



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

MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

Building an Education System That Supports Learning in the Early Grades in
Malawi: Findings from an Institutional Capacity Assessment, June 2018

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Capacity Assessment

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

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Abbreviations

CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CPEA	Coordinating Primary Education Advisor
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DEM	District Education Manager
DEMISO	District Education Management Information System Officer
DEP	Department of Education Planning
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DIAS	Department of Inspection and Advisory Services
DSNE	Department of Special Needs Education
DTED	Department of Teacher Education Development
ECC	Education Committee Chairperson
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
ESIP	Education Sector Improvement Plan
FGD	focus group discussion
HT	head teacher
ISS	Institutional System Strengthening
LB	learner's book
MERIT	Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity
MESIP	Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project
MG	Mother Group
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
NES	National Education Standards
NRP	National Reading Program
NRS	National Reading Strategy
PCR	Pupil-to-classroom ratio
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PQTR	Pupil to qualified teacher ratio
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SEGREM	Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi
SGB	School Governing Body
SH	Section Head

SMC	School Management Committee
TG	Teacher's Guide
TTC	Teacher Training College
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YESA	Yesani Ophunzira (Assess the Learners)

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Government of Malawi, through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) with financial and technical support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is implementing a National Reading Programme (NRP) aimed at improving the reading skills of Malawian students in Standards 1–4, nationwide. USAID is supporting the NRP by providing technical and financial support through three activities: (1) MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity; (2) SEGREM: Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi; and (3) YESA: *Yesani Ophunzira* Activity (Assess the Learners). The funding for all three activities will end between 2018 and 2021, and one of the objectives of MERIT is to ensure pathways for sustainability of reading outcomes are instituted such that gains made under the NRP are sustained after USAID support ends. As a first step, MERIT conducted a capacity assessment of the education system in Malawi to determine the extent to which the system is performing a set of core functions that have been shown to promote and sustain learning (Crouch & DeStefano, 2017). These are: (1) setting and communicating expectations; (2) monitoring against expectations; and (3) providing targeted support to schools and teachers. The goal of the capacity assessment exercise was to identify the key areas and opportunities to strengthen the education system’s capacity for producing and sustaining learning outcomes. The capacity assessment exercise involved extensive research and participatory consultation processes at national, district, and school levels, and under the guidance of an Institutional System Strengthening (ISS) Taskforce convened by the MoEST. The assessment exercise reached 13 of 34 educational districts and included focus group discussions (FGDs) with district and school-level personnel and community members and interviews with key leaders at MoEST central office. The assessment team also reviewed key policy documents and plans. The assessment exercise was undertaken between March and May 2018 by MERIT staff with support of members from the ISS Taskforce.

The instruments used for the exercise were adapted from a tool and framework developed by RTI International, which identified 15 characteristics (or behaviors) of education systems that promote learning (5 each for the 3 core functions outlined above).

The findings of the capacity assessment follow.

1.2 Summary of Findings

Setting and communicating expectations

Malawi has defined some system goals and targets in national policy documents and plans, but these goals have not been specific to learning.

Under the NRP and the National Reading Strategy, curricular expectations with regards to reading are clear and well defined. They have been embedded into teaching and learning materials such as teacher’s guides (TGs) and learner’s books (LBs), which teachers have been to use. Reading benchmarks were defined as part of the USAID-funded Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity, but these have not been officially adopted by MoEST, and they are not widely known by key education stakeholders.

MoEST has recently developed a National Education Standards (NES) document, which outlines educational standards in several educational aspects, including teaching and learning. These standards were expected to be used by inspectors to evaluate schools, but teachers and school governing bodies were not fully aware of the NES. Many of the policy documents and guidelines developed at the national level have not been effectively communicated down the ranks to the schools.

Monitoring against expectations

There are policies and guidelines that support a monitoring and quality assurance system, but the implementation of these guidelines is weak. At the school level, teachers do conduct periodic assessments of students, but these assessments are based not on objective criteria but on the discretion of individual teachers.

Assessments are done either termly or annually and are mostly used to determine whether a student is promoted to the next level.

As part of the NRP, USAID has funded annual early grade reading assessments. While these have provided good information on how the system is performing, the assessment is not geared toward tracking progress of individual students or schools.

MoEST has school support officials, such as Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and inspectors, who are supposed to provide teacher support and inspection services, respectively. But because of various challenges, these officers do not visit the schools frequently enough to provide effective services. When PEAs do visit schools, they are supposed to conduct teacher observations and provide coaching support to teachers.

Under the NRP, SHs have been trained to conduct teacher observations and provide coaching support to their peers. The data from these observations are recorded and shared with the HTs but are not aggregated at a national level. There are very few data that can be used as the basis of monitoring teacher performance.

The YESA activity will be working with MoEST to develop and train teachers on a continuous assessment protocol for monitoring student performance.

Providing support to schools and teachers

Because of the lack of learning data at the school level, the system does not have any means of identifying struggling schools or teachers that need targeted support. What data exist come from national end-of-cycle examinations, which do not provide the information needed to improve learning, since they are terminal exams.

In general, provision of teaching and learning materials and other resources to schools is weak as evidenced by very high pupil-to-teacher, pupil-to-classroom, and pupil-to-book ratios.

However, under the NRP, USAID has supported MoEST to provide adequate teaching and learning materials, including LBs and supplementary readers, to support the teaching of reading. Through the YESA Activity, additional opportunities will be provided to support students who are struggling to read. Targeted support has been provided to readers with visual impairments as all learner texts have been provided in large-print and braille.

For other subjects that do not have similar support from outside funders, the system hasn't been able to provide the requisite resources.

1.3 Recommendations

Setting and communicating expectations

- Revise or develop specific and measurable reading goals and benchmarks in Chichewa and English, using a participatory approach, and disseminate to relevant stakeholders.
- Develop and implement a communication plan that allows MoEST to communicate and coordinate more effectively within the sector, and with external stakeholders and the general public about the reading goals.
- Finalize and disseminate the Chichewa NES to various actors within the system, including all school governing bodies, to enhance understanding and interpretation of standards and expectations of the various actors.

Monitoring against expectations

- PEAs, with support from District Education Managers (DEMs), to develop schedules for visiting schools to provide coaching support to teachers and section heads (SHs) for reading instruction.
- Teachers, PEAs, and DEMs supported to undertake periodic assessment of reading outcomes in schools as a way of identifying students and schools that are making progress and those that need extra support.
- Build capacity of schools and district level officials to use learning assessment data in their decision-making and performance management.

Providing support to schools and teachers

- Improve the capacity of MoEST at the district level to plan, develop, and deliver on educational budgets that are more closely aligned to the goal of improving learning, especially with regard to providing ongoing support for schools and teachers.
- Develop the skills and knowledge of DEMs and other district education officials to manage and oversee the NRP activities in their districts, using available data on performance.
- Develop mechanisms for identifying and rewarding high-performing teachers and schools and providing targeted support for those that are struggling. YESA is already working on a remedial program for struggling students.
- Orient School Governing Bodies (SGBs) on the role they can play in improving reading outcomes.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity is a five-year USAID activity designed to provide technical assistance to MoEST in improving the reading performance of Malawian learners in Standards 1–4, nationwide. Reading performance is defined as students' achieving reading fluency as determined by the MoEST reading benchmarks.

MERIT has five main objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Improved instruction for primary grade reading outcomes
- **Objective 2:** Increased parental and community engagement in supporting reading
- **Objective 3:** Safer learning environments for reading created
- **Objective 4:** Pathways for sustainability instituted
- **Objective 5:** Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) priorities for integration advanced

This capacity assessment exercise was conducted as part of Objective 4, which is concerned with ensuring that there is a clear path toward sustainability, including through the development of local capacity, to ensure that the achievement of MERIT outlive the funded activity.

During the first three years of its operation, MERIT has provided technical assistance to MoEST and related agencies in the implementation of the NRP. MERIT has worked closely with the MoEST officials and through government systems to train over 45,000 teachers from Standard 1-4 on reading instruction and building safe and inclusive schools; develop teaching and learning materials (TLMs), including teacher guides, learner books, and supplementary readers; produced printed and distributed braille and large-print versions of these TLMs; and trained over 21,000 SHs, PEAs, and head teachers (HTs) on providing coaching support for teachers. Through these activities, MERIT has worked with and developed capacity of officials at MoEST, at national, district, and zonal levels; Malawi Institute of Education (MIE); teacher training colleges (TTCs), and schools.

In the final two years of its operation, MERIT will work to ensure that the education system overall can sustain any learning gains made under the NRP. MERIT's focus will be on ensuring that the education system has the capacity to perform the core functions needed to promote and sustain learning. The capacity assessment that is the focus of this report investigates the extent to which the Malawian education system can perform those core functions needed to promote learning.

2.2 Capacity Assessment Framework

The capacity assessment is based on a framework proposed by Crouch and DeStefano ((Luis Crouch & Joseph DeStefano, 2017)), who argued that education systems that promote and sustain learning have to be able to perform a set of core functions as follows.

Setting and communicating expectations for learning

Education systems that are geared toward sustaining learning should set expectations for what students should know and do, what teachers should know and do, and for what other educational actors should do to support their learning. In addition, these expectations should be communicated throughout the system to various actors from parents, teachers, school heads, district officials, and students themselves.

Monitoring against set expectations and holding actors accountable

Once learning goals are known and communicated, education systems should be able to monitor progress against goals and hold various actors responsible for their role in the achievement of those goals. The information could then be used to motivate performance. This function allows the system to know whether learners are making progress toward achieving their goals.

Supporting struggling students and teachers, while providing basic inputs for all

Learning systems should be able to use the monitoring data collected to intervene to support struggling schools and recognize high performers—teachers and students. In addition, in order to hold school and other education actors accountable for delivering learning, the system must ensure that the minimum inputs (financial, technical, materials, etc.) have been provided. For example, one cannot hold teachers accountable for producing learning if they have not received the training or necessary materials for them to do their job. The capacity assessment conducted, evaluated the extent to which the Malawi education system performed the identified core functions, as it pertains to sustaining learning outcomes in early grade reading. The core functions are really about accountability for learning—setting and communicating expectations for learning; monitoring progress toward learning; holding school, teachers, and other educational actors accountable for learning; and holding the system itself accountable for providing what schools need—basic inputs, and targeted support.

2.3 Methodology

The work on this assessment was undertaken through review of policy documents, key informant interviews with MoEST officials, and FGDs with participants at the district, zone, and school levels. The process was supported and overseen by the ISS Taskforce, which is made up of members of various departments at MoEST. See ***Annex 2*** for a list of members.

Sample

A total of 13 out of the 34 educational districts participated in the assessment: Balaka, Blantyre Rural, Blantyre Urban, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Dedza, Karonga, Kasungu, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje, and Thyolo. Participating districts were selected purposively so as to reflect a mix of characteristics. The sample included one district per education division, a mix of urban and rural districts, and a mix of small and large districts. Twenty-four schools within these districts also participated in the assessment.

National Level

At the national level, the team interviewed heads of departments (Directors and Deputy Directors) at MoEST, including the departments of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Teacher Education and Development (DTED), Education Planning (DEP), Special Needs Education (DSNE), and Basic Education (DBE).

District Level

At the district level, the team held FGDs with district education staff as described below:

- 18 DEMISOs (5 women, 13 men)
- 11 DEMs (3 women, 8 men)
- 4 CPEAs (3 men, 1 woman)
- 6 Inspectors (4 men, 2 women)
- 2 Education Committee Chairpersons (ECCs) (2 men, 0 women)
- 2 District Directors of Development and Planning (2 men, 0 women)

Zonal Level

At the zonal level FGDs were held with 46 PEAs (26 men, 20 women) from Karonga, Kasungu, Blantyre, Dedza, and Balaka Districts.

School Level

FGDs were held with a total of 133 school-level officials (76 men, 57 women) and 76 community members (43 men, 33 women). The school-level officials comprised HTs, SHs, and teachers, while the community people were members of SGBs such as school management committees (SMCs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and Mother Groups (MGs).

Table 1 below shows the number of participants in the FGDs by district and position. In all, a total of 301 individuals (125 women, 176 men) participated in the assessment.

Table 1. District, Zonal, and School-Level Education Officials in FGDs

	DEMs		DEMISOs		CPEAs		ECCs		Inspectors		Directors of Planning and Development		HTs and Teachers		Members of SGBs		PEAs	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Balaka													11	2	4	3	5	5
Blantyre Urban		1	1	1					2	1			8	7	3	2	4	1
Blantyre Rural	1		2		1				1	1			5	1	5	2	0	3
Chiradzulu	1		1	1	1					1	1		8	5	7	1		
Dedza													14	11		7	5	5
Karonga	1					1		1		1			11	6	15	11	7	1
Kasungu	1				1		1		1	1	1		11	22	7	1	5	5
Mulanje	1		2															
Mwanza		1	1	1														
Neno	1		2															
Nsanje	1		1	1														
Ntchisi													8	3	2	6		
Thyolo	1		2															
Chikwawa		1	1	1														
Total	8	3	13	5	3	1	1	1	4	5	2	0	76	57	43	33	26	20
Grand Total	11		18		4		2		9		2		133		76		46	

Tools and instruments

The data collection instruments used for the FGDs and interviews were adopted from instruments developed by RTI International's International Education team to correspond with the systems framework described above. The instruments further defined the three core functions described (setting and communicating expectations, monitoring against expected, providing targeting support) into 15 behaviors or characteristics that learning systems will have—five for each of the three core functions.

Thus, the data collection instruments were designed to assess the extent to which the education system in Malawi exhibited the 15 characteristics or behaviors of highly functioning systems, as listed in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. 15 Characteristics or Behaviors of a Highly Supportive System

1. Setting and communicating expectations

- 1.1. Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).
- 1.2. Curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points – i.e. each term, each grade. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.
- 1.3. Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics), and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.
- 1.4. Expectations for principals regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.
- 1.5. School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/principals/teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.

2. Monitoring against expectations

- 2.1. Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.
- 2.2. Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.
- 2.3. Supervisor and/or principal monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).
- 2.4. Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or principals are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance.
- 2.5. Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

3. Providing support to schools and teachers

- 3.1. Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.
- 3.2. Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).

- 3.3. Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes.
- 3.4. District/sub-district levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help.
- 3.5. National-level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection took place between March and May 2018. Interviews and FGDs were conducted by the Capacity Building Specialist together with MoEST officials and MERIT staff.

The Capacity Development Task Force, comprising members from DIAS, DEP, DBE, DTED, and DSNE, served as an advisory group. The task force members from DIAS and DEP contributed to the review and adaptation of the instrument, data collection, review and discussion of findings, and preliminary prioritization of the recommendations.

The data collected were analyzed using a deductive approach, using the research questions as a guide for grouping and analyzing the data.

2.4 Education Sector’s Policy and Regulatory Framework

The policy and regulatory framework of the education sector in Malawi is principally defined by four key documents: The Education Act (2013), the Local Government Act (1998) and its 2017 Amendment, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III (2017–2022), and the National Education Sector Plan (2008–2017).

Several other documents, particularly the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) II (2013/14 –2017/18), the National Reading Strategy (NRS) (2014–2019), the National Education Policy (2013), and the NES, as well as specific sub-sector policies, also have important implications for the education sector’s priorities and objectives. These documents, and more, were reviewed as part of this assessment. A full list of key policy documents reviewed are included in the Bibliography.

The main actors responsible for delivering on education policies and goals are listed in **Annex 4**.

Finally, there are several major donor-funded projects that support MoEST in the implementation of the above strategies and plans in support of early grade learning. Some data reviewed came from these projects. The projects are listed in **Table 2**.

Table 2. List of Major Projects That Support the Implementation of MoEST Strategies and Plans

Project Name	Funder	Amount	Objectives
Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project (MESIP)	Global Partnership for Education and managed by the World Bank	\$44.9 million	To improve the equity and quality of primary education service delivery in early grade levels with an emphasis on improved accountability and functioning at the school level

Project Name	Funder	Amount	Objectives
MERIT: Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity	USAID and UK Department for International Development	\$64.9 million	To improve the reading skills of children in Standards 1–4 in Chichewa and English
Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity	USAID	\$13.9 million	To improve the reading skills of learners in Standards 1–3 in 13 districts in Malawi
YESA	USAID	\$15 million	To help the Malawian Education system build its capacity to measure students' reading acquisition and to create citizen demand for improved reading instruction

3. Findings

The findings are organized around the three core functions and 15 corresponding characteristics of a learning-coherent education system.

3.1 Functional Area (FA)1: Setting and Communicating Expectations

FA1.1 Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system

There are some system goals and targets outlined in national documents such as the ESIP II. For example, the ESIP II has a policy goal related to literacy and learning that reads: “50% of children reach [Standard] 4 literacy/numeracy by 2017,” and this goal was to be tracked through an indicator that measured the percentage of students in Standards 4–8 that met Standard 4 literacy and numeracy standards. This goal, while important, is not specific enough, and Standard 4 literacy and numeracy standards have not been defined.

Some benchmarks and targets for literacy in Chichewa were defined under the USAID-funded Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity. However, they have not been officially adopted by MoEST, although the benchmarks are now being used to track progress in the current NRP, supported by USAID through MERIT.

Aside from the broad literacy and numeracy goal outlined in the ESIP II, most of the system-level goals and standards are more related to access and inputs than to learning. For example, the primary and basic education objectives from MGDS III, shown in **Figure 2**, have little focus on concrete learning outcomes. Similarly, the indicators used to measure progress include: net attendance ratios, survival rates, transition rates, pupil to qualified teacher ratios, with no concrete measures of learning.

Figure 2. Education Objectives as Outlined in the MGDS III

1. Improved quality and relevance of primary education

- ◆ Improving teaching inputs to facilitate more effective learning.

- ◆ Reducing class sizes to facilitate more effective learning through progressively recruiting trained teachers.
- ◆ Enhancing the relevance of primary school curriculum.
- ◆ Ensuring the availability of [TLMs], including for special needs learners.
- ◆ Reinforcing inspection and supervision system of primary education.
- ◆ Improving incentives to teachers and [supervising] their performance.
- ◆ Improving access to basic health services that meet girls' and boys' needs in all primary schools.
- ◆ Regulating and standardizing private sector participation in basic education.

2. Improved access and equity in basic education

- ◆ Improving net school enrolment and completion rates, including for those disadvantaged by gender, poverty, special needs, and geographical location.
- ◆ Improving, expanding, and maximizing the use of permanent infrastructure such as classrooms, school facilities, and teachers' houses.
- ◆ Strengthening complementary basic educational modalities for learners including Interactive Radio Instructions (IRI) and Open and Distance Learning.
- ◆ Building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe and effective learning environments.
- ◆ Introducing comprehensive programmes at the formal and non-formal levels, including adult education.

3. Improved governance and management of basic education

- ◆ Mobilizing communities to participate in school development and management activities.
- ◆ Monitoring performance and strengthening internal efficiency of basic education system.
- ◆ Ensuring full decentralization of education services.

Source: (Government of Malawi, 2017)

The assessment revealed that district, zone, and school-level officials are more aware of broad national goals (to improve access and quality) than specific targets and benchmarks, as most officials found it difficult to cite specific targets and benchmarks.

District and school officials further indicated that most of the times targets are set at the national level without much consultation with district officials or those that have a direct bearing on the set targets, such as teachers themselves. This makes it difficult for the districts to achieve set targets or localize them.

FA1.2 Curriculum that provides both specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points and actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated

In 2007, Malawi launched its first outcome-based curriculum for primary schools that outlined objectives and outcomes that learners were expected to achieve by the end of primary school. The curriculum also outlined knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be demonstrated by learners at each standard. Subject syllabi were developed for each subject in the curriculum and are still current to date, with the exception being in reading. The syllabi provide expectations of learner competencies and proficiency levels for each grade and subject. The 2007 curriculum and syllabi were rolled out to

teachers using a cascade training but did not reach all teachers in all grades due to lack of funding.

With the approval of the NRS in 2014, MoEST's approach to the teaching of reading in Chichewa and English changed. The MIE, with support from MERIT, developed new curricula, TGs, and LBs for teachers and students in Standards 1 to 4. The MIE is also currently in the process of aligning the existing Chichewa and English syllabi to the NRS. Through the NRP, teachers, SHs, and PEAs have received training on the teaching of reading and are able to identify documents and materials that contain learner competencies and proficiency levels such as the teacher guides. DEMs, on the other hand, found it difficult to mention the documents that contain learner expectations.

Part of the reason for lower levels of awareness among DEMs and other district officials about the specific curricula expectations is that, so far, they have not been the targets of sustained outreach or training by the NRP. In addition, they have not been involved in the design of these curricula expectations and targets as their role is largely focused on management. In addition, while materials developed have been distributed to schools, they have not been distributed to district education offices. Given the importance of the role of the district education offices, under decentralization, we would need to do more to engage the DEMs and other district officials in the management and support of learning.

Finally, while the NRP has ensured that TLMs related to reading instruction have reached the schools, the MoEST has not been able to do the same for other subjects and with other policy documents such as NES.

FA1.3 Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes, and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are

As mentioned earlier, under the NRP, MoEST developed TGs for teachers of Standards 1–4, which include scripted lesson plans that guide teachers on the instruction of Chichewa and English. TGs provide detailed information on what learners are supposed to learn each day and detailed instructions for teachers on what and how to teach them. All teachers of Standards 1–4 and HTs received training on the use of these materials, and they all received a copy of the TGs.

Such detailed scripted lesson plans do not exist for other subjects. Instead, teachers are expected to develop their own lesson plans based on the syllabus. The NES provides standards pertaining to teaching such as “Teaching for effective learning” and “Teaching which meets the needs of all students,” but these are general standards that have not been translated into specific expectations for what teachers should do to meet these standards (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Malawi, 2015).

Furthermore, while these standards such as the NES are available, and officials are aware of their existence, the assessment established that zonal and school administrators find the interpretation of these standards to be a challenge. Where teachers knew of the standards, they mentioned not having the skills or training required to meet the standards. For example, although the standards emphasized the need to provide support to special needs education learners, teachers cannot do this adequately as they have not received enough training.

FA1.4 Expectations for principals regarding their instructional support roles, and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

Through the NES, MoEST has defined standards and expectations for school leaders (Standards 16–20). In addition, the *Primary School Administration Handbook* provides an outline of head teacher job descriptions, as do recruitment notices from the Teaching Service Commission. The handbooks, however, are not available in schools.

In line with this, HTs revealed that they were not fully aware of their job description but do support teachers based on their experience. Also, there is no pre-service leadership training for HTs, most of whom just moved up the ranks from teacher or deputy head teacher (Wamba, 2015).

In 2018, MoEST, with technical assistance from MERIT, provided training for all HT on their instructional support role as it pertains to supporting teachers on reading instruction. The two-day training covered topics such as the head teacher’s role in coaching, remediation, monitoring, and continuous assessment.

In addition to the NRP training of HTs, the Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project (MESIP), which is funded by the GPE, will also be providing leadership training to about 800 HTs to cover topics such as managing schools in “resource-constrained environments” and motivating and rewarding teachers (World Bank, 2016).

The assessment further noted that members of school governing structures are not fully aware of head teacher standards and expectations. MoEST, however, is in the process of finalizing the translation of the NES into Chichewa to enhance understanding of the standards by a larger group of stakeholders.

FA1.5 School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational, and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/principals/teachers in achieving the desired outcomes

The findings reveal that at the national level, MoEST has policies and guidelines for the provision of external support to teachers and schools. Examples of these documents include National Standards for Primary and Secondary Education, Education Act 2013, DIAS *Handbook for Inspectors and Advisors*, National Education Policy, and the National Strategy for Community Mobilization among others. Furthermore, MoEST has put in place support personnel at all the levels to provide the support, including CPEAs and inspectors at the district level, PEAs and key teachers at zonal level, and HTs and deputy HTs at the school level. Through the NRP, SHs have also assumed the role of supporting teachers as coaches.

The *Handbook for Inspectors and Advisors* distinguishes the roles played by inspectors and PEAs in supporting schools. Inspectors periodically visit schools to conduct an independent external evaluation of the effectiveness of the school, while PEAs are expected to support schools and teachers by providing ongoing guidance to the school on teaching, learning, leadership, and management (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2015). The handbook also outlines the number of schools any single PEA is responsible for (10–15) and the expected number of support visits (between 3 and 6 per year per school). Overall, it is expected that about 60% of an advisor’s time is spent on school support.

However, the actual frequency of PEA and inspector visits to schools is much lower than that prescribed by policy. Some of the key challenges that limit the frequency of visits, as reported by respondents, include lack of resources to support travel, not enough inspectors to cover all the schools, and time being taken up by other activities.

To make up for the lack of visits by PEAs, MoEST recommended that SHs assume the primary role of providing peer-based coaching support to teachers and the NRP, and MERIT has trained the SHs on this role.

3.2 Functional Area 2: Monitoring Against Expectations

FA2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments

While some teachers do periodically assess learning outcomes, continuous assessment is not systematic and most teachers do not know how to do this well (Chulu, 2013). Teachers face several challenges conducting continuous assessments due to large classes, understaffing, and lack of documentation of assessment results.

Over the years, there have been attempts to institutionalize continuous assessments in Malawi through projects funded by USAID and other partners such as Improving Education Quality, Malawi Break Through to Literacy, and Literacy Across Curriculum interventions. However, these reforms have not been able to take root in their intended forms because of lack of resources, both financial and technical. A current USAID-funded project, YESA, will be training teachers on conducting continuous assessment for reading, but this is yet to get underway.

Other entities outside of the schools also assess learners at varying frequencies. PEAs reported assessing learners when they visit a school, but the scope of this assessment is unclear, and given that the visits are sporadic, these assessments are not done on a routine basis. Malawi is part of the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality, which conducts assessment of literacy and numeracy performance of Grade 6 students in member countries. The assessment provides national-level (and comparative) results, and Malawi has consistently ranked at the bottom of the ranking of about 15-member countries. The assessments have been conducted every four to five years since 2001, but there has been no assessment conducted since 2011. Finally, the Malawi National Examination Board conducts end-of-cycle examinations of learners at the end of the primary and secondary cycles. These exams are conducted annually for students in the last grade of primary and secondary school.

FA2.2 Use of learning outcomes data at the school level

The findings indicate that teachers provide formal and informal feedback to parents on student progress in early grades. The most common way of providing formal feedback is using school reports produced either termly or annually depending on availability of resources. The school report cards are provided to the learners, and learners can take them home.

Other less formal ways that schools use to provide feedback is through open days, reading fairs, and one-on-one meetings with parents. Learners in Standard 1 and 2

are mostly assessed orally, while Standard 3 and 4 students have written tests that are defined by teachers individually.

In addition, results from the examinations given at the end of academic year are used to determine whether a learner will transition to the next standard or repeat. Similarly, end-of-cycle examinations are used to certify students and to determine whether a learner will transition from one cycle to the next.

There is little evidence that school leaders (HTs or SHs), supervisors, or PEAs provide feedback to teachers on student progress. PEAs are supposed to provide feedback to teachers and HTs, but this is not a consistent practice.

FA2.3 Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance, availability, and use of TLMs at the school level in their progress through the curriculum, as well as their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data

MoEST has policies and procedures in place for monitoring teacher performance through classroom observations, and inspectors and PEAs are responsible for conducting classroom observations using specific instruments. According to the DIAS handbook, inspectors and supervisors should provide oral feedback after every performance evaluation or school visit and a written copy of an assessment report to the school and district.

According to the Education Act 2011, SMCs are responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality of both teachers and learners and the quality of learning and for reporting these to the PEA.

The NES document provides the standards against which teaching outcomes are assessed, and samples of available inspection reports suggest that inspectors are assessing students based on their work. The NES provides criteria for inspectors to assess whether the school, classroom, or teacher was meeting, below, or above minimum standards.

Table 3. Standards Pertaining to Student Outcomes and Teaching Process

Area	No	Education Standard
Outcomes for students	1.	Learning in lessons
	2.	Students' outcomes in the curriculum
	3.	Attainment across the school
	4.	Students' participation in education
	5.	Students' behavior and involvement in school life
	6.	Students' safety and protection
The teaching process	7.	A curriculum that is appropriate and relevant
	8.	High expectations
	9.	Teachers with good professional, subject, and curriculum knowledge
	10.	Well-planned lessons
	11.	Teaching for effective learning
	12.	Accurate and constructive use of assessment

Area	No	Education Standard
	13.	Teaching which meets the needs of all students
	14.	Effective management of behavior

Source: NES

NES Standard 25 pertains to the management of material resources, including TLMs. At a minimum, schools are expected to keep their materials well organized, secure, well-cared for, and accessible to students.

The NES document is not strictly limited to early grade learning and is used to assess teachers and learners of all standards and subjects. Also, the instrument linked to the NES provides broad measures of student practice, not necessarily linked to early grade reading.

Under the NRP, the MoEST has developed monitoring tools for SHs and PEAs that are more directly linked to early grade reading. Data that are collected through coaching visits are documented, and the information is used as a basis for providing feedback to the teachers and determining further areas for support. The NRP also conducts a National Assessment of Reading Instruction, which does assess instructional practice for early grade reading. The information derived is used to improve the NRP activities, but not integrated into the wider teacher management system.

FA2.4 Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level

School leaders and supervisors reported that they discussed the quality of teaching with the teachers based on results from classroom observations, attendance records, and assessment and examination results. These discussions are recorded in school minute books and advisory and inspection reports. Performance is also discussed during PTA and SMC meetings and documented in the minute books. However, discussions about performance are usually dominated by performance in the Malawi National Examination Board Primary school-leaving examinations.

Under the NRP, discussions on the quality of teaching with respect to early grade reading are recorded in the coaching record books. PEAs and SHs have been oriented on how to conduct the coaching, document the results, and use the data as a basis for providing support to teachers to enable them to perform according to expectations. The PEAs and CPEAs have also been provided with tablets to ease documentation and analysis of collected data.

According to NES Standard 20 on Staff Supervision and Development, the HTs and senior teachers are to use the data from lesson observations to inform regular appraisal of the work of teachers. However, it is unclear how these data, when collected, are used to inform teacher performance appraisals or promotions.

FA2.5 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels

Data on teaching and learning outcomes that are collected from inspection visits are supposed to be reported at the district level. DEMs should receive a report of all inspection visits of schools in their districts. The school-level coaching data are not reported upward to district and national levels, as that is not the purpose. Instead these data are to be stored by the head teacher, and accessible to education officials

from the district or national level who visit the school. The data collected by PEAs from the coaching visits are submitted upwards to databases hosted by MERIT. These data are then shared with DEMs. It is the hope that by the end of MERIT, these data can be transferred to MoEST.

A separate data collection process exists as part of an annual census of schools. It is stored in a central education management information system (EMIS). There are EMIS officers at the district, zonal, and national levels who are responsible for the collection, storage, and reporting of the EMIS data. The EMIS data collected focus on enrollments (learners, orphans, special needs education students, etc.) and school inputs (numbers of teachers, books, classrooms, etc.). From these data, indicators pertaining to access (e.g., enrollment ratios), equity (gender parity indices), and input-ratios (pupil-teacher ratios, pupil-book ratios, etc.) can be calculated. The EMIS data is stored and analyzed centrally, and a statistical report is supposed to be produced annually. However, there is usually a long delay between data collection and publication of report and dissemination is not widespread.

At the school level, similar data are collected on a monthly basis. Additional information collected at the school level include numbers of desks needed, numbers of textbooks needed, PEA supervisory visits, records of SMC/PTA meetings held, details of school finances, and records of progress on the implementation of school improvement plans. Most of the data are on paper and stored in office cupboards, but without proper filing.

In summary, data that are collected by district and zone EMIS officers focus primarily on inputs and enrollments and not learning outcomes. While some reports on this data are produced, their use by school leaders and district managers is limited.

3.2 Functional Area 3: Providing Support to Schools and Teachers

To improve learning outcomes, schools, teachers, and learners must be provided with necessary inputs and targeted support. If schools are expected to produce learning, then the system should support them with the necessary basic inputs such as trainings, TLMs and actual support. The findings below indicate the extent to which the education system can provide targeted support to schools and teachers.

FA3.1 Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs

Under the NRP, all teachers of Standards 1–4 have received training and can receive school-based coaching from SHs and HTs who have been trained to perform this role. In addition, teachers have received TGs, which include scripted lesson plans and resource handbooks, to support their teaching. In addition to the training and coaching for teachers, schools have received learner textbooks and supplementary readers as well as training for HTs. Under the NRP, these inputs (curricula, training, materials, and coaching) are well aligned. MoEST has also mainstreamed the EGR teaching methodologies into teacher’s pre-service training, which should improve sustainability.

However, inputs for other areas outside of reading are not readily available due to financial and human resource challenges. Schools still lack adequate numbers of classrooms and teachers. For example, the 2017 EMIS report, pupil–classroom ratio (PCR) was 121:1 while the pupil–qualified teacher ratio (PQTR) was 79:1. In

addition, these averages hide wide disparities within districts; for example, the PQTR in Machinga was 96.5 and the PCR was 165:1, much higher than the average.

There are programs under development to support early grade numeracy (funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development [DFID]) and classroom construction (funded by the Global Partnership for Education, DFID, and USAID), which should help alleviate some of the most urgent needs. In the meantime, the system must plan for longer term construction and maintenance of school infrastructure. Path to sustainability also means that the system must be able to train new teachers as they are hired, replace TLMs, and keep track of the basic inputs received by schools.

FA3.2 Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind

The findings revealed that learners who are struggling are identified mainly through assessments, but MoEST currently does not have any policies or guidelines in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extra curriculum activities to these learners. It was noted, however, that schools develop their own initiatives to support struggling learners.

The assessment further noted that MoEST, as part of the MESIP program funded by GPE, is focusing on improving promotion rates through addressing the inefficiencies of repetitions and dropout in the primary education system. One of the key ways it is proposing to do so is by providing remedial classes for learners who are struggling (World Bank, 2016). The program is being implemented in a few schools in selected districts. MoEST, with technical support from YESA, is also piloting a remedial reading program, which should eventually have a national reach. It is unclear how these two remedial programs will be coordinated.

FA3.3 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers, students, and schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

The assessment established that MoEST does not have a systematic way of recognizing and rewarding high performance, but some districts and schools have developed their own way of recognizing high performance.

The MESIP Program, funded by GPE, has provided guidelines on how to recognize and reward high performance through a performance-based school improvement grant program, with schools being rewarded if they can improve promotion and retention of students. This initiative is to be piloted in 800 randomly selected school in Chikwawa, Dedza, Kasungu, Lilongwe Rural West, Machinga, Mangochi, Mzimba South, and Thyolo. Under the NRP, MERIT will work with DEMs to develop a recognition program for star teachers as a way of motivating them and other teachers to perform better.

FA3.4 District/sub-district levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools and teachers needing more support are given extra attention, resources, or help.

While there are policy guidelines that support this function, as mentioned earlier, external support to schools by PEAs and inspectors is limited. Under the NRPs, PEAs have been trained to conduct observations of coaching by SHs and to provide support to struggling SHs.

FA3.5 National-level review of needs across schools and districts—with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals

The findings of the assessment revealed that the processes of review, planning, and budget processing do take place at all levels. However, several challenges exist with these processes. At the national level, plans and budget are developed using the top to bottom approach and not the bottom-up approach. Thus, national-level plans are developed based on national and international priority goals such as MGDS or Sustainable Development Goals. As a result of this, strategic plans that are developed are usually devoid of existing needs on the ground.

At the district level, plans that are developed are often a reflection of the national priorities or are based on school improvement plans. But as at the national level, resources are a challenge as ceilings are imposed by the national level.

School-level plans are also developed to reflect the needs of the schools, but most of the times funds that are provided are not adequate. Guidelines on the allocation of the resources also pose a challenge, as needs are much higher than the available resources.

4. Conclusion and Key Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

The institutional capacity assessment exercise was designed to help MoEST identify key priority areas that must be strengthened to effectively sustain NRP interventions. As has been illustrated by the findings of this assessment, the successful and continued implementation of the NRP interventions will require deliberate effort and commitment on the part of the MoEST, supported by its partners, to address the key capacity gaps identified. The assessment has highlighted several gaps that must be addressed in MoEST's ability to carry out the core functions of an effective learning system. While some of these gaps can be addressed within a short period of time, others will require long-term strategies. To achieve this, there is need for MoEST officials, at all levels, to reflect on these challenges and develop a roadmap on how the identified issues will be addressed. One specific issue worth considering is that there have been various attempts by donors and other external partners to tackle some of the issues identified by this assessment on various projects, but these attempts have been piecemeal, and many have not survived much longer than the duration of the program.

4.2 Recommendations

While the preceding discussion has highlighted many changes, this section on recommendations focuses on those key areas that are specific to building system capacity to improve the likelihood of sustaining improvements in reading outcomes.

That said, the recommendations can be extended to cover other areas of the education system.

Setting and communicating expectations

- Revise or develop specific and measurable reading goals and benchmarks in Chichewa and English, using a participatory approach and disseminate to relevant stakeholders
- Develop and implement a communication plan that allows MoEST to communicate and coordinate more effectively within the sector, and with external stakeholders and the general public about the reading goals.
- Finalize and disseminate the Chichewa NES to various actors within the system including SGBs to enhance understanding and interpretation of standards and expectations of the various actors.

Monitoring against Expectations

- PEAs, with support from DEMs, should develop schedules for visiting schools to provide coaching support to teachers and SHs for reading instruction.
- Teachers, PEAs, and DEMs should be supported to undertake periodic assessment of reading outcomes in schools as a way of identifying students and schools that are making progress and those that need extra support.
- Build capacity of schools and district-level officials to use learning assessment data in their decision-making and performance management.

Providing support to schools and teachers

- Improve the capacity of MoEST at the district level to plan, develop, and deliver on educational budgets that are more closely aligned to goal of improving learning, especially with regard to providing ongoing support for schools and teachers.
- Develop the skills and knowledge of DEMs and other district education officials to manage and oversee the NRP activities in their districts, using available data on performance.
- Develop mechanisms for identifying and rewarding high-performing teachers and schools and providing targeted support for those that are struggling. YESA is already working on a remedial program for struggling students.
- Orient SGBs on the role they can play in supporting improving reading outcomes.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Capacity Assessment Questionnaires



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

MoEST Departments

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

Your participation is voluntary and the responses made herein will be confidential.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of institution/ Department:

Name of Official completing the form:

Designation:

Sex: Male: Female:

Contact Number:

Email:

Submission date:/...../.....

National Level Questionnaire

(Instruction: Kindly enter your responses to the questions below)

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS	
1.1	Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).
Questions	<p><i>1.1.1 Does MoEST have any benchmarks in relation to learner fluency or comprehension?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>If Yes, please indicate the specific documents where these can be found.</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.1.2 Are these benchmarks localized at Districts level?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.1.3 Can you cite some examples of these benchmarks?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
1.2	A curriculum provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points – i.e. each term, each grade. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.
Questions	<p><i>1.2.1 Are there any policy or curricular documents that contain competency or proficiency level descriptors?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>If Yes, please provide examples of the proficiency level descriptors and also state where these can be found):</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.2.2 Are teachers, school heads and district support officers (e.g DEMs and Inspectors) aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads and district support officers (e.g DEMs and Inspectors) are aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.2.3 Are parents and school governing bodies (PTA, SMC, MGs) aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

	<p><i>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and school governing bodies (e.g PTA, SMC, MGs) are aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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1.3	<p>Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.</p>
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Questions	<p><i>1.3.1.1 Are there standards or policies for teachers that emphasize either appropriate instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>(If Yes, please name the standards or policy documents these can be found):</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.3.1.2 Do the standards above include the value of providing support to children with disabilities and those struggling to learn?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>(If Yes, please name the standards or policy documents these can be found):</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.3.1.3 Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>1.3.2. Are teachers, school heads and district support officers aware of the instructional standards, behaviors expected out of teachers?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads and district support officers are aware of the instructional standards, behaviors expected out of teachers?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.3.3 Are district supervisors and support officers aware of teacher standards and expectations?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that district supervisors and support officers are aware of teacher standards and expectations?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>1.3.4 Are the standards or policies for teachers clear on gender equitable teaching practices and behaviors (fair treatment of girls and boys)?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
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1.4	<p>Expectations for head teachers regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.</p>
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	<p><i>1.4.1.1 Are there standards or policies for head teachers / deputy head teachers that emphasize either appropriate instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
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	<p>(If Yes, please specify):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>1.4.1.2 Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions for head teachers/ deutes emphasize instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>(If Yes, please specify):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>1.4.2 Are School leaders (head teachers/ deputy headteachers /section headteachers) aware of the standards and expectations?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that head teachers, section heads and teachers are aware of the standards and expectations?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>1.4.3 Are district supervisors and support officers aware of school leaders standards and expectations?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that district supervisors and support officers are aware of the standards and expectations?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>1.4.4 Are parents and communities aware of head teacher standards and expectations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and communities are aware of the standards and expectations?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
1.5	<p>School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/ headteachers /teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.</p>
	<p>1.5.1 Are there policies, guidelines, JDs in place that describe levels and types of external support to be provided to schools and teachers by external support personnel such as Inspectors and Primary Education Advisors?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>(If Yes, please cite the documents):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>1.5.2 Are school leaders and teachers aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers are made aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided?</p>

.....

 1.5.3 Are District Education Managers and Inspectors, CPEAs aware of external support standards and expectations?
 Yes No
 What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that DEMs and Inspectors, CPEAs are aware of the external support standards and expectations?

 1.5.4 Are there guidelines on how parents and communities can support the school and its system?
 Yes No
 If yes, please mention the document where these guidelines can be found.

 What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and communities are made aware of how they can support the school and its system

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING AGAINST EXPECTATIONS	
2.1	Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.
	<p>2.1.1 Do teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes please specify methods/ tools used to assess the learners </p> <p>2.1.2 Do School leaders Head teachers/ Deputy HT and Section Heads or external supervisors / support officers also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes please specify methods/ tools used to assess the learners </p> <p>2.1.3 Do parents and community members also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes please specify methods/ tools used to assess the learners </p>
2.2	Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

	<p>2.2.1 Do teachers provide feedback to parents and community on student progress in EGL subject areas? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes please specify methods/ mechanisms that is used to provide the feedback </p> <p>2.2.2 Do school leaders, supervisors or support officers provide feedback to teachers on student progress? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes please specify methods/ mechanisms that is used to provide the feedback </p> <p>If discussions or feedback is given, how is the information utilized ? </p>
2.3	<p>Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).</p>
	<p>2.3.1 Do supervisors, support officers or school leaders conduct classroom observations on a routine basis? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes specify the instruments used </p> <p>2.3.2 Do the observation instruments reflect objective criteria for assessing instructional practice for EGL subjects? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>2.3.3 Do the classroom observation instruments also focus on inclusive and safe learning practices? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>2.3.4 Do parents and communities contribute to availability of TLMs at the school level? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes provide examples of TLMs that parents have contributed </p>
2.4	<p>Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or head teachers are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance</p>
	<p>2.4.1 Do HT/ DHTs discuss the quality of teaching, particularly for EGL subjects with classroom teachers? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes are reports/ documentation on these discussions available and can they be shared? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If discussions are held, please elaborate how the results from these classroom observations are used </p>

	<p>2.4.2 Do parents and the community discuss the quality of learning especially for EGL with class teachers and the immediate supervisors? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>2.4.3 If yes are reports/ documentation on these discussions available and can they be shared? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
2.5	<p>Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.</p>
	<p>2.5.1 Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to district and national levels? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>What mechanisms/ structures are used to ensure that data is systematically reported? </p> <p>2.5.2 Are these data captured electronically in a centralized database at district or national levels? National Level: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No District Level: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>2.5.3 Are school-, zone, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>How are these reports utilized? </p>

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS	
3.1	<p>Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.</p>
	<p>3.1.1 What are the current EGL inputs delivered to schools? </p> <p>3.1.1.2. Are teachers getting training in EG literacy? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Explain </p> <p>3.1.1.3 Are teachers getting the necessary follow-up support? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Explain</p>

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.....
3.1.1.4 Are classrooms getting the necessary materials?

Yes No

Explain

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.....
3.1.2 Are these inputs aligned and coordinated so that they complement and reinforce each other? Or is there a clear disconnect between the curricula, training, materials, and support teachers get?

Yes No

Explain

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.....
.....
3.1.3.1 Is there school-by-school data on the basic inputs received by the schools?

Yes No

Explain

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.....
.....
3.1.3.2 Does the EMIS data have it?

Yes No

If your answer is no, is the data found elsewhere in the system (eg, inspection or monitoring reports)?

Yes No

Explain

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.....
.....
3.1.4.1 Are parents and the community aware of what materials have been received at the school?

Yes No

Explain

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.....
.....
3.1.4.2 Do parents and the community ensure that the materials have been distributed accordingly.

Yes No

Explain

	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
3.2	<p>Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).</p>
	<p><i>3.2.1 Are there policies in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extracurricular program for literacy subjects?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>3.2.2.1 How do schools identify learners that are struggling with EGL subjects?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>3.2.3.1 What programs are in place for schools to support learners who are struggling?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>3.2.4. Are parents and communities aware of how they can assist children that are falling behind at community and family level?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>If yes, could you cite some examples of how communities support children that are falling behind?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
3.3	<p>Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes</p>
	<p><i>3.3.1 How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>3.3.2 Are there specific policies, programs and protocols that districts or schools follow to recognize high performers (beyond student competitions), specifically for EGL outcomes? Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>3.3.3 Are EGL teaching and learning performance data criteria used as the basis for recognition/awards?</i></p>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain:</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.3.4 <i>Do teachers provide positive reinforcement and encouragement for struggling learners who are trying their best?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.3.5 <i>Do parents and the community undertake any initiatives to celebrate and reward good performance of the school, teachers and learners?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
3.4	<p>District/sub district levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help.</p>
	<p>3.4.1 <i>Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at sub district (cluster levels)?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.4.2 <i>Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at the school level?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Explain</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.4.3 <i>To what extent do support personnel use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.4.4 <i>How frequently are external support personnel able to visit a given school or teacher in an academic term or year?</i></p>

	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.4.5 Does the school share inspection reports with parents and communities that give evidence of performance of teachers and learners and what extra support is required?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Explain</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
3.5	National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.
	<p>3.5.1 What are the existing performance review processes at national level?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.2 What are the existing performance review processes at district levels?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.3 How do needs get translated into strategic plans?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.4 How do strategic plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.5 How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level i.e National and District level?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.6 To what extent do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3.5.7 Are parents and the community members consulted during the development of strategic plans and budgets.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Explain</p>

	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>Final Question</p>	<p><i>HAVING IMPLEMENTED THE NRP INTERVENTIONS FOR CLOSE TO 2.5 YEARS, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE KEY CAPACITY ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN ORDER TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE, OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NRP INTERVENTIONS?</i></p>
	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

District Education Managers FGD Guide

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution/ Department:	
Target Group:	
Districts:	
Date of Assessment:	
Total number of Participants: Male: Female:	
Names of Assessors Team:	

Instruction: The assessment team should use the set of questions below to facilitate the discussion. The team should also ensure that responses to the discussion are well documented and recorded.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

1.1 Goals of the system expressed in terms of measureable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).

- Does MoEST have any recent early grade learning benchmarks in relation to learner fluency or comprehension? indicate the specific documents where these can be found
- Are these benchmarks localized at Districts level? Can you cite some of these district level benchmarks
- What mechanism is in place to ensure that districts are aware of the district benchmarks

1.2 A curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points – i.e. each term, each grade. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.

- Are there any policy or curricular documents that contain competency or proficiency level descriptors? What are some of the examples of these proficiency level descriptors and where these can be found?
- Are teachers, school heads and district support officers (e.g DEMs and Inspectors) aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?
- What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads and district support officers (e.g DEMs and Inspectors) are aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?

1.3 Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- Are there standards or policies for teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes? In which document are these standards found?
 - *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?*
 - *Do the standards above include the value of providing support to children with disabilities and those struggling to learn?*
 - *Are teachers, school heads and district support officers aware of the teaching instructional standards or behaviors expected out of teachers?*

- What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads and district support officers are aware of the teaching instructional standards/ behaviors expected out of teachers?
 - *Are district supervisors and support officers aware of teacher standards and expectations?*
- What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that district supervisors and support officers are aware of teacher standards and expectations?
 - *Are the standards or policies for teachers clear on gender equitable teaching practices and behaviors (fair treatment of girls and boys)?*
 - *Are school governing bodies (SMC, PTA , MGs) aware of teacher standards and expectations?*

1.4 *Expectations for head teachers regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.*

- Are there standards or policies for head teachers / deputy head teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes? Name the standards or policy documents where these can be found
 - *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions for head teachers/ deputies emphasize instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?*
- Are school leaders (head teachers/ deputy head teachers /section head teachers) aware of the standards and expectations
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that head teachers, section heads and deputy head teachers are aware of the standards and expectations?*
- Are district supervisors and support officers (DEMs and Inspectors, CPEAs) aware of school leader's standards and expectations?
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that district supervisors and support officers are aware of the standards and expectations?*
- Are parents and communities aware of head teacher standards and expectations?
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and communities are aware of the standards and expectations*

1.5 *School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/ headteachers /teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.*

- Are there policies and guidelines in place that describe levels and types of external support to be provided to schools and teachers by external support personnel such as Inspectors and Primary Education Advisors? Could you mention these documents
- Are school leaders and teachers aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that they are aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them?*

- Are you (District Education Managers and Inspectors, CPEAs) aware of external support standards and expectations? How and What type of support do you provide to schools?
- What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that you (DEMs and Inspectors, CPEAs) are aware of the external support standards and expectations?
- Are there guidelines on how parents and school governing bodies can support the school and its system? Is there a specific document where these guidelines can be found
- What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and school governing bodies are made aware of how they can support the school and its system?

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.

- Do teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis? What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency of assessment?*
- Do these assessments also target learners with special education needs.*
- Do School leaders (Head teachers/ Deputy HT and Section Heads) or external supervisors / support officers also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis. What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency.*

2.2 Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

- Do teachers provide feedback to parents and school governing bodies on student progress on learning outcomes in relation to early grade learning subject areas? What methods/ mechanisms that are used to provide the feedback?*
- Do school leaders, supervisors or support officers provide feedback to teachers on student progress on learning outcomes? What methods/ mechanisms that is used to provide the feedback?*

2.3 Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of Teaching and Learning Materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).

- Do supervisors, support officers or school leaders conduct classroom observations on a routine basis? What instruments are used and what frequency?*
- Do the observation instruments reflect objective criteria for assessing teaching instructional practice for Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- Do the classroom observation instruments also focus on inclusive and safe learning practices?*

- d. *Do parents and school governing bodies contribute to availability of Teaching Learning Materials at the school level?*

2.4 Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or head teachers are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance

- a. *Do Head teachers / Deputy Head teachers / Section Heads discuss the quality of teaching, particularly for Early Grade Learning subjects with classroom teachers? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*
- b. *Are results from the classroom observations used as a basis for providing feedback to teachers*
- c. *Do parents and the community discuss the quality of learning especially for EGL with class teachers and the immediate supervisors? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*

2.5 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

- a. *Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to district and national levels?*
- b. *What mechanisms/ structures are used to ensure that data is systematically reported?*
- c. *Are these data captured electronically in a centralized database at district or national levels?*
 - *National Level:*
 - *District Level:*
- d. *Are school, zone, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis?*
- e. *How are these reports utilized?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.

- a. *Apart from the National Reading Program, are teachers getting training in Early Grade literacy from other partners? If yes, mention the partners.*
- b. *Are teachers getting the necessary follow-up support on early grade teaching instruction (e.g coaching, classroom observation? from supervisors and external support personnel? How frequent is the support provided?*
- c. *Are classrooms getting the necessary teaching and learning materials? what materials are being provided?*
- d. *Is there a clear connection between the curricula, training, materials, and support teachers get?*

3.2 Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).

- a. *Are there policies in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extracurricular program for literacy subjects? Specify the documents where this can be found*
- b. *How do schools identify learners that are struggling with Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- c. *What programs are in place for schools to support learners who are struggling?*

3.3 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

- a. *Are there specific policies, programs and protocols that are in place to recognize learning performance in Early Grade learning. State the documents/ policies where these can be found*
 - *How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized at National, District and School level?*
- b. *Are EGL teaching and learning performance data criteria used as the basis for recognition/awards?*
- c. *Do parents and the community undertake any initiatives to celebrate and reward good performance of the school, teachers and learners?*

3.4 District/zone levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help?

- a. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at zone or cluster levels? Who are these?*
- b. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at the school level? Who are these?*
- c. *To what extent do support personnel use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback to teachers?*
- d. *How frequently are external support personnel able to visit a given school or teacher in an academic term or year?*
- e. *Does the school share inspection reports with parents and school governing bodies that give evidence of performance of teachers and learners and what extra support is required? Specify the methods/ mechanism that is used to share the reports*

3.5 National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- a. *What are the existing performance review processes at district levels?*
- b. *How do needs get translated into strategic plans?*
- c. *How do strategic plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?*
- d. *How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level?*
- e. *Do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?*

- f. *Are parents and the school governing bodies consulted during the development of strategic plans and budgets? What mechanisms/ methods are used to ensure that parents and school governing bodies effectively input into the process.*



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

CPEA/ PEA FGD Guide

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution/ Department:	
Target Group:	
Districts:	
Date of Assessment:	
Total number of Participants: Male: Female:	
Names of Assessors Team:	
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.....	
.....	
.....	

CPEAs/ PEAs FGD GUIDE

Instruction: The assessment team should use the set of questions below to facilitate the discussion. The team should also ensure that responses to the discussion are well documented and recorded.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

1.1 *Goals of the system expressed in terms of measureable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).*

- a. *Does MoEST have any recent early grade learning benchmarks in relation to learner fluency or comprehension? indicate the specific documents where these can be found*
- b. *Can you cite some of these district level benchmarks*

A curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points – i.e. each term, each grade.

1.2 *Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.*

- a. *Are there any policy or curricular documents that contain competency or proficiency level descriptors? What are some of the examples of these proficiency level descriptors and where these can be found?*
- b. *Are PEAs, teachers, school heads aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?*
- c. *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads , PEAs are aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?*

1.3 *Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.*

- a. *Are there standards or policies for teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes? In which document are these standards found?*
- b. *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?*
- c. *Do the standards above include the value of providing support to children with disabilities and those struggling to learn?*
- d. *Are teachers, school heads aware of the teaching instructional standards or behaviors expected out of teachers?*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads are aware of the teaching instructional standards/ behaviors expected out of teachers?*
- e. *Are the standards or policies for teachers clear on gender equitable teaching practices and behaviors (fair treatment of girls and boys)?*
- f. *Are school governing bodies (SMC, PTA , MGs) aware of teacher standards and expectations?*

1.4 *Expectations for head teachers regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.*

- *Are there standards or policies for head teachers / deputy head teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching instructional support behaviors*

or learning outcomes? Name the standards or policy documents where these can be found

- *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions for head teachers/ deputies emphasize instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?*
- Are school leaders (head teachers/ deputy head teachers /section head teachers) aware of the standards and expectations
- *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that head teachers, section heads and deputy head teachers are aware of the standards and expectations?*
- Are district supervisors and support officers (DEMs and Inspectors, CPEAs) aware of school leader's standards and expectations?
- *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that district supervisors and support officers are aware of the standards and expectations?*
- Are parents and communities aware of head teacher standards and expectations?
- *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and communities are aware of the standards and expectations*

1.5 School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/ headteachers /teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.

- a. *Are there policies and guidelines in place that describe levels and types of external support to be provided to schools and teachers by external support personnel such as Inspectors and Primary Education Advisors? Could you mention these documents*
- b. *Are school leaders and teachers aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that they are aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them?*
- c. *Are you (District Education Managers and Inspectors, CPEAs/PEAs) aware of external support standards and expectations? How and What type of support do you provide to schools?*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that you (CPEAs/ PEAs) are aware of the external support standards and expectations?*
- d. *Are there guidelines on how parents and school governing bodies can support the school and its system? Is there a specific document where these guidelines can be found*
- e. *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and school governing bodies are made aware of how they can support the school and its system?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.

- a. *Do teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis? What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency of assessment?*
- b. *Do these assessments also target learners with special education needs.*
- c. *Do School leaders (Head teachers/ Deputy HT and Section Heads) or external supervisors / support officers also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis. What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency.*

2.2 Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

- a. *Do teachers provide feedback to parents and school governing bodies on student progress on learning outcomes in relation to early grade learning subject areas? What methods/ mechanisms that are used to provide the feedback?*
- b. *Do school leaders, supervisors or support officers provide feedback to teachers on student progress on learning outcomes? What methods/ mechanisms that is used to provide the feedback?*

2.3 Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of Teaching and Learning Materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).

- a. *Do supervisors, support officers or school leaders conduct classroom observations on a routine basis? What instruments are used and what frequency?*
- b. *Do the observation instruments reflect objective criteria for assessing teaching instructional practice for Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- c. *Do the classroom observation instruments also focus on inclusive and safe learning practices?*
- d. *Do parents and school governing bodies contribute to availability of Teaching Learning Materials at the school level?*

2.4 Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or head teachers are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance

- a. *Do Head teachers / Deputy Head teachers / Section Heads discuss the quality of teaching, particularly for Early Grade Learning subjects with classroom teachers? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*
- b. *Are results from the classroom observations used as a basis for providing feedback to teachers*
- c. *Do parents and the community discuss the quality of learning especially for EGL with class teachers and the immediate supervisors? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*

2.5 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are

not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

- a. *Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to district and national levels?*
 - *What mechanisms/ structures are used to ensure that data is systematically reported?*
- b. *Are these data captured electronically in a centralized database at district or national levels?*
 - *National Level:*
 - *District Level:*
- c. *Are school, zone, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis?*
- d. *How are these reports utilized?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.

- a. *Apart from the National Reading Program, are teachers getting training in Early Grade literacy from other partners? If yes, mention the partners.*
- b. *Are teachers getting the necessary follow-up support on early grade teaching instruction (e.g coaching, classroom observation? from supervisors and external support personnel? How frequent is the support provided?*
- c. *Are classrooms getting the necessary teaching and learning materials? what materials are being provided?*
- d. *Is there a clear connection between the curricula, training, materials, and support teachers get?*

3.2 Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).

- a. *Are there policies in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extracurricular program for literacy subjects? Specify the documents where this can be found*
- b. *How do schools identify learners that are struggling with Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- c. *What programs are in place for schools to support learners who are struggling?*

3.3 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

- a. *Are there specific policies, programs and protocols that are in place to recognize learning performance in Early Grade learning. State the documents/ policies where these can be found*
 - *How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized at National, District and School level?*

- b. *Are EGL teaching and learning performance data criteria used as the basis for recognition/awards?*
- c. *Do parents and the community undertake any initiatives to celebrate and reward good performance of the school, teachers and learners?*

3.4 District/zone levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help?

- a. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at zone or cluster levels? Who are these?*
- b. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at the school level? Who are these?*
- c. *To what extent do support personnel use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback to teachers?*
- d. *How frequently are external support personnel able to visit a given school or teacher in an academic term or year?*
- e. *Does the school share inspection reports with parents and school governing bodies that give evidence of performance of teachers and learners and what extra support is required? Specify the methods/ mechanism that is used to share the reports*

3.5 National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- a. *What are the existing performance review processes at Zone levels?*
- b. *How do needs get translated into plans?*
- c. *How do plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?*
- d. *How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level?*
- e. *Do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?*
- f. *Are parents and the school governing bodies consulted during the development of strategic plans and budgets? What mechanisms/ methods are used to ensure that parents and school governing bodies effectively input into the process.*



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

Head teachers/ Deputy Head Teachers/ Section Heads FGD Guide

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution/ Department:	
Target Group:	
Districts:	
Date of Assessment:	
Total number of Participants: Male: Female:	
Names of Assessors Team:	
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.....	
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Instruction: The assessment team should use the set of questions below to facilitate the discussion. The team should also ensure that responses to the discussion are well documented and recorded.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

1.1 Goals of the system expressed in terms of measureable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system

(i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).

- a. Does MoEST have any recent early grade learning benchmarks in relation to learner fluency or comprehension? indicate the specific documents where these can be found
- b. Can you cite some of these district level benchmarks
- c. What mechanism is in place to ensure that schools are aware of the benchmarks

1.2 A curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points – i.e. each term, each grade. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.

- a. *Are there any policy or curricular documents that contain competency or proficiency level descriptors? What are some of the examples of these proficiency level descriptors and where these can be found?*
- b. *Are teachers, school heads aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?*
- c. *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads are aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels?*

1.3 Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- a. *Are there standards or policies for teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes? In which document are these standards found?*
- b. *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize teaching instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?*
- c. *Do the standards above include the value of providing support to children with disabilities and those struggling to learn?*
- d. *Are teachers, school heads and district support officers aware of the teaching instructional standards or behaviors expected out of teachers?*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that teachers, school heads are aware of the teaching instructional standards/ behaviors expected out of teachers?*
- e. *Are the standards or policies for teachers clear on gender equitable teaching practices and behaviors (fair treatment of girls and boys)?*
- f. *Are school governing bodies (SMC, PTA , MGs) aware of teacher standards and expectations?*

1.4 Expectations for head teachers regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- a. *Are there standards or policies for head teachers / deputy head teachers/ section head teachers that emphasize either appropriate teaching*

instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes? Name the standards or policy documents where these can be found

- *Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions for head teachers/ deputies emphasize instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?*
- b. *Are school leaders (head teachers/ deputy head teachers /section head teachers) aware of the standards and expectations*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that head teachers, section heads and deputy head teachers are aware of the standards and expectations?*
- c. *Are parents and communities aware of head teacher standards and expectations?*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and communities are aware of the standards and expectations*

1.5 School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/ headteachers /teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.

- a. *Are there policies and guidelines in place that describe levels and types of external support to be provided to schools and teachers by external support personnel such as Inspectors and Primary Education Advisors? Could you mention these documents*
- b. *Are school leaders and teachers aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that they are aware of the type and levels of external support to be provided to them?*
- c. *Are you aware of external support standards and expectations? How and What type of support is provided to schools?*
- d. *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that you (DEMs and Inspectors, CPEAs) are aware of the external support standards and expectations?*
- e. *Are there guidelines on how parents and school governing bodies can support the school and its system? Is there a specific document where these guidelines can be found*
- f. *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and school governing bodies are made aware of how they can support the school and its system?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.

- a. *Do teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis? What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency of assessment?*
- b. *Do these assessments also target learners with special education needs.*
- c. *Do School leaders (Head teachers/ Deputy HT and Section Heads) or external supervisors / support officers also routinely assess learners on a*

predictable basis? What methods / tools are used to assess the learners and the frequency?

2.2 Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

- a. Do teachers provide feedback to parents and school governing bodies on student progress on learning outcomes in relation to early grade learning subject areas? What methods/ mechanisms that are used to provide the feedback?*
- b. Do school leaders, supervisors or support officers provide feedback to teachers on student progress on learning outcomes? What methods/ mechanisms that is used to provide the feedback?*

2.3 Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of Teaching and Learning Materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).

- a. Do supervisors, support officers or school leaders conduct classroom observations on a routine basis? What instruments are used and what frequency?*
- b. Do you conduct classroom observations on a routine basis? What instruments are used and what frequency?*
- c. Do the observation instruments reflect objective criteria for assessing teaching instructional practice for Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- d. Do the classroom observation instruments also focus on inclusive and safe learning practices?*
- e. Do parents and school governing bodies contribute to availability of Teaching Learning Materials at the school level?*

2.4 Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or head teachers are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance

- a. Do Head teachers / Deputy Head teachers / Section Heads discuss the quality of teaching, particularly for Early Grade Learning subjects with classroom teachers? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*
- b. Are results from the classroom observations used as a basis for providing feedback to teachers*
- c. Do parents and the community discuss the quality of learning especially for EGL with class teachers and the immediate supervisors? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*

2.5 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

- d. Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to zone and district levels?*

- a. *What mechanisms/ structures are used to ensure that data is systematically reported?*
- b. *Are these data captured electronically in at district or zone levels?*
- c. *Are school, zone, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis?*
- d. *How are these reports utilized?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.

- a. *Apart from the National Reading Program, are teachers getting training in Early Grade literacy from other partners? If yes, mention the partners.*
- b. *Are teachers getting the necessary follow-up support on early grade teaching instruction (e.g coaching, classroom observation? from supervisors and external support personnel? How frequent is the support provided?*
- c. *Are classrooms getting the necessary teaching and learning materials? what materials are being provided?*
- d. *Is there a clear connection between the curricula, training, materials, and support teachers get?*

3.2 Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).

- a. *Are there policies in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extracurricular program for literacy subjects? Specify the documents where this can be found*
- b. *How do schools identify learners that are struggling with Early Grade Learning subjects?*
- c. *What programs are in place for schools to support learners who are struggling?*

3.3 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

- a. *Are there specific policies, programs and protocols that are in place to recognize learning performance in Early Grade learning. State the documents/ policies where these can be found*
- b. *How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized at District, zone and School level?*
 - *Are EGL teaching and learning performance data criteria used as the basis for recognition/awards?*
- c. *Do parents and the community undertake any initiatives to celebrate and reward good performance of the school, teachers and learners?*

3.4 District/zone levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help?

- a. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at zone or cluster levels? Who are these?*
- b. *Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at the school level? Who are these?*
- c. *To what extent do support personnel use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback to teachers?*
- d. *How frequently are external support personnel able to visit a given school or teacher in an academic term or year?*
- e. *Does the school share inspection reports with parents and school governing bodies that give evidence of performance of teachers and learners and what extra support is required? Specify the methods/ mechanism that is used to share the reports*

3.5 National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- a. *What are the existing performance review processes at zone/ school levels?*
- b. *How do needs get translated into plans?*
- c. *How do plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?*
- d. *How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level?*
- e. *Do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?*
- f. *Are parents and the school governing bodies consulted during the development of strategic plans and budgets? What mechanisms/ methods are used to ensure that parents and school governing bodies effectively input into the process.*



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

DEMISO FGD Guide

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution/ Department:	
Target Group:	
Districts:	
Date of Assessment:	
Total number of Participants: Male: Female:	
Names of Assessors Team:	
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DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM OFFICERS FGD GUIDE

Instruction: The assessment for DEMISOs focuses mainly on data collection system, management and use of data for decision-making. The assessment team should use the set of questions below to facilitate the discussion. The team should also ensure that responses to the discussion are well documented and recorded.

GENERAL QUESTION

- What is the role of DEMISOs?
- What type of data is collected by DEMISOs?

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

Goals of the system expressed in terms of measureable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).

- Does MoEST have any recent early grade learning benchmarks in relation to learner fluency or comprehension?
- Are these benchmarks localized at Districts level?
- Can you cite some of these district level benchmarks?
- What mechanism is in place to ensure that districts are aware of the district benchmarks

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels – in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations – and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

- Is data on teaching and learning outcomes captured at district level? If yes how is it captured?
- Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to district and national levels?
- What mechanisms/ structures are used to ensure that data is systematically reported?
- Are these data captured electronically in a centralized database at district or zone levels?
- Are school, zone, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis?
- How are these reports utilized?

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs – materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials) – in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.

- Do you have district data on the basic inputs received in the schools (trainings, TLMs)
- Do you collect school by school data on the basic inputs received by schools?
- If not are the data found else where in the system? (e.g inspector or monitoring reports)

3.2 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

- How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized at District, Zone and School level?

- Are Early Grade teaching and learning performance data used as the basis for recognition/awards?

3.3 District/zone levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help?

- Do DEMIS Officers capture data from student assessments?
- Do DEMIS Officers capture data on classroom observations made by Head teachers and Infant Section Heads to teachers?
- Do DEMIS Officers capture data on classroom observations made by PEAs to Head teachers and Infant Sections heads during coaching
- To what extent do support personnel use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback to teachers?

3.4 National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- What are the existing performance review processes at district levels?
- How do needs get translated into plans?
- How do plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?
- How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level?
- Do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?



Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

School Governing Bodies FGD Guide

INTRODUCTION

The National Reading Programme (NRP) is a Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Programme aimed at improving the reading outcomes among primary school learners in Standard 1 – 4. The purpose of this exercise is to help MoEST identify priority areas of systems support needed to strengthen the education system’s capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning related to instructional reform support. The priority focus areas involve the system’s capacity for: 1) setting and communicating expectations; 2) monitoring against expectations; and 3) providing support to schools and teachers. The capacity assessment therefore is focused on determining the extent to which the education system exhibits these 3 core functions in relation to the 15 characteristics of a highly effective system.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution/ Department: Target Group: Districts: Date of Assessment: Total number of Participants: Male: Female: Names of Assessors Team:	
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SCHOOL GOVERNING STRUCTURES FGD GUIDE

Instruction: The assessment team should use the set of questions below to facilitate the discussion. The team should also ensure that responses to the discussion are well documented and recorded.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1: SETTING AND COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

1.1 Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on

teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- a. *Are you aware of any teacher standards and expectations? If yes can you provide examples of these standards and expectations*

1.2 Expectations for head teachers regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- a. *Are you aware of head teacher standards and expectations? If yes can you provide examples of these standards and expectations.*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that you aware of the standards and expectations*

1.3 School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/ headteachers /teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.

- a. *Are there guidelines on how parents and school governing bodies can support the school and its system? Is there a specific document where these guidelines can be found*
 - *What system/ mechanism is in place to ensure that parents and school governing bodies are made aware of how they can support the school and its system?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2: MONITORING AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Use of learning outcomes data at the school level – periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

- a. *Do you receive any feedback on student progress on learning outcomes in relation to early grade learning subject areas? What methods/ mechanisms that are used to provide the feedback?*

2.2 Supervisor and/or head teacher monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of Teaching and Learning Materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).

- a. *Do you contribute to availability of Teaching Learning Materials at the school level? How is this done?*

2.3. Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of TLMs at school level – how supervisors and/or head teachers are supporting teachers, how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials, of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance

- a. *Do you discuss the quality of learning especially for EGL with class teachers and the immediate supervisors? Are sample reports/ documentation on these discussions available?*

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3: PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes

- a. *Do parents and the community undertake any initiatives to celebrate and reward good performance of the school, teachers and learners? If yes can you provide some examples of these initiatives?*

3.2 District/zone levels using data on school performance to orient provision of external support and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help?

- a. *Does the school share inspection reports with parents and school governing bodies that give evidence of performance of teachers and learners and what extra support is required? Specify the methods/ mechanism that is used to share the reports*

3.3 National level review of needs across schools/districts – with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- a. *Are parents and the school governing bodies consulted during the development of strategic plans and budgets? What mechanisms/ methods are used to ensure that parents and school governing bodies effectively input into the process.*

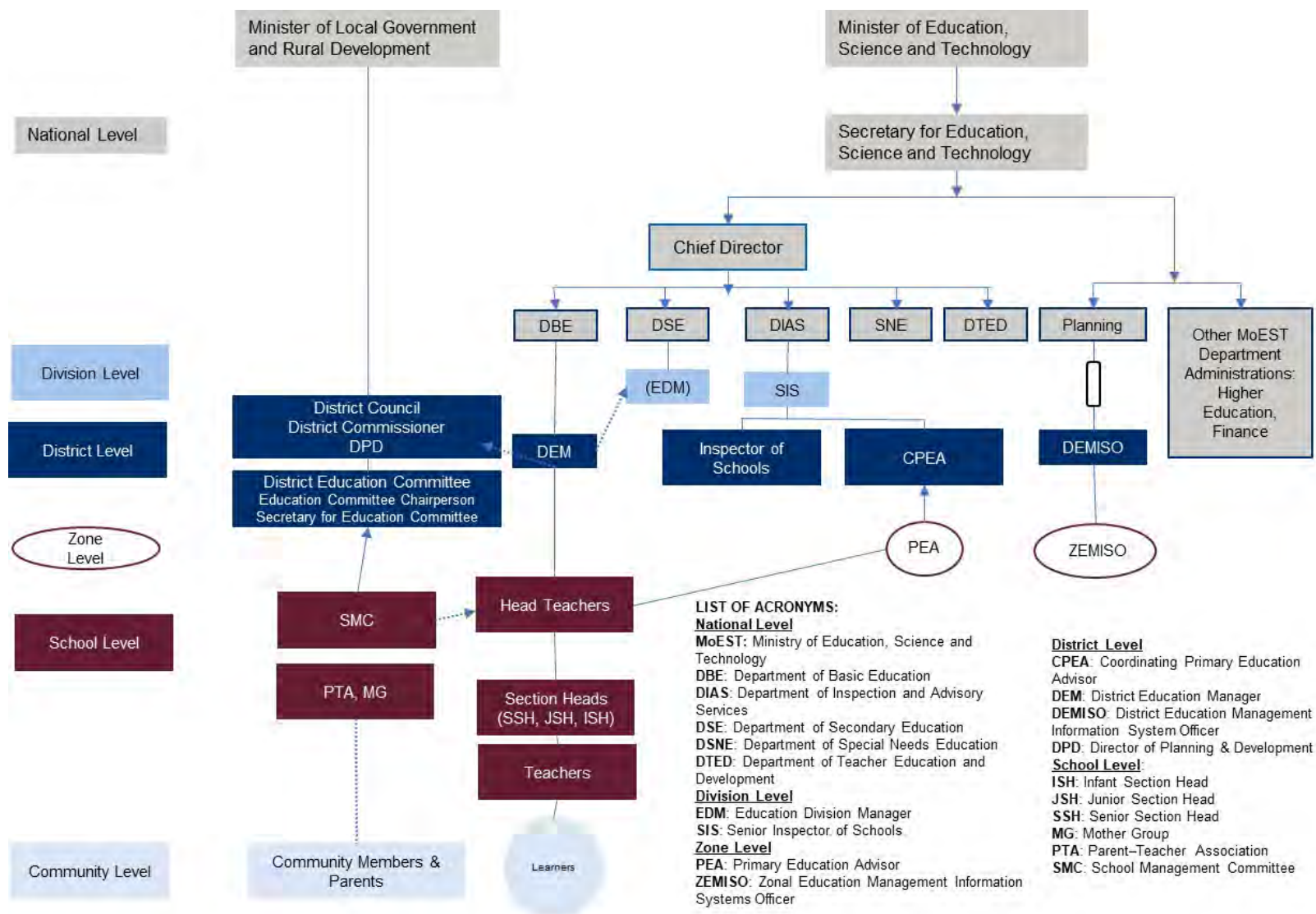
Annex 2: Summary of FGD Targets and Dates

Activity	Details
Focus Group discussions with MoEST - DEMISOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group discussions held with DEMISO from Blantyre Urban, Blantyre Rural, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Neno and Nsanje and Chiradzulu, Mulanje and Thyolo on 22nd March 2018. A total of 18 DEMISOs (5 Female and 13 Males participated)
Focus Group discussions with MoEST - DEMs, CPEAs, Inspectors, DPD and Chairpersons of Education Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first set of Focus group discussions with DEMs was held with officials from Blantyre Urban, Blantyre Rural, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Neno and Nsanje and Chiradzulu, Mulanje and Thyolo on 23rd March 2018. A total of 9 DEMs (3 Female and 6 Males participated) <p>The second set of Focus Group Discussions was held with District level officials (14 Male and 8 female) i.e DEMs, CPEA, Inspectors, Chair Persons of Education Committee and DPDs in Karonga, Kasungu, Blantyre Urban, Blantyre rural and Chiradzulu District.</p> <p>Assessments in Balaka, Blantyre and Chiradzulu were conducted in collaboration with MoEST Officials from DIAS and Department of Education Planning i.e Mr Antony Manja (DIAS) and Mr George Jim (Education Planning).</p> <p>Focus group discussions were conducted on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karonga – 11 April 2018; Kasungu- 13 April 2018; Blantyre Rural: 17th April 2018; Chiradzulu – 18 April 2018; Blantyre Urban; 19th April 2018
Focus Group discussions with Head teachers, Teachers and School governing bodies	<p>Focus group discussions held with a total of 125 School level officials (68 male and 57 females) and 76 community members (43 male and 33 female). School level officials comprised of head teachers, Section heads, while community stakeholders included SMC, PTA and Mother groups. The school and community level focus group discussions were held in Karonga, Balaka, Blantyre Urban, Blantyre Rural, Chiradzulu, Ntchisi and Dedza Districts.</p> <p>The focus group discussions were conducted on the following dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ntchisi – 04 April 2018; Dedza – 05 April 2018; Kasungu- 10 April 2018; Karonga – 11 April 2018; Balaka: 16th April; Blantyre Rural: 17th April 2018; Chiradzulu – 18 April 2018; 19th April Blantyre Urban
FGDs with PEAs	<p>Focus Group discussions held with 46 Primary Education Advisors (26 Male; 20 female) from Karonga, Kasungu, Blantyre, Dedza and Balaka Districts</p> <p>Assessments for Dedza; Kasungu and Karonga were conducted in collaboration with MoEST Official from DIAS, Mr Antony Manja.</p> <p>Focus group discussions were conducted as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedza – 8 May 2018 at Rewards Lodge in Mchinji; Kasungu- 9th May 2018 at Mponela TDC; Balaka – 9th May 2018 at Liwonde TDC; Karonga - 10th May 2018 at Rumphu Boma TDC; Blantyre Rural and Urban: 11th May 2018 at Lunzu TDC;
4.1.2 Interviews with MoEST Central Level – Questionnaire	<p>MoEST Director / Deputy Directors briefed on the Capacity Assessment exercise and provided with a questionnaire for their feedback. The meetings were held with MoEST Officials from the following departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Inspection and Advisory Services Department of Teacher Education and Development Department of Education Planning Department of Special Needs Education Department of Basic Education

Annex 3: NRP Institutional System Strengthening Taskforce Members

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Annex 4. Organogram



MoEST ORGANOGRAM NOTES

At the national level:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is headed by the Minister, seconded by the Secretary for Education, Science and Technology. The heads of the Departments of Basic Education, Secondary Education, Inspection and Advisory Services, Special Needs Education, and Teacher Education and Development report to the Chief Director, who reports to the Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, while the other MoEST departments, such as the Department of Education Planning, report directly to the Secretary.

At the Education Division level:

- Education Division Managers are responsible for secondary education and report directly to the Department of Secondary Education.
- Senior Inspectors of Schools are responsible for conducting external evaluations of the effectiveness of schools and colleges and report directly to the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services.

At the district level:

- The District Education Manager is responsible for managing primary education and reports directly to the Department of Basic Education. The District Education Manager, however, also reports to the Education Division Manager as well as the district council.
- Coordinating Primary Education Advisors coordinate the work of all Primary Education Advisors and report to the District Education Managers.
- Inspectors of Schools also conduct school evaluations and report directly to the Senior Inspectors of Schools and the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services.
- The district council falls under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and is headed by the District Commissioner, followed by the Director of Planning and Development. The council has subcommittees, one of which is the Education Committee.
- The Education Committee is headed by the Chairperson for the Education Committee. The District Education Manager is secretary to the Education Committee.
- District Education Management Information System Officers are responsible for data collection and management at the district level.

At the zone level:

- The Primary Education Advisors support school leaders, managers, teachers, and other stakeholders in improving the quality of education. They report directly to the Coordinating Primary Education Advisors.
- Zone Education Management Information System Officers are responsible for data collection and management at the zone level and report directly to the District Education Management Information System Officers.

At the school level:

- Schools are headed by the head teachers and deputy head teachers. Schools also have section heads who are responsible for providing leadership to the various sections. Head teachers report to the directly to the District Education Managers but do liaise with the Primary Education Advisors daily.
- Schools are managed by school governing bodies such as the School Management Committee and associations such as the Parent–Teacher Association and Mother Groups.
- The School Management Committee is a governing body that falls under the Education Service Committee and is responsible for overseeing education activities at the school level.