



Assistance to Basic Education: All Children Reading (ABE ACR)

MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

Final Project Report, September 29, 2015–March 15, 2021

May 30, 2021

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MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading
Improvement Activity

Final Project Report, March 15, 2021

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The authors' views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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List of Abbreviations

ABE	Assistance to Basic Education
ACR	All Children Reading
ASPIRE	Girls' Empowerment through Education and Health Activity
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
CME	community mobilization and engagement
COP	Chief of Party
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPD	continuous professional development
CPEA	Coordinating Primary Education Advisor
CSO	civil society organization
DBE	Directorate of Basic Education
DCEC	District Council Education Committee
DEM	District Education Manager
DEMISO	District Education Management Information System Officer
DEP	Directorate of Education Planning
DEYS	Director of Education, Youth and Sport
DIAS	Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services
DQAS	Directorate of Quality Assurance Services
DSNE	Directorate of Special Needs Education
DTED	Directorate of Teacher Education
EDM	Education Division Manager
EFT	electronic funds transfer
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FGD	focus group discussion
FY	fiscal year
GIS	geographic information system
IEP	individualized education plan
IVR	interactive voice response
LB	learner's book
LGAP	Local Government Accountability and Performance
MEL	monitoring, evaluation, and learning

MERIT	Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity
MGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MOI	Ministry of Information
MTPDS	Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support
MWAI	Miske Witt and Associates, Inc.
MWK	Malawian Kwacha
NARI	National Assessment of Reading Instruction
NASIS	National Assessment of Safe and Inclusive Schools
NRP	National Reading Programme
NRPIE	National Reading Programme Implementation Expansion
NRS	National Reading Strategy
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PPP	public–private partnership
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
PTA	parent-teachers association
REFAM	Reading for All Malawi (implemented by Juarez and Associates)
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SBCC	social and behavior change communication
SEGREM	Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi
SMC	school management committee
SNE	special needs education
TG	teacher’s guide
TLC	Teacher Learning Circle
TLM	teaching and learning materials
TOT	training of trainers
TTC	teacher training college
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
YESA	Assess the Learners/Yesani Ophunzira Activity (implemented by Abt Associates)

1. Introduction

1.1 National Context

Since the government abolished fees for primary school education in 1994, Malawi has seen great improvement in access to education. However, the same is not true about the quality of the education. Recruitment of qualified teachers did not keep pace with the increase in enrolment; class sizes were very large, and the supply of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) was inadequate. This resulted in consistent student underperformance, particularly in literacy. For example, in four reading assessments conducted by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) between 1996 and 2013, Malawi's scores were the lowest.

Similarly, national reading assessments conducted by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) Activity in 2010 and the Early Grade Reading Activity in 2013 showed that students consistently underperformed in measures of basic literacy. Determined to find ways to improve the situation, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), now referred to only as the Ministry of Education (MOE), commissioned several reading instruction improvement pilots including the Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy, 2003–2005; Primary School Support Project, 2006–2009; MTPDS, 2010–2013; and Early Grade Reading Activity 2013–2015.

Lessons learned from these pilots inspired the development of the National Reading Strategy (NRS) in 2014 with support from USAID. The NRS sets out key issues and interventions aimed at improving reading skills of learners in Malawi. It emphasized the importance of the following:

- The five components of reading, i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies
- Standards that explicitly state what children will learn by the end of each grade level in each language
- Teacher and student materials that support student learning and the teaching of reading and language development in Chichewa and English
- Teachers who have the skills and knowledge needed to teach reading effectively
- Allocation of adequate time for reading instruction

The establishment of the National Reading Programme (NRP) in 2015 was to operationalize the NRS. The MERIT Activity was created to provide financial and technical support to the MOE to implement the NRP.

1.2 Activity Description

Started in September 2015 and closed in March 2021, MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity was a five-year, six-month USAID activity designed to provide technical assistance to the MOE, in improving the reading performance of Malawian learners in Standards 1–4 nationwide. MERIT had five major objectives, each with a set of sub-objectives (**Table 1**):

Objective 1: Improved instruction for primary grade reading outcomes

Objective 2: Increased parental and community engagement in supporting reading

Objective 3: Safer learning environments for reading created

Objective 4: Pathways for sustainability instituted

Objective 5: Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) priorities for integration advanced

Table 1. MERIT Objectives and Sub-objectives

Objective (O) 1: Improved instruction for primary grade reading outcomes
O1.1 Adequate high-quality teaching and learning materials for reading effectively used
O1.2 Improved instructional practice for early grade reading
O1.3. Established classroom level support for teaching reading
O1.4 Increased access to teaching and learning materials
O2: Increased parental and community engagement in supporting reading
O2.1 Increased number of parents and communities implementing evidence-based interventions to improve student reading
O2.2 Increased number of parents and community members advocating for appropriate evidence-based interventions to improve student reading
O3: Safer learning environments for reading created
O3.1 Learning spaces free from physical harm and mental abuse provided
O3.2 Positive reinforcement in the teaching of reading increased
O4 Pathways for sustainability instituted
O4.1 Increased government and community ownership of reading interventions
O4.2. Increased capacity of local organizations to implement reading interventions
O4.3. Sources of additional financial and technical support leveraged
O5 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) priorities for integration advanced
O5.1 Robust participation in CDCS integration processes resulting in implementation of coordination requirements, particularly in CDCS focus districts
Crosscutting issues
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
Gender
Special Needs Education

1.3 Approach to Implementation

MERIT worked closely with and through government systems at the national and sub-national levels to support implementation of the NRP. The Activity engaged local actors in every step of the implementation and built technical and management capacities within targeted institutions. Our staff were co-located at division and district offices of the MOE, and for the first three years, we had a technical team embedded at the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE). In addition to working through government systems, we also provided sub-awards to local non-governmental organizations to implement some of the community engagement activities. Finally, we worked with government officials to create linkages with the private sector to support NRP activities through corporate social responsibility and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

MERIT was one of four USAID-funded activities that supported the NRP, and since MERIT was the first and largest of these activities, we coordinated the activities of all partners to ensure that we leveraged our resources in supporting the NRP. We used common terminology, coordinated training content and trainings, and supported each other with the

implementation.

The implementation of MERIT was led by RTI International in collaboration with several other partners as shown in **Table 2** below.

Table 2. List of MERIT Partners

MERIT Partners	Key Roles and Responsibilities	Contract End Date
RTI International	Project management, early grade reading instruction, lead for Objective 1, 4, and 5	March 15, 2021
Windwalker Corporation	Ensure 508 compliance of MERIT documents	March 15, 2021
Infonex Corporation	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning	February 15, 2021
Perkins School for the Blind	Support disability, inclusive education, and special needs programming	September 30, 2019
Miske Witt & Associates, Inc. (MWAI)	Create safe learning environments for reading, lead for Objective 3	September 30, 2019
blueTree Group Kenya	Support book publishing	October 31, 2018
Link Community Development Malawi	Parental and community engagement in support of reading, lead for Objective 2	August 31, 2018
SIL Lead Inc.	Support for the development of TLMs	May 26, 2017

1.4 Program Key Achievements

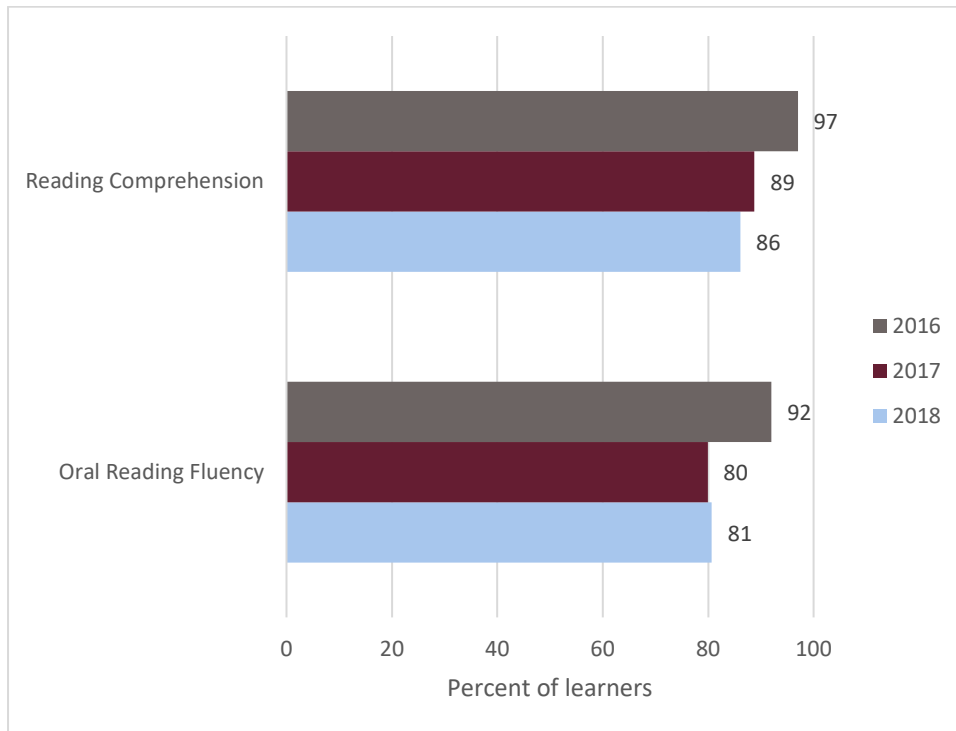
The overall goal of MERIT was to provide technical assistance to the MOE in improving the reading performance of Malawian learners in Standards 1–4 nationwide. Achievements in reading were measured by results from early grade reading assessments (EGRAs) conducted by MERIT and the Yesani Ophunzira Activity (Assess the Learners [YESA]).

MERIT conducted a baseline assessment in Chichewa reading in 2016 (Standards 1 and 2) and two other EGRAs in 2017 and 2018 (Standards 1 and 3). YESA conducted national reading assessments in Chichewa and English (Standards 2 and 4) in 2017 and 2018.

Unfortunately, due to school closures due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the reading assessments scheduled for 2020 could not be conducted.

Despite not being able to conduct final EGRAs in 2020, the results from 2016, 2017, and 2018 showed a promising trend, with increases in learners' reading skills in most subtasks. **Figure 1** below shows the percentage of zero scores in fluency and comprehension for Standard 2 Chichewa across the three years that data are available. While most students still cannot read with fluency and comprehension, the percentage of students scoring zero dropped 11 percentage points in both indicators between 2016 and 2018.

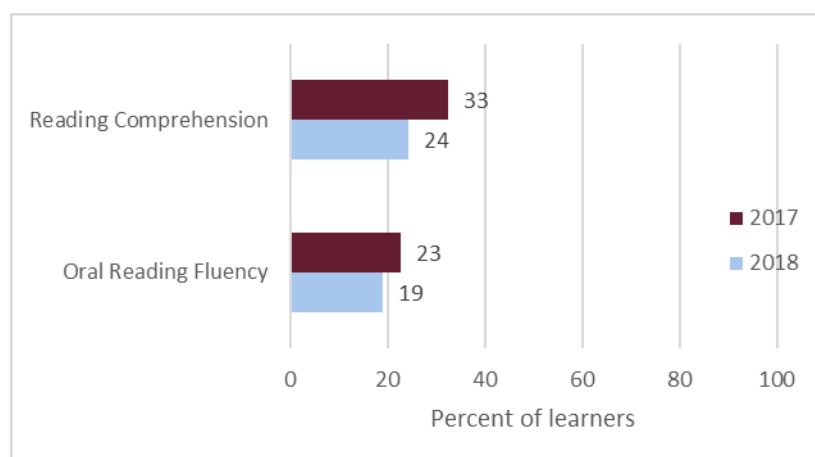
Figure 1. Percent of Standard 2 Learners with Zero Scores in Chichewa Comprehension and Fluency, 2016–2018



Source: Infonex Corp and RTI International, Early Grade Reading Assessment, Chichewa National Baseline for Standards 1 and 2, June 2016; MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity, May 2017; Abt Associates, 2018. National Reading Assessment: Results of the 2018 Assessment of Standard 2 and 4 Learners in Public Schools in Malawi, May 2019

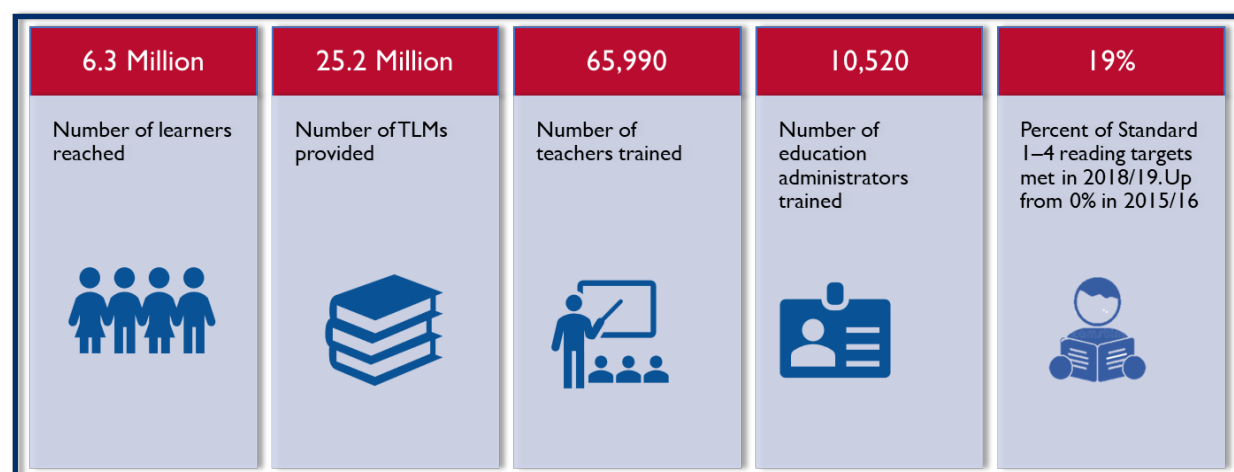
The improvements in reading skills for Chichewa Standard 4 is even more encouraging as the percentage of zero scores dropped 9 percentage points in reading comprehension and 6 percentage points oral reading fluency between 2017 and 2018, just one year into the rollout of the NRP in these grades (see **Figure 2**). In addition, these changes are statistically significant ($p < .05$). Indeed, in all Chichewa reading subtasks there were statistically significant improvements for Standard 4 learners between 2017 and 2018. In summary, while the reading skills of learners remained low, there were significant improvements made in most reading subtasks between 2017 and 2018, the two most recent years for which data were collected.

Figure 2. Percent of Standard 4 Learners with Zero Scores in Chichewa Comprehension and Fluency, 2017–2018



In the process of working toward achieving the Activity goal of improved reading, the NRP benefitted millions of Malawian learners, educators, and administrators as shown in **Figure 3**. MERIT also made progress on other intermediate results and outcomes (as seen in **Annex A**) and has created a strong foundation for further improvements in reading skills.

Figure 3. NRP by the Numbers



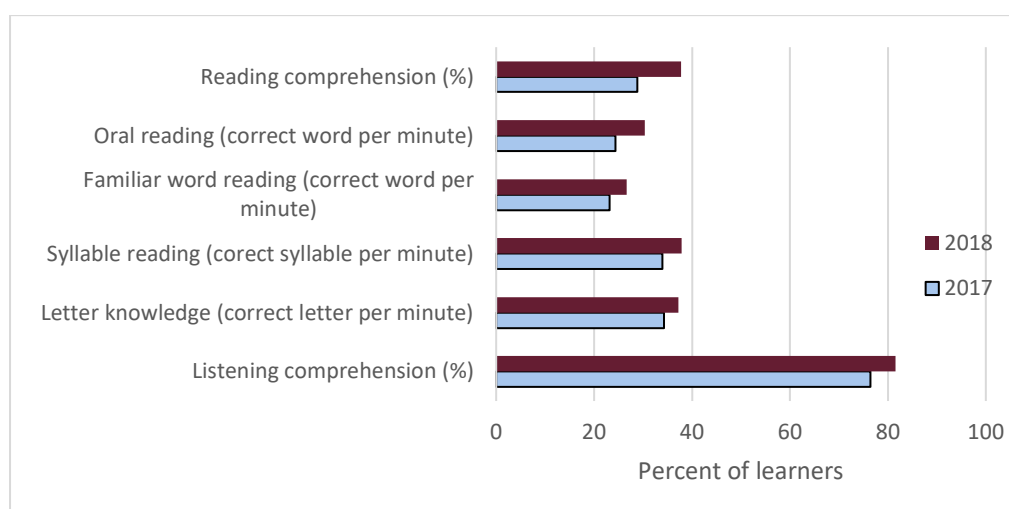
The rest of the report provides details on the achievements of MERIT for each objective and crosscutting issue during the life of the Activity. The report also discusses some of the challenges faced during implementation, lessons learned, and recommendations for the future. Attached are **Annex A**, which illustrates progress by indicators; **Annex B**, list of supplementary readers developed with MERIT assistance; **Annex C**, which lists the status of all materials and deliverables; **Annex D**, the Financial Report; **Annex E**, a list of sub-contractors; and **Annex F**, civil society organizations (CSOs) hired for community mobilization and engagement (CME) activities.

2. Accomplishments by Objective and Crosscutting Issues

2.1 Objective 1: Improved Instruction for Primary Grade Reading Outcomes

The focus of Objective 1 was to provide continuous professional development (CPD) and support for teachers to enable them to support student reading outcomes in Chichewa and English. MERIT organized annual trainings for teachers on reading instruction, classroom management, and safe and inclusive schools. Section heads and head teachers received training on coaching and classroom observation, whereas MERIT also provided technical assistance to MIE to develop TLMs for teachers and learners including learner’s books (LBs), teacher’s guides (TGs), supplementary readers, and teacher resource materials. These activities contributed to improvement in reading scores as seen in **Figure 4** below. In addition, the 2018 National Reading Assessment conducted by YESA found that one of the factors contributing to higher reading scores was teachers closely following the TG during instruction.

Figure 4. Mean Reading Scores for Standard 4 Chichewa, 2017–2018



In **Figure 4**, Standard 4 learners show improvement on all Chichewa reading subtasks in the year between 2017 and 2018, and a similar pattern emerges for English. Unfortunately, 2018 was the last year we conducted an EGRA, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused the 2020 reading assessments to be canceled. The other intermediate results and outcomes for this objective are shown in **Figure 5** below.

Figure 5. Objective 1 Key Results and Outcomes

65,990	Standard 1–4 teachers received training on reading instruction in Chichewa and English.
615	Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) who received training on coaching and how to conduct classroom observations using tablets. PEAs also were trained as trainers of teachers.
12,000	Section heads received training on peer-based coaching and on the facilitation of Teacher Learning Circles (TLCs).
90%	Of teachers observed and coached in reading instruction during the life of the Activity.
10,520	Head teachers received training on coaching, facilitation of TLCs, and engaging parents and communities.
25,240,777	Number of LBs and other TLMs provided with U.S. Government (USG) support.

Improved Instructional Practice for Early Grade Reading

Using a cascade training model, MERIT in collaboration with the MOE, trained 65,990 Standard 1–4 teachers on topics that support reading instruction, such as the use of TGs and LBs, classroom management, use of supplementary readers, and comprehension strategies. For each of the trainings, we developed, printed, and distributed facilitator manuals and participant’s handbooks for teachers and trainers to use as reference guides. In a typical year, we conducted a large training in August to prepare teachers for the start of the academic year, followed by one to two refresher trainings during the school year. The topics for the refresher trainings were informed by classroom observations that highlighted areas in which teachers need help. An essential component of each teacher training workshop was the one-day practicum, which allowed teachers to model and practice the skills acquired in as close to a classroom setting as possible. The practicum sessions were followed by a discussion focused on successes, challenges, and solutions.

During the prolonged school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MERIT pivoted to using mobile technologies such as interactive voice response (IVR) and WhatsApp to continue providing support to teachers. Through this mode of training, we were able to reach over 12,000 educators and continue to support them during school closures. **Table 3** below provides the details of the training provided to educators during each fiscal year, outlining who was trained, when they were trained, what they were trained on, and how the training happened.

Table 3. Rollout of Teacher Training by Year

Fiscal Year	Training Details
2016	
	Who: 18,000+ Standard 1 teachers, head teachers, infant section heads When: August 2016 What: Use of Standard 1 TGs and LBs for teaching reading How: Cascade, in-person
2017	
	Who: 21,000+ Standard 1 teachers, head teachers, infant section heads When: December 2016; April 2017 What: Chichewa and English reading instruction, gender-equitable and inclusive practices, creating safe learning environments, advance lesson planning How: Cascade, in-person
	Who: 41,000+ Standard 2–4 teachers When: August to September 2017 What: Chichewa and reading instruction How: Cascade, in-person
2018	
	Who: 34,000+ Standard 2–4 teachers When: January 2018 What: Chichewa and English reading instruction How: Cascade, in-person
2019	

Fiscal Year	Training Details
	Who: 21,000+ Standard 1 and 2 teachers When: December 2018 What: Chichewa and English reading instruction, use of supplementary readers, use of revised Standard 1 English TG, decoding How: Cascade, in-person
	Who: 23,000+ Standard 3 and 4 teachers When: August 2019 What: Strategies for teaching reading comprehension How: Cascade, in-person
2020	
	Who: 29,000+ Standard 1 and 2 teachers and head teachers When: December 2019 What: Strategies for teaching reading comprehension How: Cascade, in-person
2021	
	Who: 18,000+ section heads, head teachers, key teachers, special needs education (SNE) teachers, PEAs, Coordinating PEAs (CPEAs) When: October 2020 What: Strategies for revision and remediation to make up for learning lost during prolonged school break How: IVR, zonal training

In 2017 and 2019, we conducted the assessments of teacher practice called the National Assessment of Reading Instruction (NARI), which showed improvements in teacher practice over the course of the two years.

Established Classroom-Level Support for Teaching Reading

In addition to the teacher training workshops, MERIT also facilitated ongoing teacher support and coaching. Based on RTI’s experience with coaching by PEAs under the previous Early Grade Reading Activity, we learned the difficulty of relying solely on visits by PEAs to support coaching. Even though we provided fuel reimbursements, the frequency of coaching by PEAs fell well below expectations. As such, together with the MOE we devised a new school-based coaching model that uses the section heads (infant and junior) as coaches. The PEAs’ role was to coach the section heads.

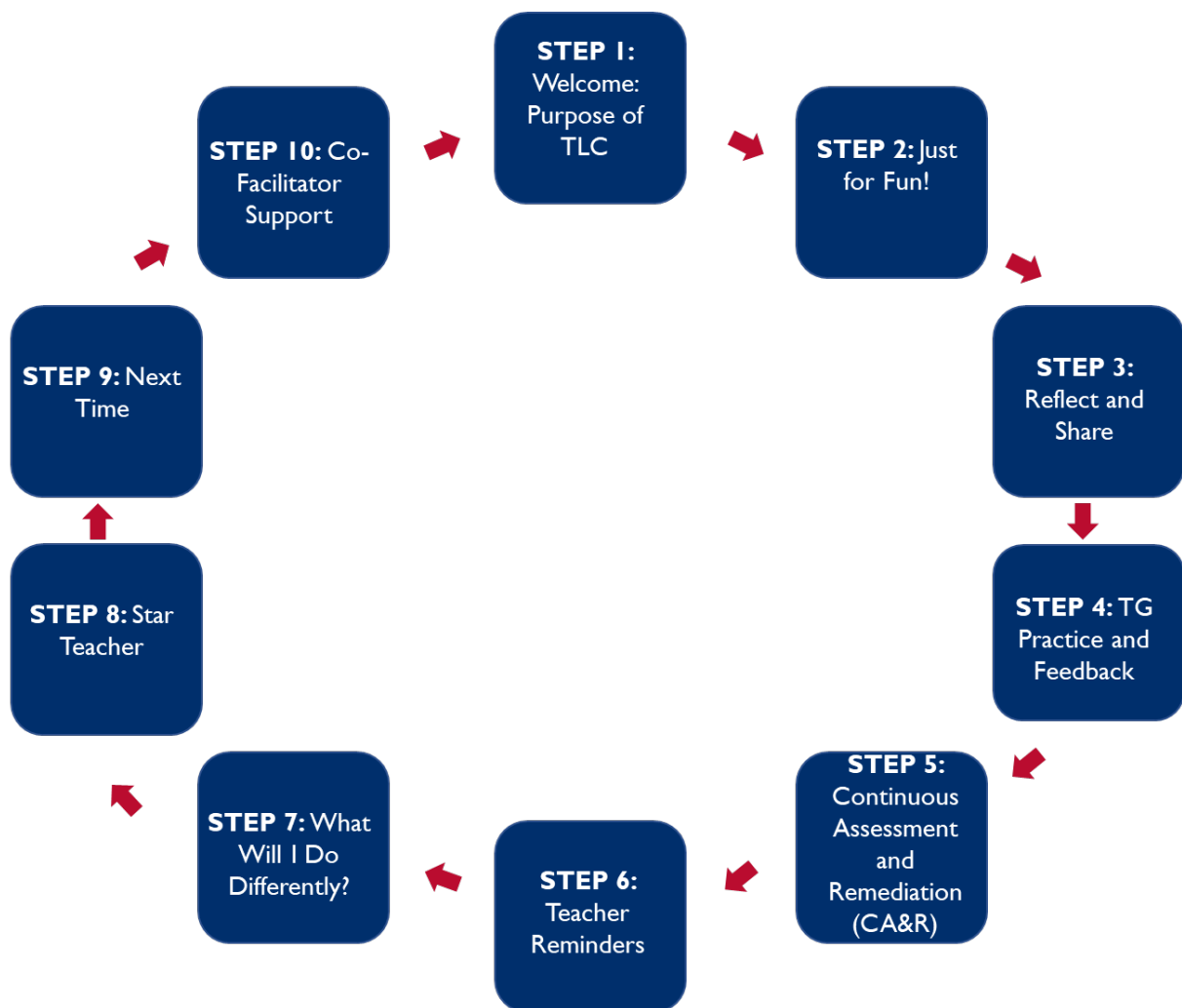
To support the coaching, MERIT developed, in collaboration with the MOE, several tools and guides for coaches including *Coach Training Facilitator’s Guide*, *Coach Resource Handbook*, and *NRP Section Head Coaching Tool*. We also provided several training workshops for section heads, PEAs, and head teachers on coaching strategies. Trainings took place in November 2016, May to June 2017, and October 2017.

Results from the 2019 NARI showed that efforts to improve classroom support through school-based coaching were largely successful. A significant percentage (90%) of the observed Standard 1–4 teachers had been coached in the NRP pedagogy just in the first half of the 2018–2019 school year (September 2018 to February 2019). In addition, more than half (58%) of teachers had been coached more than three times. This was a higher percentage than in all the 2017–2018 school year.

In 2018, MERIT introduced an additional modality of providing support to teachers through

school-based professional learning communities, called TLCs. TLCs were launched nationwide in Year 4 and became a vehicle for teachers to reflect on and share solutions to challenges they encounter during literacy instruction. Section heads facilitate the TLCs using a 10-step guide developed by MERIT (see **Figure 6**) and after receiving multiple trainings from MERIT in 2019 and 2020. The section head is also encouraged to select a teacher to act as co-facilitator. Section heads and head teachers selected “Star Teachers” based on classroom observations and coaching. Star Teachers were provided a certificate from the head teacher. Some PEAs have created “Star Teachers” for zones and districts.

Figure 6. 10-Step Guide to TLC Facilitation



The TLCs have been very well-received by the schools and by the MOE and other education partners. The 2019 NARI, which was conducted in a random sample of 86 schools, found that a large majority (74%) of schools had conducted all prescribed TLCs up to the date of the assessment, and over 80% of Standard 1–4 teachers attended all TLCs. As another sign that this innovation has taken hold, the MOE is set to include TLCs as part of the CPD framework. In addition, a new nationwide numeracy program funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue using the TLCs to support instruction in numeracy.

Increased Access to and Effective Use of TLMs

MERIT provided technical support to Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi (SEGREM), implemented by MIE, in the development of the Standard 1–4 English and Chichewa TGs and LBs, the revision of the Standard 1–4 Chichewa and English syllabuses to align to the NRS, and the development of 97 titles of supplementary readers. The TGs

Njuchi ndi maluwa



provide a daily scripted lesson plan for teachers that provides all they need to teach the lesson for the day. They also include strategies for reviewing units, checking students' understanding, and managing classroom routines.

The supplementary readers spanned a range of genres from poetry to animal fantasy, informational text, realistic fiction, folktale, and biography. As with the TGs and LBs, the supplementary readers were developed through a gender and inclusivity lens. A full list of the readers is provided in **Annex B**. The materials were distributed to schools, and teachers were trained on their use. Finally, in the last few months of MERIT, we produced an NRP reference guide for teachers to provide a quick and easy way to get information on various topics in the NRP curriculum.

MERIT also produced four videos and corresponding user guides demonstrating how to teach read alouds, letter sounds, use of supplementary readers, and decoding.

MERIT submitted videos to the Directorate of Teacher Education (DTED) and distributed them to all teacher training colleges (TTCs) to be used as resource materials as they train new teachers.

In addition to the development of materials, the Activity also facilitated the printing and distribution of these materials to schools and learners nationwide. MERIT supported the printing of materials in braille and large print for teachers and learners who were blind or had a visual impairment, setting a new standard for NRP partners and the MOE. **Table 4** shows the total TLMs delivered to schools and educators during the life of the Activity with USG assistance. Of the 25.2 million TLMs, 12 million LBs and 1.9 million supplementary readers were provided with non-MERIT funds.

Table 4. Total Numbers of TLMs Provided with USG Assistance

Materials	Numbers Provided
Standard 1-4 LBs	12,029,407 ^a
Supplementary Readers	11,982,424 ^b
Training Materials (Facilitator Guides, Participant Workbooks, etc.)	803,706
Standard 1–4 TGs	345,607
Other materials (Coaching manuals and tools; DCEC Orientation manuals)	50,700
Braille and Large Print Materials (LBs, Supplementary Readers, TGs)	28,593
GRAND TOTAL	25,240,077
^a LBs were provided with non-MERIT USG funds (MERIT printed only 49,975 used during training)	
^b 1.9 million supplementary readers provided with non-MERIT USG funds	

For the first time in Malawi, TGs and LBs were distributed in enough quantities for all learners and teachers, and it was the policy of the NRP that learners could take their books home with them. Standard 1 books were distributed first in 2016 and replenished in 2018, while books for the remainder of classes were distributed first in 2017 and replenished in 2019. Despite distributing books in sufficient quantities, the NARI assessments showed that many learners did not have their book with them at the start of the lesson, which meant that they did not bring it from home. In all 238 lessons observed during the 2017 NARI, an average of 56% of learners had their book in class with them, and this dropped to 46% of learners in the 2019 NARI.¹ Even for the books that were brought to class, less than half were in satisfactory condition. In less than 10% of schools did the teachers distribute books in class, and where they did distribute them, it was not in sufficient quantities to make up for the shortfall. The use of supplementary readers in the classrooms was also limited. The low availability of books in classrooms is a challenge that the NRP partners have been trying to solve: USAID committed to replenishing books, and the MOE is considering changing the policy for the children in Standards 1 and 2 to take the LBs home. They will be encouraged to take home the supplementary readers instead.

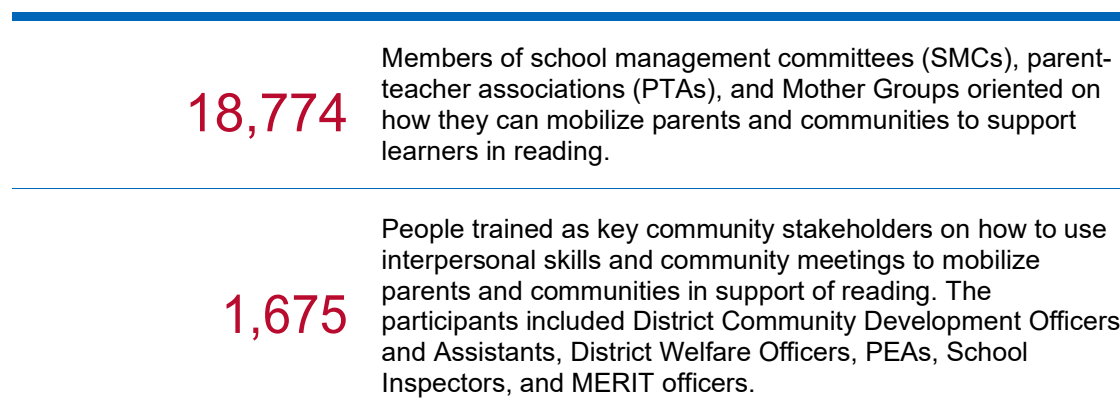
2.2 Objective 2: Increased Parental and Community Engagement in Supporting Student Reading

MERIT’s initial CME strategy focused on working with local communities using a three-pronged social and behavior change communication (SBCC) approach that included: (1) a national-level SBCC mass media awareness campaign, (2) a local-level SBCC mass media awareness campaign, and (3) face-to-face campaigns. Between 2016 and 2018, the implementation was led by a local sub-contractor, Link Community Development Malawi, and implemented with the help of 24 CSOs. Key results are shown in **Figure 7**.

SBCC Mass Media Campaigns

The SBCC mass media campaigns produced billboards, posters, radio messages and jingles, and road shows to communicate NRP messages to the communities. The campaign had three main messages for parents and guardians: (1) send your children to school on time, (2) read with children using the books they have brought home from school, and (3) good and responsible parents help their children read. The Ministry of Information (MOI) was a key partner in the national SBCC campaign. MERIT worked with the Creative Arts and Graphic Team at MOI to produce the campaign materials. MERIT worked with the MOI team to design and test the campaign materials in four districts, before finalizing the messages.

Figure 7. Objective 2 Key Results and Outcomes



¹ The 2019 NARI was conducted prior to the replenishment of LBs for Standards 2–4

28,156	Posters distributed to district and schools with key messages to parents and communities about supporting reading.
18	Billboards erected in city centers in Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba, Mzuzu, Luchenza, and Kasungu with the NRP messages for parents.
45,171	Calls made to the 3-2-1 information line between September and December 2020 by parents and guardians to listen to messages about on how to support their children’s reading at home.
24	CSOs received grants and training on conducting CME activities in the districts.

Three billboards each were erected in high-traffic areas in Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba, Mzuzu, Luchenza, and Kasungu, and the posters were distributed in schools throughout the country (**Figure 8**). As part of the mass media campaign, messages based on the MOE October 2016 circular were broadcast on three radio stations: Malawi Broadcasting Station, Malawi Institute of Journalism, and Zodiak Broadcasting Station from May 5 to 24, 2017. There were five distinct messages emphasizing that: (1) each learner has textbooks and can take them home to practice reading, (2) parents and guardians should help the learners practice reading, (3) schools should adhere to the new times for the school day, which allowed for an extra hour of reading instruction as advocated for by USAID (4) school feeding programs should not interfere with school timetables, and (5) teachers and learners should be punctual for lessons. Each message had six slots per radio station. In total, there were 30 announcements per radio station.

Figure 8. One of the Billboards Erected to Promote Reading at Home with Children

The mass media campaign reinforced the same messages of the national campaign at the community level using local community radio, road shows, banners, flyers, and a handbook for community stakeholders.

Face-to-Face Community Engagement Campaigns

For the face-to-face campaigns, MERIT worked with community leaders and CSOs to mobilize and orient communities at the community level. After a rigorous selection process, 24 CSOs were selected and trained on CME strategies for their outreach to schools and the school management bodies such as PTAs, SMCs, and Mother Groups. Unfortunately, MERIT had to pause these outreach activities due to funding limitations. When work resumed, contracts for the CSOs were shortened to six months as part of restructuring efforts. Nonetheless, the CSOs were able to visit approximately 50% of all schools and oriented a total of 18,774 members of the PTAs, SMCs, and Mother Groups on how to support their children’s reading in and out of school.



Parent congratulating her daughter after the girl performed well at a reading fair (Photo: Rex Chasweka)

During MERIT, parents and communities supported schools and reading in several ways. They arranged and participated in reading fairs, provided gifts for winners of these fairs, started up reading clubs in the communities, helped schools with taking inventory of LBs and supplementary readers, and helped in covering LBs with plastic so they could last longer. In some schools, Mother Groups and SMCs monitored attendance of teachers, provided meals to learners in schools, and used traditional structures such as “Gule Wamkulu”² to try to reduce student absenteeism.

The 3-2-1 Telephone Platform Service for Parents and Caregivers of Standard 1–4 Learners

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MERIT, through its partner Viamo, launched an education

² “Gule Wamkulu” is a traditional dance in Malawi, which is usually performed after the harvest and other ceremonies. It includes masked characters that can teach its audience moral and social values.

channel within its 3-2-1 national information service. MERIT led the development of content for the information service, with YESA and Reading for All Malawi (REFAM), which included a total of 25 messages in four categories or subthemes that included reading at home, learning resources, peer learning, and support for children with disabilities. The messages were recorded and posted on the national 3-2-1 service and available free to Airtel subscribers. Parents and caregivers dial 3-2-1 and choose to listen to all or some of the education messages. The messages on the platform will run for one year and are aimed at encouraging the parents and caregivers to support their children’s reading at home. Reports from Viamo show that over 78,324 calls have been made into the system since it started in September 2020, and in over 90% of those calls, the caller listened to all the key messages. The largest number of calls were made during the first month after its launch, which is not surprising given the efforts made to publicize it. Demand for the service remains strong as almost 19,000 used the service between mid-January and mid-February. **Table 5** shows the details. The service will be in place for one year until September 2021.

Table 5. Calls to the 3-2-1 National Education Information Service, October 2020–February 2021

Period	Number of Calls	Number of Unique Callers	Number of Calls Where the Caller Listened to All Key Messages
October 2020	20,849	17,852	19,115
November 2020	12,620	11,193	11,477
December 2020	11,703	10,685	10,527
January 2021	14,174	12,844	12,739
February 2021	18,978	16,821	16,873
Total	78,324		70,731

In preparation for school reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic, MERIT revised and adapted messages and jingles for airing in September to October 2020. These messages encouraged parents to send their children back to school so they can continue with their learning. They were aired across three radio stations with national reach.

2.3 Objective 3: Safer Learning Environments for Reading Created

In addition to support for reading instruction, MERIT also focused on ensuring that the learning environments were safe for all students, including students with special needs. This included focusing on four main areas: positive discipline and reinforcement, gender-responsive teaching practices, inclusive teaching practices, and physical and emotional safety. The team also ensured that these issues were integrated into all aspects of MERIT’s training and materials development work. These activities were led by MWAI, with support from Perkins School for the Blind on inclusive education.

Figure 9 shows the key results for Objective 3.

Figure 9. Objective 3 Key Results and Outcomes

55,518

Teachers trained in positive discipline and reinforcement, gender-responsive, teaching practices, inclusive education, and physical and emotional safety.

5

Guides and resources developed to support creating safe learning environments for reading, namely: “*Front matter*” on *Safe Learning Classrooms and Schools* included in the Standard 1 TG, *Gender and Special Needs Education Checklist* for reviewing and developing TLMs, *Safe Learning Guide for Teachers and Education Officials*, *Comprehensive Gender Plan*, and *Gender Integration Guide and Checklist*.

4

Conference presentations focused on MERIT’s work on creating safe reading environments for international audiences at Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) annual conferences in 2017, 2018, 2019.

83%

Of safe school elements showed significant improvements between 2017 and 2019.

To support this work, MERIT developed a *Safe Learning Spaces Guide for Teachers and Schools*, which was used in the training of teachers. All teachers received training on practices for creating safe learning environments in their classrooms and schools during the nationwide trainings on reading instruction. During the first round of training, there were stand-alone modules for gender, inclusive education, and positive discipline, and in subsequent trainings these themes were integrated into the other modules.

To understand whether and how our efforts were improving classroom practices, MERIT conducted a National Assessment of Safe and Inclusive Schools (NASIS) in 2017 and 2019. The 2017 assessment was considered a baseline and examined the four elements of safe reading environments: gender- responsiveness, inclusion, positive discipline and reinforcement, and physical and emotional safety. The assessment was conducted in a nationally representative sample of 86 schools and included interviews with















Girls from Lilongwe LEA School with their books during break (Photo: RTI International)

head teachers and teachers, focus group discussions (FGDs) with students, school observation, and classroom observation. The 2019 assessment followed the same approach as the 2017 baseline, but across a different sample of 86 schools. **Table 6** below shows the areas in which there were statistically significant ($p < .05$) changes in schools regarding creating safe and inclusive reading environments. Of the 12 areas shown, there were improvements in 10 areas from 2017 to 2019. For example, teachers were observed using harsh language and/or being physically aggressive to students in 30% of schools in 2017,

and that percentage dropped to 15% in 2019. These improvements came after the MERIT training of teachers, section heads, and head teachers on creating safe learning environments and gender-equitable and inclusive practices. While these are encouraging signs, there is more work to be done to ensure that schools and classrooms are safe and protective for all children all the time.

Table 6. Changes in Safe and Inclusive Environments in School Between 2017 and 2019

Variable	2017 Value	2019 Value	Positive or Negative
Teacher calling on boys (number of times in 30-minute observation)	9.5	11.2	
Teacher calling on girls (number of times in 30-minute observation)	9.4	11.1	
Teachers observed using two or more approaches to explain the same concept more than one time (percent in 30-minute observations)	87%	49%	
Teachers observed inviting questions and/or students asked questions or made requests (percent of observations)	17%	39%	
Teachers observed using harsh, humiliating, or critical language and/or being physically aggressive toward pupils (percent of observations)	30%	15%	
Pupil groups reporting that a teacher had hit or harshly punished a late student (percent of pupil focus groups)	39%	28%	
Students observed being verbally and physically aggressive to other students (percent of observations)	49%	28%	
Schools observed with students humiliating or verbally bullying other students and/or being physically aggressive (hitting, kicking, pushing) another student (percent of school observations)	26%	42%	
Student groups reporting there was someone at school they would feel comfortable talking to if they felt unsafe (percent of groups that had all three students agree)	83%	93%	
Schools observed with classrooms or classroom blocks with a ramp (percent of schools observed)	48%	69%	
Schools observed with a mission statement (percent of schools)	44%	66%	
Schools observed with a code of conduct or ethics of teachers (percent of schools)	34%	63%	

In addition to the NASIS, MERIT also conducted a small, qualitative study in 2018 to investigate in greater depth the findings from the 2017 NASIS. This study, *Safe Learning Environments for Reading*, included full-day observations and in-depth interviews. This qualitative study reinforced and expanded on the findings of the 2017 NASIS. In schools with higher scores from the NASIS, teachers interacted with care and empathy and they sought out and helped struggling students, suggesting that school culture (including norms of classroom interactions and school leadership) and student supervision were related to feelings of safety and inclusion.

The findings from all these studies were widely disseminated to District Education Managers (DEMs), CPEAs, PEAs, and other district-level key government officers through district cluster workshops and district review meetings. The district stakeholders committed to developing plans to address some of the issues highlighted. The findings also informed teacher trainings, TLCs, and materials development work. Beyond Malawi, MERIT's work on creating safe learning environments was shared with an international audience of scholars, practitioners, and government officials, who attended the CIES annual conferences between 2017 and 2019.

- “Monitoring gender integration in MERIT: Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity” (CIES 2017, Atlanta, USA)
- “The Safe Learning Approach of MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity” (CIES 2018, Mexico City, Mexico)
- “Treading carefully: Methodological considerations when measuring safety and gender-responsiveness,” as part of the highlighted Gender and Education panel, *Unlearning gendered lessons: Examining curriculum, teaching, measurement, and girls’ and boys’ narratives on schooling* (CIES 2019, San Francisco)
- “Gender and safety at primary schools in Malawi: Evidence from the Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement (MERIT) Activity” (CIES 2019, San Francisco)

2.4 Objective 4: Pathways for Sustainability Instituted

From the beginning, MERIT was designed so that it will have long-term, broad-based results. By working closely with and through local and government systems, MERIT created the environment for Malawian ownership of the reading interventions and its results. The desired outcomes for this objective to institute pathways for sustainability were increased government and community ownership of reading interventions, increased capacity of local organizations to implement reading interventions, and sources of additional financial and technical support leveraged.

MERIT spent much of Year 1 building government ownership of the Activity and ensuring alignment between the NRS and the NRP. MERIT initiated two key meetings with MOE, MIE, and TTC officials—the first discussed the governance structures that would guide the NRP, lessons learned from the implementation of EGRA and SEGREM, and timelines for the rollout of the NRP. The second presented the NRP approach to a wider group of stakeholders. These initial meetings resulted in the formation of the NRP Steering Committee, which was chaired by the Chief Director and the USAID Education Chief, and the NRP Technical Committee, which included the directors of the relevant technical directorates at MOE and MERIT technical staff.

MERIT staff were co-located in the district education offices to support the DEMs, PEAs, and CPEAs in implementing the NRP, and MERIT had a team of technical specialists at MIE to support the materials development process.

Figure 10 shows the key outcomes of Objective 4.

Figure 10. Objective 4 Key Results and Outcomes

10,520	Education administrators and officials who completed professional development activities. These included officials from MOE directorates, TTC lecturers, head teachers, District Education Management Information System Officers (DEMISOs), CPEAs, PEAs, and more.
263	People participated in FGDs as part of the Institutional Capacity Assessment exercise of the MOE.
24	CSOs received grants, training, and technical assistance from MERIT to implement CME activities.
11,189,590	Malawian kwacha were received from corporate donations and sponsorships to support NRP activities.

Increased government and community ownership of reading interventions

By working through and with local government structures on all MERIT activities, RTI was building ownership of reading interventions in the government at both the central and the local levels. All policy decisions that supported MERIT were made by the NRP Steering Committee, which had representation from all directors of the MOE and the central management in the form of the Principal Secretary and the Chief Director. MERIT also organized several joint high-level monitoring visits to schools that included the Minister of Education and other high-level officials to observe the NRP and its implementation.

MERIT also invested in building the capacity of the education system to support reading outcomes by focusing on building capacity in the core functional areas. RTI's research has shown that educational systems that support learning must be able to perform three core functions: (1) set and communicate expectations, (2) monitor against those expectations, (3) provide basic inputs to all schools and targeted support to struggling schools and students. This approach to system building informed our overall approach to building system capacity. Midway through the program, in 2018, we conducted an institutional capacity assessment of the MOE in these three core functions, to prioritize support in the remaining years of the project. The assessment was done through FGDs with education stakeholders at district, zonal, and school levels and by administering a questionnaire to central-level Ministry officials.



District review meeting in Blantyre (Photo: Janet Chirombo)

The institutional capacity assessment found gaps in capacity in all three areas, but decided to prioritize support to the district level so as to improve the monitoring function and the provision of support to schools. These functions have been decentralized to the district levels and are the responsibility of PEAs, under the supervision of DEMs. We conducted two series of cluster-based workshops for DEMs and key government officials at division level, one in March and April 2019 and another in February 2020. The aim of the workshops was to enhance active participation and planning in NRP activities by DEMs and other key government officers at the district level and to ensure their ownership of the program. We noted that after these workshops the levels of PEA coaching increased. We also instituted, in each district, district review meetings where district education officials including CPEAs and PEAs convene to discuss best practices and solutions to challenges encountered in implementing the NRP. MERIT initially facilitated these meetings, but by the end of the project the leadership of the meetings had transitioned to the DEMs.

One way in which government demonstrated its ownership of the NRP was in its efforts to design policies to support reading. MERIT supported the MOE on establishing and communicating policies in support of the NRP. The first of these circulars (Ref.

No.EDU/BED/1/26) sent out in 2016 to all Education Division Managers (EDMs), DEMs, and head teachers outlined expectations for the implementation of the NRP. It included expectations about: daily and on-time attendance of students of teachers; time spent on teaching reading (one hour each for Chichewa and English daily); school feeding not taking up instructional hours; book use and care; use of Chichewa to English; and breaking up large classes into smaller classes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MERIT initiated NRP policy dialogue meetings with the MOE on the approach to the implementation of the NRP curriculum following the prolonged school closure. The meetings took place in July, August, and September 2020 and included participants from the USAID Education Office, NRP implementing partners, and the relevant MOE directors including Directorate of Quality Assurance Services (DQAS), Directorate of Basic Education (DBE), DTED, and Directorate of Special Needs Education (DSNE). These meetings helped inform the MOE's eventual decision about how to implement the curriculum when schools reopened, and the best way for MERIT and other partners to support schools in doing so.

MERIT conducted a weeklong NRP Symposium from October 5 to 9, 2020, under the theme

“Reading Is the Foundation for all Learning,” or in Chichewa, “Kuwereṅa ndi Maziko Amaphunziro Onse.” The aim of the symposium was to celebrate the achievements made since the implementation of the NRP started. Activities during the week included the following:

1. A press conference that was presided over by the Minister of Education, Honorable Agnes Nyalonje, during which she highlighted the importance of reading in the first few years of primary school.
2. A radio and television read-aloud series that featured the Deputy Minister of Education, Honorable Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima; U.S. Ambassador to Malawi, Ambassador Robert Scott; USAID Mission Director, Dr. Catie Lott; Principal Secretary for Education, Ms. Chikondano Mussa, teachers, learners, and local celebrities.
3. A webinar entitled “The First 5 Years of the Implementation of Malawi’s National Reading Programme” was held on October 6, 2020. Four presentations were made during this webinar including NRP Overview and Achievements by Charles Gunsaru, MERIT Deputy Chief of Party; Teacher Training and Support to Improve Reading Instruction by Benford Mwakayuni, DEM Likoma; Books Make a Difference by Annie Kaliu, DEM Blantyre Urban; and Community Engagement and Support towards Student Reading by George Ngayiyaye, Director of Education, Youth and Sport (DEYS) for Dedza. Over 100 people participated in this webinar from USAID, MOE, partner organizations, and NRP implementing partners.
4. A roundtable discussion focusing on policies impacting literacy instruction. This was chaired by the Director for DQAS Mr. Raphael Agabu. Other panelists included the Director for DBE, Mr. Gossam Mafuta; Director for DTED, Mr. Misheck Munthali; DEYS for Mzimba South, Fiddes Msowoya; and DEM for Mchinji, Nelly Kamtedza. Other participants in the virtual discussion included officers from USAID, the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, MERIT, YESA, REFAM, and other stakeholders.
5. A radio call-in program on MBC radio station. Panelists for this call-in program included the Director of DQAS and representatives from DTED and DBE.

Increased Capacity of Local Organizations to Implement Reading Interventions

As mentioned earlier, MERIT identified 24 local CSOs in 2017 to support CME activities in the districts. We adapted the Participatory Local Organizational Capacity Assessment tool, developed by the RTI Home Office, for use in Malawi. This tool was used for assessing the operational capacity of CSOs and to help build a plan for their support. These CSOs were assessed in five areas related to (1) program and technical capability, (2) governance, (3) administration, (4) human resources, and (5) financial management. Even the process of administering the tool itself was a capacity-building exercise.

The selected CSOs attended a series of workshops between August and October 2017 to prepare them in the skills and strategies needed to negotiate and lobby with parents and communities in support of reading. Seventy-five staff of the selected CSOs participated in the trainings. Armed with the knowledge from the trainings, the CSOs visited a total of 2,657 schools where they mobilized parents, communities, and school governance structures in support of reading. They also distributed over 19,000 NRP posters to schools and communities. The CSO grants were active from November 1, 2017, to April 30, 2018.

Sources of Additional Financial and Technical Support Leveraged

Recognizing that the success of the NRP requires identifying and securing various sources of financial and technical support, MERIT advocated with the private sector for its support with the NRP. The team developed various concepts on how the private sector can support the NRP including through PPPs and corporate social responsibility funds in areas such as Braille Cup, SBCC posters, and supplementary readers. MERIT was able to secure private-sector cash donations amounting to MK 11.189 million in support of the Braille Cup and printing of supplementary readers (see Table 7).

Table 7. Private-Sector Contributions to the NRP

#	Partner	Activity Supported	Proposed Contribution (MK)
1	CDH Investment Bank	Braille Cup	500,000
2	Airtel Malawi	Braille Cup	3,000,000
3	Lilongwe Dairy	Braille Cup	350,000
4	Standard Bank	Printing of supplementary readers	4,000,000
5	Save the Children	Braille Cup	2,839,594
6	Seed Co	Braille Cup	500,000
Confirmed Total			11,189,594

In addition to sourcing contributions from individual companies, MERIT worked to build a structure within the MOE for ongoing engagement with the private sector. Through advocacy, the MOE identified an officer within the DBE who would become the focal person for PPPs in the MOE. The MERIT PPP specialist worked alongside the MOE PPP focal person and coached her in the various responsibilities for the role. MERIT, in collaboration with REFAM and the MOE, also planned to hold a private sector engagement (PSE) forum that would establish a structure for the MOE to interact with private-sector organizations in support of the NRP. The MOE's focus was to have the private sector focus on the printing of student LBs, for a replenishment plan is not in place. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the PSE forum was postponed twice: first from April 2020, when COVID-19 first hit Malawi, to January 2021 and then indefinitely. The MOE agreed to hold the forum when the COVID-19 situation improves, and consequently, MERIT handed over all the documentation to REFAM and the MOE for possible use in future.

Finally, MERIT relied on local businesses to provide services to the NRP. This was especially important in printing of TLMs. In the first year of MERIT, we relied on international printers to print LBs because the capacity to print in-country was limited. However, MERIT's partner blueTree Group worked closely with printers in-country to ensure that they could invest in the necessary equipment that they needed to print books in Malawi, and by the second round of printing, MERIT was able to give over 25 different contracts to five local printers for the printing of LBs and TGs.³ Braille printing was also done locally by Montfort College and the Malawi Union of the Blind. This improved the cost, timeliness, and efficiency of book printing and distribution. It also helped local printers build their capacity for printing large quantities of materials.

2.5 Objective 5: CDCS Priorities for Integration Advanced

³ We used many more smaller local printers for other smaller printing jobs.

USAID/Malawi funded several activities in Malawi during the MERIT period of performance including in education, health, governance, and agriculture. MERIT found ways to integrate our activities with other USAID-funded initiatives in an endeavor to provide a coordinated approach to achieving results. MERIT played a lead role in coordinating activities across all USAID implementing partners supporting the NRP. MERIT also coordinated activities with other USAID partners such as Girls' Empowerment through Education and Health Activity (ASPIRE) and Local Government Accountability and Performance (LGAP) as described below.

Integration with Other NRP Partners

USAID has funded several other activities that supported various aspects of the NRP: YESA, REFAM, SEGREM, and National Reading Programme Implementation Expansion (NRPIE). SEGREM was responsible for developing TLMs for the NRP, and MERIT provided significant technical assistance in all the materials development activities and had a technical team embedded at MIE to work with SEGREM. In 2019 and 2020, USAID funded three other activities—YESA, REFAM, and NRPIE—implemented by Abt Associates, Juarez and Associates, and Florida State University, respectively, to work on aspects related to continuous assessment and remediation, inclusive education, and benchmarking.

Realizing the importance of presenting a coordinated front to the MOE in service to the same goal, RTI's MERIT Chief of Party (COP) initiated weekly COP meetings, which the USAID Deputy Education Chief would join at least bi-weekly. These meetings allowed the COPs to share project updates, discuss areas the projects could plan together, problem solve issues projects faced individually or collectively, and to come as one voice to USAID on bigger issues (sometimes administrative; other times, NRP bigger picture issues). This collaboration led to joint activities, such as teacher trainings, resulting in cost savings, leveraging of technical expertise, and more efficient implementation. For example, joint trainings with YESA meant that YESA saved on transportation cost and per diem on travel and planning days since MERIT covered those.

Integration with Other Partners

MERIT collaborated with the LGAP project in planning an orientation workshop for newly elected members of the District Council Education Committees (DCECs). The DCEC is one of seven statutory service committees provided for in the Local Government Act, and they are responsible for localizing national policies for their district, formulating by-laws, and proposing council activities in education. The orientation was designed to orient the members to their roles and responsibilities and national education policies and laws, including the NRS. MERIT and LGAP were to design and conduct the orientation jointly. However, due to reasons outside of MERIT's control, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the orientation of the committees could not take place before MERIT closeout. MERIT developed a manual to support the orientation and printed 400 copies, which it handed over to the MOE through DQAS for future use.

MERIT also provided tablets to ASPIRE for their coaching support in Zomba, Machinga, and Balaka.

2.6 Crosscutting Activities

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Infonex, a MERIT consortium partner, led the implementation of MEL activities.

EGRAs

MERIT worked with the MOE to conduct several assessments of early grade reading. The first, which took place in 2016, formed the baseline for the NRP. That baseline assessment was conducted with stratified random samples of 10 Standard 1 and 10 Standard 2 students in each of 86 randomly selected MOE primary schools across Malawi, for a total of some 860 students (half boys, half girls) in each standard.

The second assessment took place in 2017. Again, the exercise was conducted in 86 schools randomly selected from across the country. The focus was on Standard 1 and 3 learners; 10 learners (5 boys, 5 girls) were randomly sampled and assessed from each focus standard and sampled school. A total of 1,720 randomly selected Standard 1 and 3 students (860 boys, 860 girls) from the 86 schools were assessed. The exercise was done with the participation of MOE officers from DQAS and DTED.

The 2018 EGRA took place from May 28 to June 8. A total of 18 assessors (5 men, 13 women) were trained to conduct this exercise. They included primary school teachers and officers from DQAS, DTED, and the Directorate of Education Planning (DEP), who had been used in earlier assessments. They were divided into 9 teams of 2, and each team was led by a MERIT officer. The assessment was conducted in the same 86 schools that were used in the 2016 baseline survey. A total of 860 (430 girls, 430 boys) randomly sampled learners from Standards 1 and another 860 (430 girls, 430 boys) from Standard 3 were assessed in four reading tasks (syllables, familiar word, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension) in Chichewa. The final report of the exercise was submitted to USAID on September 27, 2018. The findings from the EGRA, in conjunction with the NARI and NASIS, were used to inform MERIT's subsequent work planning and influenced decisions about the topics to cover during training. Unfortunately, the final 2020 EGRA could not be conducted because of school closures due to COVID-19.

Development of a Teacher Observation and Coaching Instrument

In October 2017 MERIT developed a Teacher Observation and Coaching Instrument for use by PEAs when coaching teachers. Later when it was decided that coaching of teachers should be done by section heads, and that PEAs should instead be monitoring the coaching done by the section heads and providing them support, the instrument was revised for use by section heads and a new instrument was developed for use by the PEAs. The process of developing these instruments included participation from the MOE, particularly the DQAS, DTED, and DBE. The instrument for the section heads was later simplified and printed on one two-sided laminated sheet and copies were distributed to all schools. When the PEAs were issued tablets to support coaching in May 2018, their observation instrument was installed on those tablets.

Development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Zonal Maps

MERIT developed, printed, and distributed GIS maps of all education zones in the country. Work on geo-referencing of zonal map boundaries and collecting of missing Global Positioning System coordinates for MOE primary schools started in October 2016 and was completed in May 2017. A series of workshops for validation of the maps was held in December 2017 and March 2018. These workshops involved DEMs, District Education Management Information System Officers (DEMISOs), and officers from DQAS and the Education Management Information System (EMIS) section of the DEP. During these workshops DEMISOs were also trained on how to use and update the maps. Later in 2019, a total of 1,112 copies of the maps were printed. Of these 30 were of size A0, 102 size A1, 490 size A2, and another 490 size A4. The maps were then distributed to EDMs, DEMs,

District Commissioners, and PEAs. The maps are for use by PEAs and other education officers as they plan and implement NRP and other activities in the education zones and districts. Electronic copies of the GIS data were shared with DEMISOs in all the DEMs' offices. In addition, the maps were also shared with USAID, YESA, and REFAM and the EMIS section of the MOE. Some districts have been using the GIS maps in their planning, reporting, and decision-making processes.

2017 NARI and NASIS

MERIT conducted the NARI and NASIS from February 8 to March 8, 2017. The exercise took place in a nationally representative sample of 86 schools. The 2017 NARI was conducted in Standard 1 only, while NASIS was done in Standards 2, 3, and 4 as well. The purposes of the NARI were to measure teachers' proficiency in improved reading pedagogy and identify key areas and priority practices for further strengthening through teacher training and coaching. The NASIS was aimed at assessing school safety and inclusivity. Instruments for the exercise included the School Observation, Head Teacher Interview, Classroom Observation, Learner Interview, and Teacher Interview tools. MERIT engaged government officials in all aspects of the assessment including developing the instruments, conducting the assessment, and monitoring the assessment. In developing the instruments, MERIT involved officers from the MOE particularly from DQAS, DBE, DSNE, DEP, and TTCs. There were also officers from the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW) and Ministry of Civic Education, Culture and Community Development. In addition, MOE personnel were trained as assessors and supervisors.

A report on the 2017 NARI was submitted to USAID on March 13, 2018, and was approved on August 3, 2018. Some key findings include the following:

- Nearly all observed Standard 1 teachers (96+%) completed the 15 days of training conducted by the NRP and scored their NRP training highly: 69% rated the NRP training as "very useful"; 29.5% as "useful."
- A majority (81%) of observed teachers reported receiving NRP coaching support, most of them from the infant section heads in their schools. Most (70+ %) rated their NRP coaching "very useful"; nearly all others rated it "useful."
- Learner attendance rates were very low. The median rate of attendance for Standard 1 on the day of assessment was just 53%, and for many schools the attendance rate was considerably lower. Low rates of learner attendance pose a major challenge to improving reading outcomes in early grades.
- Many learners did not use an LB, as expected, during the lesson. In most observed lessons, fewer than 75% of Standard 1 learners came to class with their LBs, and few teachers distributed LBs kept in the classroom to learners.

The NASIS report was submitted to USAID on August 6, 2018. It was organized broadly around the four key elements of school inclusion and safety that are the focus of Component 3 activities and that are reflected directly in Indicators 301 and 302 of MERIT's Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:

Indicator-301: Percentage of teachers demonstrating behaviors of gender-responsive positive reinforcement in the classroom.

Indicator-302: Percentage of schools achieving a satisfactory rating on assessment scale of gender-responsive, inclusive, safe, protective, equality-, and health-promoting school.

A few general themes that were evident across the elements and the indicators emerged from the data analysis:

- What head teachers and teachers said about daily school practice was not always the same as what students reported they experienced. This was particularly true regarding physical safety issues (e.g., if students at the school were beaten, if the school was a safe space for students).
- There were some important differences between what teachers and head teachers said about school, and what enumerators observed at the school and in classrooms.
- Teachers and head teachers generally expressed strong support for official policies related to gender-responsiveness, safety, inclusion, and positive reinforcement. Many teachers voiced their support using simplified phrases that were often very similar.
- Teachers expressed greater discomfort and less knowledge about how to implement inclusive education and positive reinforcement policies than they did gender-responsive and safety policies.

2019 NARI and NASIS

Data collection for the 2019 NARI and 2019 NASIS was done concurrently from February 18 to March 5, 2019. For the 2019 NARI data collection, revised versions of the tools for the 2017 NARI were used. The 2019 NARI also collected data on remediation and continuous assessment on behalf of YESA. Data were collected from all 86 sample schools, even though in some parts of the country there were heavy rains during that period.

A report of the 2019 NASIS was submitted to USAID on September 11, 2019, and USAID approved it on November 13, 2019. Key findings of the 2019 NARI and the 2019 NASIS were shared with participants at the NRP cluster-based workshops for district-level key government officers, which took place from February 11 to 21, 2020. DEMs used the data in the preparation of their yearly action plans to support the NRP. In addition, the results from the assessments informed MERIT's planning of its activities, including topics for future trainings and areas of focus for coaching.

Study of Coaching of Section Heads by PEAs

MERIT conducted a study of coaching of section heads by PEAs. The aim was to determine the extent to which PEAs were visiting schools to support section heads in coaching the teachers. The study analyzed the records of coaching submitted by the PEAs from May 2018, when they received tablets to use in their coaching of the teachers, to March 2020. A draft report of primary results and findings from this study was submitted to USAID on September 11, 2020. On December 10, USAID cleared the draft report. MERIT finalized the cleared report and resubmitted it to USAID on December 22, 2020.

The findings from the coaching study were shared with DEMs, PEAs, and other district officials during the DEM cluster workshop. They were also discussed in district quarterly meetings supported by MERIT. Some DEMs committed to including more budget for school visits by the PEAs, and the data usually show an uptick in coaching visits after these review meetings.

Piloting the Use of an Android App for Registering Workshop Participants

On December 4, 2019, the MEL Specialist attended a meeting at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malawi offices to learn how UNDP uses an app for Android phones to register workshop participants, by capturing information stored in a participant's national identification card. UNDP shared its experience in the use of the app,

which enhances accountability and simplifies the reconciliation of workshop attendance and payments of allowances. MERIT tested the system during the district cluster workshops that took place in February 2020. The results of the pilot showed that the system could be used for registering workshop participants, and it made the registration process simpler, quicker, and more accurate. Given the shift to virtual training in 2020, MERIT did not have an opportunity to use the service beyond the pilot in February 2020 but would recommend it for use in current and future USG programs.

2.7 Students with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities

MERIT ensured that the needs of students with disabilities were considered and addressed throughout all its activities. The efforts taken to improve reading outcomes for children with disabilities and to mainstream disability and inclusion issues are outlined below.

Collaboration with SNE Stakeholders

To ensure collaboration between MERIT and SNE stakeholders a series of meetings with SNE divisional and district desk officers was held in October 2016. The aim of the meetings was to improve collaboration and communication between MERIT and SNE desk officers at education division and district levels and facilitate effective implementation of inclusive education activities. These meetings were facilitated by the Perkins Africa Region Coordinator and the SNE Specialist. The meetings created a common understanding of what to expect from MERIT. In December 2018, a follow-up meeting with the stakeholders was held to share reports by the SNE divisional desk officers regarding successes and challenges in the implementation of inclusive education-related activities under the NRP. Throughout the life of the MERIT Activity, we collaborated with the SNE officers at the MOE and with Disabled Persons Organizations in all activities including training, development of materials, and community mobilization.

Enhancing Skills of SNE Teachers

MERIT conducted several training workshops aimed at enhancing skills of SNE teachers in delivering the NRP curriculum. Perkins's sub-contract with MERIT ended in March 2019, but the work on disability was taken up by the REFAM activity.



A learner who is blind participating in the 2017 Braille Cup (Photo: Rex Chasweka)

Adapting NRP TLMs for Braille Readers

In November and December 2016 MERIT conducted a training for SNE teachers responsible for Standard 1 learners with visual impairment. The training focused on helping teachers learn how to adapt the NRP TLMs for braille readers. Teachers had earlier expressed their concerns around using the Standard 1 English Learner's Book for students with visual impairment. The book contains pictures, making it less accessible for learners with visual impairment. During the workshop

participants were shown strategies that could be used to adapt the LB for learners with visual impairment. Thirty participants (26 men and 4 women) attended the training.

Developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

In April 2017, MERIT organized a TOT workshop aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of SNE teachers in developing IEPs and teaching strategies that are effective for children with disabilities. As a TOT, this workshop targeted SNE Desk Officers, TTC lecturers, SNE teachers, and officials from DQAS, DSNE, and DTED. A total of 26 people (17 men and 9 women) attended the workshop, which was facilitated by a Perkins Consultant. IEP training manuals (facilitator's guide and teacher resource handbook) were developed in October and November 2017. These were then used to train SNE teachers and head teachers who oversee resource centers for children with disabilities. The training took place in a series of three workshops that ran in December 2017 for teachers in the Central East and Central West Education Divisions, April 2018 for teachers in the Shire Highlands Education Division, and May 2018 for teachers in the South East and South West Education Divisions. A total of 214 SNE teachers (138 men, 76 women) were trained in the development of IEPs. Participants in the training workshops developed school-based action plans that would ensure more trainings on development of IEPs happened at the school level. The workshops were also attended by senior officers from the DSNE including the Deputy Director and the Chief Education Officer.

Teaching Students with Visual Impairment and Hearing Loss

A TOT workshop for teachers of children with visual impairment and hearing loss was conducted from June 19 to 21, 2018. A total of 21 teachers (11 men, 10 women) drawn from schools that have learners with visual impairment and hearing loss attended the workshop. The aim of the training was to build the capacity of the trainers in improving instructional practice for teachers of children with visual impairment and hearing loss. Another TOT workshop for teachers of children with visual impairment and hearing loss was held from June 25 to 27 to develop a model for conducting national reading fairs for children with hearing loss. Participants at the workshop were drawn from stakeholder organizations including MOE, Montfort College, Malawi National Association of the Deaf, and Parents of Disabled Children Association in Malawi. A total of 20 participants (12 men, 8 women) attended the workshop. By the end of the workshop, participants developed a handbook on planning and implementing a reading fair for children with hearing loss.

Integrating Inclusive Education into Training for All Teachers

In addition to specific training for SNE educators, MERIT also developed modules on how to include and educate learners with disabilities in all classrooms. These modules were developed as part of MERIT-organized teacher trainings, which were conducted in August 2016, April 2017, and September 2018. The modules have been incorporated into MERIT's teacher training manuals and used by facilitators to train over 45,000 teachers in Standards 1–4.

Some key topics included in the modules were as follows:

- Introduction to theories supporting inclusive education
- Classroom management
- Education assessments to identify individual child needs
- Developing IEPs
- Making and using appropriate TLMs

Additionally, Perkins coordinated the identification and integration of 245 SNE teachers (140 men and 105 women) to attend the CPD trainings as participants and co-facilitators. Besides

ensuring a cross-pollination of skills and knowledge between the special needs teachers and the regular teachers, the inclusion of the SNE teachers helped in making sure that perspectives about learners with disabilities were incorporated into the training.

Incorporating Inclusive Elements into NRP's TLMs

MERIT ensured that all NRP materials and activities represented all children, including children with disabilities. The SNE Specialist guided writers, illustrators, and editors on how to develop and review materials using the following criteria:

- Are students with disabilities represented in the text?
- Are students with disabilities represented as role models or outstanding characters?
- Is the language free of derogatory words related to disability?
- Are learners with disabilities depicted in the illustrations?
- Are categorizations of people with disabilities free of stereotypes?
- Are students with disabilities depicted equally participating in school activities?

During every TLM development workshop, the SNE Specialist reviewed materials to ensure they adhered to the guidelines.

Printing and Distributing Large-Print and Braille Versions of TLMs

In addition to ensuring TLMs featured people with disabilities in a positive way, MERIT produced and distributed braille and large-print versions of all LBs and TGs and 33 titles of supplementary readers. The materials were distributed to SNE centers nationwide. In total, over 16,000 braille materials and 18,500 large-print materials were produced. The content of the books was put together at Perkins-coordinated workshops by braille experts from the MOE and Montfort College.

Reading Competitions Featuring Learners with Disabilities

The Braille Cup Competition

As part of a strategy to motivate children with disabilities to increase their literacy skills and to engage communities in their learning, MERIT continued to conduct the Braille Cup competition, which was started under the Early Grade Reading Activity. This is a reading competition for braille readers, and it was organized twice, in 2017 and in 2018. The competition involved all schools with learners who have visual impairment. It started at the cluster level and culminated in national finals. The national finals were a large event, sponsored by Airtel Malawi, and attended by high-level officials from USAID and the MOE. In 2018, the prize presentation ceremony was presided over by the Minister of Education, Mr.

Bright Msaka. Also in attendance were the USAID Acting Mission Director, Peter Trenchard; USAID Education Director, Michelle Chen; Secretary for Education, Science, and Technology, Justin Saidi; MOE Chief Director, Thokozile Banda; EDM for South West Education Division, Dr. Abraham Sineta; and representatives of the private-sector companies that contributed to the cost of running the competition.

Reading Competition for Learners with Hearing Impairment

A pilot reading competition for children who are deaf or hard of hearing was held at Mountainview School for the Deaf, in Thyolo, from November 13 to 15, 2018. This was part of the process of developing a model for a reading competition for children who are deaf or hard of hearing that could be used by the MOE at the national level. The competition involved 18 learners drawn from three schools for the deaf: Mountainview, Maryview, and

Mua School for the Deaf. The findings from the pilot were used to refine a draft handbook on reading competitions for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, which was developed in fiscal year (FY) 2018. Just as it did for the Braille Cup, MERIT worked very closely with the MOE in the organization of this pilot.

Engaging Parents and Caregivers of Students with Disabilities to Support Their Children's Learning

In January 2019, a training workshop for support groups for families with children with disabilities was held at Mponela. A total of 112 participants (73 men; 39 women) attended the training, including SNE Desk Officers of Montfort College and representatives from the MOE, Parents of Disabled Children Association in Malawi, Malawi Council for the Handicapped, Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi, and TTCs. The workshop was aimed at introducing participants to ways of supporting children with disabilities in learning how to read and write. The training prepared the participants to deliver training to parent support groups on the following key areas:

- Identifying services for supporting children's ability to read and write
- Understanding what family support groups can do to promote children's ability to read and write
- Strengthening the relationship between families and schools
- Promoting the role of parents as advocates

2.8 Gender

MERIT addressed gender issues in all aspects of its activities. MERIT developed a comprehensive gender plan that guided its activities and a Gender Integration Checklist that was used to track how gender was being integrated into the Activity implementation and management. Gender integration was led by MERIT partner, MWAI.

Gender Integration Training of MERIT and Other Key NRP Stakeholders

In 2016, MERIT staff and some key stakeholders were oriented on the importance of integrating gender and ensuring no gender bias in all technical, operational, and management activities of the Activity.

Again In 2017, after the development of the Gender Integration Guide, MERIT staff at home office and field levels were trained on how to conduct gender-responsive programming through monthly reporting and planning, as detailed in the Gender Integration Guide. Staff learned how to use the revised monthly reporting template that included tables for reporting and planning gender for their monthly reports.

Ensuring That NRP Materials and Activities Were Gender Sensitive

MWAI provided technical support to the TLM developers at SEGREM and MIE (writers, illustrators, and editors) to ensure gender-responsive, inclusive materials. MWAI's guidance focused on the impact that TLMs have on learners as well as gender considerations when developing TLMs such as representation of different sub-groups, role of characters, language use, and illustrations.

MWAI also reviewed and provided feedback on Standard 1–4 English and Chichewa books as they were being developed. Similarly, MERIT provided guidance on integrating gender in the development of supplementary readers during a writers' workshop held at MIE. During the workshop, the MERIT Gender Specialist made a presentation on gender in TLMs and had discussions with the writers on gender aspects such as transformational roles

(leadership and prestigious role sharing), language considerations (non-stereotypical and non-derogatory), character representation in the text, and illustrations of stories.

Integrating Gender and Safe Learning Approaches into Teacher Training Workshops

Teacher trainings for Standard 1–4 teachers included elements of Safe Learning Spaces, which are gender-equitable teaching practices, inclusive education, and positive discipline. These elements were integrated into all training manuals and resource materials. MERIT gender specialists participated in the training of master trainers and monitored the TOT at district level. The development of coaching manuals and head teacher training also included the Safe Learning Spaces elements, including gender.

The initial training of Standard 1–4 teachers also included stand-alone modules on creating safe learning environments. The topics covered were as follows:

- Understanding key concepts: sex vs. gender
- How the language teachers and students use in class can reinforce gender stereotypes about girls and boys and negatively affect their learning
- Gender-equitable vs. gender-biased teaching practices: assigning group and class leaders, giving feedback and support, distributing textbooks and TLMs, seating arrangements, assigning classroom chores, disciplining learners
- Assessing your school’s performance against the gender-related requirements in National Education Standard 6: Students’ safety and protection and planning for improvement
- Effects of gender-equitable vs. gender-biased teaching practices on girls’ and boys’ learning

3. Key Challenges During Implementation

3.1 Materials Development

Originally MERIT was supposed to be implemented using materials that the MOE had developed with support from the USAID. However, as the implementation of the project started, USAID decided that MERIT should start by working with the MOE through MIE to produce the necessary materials to ensure alignment with the NRS. MIE was to lead the process while MERIT provided technical support. In the first year this arrangement proved to be a challenge. The deadlines required to ensure Standard 1 materials were ready for training of teachers in August 2016 meant that the MERIT team had to take the lead in planning and organizing workshops. However, since by the time MERIT got underway the MIE annual work plan was already developed and approved by its board, requests for MIE officers to be involved in materials development workshops often conflicted with assignments for their other MIE duties. This was resolved by ensuring that NRP and MERIT activities were included in future MIE work plans. From Year 2 MERIT was supposed to work with MIE through the provision of technical support to SEGREM, which was to produce materials for Standards 2–4. Despite some initial challenges, MERIT slowly established a collegial relationship with SEGREM that led to the development of high-quality materials to support the NRP.

3.2 Disbursement of Allowances for Training Workshops

Disbursement of allowances and liquidations during training of teachers particularly at zonal level presented challenges. With over 500 zonal training centers spread throughout the

country and limited capacity of mobile money network systems in the country, MERIT tried a range of options to identify an efficient and cost-effective method of payment of allowances. During the first trainings in August 2016, which involved over 21,000 teachers, a cash in transit service provider was used to distribute cash to the training centers. Unfortunately, the service provider had limited capacity and was unable to distribute all the allowances before the trainings ended. MERIT had to intervene with the use of its finance staff and District Coordinators. For the training of Standard 2, 3, and 4 teachers in August 2017, which involved over 40,000 teachers, MERIT used electronic funds transfer (EFT) after collecting and verifying the participants' bank accounts. The system had already been used for disbursement of allowances during materials development, master trainers, and TOT workshops. However, for the zonal trainings there were several issues, including incorrect account numbers, and in some cases, PEAs allowed new participants, who had not submitted their account numbers, to attend the trainings. This resulted in delays in clearing advances. The issue was finally resolved by using a combination of EFT and cash payments through District Coordinators and finance staff to transfer cash to the training centers. By the end of the Activity, advances from trainings were being cleared in two months or less.

3.3 COVID-19 Pandemic

Schools closed at the end of March 2020, before the end of the second term, and did not reopen for the third term until October 12, 2020. During this seven-month closure there was very little learning taking place, as the radio instruction program from the MOE only provided 30-minutes of instruction per grade, and many learners were unable to listen in. Based on research on learning loss in Malawi over the normal long vacation⁴ and estimates of learning loss in similar countries during the prolonged COVID-19 closures,⁵ significant learning loss in Malawi is a certainty. In anticipation of the loss in learning, MERIT worked with the MOE to develop guidelines for teachers on how to approach remediation and revision of prior materials after school reopened. MERIT then trained section heads and head teachers on the curriculum approach for NRP using a hybrid approach that combined IVR and in-person workshops. Unfortunately, schools had to close again in January for a five-week period as COVID-19 cases surged in Malawi after the December holidays. These disruptions are bound to affect student's reading ability, thereby tempering some of the gains made by the NRP.

In addition to the learning loss, some of MERIT's activities had to be postponed or canceled. The 2020 EGRA was canceled outright as assessments could not be done while schools were closed. YESA is scheduled to conduct an EGRA sometime in 2021. The PSE forum was postponed until sometime after the Activity closes; the MOE and REFAM have committed to holding the forum when the situation allows. However, other activities including the NRP Symposium, teacher trainings, and data collection exercises were simply postponed while the MERIT team found other ways to conduct them virtually. Trainings were conducted using IVR, as explained above, and the NRP Symposium was organized as a weeklong event combining virtual and mass media events.

⁴ Slade, Timothy S., Benjamin Piper, Zikani Kaunda, Simon King, and Hibatalla Ibrahim. "Is 'Summer' Reading Loss Universal? Using Ongoing Literacy Assessment in Malawi to Estimate the Loss from Grade-Transition Breaks." *Research in Comparative and International Education* 12, no. 4 (December 2017): 461–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499917740657>.

⁵ Cumminskey, Chris. "Calculating the Educational Impact of COVID-19 (Part II): Using Data from Successive Grades to Estimate Learning Loss." *ShareEd: RTI International's Shared Resources for International Education* (blog), 2020. <https://shared.rti.org/content/calculating-educational-impact-covid-19-part-ii-using-data-successive-grades-estimate>.

4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Learning from experiences and observations encountered during the implementation of MERIT and then adapting the program based on new knowledge was a continuous practice during MERIT. In the previous section, we described some major operational challenges and external risks that we faced and how we solved them. In this section, the focus is on what we learned from observations, studies, and experience implementing MERIT.

School-based coaching provides more frequent support to teachers. Based on experience and evidence from the preceding Early Grade Reading Activity, PEAs struggled to visit schools frequently even when provided with logistical support. Therefore, under MERIT we moved to a school-based coaching model where teachers were coached by section heads in the school. This model significantly increased the frequency of coaching in the school, even as PEA coaching visits lagged. In addition, 100% of teachers interviewed in the NARI 2019 rated their satisfaction with the school-based coaching as either “very useful” or “useful.”

- We recommend that the system of school-based coaching be institutionalized, and the coaching role of the section heads be formally recognized. The job expectations and performance appraisal of section heads should reflect their coaching role.

PEA visits to schools to coach section heads is uneven. With the shift to school-based coaching under the NRP, the role of the PEA shifted to coaching of the section heads.

MERIT provided tablets, coaching tools, and training to PEAs to enable them to do this role, and the expectation was that they would visit schools to observe coaching sessions and provide guidance to the section heads on their coaching practice. Coaching improved modestly from the 2018–2019 school year to 2019–2020 school year. The percentage of zones with active coaching (12 or more visits) increased from 14% to 24%; however, 25% of zones in 2019–20 had little or no coaching visits.

- We recommend closer monitoring of coaching activity by DEMs, who supervise PEAs. We found that when DEMs were presented data on PEA coaching in their district, coaching visits improved. (See more below.)

Build strong accountability systems at the district level. In the first two years of MERIT, the focus of capacity-building and technical assistance was at the central level, with MIE in materials development, and at the zonal levels with rolling out the teacher trainings. In 2018, MERIT conducted an institutional capacity assessment, which highlighted the crucial role of district education officers (e.g., DEMs, DCECs, CPEAs) in managing and monitoring implementation of the NRP. Beginning in 2019, MERIT instituted annual district cluster workshops and quarterly district review meetings, where district education leaders convened to share best practices, challenges, and solutions to NRP implementation. The MERIT national coaching study found sharp increases in coaching activity in the months immediately following these district activities.

- We recommend continuing district review meetings to support NRP implementation. In addition, capacity-building in the core system functions—setting and communicating expectations, monitoring against expectations, and providing basic inputs and targeted support—should be focused on district-level actors.

Use of LBs and supplementary readers. MERIT provided LBs and supplementary readers in sufficient quantities for each student to have one. From an audit of LBs that was conducted as part of the NARI 2019, 97% of schools received LBs at quantities

corresponding to at least 90% of enrolment. These LBs were distributed in 2016 (Standard 1), 2017 (Standards 2–4), and 2018 (Standard 1 replenishment). However, the data from classroom observation from the NARI 2019 showed that most children (57%) did not have their LBs with them in class, and that of the LBs that were being used, many were in poor condition. The same assessment found that supplementary readers were rarely used in class. One reason for this is that the TGs do not integrate the use of supplementary readers: only in 1% of lessons observed were supplementary readers proposed to be used. MERIT provided specific training to teachers on how to use supplementary readers, but this did not lead to significant changes in practice. The book use problem was worse in the lower standards.

- We recommend improvements in the book supply chain that would support annual replenishment of books. This is probably a longer-term solution. In the short-term, the policy of taking LBs home can be revised for the lower classes so students keep the LBs at school but take home the supplementary readers. In addition, we recommend that revisions of the TGs include specific instruction on how and which readers should be used within lessons.

Low learner attendance: The average median rate of attendance in the NARI 2019 sample of schools on the day of assessment varied from 60% in Standard 1 to 69% in Standard 4. Unfortunately, these low rates of learner attendance have persisted despite efforts to sensitize parents about the importance of sending their children to school daily and on time. Instructional hours in Malawi are already low, and this combined with low student attendance significantly reduces opportunity to improve reading outcomes. Recent studies of student absenteeism in Malawi have highlighted several contributing factors, including illness, lack of money, domestic chores, orphan status, engagement in economic activities, classroom environment, and hunger.⁶

- We recommend better integration of services such as health and nutrition in communities and schools. School feeding has been shown to increase attendance, but not all schools have school feeding programs. Many of the reasons for low learner attendance are beyond the scope of the education sector alone.

Safe and Inclusive Schools: As described above, the NASIS and qualitative study showed improvements in safety and inclusion in schools. However, there are still many challenges. For example, many schools lacked the infrastructure to support safety and inclusion, which impeded opportunities to learn, particularly for girls and children with disabilities. Schools held classes outside and had no water sources, broken latrines, high levels of noise, limited resources (chalkboards, seating), and partially completed infrastructure projects that were safety hazards. Even as many teachers are trying to support all students in their classrooms, children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms reported difficulties such as bullying and segregation from other students and lack of access to specialized resources, especially in schools where there are no SNE centers.

- We recommend continued technical and financial resources to support inclusive education. While every school will not have an SNE resource center, SNE teachers will be needed to provide specialist support as needed to learners in all schools. Teachers need additional training and resources to support the needs of children with disabilities.

⁶ See, for example: Grant, Monica J., Cynthia B. Lloyd, and Barbara S. Mensch. "Menstruation and School Absenteeism: Evidence from Rural Malawi." *Comparative Education Review* 57, no. 2 (May 1, 2013): 260–84. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669121>; and Kelly, Christine Anne. "School Absenteeism in Karonga District, Northern Malawi: Trends, Influences and the Impact of Cleaner Burning Biomass-Fuelled Cookstoves." Dissertation for London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.17037/PUBS.04648671>.

Finally, engage communities and private sector in helping to solve some of the infrastructure needs in schools.

Annexes

Annex A. Progress by Indicators

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-001. Percent of learners who demonstrate reading fluency and comprehension of grade level text at the end of grade 2 with U.S. Government (USG) assistance.	Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Indicator Direct Objective (DO) 1; USAID Foreign Assistance Indicator ES.1-1a to f	Annual Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) for indicative student sample, Standard 2	0%	1%	1%	—	No Measure of Results this Year due to COVID-19	—	1%	24%	NOTE: Last data available from 2018 and we believe we had made progress before the COVID-19 pandemic happened.
Ind-002. Percent of Standard 1–4 reading targets reached (out of 32) each year.	CDCS Indicator for DO 1	Annual EGRAs for indicative student samples, Standards 1–4	0%	13%	19%	—	No Measure of Results this Year due to COVID-19	—	19%	100%	NOTE: Last data available from 2018. Results improved by 19 percentage point and we expected further progress. Unfortunately, COVID-19 pandemic did not allow further assessment.
Ind-101. Number of learners reached in reading programs at the primary level.	USAID Foreign Assistance Indicator ES.1-5a-b	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) Education Management Information System (EMIS) and MERIT Activity records	1,054,3341	3,320,5932	3,381,5983	3,476,7204	Estimated-3,549,669	Estimated-3,624,506	6,268,953 unique individuals reached; non-summative, Years 1 to 6	6,268,953	Target achieved

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-102. Proportion (%) of teachers demonstrating satisfactory performance in essential skills of reading instruction	CDCS Indicator for Intermediate Result (IR) 1.2	Classroom observations in indicative national sample of schools, using annual assessment.	—	20%	—	22%	—	—	22%	50%	NOTE: Target not achieved as of 2019. This is a composite of 9 indicators of classroom practice. The target of 50% satisfactory was met in three areas: “allowing prescribed reading time for learners”, “percent of learners engaged individually by teachers” and “how well teachers kept learners on track”
Ind-103. Number of primary school educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance.	USAID Foreign Assistance Indicator ES.1-6a and b.	MERIT Activity Training/Coaching Information System	15,537	45,065	37,759	43,899	27,887	12,939	65,990	65,500	Target exceeded.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-104. Proportion (%) of teachers observed and coached in reading instruction during current or previous school term.	Custom	Data collection from teachers in indicative national sample of schools, using annual assessment.	—	80%	—	90%	46%	43%	90%5	95%	Result shy of target by 5 percentage point in Year 4. The drop in Year 5 and 6 was due to a change in the way the data was collected. In Years 2 and 4 data were from teacher self-reports. In years 5 data was collected from coaching logbooks, and in Year 6 from phone surveys and spot checks.
Ind-105. Proportion (%) of MoEST primary schools with adequate numbers of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to support instructional activities in reading as planned.	Custom	School inventories of NRP Learner Books in indicative national sample of schools, using annual assessment.	—	97%	—	99%	30%	—	99%67	97%	Target achieved.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-106. Proportion (%) of teachers who satisfactorily engage the majority of learners with teaching and learning materials (TLMs).	CDCS Indicator for IR 1.1	Classroom observations in indicative national sample of supported schools, using annual assessment.	—	16%	—	33%	—	—	33%	50%	Target not achieved. This is a composite of 3 indicators, including the percentage of learners that have their LBs in class, percent of prescribed time spent reading, and assessor rating of how well the teacher kept most learners on task. The fact that most children did not have their LBs in class, affected the indicator.
Ind-107. Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) provided with USG assistance	USAID Foreign Assistance Indicator ES.1-10	MERIT records of TLM production and distribution.	—	6,913,218	1,868,501	2,018,012	37,524	19,292	10,856,547	10,800,000	Target exceeded.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-108. Number of teachers effectively participating in school-based learning community (SBLC) meetings. new Year 4.	Custom	Records of SBLC meetings and participants for an indicative annual national sample of schools.	—	—	—	26,643	18,071	11,418	26,6437	16,915	Target exceeded. Year 6 was down because of the prolonged-school closure and shortened term
Ind-109. Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance.	USAID Foreign Assistance Indicator ES.1-12	MERIT Activity Training/Coaching Information System	6,117	7,846	7,828	2,981	6,651	6,131	10,520	9,500	Target exceeded.
Ind-201. Percent of schools with extracurricular reading activities supported by parents and communities.	MERIT Objective 2	Annual survey of extracurricular reading activities in indicative annual national sample of schools.	—	—	—	22%	No Measure of Results this Year	—	22%	22%	Target met
Ind-301. Percentage of teachers demonstrating behaviors of gender-responsive, positive reinforcement in the classroom	CDCS Indicator for Sub-IR4	Classroom observations in indicative annual national sample of schools.	—	25%	—	– 43%	---	---	43%	35%	Target exceeded.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-302. Percentage of schools achieving a satisfactory rating on assessment scale of gender-responsive, inclusive, safe, protective, and equality-promoting school	CDCS Indicator for Sub-IR4	School assessment instrument developed and applied in indicative annual national sample of schools.	—	15%	—	19%	---	---	19%	25%	Target not met. Showed some improvements, changes in culture and norms take time.
Ind-401. Number of MoEST units supported to strengthen their organizational capacities for setting, communicating and monitoring stakeholder expectations and supporting initiatives to improve reading outcomes.	MERIT Objective 4	MERIT Activity records and reports/ presentations	—	—	68	36	39	—	112	68	Target exceeded.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
Ind-403. Number of scientific studies published or conference presentations to share key findings and lessons learned on MERIT/ National Reading Program (NRP) implementation approach	USAID FAF indicator Science, Technology, and Innovation/Research (STIR)-6	MERIT Activity records and reports/ presentations	—	1	1	1	2	0	5	4	Target exceeded.
Ind-501. Number of integrated activities carried out that support improvement of student reading outcomes	Custom	MERIT Activity records	—	1	1	5	1	1	9	4	Target exceeded.
Ind-502. Number of districts in which one or more integrated activities that support improving student reading outcomes are carried out	CDCS integration objective for priority districts	MERIT Activity records	—	3	0	31	34	34	34	10	Target exceeded.

Indicator	Links to	Data Source & Collection Method	Annual and Life of Activity Results								Notes on LOA achievement
			Year 1 (2015–16)	Year 2 (2016–17)	Year 3 (2017–18)	Year 4 (2018–19)	Year 5 (2019–20)	Year 6 (2020–21)	LOA Results	LOA Targets	
<p>Notes:</p> <p>¹ Standard 1 enrolment figure for 2015/2016 (Year 1) as reported by the MoEST in the EMIS annual statistical report for 2016.</p> <p>² Total enrolment for Standards 1-4 for 2016/2017 (Year 2) as reported by the MoEST in the EMIS annual statistical report for 2017.</p> <p>³ Total enrolment for Standards 1-4 for 2017/2018 (Year 3) as reported by the MoEST in the EMIS annual statistical report for 2018.</p> <p>⁴ total enrolment for Standards 1-4 for 2018/19 (Year 4) as reported by the MoEST in the EMIS annual statistical report for 2019.</p> <p>⁵ Results for Years 5-6 reflect a change in data collection methodology from oral reporting by randomized samples of observed teachers (Years 1-4) to inspection of coaching logbooks kept by section heads in indicative samples of public primary schools (Year 5) and spot checks for a subset of a national indicative sample of schools (Year 6) due to COVID-restricted travel and school visits.</p> <p>⁶ The Year 5 (FY2020) result is the net total number of Standards 2-4 Learner Books received (average of Chichewa + English LBs) by each sample school divided by total Standards 2-4 enrolment in January 2020 in that sample school. The Year 5 result is percentage of all sample schools in which total Standards 2-4 books received is at least 70% of total Standards 2-4 enrolment. The higher results in Years 2 and 4 reflect the much larger inventory of Standard 1 Learner Books received at each school in Years 1-2 and the distribution of large, second printing of Standard 1 Learner Books in Years 3-4 (2018).</p> <p>⁷ Results for Years 5-6 reflect a change in data collection methodology from oral reporting by observed teachers from a national randomized sample of public primary schools (Year 4) to inspection of teacher attendance registers of Teacher Learning Circles for a national sample of public primary schools (Year 5) and for the spot-checked subset of a national sample of schools (Year 6) due to COVID-restricted travel and school visits.</p>											

Annex B. List of Supplementary Titles Developed with Technical Assistance from MERIT

No.	Language	Title	Year
Standard 1			
1	Chichewa	Abale Anga	2019
2	Chichewa	Achule	2019
3	Chichewa	Atate Apita Kosaka	2018
4	Chichewa	Bambo Wamtali	2018
5	Chichewa	Biso	2018
6	Chichewa	Bulu ndi Chona	2018
7	Chichewa	Ichi ndi Chiyani	2018
8	Chichewa	Ine kapenia iwe?	2019
9	Chichewa	Juma Atola Dzembe	2019
10	Chichewa	Kambuzi Kanga	2018
11	Chichewa	Kuoloka msewu	2019
12	Chichewa	Kusaka	2018
13	Chichewa	Kuweruka ku sukulu	2018
14	Chichewa	Madzi	2018
15	Chichewa	Maloto a Mbewa	2018
16	Chichewa	Mnyamata wachibwa	2019
17	Chichewa	Moyo wakumudzi	2019
18	Chichewa	Ndi mtundu wanji	2019
19	Chichewa	Ndine Malawi	2019
20	Chichewa	Ndiwe yani?	2018
21	Chichewa	Ndiwerengere Yani	2018
22	Chichewa	Ng'ona di Nyani	2018
23	Chichewa	Njuchi ndi Maluwa	2019
24	Chichewa	Onani Chule	2018
25	Chichewa	Soya	2019
26	Chichewa	Tigawane Manachesi	2019
27	Chichewa	Tipewe Malungo	2019
28	Chichewa	Titeteze zachilengedwe	2019
29	Chichewa	Umakonda Chiyani?	2018
30	Chichewa	Utawaleza	2018
31	Chichewa	Zinrhu zopangidwa ndi chikopa	2019
32	Chichewa	Ziwiriziwiri	2019
Standard 2			
33	Chichewa	Aliyense Angathe	2018
34	Chichewa	Atsogoleri athu	2019
35	Chichewa	Chitsanzo alandira mphatso	2019

No.	Language	Title	Year
36	Chichewa	Dziwani za nyengo	2019
37	Chichewa	Kambuzi	2018
38	Chichewa	Khumbo langa	2019
39	Chichewa	Maloto a Sara	2018
40	Chichewa	Mbiri ya Flora Selemani	2019
41	Chichewa	Mkango Woopa Kugonja	2018
42	Chichewa	Moni Nonse	2018
43	Chichewa	Mphaka ndi Galu ndi Gulugufe	2018
44	Chichewa	Mwana waulemu	2019
45	Chichewa	Ndife Nsomba	2019
46	Chichewa	Nkhandwe Yosayamika	2018
47	Chichewa	Nyama za ku Malawi	2018
48	Chichewa	Tonse Tingathe	2018
49	Chichewa	Usiku Wabwino Popi	2018
50	Chichewa	Zakudya zomwe ndimadya	2019
51	Chichewa	Zinthu 7 zodabwitsa za kuMalawi	2019
52	English	At the Dam	2018
53	English	Cooking Cabbage	2019
54	English	Five Fat Hens	2018
55	English	Help me mama	2019
56	English	I am the Sun	2019
57	English	In my band	2019
58	English	Jobs	2019
59	English	Legs	2018
60	English	Mixing Colours	2019
61	English	Monkey's Camera	2018
62	English	Mwera the Wind	2018
63	English	Rat Has a Plan	2018
64	English	This Dress Fits	2018
65	English	Tick-tock	2019
66	English	What am I from	2019
67	English	What Do You See?	2018
Standard 3			
68	Chichewa	Fisi ndi Fulu aona Zakuda	2018
69	Chichewa	Kambuku	2018
70	Chichewa	Kangaude Aona Malodza	2018
71	Chichewa	Khalidwe la Mphatso	2018
72	Chichewa	Litchololothcholo La Tambala	2018
73	Chichewa	Mpandakwawo Akanidwa	2018

Annex C. Status of Materials and Contract Deliverables

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (ME&L)				
Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	ME&L	2/1/2017 4/17/2017 5/18/2018 2/7/2019	3/19/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TQFJ.pdf
Baseline Evaluation Report	ME&L	5/6/2017	8/13/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/99c8e4d789b04ba1b8b13adf75dab d90.pdf
National Assessment of Reading Instruction (NARI), Standard 1	ME&L	3/18/2018	8/3/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WCP4.pdf
2017 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Report	ME&L	8/3/2018	8/13/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T97R.pdf
MERIT 2017 National Assessment of Safe and Inclusive Schools (NASIS) Report	ME&L	8/6/2018	5/13/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TQ99.pdf
2018 EGRA Report	ME&L	9/27/2018	3/20/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TP3B.pdf
2019 NASIS	ME&L	9/11/2019	11/13/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/164bc081c71f43e08870a379eb62c871.pdf
Annual Work Plans				
Year 1 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	6/19/2016	7/25/2016	Project Share
Year 2 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	10/24/2016	10/20/2017	Project Share
Year 3 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	9/14/2017	11/14/2017	Project Share
Year 4 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	8/31/2018	1/29/2019	Project Share
Year 5 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	8/31/2019	11/1/2019	Project Share
Year 6 Annual Work Plan	Annual Work Plan	8/31/2020	12/17/2020	Project Share

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
Activity Reports				
Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Quarter (Q)1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	1/31/2021	2/6/2021	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/1b_f6f5ee46614c19b2a3d8ae5849881e.pdf
FY2020 Q4 Annual Progress Report	Annual Report	10/30/2019	11/8/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00W8X4.pdf
FY2020 Q3 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	7/29/2020	8/11/2020	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2H8.pdf
FY2020 Q2 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	4/29/2020	5/13/2020	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/a7_d773af0e434ff3aad0a71db5729f8.pdf
FY2020 Q1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	1/30/2020	4/30/2020	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/1b_f6f5ee46614c19b2a3d8ae5849881e.pdf
FY2019 Q3 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	7/26/2019	8/20/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WGXB.pdf
FY2019 Q2 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	4/25/2019	5/22/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WGX8.pdf
FY2019 Q1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	1/30/2019	2/19/2019	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WHXS.pdf
FY2018 Q4 Annual Progress Report	Annual Report	10/31/2018	11/8/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TDPQ.pdf
FY2018 Q3 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	7/30/2018	8/29/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WHXT.pdf
FY2018 Q2 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	4/30/2018	6/4/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WHXW.pdf
FY2018 Q1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	1/31/2018	6/4/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WHXX.pdf
FY2017 Q4 Annual Progress Report	Annual Report	10/31/2018	11/8/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00N61S.pdf
FY2017 Q3 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	7/30/2017	11/7/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/52_adbf52498d4dca802871ba518de685.pdf

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
FY2017 Q2 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	4/28/2017	10/31/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/d39bfce48d9544a1a3511f762303f025.pdf
FY2017 Q1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	2/6/2017	2/7/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WHXX.pdf
FY2016 Q4 Annual Progress Report	Annual Report	10/31/2016	10/31/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00MQSH.pdf
FY2016 Q3 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	8/4/2016		https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/f366b999fb924df28cda333db1a4a3db.pdf
FY2016 Q2 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	4/29/2016	5/17/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/678a547d7ac348d58eb47078b6fa4600.pdf
FY2016 Q1 Quarterly Progress Report	Quarterly Report	1/31/2016	4/29/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/1754ef91bdc14ceb9afb8ca2264d2528.pdf
Monthly Update Reports				
February 2021, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	2/26/2021		Project Share
December 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	12/31/2021		Project Share
November 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	11/30/2020		Project Share
September 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	9/30/2020		Project Share
August 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	8/30/2020		Project Share
June 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/30/2020	7/2/2020	Project Share
May 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	5/29/2020		Project Share
March 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/30/2020	4/20/2020	Project Share
February 2020, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	2/28/2020	3/2/2020	Project Share
December 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	12/31/2019		Project Share
November 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	11/29/2019		Project Share
September 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	9/30/2019		Project Share

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
August 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	9/3/2019		Project share
June 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/28/2019		Project Share
May 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	5/30/2019		Project share
March 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/29/2019		Project Share
February 2019, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	2/28/2019		Project Share
December 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	12/31/2018		Project Share
November 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	11/30/2018		Project Share
September 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	10/2/2018		Project Share
August 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	8/31/2019	10/11/2018	Project share
June 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/29/2018		Project Share
May 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/1/2018		Project share
March 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/29/2018		Project Share
February 2018, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/1/2018		Project Share
November 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	12/1/2016		Project Share
September 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/31/2017		Project Share
August 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/31/2017		Project Share
July 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/31/2017		Project Share
June 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/30/2017		Project Share
May 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	5/31/2017		Project share
March 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/31/2017		Project Share
February 2017, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	2/28/2017	3/1/2017	Project Share
December 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	1/1/2017	1/9/2017	Project Share
November 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	12/1/2016		Project Share

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
September 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	10/3/2016	11/14/2016	Project Share
August 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	9/18/2016	9/18/2016	Project Share
June 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/30/2016		Project Share
May 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	6/2/2016		Project Share
March 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/31/2016		Project Share
February 2016, Monthly Report	Monthly Report	3/1/2016		Project Share
Program Cost Report				
MERIT 2020 Cost Data Report	Cost Report	11/30/2020	pending	Project Share
MERIT 2018 Cost Data Report	Cost Report	11/30/2018	1/30/2019	Project Share
MERIT FY2016 Cost Data Report	Cost Report	1/13/2017	3/22/2017	Project Share
Deliverables and Ad hoc Reports				
Chichewa 1 Buku la ophunzira la Sitandade	Learner's Book	1/15/2016	3/17/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T5P1.pdf
Standard 1 English Learner Book	Learner's Book	6/1/2016	8/8/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6NX.pdf
Standard 1 Chichewa Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	12/28/2016	12/28/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00SSK3.pdf
Standard 1 English Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	12/28/2016	6/5/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6NV.pdf
Chichewa 2 Buku la ophunzira la Sitandade	Learner's Book	6/9/2017	7/30/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T59W.pdf
Standard 2 English Learner Book	Learner's Book	6/9/2017	7/21/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6Q5.pdf
Standard 2 Chichewa Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	12/28/2016	12/28/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00STBX.pdf
Standard 2 English Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	9/19/2017	11/22/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6P1.pdf
Chichewa 3 Buku la ophunzira la Sitandade	Learner's Book	2/1/2017	4/26/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T59Z.pdf
Standard 3 English Learner Book	Learner's Book	6/9/2017	9/11/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6Q6.pdf

Title	Type of Document or Materials	Date Submitted	Data Approved or Cleared by USAID	Location of Digital Materials
Standard 3 Chichewa Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	12/28/2016	12/28/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00SSK2.pdf
Standard 3 English Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	6/9/2017	12/1/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6PF.pdf
Chichewa 4 Buku la ophunzira la Sitandade	Learner's Book	6/9/2017	6/5/2018	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T5B1.pdf
Standard 4 English Learner Book	Learner's Book	6/9/2017	9/6/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6Q7.pdf
Standard 4 Chichewa Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	12/28/2016	12/28/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00SSK1.pdf
Standard 4 English Teacher Guide	Teacher's Guide	9/18/2017	11/20/2017	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6QB.pdf
Gender Plan	Other Contract Deliverable	6/13/2016	6/15/2016	https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T6Q1.pdf

Annex F. CSOs Hired for CME Activities

	CSO	District(s) Assigned
1	Karonga Diocese	Chitipa and Karonga
2	Development Action for Marginalised Rural Areas (DAMRA)	Rumphi
3	Mzuzu Diocese Education Commission	Mzimba North and Mzuzu
4	Livingstonia Synod Education Department	Mzimba South
5	Foundation for Children's Rights (FCR)	Nkhata Bay and Likoma
6	Foundation for Comm. and Capacity Development (FOCCAD)	Nkhota kota
7	Good Health Youth Organisation	Kasungu
8	Organisation for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development (OSSEDI)	Dowa
9	Ntchisi Evangelical Churches Consortium for Social Services (NECCOSS)	Ntchisi
10	Lilongwe Diocese Education Commission	Mchinji and Salima
11	Network for Youth Development	Lilongwe Rural West
12	Chisomo Children's Club	Lilongwe City and Dedza
13	Church and Society – CCAP Nkhoma Synod	Lilongwe Rural East
14	Blantyre Institute of Community. Ophthalmology (BICO)	Ntcheu
15	Chinansi Foundation	Balaka
16	Pan-African Civic Educators Network (PACE-NET)	Machinga, Thyolo
17	Mangochi Diocese	Mangochi (4 Traditional Authority areas—Chimwala, Mponda, Nankumba, Chilipa)
18	Namwera Aids Coordinating Committee (NACC)	5 Traditional Authority areas— Makanjila, Chowe, Katuli, Jalasi, Bwananyambi
19	CCAP Blantyre Synod	Zomba Urban, Zomba Rural and Chiradzulu
20	Sustainable Rural Community Development Organisation (SURCOD)	Nsanje
21	Adolescent Girls Literature (AGLIT+)	Chikwawa
	Yet to be determined. Save the Children (SCI) is currently working in both districts on similar activities through the Association of Progressive Women (APW)	Mwanza and Neno
22	Foundation for Community Livelihood and Development (FOCOLD)	Blantyre Rural
23	Rays of Hope Ministries	Blantyre City
24	Sustainable Rural Growth & Development Initiative (SRGDI)	Mulanje and Phalombe