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**Joint Programme on Improving Access and Quality of Education for Girls in Malawi
ANNUAL PROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2016**

<p>Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Title: Joint Programme on Improving Access and Quality of Education for Girls in Malawi • Programme Number (<i>if applicable</i>) • MPTF Office Project Number:³ 00091269 	<p>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results²</p> <p>Country/Region : Malawi Locality: Dedza, Mangochi, Salima</p> <hr/> <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results:</i> Girls Education</p>
<p>Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP • UNICEF • UNFPA 	<p>Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, Science and Technology • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Youth and Sports • Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare • Ministry of Agriculture
<p>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: \$19,139,925</p> <p>MPTF /JP Contribution⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF- \$5,952,444 • WFP –\$9,197,342 • UNFPA - \$3,990,139 	<p>Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration: 30 months</p> <p>Start Date⁵: 1 July 2014</p>

¹ The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

³ The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁴ The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁵ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)
TOTAL: : \$19,139,925
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.
Assessment/Review - Mid- Term Review <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: 31.12.2016 Mid-Term Report – if applicable please attach <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: dd.mm.yyyy

Original End Date ⁶ :	31 October 2017
Current End date ⁷ :	31 October 2017
Report Submitted By	
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⁶ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁷ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

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List of Acronyms

CBE- Complementary Basic Education

CSE- Comprehensive Sexuality Education

DEC- District Executive Committee

GBV- Gender Based Violence

IP - Implementing Partner

M&E- Monitoring and Evaluation

MoEST- Ministry of Education Science and Technology

MoH- Ministry of Health

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MT – Metric Tons

MTR- Mid Term Review

NFE – Non-Formal Education

OVC – Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PSLCE – Primary School Leaving Certificate

PTA – Parent Teachers Association

SC- Steering Committee

SLHC – School Level Health Centre

SMC – School Management Committee

SRHR – Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

THR- Take Home Rations

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

VEC- Village Education Committees

WFP – World Food Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Since the inception of the Joint Programme, girls attendance has increased year on year in supported schools. The comprehensive nature of the programme, integrating school meals, capacity development and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services has been accredited as the main attribute behind the several positive results achieved to date.

Approximately 96,500 students, in 79 primary schools, are currently supported through the programme: 40,000 in Salima; 16,000 in Dedza and 40,500 in Mangochi. Enrolment in each of the targeted districts has thrived over the two and half years since the programme was launched, growing by 34% in Salima, 20% in Dedza and 33% in Mangochi.

The number of girls sitting the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PSLCE) has also increased from the first year of the programme to date, growing by close to 25% in Salima, 33% in Dedza, and 10% in Mangochi. Further research is needed to ascertain the seemingly slower progress in Mangochi.

Additionally, pass rates have improved across all targeted zones, with schools in Katelera Zone improving from 70 percent to 77 percent, schools in Lifidzi zone improving from 82 percent to 93 percent, and schools in Ngolowindo improving from 80 percent to 81 percent. Mangochi has performed admirably in this regard, with pass rates increasing from 53% to 71%. In Dedza district, Chimbiya zone has recorded an improvement of girls' pass rate from 76 percent to 79 percent.

Finally, dropout rates have declined from a baseline of 7.4% to 5.5%, shrinking by; 69% in Salima, 37% in Mangochi, and 41% in Dedza, over the two academic years of the Joint Programme.

2. PURPOSE

The Joint Programme, *Improving Access and Quality of Education for Girls in Malawi*, is a three-year programme. The overarching aim is to improve the access; quality and relevance of education for girls, through a holistic and human rights-based approach. Simultaneously, the programme addresses key known threats such as poor food and nutrition, inadequate protection, poor quality schooling, and violations of girls' sexual and reproductive rights. The underlying objective will be achieved through the pursuit of 7 primary and related outcomes:

1. Improve the nutrition of girls and boys, in targeted schools, allowing them to stay in school
2. Increase access to second chance education for girls who are in, or have left, school
3. Ensure there is quality integrated youth friendly services, resources and structures, addressing CSE, SRHR, HIV/AIDS and GBV in place for girls who are in, or have left, school
4. Reduce violence against girls in targeted schools and communities, building effective referral pathways
5. Improve and enhance both teacher's attitudes and skills, effectively delivering life skills based and gender responsive methodologies
6. Inform and empower adolescent girls to demand SRHR services, ensuring they participate and take leadership positions within their school and their community
7. Empowered and committed communities will value quality education for all children, especially girls

Through a phased implementation, the programme harnesses a "whole school approach", focusing specifically on girls from standard 5 to 8. 79 primary schools are targeted, in 6 zones, across the districts of Salima, Mangochi and Dedza. Depending on the level of success, a significant scale-up may be developed.

3. RESULTS

3.1 OUTCOME SPECIFIC RESULTS

In line with general pre-implementation guidelines, activities specific to each outcome of the programme were implemented, and are as follows:

3.1.1 Outcome 1:

Results show that by December 2016, the programme was providing meals to more than 96,400 students across the three districts with funding for both Home Grown School Meals and Take Home Rations (THR) continuing to be channeled to schools through the District Councils. By December 2016, the programme was reaching 91% of students with THR. On the supply side, the programme has consistently procured diversified food commodities from farmer organizations, which contributes to the economic empowerment of the local communities. A total of 16 Farmer Organizations were trained in access and post-harvest handling skills. The school feeding component of the programme has continued to boost community participation in school meals management with various community committees supporting the implementation of the programme by providing guidance as well as volunteer cooks in schools. To date, all Parents and Teachers Associations, School Management Committees and Food Committees have been trained on hygiene, nutrition and sanitation whilst 78 out of 79 primary schools have been supported with three-in-one feeding shelters (storehouse, kitchen, feeding shelter), with a total of 44 structures having been constructed in the second year of the programme.

3.1.2 Outcome 2:

At the community level, adolescents who have dropped out of school are supported through an accelerated nine-month learning model of integrated academic and life skills. The curriculum is being modified to include effective aspects of sexual reproductive health, including community specific functional areas including parenting and reproductive health education. The second component of the second chance learning is Complementary Basic Education (CBE) that has been implemented by the Ministry of Education in one zone in Salima.

To date, 168 Functional Literacy centres (56 per district) have been established with a total enrollment of 5,538 students, against a target of 5000 for the second cohort, expanding to six additional zones outside the JPGE impact implementation zones. Classes for the 2016 cohort began in the first week of June 2016 and were completed in February 2017. AGLIT+ held community sensitization meetings with chiefs, outlining the importance of establishing CBE centers, while also focusing on ensuring eligibility on enrolment. Group Village Headmen identified members of Village Education Committees (VEC) for each new literacy center and reviewed the membership of existing VECs in the old zones. A total of 78 new committees were instituted and the 90 existing committees were reviewed and strengthened.

3.1.3 Outcomes 3 and 6

The youth in Malawi face a myriad of barriers in accessing information relating to reproductive health. The JPGE aims to address this by supporting adolescents' sexual and reproductive health through a package of Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) which provides access to comprehensive sexuality education; services to prevent, diagnose and treat STIs; and counselling

on family planning. These provisions educate young people on their sexual and reproductive health rights – including the right to delay marriage and the right to refuse unwanted sexual advances.

The roll-out of School-Linked Health Centers (SLHC) is close to completion, ensuring both in and out of school adolescents have access to a variety of youth friendly health services (YFHS). Currently, 62% of girls in the targeted communities are accessing YFHS, below the target of 75%. Deliberate efforts are being undertaken to track the number of in school youths that are accessing YFHS in the SLHCs. Six functional girls networks, out of a target of 15, have been created in the target areas with 100% of girls in the supported schools trained in sanitary pads production.

3.1.4 Outcome 4

20% of all girls in Malawi experience sexual violence prior to age 18 while 67% of boys and 40% of girls suffer physical abuse with corporal punishment in schools acting as a major contributor to this figure.

During the period under review, the program enrolled 12,658 children (standard 5-8) into preventative empowerment programs, surpassing the 11,060 target. Among these, 149 girls who experienced sexual abuse voluntarily enrolled in Sexual Assault Survivors Anonymous (SASA), a 12-week healing programme. A recent evaluation of the protection services under the JPGE by the John Hopkins University found that there has been a 40% decrease in the number of girls (Standards 5-8) experiencing sexual violence or abuse. A similar randomized control trial of schools outside the programme found a slight increase in the incidence of rape, clearly indicating the importance of empowering girls to avoid and defend themselves against unwanted sexual advances.

School improvement plans, with student input, have been implemented in 93% of the programme schools. Additionally, the One School One Police Officer (OSOPO) programme has ensured referral pathways for students that suffer abuse are clear, while additional initiatives, including complaints boxes, notice boards and the toll-free child helpline, continually reinforce the importance of reporting abuse. Through complaints boxes alone, a total of 833 cases (Salima 417; Dedza 86; and Mangochi, 330) were reported with 791 cases successfully resolved at school and community level with 42 prosecutions. To ensure sustainability, OSOPO will be taken to Police lower formations, strengthening linkages with community based child protection structures, while capacity development with the Judiciary will raise awareness of the law, ensuring the timely completion of trials involving children.

3.1.5 Outcome 5

806 teachers, from a target of 670, were trained in life skills and gender responsive methodologies. 67% of Parents and Teachers Associations and 56% of School Management Committees out of a target of 90% have been trained.

3.1.5 Outcome 7

Community sensitizations, including joint door-to-door campaigns with mother groups, targeted 320 households in Salima, resulting in 25 drop-outs returning to school, with a further 78 out-of-school children enrolling. Open days specifically targeted traditional leaders, learners and parents, reinforcing the importance of educating girls.

A visibility tour, organized in July, gave journalists from a host of media outlets the opportunity to explore the achievements of the programme to date. High level visits to project sites from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, UN and the Government of Malawi also supported advocacy interventions under the programme.

4.0 Qualitative Assessment

Annual Technical Review: An annual review and planning meeting was held between the 8th and 11th of November, resulting in the development of comprehensive district work plans, including both District and Implementing Partner (IP) activities, for the remainder of the project.

Steering Committee: A Steering Committee meeting, focusing on ‘delivering as one’, validated results from year two of the programme. Other issues discussed, included:

- District Coordinators’ Terms of References (ToRs) to be revised to include ‘delivering as one’
- Financial reporting capacity and data collection by IPs must be improved.
- The need to strengthen the government technical working group and improve support on government coordination structures.
- Programme implementation has to be complete by June 2017.
- ‘Unexpected’ and/or unintended outcomes that are coming up in the programme should be documented.

Community leadership: Continuing as a central component, Group Village Headmen lead in identifying members of Village Education Committees (VEC) for new literacy centers. District Social Welfare Officers have been instrumental in discussions with Childcare centre managers on accommodating CBE learners’ children.

Partnerships: A new partnership was developed with Standard Bank whereby female Standard Bank employees act as mentors to girls within the JPGE schools. In its pilot phase, the project reached three schools in Dedza, involving 40 mentors. It has been showcased in both print and electronic media and will be extended upon review of its success.

Partnerships with District Councils, through School Health and Nutrition (SHN), were strengthened through training on meal preparation, hygiene and sanitation as well as selection of meals. Additionally, local farmer organizations continued providing food to schools despite the general food insecurity situation in the country.

Coordination:

- A full-time National Coordinator was recruited
- A mid-term review outlined several recommendations to be included in the new project proposal.

- Final year finances disbursed to agencies while MoUs with partners were renewed by December.

5.0 Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Untimely Reporting:** Several schools failed to adhere to the monthly reporting schedule, affecting the consistent flow of funds resulting in temporary suspension of food supplies. District review meetings, joint monitoring visits and the Annual Technical Review meeting provided opportunities for discussions and agreements on key actions and deadlines.
- **Accountability and transparency:** Risk assessments were conducted to identify key risks and ways of mitigating them. Poor record keeping and lack of adherence to procurement processes were some of the key accountability issues identified. Financial spot checks, joint monitoring visits with Government and review meetings at district and community levels, were conducted to raise awareness and emphasize the need for transparency and accountability.
- **High prices of commodities:** Due to food insecurity, there was a general increase in commodity prices. In addition, the capacity of some farmer organizations to produce and supply adequate and diversified food quantities was limited. This led to procurement of required commodities from other sources at a higher price. Joint monitoring visits and review meetings to address the issues at the schools, community and district levels. WFP and district councils are in the process of introducing competitive procurement processes, whilst the Ministry of Agriculture will continuously disseminate food prices and monitor procurement processes.
- **Delays in completing Memorandum of Understanding by the districts:** The process of developing MOUs with district councils took longer than expected. This affected consistent flow of funds to the districts for effective coordination and monitoring of the programme activities. In addition, there was slow absorption of funds by districts which affected the timeliness of funds disbursement. WFP engaged its field staff to support with the development of budgets and facilitated submission of the draft MOUs. One pager addendums were approved to facilitate funds transfer whilst the MoUs were being finalized.
- **Results based reporting:** Implementing partners have faced challenges in results based reporting hence there is data which is yet to be verified to track progress on some indicators. However, it is expected that the MTR will be able to provide data on some of the indicators. Moving forward, the M&E TWG for the programme which has been revamped will intensify its efforts to build the capacity of Implementing Partners in results based reporting.
- **Working with community members:** Despite some of comprehensive sexuality education topics being integrated into the Malawian Life Skills curricula, open and informed discussions, including on human sexuality, are not commonly taught by teachers in schools. Furthermore, parents do not feel comfortable to discuss sex and sexuality issues with their children. However, the programme has successfully learnt that working with community members (parents, cultural leaders) ensures health and educational programs achieve their intended aims. Innovative approaches and collaborations are necessary if girls and young women are to realize their fullest potential as useful and responsible citizens of the country.

- **Schools recession periods:** Another notable challenge is on implementation of Outcome four whose major components (activities) are dependent on schools being in session, hence school holidays and other recession periods poses an issue of time lost that can be challenging to recover. However, strategies are being put in place to ensure maximization of time available when school is in session.
- **Resistances:** It has been noted that resistance from teachers to use alternative methods of punishment from corporal punishment is mainly due to lack of knowledge of the alternatives and unavailability of reinforcement measures. However, those who have undergone training on alternative methods of punishment have been able to utilize the skills and knowledge and ably handle their classes.
- **Administrative processes:** Some activities under Outcome 5 were constrained by the preparatory and Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) processes that were however, finalized in the reporting period. The PCA was finally signed during the last quarter with the first tranche disbursed in October 2016. Hence only preparatory activities have been carried including initiation meetings and signing of new MoUs with partners, tendering process, site mapping and procurement of materials for the 35 schools where the Girls Resource Rooms will be constructed.