



Report from Malawi Reading Group 2017/2018

Introduction

During the school year 2017/2018 the School Aid Reading Officer, Moses Banda, ran four reading groups with pupils drawn from Standard 5 classes. Two sessions in each of two schools, Nasenga and Mtonda Primary Schools, were held each week during term time.

The reading group sessions are pre-planned and structured and include reading from books, highlighting and discussing key words and exercises to test comprehension.

The table below shows the ages and sex of the children who attended the groups.

School	Total number of students	No of boys	No of girls	Age Range	Ave Age
Nasenga	37	17	20	8 to 18	12.5 years
Mtonda	40	19	21	10 to 14	12 years
Control (Mtonda)	19	8	11	10 to 14	11 years

In total about 20 sessions were held with average attendance just over 60%.

Prior to the commencement of the reading group, all students are tested using tests as implemented by our partner, the Book Bus. The results provide a baseline upon which to measure the progress and impact of participation in the group. At the end of the reading group each student is re-tested to assess the change achieved. Two tests are used.

This report provides an analysis of the progress or otherwise of the participating students based on the testing results.

Test results

In addition to testing students who attended the reading groups a group of students were selected for testing at Mtonda Primary school to act as a control group.

Results from all groups are shown below.



Moses Banda conducting a reading group

Happy Reader Test

This test consists of a number of letters chosen randomly by the examiner and 10 blocks of 10 words. As the child successfully reads through the letters and words they score points. They can make up to 3 errors in the test. Once they make their 4th mistake the test is stopped and the score aligned with the last word that they got correct. This is entered as their final reading score.

The table below shows results from test administered at the beginning of the reading groups and then when they concluded.

School	Happy Reader							
	No of students who had a reduction in points	%	No of students had the same no of points	%	No of students who increased points between 1 - 9	%	No of students who increased points by 10+	%
Nasenga	1	3%	6	16%	14	38%	14	38%
Mtonda	5	13%	2	5%	17	43%	11	28%
Control (Mtonda)	0	0%	4	21%	7	37%	0	0%

Around 80% of students (including those in the control group), showed improvement over the course of the year. However those who attended the reading groups made significantly greater improvement than those in the control group, with reading improvement in around a third of these students exceeding 10 points.

Flat test

The FLAT test stands for Functional Literacy Assessment Tool and was developed by World Vision. It has 8 levels, from Level 0 where letters cannot be recognised up to level 7 which is full literacy. The key is to pass level 5 - this means the child both can read fluently and has a good level of both written and oral comprehension.

The levels awarded are as follows:

- 1 Letters
- 2 Words
- 3 Paragraphs
- 4 Story
- 5 Can answer comprehension questions
- 6 Can read the local material

The table below shows changes in levels over the course of the year by the number of students, both in the two schools and in the control group.

School	FLAT Test					
	No change	%	No of students improving by one level	%	No of students improving by two levels	%
Nasenga	17	46%	12	32%	8	22%
Mtonda	13	33%	17	43%	4	10%
Control (Mtonda)	3	16%	11	58%	1	5%

As shown in the Happy Reader results, while most students improved their reading ability, those who had participated in the reading groups made a greater degree of improvement. For example 12 students from the reading groups improved by two levels while only one in the control group did so.

Conclusion

The results presented above clearly demonstrate an accelerated rate of improvement amongst students who attended the reading groups.

This improved reading ability is highly likely to also result in improved overall academic ability further demonstrating the value of these structured reading groups.

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