFP also included MOE and MOWCD headquarter officials in many of its implementation activities and has invited them to VIP field visits.

One challenge particularly within the Ministry of Education, is the frequent change of leadership. Since the project's inception, there have been several Ministers and key personnel changes. This has meant significant upheavals in focus, continuity, and time availability of ministry officials. Given this situation, PSSP: SFP recognizes it needs to meet even more frequently with Ministry headquarter officials. PSSP: SFP in particular will encourage senior officials to come more frequently to see PSSP: SFP in the field. It is important that they are hearing and seeing the best practices coming from PSSP: SFP and that PSSP: SFP discussed together with them how to improve practices and influence policy throughout the nation based on these lessons. Also,

Ministry of Women and Child Development, while a parent ministry, has not been as frequently updated on the project as the Ministry of Education. This will be addressed as the project moves forward.

PCAR coordination

Over the year, PSSP: SFP supported or liaised with members associated with the new curriculum, Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform (PCAR). PSSP: SFP attended various meetings and liaised with MIE and specifically the PCAR coordinator onsite. As the rollout for PCAR standard 1 was underway, PSSP: SFP and USAID increased its involvement and support of PCAR. PSSP: SFP attended meetings for PCAR implementation at MOE to discuss ways that PSSP: SFP could support PCAR implementation and keep abreast of PCAR developments. PSSP: SFP supported the trainings while conducting its own professional development trainings. The changing timeline of PCAR did challenge PSSP: SFP implementation, however, communication was maintained and the project remained as flexible as possible.

Coordination with other NGOs and donors

PSSP: SFP has met with other actors in support of education to raise the profile of USAID's work in PSSP: SFP and to create synergies, as appropriate. For example, PSSP: SFP team met with Dowa based NGOs and projects to introduce PSSP: SFP and strategize coordination. PSSP: SFP is the only district wide initiative supporting education, but other NGOs were supporting various areas. PSSP: SFP shared training plans and where appropriate, altered training content or delivery based on what other NGOs shared. This created significant synergies and reduced unnecessary overlaps. This was particularly true of 2 projects, ICLEP and MIAMI that are both implemented by CRECCOM and overlap with 20 schools that PSSP: SFP supports. Where those projects were undertaking similar activities as PSSP: SFP, those projects often covered the activity and it was not repeated.

PSSP: SFP also supported the initiatives of other programs. For example, PSSP: SFP committed to ensuring the successful implementation of the World Bank funded DSSP support to schools and supported the reconciliation of the grants from the schools of Dowa. This has built relationships with others and ensured that efforts stayed focused on the Dowa child. Also, as word about PSSP: SFP spread and other organizations sought information and wanted to share ideas with PSSP: SFP, which was most welcomed.

All this said, in some instances, implementers in the area are taking credit for the work of PSSP: SFP. While PSSP: SFP believes that regardless it is the success of the Dowa child that matters, it has tried to model and not only share its own success, but give credit and recognition for others inputs and achievements.

Sharing on the international scene

PSSP: SFP took advantage of opportunities to share with interested parties outside of Malawi and to learn from others in areas of support to PSSP: SFP efforts in Dowa. For example, the Deputy Chief of Party attended a School Fees Abolition Initiative (SFAI) Conference in Nairobi, sharing the objectives of PSSP: SFP project with country delegations and learning lessons from other countries that have abolished school fees. PSSP: SFP Project Manager presented a paper at the CIES conference that shared the success of PSSP: SFP with the international education community. AIR hosts a summit bringing in all its field projects to the home office to provide a forum for exchanging ideas and best practices. The Chief of Party and Deputy Chief of Party attended two summits and the Data Manager attended one summit, providing an opportunity for the lessons from Malawi to be shared broadly and to incorporate into the project strategies learned from other countries.

These exchanges helped raise the profiles of PSSP: SFP and USAID as well as provide ideas and strategies to improve the implementation of PSSP: SFP. PSSP: SFP will endeavor to continue its exchanges and sharing with all actors relevant to improving quality in education.

Reports, Work Plans and PMP

Over the first half, PSSP: SFP submitted 18 monthly reports, 5 quarterly reports, one annual report and 6 work plans and PMP. The monthly reports kept USAID and the project team at large informed of all aspects of the project. The quarterly and annual reports were more widely disseminated to various stakeholders and helped them know and appreciate the activities and impact of PSSP: SFP. Feedback has been very positive and members within Ministry of Education have made an effort to visit the project after reading these reports. The quarterly work plan and PMP updates provided the project a regular opportunity to look at its progress relative to its plans and make modifications in relation to the circumstances on the ground.

However, some months reporting takes up a significant amount of staff's time. Like this month, July 2007 PSSP: SFP is required to submit a monthly, quarterly and midterm report as well as an updated work plan and PMP. To develop staff and ensure accurate reporting, everyone contributes to the report, but report writing is a new skill for most and requires many hours for them to write their sections. While good for skill building, it does challenge timely project implementation during those peak periods. PSSP: SFP senior management has provided report writing training and will continue to support the team members to help their skills develop.

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The objectives of PSSP: SFP monitoring and evaluation are two-fold:

- To inform decisions and implementation, and
- To form the basis for telling PSSP: SFP success stories

PSSP: SFP collected baseline data on the performance of pupils, teachers and school communities and will be doing annual follow-ups to track project progress. Annex B provides data tables with the baseline and any follow-up information. Annex C shows the indicators for PSSP: SFP and the interim and ultimate targets for the project.

Baseline data collection

To establish a baseline for understanding the project impact, PSSP: SFP developed, reviewed and refined instruments and collected data in the following areas:

- Teacher details
- Teacher lesson observation
- Monthly teacher attendance
- Pupil enrollment and attendance
- Pupil transfers from/to other schools and newly enrolled
- Village register for out of school going age children
- Pupil assessments for standard 1 Chichewa and standard 6 English and Mathematics
- SMC/PTA interview
- Infrastructure and sanitation information

Each type of data collection illuminated the status of Dowa's education and the processes while sound, faced some challenges. These are discussed by type of instrument.

Teacher details

PSSP: SFP zonal staff collected background information on all teachers early in project implementation to understand their experience and skill level. PSSP: SFP distributed to all 226 schools data forms to collect teachers' details, such as gender, and professional/academic qualifications. Findings revealed over two-thirds are male, more than half of the teachers in Dowa hold a Junior Certificate (JCE) and more than three quarters are at PT4 grade, which is the lowest grade for a teaching professional. The relatively lower level of qualification of the teachers in Dowa therefore, poses a challenge to PSSP: SFP in terms of type of training to

mount and the need for additional supervision and monitoring. This has been and continues to be factored into PSSP: SFP plans. Gender imbalance means there are fewer female role models in the district, especially in continue to be made to promote gender issues at all levels of the project, a challenge not just with teachers, but also with community leaders. As discussed previously, PSSP: SFP is also encouraging study circles and providing resources for teachers to upgrade their academic qualifications. While these changes take time, some progress is already being made. For example an additional 5% of the teachers now hold their MSCE reflecting progress that PSSP: SFP will continue to foster.

Teacher Performance

PSSP: SFP developed a teacher observation instrument to ascertain teacher performance, particularly in participatory teaching methods. The instrument was piloted by the zonal coordinators in a sample of schools. Results revealed that the field based project staff did not serve as objective assessors of the very teachers they were mentoring. This is a challenge noted in other countries where mentors give too much credence to the improvement of teachers and struggle to be objective in assessing that performance against a neutral benchmark. The data collection plan was changed and education professionals from the TTC, MIE and Central Eastern Division were deployed instead. The involvement of this external team was also valuable in including other important actors in the education system. The TTCs especially expressed that this exercise opened their eyes to the challenges of rural schools and gave them ideas on how to improve their training of the future teachers. This practice will be continued.

The instrument was administered in the third term of 2006 and showed that only 32% of the teachers were successfully using participatory methods, after practicing for a full term lessons taught in the first cycle of training. As a result, PSSP: SFP has intensified its classroom supervision to help teachers master the various classroom methodologies taught.

Teacher attendance

To collect teacher absenteeism, PSSP: SFP collected a sample using the project field staff, zonal coordinators. They filled in a teacher attendance form as they visited schools. This was supposed to be a straight forward counting exercise. They checked how many teachers were outside their classrooms (e.g., at the school ground) against the registered teachers. Then they checked how many teachers were teaching against the teaching timetable. There are challenges associated with this result, however. The presence of volunteer teachers in schools suggests that the results may be overstated as the volunteer teachers adhered to the timetable more than the regular teachers and distinguishing between the two categories of teachers was not always easy. Although, despite the regular attendance in the class of volunteer teachers when they decide not to come to the school, they often did not give lead time to administrators and this challenged their ability to fill classes. PSSP: SFP has intensified sensitizations around community support in this area and have incorporated the volunteers in training, which has provided additional motivation for them.

Another challenge was more internal to the project, but a learning process about how former government field workers understand the importance and rigor of the data collection process. PSSP: SFP Zonal Coordinators were supposed to collect teacher attendance data each time they went to the school as our sampling plan stipulated, however they sometimes left the premises without collecting that data. Staff were reminded on the importance and that their performance is measured based in part on their data collection returns. A remediation data training exercise was undertaken. In addition the project started ZOC of the month awards which in part were awarded based on how well they have done their returns. This has improved the situation.

All this said, PSSP: SFP has reasonable absenteeism data and it is clear that there has been an improvement as most head teachers in the district will cite. The absenteeism of teachers has been significantly reduced by 11.4% for male (from 23.3% in 2006 to 11.9% in 2007) and by 11.5% for female (from 26.6% in 2006 to 15.1% in 2007 school session). This is a clear indication that PSSP: SFP sensitizations of communities and

teacher and the subsequent community initiatives has greatly improved the situation as more teachers have realized the importance of being in class all the times.

Pupil enrollment and attendance

PSSP: SFP sought to establish baseline data on pupil enrollment by developing and circulating to all the 226 schools a form specially designed for the purpose to capture monthly total number of pupils enrolled and attending classes from standards 1 to 8. According to government policy, the schools are supposed to record attendance information daily. But many schools recorded pupil attendance on an irregular basis. Some schools recorded mere estimates. Despite briefing sessions with head teachers on how to fill in the PSSP: SFP data collection forms, many schools associated the data with allocation of resources to schools by MOE; hence inflated figures so they would receive more resources. The practice rendered the early data collected invalid and unreliable.

PSSP: SFP intensified its sensitizations on use of school data and data reporting. It further developed an in-service training unit on it to help address the challenge. But the outcome will only benefit subsequent years of the project. Thus for year one the project used MOE data instead.

To also address some of the concerns registers were printed and given to all the 226 schools in Dowa to capture the monthly total number of learners from Standards 1 to 8 that had enrolled and attend classes. This was an intervention expected to improve the data collection situation given schools were claiming they could not capture their enrollment and attendance data since the government have not provided registers for a couple of years. This was an expensive solution to the situation but the project felt it was important for getting accurate information. However, when PSSP: SFP made follow-ups, despite having registers and being sensitized, some schools were collecting only a couple days out of the month. PSSP: SFP is increasing its sensitizations and conducted an extra training with the PEAs and ZOCs to help them supervise the teachers. This said, the situation is much better and most of the data is accurate. PSSP: SFP was looking to compile a census for attendance data but given the variety of factors, it is deploying a sampling approach.

With over 22,000 pupils returning to school after PSSP: SFP interventions, Dowa realized 18% gain overall in pupil enrollment with girls surpassing boys. Absenteeism fell from 23% to 13% between the start of term 3 in 2006 and start of term 1 in 2007. PSSP: SFP continues to support community initiatives such as the gule wamkulu escorting pupils to school or village chiefs tracking the status of pupils. PSSP: SFP will intensify its role model utilization and exchange visits to spread these best practices.

Out of school registers

PSSP: SFP instituted a village census to identify out-of-school school going age children to ensure that they go to school. Registers were distributed to all 226 schools and were further distributed to all villages in the schools' catchment areas. The teachers, CDAs and village heads were advised on how to enter information such as the reasons for drop out, status of the child – OVC or not, and if the child had ever attended school. This proved helpful for the communities to know who was not in school and enable staff and extension workers to follow-up on these pupils.

One challenge seen was in year one was non-response from a few villages that did not provide the details for the number of OVC in the villages. Some felt it was not important to submit the names of children not in school because did not see any benefit of program for those children. PSSP: SFP through its continuous sensitization to the community has changed those perceptions and more children have subsequently been enrolled in schools. MCMs were used as data collectors in year 2 and given they were closer to villages than the some other government workers, they were able to penetrate the situation on the ground and are helping to bring those last remaining children back to school. A related challenge faced is numerous villages have sprouted up, which are mostly demarcated for development purposes but do not appear in the District Commissioners register. This resulted in conflicting numbers of villages when the census was done by two different groups of people - MCMs and change agents. PSSP: SFP will cross check the names and list of

villages with the register at the District Commissioners' office. Most importantly, PSSP: SFP will continue to follow-up situation of the out of school youth and help ensure they go and remain in school.

Pupil completion, repetition and dropout

PSSP: SFP is collecting completion, repetition and drop out rates using Education Management Information System (EMIS) data that is collected nationwide, including Dowa. This supports the efforts of EMIS and reduces any potential inconsistencies that arise from different data collection methods. That said, PSSP: SFP wants to track overall school efficiency rates, not just by standard, as EMIS reports. PSSP: SFP has tried to ascertain their raw data, however EMIS indicated it was not possible to get it and that most organizations calculate a mean of means. PSSP: SFP is seeking alternatives given the challenges of making overall calculations using that method. However, for now the mean of means is reported.

While there was a slight improvement in dropout rates, completion and repetition rates declined at the end of the first year of PSSP: SFP. The reasons are simple. PSSP: SFP enrollment campaigns were successful and within the 2006 school year, 10% of the pupils, often the most disadvantaged, return to school. Some of these pupils did not return until term 3 and given such a late start, they had not gained enough knowledge to pass the end of term exams. These pupils were encouraged to return for the 2007 school year and are being provided with the necessary support, which PSSP: SFP expect will translate into higher completion rates. PSSP: SFP will continue to mobilize all stakeholders to support these pupils.

Standards 1 and 6 pupil performance baseline

In order for PSSP: SFP to capture the most relevant information to guide the training of teachers and to accurately measure PSSP: SFP's impact at the end, it developed, refined and pilot-tested standards 1 Chichewa and 6 English and mathematics. PSSP: SFP administered the baseline pupil assessment at the beginning of the third term in Dowa and in Dedza, the comparison district.

Pupil performance was low with only a quarter of the pupils passing the Chichewa and Mathematics assessment and even fewer passing the English assessment. This indicates that PSSP: SFP has a significant task in overcoming the learning challenges children are facing in both the lower and upper primary classes. Recognizing that the teachers need to own their responsibility in overcoming pupils' low performance, PSSP: SFP disseminated these results to the lead trainers and to all standards 1-8 teachers for them to understand and appreciate where children need more support; where teaching in Chichewa, mathematics and English is weak, and how to improve these areas.

The development and collection efforts helped build capacity of local staff, MIE, MANEB and MOE officials as many were involved at multiple stages with US based counterparts. PSSP: SFP will continue to work with these actors. While overall the data collection went very smoothly, the printers did have a batch within both the English and Mathematics forms that had a missing ink on half a page each. While discovered the first day, a few sites had missing data. However, this did not negatively impact the results. PSSP: SFP will be more rigorous in checking a higher percentage of the forms before administration and ensuring the data collectors have a copy that is complete in case there are any glitches.

Infrastructure

As part of understanding the situation on the ground and knowing that the lack of a conducive learning environment at school can affect pupils' outcomes, PSSP: SFP collected data on school infrastructure and sanitation. Data forms were sent to all government schools in Dowa in order to establish the baseline data on infrastructure and sanitation information. The situation in Dowa was quite dire. For over 120,000 pupils there were only 1389 classrooms of which 75% were permanent but 60% needed repairs. While there are now 1446 classrooms, there are now over 142,000 pupils to fill those rooms.. When PSSP: SFP started, there were 869 teacher's houses for 1695 teachers. This has been cited as a major impediment to consistent teacher attendance. PSSP: SFP sensitized communities on the issues and they responded. Communities have built or

renovated houses and there are now 939 houses and those teachers who have been accommodated are much more motivated and are more engaged in their job responsibilities.

As part of the data collection process, forms were originally distributed to the schools which were oriented to the forms. However, verifications showed that the schools made errors, despite being a simple counting of objects, as well as distorted information seemingly believing they would gain more resources. To address this challenge, PSSP: SFP re-trained the zonal staff and had them verify all schools and resubmit the forms. It also continued sensitizing the schools on the importance of accurate data to make decisions. In the upcoming cycle 5 teacher trainings, PSSP: SFP included a module on using school data that builds upon the previous modules. PSSP: SFP will continue to share data with the schools to help motivate improvement of the situation as well.

SMC/PTA Interviews

In order for PSSP: SFP to establish the baseline data on SMC/PTA and community participation in schools, as well as track resources and improvements a structured interview was conducted using CDAs trained by the project. A follow-up was done in the last quarter of 2006. Although the data collection was not intended as a training, SMCs/PTAs learned were made aware of key areas they are accountable to in turns of financial records and the schools at large. The project subsequently trained all SMC/PTAs and progress was noted in the follow-up. From the follow-up, it was clear that one question about the income in a school was interpreted as the current balance, not the income over the year. A subsequent follow-up was made with external monitors (CDAs from other districts) to verify and re-collect this piece of information.

The amount of financial resources has increased 13 fold. On average SMC/PTAs were handing K9000 in 2005 and over K119,000 in 2006. This is a testament to the success of the financial management trainings and the various fundraising and income generating activities that PSSP: SFP has encouraged through its small grants or sensitizations. In the second half, PSSP: SFP will be endeavoring to ensure these important resource gathering initiatives are sustained.

Overall

Taking a step back from each type of data collection, it is clear the project has a significant purpose in Dowa. Developmentally it is lagging, not only against a neutral benchmark, but within Malawi as well. Qualitatively, the impact of PSSP: SFP is clear. Where follow-up quantitative data collection has occurred according to the collection schedule, it shows the project is on track. In the data collection process, PSSP: SFP has learned some lessons like including verification time in the data collection process since that step has required more time than anticipated. Also, it helps to include actors outside the district in some data collection processes to build capacity more broadly and ensure data quality. PSSP: SFP will be intensifying its monitoring in the schools over the next few months to verify what change agents have shared as achievements, follow-up previous trainings and sensitizations and consolidate lessons and ensure the project stays on track. Also, as will be discussed next, sharing data is vital for all stakeholders.

Data dissemination

PSSP: SFP believe that data is collected to inform and improve project processes. To do this effectively, the results need to be shared with various stakeholders from the grassroots to US Congress. PSSP: SFP has shared data in each of its quarterly reports and wrote two special data reports, one on baseline data collection and another on the baseline pupil assessment. These have informed high level Ministry officials and USAID of where the project has started and progress to date. Teachers have received baseline data results during the cycles of trainings, which have motivated them to work harder, especially after seeing the low pupil performance compared to their counterparts in Dedza. PSSP: SFP has shared qualitative impact stories with the district through its area and project newsletters. This has had a ripple effect in the district as extension workers and community leaders/members are inspired by what their counterparts are doing in other parts of the district.

PSSP: SFP would like to expand its efforts in this area, especially after all the follow-up data collections are completed later this year. PSSP: SFP is planning to do a data dissemination piece in the next edition of the newsletter. It is looking into making a creative handout for schools and community leaders to make the data more accessible to less educated populations.

6.0 CONCLUSION

It is greatly satisfying that PSSP: SFP has a success story to tell for its first half of the project life because the challenges that faced it were enormous. Operating from office premises in a rural district with extremely limited structures and communication networks, re-planning scheduled activities relative to national activities like PCAR, for example, were enough to derail the implementation process. But PSSP: SFP forged ahead. Everyone of the 226 school communities emerged with at least two development initiatives aimed at improving the education of the children in Dowa particularly OVCs and girls; everyone of the 1695 teachers received at least three professional development in-service trainings and supported by eight titles of teaching/learning resource materials. New innovations like the Mobilization Corp of Malawi and the foundation for and Beginning Literacy Program for Malawi interventions were successfully established. The second half will focus on consolidating and expanding the foundation set in over the first half.

ANNEX A: PSSP: SFP DATA TABLES AND FIGURES

This section provides information about the district and baseline and where ready, follow-up information. This information gives a picture to what is happening within PSSP: SFP schools and communities.

Table A1. Number of zones, clusters, villages, schools, teachers and pupils, January 2006

Ser. #	Zone	Number of villages	Number of clusters Teachers	Number of clusters community	Number of schools	Number of teachers	Number of pupils
1.	Boma	146	5	7	20	162	11,431
2.	Chigudu	221	4	5	16	114	8,083
3.	Chimbuli	284	4	4	17	123	8,861
4.	Chimungu	229	4	4	13	118	7,421
5.	Kamphenga	235	5	5	16	101	7,157
6.	Kanyenje	115	4	5	14	83	7,470
7.	Katalima	153	4	5	20	90	8,433
8.	Kayembe	414	5	7	21	154	13,331
9.	Madisi	253	5	5	18	148	11,242
10.	Mponela	265	5	6	22	264	13,112
11.	Mvera	234	5	7	22	155	9,505
12.	Nalunga	241	4	4	11	38	4,513
13.	Senga	355	5	5	16	145	10,230
Total		3,145	59	69	226	1,695	120,789

Figure A1. Teacher Professional Qualifications (2006)

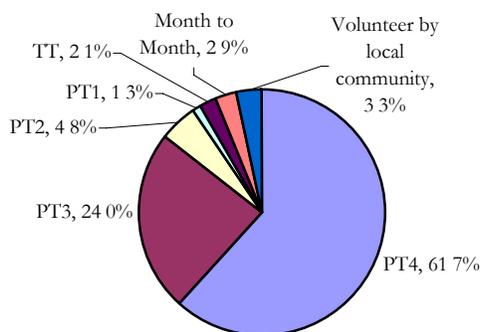


Figure A2. Teacher Academic Qualification (2006)

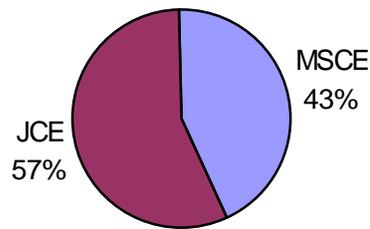


Figure A3. Teacher Academic Qualification (2007)

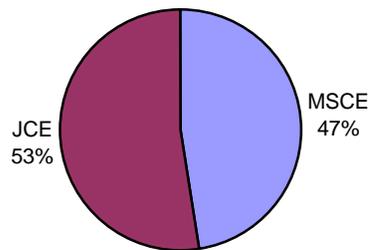


Figure A4. Teacher Training Background (2007)

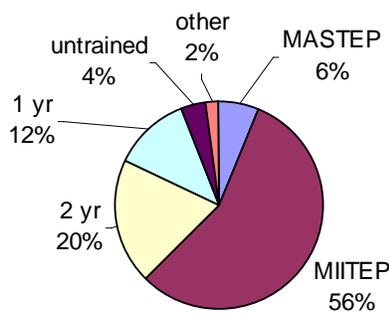


Table A2. Percentage of teachers using participatory methods

Year	Male	Female	Total	Target
Baseline October 2006	28.0	45.0	32.1	25.0%

Table A3. Mean percentage of teacher attendance by year by zone

Zone	2006 School session		2007 School session	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mvera	88.05	83.05	94.62	85.67
Kanyenje	63.14	68.61	88.47	90.28
Nalunga	63.76	58.33	73.77	85.71
Boma	83.88	79.83	87.30	85.57
Chigudu	89.30	87.30	85.21	84.14
Mponela	75.14	80.00	72.27	71.74
Chimungu	68.93	83.33	0.0	0.0
Chimbuli	84.77	97.78	93.64	93.55
Katalima	63.71	54.75	83.38	74.05
Kamphenga	74.12	50.00	94.94	85.18
Madisi	85.22	68.78	89.48	87.75
Kayembe	86.56	79.03	89.29	81.75
Senga	86.03	80.73	97.80	91.10
Total	76.81	73.66	88.16	84.94

Table A4. Number of enrolled learners per zone between February 2006 and February 2007

#	Zone	Number of learners February 2006			Number of learners February 2007			Change
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
1.	Boma	5,952	6,342	12,294	6,532	6,948	13,480	Gained 1,186
2.	Chigudu	3,949	4,268	8,217	4,458	4,617	9,075	Gained 858
3.	Chimbuli	4,509	4,326	8,835	5,645	5,737	11,382	Gained 2,547
4.	Chimungu	3,647	3,895	7,542	4,294	4,487	8,781	Gained 1,239
5.	Kamphenga	3,853	4,215	8,068	4,101	4,294	8,395	Gained 327
6.	Kanyenje	3,744	4,294	8,038	4,065	4,451	8,516	Gained 478
7.	Katalima	4,154	4,281	8,435	4,995	5,076	10,071	Gained 1,636
8.	Kayembe	6,625	6,862	13,487	7,124	7,519	14,643	Gained 1,156
9.	Madisi	5,313	6,298	11,611	5,564	5,987	11,551	Lost 60
10.	Mponela	7,347	7,464	14,811	7,702	8,100	15,802	Gained 991
11.	Mvera	4,642	4,764	9,406	5,844	5,904	11,748	Gained 2,342
12.	Nalunga	2,225	2,465	4,690	2,718	2,849	5,567	Gained 877
13.	Senga	6,075	6,518	12,593	6,739	7,218	13,957	Gained 1,364
Total		62,035	65,992	128,027	69,781	73,187	142,968	Gained 14,941

Table A5. Pupil absenteeism rate for 2005 and 2006, by sex

Year	Boys	Girls	Overall
2006	23.8	23.3	23.5
2007	13.4	13.7	13.5

Table A6. Pupil dropout rate by standard for 2005 and 2006, by sex

		2005	2006
Standard 1	Boys	19.5	19.6
	Girls	18.2	18.5
	Total	18.9	19.0
Standard 2	Boys	5.1	1.8
	Girls	7.0	5.8
	Total	6.1	3.9
Standard 3	Boys	15.8	15.0
	Girls	18.6	14.7
	Total	17.2	14.9
Standard 4	Boys	16.0	17.1
	Girls	17.0	17.4
	Total	16.5	17.2
Standard 5	Boys	10.9	16.9
	Girls	16.4	11.7
	Total	13.7	14.2
Standard 6	Boys	10.6	17.5
	Girls	12.8	15.6
	Total	11.7	16.6
Standard 7	Boys	6.8	12.8
	Girls	17.4	15.3
	Total	12.0	14.0
Standard 8	Boys	24.1	15.1
	Girls	42.8	31.7
	Total	32.9	22.7
Mean¹	Boys	13.6	14.5
	Girls	18.8	16.3
	Total	16.1	15.3

**Source data: EMIS 2006*

Table A7 Pupil repetition rate for 2005 and 2006, by sex

		2005	2006
Standard 1	Boys	26.7	29.5
	Girls	25.3	28.8
	Total	26.0	29.1
Standard 2	Boys	21.7	25.0
	Girls	21.2	21.9
	Total	21.5	23.4
Standard 3	Boys	24.4	25.0
	Girls	21.9	24.7
	Total	23.1	24.8

¹ PSSP: SFP used source data from EMIS to collect dropout, repetition and completion data. However, EMIS calculates these figures by standard and do not overall. When seeking their raw data, EMIS indicated it was not possible to get it and that most organizations calculate a mean of means. PSSP: SFP is seeking alternatives given the challenges of making overall calculations using that method.

	Year	2005	2006
Standard 4	Boys	18.5	19.9
	Girls	17.7	20.4
	Total	18.1	20.2
Standard 5	Boys	14.3	15.6
	Girls	13.3	19.5
	Total	13.8	17.6
Standard 6	Boys	10.1	10.7
	Girls	9.9	11.4
	Total	10.0	11.0
Standard 7	Boys	8.9	9.5
	Girls	8.3	10.5
	Total	8.6	10.0
Standard 8	Boys	16.2	15.2
	Girls	14.1	15.6
	Total	15.2	15.4
Mean ²	Boys	17.6	18.8
	Girls	16.5	19.1
	Total	17.0	18.9

**Source data: EMIS 2006*

Table A8. Pupil completion rate for 2005 and 2006, by sex

		2005	2006
Standard 1	Boys	53.8	51.0
	Girls	56.5	52.7
	Total	55.2	51.9
Standard 2	Boys	73.1	73.1
	Girls	71.9	72.3
	Total	72.5	72.7
Standard 3	Boys	59.8	60.0
	Girls	59.6	60.6
	Total	59.7	60.3
Standard 4	Boys	65.6	63.0
	Girls	65.3	62.3
	Total	65.4	62.6
Standard 5	Boys	74.9	67.5
	Girls	70.4	68.9
	Total	72.5	68.2
Standard 6	Boys	79.3	71.8
	Girls	77.3	73.1
	Total	78.3	72.5
Standard 7	Boys	84.4	77.7
	Girls	74.2	74.2
	Total	79.3	76.0

² ditto

		2005	2006
Standard 8	Boys	59.8	69.7
	Girls	43.1	52.7
	Total	51.9	61.9
Mean	Boys	68.8	66.7
	Girls	64.8	64.6
	Total	66.9	65.8

*Source data: EMIS 2006

Table A9. Pupil assessment sample size for intervention (Dowa) and comparison (Dedza) district

	Standard 1 Chichewa (total n = 594)		Standard 6 (mathematics and English) (total n = 2,456)	
	Intervention	Comparison	Intervention	Comparison
Boy	168	124	667	564
Girl	186	116	705	520
Total	354	240	1,372	1,084

Table A10. Standard 1 Chichewa - Percentage of students passing the test

	Intervention Group	Comparison Group
Fail (Minimal)	74.9%	72.9%
Pass (Passing + Advanced)	25.1%	27.1%

Table A11. Standard 1 Chichewa - Percentage of students passing the test by sex

	Intervention		Comparison	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Fail (Minimal)	75.0%	74.7%	75.0%	70.7%
Pass (Passing + Advanced)	25.0%	25.3%	25.0%	29.3%

Table A12. Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on English test

	Intervention Group	Comparison Group
Fail (Minimal + Needs Improvement)	79.1%	63.7%
Pass (Proficient + Advanced)	20.8%	36.3%

Table A13. Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on English test by sex

	Intervention		Comparison	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Fail (Minimal + Needs Improvement)	78.1%	80.1%	62.0%	65.4%
Pass (Proficient + Advanced)	21.9%	19.9%	37.9%	34.6%

Table A14. Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on Math test

	Intervention Group	Comparison Group
Fail (Minimal + Needs Improvement)	75.5%	63.4%
Pass (Proficient + Advanced)	24.6%	36.6%

Table A15. Standard 6 - Percentage of students by proficiency level on Math test by sex

	Intervention		Comparison	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Fail (Minimal + Needs Improvement)	71.9%	78.7%	57.7%	69.6%
Pass (Proficient + Advanced)	28.0%	21.3%	42.4%	30.4%

ANNEX B: CASE STUDIES FROM PSSP: SFP

SENGA SCHOOL AWAKENS THROUGH EXCHANGE VISITS

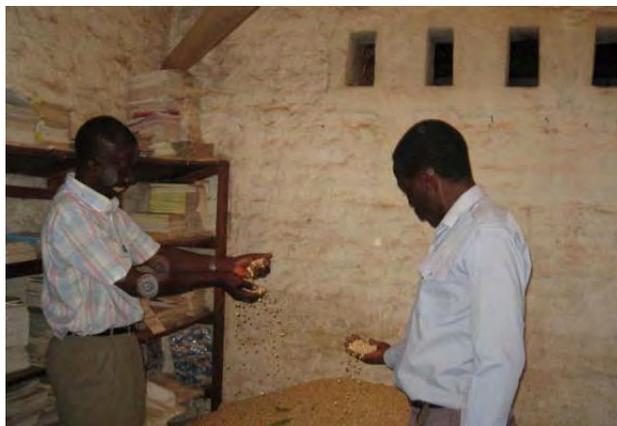
Senga School is the host school to the Teacher Development Center located on the M1. Despite being a well staffed school with 32 teachers (10 male, 22 female) against 1357 learners (668 boys, 689 girls), Senga was behind in development activities. Early after PSSP: SFP sensitizations, Mr. Mbonongo, the headteacher, called for re-elections of the SMC/PTA, which had been dormant. However, the situation remained unchanged and Mr. Mbonongo also became complacent.

Seeing this situation more than a year after PSSP: SFP started, the ZOC, Mrs. Mary Phiri, arranged a series of exchange visits for Mr. Mbonongo to see what development activities were happening in other schools in the zone. They visited 5 schools and heard first hand the success of other teachers and headteachers and attended a fund raising ceremony at 2 other schools where he witness parents contributing maize and other resources. Mr. Mbonongo eyes were opened. “I did not know my friends were doing these things. I was left behind, but no more. On Sunday I will hold a meeting with the Group Village Headmen (GVH). We are last, but we will be number 1”, Mr. Mbonongo said.

That Sunday the GVHs met and upon hearing the accomplishments of their neighbors, they pledged to invest in improving Senga School. The GVHs in turn met with their subjects, and action was seen within the week. Three classroom shelters were constructed to serve as a windbreak as the mwera wind season approached. Fifteen bags of maize were donated to raise funds and 12,000 bricks for by each of the 14 Village Heads were being molded to build a teacher’s house. This support from the community has also encouraged the teachers to work harder for improving pupil performance. Mr. Mbonongo promises to keep moving at ‘PSSP speed’ in supporting the learners at Senga School.



Grass shelter class at Senga School



Mr. Mbonongo proudly showing maize donations

TALULAR MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR THE CLASSROOMS AT DOWA 1

The effectiveness of the teaching and learning process depends on a variety of factors including the teaching methods and materials used. In Malawi, Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources (TALULAR) is a key teaching strategy that PSSP: SFP is promoting especially given the significant lack of materials for the classroom. However, TALULAR requires creativity and commitment to effectively use the resources that are available within their school catchments area, attributes not always used by the necessary actors. For Dowa 1 Primary School and other schools within the Dowa 1 Cluster, these challenges related to development and use of TALULAR are history with the coming of a key PSSP: SFP support strategy, the Mobilization Corps of Malawi (MCM) initiative.

MCM is a unique voluntary service-learning program that provides the youth with the opportunity to lead rural Malawian communities in practical responses to complex development problems facing quality education. Chikoya Kayera is one such MCM, serving in Dowa 1 cluster in Boma zone, Chikoya Kayera assisted teachers and pupils, by introducing the making of TALULAR out of paint from chalk, ashes, baked bricks, clay soil, recycled paper, bulks of trees and bananas, maize stalks, in the schools within his cluster



MCM with pupils soaking paper in readiness for pounding



Liquid paper molded into various shapes for teaching

Knowing how busy teachers are, Chikoya tapped the 60 pupils (35 girls and 25 boys) to learn and develop these materials. They made 300 counters for standard one and two, 82 alphabet letters, 2 watches, 3 abacuses, 1 fish, 3 globes showing world map and 2 wind vanes have been made are benefiting about 700 learners of which 34 are children with special needs. The type of TALULAR made was under the guidance of the 30 teachers at the school to ensure it met the needs of the classroom.



A cross section of TALULAR made under the guidance of Chikoya

A standard eight science teacher, Mr. T. Z. Balaza, commends the MCM contribution in involving pupils in TALULAR development. He observes that learners are more engaged since he intensified use of TALULAR and are proud they are involved. *“I have made my lessons in science interesting by summarizing them using a Word Tree. I ask my pupils to recall terms, topics, words, covered in previous lessons by writing on pieces of paper, stick them on the word tree and then review with the class.”* remarks Balaza. He also commented that pupils are passing their exams with higher pass rates. TALULAR is showing its value is more than what many would imagine when it was just a stick on the ground.



Science teacher, Balaza using TALULAR word tree (Insert) with the class.

REFLECTIVE TEACHING AT KAYEMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Challenge

In the past the head teacher of Kayembe Primary School in Kayembe zone and his members of staff did not prepare adequately for their lessons. While they talked from the chalkboard, they paid little attention to how the learners were performing, remediation was not provided and homework was not given. The head teacher rarely supervised teaching and learning and very few teachers received professional support in lesson delivering. The school had no evidence of school based professional development opportunities (like in service trainings) and the development of the teacher skills was not seen as a priority.

Initiative

After attending PSSP: SFP teacher trainings the head teacher and teachers embarked on school based INSETs to address both learners' needs as well as theirs, professionally. They are now exchanging ideas on how to improve teaching and making learning enjoyable by learners, with the goal of improving pupil outcomes. In cycle 4, teachers learned about reflective teaching and how they can assess themselves while teaching. In addition they learned about peer observation. At Kayembe School, teachers have taken the matter to heart.

Result

As a result of the trainings, teachers now prepare schemes and records of work properly and detail lesson plans. Teachers are practicing the teaching and learning methods learned, which as learners are more excited in school it is motivating the teachers to do more. Some of the teachers are trying to apply continuous assessment in their classes and this feedback is helping them reflect on their own practices. When the majority of pupils assessed are not grasping concepts, Kayembe teachers are reflecting on their own practices to determine what they can do to help the pupils learn better. PSSP: SFP expects Kayembe's pupils to shine as teachers continue to engage themselves and their pupils.

MPONELA 1 TEACHERS GEARED TOWARDS IMPROVING QUALITY EDUCATION

Challenge

When PSSP: SFP was introduced in Dowa in January 2006, the teachers at Mponela 1 initially had negative attitudes towards the project. They worried the project meant more work for them. Moreover, they felt they should receive higher lunch allowances to be trained. This was not an uncommon problem for semi-urban areas like Mponela township. For the first 2 cycle of trainings, they complained bitterly, for they did not recognize the professional value of the trainings, nor the difference they could make in their pupils performance if their skills were improved.

Initiative

PSSP: SFP regularly met with the teachers of Mponela 1, explaining the issues surrounding the barriers to quality education and their role in improving the situation. They were monitored and supported in their teaching and encouraged by the PEA and ZOC, although initially the teachers did not welcome this development. However, by the cycle 3 training in December 2006 teachers had drastically changed their mind set and were eager to be part of the trainings and were asking the zonal advisers to support them more. They wanted to learn from other teachers and asked to have an exchange visit to learn from teachers in other schools.

Results

Mponela 1 teachers now conduct their school based INSETS. They are applying what they learn during these INSETs into the classroom. For example, the teachers are using the participatory methods taught, like group, pair work, and demonstration role play. This is a major change from the chalk-talk methods most teachers employed before. Enock Mchawa has shown the most progress and is even using less common but powerful participatory methods such as case studies. The learners of Mponela School are now demonstrating an eagerness to learn under these new methods. Progress this year will be watched closely, as PSSP: SFP expects great things from Mponela 1.

KALAMBO'S HEART IS BIG

It's not the size of the school but its heart that determines how fast and quickly the school will develop. One way to notice the heart of a school is through the enthusiasm of its surrounding community towards its development. There are many schools that started long time ago but have not developed because of communities that are not forthcoming and responsive to development messages and needs. The result is that they remain the same, while others take challenges head on, like Kalambo School of Mponela zone.

The school serves as a feeder school to Mponela 1 Primary School. It was established to mitigate the risk of the youngest children being hit by vehicles as they crossed Mponela- Ntchisi road and minimize the fatigue from the 2-3 km walk to Mponela 1 which resulted in frequent absenteeism and drop out pupils. When established, Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) constructed 1 two- roomed school block to add to the grass shelters which the communities constructed on their own.



Classroom shelters constructed by community members at Kalambo School



A MASAF constructed school block

However, the temporary classroom shelters were inadequate for any length of time; when it rained, pupils left school. The community was concerned but constructing a school block seemed beyond their ability and no donor had stepped forward. Therefore, the school continued but with low levels of learning during bad weather.

It was the inception of the PSSP: SFP that rekindled a renewed zeal among the village heads and their subjects. Community members started to discuss in-depth issues of ensuring access and quality of basic education. *"We all agreed and appreciated that the temporary classroom structures seriously compromised quality"*, said GVH Chikamphula.

Community members led by the Kalambo School SMC and their village heads agreed on a plan to construct a school block on their own. *"We had about 200,000 bricks molded by villages and we started ferrying them to school"*, the GVH said. Through voluntary community contribution, the community raised K50,000 and employed four builders who are currently constructing the school block.

When mobilized, communities want to address the needs of their children so their future can be brighter



SIYENI'S FUTURE SHINES

Challenge

Siyeni Mandala, a 17-year standard 7 girl at Kalowilo primary school in Chimungu education zone of Dowa district, Central Malawi is stone deaf. “She received very little attention in class,” Morious Chiusiwa, her class teacher admits. Her classmates and school peers avoided her in most school activities. She was often seen walking back home after school alone and looking miserable. “It’s amazing she has remained in school all this while,” wondered her teacher.

Initiative

When PSSP: SFP, a three-year USAID-funded project was launched in Dowa, John Mwale, the Zonal Project Coordinator, decided to debate the issue of physically challenged pupils with the staff of Kalowilo school as a part of the staff sensitization and mobilization process. He aimed to brainstorm the ideas of the staff before sharing his own. The teachers’ concerns revolved around their inability to communicate with Siyeni amid other pupils who required their attention; arguing, in essence, that there was very little that could be done about Siyeni. When John hinted on the idea of pupil-centered teaching, everyone sighed with disbelief. But gradually the group realized and accepted that Siyeni’s future relied entirely on individualized and small group activity-based teaching and that this needed to be reinforced by a change of attitude among all those who interacted with her. Thus a consensus was reached and a battle to change Siyeni’s future was launched.

Results

About nine months later Siyeni’s teacher Morious Chiusiwa reports, “I am proud I have done things that were considered impossible at first. Siyeni is doing very well in class now.” Siyeni herself has this to say, “There is peace and joy in my heart now. I aspire to attain a secondary school education.” Morious uses a great deal of group work during which pupils are issued with various teaching/learning resources depending on the tasks assigned to them. He then ensures that he has time to guide Siyeni before letting her proceed with her assignment as he moves on to other groups. Sometimes he uses more able group leaders to guide Siyeni’s group or her alone when another group or groups need his assistance more.



Dowa schools have a lot to learn from Kalowilo as they strive to get OVCs and girls to access school and achieve through PSSP: SFP project to get their future shine as Siyeni’s.

PLAY PARKS IMPROVE PUPIL ATTENDANCE

Challenge

“I am at school an hour early everyday so I’ve time for fun at the play park before classes begin,” mused Maria. This is the kind of thing one hears from most of the approximately 15,000 pupils in the 22 schools of Mponela education zone in Dowa district, Central Malawi. Dowa is the impact district for PSSP: SFP, a three-year USAID-funded project aiming to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of basic education particularly that of OVC and girls. Before PSSP: SFP, rampant absenteeism that often led to high dropout rates characterized the school system. Those that stayed on performed so poorly that primary education did not really mean much to the communities.

Initiative

PSSP: SFP launched an intensive teacher in-service training program with a large community involvement component. Acute understaffing in most schools, and the predominantly illiterate district population limited the impact of these powerful interventions. So the project launched a third intervention: the Mobilization Corps of Malawi (MCM) which promotes volunteerism among local youths for community development particularly in rural settings. Mponela education zone got six volunteers, one in each of its six clusters. Their activities range from assisting community members with development of project proposals in support of education to establishing school-based initiatives like creating and running school play parks for pupils. The parks have fostered games such as swing low swing high, see-saw, long and high jump, drafts, triple jump, *bambo* and relay race tracks.



Results

The play park initiative has revolutionized the pupils’ perception of school life making the teachers’ work easier. The pupils come to school early so they can play games before classes begin thus eliminating problems associated with punctuality. Most of those who dropped out of school have since re-enrolled, raising the zonal enrollment from 13149 to a record figure of 15362.

“Thanks to MCM initiative,” remarked the Zonal Primary Education Advisor, “teachers are now able to concentrate on their work and pupils are learning a lot.” These sentiments were echoed by the local village head during a recent school open day at Mphimbi primary school.

SCHOOL CLUBS SUPPORT OVCS

In times past, Malawi schools were filled with sporting activities, school clubs and other extra curricular activities that engaged pupils in learning outside the classroom. However for more than a decade those activities have been missing, until PSSP: SFP started a revival. Various sports have been initiated at school such as volleyball, football and netball and 'bawo' and drafts as well as play packs with see saws, swings and ladders. These games and parks have attracted pupils in and out of school. . Chimbuli Primary School under of T.A. Chakhaza is no exception with pupils like Faliyeti Mwale who re-enrolled in school after a year of absence after being allured by the play parks. *"I admired my friends playing on the see –saw and I came back to school."* Mwale is an orphan who struggles to get her basic school needs and for this reason she had previously dropped out of school.



Pupils playing bawo with teachers support.

Now that she has returned to school, teachers, school committee members and community leaders are determined to ensure that she and those pupils that dropped out of school due to lack of support are adequately supported so that they remain in school. The school has introduced a tinsmith club that supports 23 pupils (13 girls and 10 boys). The patron is Mrs. Grifinet Tiwonenji, the acting deputy head teacher. The club is trained by Lyson Phiri one of the volunteer community members in Chimbuli village. Lyton has trained and continues to train all club members in tinsmith. Among the materials made include three watering canes, six small cooking pots and one big cooking pot. The headteacher Mr. Dan Mtengayumba contributed three iron sheets six feet each to the club. The tinsmith activities are done every Tuesday and Friday from 12 noon. *"We are imparting skills that will remain with these children and help learners earn a living after completing school"*, the head teacher said. Besides that however, we sell the products to realize cash to buy school material needs for pupils like Martha. Mwale has already been assisted with notebooks and pens through the initiative.

The head teacher, Mr. Dan Mtengavumba, praises the introduction of these extra curricular activities especially the leading role that the MCM, Martha Chadzunda is playing in supporting the schools with extra curricular activities. *"Imagine by January enrolment was at 648 and it has risen to 780 by March, it's amazing...but we owe all this rise to our MCM."* commented the head teacher with a smile.

Additional club are being formed, like wildlife, reading and mathematics clubs. In a nut shell, the problems of access, retention and regular attendance are being mitigated at Chimbuli School through the expansion of extra curricular activities.



M'BINDO SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIVES UP TO ITS WORD

Challenge

“Come back twelve months now and see what will have happened then,” This was the reaction of the Group Village Head after watching and participating in PSSP: SFP’s theatre for development (TFD) research verification and sensitization performance at M’bindo primary school in Kanyenje zone of Dowa district, Central Malawi on February 28, 2006. The TFD research had revealed numerous community-related challenges that impacted negatively on education standards at the school. There were no toilets for both pupils and teachers; one school block had its roof blown off by strong winds 11 years earlier, and no teachers’ houses, just to illustrate the point. The situation was simply pathetic and teachers had given up trying.

Initiative

Following the sensitization performance the community members led by Group Village Head Simpha reconvened to strategize their way forward. They decided to construct 15 toilets and one teacher’s house, rehabilitate the classroom block, and plant tree seedlings which would eventually serve as a windbreak. They also formed a Community Education Committee to support the School Management Committee in monitoring pupil attendance to ensure that all school-going age youths in the catchment area attend school. Their decisions at that time sounded like mere wishful thinking.



Result

By December 2006, only ten months after the Group Village Head’s pledge, M’bindo School has been transformed. There are indeed fifteen beautiful toilets each with hand-washing points using improvised materials; re-roofing of the school block and the construction of the teacher’s house are almost completed; 2,000 tree seedlings beautifully demarcate the school premises; monitoring of pupil attendance had led to an increase of the enrollment. For example in standard one, the number of pupils increased from 227 to 275. The community moved further to buying basic necessities such as notebooks and pencils to support OVCs. A youth club was created to cater for youth needs and interests. “M’bindo School is simply different,” remarked a district education official in a recent visit after recalling the TFD performance. “Yes,” retorted Group Village Head Simpha, “we have been empowered by PSSP: SFP. Before the project, school-related work was seen as the government’s job. Now we want to make Mbindo a model primary school in Dowa. Come back in two years’ time,” the chief said earnestly to the education official.

From what the community has demonstrated over only ten months, one has no reason to take the chief’s invitation lightly. With the support PSSP: SFP a three-year USAID-funded project M’bindo School appears to be on the right track.

COMMUNITY LOBBYING GIVES GUDYU SCHOOL A NEW LOOK

Just north of Chimbuli lies Gudyu School, with a catchment area of eight villages. The school is within the area of group village headman Katambo. The school had two permanent school blocks that accommodated classes 1-4 and an unused dilapidated semi-permanent one. As a result, some classes were taught outside under trees. This impeded their learning, especially during rainy season when classes were frequently cancelled.

Most people in the community believed that maintenance and construction of school infrastructure was the responsibility of the government and the community remained idle. The SMC made a spiritless effort to seek assistance from MASAF forms but they lacked the lobbying skills to secure that assistance. The community remained despondent and continued to blame government.

With the inception of PSSP: SFP, community leaders including the SMC at Gudyu school realized they had a responsibility to improving quality education. They embarked on several initiatives including building of a head teacher's office. Then they heard about the US Ambassador's Self-Help Fund and the mobilized community, using the lobbying skills learned from their PSSP: SFP trainings, eagerly seized the opportunity to have the dilapidated block fixed. .

“PSSP sensitizations have really opened our eyes and we are very optimistic that that the assistance we are asking from the American Embassy shall materialize.” The SMC chairperson for the school commented when they submitted the application.

Indeed the communities' optimism came true when the US Embassy assisted Gudyu School with K500,000 to renovate the school block. To match what the US Embassy provided, the community contributed sand, quarry stone, bricks and labor. The school block has since been rehabilitated and is better than new.

“We are happy to have this school block and the problem of inadequate learning space is now being eased. This will help most of the pupils learn in classrooms,” said the Group Village headman Katambo.



The rehabilitated classroom block at Gudyu. (Insert) –the interior roof.

MR. MAZUNGWI SETS THE PACE

Andrew Murray Primary School is a big school close to the TDC and one of the oldest schools in Mvera Zone. It has boarding facilities and caters for learners from other districts. Surprisingly, despite its status, Andrew Murray did not have any pit latrines for years. Everyone knew this problem, including all the 13 villages that the school services, but they gave a lukewarm response to this problem. One may ask. *“So what happened to over 800 pupils who constituted the school’s enrolment when they needed to answer the call of nature?”*

“We used to run to the closest bushes or go all the way to the hostels, others went to their homes”, said Princilla Kalino, a 14 year-old standard 8 student. Besides making the school environment unhygienic, the lack of toilets gave enable pupils to stay away long from class or never return at all.

When PSSP SFP sensitized the school communities, they identified the problem but were reluctant to act. They planned pit latrine construction but no one seemed to take a leading role until Mr. Mazungwi, one of the oldest serving teachers at the school, stepped up. Despite being in his early 60s, he dug a four room latrine, two for boys and two for girls, built its walls and roofed it. *“I did this to set the pace and show a sense of ownership as PSSP SFP had taught us.”*



Mr. Mazungwi stands by the pit latrines he constructed.

His action made an immediate impact, one of the village heads and his subjects marveled Mr. Mazungwi’s enthusiasm and commitment. They came and constructed their own pit latrines. Two other teachers have mobilized bricks and have dug more pits where they intend to construct their own latrines. Other villages are ferrying sand and bricks to construct more pit latrines with the plan of providing 2 latrines per village. *“To us he is a role model, look how the communities have responded to the action of just one man, who is merely a teacher”,* said Mr. Sosola who is also a teacher at the school.

“Our school environment is now more hygienic and we no longer have to use the bush or rush to our hostel and homes to use the toilet facilities,” added Pricilla Kalino.

MNDANJIRI SCHOOL STRIKES RETENTION WITH VOCATIONAL SKILLS

About 10km from Kamphenga TDC to the northwest lays Mndanjiri Junior Primary School. The community around Mndanjiri has tried to woo NGOs, donors and the government to support the school by molding bricks. To their credit the school has over 150,000 bricks that the community molded over the past two years.

“We thought that development has only something to do with construction. But since PSSP: SFP sensitized us on the goals and objectives, our minds have taken another dimension. We have now embarked on making sure that all dropouts are now back to school,” said Group village headman Mafunthe.

Indeed the community leaders have worked tirelessly to make sure that all children in their area are back to school. Among the beneficiaries of the communities’ efforts is a standard 5 boy who dropped out of school two years ago due to lack of financial and material support.

“Since I am an orphan and due to lack of support I was forced to drop out of school and started doing ‘ganyu’ (piecework) in other people’s gardens. However I have been rescued by the coming of PSSP after being encouraged by our village headman to go back to school.” Samson said with a smile across his face.

“Looking at the number of school children that have enrolled back to school, we sat down with the school management committee and the community leaders to map out the way forward on how we can keep them at school and how we could assist the needy pupils. Realizing that there is small grant component under PSSP: SFP, we agreed to start teaching the pupils some vocation skills. We opened up a vegetable garden for each class that would support the needy as well as teach agriculture to the pupils” said the head teacher for the school.

These initiatives helped the 33-drop outs to return to school and assisted 11 needy pupils with some basic needs like school uniforms, 1 soap, notebooks and pens. Seeing the drive of this community to improve education, PSSP: SFP appraised and granted K30,000 to support the tailoring and vegetable gardens.

Samson is one child who has benefited from the grant. Samson has quickly mastered the tailoring skills and now teaches his fellow pupils. This has also encouraged him academically.

“I thought my future had been doomed but now I am very much willing to remain in school. I was behind but I have been able to catch up with my colleagues and during the second term I was on position seven and this term I was on position one,” said Samson.

PSSP: SFP hopes other can emulate the actions of Mndanjiri for the benefit of their children.

Samson has quickly mastered the skills taught by their trainer. He is able to cut and sew anything.



INVIGORATED COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM THE SMALL SCALE GRANT INITIATIVE

Phereni Full Primary School under the care of GVH Chimangamsasa is about 2.5 Km from Dowa Boma turn off on the Lilongwe – Salima road. Only one of the seven teachers, resides at the school. The rest of the teachers operate from Chezi trading center, which is about 8 km from the school.

Teachers' houses have long been a problem providing an excuse to teachers that are absenting because of the long distances to they travel. The communities' willingness to participate in development work at the school has been marred by the wrangles among the local leaders. The school is located under one Tradition Authority however villages that send their children to that school are under another Tradition Authority. Participating in development work at the school was perceived as developing another man's land. The local politicians have aggravated this situation with statements like "*chitukuko ndi thangata.*" During political campaigns the very same politicians have been making appetizing but unfulfilled promises. For instance, during the 2004 parliamentary elections, one aspiring Member of Parliament promised to provide the iron sheets for a head teacher's office but only half were provided and the rest were to be supplied upon being voted into office. Since he lost, the iron sheets were not supplied and the office still remains half roofed and unoccupied.

It took PSSP: SFP sensitization for the group village head and his subjects to realize that they are living on empty promises and they had to do something in order to cope with their challenges. "*Look here, all along these years politicians have been politicizing development activities. They have been discouraging us to do self help projects. When they want our votes, they come and make a lot of promises that they never fulfill. This has left us confused and lazy as well. Besides that, the village heads are not willing to send their subject for development at the school. They think that they are developing my area*", lamented GVH Chimangamsasa.

After being sensitized on PSSP: SFP and the grant component including how they would access it and benefit the community, the group village head mobilized his village headmen and their subjects to start constructing new teachers' houses. Two villages were assigned work together to construct one house and through voluntary contributions by the mobilized communities of a variety of items such as tobacco, extra maize, and voluntary cash contributions by well to do well-wishers, they realized K48,000 that they used to buy cement and pay an honorarium for the builders and carpenters.

After seeing the community contributions, PSSP: SFP assisted with a small scale grant of K89,823 to complete the two teachers' houses. Today three teachers are now operating from the school. These teachers are now on time and providing additional support to the pupils through remediation classes and extra curricular activities.

"We are very happy that the community through the PSSP: SFP has realized that problems affecting the school could be solved by themselves and no one else. As they are planning to construct three more houses by next year we hope that a good number of teachers will be operating from within and that will assure the effectiveness of our duties" said the head teacher for the school Mr. P.S.A.C. Muleso.

LONGWANI SCHOOL COMMUNITY CHARGED TO SUPPORT OVCs

“The plight of orphans and vulnerable children has been there in our communities for some time. Many OVCs has never had a chance of going to school. Those that had a chance were doing so at the mercy of their guardians, and seldom could they continue with their education. The coming in of PSSP: SFP has rescued these children”, said the cluster leader in T’chawale cluster.

After being sensitized, the communities around Longwani School in Chimungu zone saw the need to assist not only the orphans in the area but also girls that has been the victims of social injustices.

Under the leadership of the cluster leader, Longwani School organized themselves to support OVCs. Longwani OVCs care group embarked on fundraising activities such as vegetables gardening and voluntary contributions. So far they have assisted 25 of the most vulnerable children with soap, notebooks, pencils and pens. The group has mobilized 60 tablets of soap and they are still lobbying for more assistance from various stakeholders. The group is also involved in feeding orphans in the lower standards.



“We are very proud that we have been able to organize ourselves and come up with strategies on how we can assist the OVCs. We thank the PSSP: SFP project for opening our eyes . At first we thought that the responsibility of making sure that these OVCs are going to school solely rests in the hands of their guardians. Now we have identified 25 OVCs and we are assisting them with various basic needs to make sure that they also have a chance of going to school. I am very proud to say that some of these children that we are supporting are doing very well in class”, said the chairperson of the OVCs care group.



Jane making a simple stool is being assisted by her classmate

“I am very happy that I am now able to go to school thanks to the PSSP project and the commendable job that our parents are doing by making sure that all of us that has been un able to go to school to start doing so. I am also very proud that I am able to learn some life skills that will assist me in my future”, said Jane Band.

Jane is one of the orphans that has benefited from this group. And according to her class teacher in standard 8 Jane was not doing well in class, as she was regularly absent. *“But now with the support that she is being given she is one of the best children in the class and I hope she will make it to secondary school. Last term she was at position number five out of twenty one students that wrote the exams”,* commented the class teacher

Jane is indeed one of the proud girls that are being supported by the community at the school.

SIP ENCOURAGES MORE CHILDREN TO WORK HARD IN SCHOOL

Since Kabulungo School in Chimungu zone they received their School Incentive Package (SIP) they have started competitions among pupils using some of the items in the box like badges or school materials and have taken seriously the need to sustain the boxes through community contributions.

“When we were getting the SIP boxes we were enlightened that the items in the boxes are only there as a starter pack. For this reason we organized ourselves and discussed how we can be replenishing the box. We have put in place a strategy where we meet once a month to fundraise through voluntary contributions. This has assisted us a lot as our box is always full”, said the school management committee Chairman for the school.

Indeed the SIP at Kabulungo School is replenished regularly and the items have been used to encourage pupils in working hard at school. Before the introduction of the SIP many students were doing their studies casually. Neither the teachers nor the parents invested themselves to ensure their pupils progressed.



Parents making voluntary contributions

Parents of Kabulungo School have left no stone unturned to make sure that there is competition among pupils in school. *“Through the SIP we have learnt that pupils can work hard if they are encouraged not only by words but also through something that they may take home and shine among their fellow students. We thank the PSSP: SFP project for introducing the SIPs in our schools. They are very helpful as our kids are now working extra hard”,* commented one parent during the presentation ceremony of incentives

Under the leadership of the SMC, teachers together with the parents have introduced fortnightly tests in all the classes. Those pupils that have done very well are given various incentives in form of pens, notebooks, soap, and pencils, which has encouraged pupils to work extra hard in class.

The parents around the school have not just stopped at the SIP. They also make their own arrangements to award their children if they have done well.

“We are not just looking at the SIP for the awards given to best pupils. We have also encouraged each parent to bring a gift for his or her child during these ceremonies. This has assisted a lot, as students are proud if they are given something by their parents”, said the cluster leader for the area.

Indeed SIP has assisted the learners as those that were lagging behind have pulled up their socks to catch up their friends.



Giving incentives to performing pupil

EXTENSION WORKERS PROUDLY SUPPORTS THE GOALS OF PSSP: SFP

Government field extension workers are designated and work with and among the communities. Their role is not only to work with the communities but also to assist in solving various problems that the community may encounter at community and school level. As extension workers they are also supposed to support school initiatives and support pupils learning in disciplines like health, agriculture and forestry.

However, prior to PSSP: SFP many of the government field extension workers were not working with the schools. Aside from the Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) who are supposed to work with the schools and the Community Development Assistants (CDAs) and Social Welfare Assistants (SWAs) that are working hand in hand with the PEAs in improving education, most of the other government extension workers have seen the school as beyond their responsibility.

After PSSP: SFP trainings for the extension workers, most realized their roles in the communities and schools and have been instrumental in supporting school initiatives and conducting various demonstrations at the school for the pupils to acquire practical knowledge and skills.

One of the most improved field extension workers is Mr. Owen Mhango, an Agriculture Extension Development Officer from Bowe cluster in Chimbuli. Now a role model of the district, Mr. Mhango has been instrumental in the demonstration of agriculture lessons and establishment of dimba gardens to assist OVCs in his cluster and beyond.

Mr. Owen Mhango has been able not only on assisting the school community but also the villages in their efforts to establish CBCC and how they can sustain the CBCC through income generating activities.

“We commend the efforts that our agriculture advisor has made in making sure that this CBCC that we established is self-sustainable. Through his sound advice and commitment we have been able to cultivate two acres of cassava and one acre of maize. We got twenty bags of maize that we are now able to feed the 60 children at the CBCC. Thanks to the PSSP: SFP project as it has drawn together different stakeholders to make sure that our children are able to learn”, commended the chairperson of Katseka CBCC that is within the catchment area of Gudyu school.

Mr. Mhango has inspired other field extension workers who are replicating his efforts. Schools like Matsewa, Gudyu and Bowe have established school gardens as a result. These efforts are assisting many children to understand subjects like agriculture, health and science.

“The most commendable thing is that when the children have acquired the skills at school they are able apply them in their respective homes. These have assisted not only the OVCs but also the economically disadvantaged families. We are sure that the various agriculture initiatives that we have introduced at school and village level shall empower the communities economically at the same time improving resources at the school level. This could not happen before the PSSP: SFP project. Thanks to the multi-sectoral approach of the project that has drawing different stakeholders to work together in improving the education of every child in Dowd”, said Mr. Mhango.



Orphan benefiting from Mr. Mhango support of CBCCs

ANNEX C: PERFORMANCE MONITORING INDICATORS

No.	Indicator	Means of Verification	2006			Target	2006			2007			Target	2008			
			Baseline				Actual	Target	Actual		Target	Actual					
			M	F	Total	Total			M	F		Total	Total	M	F	Total	
Result 1: Increasing access to basic education and improved learning with a special focus on orphans, vulnerable children, and girls																	
1	Increased percentage of pupils achieving basic literacy in Chichewa in standard 1	Pupil Assessment	25.0	25.3	25.1	N/A				5% ↑				10% ↑			
2	Increased percentage of pupils achieving in English reading at standard 6	Pupil Assessment	21.9	19.9	20.8	N/A				5% ↑				10% ↑			
3	Increased percentage of pupils achieving in Mathematics at standard 6	Pupil Assessment	28.0	21.3	24.6	N/A				5% ↑				10% ↑			
4	Decreased pupil dropout	School Records and Tracking	13.6%	18.8%	16.1%	2% ↓	14.5%	16.3%	15.3%	4% ↓				5% ³ ↓			
5	Decreased pupil repetition	School Records and Tracking	17.6%	16.5%	17.0%	2% ↓	18.8%	19.1%	18.9%	4% ↓				5% ⁴ ↓			
6	Increased pupil completion rates	School Records and Tracking	68.8%	64.8%	66.9%	3% ↑	66.7%	64.6%	65.8%	5% ↑				7% ↑			
7	Increased percentage of pupils enrolled in primary school	School Records and Tracking	58,175	62,614	120,789	4% ↑	64,818	68,188	133,006	8% ↑	69,781	73,187	142,968	12% ↑			
Result 2: Increased resources at the school level																	
8	Increased financial resources available at the school level	SMC Survey Interviews School Records			K9,000	10% ↑			K119,346	20% ↑				30% ↑			
9	Number of SMCs trained in financial management and lobbying skills	Training Reports			0	120			188	226			226	226			

³ AIR will not be able to collect this data in year 3 as the definition prevails. Data needs to be collected after the start of the school year (Feb 2009).

⁴ ditto



No.	Indicator	Means of Verification	2006			2006			2007			2008					
			Baseline			Target	Actual		Target	Actual		Target	Actual				
			M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total
10	Percentage of SMCs engaged in IGAs to support schools	Interviews			18%	10%			51.7%	50%				80%			
11	Percentage of SMCs who lobby for funds from outside sources	Interviews			0	20%			41.4%	50%				70%			
12	Percentage of SMCs and PTAs that undertake one or more physical rehabilitation or building project to support education	SMC Survey School Records Site Visits			0	10%			82.8%	50%				90%			
13	Percentage of schools that receive school incentive packages (SIPs)	Project Reports			0	80%			25.6%	100%			100%	100%			
14	Number of school accessible libraries established or expanded	Library Records			10	14			13	50			44	90			
Result 3: Improved teaching in schools																	
15	Number of teachers trained in content and pedagogical practices	Training Reports	0	0	0	1,695 ⁵	1241	479	1720	1,695	1390	572	1968	1,695			
16	Increased percentage of teachers using participatory teaching methods during classroom instruction	Classroom Observation	N/A	N/A	N/A ⁶	25%	26.4%	42.5%	30.3%	55%				70%			
17	Increased percentage of primary teachers trained in and applying early literacy teaching techniques in the classroom	Training Reports Classroom Observation	0%	0%	0%	20%			100% ⁷	60%				80%			

⁵ 1,695 teachers is the population of government teachers in Dowa district. The project expects to reach all teachers via PSSP: SFP trainings so if the numbers do expand, PSSP: SFP will reach those new teachers as well.

⁶ The project collected data for this indicator near the end of the academic school year and therefore the actual for 2006 will also serve as the baseline.

⁷ All teachers of Dowa have received incremental training in early literacy strategies. A specific observation tool that looks at the literacy strategies promoted in BLP/M is under development as the BLP/M lessons are being finalized and BLP/M specific training plan is being developed.

No.	Indicator	Means of Verification	2006			2006			2007			2008					
			Baseline			Target	Actual			Target	Actual			Target	Actual		
			M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total
18	Change in the percentage of teacher absenteeism	School Records and Tracking Instrument	23.3	26.3	25.0	2%↓	23.2	26.3	25.0	5%↓	11.8	15.1	13.5	10%↓			
19	Change in the percentage of pupil absenteeism	School Records and Tracking Instrument	23.8	23.3	23.5	5%↓	23.8	23.3	23.5	10%↓	13.4	13.7	13.5	15%↓			