



Reading for All Malawi (REFAM)

Annual Progress Report - FY 2020

October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020

Submission Date: October 30, 2020

Contract Number: AID-OAA-I-14-00058, Task Order #: 72061219F00001
Activity Start Date and End Date: Feb. 06, 2019 to July 11, 2021

COR Name: Odala Banda, Contracting Officer's Representative
The Education Office
NICO House – Ground Floor
PO Box 30455
Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Telephone: +265-1-772-455 Ext.5033
E-mail: obanda@usaid.gov

Submitted by: **Juárez & Associates**
Heidi Soule, Chief of Party
12139 National Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90064
Tel: (301) 478-0826
Email: hsoule@juarezassociates.com



This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development Malawi Mission (USAID/Malawi). 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.

Table of Contents

- Table of Contents 2
- Acronyms and Abbreviations 3
- Project Overview/Summary 4
- 1. Description / Introduction 5
- 2. Expected Results by Objective 6
- 3. Summary of Accomplishments 6
 - Objective 1: MoEST Capacity to Deliver Reading to CWD Strengthened 6
 - Sub-result 1.1: Policy framework supported. 6
 - Sub-result 1.2: Early screening, identification and intervention protocols implemented. 7
 - Sub-result 1.3: Resource networks activated. 8
 - Sub-result 1.4: Assessment and reporting improved. 9
 - Objective 2: Reading Instruction for Learners with Disabilities Improved 10
 - Sub-result 2.1: Disability specific reading materials developed. 10
 - Sub-result 2.1: Disability specific reading materials developed 10
 - Sub-result 2.2: Resource center teachers’ utilization of disability specific materials student assessment and practices improved. 11
 - Sub-result 2.3: Classroom Coaching Improved 13
 - Sub-result 2.4: Utilization of Resource Networks Improved. 13
 - Objective 3: Family and Community Support to Learning for Learners with Disabilities Improved 13
 - Sub-result 3.1: Awareness about learners with disabilities’ learning potential raised. 13
 - Sub-result 3.2: Community Support to Schooling for LwDs Increased. 15
 - Sub-result 3.3: Family Engagement and Community Support to Learning for LwDs increased. 16
- 4. Constraints and Opportunities 16
 - 4.1 Constraints 16
 - 4.2 Opportunities 22
- 5. Overview of Implementation Process 23
- 6. Management and Administrative Issues 32
 - 6.1 Deliverables and Reporting 32
 - 6.2 Work Plan Development 36
 - 6.3 STTA Support 36
 - 6.4 Coordination and Collaboration 37
 - 6.5 Finance and Administration 38
 - 6.6 Lessons Learned 39
- Annex A Indicators 40
- Annex B: Success Story 58

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMELP	Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan
CA&R	Continuous Assessment and Remediation
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA)
CSEC	Civil Society Education Coalition
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DEM	District Education Manager
DPO	Disabled Persons Organization
DEP	Directorate of Education Policy and Planning
DIAS	Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services
DTED	Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED)
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FEDOMA	Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi
GoM	Government of Malawi
IE	Inclusive Education
IE TWG	Inclusive Education Technical Working Group
IEPs	Individualized Education Plans
J&A	Juárez and Associates
JSR	Joint Sector Review
LGAP	Local Government and Accountability Performance
LwD	Learners with Disabilities
PODCAM	Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi
MANAD	Malawi National Association of the Deaf
MERIT	Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
MoH	Ministry of Health
MUB	Malawi Union of the Blind
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRP	National Reading Program
REFAM	Reading for All Malawi
RC	Resource Centres
RTI	Response to Intervention
SNE	Special Needs Education
TWG	Technical Working Group
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YESA	Yesani Ophunzira Activity

Project Overview/Summary

Program Name:	Reading for All Malawi (REFAM)
Activity Start Date & End Date:	February 9, 2019 – July 11, 2021
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	Juárez & Associates
[Contract/Agreement] Number:	Base Contract #: AID-OAA-I-14-00058 Task Order #: 7206121F00001
Major Counterpart Organizations	Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Montfort Special Needs Education College, Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA), Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD), Malawi Union of the blind (MUB)
Geographic Coverage (cities and or countries)	All 34 districts of Malawi
Reporting Period:	October 1, 2019, to September 30, 2020

I. Description / Introduction

USAID Malawi, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) has embarked on the inclusive education activity entitled Reading for All Malawi (REFAM) whose aim is to provide the MoEST a scalable intervention model that allows for the screening, identification, placement, instruction, and testing of learners with disabilities in order to help them better acquire reading skills. The REFAM activity builds upon USAID Malawi's extensive work to date in teaching children to read by expanding support to Malawi's National Reading Program (NRP) to address the needs of children with disabilities (CWD) currently enrolled in 146 primary schools with resource centers across the country. In particular, the activity focuses on young children, especially girls, in Standards 1 to 4 with visual, hearing or intellectual disabilities by developing protocols for:

- Identifying learners with disabilities and their learning needs
- Connecting them to appropriate teaching and learning resources
- Monitoring and assessing their learning progress
- Increasing parental and community support for their success

REFAM's Theory of Change (TOC):

If Malawian learners with disabilities benefit from: a) services provided by an engaged and informed Ministry, b) reading instruction and materials targeted to their needs and abilities, and c) tutoring and support from their families and communities, then they will better learn how to read and prosper in school.

Main Outcomes/Deliverables

- Strengthened MoEST capacity to deliver reading instruction to children with disabilities. This will be achieved through an updated policy framework, implementation of early detection protocols, activated resource networks, and improved evaluation and reporting.
- Improved reading instruction and learning assessment for children with disabilities. To achieve this REFAM will develop disability-specific reading materials, improve teachers' utilization of disability-specific materials and practices, and improve classroom coaching and utilization of resources networks.
- Improved family and community support for learning for children with disabilities. This will involve raising awareness about disabled persons' learning potential, increasing community support to schooling for children with disabilities, and increasing family engagement in reading practice for students.

2. Expected Results by Objective

Objective 1: MoEST capacity to deliver reading instruction to CWD strengthened
Sub result 1.1: Policy framework supported
Sub result 1.2: Early screening, identification and intervention protocols implemented
Sub result 1.3: Resource networks activated
Sub result 1.4: Assessment and reporting improved
Objective 2: Reading instruction for learners with disabilities improved
Sub result 2.1: Disability specific reading materials developed
Sub result 2.2: Resource center teachers' utilization of disability-specific materials, student assessment data and practices improved
Sub result 2.3: Classroom coaching improved
Sub result 2.4: Resource networks improved
Objective 3: Family and community support to learning for learners with disabilities improved
Sub result 3.1: Awareness about learners with disabilities' learning potential raised
Sub result 3.2: Community support to schooling for learners with disabilities increased
Sub result 3.3: Family engagement in reading practice for learners with disabilities increased

3. Summary of Accomplishments

Objective 1: MoEST Capacity to Deliver Reading to CWD Strengthened

Sub-result 1.1: Policy framework supported.

1.1.1 Policy analysis to identify the gaps between current policies and CRPD. During FY19 and FY20, REFAM reviewed policy related to inclusive education (IE), analyzed the current IE Strategy and in response supported the Department of Special Needs Education (DSNE) in developing a rationale for a standalone IE policy, and developed a roadmap documentation for DSNE and the Directorate of Education Planning to outline the details to develop a formal standalone IE policy in Malawi. REFAM was able to ensure this topic was on the Inclusive Education Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting in March 2020 and June of 2020, culminating in September 2020 when Dr. Henry Chingaibe presented at the IE TWG meeting on the standalone rationale and roadmap. While no additional deliverables and resource allocation are planned related to this activity after the culminating presentation and the handover of the reports to DSNE, REFAM will continue to support DSNE in discussions with stakeholders related to development of IE Policy via the IE TWG. In the process, REFAM is galvanizing support for a standalone IE Policy within the Inclusive Education Technical Working Group, which includes the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF) as well as the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), which have taken a particular interest in the longer-term policy. As such, it will be at the top of the agenda at the Joint Sector Review of the Education Sector in Malawi anticipated to take place in November 2020.

1.1.2 Situational analysis of SNE in Malawi to include needs assessment for Resource Centers and SNE Teacher Capacity. Data collected from approximately 150 Primary School SNE Resource Centers (RCs) under Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRAs) in July 2019 and February 2020. The data helps to improve service delivery and resources to learners with disabilities within Resource Centers. Another supplemental audit of SNE RCs was conducted in September 2020 as part of COVID-19 response and reopening of schools to ensure considerations for Learners with Disabilities (LwD) were adequately included by MoEST.

1.1.3 Present report with suggested language for policy and recommended identification protocols. The IE Roadmap presentation was made on September 11th as part of the IE TWG. REFAM will continue to support DSNE in discussions with stakeholders related to development of IE Policy via the IE TWG.

1.1.4 Capacity building of MoEST on capturing data for learners with disabilities. REFAM has worked with DSNE, Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Education Management Information System (EMIS) team and other MoEST divisions to ensure SNE RC are included in data collection for all schools. In FY 20, through EGRA and EMIS workshops, REFAM has increased awareness and sensitization of MoEST to ensure quality data collection for CWDs.

As the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Toolkit and subsequent trainings are the centerpiece deliverable moving forward, DSNE will be front and center in the design and content delivery of these national scale trainings. REFAM will continue to prioritize working group meetings with EMIS, DIAS, Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), Basic Education, and Directorate of Education Planning to ensure SNE and LwD are included in formal data collection and training in FY21.

Sub-result 1.2: Early screening, identification and intervention protocols implemented.

1.2.1 Develop an inventory of existing screening and identification tools for revision and adaptation. Tools collected in 2019. Review and analysis of tools conducted in July 2020. REFAM will lead the development of a training module on screening and identification as a component of UDL Foundations to be delivered to SNE Desk Officers and teachers in all 34 districts via blended distance learning in January 2021.

1.2.2 Validate and strengthen screening and identification tools if needed to align with new policy and international best practice. In FY 20, REFAM consulted with DSNE, MACOHA, Save the Children, Sandi Thandiza and others regarding the validation process to develop the existing screening tools. As referenced under the 1.2 summary, REFAM will devote an entire module and training to screening and identification tools as part of the Universal Design for learning training, which we anticipate will be offered to educators between October 2020 and February of 2021. By REFAM and DSNE developing the training module for the IE community in Malawi, it offers an important opportunity for educators within Malawi to strengthen their skills in the process of delivering school-based screening and identification, and utilizing existing tools that are validated and align with international best practice.

1.2.3 Pilot Response to Intervention (RtI) as a screening technique. RTI, Continuous Assessment and Remediation (CA&R) and screening align because RTI aims to identify struggling students early on and give them the support they need to be successful in school. RTI is not a specific type of program, or type of teaching. It is a proactive approach to measuring student progress. RTI is about utilizing research- based

behavior interventions in small groups and with individual students, using teaching interventions researchers have shown to be effective. Screening and Identification will be delivered via a blended training model as part of DSNE/REFAM's national scale training focusing on Universal Design for the Learning (UDL) in FY21. In addition to the UDL training, another training module will focus on CA&R and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). REFAM will build on the National Reading Program's CA&R tools under the UDL module training. As this activity was delayed due to COVID-19, REFAM will determine in FY21 if any additional pilot would be possible, depending on monitoring SNE teacher capacity following the training and school schedules.

1.2.4 Develop strategies to strengthen national identification and referral system. In FY20, REFAM contributed to the IE Technical Working Group by identifying Screening and Identification as an area where there is not a standardized approach, and it is a priority for DSNE to strengthen. In FY21, a *National Identification and Referral Brief* will be developed where REFAM and DSNE will outline strategies on how to strengthen Malawi's national identification and there will be a clear referral system and updated Disability Persons Organization (DPO) Directory which includes service organizations. The brief will be developed and shared as part of IE TWG in March 2021, and it will be integrated into the longer-term standalone IE Policy process.

1.2.5 Train district officers on validated protocols, tools and reporting for identification and assessment of learners with disabilities Although this activity was delayed due to COVID-19, REFAM will train district officers on identification and assessment in January 2021 as part of the screening and identification UDL Model.

1.2.6 Review (EMIS) to identify existing or missing variables to help capture data on students with learning needs. This activity is underway with REFAM regularly participating in meetings and collaborating with EMIS in partnership with NRP's Yesani Ophunzira Activity (YESA). REFAM will continue this work with MoEST to integrate Inclusive Education approaches in the EMIS by updating the current EMIS and building the capacity of MoEST personnel in collecting data for learners with disabilities.

Sub-result 1.3: Resource networks activated.

1.3.1 Conducted a mapping of Disabled Persons' Organizations and organizations serving persons with disabilities. Under this sub-result, in 2019, REFAM conducted a mapping of all DPOs and other organizations serving persons with disabilities across Malawi. REFAM identified 6 DPOs to work with directly. These organizations fall under the umbrella body, Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA). The identification of these organizations was done through consultative meetings which were held with umbrella organizations such as the Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA), Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM), and other DPOs.

The organizations include:

- 1) Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD),
- 2) Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM),
- 3) Malawi Union of the Blind (MUB),
- 4) Association of the Physically Disabled in Malawi (APDM),
- 5) VIHEMA Deafblind Malawi, and
- 6) Albinism Association in Malawi (APAM).

Besides, the DPOs, REFAM also works with government agencies and institutions providing services to persons with disabilities, such as, Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), Montfort College and Department of Disability within what was previously, the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDS) and now Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare.

This information that was generated in FY19, provided a foundation for REFAM and MoEST to determine in FY 20, which DPOs and SNE-serving organizations are an optimal fit for connecting with primary schools supporting LwD. Specifically, in May and July of 2020, REFAM and DSNE established WhatsApp groups for over 250 SNE teachers and national DPOs representing the diverse populations REFAM serves. Establishing these groups was an important way to communicate COVID-19 updates, and to communicate about Inclusive Education in Malawi. In FY21, REFAM will continue to build on this network to strengthen IE efforts in Malawi by working with and through DPOs.

1.3.2 Develop Directory/Guide with results of mapping exercise. DPO Directory drafted in 2019 as internal reference for REFAM and delayed due to concerns related to DPO management. DPO Directory will be updated by REFAM, Save the Children, DSNE and the Department of Disability in October 2020 and will ultimately be launched at the start of 2021. The DPO Directory is an important resource that is significant because it used a reference for referring families to community organizations offering services to learners who are BLV, DHH, and LD that REFAM will prioritize the development of in FY21 in conjunction with stakeholders.

1.3.3 Train DPO networks and volunteers on Inclusive Education and increasing community engagement, including parent organizations and their children. This activity was delayed due to COVID-19 but REFAM was able to engage DPOs as part of development of School Reopening Guidelines and IE TWG. REFAM also established a WhatsApp community for DPOs to exchange information and for REFAM to provide inputs from DSNE related to support for LWD while schools were closed due to COVID-19. DPOs will be included as participants in the UDL training at the district level in FY21.

1.3.4 Work with partners to develop a mentoring system for successful adults with disabilities to serve as role models. As REFAM is developing the UDL toolkit, mentoring and coaching protocols will be developed simultaneously; REFAM will incorporate this into the training, mentoring relationship among teachers to ensure a transfer of skills. The groundwork for 1.3.4 was laid in FY20, and 1.3.4 will be implemented in October 2020 as part of NRP Reading Symposium.

Sub-result 1.4: Assessment and reporting improved.

1.4.1 Review adapted EGRA for students who are blind to determine if it needs to be improved & develop and implement adapted EGRA for students who are deaf. In FY20, REFAM disseminated this baseline data on reading performance for 956 learners (563 boys, 393 girls) targeting 142 Resource Centers.

1.4.2 Develop and implement adapted EGRA for learners who are deaf and hard of hearing, Blind & Low Vision, and with Learning Disability. In June 2019, REFAM convened appropriate stakeholders and assessors to determine the appropriate EGRA subtask adaptations for BLV, and LD. REFAM also developed and adapted the EGRA for DHH learners using Malawian Sign Language. The MSL EGRA adaption workshop was in November 2019 and the data collection was conducted in February and March 2020, with the baseline report to be submitted in October 2020 for dissemination. Modification may be required regarding endline data collection in FY21 due to COVID-19.

1.4.3 Develop guide on how to adapt EGRAs for students with disabilities, interpret results as well as low-cost examples of classroom and instructional adaptations to best serve those students who continue to struggle. Delayed due to COVID-19. Guide will be completed by December

2020. The production of the EGRA guide is an important step toward sustainability. The guide will be used to adapt the National Reading Assessment (NRA) for learners with disabilities beyond the project period.

1.4.4 Pilot Assessment Guides and update guide as needed. Delayed due to COVID-19. Protocols for accommodation or supports that are needed for learners identified as having multiple learning needs will be incorporated into Module 2 on IEPs and CA&R in FY21.

1.4.5 Hold participatory stakeholder session on draft with input on final. These reviews were completed during the EGRA Adaptation Workshops in June 2019 and November 2019. No additional activities planned.

Objective 2: Reading Instruction for Learners with Disabilities Improved

Sub-result 2.1: Disability specific reading materials developed.

Through this objective, REFAM is strengthening classroom level inputs for the learners to learn to read by developing and providing instruction through disability specific reading materials, a mentorship and coaching program between teachers. Specifically, REFAM was asked to deliver on the following:

- Scope and sequence for improved reading instruction for children with disabilities for grades 1-4 and recommended approach for what/how to use for teaching and assessing CWD reading progress in the early grades in Malawi.
- Development of a toolkit for instruction and assessment for CWD including **student** textbooks and teacher guides that cover all categories of disabilities currently catered to in RCs in public schools Malawi (blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, and learning disabilities).
- Development of a teacher manual containing scripted lesson plans for teaching and assessing reading for CWD in each of the grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 (developed jointly with MOEST personnel and following appropriate multimodal methodology for CWD).
- Development of modules for teacher training on instructional methodology and assessment for children with disabilities including coaching strategies and techniques and approaches for working with general education teachers, parents and the community.

Planned for the development of a literacy toolkit for learners with disabilities: REFAM identified and compiled a list of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) already developed for use by learners with disabilities in Malawi. This was done as part of preparing for the development of a literacy toolkit for learners with disabilities. While some of these materials were developed as part of the National Reading Program (NRP), such as supplementary readers developed in braille, and other sets of materials were developed and distributed by MoEST and other partners such as Save the Children and Montfort Special Needs Education College.

Modification considerations:

- 2.1.3 Develop guide on adapting reading materials for students with different types of disabilities
- 2.1.4 Adapt (not Develop) NRP decodable and leveled texts using Universal Design for Learning
- 2.1.5 Review (not Prepare) scope and sequence of reading instruction for grades 1-4

Sub-result 2.1: Disability specific reading materials developed

2.1.1 Compile an inventory of existing resources and manuals for review by national and international experts. Report submitted in 2019. No additional activities planned

2.1.2 Develop Malawi Literacy Toolkit based on USAID’s Literacy Toolkit. In progress. Delayed due to COVID-19. Draft UDL Training Schedule submitted to USAID on August 27th. Outline of UDL training includes four modules: Module 1 on Foundational Literacy Instruction, Module 2 on Continuous Assessment and Remediation, Module 3 on Data Collection for Learners with Disabilities, and Module 4 on Identification and Assessment. UDL Toolkit developed. Blended UDL training implemented to all 34 districts with cohorts of 10 participants to include SNE Desk Officers, DEMs, SNE Teachers, Head Teachers and DPOs at the district level. Toolkit will be used to train teachers and be part of NRP training resources.

2.1.3 Develop guide on how to adapt reading materials for students with different types of disabilities. Delayed due to COVID-19. Position paper developed pertaining to adapting of reading materials. Guide will set standards for MoEST to ensure materials are accessible and adapted to accommodate the needs of all learners to be launched in January 2021.

2.1.4 Adapt NRP decodable and leveled texts using Universal Design for Learning. Position paper developed pertaining to adapting of reading materials. Decodable and leveled texts have already been adapted into braille under MERIT. REFAM plans to develop additional braille resources that will be suitable for BLV and adapt NRP resources for DHH.

2.1.5 Review (not Prepare) scope and sequence of reading instruction for grades 1-4. In FY20, REFAM consulted with the NRPIE in review of the scope and the sequence of reading instructions for Standards 1-4. REFAM has developed a Position Paper in August 2020 that details the rationale with evidence that indicates that REFAM should not be revising the NRP scope and sequence for Standard 1-4 learners with disabilities, as this process creates a segregated curriculum and does not meet objectives of IE in Malawi. No additional activity planned for 2.1.5.

2.1.6 Share draft Toolkit and materials with stakeholders. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. REFAM will share the first module on September 11th with USAID. REFAM will share all modules with DSNE and USAID as they are finalized Sept. 2020 - Jan. 2021.

Sub-result 2.2: Resource center teachers’ utilization of disability specific materials student assessment and practices improved.

Held discussions around a coaching strategy for inclusive education. While REFAM held initial discussions with MoEST’s Department of Special Needs (DSNE) aimed at determining a coaching strategy for classroom teachers who lack training in special needs education and have learners with disabilities in their classrooms, in FY21, REFAM plans to work with the MoEST to develop a coaching model in Inclusive Education, targeting classroom teachers in Standards 1-4. The coaching model and protocols to be developed will ultimately contribute to mentorship systems that respond to teacher needs and strengthen the itinerant teaching system.

2.2.1 Develop guidelines/protocols for coaching and mentorship practices developed. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. UDL Training will support coaching and mentorship at the district level. Guidelines to be developed in January-March 2021. REFAM will ensure to integrate the existing itinerant teaching (which has elements of coaching for general classroom teachers) into the guidelines to be developed.

2.2.2 Refine modules for teacher training at Montfort College on instructional methodology and assessment. Modification Requested. In FY19, REFAM requested Montfort College curriculum and course outlines related to Inclusive Education and Assessment GIZ Blended Learning Course on Inclusive Education (BLINC) launched Montfort modules in 2017 and 2018. The modules are current and high quality. In FY 20, REFAM determined that a modification is needed; REFAM does not recommend changing Montfort’s modules, and this recommendation has been shared with USAD. REFAM has no

activities or budget planned for 2.2.2. Note: In FY 20, Montfort Instructors have been included in collaborative development of all EGRA tools/trainings and UDL tools/trainings.

2.2.3 Develop guidelines on family and professional partnership. In progress. During FY20, REFAM worked on an outline/concept note for a Parent Guide; this guide is builds on NRP Parent Guide and IE Source book, and will be developed with REFAM, DSNE, and DPOs. Guidelines will be shared with more parents/SNE teachers during outreach campaigns to influence the supports they are able to offer to LwDS and integrated into the family resource toolkit in FY21.

2.2.4 Coordinate trainings (at least termly) on guides and Malawi Literacy Toolkit. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. In FY20, REFAM and DSNE developed the groundwork for a virtual/blended training model that is implemented at district level, in all 34 districts. The First set of UDL trainings planned for September 2020 with the third culminating in February 2021.

2.2.5 Develop Teacher training guides, integrating UDL lesson plans. In progress. In FY20, these teacher training guides are in development through the UDL process; the teacher training guides (participant books) are being incorporated into the UDL training. Participants will leave the UDL training with their guides, and their guides are significant because they are designed to assist participants as they are applying UDL in the educational context where they operate.

2.2.6 Develop system and protocols on how to improve data collection methods reporting on disability, demographic and socio-economic information. In progress. Multiple meetings held with EMIS and DSNE to ensure LwD are captured as part of national reporting and minimum standards to be established for SNE Resource Centers in FY20. In FY 21, REFAM will continue to work closely under YESA activities to revise EMIS and train MoEST on protocol on data collection for LwD to ensure that disability disaggregated data continues to flow to ensure timely decision making (November 2020 - March 2021).

2.2.7 Hold participatory meetings to review trainings and guidelines. In progress. In FY20, REFAM consulted MoEST directorates, SNE Division Officers, SNE teachers, people with disabilities among other stakeholders. Participatory trainings and guidelines held for development of all tools and trainings under REFAM to ensure meaningful participation for people with disabilities.

2.2.8 Support teachers in training on deaf education and MSL basics (*remove - Support teachers fluent in Sign Language aligned with World Federation of the Deaf*). REFAM requested a modification. In FY20, REFAM created MSL videos for approximately 100 words as part of MSL EGRA for DHH learners, and REFAM has continued to advocate for the development of MSL Guide for Teachers by MoEST, and facilitated discussions with DTED related to development of MSL materials and Deaf education training for all teachers. These are important steps that took place in FY20, toward supporting teachers to become fluent in MSL because currently there are no resources that could support such trainings.

Due to a lack of formal training for teachers in MSL as a language very few teachers of DHH learners who are fluent in Sign Language, it is not feasible to have teachers fluent in MSL without a formal longer term language course to support the development of MSL language courses for teachers. Therefore, REFAM has submitted a request for modification of 2.2.8.

Therefore, by July 2021 more teachers both specialist and regular will be reached out with the developed MSL materials and Deaf education skills that will help them gain skills that will make them improve in their instruction delivery to DHH learners. REFAM will work with eKitabu to develop resources such as a word bank of MSL videos from the MSL EGRA for DHH learners and create MSL leveled books with MANAD. MANAD capacity in terms of MSL materials development and website management will be improved, hence have a sustainable impact. \$50,000 funds added to support development of MSL materials.

Sub-result 2.3: Classroom Coaching Improved

2.3.1 Develop mentorship systems that respond to teachers' needs. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. Planned for 2021. REFAM will develop a mentorship system using an itinerant hierarchy of support systems that respond to teachers' needs, depending on the composition of their classes. REFAM will use the same participants to develop the coaching protocols and mentorship system.

2.3.2 Develop coaching protocols. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. Planned for 2021. REFAM will support the SNE teachers to develop a realistic plan that will help organize RC teachers' coaching support in the general education classrooms. Specifically, REFAM will develop coaching protocols to guide the coaching process. These protocols will align with the NRP coaching model and will include aspects that can support the SNE teacher to provide coaching effectively. The goal is to ensure that general education teachers have opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and reading instructional and assessment practices in teaching learners with disabilities within their classrooms. This coaching and training of the general education teachers by the RC teachers will take place on a one-on-one basis, in groups, in a whole school, or in a cluster of schools that surround the RC center.

2.3.3 Strengthen itinerant teaching to address student needs. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. Planned for 2021. REFAM will hold a review of the itinerant teaching system first in order to determine areas for possible improvement. Data collection forms will be updated/developed as part of this process. REFAM will reach out to more itinerant teachers in schools beyond the project schools, and consequently reach more learners and parents.

Sub-result 2.4: Utilization of Resource Networks Improved.

2.4.1 Mobile platform to share information and available resources. REFAM requested a modification in FY20. Due to limited technology and access to data amongst the target audience, REFAM recommends that this activity be revised to more appropriate resources that will be accessible to more. REFAM will work with DIAS and EMIS teams to ensure data on LwD is included in all MOEST reporting. Resources from DPOs will be updated and shared out to communities.

2.4.2 Community of practice to support teachers. In FY20, REFAM was able to facilitate an unintended consequence of COVID-19 in FY20, which many SNE teachers have been able to connect virtually via WhatsApp platforms to share best practice and encourage each other to continue to support LwD. In FY21, additional supports will be provided to ensure strong relationships and sustainable communities of practices for SNE teachers via WhatsApp and in person meet ups across districts and regions. REFAM will also highlight champions for LwD and support them through specific recognition and elevating their work within MoEST.

Objective 3: Family and Community Support to Learning for Learners with Disabilities Improved

Sub-result 3.1: Awareness about learners with disabilities' learning potential raised.

UDL Training. In FY20, REFAM and DSNE developed an outline for the course content of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) trainings to be implemented in October 2020. The foundational module that was under development in FY20 specifically has participants assess their values and beliefs about children with disabilities; this evaluation is conducted in the beginning as well as the end of the training. The UDL training also educates very specifically about what inclusion is in an education context, and participants gain practice and experience making NRP lessons more inclusive, as part of the course.

Viamo. In collaboration with YESA and MERIT, in FY20, REFAM was able to develop messages targeting parents of learners with disabilities; these messages were shared through the Viamo 3-2-1 platform on how parents of children with disabilities can support their learner's reading at home.

WhatsApp: Sharing Home Visits. During FY20, with COVID-19 leading to a shutdown in schools, REFAM established WhatsApp in partnership with DSNE, where specialist teachers exchanged tips and encouraged SNE peers to continue supporting LwD while schools are closed by visiting homes and providing specialized support to families depending on the nature and severity of the child's disability and the needs families might want to support their children better.

REFAM will produce a DPO and Parent Training module. In FY20, REFAM laid the planning groundwork for a 2021 blended training of SNE Desk Officers and teachers on how to support parents and family members of learners with disabilities, aimed at helping parents to stimulate and support the learning of language and reading at home. The Desk Officers and teachers will get virtual training and in turn will go and reach out to parents in their respective communities. As a first step of this activity, REFAM will work with its stakeholders to produce **family resource kits** to be shared among parents of children with disabilities currently enrolled in schools via SNE teachers.

The **family resource kits** will include information on how to:

- Increase vocabulary for deaf, blind, and intellectually disabled students
- Use sign language (useful not only for deaf children but also for children with spoken language difficulties as well as for nonverbal learners with intellectual disabilities)
- Use resources provided through the school for reading practice at home
- Use the resource networks identified and put in place by the project
- Advocate with the head teacher and teachers at school for learning opportunities and high-quality reading instruction for disabled family members

Building from videos produced, as part of the MSL EGRA for DHH learners, REFAM is also developing materials in MSL that will be shared to parents and families with DHH learners, so they can practice and learn MSL at home. This will help them acquire skills that will enable them to communicate effectively with their children at home and support them in their education and reading efforts. The materials will be uploaded on a shared website and distributed through other platforms such as WhatsApp and DVD's.

Essentially, the family resource kits will contain information about how parents and families of children with disabilities can get services and resources available to them. The above outlined investment reflects that the government of Malawi values the investment in the learning potential of learners with disabilities.

3.1 Awareness raising about learners with disabilities' potential raised. Disability Persons Organizations (DPOs) are a critical partner to REFAM's work; beginning in 2019 and continuing throughout 2020, REFAM reached out to a wide range of DPOs to learn about their past community outreach activities and work supporting learners with disabilities, in particular. Building from this data, REFAM has actively sought to engage people with disabilities, as partners, with the MoEST's DSNE. As part of the National Reading Symposium (NRP), REFAM has identified mentors and highlighted the work of people with disabilities as champions in their communities with a great wealth of knowledge particularly pertaining to support for LwD.

3.1.1 Conduct evaluation of past community outreach activities including surveys of DPOs and families. Accomplished - Surveys of DPOS, MACOHA, Government ministries and other service providers. Their catchment areas and activities mapped out (July 2019). This has provided REFAM with

details on DPOs and their members identified and used in REFAM activities in 2020. No planned activities moving forward.

3.1.2 Use DPO national network to adapt outreach efforts to the changing cultural realities.

Delayed due to COVID-19. In Progress. In both 2019 and 2020, DPO groups have been actively participating in on-going REFAM activities ranging from EGRA tools adaption workshops to consultation on considerations for reopening schools in 2020. Specifically, REFAM established a DPO WhatsApp group created for better DPO engagement & collaboration in 2020. Families of CWDs linked to DPOs and other service providers in their respective communities for support. Disability Directory updated and shared with partners (an effort that will be done in collaboration with SC). More sensitization done to ensure that the mindset has changed using DPOs on effective disability mainstreaming. Inclusion of DPOs via meaningful engagement as part of district level training of DEMs, SNE Desk Officers, teachers of LwDs and DPO representatives as part of UDL Training

3.1.3 Conduct outreach and social behavior campaigns that also address school safety.

Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. In FY20, as part of school reopening, REFAM worked within the context of the Inclusive Education Technical Working Group to advise on school reopening by contributing to processes targeting learners with disabilities. In addition, in 2020, REFAM participated by contributing to policy documents and meetings for NRP partners on school reopening. In 2021, REFAM will continue to work with SNE teachers and DPOs to share skills with parents on how to support their children at home through the Inclusive Education Technical Working Group (IE TWG).

Sub-result 3.2: Community Support to Schooling for LwDs Increased.

Under this sub result, REFAM has worked closely with DSNE on how to support LwDs whilst at home during the school closure in 2020. REFAM also supported the advocate efforts by DPOs and other stakeholders on the need to have LwDs reached out with necessary materials during the school closures. Such services include disability friendly format learning materials developed by MCDE and other stakeholders, provision of transparent masks/face shields for DHH learners and ensuring that school programs aired by MoEST also targets LwDs.

REFAM has also supported DSNE in advocating for SNE Desk Officers, specialist teachers, school community structures and local community leaders to develop plans on funding for supporting LwDs through the Primary School Improvement Plan. The money will be used toward procuring/developing materials and devices that can facilitate children's learning. The advocacy efforts by REFAM have also yielded results such that there is commitment by the government to provide face shields for DHH and other learners who cannot benefit from ordinary face masks, procurement and distribution of tablets to DHH learners among others. REFAM anticipates that by July 2021 more awareness will be raised and more LwDs reached with essential services and support.

3.2.1 Develop community action plans through local inclusion community. Delayed due to COVID-19 in 2020. In FY20, REFAM attended meetings hosted by Local Government Accountability Performance (LGAP). In FY21, REFAM will engage in follow up meetings with LGAP to determine if there is value add in a partnership, specifically as it relates to the development of community action plans for LwD.

3.2.2 Increase support for IE as part of community action plans and school improvement plan grant mechanism. Delayed due to COVID-19 in 2020. In FY21, REFAM will engage in supporting educators advocating for budget at the local level to ensure LwD are included in School Improvement Plans (SIP). REFAM will explore structures within LGAP as part of this initial effort.

Sub-result 3.3: Family Engagement and Community Support to Learning for LwDs increased.

Due to COVID-19, REFAM's ability to implement within communities has been hindered in FY20. In FY21, with Malawi reopening more, REFAM and DSNE will be developing the Family Resource Tool Kit that will help parents of LwDs gain skills on how to support their children's learning at home—even with schools reopening, investing in parent education and support to LwD at home is a relevant and important investment.

REFAM is also engaging with DPOs to create materials that parents can use in communicating with their children, like MSL and braille. In FY 21, REFAM will be developing the MSL resource materials that will be shared with parents. Parents will also be linked to resources identified in the communities through the mapping exercise on DPOs. Overall, through close collaboration with Desk Officers and SNE teachers, the Family Resource Kit provides a means for supporting families and support LwDs.

3.3.1 Develop family resource toolkit on how parents can support their children at home including acquisition skills, pre-braille skills, use of symbols and others including new Sign Language guides. This will include family engagement through coordination with NRP activities. Delayed due to COVID-19 in 2020. In FY21, family/parent resource toolkit in development, and families identified and sampled through specialist teachers will have access to an orientation of parents on how to support their children. This orientation will be held via SNE Teacher training with outreach to parents. NRP training and 321 messages will also be avenues engaged in this effort for activity 3.3.1.

3.3.2 Develop basic sign language guides using local MSL. Support teachers fluent in sign language aligned with the World Federation of the Deaf. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20.

Videos and illustrations were developed during the MSL EGRA during FY 21. These resources will be built on FY21 whereas REFAM's work plan includes developing a training manual for Deaf Education and MSL Basic Guide. During FY20, REFAM engaged in setting up foundational systems for collecting data for teachers and parents, and the locations of DHH learners. As the process is still being developed at the start of FY21, the FY21 works plan includes a web design effort, and budget for support for website development and management (via MoEST and MANAD) and uploading MSL videos. The FY21 Work Plan outlines plans for MSL videos to be shared to teachers and parents through other platforms like WhatsApp & DVDs. MANAD members could also be used to support parents in their communities apart from sharing them with videos in FY21. Overall, the goal is to build the capacity of MANAD in MSL data collection and management.

3.3.3 Share guidelines on rights and family professional partnerships. Delayed due to COVID-19 in FY20. There are plans in the FY21 REFAM work plan for guidelines to be developed, shared and orientation conducted.

4. Constraints and Opportunities

4.1 Constraints

Due to COVID-19, REFAM activities that were impacted as a result of COVID-19 are outlined below, please see how early screening and identification, resource networks, assessment, disability specific materials, classroom coaching, as well as family and community support.

Sub Result 1.2: Early Screening and Identification Protocols Implemented

Activity	Accomplishments / Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
I.2.3 Pilot Response to Intervention (RTI) as a screening technique	Delayed due to COVID.	REFAM will provide Continuous Assessment & Remediation (CA&R) under the UDL module training. Any additional pilot would be dependent on monitoring of SNE teacher capacity following the training.
I.2.5 Train district officers on validated protocols, tools and reporting for identification and assessment of learners with disabilities	Delayed due to COVID.	REFAM will train district officers on identification and assessment in January 2021 as part of the screening and identification UDL Model. This activity is expected to continue beyond July 2021.

Sub-result 1.3: Resource Networks Activated

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
I.3.3 Train DPO networks and volunteers on Inclusive Education and increasing community engagement, including parent organizations and their children.	Delayed due to COVID. REFAM is engaging DPOs as part of development of School Reopening Guidelines and IE TWG. REFAM established a WhatsApp community for DPOs to exchange information and for REFAM to provide inputs from DSNE related to support for LWD while schools were closed due to COVID.	DPOs will be included as participants in the UDL training at the district level.

Sub Result 1.4: Assessment and Reporting Improved

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
----------	----------------	-----------------------------------

<p>1.4.3 Develop guide on how to adapt EGRAs for students with disabilities, interpret results as well as low-cost examples of classroom and instructional adaptations to best serve those students who continue to struggle</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID.</p>	<p>Guide will be completed by December 2020. The production of the EGRA guide is an important step toward sustainability. The guide will be used to adapt the National Reading Assessment (NRA) for learners with disabilities beyond the project period.</p>
<p>1.4.4 Pilot Assessment Guides and update guide as needed.</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID.</p>	<p>Protocols for accommodation or supports that are needed for learners identified as having multiple learning needs due to learning disabilities will be incorporated into Module 2 on IEPs and CA&R in October 2020.</p>

Sub Result 2.1: Disability Specific Reading Materials Developed

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
<p>2.1.3 Develop guide on how to adapt reading materials for students with different types of disabilities</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID. Position paper developed pertaining to adapting of reading materials</p>	<p>Guide will set standards for MoEST to ensure materials are accessible and adapted to accommodate the needs of all learners to be launched in January 2021.</p>
<p>2.1.6 Share draft toolkit and materials with stakeholders</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID. REFAM will share the first module on September 11th with USAID.</p>	<p>REFAM will share all modules with DSNE and USAID as they are finalized Sept. 2020 - Jan. 2021</p>

Sub-result 2.2: Resource Center Teachers' Utilization of Disability Specific Materials, Student Assessment Data and Practices Improved

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
<p>2.2.1 Develop guidelines/protocols for coaching and mentorship practices developed</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID.</p>	<p>UDL training will support coaching and mentorship at the district level. Guidelines to be developed in January-March 2021. REFAM will ensure to integrate the existing itinerant teaching (which has elements of coaching for general classroom teachers) into the guidelines to be developed.</p>

2.2.4 Coordinate trainings (at least term) on guides and Malawi Literacy Toolkit	Delayed due to COVID. mode of transmission will be virtual/blended training at district level	First set of UDL trainings planned for September 2020 -January 2021.
--	--	--

Sub result 2.3: Classroom Coaching Improved

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
2.3.1 Develop mentorship systems that respond to teachers' needs	Delayed due to COVID.	Planned for 2021. REFAM will develop a mentorship system using an itinerant hierarchy of support systems that respond to teachers' needs, depending on the composition of their classes. REFAM will use the same participants to develop the coaching protocols and mentorship system.
2.3.2 Develop coaching protocols	Delayed due to COVID.	Planned for 2021. REFAM will support the SNE teachers to develop a realistic plan that will help organize RC teachers' coaching support in the general education classrooms. Specifically, REFAM will develop coaching protocols to guide the coaching process. These protocols will align with the NRP coaching model and will include aspects that can support the SNE teacher to provide coaching effectively. The goal is to ensure that general education teachers have opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and reading instructional and assessment practices in teaching learners with disabilities within their classrooms. This coaching and training of the general education teachers by the RC teachers will take place on a one-on-one basis, in groups, in a whole school, or in a cluster of schools that surround the RC center.
2.3.3 Strengthen itinerant teaching to address student needs	Delayed due to COVID.	Planned for 2021. REFAM will hold a review of the itinerant teaching system first in order to determine areas for possible improvement. Data collection forms will be updated/developed as part of this process. REFAM will reach out to more itinerant teachers in schools beyond the project schools, and consequently reach more learners and parents.

Sub result 3.1: Awareness Raising about Learners with Disabilities’ Potential Raised

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
<p>3.1.2 - Use DPO national network to adapt outreach efforts to the changing cultural realities</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID. In Progress.</p> <p>DPO groups have been actively participating in on-going REFAM activities ranging from EGRA tools adaption workshops to consultation on considerations for reopening schools.</p> <p>REFAM established a DPO WhatsApp group created for better DPO engagement & collaboration.</p>	<p>Families of CWD’s linked to DPOs and other service providers in their respective communities for support</p> <p>Disability Directory updated and shared with partners (an effort that will be done in collaboration with SC)</p> <p>More sensitization done to ensure that communities mindset has changed through the use of DPOs on effective disability mainstreaming</p> <p>Inclusion of DPOs via meaningful engagement as part of district level training of DEMs, SNE Desk Officers, teachers of LwDs and DPO representatives as part of UDL training</p>

Sub-result 3.2: Community Support to Schooling for LwDs Increased

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
<p>3.2.1 - Develop community action plans through local inclusion community</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID.</p>	<p>Community action plans to be developed</p> <p>Communities are aware on how to lobby for support from relevant authorities</p> <p>Needs of LwDs identified and addressed at community level</p>
<p>3.2.2 - Increase support for IE as part of community action plans and school improvement plan grant mechanism</p>	<p>Delayed due to COVID</p>	<p>School grants clearly indicate budget to ensure LwD included in School Improvement Plans and IE gain more support/funds</p>

Sub-result 3.3: Family Engagement and Community Support to Learning for LwDs Increased

Activity	Status to date	Expected Achievement by July 2021
3.3.1 - Develop family resource toolkit on how parents can support their children at home including SL acquisition skills, pre-braille skills, use of symbols and others including new sign language guides. This will include family engagement through coordination with NRP activities	Delayed due to COVID Family/parent resource toolkit in development	Families identified and sampled through specialist teachers. Orientation of parents on how to support their children (via SNE Teacher training w/ outreach to parents, NRP trainings & 321 messages)
3.3.2 - Develop basic sign language guides using local MSL. Support teachers fluent in sign language aligned with World Federation of the Deaf	Delayed due to COVID Videos and illustrations developed during the MSL EGRA. Training manual for deaf education and MSL basic guide being developed and in draft form Data for teachers and parents and their locations of DHH learners in the process of being compiled (to be done under the web design and management activity by the consultant)	Support website development and management (via MoEST and MANAD) and uploading MSL videos. Videos to be shared to teachers and parents through other platforms like WhatsApp & DVDs. MANAD members could also be used to support parents in their communities apart from sharing them with videos Build the capacity of MANAD in MSL data collection and management
3.3.3 - Share guidelines on rights and family professional partnerships	Delayed due to COVID	Guidelines developed, shared and orientation conducted

Outside of COVID-19, the following constraints are relevant:

Collecting enrollment data for learners with disabilities: As it remains difficult to gather data on enrollment for learners with disabilities in the 146 resource centers due to lack of sufficient infrastructure around data management systems at the MoEST's Department for Special Needs Education or via the Department of Education Planning's Management Information System (EMIS) that captures the necessary data on SNE teachers and students as disaggregated by grade and disability. As a result, REFAM needs to

resort to making direct contacts with SNE Desk Officers and teachers to collect the enrollment data. However, this strategy proves to be time consuming and cumbersome.

Change of timeline for baseline data collection for DHH: As Malawian Sign Language is the only language available to children who are profoundly deaf and assessments must be conducted using this language, the EGRA for learners who are DHH was shifted to FY20 because of the complexities in Malawi with sign language not being standardized, and this will have implications as far as utilizing lessons learned from the baseline to design an intervention, and then measuring the impact of the intervention – given the tight timeline for the REFAM project closing in July 2021.

4.2 Opportunities

COVID-19 Pivot. The most significant opportunity that REFAM capitalized in FY20 was the opportunity to utilize technology to reach stakeholders to further the objectives of REFAM. Between WhatsApp groups for Special Needs Educators (SNE) as well as DPOs that REFAM initiated in May 2020, as well as the blended training model for the implementation of Universal Design for Learning training, where REFAM will be able to reach close to 500 educators in a span of four training days, in all 34 districts. There were two technology trainings in September 2020 leading up to the scheduled October blended training. REFAM will ensure that interpreters will be included for any teachers who are blind, deaf or need assistance.

REFAM Overview for Universal Design for Learning Training

Delivery tool: Webinar to include slides, facilitator notes, participant workbook, pre and posttest.

Content: Base information from current UDL resources in the field and connections to Malawian resources and an introduction to UDL.

Purpose: To deepen DEM/SNE officer knowledge of identified topics and location of information, and to use Malawian resources as a base to introduce UDL.

Delivery tool: WhatsApp and Google Meet

Purpose: To provide continuous professional development and establishment of peer groups to support teachers of LWD.

Participants: Small group trainings of no more than ten people*

(Per DOH guidelines) will meet in person at MOEST facilities and will be facilitated

Virtually by REFAM at all 34 district levels to include the following:

- 1 Special Needs Education Desk Officers
- 1 District Education Managers
- ~ 3 Head Teachers
- ~ 3 SNE Teachers
- 1 DPO member

Malawian Sign Language. A significant opportunity that occurred in FY 20 is the interest that the Director of DTED has demonstrated for Malawian Sign Language. At the request of DTED, REFAM submitted a concept note regarding the teaching of Malawian Sign Language in the curriculum at teacher colleges; REFAM expects to build on these opportunities in FY21.

5. Overview of Implementation Process

As section three of this annual progress report outlines REFAM’s accomplishments by objective, this *Overview of the Implementation Process* section contains an overview of relevant information related to implementation highlights next steps.

Status for sub result 1.1

Sub result	Activity	Status FY 20
1.1 Policy framework supported	1.1.1 Policy analysis to identify the gaps between current policies and CRPD	IE roadmap & rationale for standalone policy developed
	1.1.2 Situational analysis of SNE in Malawi to include needs assessment for Resource Centers and SNE Teacher Capacity	An audit of available and needed resources conducted in Resource Centers
	1.1.3 Present report with suggested language for policy and recommended identification protocols	A report on REFAM’s efforts to contribute to the development of a standalone policy on IE shared with members of IE TWG
	1.1.4 Capacity building of MoEST on capturing data for learners with disabilities	A review of EMIS to include data for learners with disabilities was conducted

Next steps

- DSNE to launch advocacy campaign targeting the various departments at the MoEST in order for them to understand the importance of a standalone IE policy
- REFAM will continue to advocate for minimal standards for the Resource Centers, as part of the IE Policy through the IE TWG
- The Road Map needs IE TWG to add timelines on the various stages
- Set up a technical team comprising of USAID, REFAM to guide the policy formulation process.

Sub result 1.2 Early Screening, identification and Intervention Protocols Implemented.

Sub result	Activity	Status FY 20
1.2 Early screening, identification and intervention protocols implemented	1.2.1 Develop an inventory of screening and identification tools for revision and adaptation	A review of screening tools was conducted and a report with findings and recommendations produced
	1.2.2 Validate and strengthen tools to align with new policy and international best practice	A concept note on the development of a teacher training module on screening and identification was developed
	1.1.3 Review EMIS to identify missing variables to help capture data on learners with learning needs	A review of EMIS to include data for learners with disabilities was conducted

<p>Strengths of the current EMIS system as relates to children with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity within the MoEST to include disability specific indicators in its data tracking system is a positive factor in implementation of Inclusive Education • The EMIS currently collects information on the name of the school, address, physical infrastructure of the school, distance from school, electricity, total attendance, availability of SNE teachers and their qualification etc. It also collects information on student gender, distance travelled to school, socioeconomic status and family composition • The MoEST at district level uses data collected through the EMIS system in order to inform its Inclusive Education projects including resource allocation. • There is a solid team (EMIS officers) available to collect the data for learners with disabilities. The officers are equipped with resources to enable them to carry out their work.
<p>Challenges observed in the current EMIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMIS only captures a summary of special learning needs children details i.e. total number of pupils by standard and gender. • There is limited collaboration between head teachers and SNE teachers when filling the EMIS forms. As a result head teachers have challenges to identify children with specific categories of disabilities leading to a situation where they end up guessing figures • There are no further instructions and no training has been provided to the head teacher or SNE teachers to assist in determining which categories are relevant. This has resulted in data which is very difficult to interpret.

Recommendations

- The MoEST form that is used collect annual school information details as part of the management census needs to be improved so that it enables relevant disability specific information.
- There is a need for a separate feature of EMIS that is granular. In other words a separate record should be maintained for every child. This facilitates the matching of disability data to variables such as attendance, learning outcomes and family level socioeconomic data. This enables a range of analysis to inform against policies.
- Head teachers and SNE teachers need to be trained on how to identify learners with various disabilities to accurately report these details under EMIS.

Next steps:

- REFAM will identify a consultant to work with the REFAM team on the development of a UDL training focusing on screening and identification at the school level.
- The consultant will work on a brief for screening and identification as part of the IE TWG. REFAM will conduct training for district-level officers to orient them on the use of the tools.
- REFAM will ensure alignment of the identification tools with data collection forms in the program's target schools and classrooms that will continuously feed into the development or revision of learners' IEPs and will assist the MoEST to analyze and report on the data collected.
- The MOE form that is used collect the annual school information details as part of the management census needs to be improved so that it is relevant with disability specific information.
- There is a need for a separate feature of EMIS that is granular. In other words, a separate record should be maintained for every child. This facilitates the matching of disability data to variables such as attendance, learning outcomes and family level socio-economic data. This enables a range of analysis to inform against policies.
- Head teachers and SNE teachers need to be trained on how to identify learners with various disabilities to accurately report these details under EMIS
- REFAM will work with the Department of Special Needs and the Department of Planning to update the EMIS tools following the recommendations above. REFAM will continue convening meetings aimed at providing guidance to the Ministry of Education on how EMIS can better address the issue of disability by collecting data in a consistent, timely and reliable manner with well-defined policy and relevant indicators.
- REFAM will then work with YESA to ensure that disability-specific EMIS tools are part of the mobile application developed for the Ministry of Education.

Status for sub result 1.3

Sub result	Activity	Status FY 20
1.3 Resource networks activated	1.3.1 Conduct a mapping exercise of existing resources that can be used for referrals	A review of screening tools was conducted and a report with findings and recommendations produced
	1.3.2 Development of guide with results of mapping exercise	A concept note on the development of a teacher training module on screening and identification was developed

Status for sub result 1.4

Sub result	Activity	Status FY 20
1.4 Assessment and reporting improved	1.4.2 Develop and implement adapted EGRA for learners who are deaf and hard of hearing 1.4.3 Development of guide on how to adapt EGRAs for students with disabilities, interpret results as well as low-cost examples of classroom and instructional adaptations to best serve those students who continue to struggle	A baseline survey was conducted in respect for EGRA for DHH. A report was developed and shared with MoEST This activity was delayed due to COVID-19

Sub-result 1.4 Assessment and reporting improved

Findings

- Learners performed fairly well on developing literacy tasks such as letter and vocabulary recognition. Deaf learners performed better than HOH learners on letter tasks. Deaf and HOH learners performed similarly well on vocabulary tasks. All learners performed fairly well on comprehension tasks related to story retelling and listening/signing comprehension.
- Results from the learner questionnaire suggest that most learners are born with hearing impairment while some acquire their impairment through illness or injury. Due to their condition, nearly all DHH students learn MSL in school and would want their teachers to communicate to them in MSL, which does not align with teacher's use of total communication in classrooms as this method does not necessarily incorporate true MSL into communication and instruction.
- Nearly all deaf learners feel included in classroom reading instruction unlike the most HOH. Most DHH learners say they understand what is written in text or on the blackboard during lessons. Learners requested more instruction in MSL
- About 43% of teachers in special schools and 19% of teachers from mainstream schools are trained in sign language while 93% of teachers in special schools and 56% in mainstream schools use total communication for instructing students, rather than MS.

Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations

- Additional training should be given to teachers/parents on the use of MSL to aid in communication between teachers and DHH learners in school/at home
- Procurement/development of visual aids such as pictures and cards to aid in reading
- Introduction of a sign language course in institutions of higher learning
- Development of a deaf education policy that will provide a conducive environment for the promotion of deaf education in Malawi
- Promotion of MSL as the primary language for learners who are DHH

Participants in the Adaption Workshop

Cadre	Men	Women	Totals
Teachers	6	3	9
MUB (including guides)	3	1	4
Brailist	1	0	1
MoEST (Basic)	0	1	1
DIAS	1	0	1
DSNE	4	1	5
Sandithandiza	0	1	1
BICO	1	1	2
MERIT	1	1	2
Academicians	1	1	2
REFAM	3	2	5
Total	21	12	33

Next Steps

- The consultant is currently finalizing the report which will then be shared with the REFAM team for review and feedback.
- The report will be shared with USAID for review, feedback and approval.
- Results will be shared with the project stakeholders including MoEST, DPOs and teachers through various dissemination platforms.

Objective 2: Reading Instruction for Learners with Disabilities Improved

Sub-result 2.1 Disability specific reading materials developed

2.1.1 Compile an inventory of existing resources and manuals for review by national and international experts:

2.1.2 Develop Malawi Literacy Toolkit based on USAID’s Literacy Toolkit: This toolkit will be implemented through three trainings, focusing on an introduction to universal design for the learning; weaving inclusion into the National Reading Program (NRP), UDL and individualized education plans, and UDL and screening and identification. The UDL trainings will serve a variety of stakeholders to reinforce the knowledge and strategies that increase literacy skills for learners with disabilities in primary school, including: teachers, teacher trainers, educators, curriculum developers, school principals, students, and parents.

Next steps

- REFAM and DSNE will implement a blended training model in October 2020, and design materials for the individualized education plans, and screening and identification modules in November and December 2020.
- REFAM will implement trainings with stakeholders in early 2021 on UDL and IEPs, and UDL and screening and identification.

2.1.3 Develop guide on how to adapt reading materials for learners with different types of disabilities: This activity is planned for FY 21, December 2020 launch.

Objective 3: Family and Community Support to Learning for Learners with Disabilities Improved

Sub-result 3.1: Awareness about learning potential for learners with disabilities raised:

In the lead-up to the National Reading Symposium in August and September 2020, REFAM identified mentors and highlighted the work of people with disabilities as champions in their communities with a great wealth of knowledge particularly pertaining to support for LwD. In addition, the UDL training course that REFAM is implementing in October 2020 will ask participants (we are anticipating close to 500) to privately examine their beliefs on the learning potential of CwD—this check in is part of the pre- and posttest. REFAM hopes this activity will result in greater awareness among the participants about their own values and beliefs regarding learners with disabilities.

3.1.1 Conduct evaluation of past community outreach activities including surveys of DPOs and families: REFAM conducted evaluations of surveys of DPOS, MACOHA, government ministries and other service providers. Their catchment areas and activities were mapped out. This has provided REFAM with details on DPOs and how their members were identified and used in REFAM activities.

3.1.2 Use DPO national network to adapt outreach efforts to the changing cultural realities: This activity was delayed due to COVID-19.

3.1.3 Conduct outreach and social behavior campaigns that also address school safety: This activity was delayed due to COVID-19

5.1. Other Notable Activities

National Strategy on Inclusive Education dissemination workshop: From 8-11 October, 2019, REFAM attended an inclusive education dissemination workshop which was held at Chikho hotel in Kasungu district. This workshop was organized by Save the Children in collaboration with the MoEST's Department of Special Needs Education. This workshop was therefore organized in order to raise awareness and understanding of the Inclusive Education strategy and other related documents developed such as the Disability Mainstreaming Strategy, IE Coordination Guidelines and IE tools and manuals. Present at the workshop were 58 participants from all the districts that comprise the Northern Education Division.

Training of the NRA Core Team in EGRA: The Yesani Ophunzira (YESA) activity which is part of the National Reading Programme organized a series of trainings for the NRA core team. The training is aimed at building the capacity of the team in EGRA development. During the reporting period, the team was given an orientation of the background and purposes of the EGRA. The team will further be oriented and tasked to develop the different subtasks of the EGRA, including letter sounds, letter names and syllables; non-words and familiar words, reading fluency with comprehension – oral/listening and reading, phonological awareness – identification of initial or final sounds: letter sound discrimination and additional instrument components –dictation, phoneme segmentation, maze and cloze in quarter four.

NRP Steering Committee meeting - March 17, 2020: REFAM attended an NRP steering committee meeting held on March 17, 2020, at MoEST conference room in Lilongwe. The meeting brought together participants from USAID, MoEST as well as NRP implementing partners including REFAM, MERIT and YESA. During the meeting, REFAM shared with participants the present progress of implementation, highlighting the following activities:

- Meeting with the Minister of Education to share results from EGRA for BLV and LD
- EGRA results dissemination efforts at MERIT organized NRP cluster-based workshops held from 10-21 February, 2020
- MSL EGRA

REFAM was able to appreciate progress made by partners, results of a book audit exercise done by USAID and the schedule for the NRP activities for the upcoming quarter. YESA also briefed the participants on the web based platform for the EMIS which REFAM can also leverage on in its work with children with disabilities.

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) and Benchmarking workshop - March 4-13, 2020: From the 4th to the 13th of March, REFAM participated in performance level descriptors (PLD 4-6) and **Benchmarking workshops**. This initiative is part of the implementation and expansion of the National Reading Program (NRPIE). The workshops held at Linde Motel in Mponela were aimed at linking the

Malawi National Reading Assessments to a set of global performance standards which can be used to set benchmarks for comparison of performance for the EGRA across the regions of the world.

The workshops involved a discussion on the policy linking approach and minimum PLDS by grade level. This is a rating and alignment of EGRA subtasks to fit the Malawi context, determining cut scores for each category of learners by grade level. Targets were established to measure progress over time based on historical data. These workshops were organized by a US based consultancy, Schools to Schools International, and targeted 35 key stakeholders in the educator sector in Malawi who have a stake in the NRP. These included officials from the Ministry of Education (Department of Planning, Basic Education, Teacher Development, Inspection and Advisory Services and Special Needs) and Malawi Institute of Education, lecturers from teacher training colleges and other universities in Malawi, primary school teachers, officials from USAID and some of its implementing partners for the NRP, YESA and REFAM.

The Director and Deputy Director of the USAID Education Office, and the Director of Inspection and Advisory Services shared opening and closing remarks and participated in some of the sessions. During the workshop, participants developed proficiency standards that fit the Malawi context, and the assessments according to the EGRA subtasks, developed cut scores for learners of different categories, and determined targets on how learners are expected to progress, meeting a particular cut score over time points, up to 2030. It was suggested that proficiency standards as far as fluency is perhaps not directly transferable as far as learners who are reading in braille, or for assessing proficiency in sign language, for example. There are a range of complexities around the development of benchmarks.

The table below shows the participants that were present at the workshop:

Institution	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Phalombe TTC		1	1
University of Livingstonia	1		1
Machinga TTC		1	1
Malawi Institute of Education	5		5
Kabuthu primary school		1	1
Wenya Primary School		1	1
Mchedwa Primary School		1	1
Njewa Primary School	1		1
Lilongwe TTC		1	1
St Joseph TTC	1		1
YESA	4		4
REFAM		1	1

USAID		2	3	5
MOEST	DBE		1	1
	DSNE	3		3
	DTED	1	1	2
	Planning	2		2
	DIAS	1	2	3
TOTAL		21	14	35

Education Cluster Meeting: REFAM as a stakeholder in the education sector has been participating in virtual education cluster meetings. These meetings have brought together different stakeholders including MoEST, USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO, Save the Children, Nascent Solutions, World Vision, VSO, Care Malawi, Action Aid and WFP, among others. Through these meetings, members have shared various interventions that they are implementing to ensure continuity of learning in the COVID-19 period and how to strengthen their coordination; possible school re-opening schedules, guidelines and recovery activities; the formation of district clusters; inter-cluster coordination activities; and funding opportunities in the sector in response to the pandemic. Some of the notable interventions shared include the airing of interactive radio instruction for different classes including CBE, development and provision of online learning modules, procurement of tablets for home learning, development of packages for home learning to guide parents on how to instruct their children, training of caregivers and parents on home learning, distribution of food rations and cash to vulnerable households, etc. One notable funding source is the Global Partnership on Education (GPE) which is being managed by UNICEF which will address response phase and early recovery phase outputs focusing on learner and school safety, home based learning, teacher capacity and efficient program management.

Meetings with MANAD, MUB and FEDOMA on supporting learners with DHH and BLV during the COVID-19 crisis, and beyond and how to promote Deaf Education in Malawi:

REFAM conducted a number of meetings with MANAD on May 14th, 2020, on how to improve deaf education in Malawi and support DHH learners during the COVID-19 period and beyond. It was proposed that MoEST should provide educational materials in MSL and collaborate with MANAD during the production of materials and distribution to the beneficiaries. There is also a need to empower teachers and parents of deaf children with MSL skills.

REFAM also held a virtual meeting with MUB on May 12th, 2020, to discuss issues concerning support of learners with BLV during the COVID-19 period and distribution of braille materials on education and COVID-19 to learners with disabilities. MUB specified that they have embarked on lobbying and advocacy work to ensure that LWD'S and especially those who are BLV are reached and supported effectively. MUB further said it is discussing with its donor on the need to have learners with BLV take their Orbit Readers home to facilitate learning.

FEDOMA, which is an umbrella organization of DPOs, had a meeting with REFAM on May 12th, 2020. During the meeting, FEDOMA said its main activities were to make noise and ensure that all LWDs are supported effectively during this period and that DPOs are fully consulted on issues affecting their disability. In all these meetings, it was agreed that DPOs should share with REFAM the statistics of LWDs they are working with. DPOs should also share the initiatives they are embarking on to support LWD and

proposals they would put forward to ensure that the government is effectively supporting LWDs during this period.

Private Sector Engagement. While originally scheduled for early April 2020, the Private Sector Engagement (PSE) was canceled; there will likely be a forum in FY21 that will build on some of the tenets from the original concept. During FY20, REFAM was instrumental in contributing to planning efforts for the PSE with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and USAID. The concept involved a half-day Private Sector Engagement Forum on the National Reading Programme (NRP) activity for Thursday, April 2nd, 2020, at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe. The theme of the Forum was “Private Sector Engagement: Creating Opportunities for Promoting a Reading Culture in Malawian Children” and participants were to include donor organizations, private sector associations, companies, business leaders, government departments, development partners, NRP implementing partners in Malawi and our guests of honor, the Minister of Education and the USAID Mission Director. The goal of the planned forum was to convene private sector companies and different stakeholders to foster effective partnerships that will support and sustain the National Reading Program (NRP). The hope is that the PSE would create awareness of the potential markets available and pledges would be made from private sector companies in Malawi to support the NRP. As REFAM views PSE aligning with sustainability in programming in FY21, REFAM would opt to contribute to any NRP efforts focusing on PSE if the opportunity presents itself.

Reading Symposium. In FY20, REFAM contributed significantly to the development and planning of the coordinated activities of the NRP’s Reading Symposium partners during the lead up to the symposium between July, August and September 2020. The theme of the event was: Reading is the Foundation of All Learning. REFAM contributed to efforts to represent learners with disabilities in reading, and to highlight how the NRP has enacted and is enacting investments and programming so that all learners can access the NRP curriculum. REFAM notes that messaging on inclusion was incorporated into the press conference messages, the webinar as well as the presentation focusing on the first five years of the implementation of Malawi’s NRP. REFAM hopes that one of the outcomes of this messaging with the Reading Symposium is there will be a positive view on the potential of learners with disabilities.

321 Viamo. In FY20, leading up to September 2020, REFAM contributed to education messaging on inclusion through the NRP-sponsored Viamo. It is reported that there were over 20,000 callers, and a majority of the callers were under the age of 18 years. REFAM hopes that one of the outcomes of the messaging on inclusion is that it will lead individuals to hold more positive views of learners with disabilities, and it will result in more positive view of the potential of learners with disabilities.

6. Management and Administrative Issues

6.1 Deliverables and Reporting

REFAM has continued to provide quality program progress and technical reports to USAID. The table below shows a list of management deliverables.

Status of REFAM Deliverables			
#	Deliverable	Due Date	Status
1.	Compilation of an Inventory of Instructional, Assessment, Teacher Training Modules , required government forms and tools for data collection and reporting for CWD.	30-May-19	Completed.
2.	Review and analysis of current Inclusive Education Policy in Malawi--with emphasis on service provision and reading instruction--and clarification on approaches about early identification, diagnosis, placement, instruction and assessment of children with disabilities, and the development of an evidence-based standardized approach that is utilized in all cases and all parts of the country.	30-May-19	Completed.
3.	Mapping of existing DPOs and other players and advocates in the area of the education for children with disabilities in Malawi, identification of gaps in access to services and plan development to close those gaps and facilitate access to all (parents, children, teachers, communities) who need the provided services by developing resource networks in all targeted areas of the project.	30-May-19	Completed. DPO report submitted. Note: Concerns related to governance and accountability for key DPOs in Malawi (FEDOMA & PODCAM)
4.	Scope and Sequence for improved reading instruction for children with disabilities in grades 1-4 and recommended approach for what/how to use for teaching and assessing CWD reading progress in the early grades in Malawi;	30-Sep-19	NRP Scope and Sequence aligned with reading instruction in Malawi. Teaching methods and instruction to be improved through UDL framework modules. (UDL module 1 addresses this explicitly).
5.	Development of a toolkit for instruction and assessment for CWD including student textbooks and teacher guides that cover all categories of disabilities currently catered to in RCs in public schools Malawi (blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, and learning disabilities).	30-Sep-19 Revised date: Oct. 2020	UDL Toolkit in development to include modules and teacher guide. NRP Learner Books developed for BLV in braille and large print. For BLV, REFAM will provide adaption into digital, NOT new materials. For DHH, REFAM will develop MSL materials to support current books for learners.

6.	Development of a teacher manual containing scripted lesson plans for teaching and assessing reading for CWD in each of the grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 (developed jointly with MOEST personnel and following appropriate multimodal methodology for CWD).	30-Apr-20 Revised Date: Sept. 2020	UDL Toolkit - module 1 foundational lesson on IE and reading. Additional training on IEP will provide specific tailored needs of individuals LWD (<i>not “Scripted Lessons Plans”</i> ; <i>the facilitator guides for UDL are scripted</i>)
7.	Development of modules for teacher training on instructional methodology and assessment for children with the disabilities that includes coaching strategies and techniques and approaches for working with general education teachers, parents and the community.	30-Apr-20 Revised Date: October 2020	UDL Toolkit - module on continuous assessment and remediation & IEPs (module 2) screening and identification (module 3). The modules are a platform for strengthening SNE understanding of how to modify the NRP scripted lessons, so that learners with diverse learning needs are able to access to core NRP curriculum.
8.	Draft national assessments for grades 1-4 to assess reading progress of CWD based on EGRA/ASER types of assessments (EGRA for the learners who read braille in Malawi already exists, EGRA for the deaf has not yet been developed as well EGRA for children with learning disabilities). These assessments must be developed jointly with MOEST personnel. They must be flexible to include various tasks to be used with children who have various disabilities and practical and functional for the teachers so that they can use components of these assessments for formative classroom assessment. The assessments must assist the MOEST in data collection but also inform instruction so that practices for CWD continuously improve.	Baseline May/June 2019 Report due by 31-Jul-20 Endline May/June 2021 Report due by 31-Jul-21	Baseline Completed. Endline to be determined.
9.	Development of a system and a protocol with the appropriate steps and forms for data collection and reporting on CWD in terms of diagnosis, demographic and socio-economic information, general health status and needs, and academic progress to the MOEST/EMIS . Currently the information that exists on EMIS is not adequate. This work must be done in close collaboration with MOEST/EMIS.	31-Dec-19	EMIS & DMIS coordination with YESA.
10.	Development of a family toolkit for parents and families of CWD for use to support their children in improving reading skills.	31-Jan-20	Additional training building on current NRP “Training Manual for Family Support Groups” with focus on LwD.

11.	Development of community networks / or capitalizing on existing (such as mothers' groups and DPOs) to increase community support to students with disabilities and their families. Collect, analyze and report national baseline and end-line student reading data for learners with disabilities from primary schools. This work will be done jointly with MOEST (Directorate of Special Needs Education and EMIS).	31-Aug-19	This can only be done when schools are open. Will not be possible to implement training at a community level. SNE teachers who complete UDL modules will include training on community networks and align to School Improvement Plans. Additionally, the DPO training will provide information on connecting to school networks and support of LWD.
12.	Development of a capacity building strategy for the MOEST to sustainably provide improved reading instruction and assessment for children with disabilities in Standards 1-4.	31-Jan-21	Ongoing

6.2 Work Plan Development

Communication and coordination within the National Reading Program is greatly enhanced because MERIT, YESA, REFAM, and NRPIE participate in joint planning meetings every week; the weekly meetings began in March 2020. Prior to March 2020, MERIT, YESA and REFAM met on a monthly basis, and NRPIE was not yet part of the meetings.

During the weekly meetings, MERIT, YESA and REFAM share work plans, and as well as jointly plan events, such as the Reading Symposium, 3-2-1, and the Private Sector Engagement event, and trainings. In addition, as of August, every other week, a member of the Education Team from USAID joins the planning meeting.

A highlight in this communication and coordination effort occurred in May 2020, as REFAM was providing updates on planning for our Universal Design for Learning training, NRPIE COP offered to provide input into our effort. Because of the NRPIE COP's background and expertise in scope and sequence, NRPIE was able to prepare a comprehensive overview of Standards 1-4, and look at how disability friendly the curriculum is—find and share examples of multisensory instruction as well as pedagogy within the NRP that is encouraging collaborative learning. This documentation oriented REFAM as we developed Module 1 on Weaving Inclusion into the NRP. Although MERIT will close on March 15, 2021, REFAM looks forward to continuing this weekly planning meeting as it has many benefits on the programming level.

6.3 STTA Support

Short-Term Technical Assistance

Name of Advisor	Dates	Assignment	Outcome
Stefany Thangavelu, Technical Advisor	November 2019 11-15 th	Meeting with local team members and partners for USAID REFAM Startup	Malawian Sign Language EGRA developed and implemented
Dr. Henry Chingaibe	Agreement: May 4, 2020 - June 30, 2020 1st Amendment: June 30, 2020 - August 31, 2020 2nd Amendment: August 31, 2020 - September 15, 2020	IE Policy PP Roadmap IE Policy PP Standalone Policy Rational	IE Policy environment strengthened
Tia Linda Zuze, M&E Consultant	Agreement: March 19, 2019 1st Amendment: June 3, 2019 2nd Amendment: December 12, 2019 3rd Amendment: January 31, 2020 4th Amendment: April 3, 2020	Working on M&E specific tasks under work plan & AMELP	M&E strengthened

Vanessa Scherman	1st Amendment: March 15, 2020 - July 31 2020 Agreement: October 15, 2020 March 15 2020	Working on M&E specific tasks under work plan & AMELP	Data validated as a result of Scherman's expertise
Dr. Louise Lord Nelson	June 8, 2020 - October 31, 2020	I. UDL Module 1, 2 &3 Training Packages: Slides, Facilitator Guide & Training Packet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics Include: Introduction to Universal Design for Learning • Individualized Education Plans • Screening and Identification. 	Enhancing Universal Design for Learning within the NRP
Hellena Mthinda	February 13, 2020 March 27, 2020	Private Sector Engagement Support Directory	Enhanced information on PSE within NRP community
Victoria Brown	Agreement: October 15, 2019 - March 15, 2020 1st Amendment: February 3 - March 15, 2020 2nd Amendment: March 15, 2020 - July 30 2020 New Agreement 2020: September 1 - December 31, 2020	Malawian Sign Language EGRA DHH Baseline Report	Malawian Sign Language EGRA developed and implemented and M&E strengthened.

6.4 Coordination and Collaboration

In addition to working closely with our National Reading Program (NRP) partners, MERIT and YESA in 2020, REFAM took a leading role in the Inclusive Education Technical Working Group (IE TWG) and has championed the inclusive education policy. REFAM views the IE TWG as a critical network for making progress within inclusive education. REFAM looks forward to continuing our active leadership role in the IE TWG in 2021, especially as it is anticipated that the beginnings of the standalone IE Policy will be initiated in 2021.

6.5 Finance and Administration

Description	Budget	Obligation to date	Invoiced as of August 31, 2020	Total Cost incurred for Sept 2020	Total Expenditures	Remaining Budget	Remaining Obligation
Labor Costs	624,965.00		394,687.38	24,586.43	419,273.81	205,691.19	
Consultants	129,941.00		103,188.55	11,896.88	115,085.43	14,855.57	
Travel	277,987.00		57,138.78	166.92	57,305.70	220,681.30	
Procurement/Supplies	241,144.00		36,154.56	1,291.69	37,446.25	203,697.75	
Communications	10,816.00		9,198.76	711.01	9,909.77	906.23	
Subcontracts	200,000.00		41,647.88		41,647.88	158,352.12	
Allowances	101,092.00		46,489.32	4,436.67	50,925.99	50,166.01	
Other Direct Costs	445,112.00		228,168.42	1,805.03	229,973.45	215,138.55	
Indirect	845,131.00		546,279.63	35,377.17	581,656.80	263,474.20	
Fee	86,286.00		43,888.60	2,408.15	46,296.75	39,989.25	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total	2,962,474.00	2,568,819.62	1,506,841.88	\$ 82,679.95	1,589,521.83	1,372,952.17	979,297.79

6.6 Lessons Learned

1) Families and communities play an important role in learners with disabilities accessing education. The role of families and community members in the education of learners with disabilities became very apparent during the school closedown in 2020, related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The SNE teachers did conduct home visits, and some did report on the role that siblings and parents played in efforts to continue education under COVID-19.

2) Identifying existing structures and building relationships are important for the sustainability of REFAM's inputs into the education sector. The IE TWG as well as the DSNE and DPOs are important to the sustainability of the efforts REFAM is implementing. REFAM has prioritized building relationships within all of these structures, and will continue to prioritize relationship building, communication and collaboration in FY21.

3) Malawian Sign Language and Deaf Education. REFAM has learned how challenging it is to work within the deaf education community in Malawi because of the lack of standardization of Malawian Sign Language, as well as some complexities related to the sign language dictionary development, and the fact that fluency in MSL takes a significant amount of time and investment. There is a need for resources to be inserted into the system, specifically for deaf education at the teacher college level, at the resource center level, and for teachers who are in the field. Materials are needed, and more investment in this area is critical for making progress for learners in Malawi who are DHH.

Annex A Indicators

Code	Indicator	FY19 Target	FY19 Results	Remarks	FY20 Target	FY20	FY20 Results by Quarter (If Applicable)				Remarks
						Results	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
USAID Dev Indicators											
ES-Cus.RI.47	Percent of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4	X	2.3% 1.8%	2.3% - ORF, English 1.8% -ORF, Chichewa Percentages are only based on Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) for Blind and Low Vision (BLV) as LD learners were not assessed in ORF.	0%	0%	Based on the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), none of the learners who were Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) attained the minimum grade level proficiency in reading at the end of year 4. Percentages are only based on ORF.				These are reported based on the subtasks – ORF English and ORF Chichewa for DHH.
ES-Cus.RI.47a	Total number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance assessed in reading at the end of Grade 4	X	442	This only includes 124 learners who were BLV and 318 were LD in Grade 4.	68	68	0	68	0	0	This only includes DHH learners, 27 boys and 41 girls were reached in Grade 4 in Q2.
ES-Cus.RI.47b	Total number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-		10 (ORF Eng) 8	This count is only for Blind Low Vision (BLV) which are reported, based on ORF English and ORF Chichewa.	0	0	Based on the ORF, none of the learners who are DHH attained the minimum grade level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4.				Results based only on MSL EGRA for DHH Learners.

	level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4		(ORF Chi)								
ES-Cus.RI.47c	Percent of learners with Visual impairment (VI) disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4		6.5% (ORF Chi)	The figures represent the percentage of BLV learners who were proficient in ORF (Chichewa, English).	6.5%	6.5%	Actual Baseline scores used for 2020.				Actual Baseline scores used for 2020.
			7.9% (ORF Eng)		7.9%	7.9%					
ES-Cus.RI.47c1	Total number of learners with Visual impairment (VI) disability targeted for USG assistance assessed in reading at the end of Grade 4	124	124	REFAM assessed 124 learners (65 males and 59 females) through the EGRA for VI.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No learners with VI were targeted with assessments in FY20. REFAM reached 124 learners with VI in FY19.

ES-Cus.RI.47c2	Total number of learners with Visual impairment (VI) disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4		8 (ORF Chi) 10 (ORF Eng)	For ORF, 8 learners were proficient in Chichewa by reading 51 to 59 CWPM - 6.5% of the total number assessed. For English, 10 learners (7.9%) of the total assessed were proficient and able to read 41-44 CWPM. For Listening Comprehension, 50% of learners were proficient in Chichewa against 21% who were proficient in English.	8 10	8 10	Baseline scores for VI learners used as targets for 2020.	No assessment for learners with VI in FY 20. Baseline scores for EGRA used as targets, and actuals for 2020. Learners were not assessed in Reading Comprehension, instead Listening Comprehension has been used as a measure.
ES-Cus.RI.47d	Percent of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 4	NA	NA-	No DHH learners assessed.	0%	HoH 0% (ORF, Eng&Chic) Deaf 0% (ORF, Eng&Chic)		For DHH learners, in terms of ORF, none of the learners assessed were proficient in English (0%) and Chichewa (0%). For Reading Comprehension, none of the learners were proficient in English while 17% were proficient in Chichewa. Deaf learners were also assessed in ORF, none of the learners were proficient in

											Chichewa (51-59 CWPM) and English (44-55 CWPM). For Reading Comprehension, 6 learners (12.5%) were proficient in English, while none of the learners were proficient in Chichewa.
ES-Cus.RI.47d1	Total number of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance assessed in reading at the end of grade 4	NA	NA	No DHH learners assessed.	68	68	0	68	0	0	68 DHH Learners assessed in EGRA (27 males and 41 females). Next assessment will be at endline
ES-Cus.RI.47d2	Total number of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 4			No assessments done for DHH in FY 19.		HoH 0 (ORF Chi & Eng) Deaf 0 (ORF Chi & Eng)					Mean scores are split between the completely Deaf and HoH learners. For Reading Comprehension, for English, the Deaf learners mean score was 24% while HoH got an average of 13%. For Chichewa, the mean was 16% and 28% for the HoH learners. For Oral Reading Fluency (story telling), in English, the Deaf learners scored

												an average of 9 CWPM (24%) and 22 CWPM (42%) for HoH learners. For Chichewa, the average score was 13 CWPM (21%) for the Deaf learners and 42 CWPM (68%) for HoH learners.
ES-Cus.RI.47e	Percent of learners with learning difficulty disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4		0.3% (FWR, Eng) 2.5% (FWR, Chi)	These learners were only assessed in Familiar Word Reading. For English, only 1 learner was proficient representing 0.3% of the total sample while 2.5% of the learners were proficient in Chichewa. The learners were assessed based on 25 to 34 CWPM for English and 30 to 39 CWPM for Chichewa.	0.3% 2.5%	0.3% 2.5%	Baseline scores used as actuals for FY 2020.					
ES-Cus.RI.47e1	Total number of learners with learning difficulty disability targeted for USG assistance assessed in reading at the end of Grade 4		318	184 males and 134 females assessed in reading.		0	0	0	0	0		No assessments done in FY 20. Next assessment will be done at endline.

ES-Cus.RI.47e2	Total number of learners with learning difficulty disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 4		1 (FWR, Eng) 8 (FWR, Chic)	These learners were only assessed in familiar word reading.	1 8	1 8	Baseline scores used as actuals for reporting period				No assessments done in FY 20. Next assessment will be done at endline.
ES. I-3	Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance	956	957	These were reached through EGRA assessments for BLV and LD.	8127	132	0	132	0	0	The 132 learners were reached through DHH EGRA assessments. No learners were reached in Q3 and 4 due to COVID-19 as schools were closed.
ES. I-3a	Number of male learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance		563	129 BLV learners reached against 434 LD learners reached.		57	0	57	0	0	57 males reached through the DHH EGRA. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.
ES. I-3b	Number of female learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with		394	109 BLV learners against 285 LD learners.		75	0	75	0	0	75 females reached through DHH EGRA. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.

	USG education assistance										
ES. 1-3c	Number of male learners aged 10-14 in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance		319	247 LD against 72 VI male learners reached.		36	0	36	0	0	36 males DHH learners reached. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.
ES. 1-3d	Number of female learners aged 10-14 in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance		332	176 LD and 56 VI learners reached.		55	0	55	0	0	55 females DHH learners reached in Q2. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.
ES. 1-3e	Number of male learners aged 15-19 in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG assistance		47	35 LD against 12 VI learners reached.		10	0	10	0	0	10 DHH males reached in Q2. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.
ES. 1-3f	Number of female learners aged 15-19 in primary schools or equivalent non-school		27	16 LD against 11 VI learners reached.		13	0	13	0	0	13 females learners reached in Q2. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.

	based settings reached with USG assistance										
ES. I-3g	Number of learners with disabilities in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG assistance		957	These were reached with the EGRA assessments.		132	0	132	0	0	These were reached with assessments for DHH in Q2. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19.
ES. I-3h	Number of learners affected by conflict or crisis in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG assistance		0	No learners in conflict or crisis were reached.		0	0	0	0	0	No learners in crisis or conflict were reached.
ES. I-47	Percent of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		3.5% (ORF, Eng) 2.1% (ORF, Chi)	Percentages are only based on Oral Reading Fluency for Blind and low vision learners only as learners with LD were not assessed in ORF.	VI (3.5%, 2.1%)	VI (3.5%, 2.1%) HI (1.2%, ORF Eng) (0.7%, ORF Chi)	These are reported based on oral reading fluency for HI and VI learners who were assessed in ORF and disaggregated by language.				Baseline scores are actuals for FY20.

ES. 1-47a	Total number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance assessed at the end of Grade 2		515	These comprise of 401 LD learners and 114 VI learners.		64	0	64	0	0	These were reached through the DHH assessments in Q2. No learners reached in Q3 due to COVID-19.
ES. 1-47b	Total number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		18 (ORF, Eng) 11 (ORF, Chi)	Only ORF Scores.	TBD	6 (ORF, Eng) 4 (ORF, Chi)	This only includes learners with hearing impairment that were assessed in FY 20.			Benchmarks yet to be defined, but mean scores captured under specific disabilities.	
ES. 1-47c	Percent of learners with visual impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		9.6% (ORF, Chi) 16.1% (ORF, Eng)	For ORF, 9.6% of learners were proficient in Chichewa, by reading 20 to 29 CWPM. For English, 16.1% of the learners reached were proficient by reading between 29-40 correct words per minute. For Listening Comprehension, 29.5% of the learners were proficient in Chichewa, against 2.7% who were proficient in English.	16.1% 9.6%	16.1% 9.6%	Actual Baseline scores used for 2020			BLV learners were not assessed in Reading Comprehension.	

ES. I-47c1	Total number of learners with visual impairment disability targeted for USG assistance assessed at the end of Grade 2	114	114	REFAM reached 114 learners – 64 males and 50 females).	0	0	0	0	0	0	No assessments done for VI in FY 20. Next assessment to be done at end-line.
ES. I-47c2	Total number of learners with visual impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		11 (ORF, Chi) 18 (ORF, Eng)	11 Learners with VI were proficient in ORF for Chichewa against 18 for English.	11 18	11 18	Actual Baseline scores used for 2020			No learners with visual impairment were reached in FY20, as these learners were reached in the baseline in FY19.	
ES. I-47d	Percent of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2	NA	NA	No assessments done for DHH.	HoH	HoH 0% (ORF, Eng) 14.3% (ORF, Chi)	For HoH learners, none of the learners were proficient in English, while 14.3% learners were proficient in Chichewa for Oral Reading Fluency. In Reading Comprehension, 25% of the learners were proficient in English, while none of the learners were proficient in Chichewa. On the other hand, for Deaf learners, 10.7% of the learners were proficient in English, while 5.9% of the learners were proficient in Chichewa. In Reading Comprehension, 32.7% and 10.7% of the			Baseline was conducted in FY20 and therefore uses actual scores.	

							learners were proficient in English and Chichewa, respectively.				
ES. I-47d1	Total number of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance assessed at the end of Grade 2	NA	NA	No assessments done for DHH.	TBD	64	0	64	0	0	EGRA assessment reached 64 HI learners, 31 males and 33 females in Q2. Next assessment to be at the end-line.
ES. I-47d2	Total number of learners with hearing impairment disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2	NA	NA	No assessments done for DHH.		HoH 1 (ORF, Chi) 0 (ORF, Eng) Deaf 3 (ORF, Chi) 6 (ORF, Eng)	For HoH learners, none of the learners were proficient in English while 1 learner was proficient in Chichewa for oral reading fluency. In reading comprehension, 25% of the learners were proficient in English while none of the learners were proficient in Chichewa. On the other hand, for deaf learners, 10.7% of the learners were proficient in English while 5.9% of the learners were proficient in Chichewa. In reading comprehension, 32.7% and 10.7% of the learners were proficient in English and Chichewa respectively.				Baseline was conducted in FY 20.

ES. I-47e	Percent of learners with learning difficulty disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		0.2%	REFAM reached 401 learners in FY 19. Grade 2 learners were only assessed in Chichewa. It was established that only 0.2% of the learners were proficient in Familiar Word Reading.	0.2%	0.2%	Actual Baseline scores used for 2020				Learners with LD have not been assessed in FY 20. Next assessment will be done at endline.
ES. I-47e1	Total number of learners with learning difficult disability targeted for USG assistance assessed at the end of Grade 2		401	401 learners reached (250 males, 151 females).	TBD		0	0	0	0	Learners with LD have not been assessed in FY 20. Next assessment will be done at endline.
ES. I-47e2	Total number of learners with learning difficulties disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of Grade 2		1	Grade 2 learners were only assessed in Chichewa, and only 1 learner was proficient.	1	1	Actual Baseline scores used for 2020				No assessment for LDs done in FY20.

ES. I-8	Number of primary or secondary school educators who complete professional development activities on teaching students with special educational needs with USG assistance	34	34	These were reached through EGRA assessments for BLV and LD.	2218	6	6	4*	0	0	REFAM reached a total of 6 educators in 2020. In Q1, REFAM reached 6 educators, while in Quarter 2, REFAM reached 4 educators- - all of which were part of the training in Q1. No educators were reached in Q3 and Q4, due to COVID-19. Underachievement is mainly attributed to COVID-19 restrictions.
ES. I-12	Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	20	20	These were reached through EGRA assessments for BLV and LD.	300	57	8	8*	0	46*	These educators were reached through the adaptation and implementation of the DHH EGRA in Q2. No educators reached through trainings in Q3. REFAM reached 46 administrators in Q4, Q3, of which were part of Q1 and Q2 trainings. Underachievement is mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions.
Q1 reached 8 administrators. Q3 reached 8 administrators, two of which had already been reached in Q1. Q4 reached 46 administrators, 3 of which had already been reached. The annual results counts only unique educators totaling 57.											

ES.1-12a	Number of female education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance		11	These were reached through EGRA assessments for BLV and LD.		10	3	1	0	7*	These educators were reached through the adaptation and implementation of the DHH EGRA in Q2. No educators reached through trainings in Q3. In Q4, REFAM reached 7 administrators, one of which was already reached in Q2. The annual result is therefore 10.
ES.1-12b	Number of male education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance		23	These were reached through EGRA assessments for BLV and LD.		47	5	7*	0	39*	The underachievement is partly attributed to a restriction in carrying out activities due to COVID-19 and awaiting of the DHH final report to inform further programming.
ES.1-13	Number of parent teacher associations (PTAs) or community governance structures engaged in primary or secondary education	0	0	No structures were engaged in this period.	657	0	0	0	0	0	No activities done to reach structures due to COVID-19 in FY20.

	supported with USG assistance										
ES.1-49	Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that are inclusively representative provided with USG assistance	0	0	No materials were produced in this period.	5113	0	0	0	0	0	Production and distribution of teaching and learning materials was delayed due to COVID-19 as schools were closed.
ES.4.1	Number of vulnerable persons benefitting from USG-supported social services	956	959	The data captured here includes the 957 learners assessed under the two EGRA assessments for LD and BLV. REFAM also engaged 2 blind participants from MUB.	8267	139	5	138*	0	0	Reached 138 vulnerable persons in Q2, 4 of whom reached in Q1. No learners reached in Q3 and Q4 as schools were closed due to COVID-19 and no trainings were done for adults with disabilities. These adults with disabilities came from MANAD, Mua, FEDOMA and Mary View School for the Deaf.
ES.4.2	Number of service providers trained who serve vulnerable persons	5	6	REFAM engaged 6 officials from BICO, Sandithandiza, a braillest and 2 guides for MUB officials in the adaptation workshop for BLV.	5	4	2	3*	0	0	3 service providers were reached in Q2, but one was already captured in Q1 data. No trainings in Q3 and Q4 due to COVID-19. These are sign language

											interpreters, tutors and illustrators.
ES.4.3	Number of USG-assisted organizations and/or service delivery systems that serve vulnerable persons strengthened	5	3	Three organizations were reached in FY 19 that supported the BLV workshop including BICO, Sandithandiza and MUB.	5	2	2	2*	0	0	REFAM engaged MANAD, MUB, APDM, APAM and Deafblind Malawi via WhatsApp on the various education interventions for CwDs and COVID-19 response.
<p>All organizations reached in Q2 were also reached in Q1. The annual results represent unique organizations.</p>											
AMELP Indicators (Other)											
Cus.RI.2	Number of primary or secondary school educators (from mainstream schools under MERIT/YESA integration) who complete professional development activities on teaching students with special educational needs with USG assistance	42,952	43,899	REFAM did not participate in any trainings or development of materials in 2019 under the MERIT/YESA integration as the project was still setting up. As such the reported figure is MERITs achievement.	29999	27887	24467	-	-	3402	Through FY20, REFAM worked with MERIT/YESA in contributing toward developing content on special needs education in their training materials that have been used to train classroom and SNE teachers in Grade 1 and 2, Section Heads, PEAs and Key Teachers. MERIT records show that 16,298 females and 11,589 males were reached in FY 20 totaling 27,887. Through the trainings where REFAM contributed

Cus.RI.3	Percentage of teachers who demonstrate knowledge and skill in the use of specific inclusive teaching practices	40%	0%		55%	66%	0	66%	0%	0	from the MSL EGRA completed in Q2, it was reported that the teachers did a number of positive actions in mainstream schools including - referring to teachers guides (43%), 87% moved around classroom, 83% called learners by name, 87% encouraged learner participation, 81% brought learners to task, 4% recorded performance while 77% engaged DHH learners. The reported figure is the average of the positive actions reported.
Cus.RI.4	Percent of parents or guardians or other family members supporting teaching children with disabilities	0	0	Parents were not reached in any activities in the year.	15%	0	0	0	0	0	REFAM could not do activities reaching parents due to COVID-19. REFAM will utilize in-school activities to reach out to the parents in 2021, through which surveys will be done to establish their support for learners with disabilities.
Cus.RI.5	Number of laws, policies, regulations or guidelines	5	0	These deliverables were moved to FY 20 and FY21.	1	1	0	0	0	1	REFAM has in the reporting period developed a Think Piece that is a

	developed or modified to improve reading instruction and assessment of children with disabilities											rationale for the development of a standalone policy on Inclusive Education (IE) and a Road Map for a standalone IE Policy.
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

Annex B: Success Story

New modes of Learning for Inclusive Education in Malawi – Weaving Universal Design for Learning into the National Reading Program

Like many schools around the world, in March 2020, schools in Malawi closed down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to schools closing nationally, the Malawian government outlined a range of guidelines and policies regarding in-person meeting sizes. Small group training sessions of no more than ten people are allowed to gather during the pandemic, for example. Given all of the constraints of the pandemic, REFAM since March 2020 has been intentionally integrating technology into our programming in an effort to continue reaching our stakeholders.



Figure 1: UDL Training Session

In partnership with the Department of Special Needs Education (DSNE), REFAM initiated WhatsApp groups for Special Needs Educators (SNE) as well as Disabled Person's Organizations (DPOs); these communication channels have become important platforms whereby SNE educators are sharing information, for example, photos and stories of initiating home visits with their learners. Also, the WhatsApp groups became networks for sharing official information about COVID-19 and also messages from the Ministry of Education, as well as information on webinars and reports focused on Inclusive Education.

Given the success REFAM has observed with the WhatsApp groups, and the fact that schools remained closed, REFAM and DSNE knew that we needed to conduct training and we understood that technology would be an integral part of our model if we were to reach all 34 education districts. REFAM and DSNE devised a blended training model with which we managed to reach 500 educators in a span of four days for flagship training on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). *Weaving Inclusion into the National Reading Program* topics include Introduction to Universal Design for Learning (module 1), Individualized Education Plans (module 2), and Screening and Identification (module 3). The content of the training packages includes: scripted facilitator guide, slides, participant workbook, and pre- and posttest.

As readiness for this model required a baseline of proficiency in technology, REFAM and DSNE were intentional in our outreach and support before, during and after the trainings. Ramping up to the October 2020 training, in September 2020 REFAM offered two technology trainings, whereby participants could practice basic skills such as practice with the discussion board and muting and unmuting. In addition, there were many complex logistics that went into the design of the training model, including the inclusive education coordinators needing to procure equipment and materials for the trainings.

Incorporated in the complex logistics, REFAM is prioritizing modeling UDL as part of the training and therefore ensuring that interpreters are included for any teachers who are blind, deaf or in need of

assistance. In addition, REFAM made an explicit effort to ask participants to turn on the closed captioning and braille supports were sent in advance.

In assessing the training course, it is important to consider the point of view of the participant. REFAM obtained close to 500 surveys from participants which we are able to review, in detail, the experiences that participants are reporting. Participants reported high rates of satisfaction as far as the support they received from DSNE and REFAM before, during and after the training. Participants reported too that they noticed and appreciated the level of engagement of DSNE in this training. However, there were a significant number of participants who reported a preference for going back to a face-to-face model when this is a possibility, and coordinators cited the level of effort associated with the logistics for this workshop as a big challenge.

The Universal Design for Learning blended training model that enabled DSNE was the first of its kind in Malawi, and the fact that all 34 education districts were reached in four days of training is significant. The training course took three and half hours, and participants did not have to travel far or overnight to take part because all of the training sites, by design, were relatively close to the locations where the educators live and work. REFAM is still determining the costs as well as well as the impact of this model of training, and are in the process of consulting stakeholders to determine what aspects of this model to keep, and what needs to be adapted when moving forward.