

# Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE)-III 2021–2023, Malawi



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# Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education-III (2021 – 2023), Malawi Final Evaluation Report

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United Nations Children’s Fund  
Three United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

January 2024

Photo information: Girl Students from Thugulu Primary School in Salima district and mother group chairperson smile as they pose for a picture after their menstrual hygiene session.

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Please cite the work as follows: UNICEF. 2024. *“Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education III (2021 – 2023), Malawi”*. UNICEF Country Office, Malawi.

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## ACRONYMS

BLM	Banja La Mtsogolo
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CBE	Continuous Basic Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
CSE	Comprehensive Sexual Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DiD	Difference-in-Difference
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERB	Ethics Review Board
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FAL	Functional Literacy
FPAM	Family Planning Association of Malawi
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSSP	Health Sector Strategic Plan
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IRB	Institutional Review Board
JPAG	Joint Programme for Adolescent Girls
JPGE	Joint Programme on Girls' Education
KAP	Knowledge Attitudes and Practice
KII	Key Informant Interview

KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MAGGA	Malawi Girl Guides Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MERP	Malawi Education Reform Programme
MESIP	Malawi Education Sector Investment Programme
MIP	Malawi Implementation Plan
MLA	Malawi Learning Assessment
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
RCO	Regional Country Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations

UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US-Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
YFHS	Youth Friendly Health Services

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ***Overview of the object of the evaluation***

This mid-term evaluation (MTE) revolves around the Joint Programme on Girls' Education (JPGE) in its third phase, spanning from April 2021 to October 2024. Building on prior experiences, JPGE aims to address barriers to quality education for girls, boys, and vulnerable children in Malawi, focusing on socio-economic, cultural, health, nutrition, and gender-related challenges. The current phase emphasises on an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, aiming to ensure quality, inclusive, and equitable education. Three outcome areas distributed among the three United Nations (UN) agencies UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP include improving access to education, reintegrating adolescents into schools or alternative learning programs, and enhancing support for education, life skills, health, and nutrition. JPGE aspires to contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). The programme follows a gender-transformative approach, actively engaging boys in promoting gender equality.

The evaluation considers the financial delineation, with a budget of USD 40,561,450, and geographic delineation covering four districts in Malawi (i.e., Dedza, Mangochi, Salima, and Kasungu). The three UN agencies are collaborating with the Malawian government and various ministries to deliver comprehensive services. UNICEF's specific focus within the project was on effective teaching and learning, providing second chance education for out-of-school girls, and fostering a supportive community of parents, caregivers, and education stakeholders. Moreover, UNFPA's role was centred on sexual reproductive health and rights services, while WFP concentrated on supplying diverse and nutritious school meals, imparting knowledge related to nutrition, and collaborating with smallholders to sell their products through WFP-supported aggregation systems. Direct target groups and beneficiaries comprise of in-school and out-of-school children and adolescents, aged 10-24, along with parents, guardians, and caregivers of these populations. Stakeholders in the targeted districts and communities, local and national level policy stakeholder, and targeted schools as well as teachers in those schools constitute relevant stakeholders.

## ***Evaluation purpose, objectives, and intended audience***

Mainlevel Consulting AG was commissioned by the UNICEF Country Office Malawi, to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the third phases of the JPGE, covering the period from April 2021 to July 2023. The evaluation aimed to assess the programme's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability based on the criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), with a focus on district-specific insights gathered during visits to all four implementation districts in Malawi.

The core purpose of the MTE was to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes were on track in terms of access to quality and inclusive education, recommending possible intervention changes for the remaining timeline until October 2024.

The primary users of the evaluation findings are the three implementing UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA), the Ministry of Education, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy as the programme's donor. The evaluation aimed to provide an evidence-based foundation for programme revision, document lessons learned, and offer recommendations for actionable adjustments to interventions, informing the remaining intervention period and guiding future interventions with similar goals and scope.

## ***Evaluation methodology***

The MTE adopted a differentiated approach considering the large and complex nature of the intervention. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the MTE leveraged available secondary data, including progress reports and Malawi Education Statistics Report (based on data from the Education Management Information System – EMIS) to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Both quantitative data (from secondary EMIS data) and qualitative data (collected through primary data collection and narrative sources) were triangulated to enhance analysis robustness, considering the limitations in data collection within the project's setting. In the deductive approach, alignment with evaluation questions facilitated the triangulation of data across all six OECD-DAC criteria. Conversely, an inductive approach was employed for the analysis of open-ended questions in focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) transcripts.

A counterfactual/quasi-experimental analysis was conducted on selected Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and outcome indicators at both intervention and non-intervention schools to establish a causal link between the intervention and access to quality and inclusive education. The Difference-in-Difference (DiD) approach controlled for confounding factors, considering the non-random assignment of schools to the intervention based on poverty criteria. The evaluation team employed the open-source statistical software R for both descriptive analysis of available quantitative data and inferential statistics.

Where a quasi-experimental approach was not feasible, a qualitative a multiple case study approach via voluntary and informed FGDs was employed. This allowed for an in-depth exploration of complex cultural and behavioural dimensions, complementing quantitative monitoring. FGDs involved learners and caregivers, utilizing structured questionnaires adapted to the respective target group with Likert scale assessments and open questions to deduce district-specific tendencies, specifically for indicators without EMIS data. The evaluators drew conclusions based on converging evidence from various sources (e.g., documents, interviews, and FGD transcripts), employing triangulation, and diverging evidence, exploring competing causes or artefacts. In addition to FGDs, semi-structured KIIs were conducted to retrieve valuable information on selected indicators (particularly KPI indicator 1) and the other OECD-DAC dimensions to be explored throughout the MTE. Depending on the stakeholder, interviews took place virtually or in person. Throughout interviews and FGDs, the evaluators assured the anonymity of the respondents by applying relevant data protection requirements.

While the counterfactual analysis is based on the comprehensive EMIS data based, which covers all targeted and non-targeted schools, primary qualitative data collections is based on stratified convenience sampling with proportional allocation at zone and school level (i.e., 36 school across 11 zones in the intervention zone), stratified random sampling with proportional allocation regarding learners and former out-of-school learners (i.e., 147 learners and 68 out-of-school learners in sampled intervention schools), and a convenience sample for caregivers (i.e., 176 caregivers in sampled intervention schools).

## ***Key conclusions on findings***

**Overall:** JPGE III employs a joint and holistic approach, addressing root causes of limited equitable education, focusing on nutrition, education, and SRHR. Aligned with the national policies and SDGs, the programme engages stakeholders, emphasising shared responsibility. Despite successes, challenges persist, including infrastructure issues and sociocultural barriers. While addressing inclusiveness, challenges remain, requiring increased sensitisation. JPGE aims to upscale nationally, facing sustainability challenges due to turnover and resource constraints, emphasising the need for strategic planning and additional resources for lasting impact.

**Relevance:** JPGE aligns with national policies, addressing educational challenges, but faces persistent issues like infrastructural challenges and limited access for remote populations. While understanding target groups well, the programme needs refinement in performance indicators at both KPI and outcome levels.

**Coherence:** JPGE demonstrates good collaboration among three UN agencies, aligning with government policies and avoiding duplication through regular meetings. Challenges in networking persist, but joint funding ensures a unified focus at selected schools, emphasising the need for ongoing improvement in operational dynamics and coordination.

**Effectiveness:** The MTE assessed some positive changes in minimum competency in literacy and numeracy, pregnancy rates, reduced gender-based differences in dropout rates, minimum service packages, and awareness for girls' education. However, challenges remain contributing to lower repetition rates, lower dropout rates, effective alternative learning programmes and effective inclusion of learners with special needs. School meal provision, while crucial for attendance, has inadvertently led to regional disparities and feelings of exclusion.

**Impact:** The programme has significant potential to impact access to quality education, aligning with SDG 4, contributing to girls' education through SRHR services, infrastructure, and promoting inclusiveness. The school feeding component, linked to SDG 2, is seen as plausibly enhancing literacy. Despite challenges, the interconnected components have comprehensive potential at targeted schools, but the uncertainty around upscaling remains.

**Efficiency:** JPGE effectively executed activities, meeting timelines and quality expectations, with collaborative planning and adequate funds. However, delays in funding processes, especially in the initial months, and concerns about delayed funds for school meals negatively impacted outcomes. Stakeholders recommend closer monitoring to enhance efficiency and ensure consistent high quality on the ground.

**Sustainability:** JPGE's sustainability is influenced by community engagement and local capacity building, but challenges like personnel turnover and limited government buy-in jeopardize long-term impact. Cost-intensive interventions require strategic planning, and upscaling demands a viable exit strategy. Addressing these issues before project completion is crucial for lasting impact and effectiveness.

### ***Lessons learned***

The intervention's joint approach of three complementary UN agencies made it possible to address several key issues to equitable and inclusive quality education simultaneously and holistically. JPGE has shown that the complementarity of different intervention components has the potential to create a holistic and synergistic impact on the targeted outcomes. Furthermore, the involvement of experienced partners and ministries at the national and district levels ensures effective project implementation and has shown capacity for sustainability. In particular, JPGE needs to upscale the intervention from its current intervention zone to all 28 districts. The current focus restricts governmental buy-in and ownership, limiting the representation of JPGE results on education nationwide. Similarly, JPGE's focus on specific schools within a district, rather than targeting all schools, contributes to discrepancies and growing inequalities between school zones and yields unintended consequences of learner migration.

Across all intervention components, it has become evident that the buy-in of the local community, especially parents, is a major catalyst to promote equitable and inclusive access to education. In a similar vein, anecdotal evidence highlights the importance of continuously also involving boys in a girl-targeted

intervention to avoid unintended resistance. Of the three JPGE components, food provision has shown to be the major but also the most fund-dependent pull factor for learners to go to school. In this regard, it has become evident that fund dependency and the overarching issue of high poverty rates in the community affect the programme's sustainability and impact. Regarding project implementation, a key take-away is the necessity to reflect the SMART criteria of the JPGE indicators in terms of relevance and measurability (e.g., clear definitions, to avoid varied interpretations and potential discrepancies in progress assessment). In particular, JPGE has been more activity- than result-oriented which limits its potential for impact.

### ***Key Recommendations***

Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is crucial for JPGE's effectiveness. In this vein, the KPI indicators should align with the programme objective, operationalising all its dimensions, or the programme objective would need to be adjusted accordingly on the impact level. Furthermore, clear definitions of indicators, such as, the "minimum package," are essential to avoid varied interpretations at the outcome level. In this regard, the indicator reference manual should be revised for agreed definitions and clear data collection methods for a unified monitoring. The programme could also benefit from a results-based perspective, integrating data from all three UN agencies into one joint monitoring process for evidence-based steering. Against this backdrop, establishing a joint vision among M&E officers through frequent exchange meetings is recommended.

As the intervention results depend on further (financial) support to be sustainable, it is recommended that JPGE (i) identify and engage potential partners to continue key interventions through a stakeholder analysis, (ii) provide timely communication to schools about the programme's continuity or phasing out by establishing a communication plan with clear timelines, and (iii) eventually ensure a well-planned phase-out period, avoiding disruptions in the middle of a school year or term, by developing a phased exit strategy based on the academic calendar.

In light of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) practices being partially undermined by insufficient WASH infrastructure at schools, it is crucial to prioritise the establishment / rehabilitation of proper WASH infrastructure in all schools. This includes ensuring easy access to water (e.g., provision of boreholes) as well as sufficient stocks of soap and providing / rehabilitating facilities, such as, latrines and change rooms wherever needed.

As there is still sensitivity around SRHR topics at schools, it is imperative to intensify efforts to address the root causes of these issues. In this vein, low-threshold services (e.g., mobile clinics) should be further supported and intensified to ensure easy access to information and contraceptives when needed.

Given the lacking awareness around alternative learning programmes in the target groups, which undermine their potential effectiveness, increased awareness is imperative. This entails targeted awareness campaigns for mother groups, parents, and the broader community. Leveraging existing community-based and NGO-driven alternative learning programs is essential to share knowledge and experiences, fostering a seamless transition and sustainability beyond the project period. In this regard, JPGE could, for instance, identify and engage with community-based and NGO-driven alternative learning programs already operating in certain areas, establishing partnerships to share best practices, resources, and experiences, ensuring a more comprehensive and effective intervention.

# INTRODUCTION: EVALUATION RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

## 1.1. Background and context

Malawi, categorised as a low-income and least-developed country, holds the position of 172 out of 189 on the Human Development Index. The 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census reveals a notable 35 percent population increase in a decade, with projections suggesting a doubling within two decades if current trends persist. The demographic landscape underscores the prominence of young people, constituting the largest and fastest-growing proportion, with 52 percent below 18 years and 80 percent below 35 years. Women account for approximately 52 percent of the total population. The global projection from the World Bank Human Capital project indicates that 56 percent of children born today will, at best, achieve only half of their potential productivity. In Malawi, a child born today is expected to be 41 percent as productive as their full potential with complete education and optimal health. In the Human Capital Index, Malawi stands at 125 out of 157 countries, emphasising the challenges in maximizing human capital potential (World Bank, 2021).

Within this context, access to quality education emerges as a pivotal determinant. The prevailing education scenario in Malawi is reflected in the fact that children can anticipate completing 9.4 years of schooling by age 18; however, when adjusted for learning quality, this is equivalent to only 5.4 years, indicating a significant learning gap of 4 years. Acknowledging the pivotal role of education quality as a crucial factor for attaining developmental outcomes and impact in Malawi, it becomes imperative to tackle challenges in the provision and accessibility of education for all, especially at the foundational levels of primary schooling (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP 2020).

Moreover, Malawian children, especially girls and the most vulnerable, encounter a multitude of barriers hindering access to inclusive and quality education and alternative learning pathways. These barriers encompass poor-quality schooling, inadequate food and nutrition, insufficient protection against sexual and physical violence, harmful social and traditional practices, and violations of sexual and reproductive rights. Research underscores the transformative potential of investing in girls' education, presenting it as an effective avenue for promoting gender equality, expediting development, and breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, hunger, and poverty (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, 2020).

A conducive school environment and school system hence appears as a pivotal factor in addressing these issues. However, Malawi's educational system faces numerous challenges that impede the achievement of SDG 4, i.e., inclusive and equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Children in Malawi, particularly girls and the most vulnerable groups, face multiple barriers to quality education, which include poverty, malnutrition, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, and the effects of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). These challenges are closely linked to low learning outcomes, with only a quarter of children aged 10–14 featuring foundational literacy skills, and overall poor literacy rates in the general population.

Further challenging the right to a quality, inclusive, and equitable education in Malawi is the strain on available resources created by an increasing population of school-aged children. As of 2022, primary school enrolment stood at 4.9 million, translating into a net enrolment of 88%. In addition, while primary school completion at 56% in 2022 has improved by six percentage points from 2021, both the drop-out

rates in primary school and the low transition rate from primary to secondary school point to internal efficiency issues that must be resolved. More recently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a further increase in the percentage of out-of-school children and a decrease in the transition rate from primary to secondary school. In addition, the decline in the education budget relative to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plays havoc on school rates<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly worrisome as the past years have seen the budget fall below the level recommended by the Incheon Declaration on Inclusive Education.

Nevertheless, the Malawian government is committed to ensuring adequate access to inclusive and equitable education and has expressed this commitment through various strategies. To support these ambitions, the United Nations (UN), with funding from the Norwegian Embassy, has set up a multi-sectoral programme, the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education, implemented by three UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA).

## 1.2. Object of evaluation

**Evaluation object:** The object of evaluation is the afore-mentioned JPGE intervention, phase III (April 2021 – October 2024). JPGE was built on the experience and lessons learned of the Joint Programme for Adolescent Girls (JPAG, 2010-2015). JPGE intervention's initial phase was launched in 2014, it strives to address socio-economic, cultural, health, nutrition, and gender-related barriers to quality education for girls, boys, and the most vulnerable children to achieve an inclusive and equitable access to education. While the first phase (implemented in 81 schools in three districts) focused on building and piloting a model and the second phase (implemented in 88 schools in the same three districts) focused on the roll-out and expansion with more emphasis on government leadership, the current phase of the programme (implemented in 199 schools in four districts), which is the object of this MTE, seeks to ensure quality, inclusive and equitable education by reinforcing an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, building synergies to ensure sustainable solutions, while strengthening the focus on the quality of learning (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP 2020).

JPGE follows the concrete objective that school aged girls, boys and adolescent (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education improving their life opportunities. To achieve this, three outcome areas were defined that the three UN agencies UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP have distributed among themselves. These outcome areas comprise (1) improving access to inclusive quality education to enhance learning outcomes; (2) the integration of girls, boys and out-of-school-adolescents back in schools and/or into complementary alternative learning and life skills programmes; and (3) increasing the support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents (in and out-of-school) by communities, parents and education stakeholders. Respective underlying intervention strands and expected results are displayed in the programme's Theory of Change (ToC) (Fig. 2 below).

At impact level, JPGE aspires to contribute to SDG 4 (Quality Education) through improved quality of learning, stabilised/reduced dropout, reduced gender disparities, disability and gender sensitive and safe, non-violent, inclusive learning environments; to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through SRHR interventions, including increased access to sexual reproductive health information and services as well as expanded access to basic health services through the school health programme; to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through reduced barriers for equal access of girls to education, through the programme's work with communities and law enforcement services to provide a safer environment for girls, and with

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<sup>1</sup> The share of the education budget to GDP declined from 4.2 per cent in 2020/21 to 3.2 per cent in 2021/22, reaching the lowest level since 2016/17 (Terms of Reference (ToR) MTE JPGE III 2023).

sensitization of key community stakeholders to value education against early marriages; and to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by providing learners ensured access to safe and nutritious food through a school meals grown through the home-grown approach, aspiring to enhance income and economic opportunities for small-holder farmers through food sales to the schools.

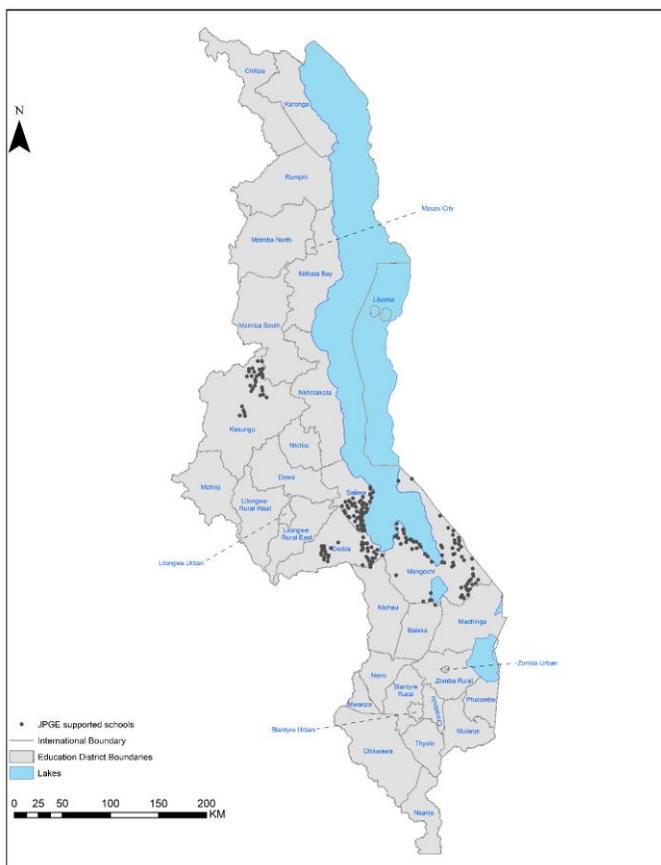
JPGE III (April 2021 - October 2024) furthermore follows a gender-transformative approach, wherein boys are actively addressed to become change makers promoting gender equality.

**Temporal delineation:** The object of this evaluation is the third phase of the JPGE intervention, which has an overall term stretching from April 2021 to October 2024. The project has had two previous phases, the first phase covering the period July 2014 to October 2017, and the second phase February 2018 to March 2021.

**Financial delineation:** The total approved budget of the project stood at USD 40,561,450 as per the 2022 progress report. Of this total, the Malawi SDG acceleration fund, which receives funding from the United Kingdom and Norway among others, has availed USD 19,763,954 to the three implementing UN organisations:  
 UNICEF: USD 11,797,435  
 WFP: USD 8,004,359  
 UNFPA: USD 3,269,946.

**Geographic delineation:** The programme is implemented in four districts in Malawi: Dedza, Mangochi, Salima and, since phase III, Kasungu. Within the targeted districts, the number of schools increased throughout the phases, starting at 81 schools in phase I, to 88 schools in phase II, and 199 schools in the current phase III (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP 2020).

**Key Stakeholders:** JPGE is a collaborative effort between three United Nations agencies: UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA. The three UN agencies leveraged their core strengths and respective advantages to assist the Malawian government in delivering a comprehensive range of services to enhance access to quality and inclusive education. WFP, in alignment with previous phases, continued its support to the Regional Country Office (RCO) in a coordinating capacity, housing UN programme coordinators at both national and district levels. Meanwhile, UNICEF took on the role of technical lead. Although the responsibilities were shared among the three organisations, UNICEF's specific focus within the project was on effective teaching and learning, providing second chance education for out-of-school girls, and fostering a supportive community of parents, caregivers, and education stakeholders.



**Figure 1 JPGE III intervention area**

Moreover, UNFPA's role was centred on sexual reproductive health and rights services, while WFP concentrated on supplying diverse and nutritious school meals, imparting knowledge related to nutrition, and collaborating with smallholders to sell their products through WFP-supported aggregation systems.

In addition, governmental actors, particularly the government of Malawi plays an essential coordinating and implementing role at the national and district level, with the Ministry of Education serving as the main and leading ministry. Other ministries participating in the programme are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, Ministry of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water development, Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Most interventions are implemented through the District Councils situated under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Direct target groups and beneficiaries comprise of in-school and out-of-school children and adolescents, along with parents, guardians, and caregivers of these populations. Furthermore, education stakeholders in the targeted districts and communities, local and national level policy stakeholders, and targeted schools as well as teachers in those schools constitute relevant stakeholders.

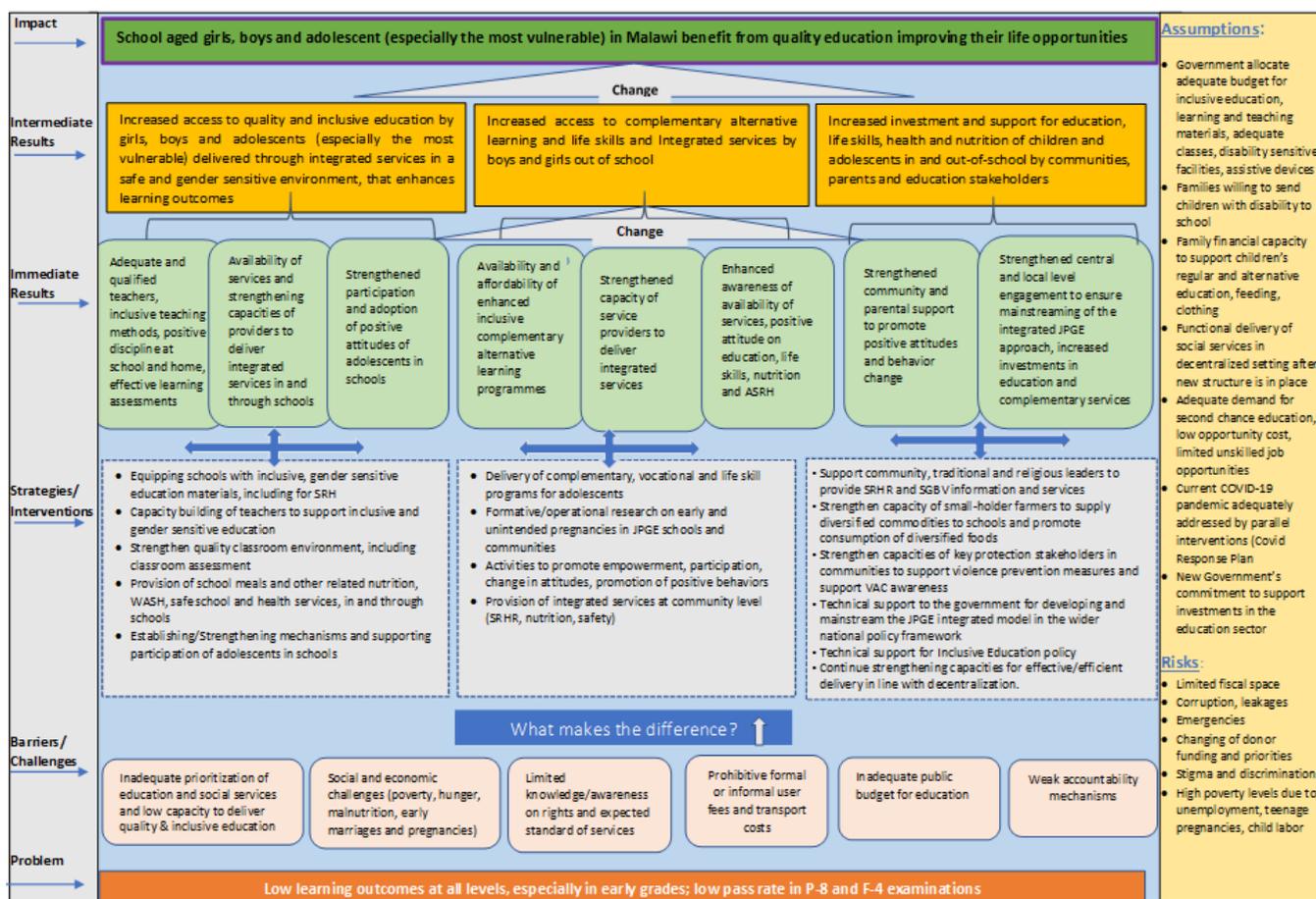


Figure 2 JPGE III Theory of Change (Baseline report)

### 1.3. Evaluation purpose, objectives, and scope

Mainlevel Consulting AG (in the following referred to as Mainlevel) was commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) RCO Malawi to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the third phase of the United Nation's Joint Programme on Girls' Education (JPGE).

The core **purpose** of the MTE was to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes were on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining timeline for phase III of the project implementation.

**Primary intended users** of the evaluation will be the three implementing UN agencies UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA, the Ministry of Education as the primary governmental partner and the Royal Norwegian Embassy as the donor of the programme and is intended to inform the implementation of the programme throughout the remaining year and future interventions with a similar goal and scope. The evaluation is specifically intended to be used to revise and adapt the design of the JPGE programme throughout the remaining programme period wherever needed, in order to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Specifically, the scope of the evaluation comprised of various interlinked **objectives** outlined in the ToR of this assignment, which can be summarized as follows:

- Analysing the JPGE III programme along the OECD-DAC criteria relevance, coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness with a particular focus on
  - Examining if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track<sup>2</sup>;
  - Establishing the impact of the JPGE III in making a difference to the access of quality and inclusive education.

Based on these objectives, the evaluation strives to fulfil the following core functions:

- Providing an evidence-based foundation for the revision and improvement of the JPGE III programme;
  - Identifying and documenting lessons learned and deducing clear recommendations for actionable adjustments to the intervention (activities) for the remaining year of implementation of the project (until October 2024);
  - Deducing recommendations on the monitoring framework, particularly offering explicit instructions for ensuring that all outcome level indicators can be effectively measured and analysed with disaggregation based on factors such as, geography and school.

The extent to which the assessment has been guided by and considered, UNICEF and system-wide **objectives on gender equality and human rights** and particularly on child rights in outlined in the corresponding chapter (→ Gender and human rights (including child rights)).

The **scope** of the evaluation encompasses an in-depth analysis of the third phase of JPGE in Malawi, covering the period from 04/ 2021 to 07/ 2023. The evaluation aimed to assess the programme's relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability as defined per the OECD-DAC criteria. The scope extended to district-specific insights gathered during visits to all four implementation districts.

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<sup>2</sup> Following a district-differentiated approach.

The evaluation report at hand covers the objectives of the evaluation. As will be further scrutinized in the following chapter, the evaluation team visited **all four implementation districts** to deduce district-specific insights on indicators and evaluation questions, wherever feasible.

## EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Evaluation criteria

JPGE III is assessed based on standardised evaluation criteria and questions to ensure comparability with other development cooperation projects in Malawi and at the international level. These are based on the [OECD-DAC evaluation criteria](#) (updated 2020) for international cooperation. Relevant for this mid-term evaluation are all six criteria, namely **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability**. In line with donor requirements voiced during the inception phase, a particular focus will be put on the criteria effectiveness and impact.

**Relevance:** Under this criterion, the evaluation examines whether JPGE III is doing the 'right thing,' i.e., if the programme's approach is appropriate to reach its intended objectives. An assessment is conducted of the extent to which the overall logic of the programme is in line with (i) the education context and governmental priorities of Malawi and (ii) the needs of girls and adolescent girls and boys, including relevant barriers to education they face in Malawi, and of (iii) the appropriateness and usefulness of JPGE III indicators.

**Coherence:** This criterion will primarily assess the extent to which JPGE III fits into the existing environment. Therefore, the alignment with national policies and the norms of UNICEF in Malawi will be assessed. In addition, it is analysed to what extent synergies and interlinkages are exploited between JPGE III partners (internal coherence), i.e., the involved UN agencies, as well as between JPGE III and external stakeholders and programmes (external coherence).

**Effectiveness:** This criterion examines the extent to which JPGE's objective and outcomes are on track. The criterion furthermore explores supporting and hindering factors (constraints) that were decisive for achieving (or failing to achieve) objectives. Furthermore, potential positive or negative unintended outcomes of the programme are explored.

**Impact:** This criterion assesses the potential contributions of JPGE to higher-level development objectives primarily looking at the extent to which the programme is contributing to an enhanced access to quality and inclusive primary education. In line with the programme's ToC, the impact level refers to an enhanced access to quality and inclusive education.

**Efficiency:** The efficiency criterion gauges the degree to which (financial, human, time) resources are available and appropriate relative to the intended and achieved outputs and outcomes. Therefore, under this criterion, the JPGE III's production efficiency, i.e., the transformation of resources into output results, and allocation efficiency, i.e., transformation of resources into outcome results, are assessed.

**Sustainability:** Finally, this criterion assesses whether benefits are likely to last once JPGE III comes to an end. Under this criterion, contributions to sustainable capacities are assessed and the influence of external factors (political, economic, social environment) on sustainability prospects are considered.

Specific assessment dimensions and evaluation questions were derived from the criteria and provided in the ToR of this assignment. They form the basis for the evaluation and are listed in the evaluation matrix along with the corresponding assessment basis and data collection methods (annexed).

## 2.2. Evaluation design

Given the large and complex setup of the JPGE intervention, the evaluation followed a differentiated approach depending on data availability.

First of all, the mid-term evaluation followed a **mixed-methods approach**. This means that (i) the evaluation did not start from scratch, but built on available secondary data (progress report, Knowledge Attitudes and Practice (KAP) studies etc.), particularly data from EMIS and (ii) triangulated both **quantitative** (retrieved from secondary EMIS data) and **qualitative data** (collected through primary data collection and retrieved from narrative sources, such as, progress reports) to enhance the robustness of the analyses.

Secondly, the evaluation team conducted a **counterfactual / quasi-experimental analysis** of selected KPI and outcome indicators at intervention and non-intervention schools to find support for a causal link between the intervention and access to quality and inclusive education. Such an approach is particularly suited to the current context where assignment to the intervention was non-random, with schools that were included in JPGE being selected based on specific poverty criteria (JPGE I Final Evaluation Report, 2019). Additionally, such an approach also considers that factors other than the intervention may impact our outcome of interest. For instance, national-level policy changes relating to the school system in Malawi could have an impact on the access to quality and inclusive education. The DiD approach effectively controlled for both confounding factors and the endogenous (unobservable) characteristics of the intervention group. This was achieved by conducting a before/after comparison within the intervention group (intervention schools) and comparing it with a suitable control group (non-intervention schools).. Ensuring the use of reliable and robust data is of utmost importance; therefore, the MTE conducted the quasi-experimental analyses exclusively in instances where robust secondary baseline and progress data were available for both intervention and non-intervention schools. Additionally, it should be noted that the MTE's setting did not allow for collecting further primary quantitative data, given both issues of constructing a comparable control group as well as collecting data based on a representative sample of intervention and non-intervention schools. However, complete baseline and progress data (EMIS) at the school level (intervention and non-intervention schools) was only available for those outcome indicators which are based on EMIS data. Against this backdrop, a quasi-experimental before-after analysis of the status of individual schools was only conducted for selected indicators.

For all indicators where a counterfactual / quasi-experimental approach was not feasible, a more **qualitative approach** was chosen to complement the understanding and status of the remaining indicators at target schools. In this vein, the evaluators opted for a multiple case study approach via FGDs. Such an approach is an invaluable research methodology in social sciences, particularly when delving into complex cultural and behavioural dimensions. This approach is particularly advantageous given that the evaluators aimed to exhaustively explore several indicators and multiple dimensions of the programme. It allows for a deep and holistic understanding that complement available quantitative monitoring of the indicators. Moreover, the inclusion of FGDs and individual interviews as part of this methodology aligns with Foucault's perspective on interviews as social arenas for the construction and

contestation of views and actions. Such interactions generate a wealth of data that illuminate individuals' experiences, thoughts, and feelings from their own perspectives. This rich source of information becomes a site for constructing, interpreting, understanding, and representing cultural experiences. By incorporating FGDs within the multiple case study framework, the evaluators tapped into the collective wisdom and diversity of viewpoints, thereby enriching the depth and breadth of their analyses. To an extent, multiple cases can be considered as multiple experiments or multiple surveys (i.e., following a replication logic), instead of multiple respondents in a survey (Yin, 1994). Instead of “statistical generalisation,” in which inference about a population based on sampled quantitative data, insights of selected case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions in the intervention logic and the assessment of indicators. In this vein, the evaluators draw conclusions with respect to plausibility by searching for converging (e.g., triangulation) and diverging evidence (i.e., competing causes or artefacts that may otherwise account for the observed outcomes).

Hence, FGDs were conducted with learners and caregivers, following structured questionnaires. The questionnaire included Likert scale assessment for relevant statements, combined with open questions to better understand high and low ratings. This approach allowed for a quantification of answers and hence the deduction of district-specific tendencies even for indicators for which no EMIS data was available.

The following table provides an overview of the KPI and outcome indicators and the respectively followed evaluation approach chosen (counterfactual vs. qualitative data collection) based on data availability and scope of the MTE. Indicators for which no data source could be identified at all were deprioritised and not assessed under the effectiveness dimension of this MTE:

**Table 1 Evaluation approach chosen per results area and indicator**

Outcome	Indicator	Data sources MTE
<b>Goal: School aged girls, boys and adolescent (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education improving their life opportunities</b>	1. Percentage of learners in Grade 7 that attain at least minimum competency in (i) literacy (ii) numeracy, by Sex	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
	2. Percentage of primary school-age children enrolled in primary school, by Sex	Deprioritized: lack of required national level data (total number of primary school-age children / specific EMIS data)
	3. Percentage of primary school-age children who dropout during primary school, by sex	Deprioritized: lack of required national level data. Similar analysis done under indicator 1.4 (below).
<b>Outcome 1: By 2024, school aged children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, in target areas have access to inclusive quality education, delivered through integrated services</b>	1.1 Percentage of children in Standard 8 who passed the national examination in the targeted schools, by sex	Deprioritized: no recent EMIS data available.
	1.2 Percentage of children who repeated Standard 5 – 8 in the target schools, by sex	Counterfactual: Quantitative EMIS data (repetition)
	1.3 Percentage of children at last grade of primary who transition to secondary school in the targeted schools, disaggregated by Sex (pass rate)	Deprioritized: no data source available.

<b>in a safe and gender sensitive environment, that enhances learning outcomes</b>	1.4 Percentage of primary school-age children who dropout during standard 5 - 8 in the target areas, by sex	Counterfactual: Quantitative EMIS data (dropout)
	1.5 Percentage of girls enrolled in targeted schools who have fallen pregnant during the school year	Counterfactual: Quantitative EMIS data (pregnancy)
	1.6 Number of targeted schools providing a minimum package of integrated services (SRHR, health and nutrition, WASH services, diversified nutritious meals)  <i>Remark: no operationalisation of "minimum package" available (to evaluators).</i>	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
<b>Outcome 2: Girls, boys and adolescents out of school who are integrated back in schools, have increased access to complementary alternative learning and life skills, integrated services and are empowered and practice positive behaviours</b>	2.1 Proportion of graduates, especially girls, who completed an alternative learning programme and are enrolled back in formal education  <i>Clarification: Proportion of graduates (esp. girls) of an alternative learning programme who are enrolled back in formal education.</i>	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
	2.2 Proportion of girls and boys aged 10-24 who demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes towards SRHR.	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
	2.3 Number and % of girls and boys in target areas enrolled in life skills programme that complete programme	Deprioritized: no data source (beyond internal monitoring data) available.
<b>Outcome 3: Communities, parents and education stakeholders demonstrate increased investment and support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out-of-school</b>	3.1 Number of districts with revised district education plan aligned to NESIP (2020 -2030) as part of the overall district plans.	Deprioritized: indicator achieved in 2022, in all four districts, no further data collection required
	3.2 Proportion of parents, caregiver and stakeholders understanding and promoting enrolment of girls in education	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
	3.3 Number of parents with capacities and skills to provide support to learning for school going children, especially those with disabilities and special education needs	Qualitative data collection at intervention schools
	3.4 Percentage of targeted smallholders selling through programme-supported farmer aggregation systems	Deprioritized: data collect not feasible at primary schools.

## 2.3. Sampling of schools and interviewees

As previously argued, following a detailed review of secondary data, the baseline study, and monitoring data, the primary data collection in this MTE largely focused on the collection of qualitative data.

Therefore, the evaluators present the sampling approach followed across all relevant levels for the MTE of the JPGE III programme:

**Table 2 Sampling in primary data collection**

Level	Sampling strategy	Targeted units (2022)	Foreseen sample size MTE	Actually reached sample size
District level	None	4	4 districts	4 districts
Zone level	Stratified convenience sampling with proportional allocation	33 (5 Dedza, 6 Kasungu, 16 Mangochi, 6 Salima)	11 zones in total (Dedza: 2 zones, Kasungu: 2 zones, Mangochi: 5 zones, Salima: 2 zones)	11 zones in total (Dedza: 2 zones, Kasungu: 2 zones, Mangochi: 5 zones, Salima: 2 zones)
School level (intervention schools)	Stratified convenience sampling with proportional allocation	199 (41 Dedza, 30 in Kasungu, 74 Mangochi, 54 Salima)	40 Schools in total (Dedza: 8, Kasungu: 6, Mangochi: 15, Salima: 11)	36 Schools (Dedza: 8, Kasungu: 8, Mangochi: 10, Salima: 10)
Learners	Stratified random sampling with proportional allocation	242,849 (52% girls, 48% boys)	120 learners (62 girls, 58 boys) in intervention schools. Dedza: 25 learners (13 girls, 12 boys) Kasungu: 18 learners (9 girls, 9 boys) Mangochi: 45 learners (23 girls, 22 boys) Salima: 33 learners (17 girls, 16 boys)	147 learners (74 girls, 73 boys) in intervention schools. Dedza: 26 learners (14 girls, 12 boys) Kasungu: 43 learners (22 girls, 21 boys) Mangochi: 42 learners (20 girls, 22 boys) Salima: 36 learners (18 girls, 18 boys)
Out-of-school adolescents	Stratified random sampling with proportional allocation	56,342 (64% girls, 36% boys)	120 out-of-school adolescents in total. Of which, 77 are girls and 43 are boys.	98 out-of-school adolescents in total. Of which, 54 are girls and 43 are boys and 1 chose other.
Parents / Caregivers	Convenience sample	165,000	120 parents/caregivers in intervention schools.	176 parents/caregivers in intervention schools (105 Women, 71 Men)

## 2.4. Data collection methods

The primary data collection method used for primary qualitative data collection throughout this MTE were **FGDs** with members of the target groups. All FGDs took place in person and were conducted by international consultants, national consultants, and enumerators.

The advantage of conducting FGDs is that, especially with younger target groups (learners and former out-of-school children), FGDs can help boost confidence and encourage participants to share insights more freely, thereby enhancing communication and the exchange of ideas. This was expected to help the evaluation team gain an in-depth understanding of the participants and their experiences and perspectives.

Each FGDs followed a structured guideline, adapted to the respective target group. Closed questions were operationalised through a five-point Likert scale. Such as, the scale is particularly useful to measure attitudes, beliefs and perceptions in the target population as it allows for nuanced answer options. Complementary to the Likert scale assessments, the guidelines included open qualitative questions exploring the reasons for provided ratings.

For the recording of the FGDs, the evaluators utilized Kobo Toolbox, an open-source digital survey tool that is suitable for on- and offline data collection and allowed for easy navigation by the enumerators (e.g., the use of status and progress indicators, drop-down lists, radio buttons, matrix answers, checkboxes, free-text fields and even photographs). To enable the different respondent groups to participate in the survey and receive adapted questions, filter logics were applied. Filter questions can be used whenever the course of a questionnaire is to be adapted individually. Through the setting of filter questions, different questionnaire respondents are only asked those questions that are relevant to them. Last but not least, the voluntary and informed participation of interviewees was ensured throughout the survey by (i) ensuring that informed consent was collected from each interviewee before the start of the FGD and (ii) by including the options to consciously skip items that the respondents did not want to answer.

By using digital tools, the amount of missing data could be reduced and the information content to qualitative open questions could be increased.

In addition to FGDs, semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted to retrieve valuable information on selected indicators (particularly KPI indicator 1) and the other OECD-DAC dimensions to be explored throughout the MTE. Depending on the stakeholder, interviews took place virtually or in person.

Guidelines for key informant interviews were semi-structured, which means that they allowed for flexibility to ask follow-up questions or explore topics that emerged during the interviews and may not have been anticipated. A safe talking environment and anonymisation of statements was guaranteed. Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted by the international and national consultants.

Throughout interviews and FGDs, the evaluators assured the anonymity of the respondents by applying relevant **data protection requirements**, including the use of codes instead of real names. In addition, they added the latter to the introduction of the FGD / interview, informing respondents about the use of data.

## 2.5. Data analysis process

The evaluation team implemented a systematic approach to data management and analysis, combining qualitative findings from various sources, such as, documents, interviews, and FGD transcripts. MAXQDA®, a qualitative data analysis software, was utilised for a comprehensive code-based qualitative assessment. Two distinct approaches were adopted to define analysis codes, ensuring a thorough analysis of diverse data sources.

In the **deductive approach**, alignment with evaluation questions facilitated the triangulation of data across all six OECD-DAC criteria. This method allowed for the retrieval, contrast, and summarisation of information related to specific evaluation questions from multiple sources.

Conversely, an **inductive approach** was employed for the analysis of open-ended questions in FGD transcripts. During this approach, categories and codes were derived throughout the data analysis process, enabling an open assessment, especially in exploring reasons identified by FGD participants in the Likert scale assessments<sup>3</sup>.

**Quantitative data**, including Likert scale assessment data and extensive EMIS data, underwent comprehensive analysis. The Likert scale assessment data from FGDs at intervention schools underwent a descriptive analysis, including the derivation of district-specific average ratings for examined indicators, facilitating a comparative assessment across districts.

Within the **quasi-experimental approach** (DiD method), extensive EMIS data were analysed to compare outcomes between intervention and non-intervention schools, enhancing result robustness. The evaluation team employed the open-source statistical software R for both descriptive analysis of available quantitative data and the conduct of inferential statistical tests.

It is important to note that a DiD approach was employed, comparing intervention and non-intervention schools at the district level, as the available data did not allow for estimating a separate impact of policy on achievement by school type. While this approach is widely used, it is worth acknowledging that different programmes may apply variations of this method based on their specific contexts and research questions.

Prior to delving into the impact assessment through the DiD method, a crucial step in the analysis involved conducting pre-treatment tests. These tests are essential to evaluate the parallel trends assumption, a fundamental prerequisite for the validity of the DiD approach. The evaluation team followed established methodologies, including trend analyses, to examine whether the intervention and non-intervention groups exhibited similar trends in the outcome variables before the implementation of the JPGE intervention. The pre-treatment tests aimed to ensure that any observed changes could be attributed to the JPGE interventions rather than pre-existing divergences in trends between the two groups. This rigorous examination of pre-treatment trends enhanced the robustness and reliability of the subsequent DiD-analysis.

In order to estimate the impact of the JPGE intervention on educational outcomes, a DiD regression model was employed. The model is represented as follows:

$$\text{logit}(p_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{Target dummy} + \beta_2 \times \text{Intervention} + \beta_3 \times (\text{Target dummy} \times \text{Intervention}) + \text{District\_FE}_j + \epsilon_{it}$$

Here,  $p_{it}$  denotes the probability of the educational outcome for observation  $i$  at time  $t$ . The Target Dummy is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the observation is from a targeted area and 0 otherwise. The Intervention variable is a binary indicator equal to 1 if the observation is from the post-intervention period and 0 for the pre-intervention period. The interaction term (Target Dummy  $\times$  Intervention) captures the differential impact of the intervention in targeted areas compared to non-targeted areas over time. Additionally,  $\text{District\_FE}_j$  represents district fixed effects, accounting for unobservable district-specific factors that may influence the outcomes.  $\epsilon_{it}$  denotes the error term. It is important to note that due to data

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<sup>3</sup> A Likert scale assessment, using a 5-point scale, involves respondents indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements, typically ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The scale provides a structured way to measure attitudes, opinions, or perceptions, with higher scores indicating greater agreement or positivity.

constraints, the estimation considers both public and private schools at the municipality level, and the separate impact of the policy on achievement by type of schools could not be estimated.

In conclusion, this multifaceted approach to data analysis, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, provides a robust foundation for assessing the effects and impact of the JPGE intervention, despite inherent challenges and constraints.

## 2.6. Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation process encountered several noteworthy limitations that merit careful consideration. One faced challenge pertained to constraints related to **sampling**. Real-life time and budget limitations rendered a fully representative sample, adhering to a 95% confidence level and 5% error margin, unattainable within the given scope and setting. To address this, the evaluators proposed a strategic sampling strategy stratified according to relevant intervention levels, as detailed in chapter 1.6.

A substantial weakness of the evaluated programme, also reflected in the impact section, pertained to the **absence of a comprehensive programme-specific monitoring system** on all indicators. Consequently, the evaluation team had access only to the excerpts of the presumably undertaken monitoring by each involved UN agency, and selected, partly unlabelled monitoring figures from implementing partners. The non-availability of usable and reliable monitoring data significantly impeded a thorough assessment of the impact dimension and affected the evaluation of indicators in the effectiveness assessment, given the absence of current monitoring data beyond the 2022 progress report submitted to the donor.

The evaluation's **counterfactual approach**, while valuable, faced notable limitations as well. Given that intervention schools for JPGE were selected based on certain poverty related criteria rather than following a randomised approach, their similarity in terms of poverty status cannot automatically be assumed. The matching design for the counterfactual approach, reliant on observable differences in schools, had to assume no unobservable characteristics influencing learning outcomes outside of the programme. This is a strong assumption, considering the numerous unobserved factors that may influence outcomes, such as household characteristics, parents' education, and household wealth.

The counterfactual analysis faced another notable challenge due to the **multi-phase nature** of the JPGE intervention under evaluation. With the third phase being assessed, the preceding two phases had already exerted influence on a substantial number of targeted schools. This circumstance posed a challenge to a fundamental assumption of the quasi-experimental approach, which requires targeted and non-targeted schools to exhibit parallel trends before the intervention. Despite the evaluation team's efforts to access pre-JPGE data (prior to 2012), the availability of data for this period was incomplete and featured significant gaps, rendering it unsuitable for establishing a robust baseline. In light of these limitations, the evaluators had to resort to using 2019 and 2020 as the pre-intervention period. However, this introduced concerns about the existence of parallel trends during this timeframe. Consequently, the counterfactual analysis conducted for this MTE could not yield significant results, emphasising the importance of a comprehensive and accurate baseline for quasi-experimental designs.

Given that "real" baseline or midline data was not available for the evaluation, the evaluation team was unable to use matching in conjunction with a DiD model to account for time-invariant unobservable characteristics and increase the robustness of the matching design. Finally, as matching should be conducted with baseline characteristics, without this data the evaluation team had to use ex-post

covariates for the matching with the assumption that the covariates have been time-invariant since baseline. These assumptions of no unobservable differences between treatment and control schools along with time-invariant matching covariates limit causal interpretations from the analysis. In response to these limitations, the evaluators placed a stronger emphasis on descriptive analyses and qualitative data analysis, providing valuable insights into the programme's implementation.

**Data quality** emerged as a notable limitation, encompassing incomplete data, limiting the full sample of schools, and entailing challenges in ensuring ideal conditions for the counterfactual assumption.

Last but not least, **connectivity issues** and occasional difficulties in verbal comprehension during virtual data collection posed challenges. The unexpected unavailability of selected stakeholders in Lilongwe and disruptions in planned data inclusion, exacerbated by stakeholders' preference for virtual interviews, compromised the quality of some conducted interviews. Challenges of this nature were not encountered in on-site interviews/discussions. The clarity of questions was guaranteed by the inclusion of local enumerators proficient in Chichewa. These enumerators either presented the questions directly in the respondents' native language or, in cases where an international evaluator was involved, translated questions from English as required.

## 2.7. Gender and human rights (including child rights)

The target groups involved in this mid-term evaluation required the evaluation team to ensure inclusive data collection as well as high standards in terms of research ethics, thereby ensuring evaluators' independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability and accounting for potential conflicts of interest, in line with UNEG ethical standards. The evaluation team was committed to maintaining independence by avoiding undue influence from external parties. Impartiality was ensured through unbiased and objective assessments, without favouritism or prejudice. Credibility was upheld by employing rigorous research methodologies, data analysis, and reporting practices to enhance the reliability of findings. Conflicts of interest were systematically identified, disclosed, and managed to prevent any compromise in the integrity of the evaluation. Accountability was demonstrated by transparently communicating methodologies, engaging stakeholders, and addressing concerns raised during the evaluation process.

The evaluation team was supported in this process by the **UNICEF Ethics Review Board (ERB)** (also called Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned with protecting the welfare, rights, and privacy of persons engaged in research and evaluations. The purpose of the review by the ERB is to ensure the protection of human research participants' rights, including respect for individuals to make free decisions, justice or equity regarding distribution of the burdens and benefits of research, and the obligation to do good and avoid harm. ERBs review research protocols that involve the collection and analysis of data from human subjects to ensure that ethical standards are upheld. Within the realm of this MTE, the ERB reviewed the Ethics Application form outlining potential risks and mitigation measures throughout the evaluation process, data collection instruments and informed consent forms prior to data collection.

All evaluation team members were experienced in gender-sensitive data collection and data collection with vulnerable groups, including children and persons with disabilities. In addition, the evaluation team was supported by a key expert on gender equality and human/child rights to ensure both methodological rigor and the compliance with ethical standards.

Particular attention was paid to the application of ethical standards and data protection in data collection involving children. It was ensured that the research interest of the evaluation never overrode the interests of the children. In this regard, Mainlevel carefully reviewed and fully adhered to United Nations Evaluation

Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2020) and the UNICEF procedure on ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis (2021) and ensured compliance within the evaluation team.

The following measures were taken to ensure ethical standards and an inclusive approach:

**Evaluation design:** As part of the inception phase, all evaluation objectives, criteria, and questions were internally reviewed regarding their inclusiveness for women and men, girls and boys, and people of different backgrounds and abilities. Furthermore, in line with UNICEF's standards and guidelines surrounding data collection involving humans, prior to the actual collection of data itself, all instruments were submitted to the ethical board for a review and approval.

**Subject risks:** The risks listed below were anticipated, and corresponding mitigation measures were taken during the preparation of data collection:

*Risk:* Fear and anxiety about negative consequences of a participant's involvement or if someone finds out what they have said; i.e., boys, girls, and adolescents.

*Mitigation:* In the call to headteachers prior to the data collection to mobilise participants, relevant key parameters of the involvement in data collection were outlined, including voluntariness of participation and option of withdrawal at any point and confidentiality of data.

*Risk:* Discomfort caused from questions that might be upsetting, embarrassing, intrusive or sensitive.

*Mitigation:* The evaluation was conducted with integrity and was respectful of participants, their views, cultures, and diverse contributions. Questions were formulated in a sensitive manner, and guidelines underwent a four-eye quality check and approval by the ethics board before the first FGD. However, if a participant felt uncomfortable during the interview or FGD, or with any of the questions, they did not have to answer the respective question and could decide to leave the interview without any negative consequences. Furthermore, there were at least two evaluators present per FGD to minimise the risks of doing any harm from their side.

*Risk:* Travelling to and from location of data collection at less safe times of the day posing safety risks.

*Mitigation:* The data collection team organised the data collection meeting with the participants at an appropriate and safe time during the day, as the participants had to gather at one place to join the discussion. Specifically, enumerator teams split to ensure that all children could be engaged during morning hours, when they were arounds school premises anyway, ensuring they would not have to stay behind after classes ended. Furthermore, their schools should represent a familiar environment to the girls, boys, and adolescents involved, providing additional comfort to them. Another advantage is the participants' familiarity with the logistics towards their school, not increasing any safety risks related to traveling.

*Risk:* Participation in the interviews could mean missing out on a day or some hours from school for girls, boys, and adolescents.

*Mitigation:* Whenever possible, the FGDs were conducted at a time when participants would not need to miss out school (i.e., during break times).

**Subject recruitment:** For interviews, the evaluation team directly contacted the relevant stakeholders within the implementing UN agencies as they were already liaised. In a next step, the evaluators asked the project team to liaise them with the district coordinators, through which they could reach out to head teachers at the selected schools. For the FGDs, the evaluation team then coordinated with the head teachers to make calls and reach out to the other foreseen participants (parents, learners, former out-of-school children). The evaluators conducted FGDs with learners (including former out-of-school children) and parents/caregivers based on their participation in the programme and their availability and willingness to participate in an interview at the time of data collection.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality in managing and handling any sensitive data from the participants, the evaluation team followed ethical considerations throughout the implementation of the evaluation. All interview sources were codified for the final evaluation report to prevent retractability of specific statements to individual respondents. The evaluation report does not disclose any names or other personal data.

**Informed Consent:** Prior to the start of the data collection involving adults, such as, head teachers and parents, informed consent was sought. For each target group and data collection type (i.e., key informant interviews and FGDs), the evaluation team conceptualized a consent form, which informed participants about the evaluation, the purpose of the data collection, their involvement, and data management. Participants were asked to sign the consent form before participating in data collection.

The evaluation team adhered to international guidelines and expertise from child protection organisations by informing children about the purpose of the study and giving them the option to be involved or not. Written consent forms were equally revised by/read out to and signed by parents of the chosen child. The consent forms and information sheet were tailored to the age of the participants, and easy language ensured that everyone could follow easily.

Before data collection, the interviewer read out the information sheet, which included the purpose of the interview, why participants had been invited to participate in data collection, details about the confidentiality of data, the duration of data collection, and that the interview was completely voluntary. In addition to the signed consent forms, the interviewer also asked for verbal assent, particularly from participating minors, and made note of the verbal assent. Data collection only proceeded with the submission of signed consent forms and verbally accorded assent. The interviewer also pointed out that participants could drop out at any point without the need for an explanation, even after giving their consent and assent to participate if they did not feel comfortable throughout data collection. Data collectors also asked whether everybody had understood the content or if there were any questions.

**Subject & Data Protection:** The responsibility for collecting and having custody of the data rested solely with the evaluation team, according to the signed data protection contract. Handwritten notes were taken regarding key insights during the interviews, and no (audio / visual) recordings were made. The interview transcripts were securely stored on Mainlevel's data storage drive. The organisation's data privacy and protection officer are responsible for ensuring secure storage and destroying the data six months after completing the assignment.

As mentioned above under subject risks, children were engaged at school, at a safe and convenient place under the distant observation of teachers, parents, and guardians. The training of enumerators specifically included awareness-raising and capacity building regarding data collection with children and vulnerable groups. Enumerators and evaluators were sensitised regarding implicit hierarchies between interviewer and interviewee (adult and child, etc.), and diversity among enumerators was encouraged. For

FGDs involving children, child-friendly tools were utilized to enable informed and active participation by younger children and were partly based on visual communication (smiley faces). Children were cautiously encouraged to speak up during interviews and group discussions, but their silence was equally respected.

A gender balance among interviewees and FGD participants as well as inclusion of persons with disabilities was actively encouraged, with the latter being difficult to achieve in the given setting. In addition, enumerators of different genders were involved so that interviewees could choose to talk to an interviewer of the same gender.

For the questions posed, the evaluators ensured that they were short and easy to understand, adapting them, when necessary, to the vocabulary of children and avoiding negative formulations. Overall discussions were kept short, and sufficient time was allocated to enumerators to explain the purpose and contents of the discussion and to conduct the FGDs. The evaluators aimed to make the discussions as intuitive as possible. To make the questions more child-friendly and inclusive for young children or those with learning difficulties, the evaluation team suggested using a “Smiley Scale Rating.” In this approach, children could express their opinion on rating questions by choosing one of the smileys representing very happy, happy, neutral, or fairly unhappy on the five-point Likert Smiley Scale.

## **2.8. Dissemination and use of evaluation**

This formative evaluation was conducted through a consultative, inclusive and participatory process, closely engaging with all UN partners and the Reference Group members. It has highlighted many key learning and recommendations for the current and future programmes of the partner UN agencies. UNICEF has chalked out a dissemination plan where the report has been shared with all the Reference Group members and will be further disseminated to the relevant wider audience. For this purpose, a summary report, under the title UNICEF LEaRNS (Learning from Evaluation and Research Note Series) is being developed based on the final report. A draft summary has been annexed with this report, which will be further designed by UNICEF with relevant pictures before sharing with the key stakeholders. Also, a management response will be prepared by the UN agencies to ensure the action on and use of key recommendations.

## FINDINGS ALONG OECD-DAC CRITERIA

This chapter analyses and assesses the third phase of the JPGE III along the six OECD-DAC criteria relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

### 3.1 Relevance

As part of the relevance criterion, the midterm review examined the alignment with relevant policies and priorities, the alignment with needs and capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders, as well as the appropriateness of the project design.

#### Relevance – Dimension 1: Alignment with policies and priorities

I. To what extent are programme objectives relevant to the education context and aligned to government priorities and policies?

JPGE in Malawi demonstrates a high degree of relevance to the education context and a strong alignment with government priorities and policies.

On one hand, JPGE closely aligns with national policies, especially in the realm of sexual and reproductive health, by actively implementing national strategies and indicators (INT\_8). The programme's **alignment** extends to the Government of Malawi /UNFPA 9<sup>th</sup> Country Programme (2024–2028), in which it targets 10–14-year-old girls as the key population. In addition, JPGE aligns with the equity pillar of the National Education Strategy, contributing to gender parity and fitting well within the thematic areas outlined by the Ministry of Education. The programme is also in sync with the Malawian Sector Investment Plan and EMIS, demonstrating its alignment with the broader national strategy plan (INT\_6), the SRHR Policy, Youth Investment Policy, and the National Youth Policy. Linked with JPGE, WFP's longstanding support in school feeding aligns with the broader school health and nutrition policy, emphasising the comprehensive approach of the programme to improving education outcomes.

On the other hand, JPGE shows **complementarity** with government priorities on girls' and boys' inclusive education, involving various ministries such as, Education, Gender, Health, and Agriculture (INT\_7). JPGE contributes to the formulation of youth policies, health service strategies, investment policies, and the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) III 2023-2030, showcasing the integration and implementation of broader national strategies (INT\_5, 9). Moreover, JPGE significantly contributes to the Malawi 2063 vision by addressing multiple challenges simultaneously, particularly those related to health, human capital, and education. The programme also contributes to the national goal of increasing girls' enrolment in secondary school and aligns with the Government's zero-hunger strategy through components like the school feeding programme and market provision for farmers at primary schools (FGD\_2).

Moreover, through its intended contributions to SDG 2 (zero hunger), SGE 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality), the programme features alignment with the global Agenda 2030. On an African level, the programme is furthermore in sync with the Agenda 2063 ("The Africa We Want") which strives for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent over a 50-year period, prioritising education, gender equality, and youth empowerment.

In general, the programme's activities are consistent with national guidelines, particularly those promoting girls' education (FGD\_1). JPGE furthermore takes up a role as a central point in the primary education

sector, filling gaps within the national education programme through its support to the education system (INT\_10).

## Relevance – Dimension 2: Alignment with needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders

II. To what extent did the programme identify the needs of girls and adolescent girls and boys (especially the most vulnerable) and the relevant barriers to girls' and boys' education in Malawi?

JPGE demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the needs and barriers affecting girls and adolescent boys in the pursuit of education. A key strength of the programme lies in its recognition of the relevance of SRHR services to the target groups (e.g., capacity building on menstrual hygiene), with a particular emphasis on adolescents and young people (INT\_1, 11). Importantly, the programme acknowledges the multifaceted nature of barriers to education, addressing issues beyond the classroom setting. This includes a commitment to improving the overall learning experience by focusing on the quality of teaching and practical matters like access to sanitary facilities and nutrition, reflecting a holistic approach to education (INT\_2). In terms of nutrition, the WFP intervention aspires to tackle poverty, hunger, and school attendance simultaneously. In its holistic approach, JPGE acknowledges and addresses gender stereotypes, poverty, and the lack of role models for boys. The third phase of the programme also includes a social behaviour change component, fostering awareness among stakeholders about the importance of education and promoting a collective effort towards common goals (INT\_11).

Based on needs assessments, JPGE has **identified** and **addressed specific challenges** (e.g., early marriages and teenage pregnancy). For instance, regarding teenage pregnancy, the intervention has implemented a mentorship programme and a safe space mentorship programme for health care providers to ensure the provision of youth-friendly health services, including family planning. It focuses on overcoming barriers like formal parental consent (INT\_3). In addition, the intervention involves a range of relevant stakeholders (i.e., parents, community leaders, and policymakers), aspiring to ensure their buy-in and influence on the final beneficiaries to achieve reductions in teenage pregnancies, gender-based violence, early marriages, and school dropouts (INT\_8). For instance, JPGE engages them in awareness campaigns and mentor recruitment to combat cultural practices that limit girls' participation in education, demonstrating a proactive approach to social barriers such as, early marriages (FGD\_1). The programme further addresses financial and social barriers by providing safe spaces for girls, engaging in mentorship programmes and after-school clubs, and sensitizing boys to issues related to early marriage, pregnancy, HIV, and absenteeism (INT\_3, 9, 11). At community level, JPGE involves parents in the promotion of education and implements readmission campaigns to overcome cultural barriers (e.g., early marriages and premature school dropouts) and to increase admission rates (FGD\_2; INT\_11).

However, **some key barriers remain**. Though school meals may contribute to learners attending school, mitigating poverty as a barrier, families still face opportunity costs as a learner at school does not contribute to family income. In addition, school infrastructure often remains insufficient (e.g., no desks in classrooms) and features a fundamental lack of resources to learn in a safe environment. In particular, learners with special needs continue to face barriers to education due to constraints in school infrastructure, limited resources, and teachers' support capacities. Also, teacher-pupil ratios remain inadequate (with oftentimes 120 learners in on classroom) and the relations between the two is poor (INT\_5, 10). Regarding sanitation, some schools continue to lack proper, adequate, and sufficient WASH facilities, especially girls' change rooms, which leads to lower attendance rates of girls during their

menstruation. Regarding pregnancy and early marriages as root causes of dropouts, the overall dropout rate, albeit higher than in the baseline year 2019, is seen to exhibit a downward trend in the years following the intervention which aspires to tackle underlying issues and support dropouts to return to school (INT\_6). However, the decreasing trend in dropout rates cannot be statistically attributed to the intervention. It rather seems like a stabilisation trend after a stark increase after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these slight improvements, girls continue to have a lack in perspective in terms of secondary education, which comes with even more challenges for girls, particularly in terms of limited vacancies despite the universal right to education (INT\_10). Similarly, access to SRHR services remains limited as JPGE encountered limitations in bringing these services to the far away girls, who are particularly prone to drop out. Moreover, though the intervention began to include boys in phase II, the latter often feel left out of the support and are thus frustrated (INT\_6). At district level, implementing partners would need to coordinate more to mitigate these issues (INT\_5).

### Relevance – Dimension 3: Appropriateness of the design

#### III. How useful are the project's performance indicators?

The performance (outcome) indicators of JPGE have been generally acknowledged by interview partners as comprehensive and covering all the elements addressed by the project. Despite this strength, the evaluation team identifies a gap in effectively operationalising the programme's (impact-level) objective. While indicators are expected to translate results, including the programme objective, into measurable dimensions, the evaluation team assesses that the chosen **KPI indicators** enrolment, dropout rates, and literacy/numeracy of grade 7 learners, do not adequately reflect the programme objective in its entirety. Particularly the overarching goal of "improved life opportunities" is not captured by the KPI indicators.

On a positive note, the establishment and regular updates of suitable **indicators at the district level** were noted as a positive aspect of JPGE's monitoring and evaluation framework in conducted interviews. These indicators are considered highly useful, especially since they align with the standard indicators used for reporting to UNFPA, demonstrating consistency and facilitating reporting practices (INT\_9). Each intervention within JPGE has specific output and outcome indicators, crucial for tracking progress, mapping implementation quality, and identifying remaining gaps. The JPGE M&E team reportedly actively engages with stakeholders, presenting indicators and progress updates, with ongoing tracking and follow-up at the district level, including meetings with relevant ministries (FGD\_2). According to one interview source, this collaboration and transparency in data provision contribute to informed programmatic decisions and showcase the effectiveness of certain interventions, such as, the positive impact of school feeding programmes in providing daily nutritious meals (INT\_11).

Nevertheless, the evaluation team assesses that indicators are, in many cases, not formulated in a **SMART manner** (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and hence do not fulfil the basic quality requirements for indicators. Key dimensions of indicators are furthermore oftentimes not properly defined, hindering a common understanding of indicators among implementing partners, a coherent monitoring approach and, not least, a streamlined approach to their assessment within this MTE. To adequately account for the respective strengths and weaknesses of each indicator assessed in the framework of this MTE, a specific SMART assessment is included for each indicator in the effectiveness chapter of this report (see chapter 3.3).

With regard to the specific components, interviewed stakeholders particularly identified the direct contribution of the SRHR component to education as an area for improvement. Concerns were raised

about the mere focus on the delivery of services without sufficient attention to their (educational) effects. Additionally, limitations in tracking the distinction between in- and out-of-school children and adolescents accessing SRHR services highlight the need for a more nuanced mechanism to assess the quantity and demographic specifics of learners with access to these services (INT\_4).

Last but not least, interview partners pinpointed a mismatch between the intervention zone of four districts and the intervention's objective to tackle girls' barriers to education in all of Malawi. Due to limited funds, only a fraction of the area can be covered by JPGE (INT\_6, 9).

**Overall**, JPGE aligns with national policies, addressing various educational challenges, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and cultural barriers. However, persistent issues such as, infrastructure challenges and limited access to services for remote populations require continued efforts. The programme generally features a good understanding of (educational) needs of target groups and engagement with relevant stakeholders. With regard to the appropriateness of indicators, a need for refinement of performance indicators (KPI and outcome level) became evident.

## 3.2 Coherence

Under the coherence criterion, the MTE assesses internal coherence, particularly synergies between UN agencies and with the governmental partners and their respective priorities, and external coherence with relevant external actors' interventions.

### Coherence – Dimension 1: Internal Coherence

IV. How well does the JPGE-III fit into the national policies, government priorities and norms of UNICEF in Malawi?

As highlighted in the relevance chapter, JPGE is closely aligned with government policies, priorities, and UN norms, contributing to key national objectives in Malawi. Specifically, JPGE aligns with the HSSP, addressing governmental priorities such as, combating teenage pregnancy (INT\_3, 5). The programme aspired to empower learners through advocacy and community engagement, fostering collaboration between all involved stakeholders across different sectors at the district level (e.g., district coordinators organised open-days fairs), including education, agriculture, and the district council (FGD\_1), for the latter to take interest in children's education and promote girls' education (INT\_7).

JPGE further aligns with government efforts to address poverty as a barrier to education, complementing existing funds by targeting those not benefiting from current initiatives. The programme strengthens the capacities of teachers and project stakeholders (e.g., on how to integrate former dropouts), addressing issues related to hunger, poor health, and menstrual hygiene management to promote girls' education (INT\_7).

According to interview sources, there is strong political will from the Ministry of Education to promote female education, and JPGE activities are well-aligned with government policies, contributing to the promotion of girls' education (INT\_7). Notably, the programme aligns with the Malawi National Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) Strategy 2022–2030, facilitating changes in legislation to allow sexual and reproductive health services for 10–14-year-olds without parental consent. JPGE III also contributes to health and facility standards by capacitating health care professionals to provide SRHR services to adolescents and improving the quality of all targeted health facilities to get accreditation (INT\_8).

Moreover, the programme complements UNFPA mandates regarding gender-related issues, implementing comprehensive sexual education (CSE) alongside SRHR interventions to empower girls to make informed decisions and go to school (INT\_9). This internal coherence also allows for certain spillover effects. For example, the unprecedented mentorship component of JPGE helped build capacities at community level for facilitators (Training of Trainers – ToT), who, in turn, started mentoring others in the district (INT\_8). Also, JPGE agricultural component reviewed and disseminated good agricultural practices across communities to secure food provision (INT\_7). Likewise, a UNICEF internal interview partner confirmed the alignment of the programme with overall UNICEF norms, particularly in the education sector (INT\_2).

V. How good are the synergies and interlinkages among the JPGE-III partners (both UN and government) on JPGE (e.g., internal and external coordination mechanisms, challenges of coordination, conflicts with other UNICEF programmes)?

JPGE in Malawi is implemented by three UN agencies collaboratively, following an integrating approach and hence aiming to achieve a comprehensive impact at the intervention schools. The joint funding and selection of the same schools by all UN agencies are expected to contribute to an enhanced outcome at the school level, showcasing the added value of a joint programme (INT\_2). As all three UN agencies come together to coordinate (INT\_3, 5), JPGE does not conflict with other UNICEF interventions (INT\_2), but rather complements other UN projects (INT\_11). There is a clear understanding of responsibilities among UN agencies, with each agency having its own sphere of operation (FGD\_1, 2; INT\_8). To ensure coordination among the three components, each headed by a different UN agency, the role of a coordinator is expected to coordinate among the three agencies. However, challenges in coordination were reported, particularly in the context of recurring staff turnover (particularly in the role of coordinator) and lengthy recruitment processes hindering synergy among programme components (INT\_2, 9, 10). Despite a big potential for synergies, some interviewed stakeholders perceived the three UN agencies as operating independently or even competitively, lacking a unified approach (INT\_2, 9, 10).

*“Similar UN interventions, such as, Spotlight, have better coordination than JPGE, especially regarding communication. Every agency is on its own, coordinators of each agency not knowing the coordinators of other agencies.” (INT\_9).*

This is particularly critical as the joint programme's success is clearly contingent on coordination, adaptability, and tolerance among agencies, and is partly perceived as serving as an opportunity to strengthen the system and act as a role model for government coordination at various levels (FGD\_2). While there is clear room for improvement in achieving more unified and coordinated efforts, the joint funding mechanism ensures a common focus at the grassroots level, the selected schools, through the implementation of complementary interventions under the three components (FGD\_1; INT\_2, 5, 7, 11). Challenges related to different budget allocations, technical responsibilities, and staff turnovers are aspired to be mitigated through transparency in communication, particularly regular meetings for the entire programme and coordination at the district level (INT\_9, 10, 11). Furthermore, conflicts with and among the ministries regarding the provision of SRHR commodities in schools reveal challenges in aligning programme activities with partly conflicting government strategies (INT\_8):

*“There are conflicts with the Ministry of Education regarding the distribution of SRHR interventions, especially in schools. They approve the comprehensive sexual education curriculum, but they do not allow the distribution of SRHR commodities on school premises. The Ministry of Health, on the other hand, does not agree with this passive approach, considering it ineffective and hindering.” (INT\_8).*

Overall, the collaboration among JPGE partners exhibits both strengths and challenges, emphasising the need for continuous improvement in coordination mechanisms and collaborative efforts.

Beyond the UN level, the three UN agencies jointly coordinate with the implementing ministries of education, health, agriculture, and gender, as well as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) such as, YONECO, Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM), National SRHR alliance, and the human rights resource centre (INT\_8).

In addition, as some UN staff members also work on other UN projects in Malawi on similar issues, there is synergy in terms of knowledge transfer. Moreover, some components original to JPGE, such as, its (digital) CSE or parent-child linkage under JPGE, are taken over by other development projects (e.g., KOICA – Korea International Cooperation Agency) (INT\_7, 8, 9), showing a close interlinkage of the programme with other actors in the field.

## Coherence – Dimension 2: External Coherence

VI. What is the role and relationship of the JPGE with other actors' interventions (extent of partnership, coordination, and complementarity and/ or conflict with the interventions of the Malawi government and other relevant actors)?

JPGE III in Malawi actively engages in partnerships, coordination efforts, and complementary initiatives with various stakeholders, including government programmes and other interventions, both at the national and district levels. At the **national level**, JPGE complements existing programmes by aligning with national policies and objectives. For instance, it supports menstrual hygiene education to enhance school attendance and participates in teacher empowerment initiatives addressing gender-based violence, thus aligning with national priorities (INT\_5). The project collaborates synergistically with UNFPA's Safeguarding Young People programme, demonstrating a coordinated approach to achieving shared SRHR goals without providing commodities directly at school premises, in line with governmental health policies (INT\_5).

Utilising existing Malawi Girl Guides Association (MAGGA) structures, JPGE integrates its activities into the Girl Guides network, leveraging established **district-level structures** (INT\_5). The project collaborates with local police forces, the Youth Friendly Health Service Programme, and the Health Facility Improvement Plan, complementing government activities on child protection and health (FGD\_1, INT\_3). At the district level, WFP furthermore collaborates with projects in the context of capacity building in agriculture. This collaboration focuses purely on district councils with which the ministries of education and agriculture already collaborated (INT\_10). Additionally, partnerships with organisations like United States Agency for International Development (USAID), WorldVision, and KOICA help divide tasks, avoid duplication, and showcase complementarity in various components (INT\_8, 9). Geographical complementarity in promoting girls' education is noted between Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), USAID, and JPGE, emphasising collaborative efforts (FGD\_2, INT\_7).

JPGE collaborates with various **external development cooperation organisations**, including USAID and WorldVision, to assign tasks and prevent redundancy, demonstrating complementarity across different aspects (INT\_8, 9). In Mangochi, the WFP school feeding programme complements Iceland's Mangochi Basic Education Project, emphasising education and health (FGD\_1). Leveraging synergies, JPGE benefits from the collaboration between CAMFED and WFP, leading to a broader impact on dropout rates and policy networks. This collaborative approach enables other donors and organisations to

intervene more effectively, expanding JPGE's influence nationally, contributing to policies like the nutrition policy in the national budget (FGD\_2). In the realm of SRHR, JPGE forms connections through the Ministry of Health with Plan International and through the Ministry of Gender with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and UNFPA for CSE (INT\_7). There is complementarity with USAID, providing support for the contraceptive component, including emergency contraceptives and condom distribution. WorldVision contributes to capacity building and addresses HIV prevention issues using global funds (INT\_8).

*“Donor complementarity is important to achieve synergies in interventions.” (INT\_10).*

Despite these positive aspects, **challenges in coordination** and information sharing within UN agencies suggest opportunities for improvement. Firstly, issues related to communication and collaboration within the UN agencies were reported, with concerns raised about a lack of active follow-up, transparency, and joint planning, particularly at higher decision-making levels with implementing partners (INT\_5). Secondly, the limited geographical focus of JPGE on four districts and potential overlaps with other programmes like Malawi Education Sector Investment Programme (MESIP) and the Malawi Education Reform Programme (MERP) reveal coordination gaps, impacting the overall effectiveness of interventions (INT\_6). Based on anecdotal evidence, it appears that particularly MESIP, MERP, and JPGE operate independently, lacking collaborative exchanges. (INT\_6).

Additionally, the centralised model of the feeding programme in Salima is identified as lacking synergies with other initiatives, with risks of reducing its overall impact (FGD\_1). Occasional meetings with WorldVision provide insights, but the absence of clearly defined collaborations poses challenges in coordinating efforts with such external stakeholders (INT\_5). Addressing these issues could enhance the overall effectiveness and coherence of JPGE.

## VII. What are the strengths and gaps in achieving coherence and adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?

Assessing the strengths and shortcomings in achieving coherence and value addition while preventing duplication of effort in the JPGE intervention reveals a multifaceted landscape. The programme demonstrates strengths through various mechanisms. Regular technical working group (TWG) meetings play a pivotal role in averting duplications and fostering synergies (INT\_3). At the district level, a participatory approach involving relevant stakeholders in joint TWGs and monitoring activities aspires to ensure coordinated efforts and coherence (FGD\_1).

The linkages to local farmer markets align with the agricultural sector's commercialisation agenda, ensuring that the school meal component under JPGE supports local farmers and cooperatives without redundant efforts (FGD\_1). Avoiding duplication is actively pursued through mapping exercises in collaboration with district coordinators to identify and allocate activities effectively (INT\_9). Furthermore, JPGE is perceived by some as serving as a pilot and role model for government and district-level coordination, promoting a common agenda and preventing duplication of efforts within the UN (FGD\_2).

However, gaps in achieving coherence and adding value within JPGE are equally evident in several areas. Even though TWGs occur regularly, networking and knowledge management present notable gaps, impeding effective coordination and collaboration (INT\_3). As pointed out previously, anecdotal evidence furthermore suggests issues in active follow-ups, information sharing, and collaborative decision-making among UN agencies and implementing partners (INT\_5, 6, 7). This additionally reveals a gap in learning and exchange compared to other government programmes and World Bank initiatives

(INT\_6). Furthermore, resource restrictions and limited coverage within the country, benefiting only four out of 28 districts, highlight missed opportunities for upscaling and potential synergies with other initiatives facing similar challenges (INT\_6, 9).

**In conclusion**, JPGE demonstrates a certain degree of collaboration among the three implementing UN agencies and aligns with government policies to address key national objectives. The programme successfully avoids duplication through mechanisms such as, regular technical working group meetings and collaborative approaches at the district level. While challenges in networking and knowledge management persist, the joint funding mechanism ensures a unified focus at the selected schools, highlighting the ongoing need for improvement in operational dynamics and coordination.

### 3.3 Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion comprises of assessments of the achievement of prioritized KPI and outcome indicators, as well as possible unintended results.

#### Effectiveness – Dimensions 1 and 2: Achievement and Contributions to achievement of intended objectives

VIII. Are the current interventions reaching the intended target? To what extent are key interventions contributing to achieving planned outcome results? What are the major constraints so far?

The core of the effectiveness assessment in this MTE revolved around the assessment of the project’s KPI and outcome indicators, which are key to understanding the project’s progress towards achieving its objectives so far. The primary source of data collection for assessing indicator achievement at KPI and outcome level were the EMIS data sets, structured interviews with head teachers as well as FGDs with learners (including former out-of-school children) and caregivers.

To capture the basis of assessment and evaluability of each indicator, a brief SMART analysis is conducted for each assessed indicator ahead of the status assessment. A SMART analysis assesses the extent, to which an indicator is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, determining hence its quality and evaluability.

**Goal: School aged girls, boys and adolescent (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education improving their life opportunities**

**Indicator 1:** Percentage of learners in Grade 7 that attain at least minimum competency in (i) literacy (ii) numeracy, by sex.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chichewa: 42.30% (43.9% girls, 40.8%)</li> <li>English: 3.6% (girls 3.6%, boys 3.5%)</li> <li>Mathematics: 22.30% (girls 20.7%, boys 23.9%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chichewa: 44.4% (girls 44.3%, boys 44.5%)</li> <li>English: 20.2% (girls 19.7%, boys 20.7%)</li> <li>Mathematics: not reported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chichewa: 50% (50% for girls, and 49% for boys)</li> <li>English: 20% (22% for girls and 19% for boys)</li> <li>Mathematics: 31% (30% for girls and 33% for boys)</li> </ul>

**SMART assessment:** The formulation is clear, yet the indicator does not fully capture the intended project objective. The indicator falls short in operationalising the programme objective of learners benefiting from quality education and improving life opportunities. Therefore, the "relevant" aspect is not fully met. This lack of alignment makes the indicator less relevant in operationalising the desired outcome. This assessment applies to all three KPI indicators and will not be repeated for subsequent indicators. In addition, the core dimension of the indicator, the "minimum competency", is not adequately specified, neither in the indicator formulation nor in the indicator reference manual, making it challenging to precisely identify what level of proficiency or skill is expected, hence failing the "specific" criterion.

**Status assessment:** The baseline assessment was based on the Malawi Learning Assessment (MLA)<sup>4</sup>, which is conducted every three years at national level. It is unclear which (sampled) monitoring data were considered for the 2022 status assessment. As updated MLA figures for 2023 had not been available yet and replicating the MLA was out of scope of this MTE to assess indicator 1, the evaluators used a proxy indicator that parallel the logic of the MLA. Concretely, the MTE assessed the pass rates for mathematics (proxy for numeracy) as well as Chichewa and English (proxies for literacy) in grade 7 in the selected sample of schools (as tracked by the head teacher) to indicate minimum expected competency in literacy and numeracy in grade 7. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the evidence base for the MTE is partially perception-based<sup>5</sup> as required data was not systematically tracked by some head teachers. Furthermore, the pass rates are based on assessments administered by each school, which limits the comparability of minimum expected competency in literacy and numeracy in grade 7 across all intervention schools and districts. Put differently, the individual pass rates are not comparable as they do not base in a same assessment, as it would be the case with the MLA pass rates indicated below. Against this backdrop, it is not possible to relate the MTE assessment with the figures reported so far under this indicator. Relatedly, the MTE sample of schools (N=36) involved in primary data collection is not representative of all intervention schools, as outlined in chapter 2.3. Against this backdrop, the MTE assessment can only be understood as an indication for JPGE's effectiveness under this indicator. Including the latest MLA data in the endline evaluation of JPGE might reveal a concrete change in this indicator, potentially due to JPGE.

Table 3 shows the average pass rates for the three subjects, disaggregated by gender and district. Overall, the majority of boys and girls (i.e., over 50%) pass English and Chichewa across all four districts, indicating a certain minimum competency in literacy as foreseen in the JPGE target for this indicator—assuming that the pass rates are comparable. Regarding numeracy (i.e., pass rates in mathematics), the majority of boys pass mathematics in grade 7 in all districts, except in Mangochi. For girls, this is the case in two out of four districts. Nevertheless, more than 30% of both boys and girls across all districts pass mathematics in grade 7, indicating a certain minimum competency in numeracy as foreseen in the JPGE target for this indicator—assuming that the pass rates are comparable. Moreover, based on the overall average, pass rates are highest for Chichewa, followed by English and Mathematics, further corroborating that literacy is less an issue than numeracy. Relatedly, a gender effect might be at play: It appears that

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<sup>4</sup> The MLA is administered by the Ministry of Education to grade 2, grade 4 and grade 7 students in public schools. The MLA is a low-stake written assessment, administered face-to-face and delivered through paper-pencil tests. Test-takers are presented with booklets based on different learning objectives in Mathematics, Chichewa, and English. Test items consist of multiple-choice questions with three or more response options and open-ended questions requiring short constructed responses. Student performance is reported by average score. The minimum requirement to meet the national standard is a score of 40%.

<sup>5</sup> Three out of 36 head teachers did not systematically track the pass rates for the three subjects. As mitigation strategy, the enumerators asked the head teachers to provide rough estimations of pass rates.

more boys pass English than girls. For Chichewa and Mathematics, more girls seem to pass the subjects compared to boys. At district level, this gender effect is more nuanced: While Salima and Mangochi show the same tendency than the overall average, more boys seem to pass Mathematics compared to girls in Kasungu and Dedza. These tendencies might indicate the districts and aspects (i.e., literacy vs. numeracy) JPGE or similar interventions might want to focus more on in the future to achieve minimum competency in literacy and numeracy in grade 7.

**Table 3 Grade 7 average pass rates for the school year 2022/23 in Mathematics, English, and Chichewa (disaggregated by gender and district)**

District	Mathematics		English		Chichewa	
	Boys absolute (percentage)	Girls absolute (percentage)	Boys absolute (percentage)	Girls absolute (percentage)	Boys absolute (percentage)	Girls absolute (percentage)
<b>Kasungu</b>	91 out of 133 (68.4%)	99 out of 218 (45.3%)	98 out of 150 (65.3%)	123 out of 218 (56.4%)	140 out of 152 (92.1%)	206 out of 218 (94.5%)
<b>Dedza</b>	263 out of 461 (57.1%)	194 out of 430 (45.1%)	260 out of 391 (66.5%)	211 out of 375 (56.2%)	284 out of 299 (94.9%)	288 out of 303 (95%)
<b>Salima</b>	193 out of 273 (70.6%)	217 out of 288 (75.2%)	211 out of 291 (72.5%)	235 out of 366 (64.2%)	256 out of 356 (71.9%)	321 out of 424 (75.7%)
<b>Mangochi</b>	297 out of 649 (45.8%)	351 out of 557 (63%)	335 out of 480 (69.7%)	341 out of 514 (66.3%)	361 out of 535 (67.5%)	386 out of 527 (73.3%)
<b>Overall average across districts</b>	844 out of 1,516 (55.7%)	861 out of 1,494 (57.6%)	904 out of 1,312 (68.9%)	910 out of 1,473 (61.8%)	1,041 out of 1,342 (77.6%)	1,201 out of 1,472 (81.6%)

*N=36 schools: 8 schools in Kasungu and Dedza, respectively; 10 schools in Salima and Mangochi, respectively.*

Though it is not possible to compare the MTE assessment with the figures reported so far under this indicator and thus make conclusions on the concrete effectiveness of the intervention in terms of minimum competency in literacy and numeracy so far, anecdotal evidence from qualitative insights suggests a potential intervention effect.

*“Prior to the intervention, the intervention zones in Mangochi had the lowest education outcomes in the district. Now they have the best outcomes in the district.” (FGD\_2).*

**Outcome 1: By 2024, school aged children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, in target areas have access to inclusive quality education, delivered through integrated services in a safe and gender sensitive environment, that enhances learning outcomes.**

**Indicator 1.2:** Percentage of children who repeated Standard 5–8 in the target schools, by sex.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
<b>23%</b> (25% girls, 20% boys)	<b>16.7%</b> (16.7% girls, 16.7% boys)	<b>13.5%</b> (12% girls, 15% boys)

**SMART assessment:** The indicator is assessed as SMART.

**Status assessment:** The table above shows the baseline and 2022 values by drawing data from EMIS for all schools targeted by the programme. According to the last progress report, average repetition rates for learners in standard 5 to 8 in targeted schools recorded remarkable improvements, reduced to 16.7 percent for both girls and boys in 2022, compared to 22 percent in 2021 and baseline of 23 percent in 2020 (Progress report 2022).

For the MTE at hand, the evaluators calculated updated values<sup>6</sup> (2023) for this indicator, reverting to the same data source (EMIS data). However, the underlying sample slightly differs from the one referred to in the above assessment given that the updated values are drawn from the sample of schools that are included in the counterfactual approach. The DiD-approach which is applied throughout the counterfactual analysis relies on multiple time-periods for conducting the before and after analysis between intervention and control group. An implication of this is that only those schools that have been in the programme since at least 2019 are reflected in the analysis. As a result of this necessity, only those schools are reported for which a response is recorded for each year in the period 2019 to 2023, and where data was available for the following variables: enrolments for grades 5 to 8, Repetition number, Drop-out number and Drop-out due to pregnancy (or number of girls falling pregnant). As a result of this difference, the sample used in this MTE only comprises 145 intervention schools (Dedza: 36, Kasungu: 27, Salima: 31 Mangochi: 51). Based on this sample, we observe the following values:

Baseline value (2020)	Updated Figure (2022)	Updated Figure (2023)	Target Value (2024)
<b>7.84%</b> (6.92% girls, 8.85% boys)	<b>23.92%</b> (24.12% girls, 23.7% boys)	<b>23.98%</b> (24% girls, 23.94% boys)	<b>13.5%</b> (12% girls, 15% boys)

**All Districts:** Over the span of 2019 to 2023, the differences in repetition rates between targeted and non-targeted schools across all districts have undergone notable shifts. Overall, the repetition rates increased for both targeted and non-targeted schools between 2019 and 2023, from 20.63% to 23.73% for non-targeted schools and from 21.95% to 24.7% for targeted school. A notable finding is the extremely low repetition rate in 2020, which coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic. In subsequent years, repetition rates have surged beyond pre-pandemic levels, ostensibly attributed to the profound impacts of school closures, remote learning challenges, and disruptions to traditional teaching methods. These disruptions have led to substantial learning loss, intensified educational disparities, and underscored the critical imperatives of digital access and adaptability in the educational landscape worldwide. Due to the increase in the repetition rate in recent years, the current repetition rate of 24.7% has deviated considerably from its target value of 13.5% for 2024 even exceeds the baseline value for 2020 (see table 4). Achieving the target value for 2024 seems unlikely.

The result of the DiD-analysis is that the intervention is not statistically significant, i.e., suggesting that the effect of the intervention on repetition rates is not significantly different between the target and non-target schools<sup>7</sup>. This means that the intervention does not have a statistically discernible differential effect on

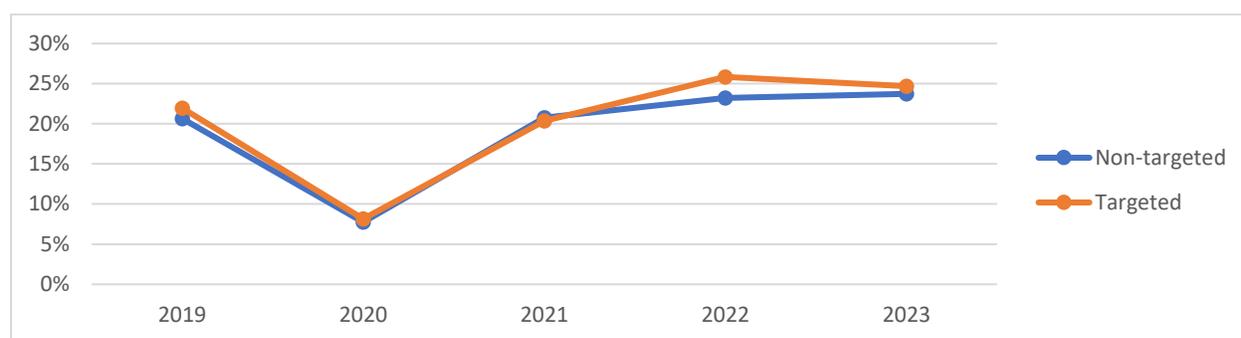
<sup>6</sup> As per indicator definition, the indicator is calculated across all grades.

<sup>7</sup> Since the p-value is 0.242, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we would not reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the difference in the outcome variable between the two groups is statistically significant. This suggests that, based on the data, we cannot rule out the possibility that the true difference is zero.

the repetition rates based on whether the school was targeted or not<sup>8</sup>. When calculating marginal effects, the average change in the probability repeating a year was also not significantly different between intervention and non-intervention schools in the pre-intervention period when considering all districts together. However, it is important to note that the lack of statistical significance does not necessarily mean there is no practical significance (see qualitative evidence).

**Table 4 Repetition rates 2019–2023 per district across gender**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	20.63%	21.95%	17.91%	21.37%	20.42%	20.62%	23.50%	23.92%	21.45%	20.40%
2020	7.75%	8.15%	7.29%	7.38%	7.53%	5.56%	7.69%	9.53%	11.32%	8.95%
2021	20.78%	20.36%	18.23%	18.75%	20.90%	19.03%	23.15%	23.23%	20.53%	18.10%
2022	23.24%	25.84%	21.49%	22.50%	24.94%	22.73%	22.77%	29.15%	22.33%	26.15%
2023	23.73%	24.70%	25.05%	26.37%	23.74%	24.08%	22.08%	24.75%	25.03%	23.18%



**Figure 3 Repetition rates 2019-2023 All Districts across gender**

<sup>8</sup> As the dependent variable is a percentage, a non-linear model was imperative to correctly estimate any possible effect. As such, the interaction term cannot be interpreted as the DiD-effect as it would be the case with a linear regression model. Instead, it is important to calculate the marginal effects of both intervention and non-intervention schools based on the non-linear model and interpret the significance of the difference in these marginal effects as the DiD-effect.

**Table 5 Fixed effects binomial estimation repetition rates (all learners)**

	Repetition rate across gender				
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 3 Kasungu	Model 4 Mangochi	Model 5 Salima
Constant		-1.777*** (0.0305)	-1.670*** (0.0242)	-1.515*** (0.0434)	-1.531*** (0.0563)
Targeted school	0.0284 (0.0384)	0.1025 (0.0708)	-0.1025 (0.0788)	0.0625 (0.0657)	-0.1449 (0.0902)
Intervention period	0.4619*** (0.0257)	0.5819*** (0.0400)	0.5361*** (0.0350)	0.2753*** (0.0608)	0.3593*** (0.0815)
Targeted school x intervention period	0.0582 (0.0590)	-0.0414 (0.0898)	0.0498 (0.1070)	0.1819 (0.1251)	0.1992 (0.1314)
District	Yes	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo				
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	0.09766	0.13193	0.12728	0.04118	0.10650

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 6 Marginal effects of DiD for repetition rates (all learners)**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.012	0.010	1.171	0.242	2.050	-0.008	0.032
Dedza	-0.002	0.015	-0.143	0.886	0.174	-0.031	0.026
Kasungu	0.004	0.019	0.188	0.851	0.233	-0.034	0.042
Mangochi	0.036	0.023	1.578	0.115	3.125	-0.009	0.081
Salima	0.030	0.022	1.385	0.166	2.590	-0.013	0.073

**Individual districts:** The results for the individual districts are similar to the overall results. Here, too, the repetition rates in 2023 are above the 2019 values in all districts and well below the target value for 2024. All districts saw a decrease in repetition rates in 2021, which coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic.

If the difference between targeted and non-targeted schools between 2019 and 2023 is considered, a mixed picture emerges. While in Dedza and Salima the difference in repetition rates between targeted and non-targeted school decreased from 2019 to 2023, the difference in repetition rates between targeted and non-targeted school in Kasungu and Mangochi increased. Only in Salima, the repetition rate for targeted schools is lower, being at 23.41% compared to 24.56% at non-targeted schools. However, it should be noted that targeted schools in Salima already performed better in the base year 2019 (see table 7).

The DiD-analysis also indicates that the intervention is not statistically significant for three out of four districts, which are further indications that the intervention had no statistically significant effect on the repetition rates. Only within the district of Mangochi, the DiD-analysis suggests that the intervention is associated with a statistically significant additional increase in the repetition rates, as indicated by the significant estimate for the intervention group and the positive DiD-estimate. In the context of the goal to harmonize differences, this positive effect can be seen as a successful reduction in the disparity between the targeted and non-targeted groups. The estimate suggests that the intervention has contributed to aligning repetition rates, reflecting progress toward the desired outcome of harmonization of repetition rates.

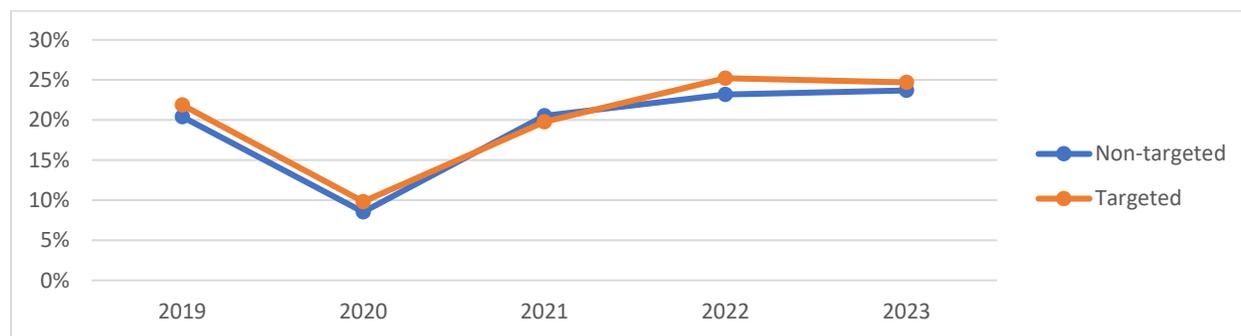
**Disaggregated by gender:** Looking at the data from gender-sensitive lens, the data indicates an overall decrease regarding the difference in repetition rates between targeted and non-targeted schools for male

learners from 2019 to 2023 across all districts. Only in Kasungu, a minimal increase in the difference of repetition rates occurred (see table 7).

Based on the DiD-analysis, it appears that the intervention did not lead to a statistically significant change in the probability of the outcome variable for boys. This suggests that there is no clear evidence of a significant change in the probability of the outcome variable between the intervention and non-intervention groups before and after the intervention for boys.

**Table 7 Repetition rates among boys 2019–2023 per district**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	20.40%	21.89%	16.95%	19.47%	20.95%	21.75%	22.82%	24.59%	21.02%	20.57%
2020	8.53%	9.82%	7.00%	7.53%	8.80%	6.65%	8.37%	12.66%	13.31%	10.66%
2021	20.54%	19.78%	17.76%	18.50%	21.44%	19.15%	21.97%	22.01%	20.19%	17.77%
2022	23.18%	25.22%	20.90%	20.40%	25.85%	23.38%	21.98%	29.70%	21.85%	24.33%
2023	23.69%	24.69%	24.14%	25.76%	24.16%	24.62%	22.28%	24.83%	24.56%	23.41%



**Figure 4 Repetition rates 2019-2023 All Districts among boys**

**Table 8 Fixed effects binomial estimation repetition rates (male learners)**

	Male repetition rate			
	Model 1 Dedza	Model 2 Kasungu	Model 3 Mangochi	Model 4 Salima
Constant	-1.826*** (0.0331)	-1.617*** (0.0246)	-1.540*** (0.0464)	-1.503*** (0.0615)
Targeted school	0.0990 (0.0828)	-0.1030 (0.0801)	0.1375 (0.0718)	-0.1316 (0.1049)
Intervention period	0.5880*** (0.0424)	0.5188*** (0.0397)	0.2813*** (0.0598)	0.3051** (0.0990)
Targeted school x intervention period	-0.0738 (0.1060)	0.0473 (0.1203)	0.1437 (0.1505)	0.1696 (0.1484)
District	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo			
Observations	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	0.12676	0.11155	0.03542	0.07851

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 9 Marginal effects of DiD for repetition rates (male learners)**

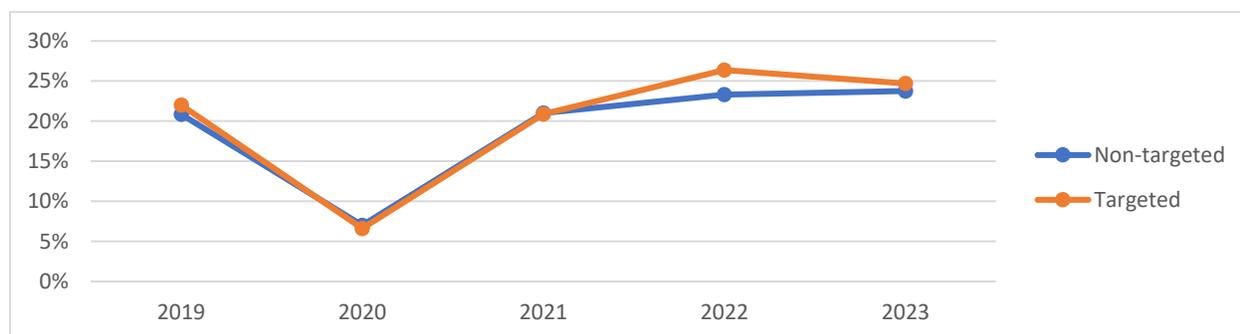
District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
Dedza	-0.008	0.016	-0.483	0.629	0.669	-0.040	0.032
Kasungu	0.003	0.022	0.157	0.876	0.192	-0.040	0.016
Mangochi	0.031	0.028	1.108	0.268	1.901	-0.024	0.036
Salima	0.026	0.024	1.062	0.288	1.794	-0.022	0.003

For female learners, the trend that emerged is similar to the general trend with a mixed picture on district level (see table 10). Overall, the difference in repetition rates for girls between targeted and non-targeted schools decreased from 2019 to 2023 across all districts. The progress in the Dedza district is particularly striking, with repetition rates decreasing from 23,14% in 2019 to 18.99% in 2023. While the repetition rate for girls in 2019 was higher for targeted schools than for non-targeted schools in Mangochi and Salima, this trend has since reversed. In 2023, targeted schools in Mangochi and Salima perform worse than non-targeted schools in terms of repetition rates of female learners.

Based on the DiD-analysis, it appears that the intervention did not lead to a statistically significant change in the probability of the outcome variable for girls. This suggests that there is no clear evidence of a significant change in the probability of the outcome variable between the intervention and non-intervention schools before and after the intervention for girls. Disaggregating the DiD-analysis by individual district, a significant effect for the repetition rate of girls can only be observed for the district of Mangochi ( $p = 0.048$ ). Since no significant results were observed in the other three districts, the significant result for Mangochi should not be interpreted as an indication of a significant effect of the intervention on the repetition rate of girls.

**Table 10 Repetition rates among girls 2019–2023 per district**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	20.86%	22.01%	18.81%	23.14%	19.92%	19.60%	24.14%	23.32%	21.87%	20.24%
2020	7.00%	6.62%	7.57%	7.57%	6.28%	4.49%	7.06%	6.73%	20.24%	7.41%
2021	21.00%	20.88%	18.66%	7.24%	20.40%	18.92%	24.27%	24.33%	9.43%	18.40%
2022	23.30%	26.38%	22.00%	18.66%	24.13%	22.15%	23.48%	28.66%	7.41%	27.80%
2023	23.76%	24.70%	25.84%	18.99%	23.34%	23.61%	21.92%	24.68%	20.85%	22.98%



**Figure 5 Repetition rates 2019-2023 All districts among girls**

**Table 11 Fixed effects binomial estimation of repetition rates (female learners)**

	Female repetition rate				
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 3 Kasungu	Model 4 Mangochi	Model 5 Salima
Constant		-1.734*** (0.0351)	-1.723*** (0.0267)	-1.492*** (0.0459)	-1.558*** (0.0625)
Targeted school	0.0014 (0.0408)	0.1052 (0.0759)	-0.1006 (0.0893)	-0.0066 (0.0707)	-0.1564 (0.0940)
Intervention period	0.4688*** (0.0284)	0.5745*** (0.0454)	0.5558*** (0.0373)	0.2686*** (0.0675)	0.4118*** (0.0892)
Targeted school x intervention period	0.0861 (0.0581)	-0.0183 (0.0981)	0.0515 (0.1180)	0.2189 (0.1165)	0.2227 (0.1431)
District	Yes	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo				
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	0.08401	0.10006	0.11880	0.03551	0.10311

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 12 Marginal effects of DiD for repetition rates (female learners)**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.016	0.010	1.624	0.104	3.259	-0.003	0.034
Dedza	0.002	0.016	0.136	0.892	0.165	-0.030	0.034
Kasungu	0.004	0.020	0.185	0.853	0.229	-0.036	0.043
Mangochi	0.040	0.020	1.979	0.048	4.387	0.000	0.080
Salima	0.034	0.024	1.397	0.163	2.621	-0.014	0.081

The target achievement for indicator 1.2 is **off-track**. The target value for 2024 is **not expected to be achieved**.

Based on the overall, district and gender-specific comparison of intervention and non-intervention schools, the evaluation team concludes that **JPGE did not have a meaningful impact on the repetition rates** in targeted schools.

**Indicator 1.4:** Percentage of primary school-age children who dropout during standard 5 - 8 in the target schools, by sex.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
<b>6%</b> (6% girls, 6% boys)	<b>5%</b> (5.1% girls, 4.8% boys)	<b>3.5 %</b> (3% girls, 4% boys)

**SMART assessment:** The indicator is assessed as SMART.

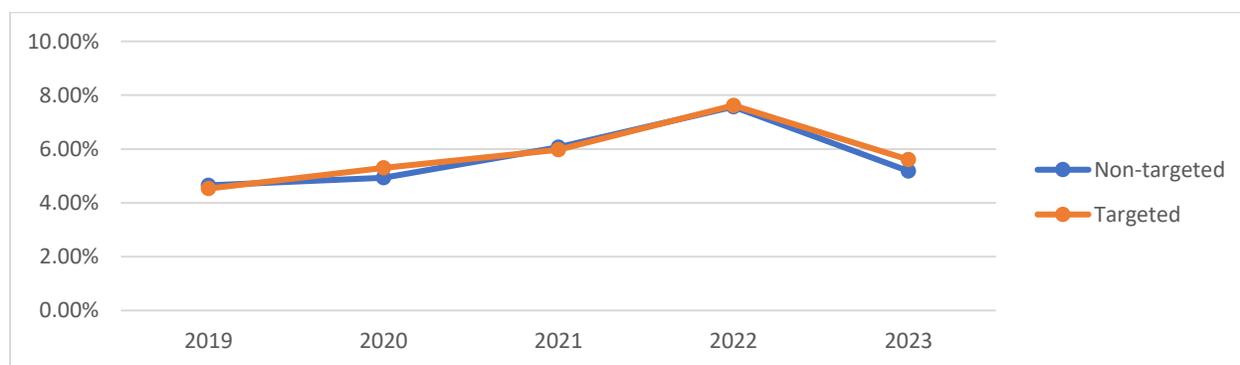
**Status assessment:** The table above shows the baseline and 2022 values for all schools targeted by the programme. According to the last progress report, average dropout rates for learners in standard 5 to 8 in targeted schools featured slight improvements. Dropout rates decreased from 6% (baseline) by 0.9 percentage point for girls and by 1.2 percentage point for boys. In all four districts the dropout rates in JPGE-supported schools were lower than the respective district totals for learners in classes standard 5–8 (Progress report 2022).

As outlined in the status assessment of indicator 1.2, the evaluators calculated updated values of 2023 for this indicator for the MTE at hand, reverting to the same EMIS data source, yet to a reduced sample size of 145 targeted schools as only schools with full data sets could be included in the counterfactual analysis. Based on this sample, we observe the following values (see also tables 13 to 15):

Baseline value (2020)	Updated Figure (2022)	Updated Figure (2023)	Target Value (2024)
<b>5.3%</b> (5.5% girls, 5.1% boys)	<b>7.6%</b> (7.8% girls, 7.4% boys)	<b>5.6%</b> (5.7% girls, 5.5% boys)	<b>3.5 %</b> (3% girls, 4% boys)

**Table 13 Dropout rates 2019–2023 per district all learners**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	4.65%	4.53%	4.91%	4.35%	2.40%	1.97%	7.67%	6.22%	5.70%	3.85%
2020	4.93%	5.30%	6.33%	5.64%	2.16%	1.15%	8.32%	7.66%	5.15%	4.47%
2021	6.07%	5.97%	7.95%	6.50%	2.23%	2.83%	9.80%	7.75%	6.57%	4.34%
2022	7.57%	7.62%	11.74%	10.06%	2.69%	2.44%	10.86%	8.99%	5.46%	5.58%
2023	5.18%	5.60%	7.53%	8.45%	2.52%	2.24%	6.99%	6.03%	4.52%	3.92%



**Figure 6 Dropout rates 2019-2023 All Districts across gender**

**All Districts:** Over the span of 2019 to 2023, the proportion of dropouts has increased across all schools from 2020 onwards, either when considering all districts or each district individually. Overall, the dropout rates increased for both non-targeted and targeted schools. Notably, the proportion of dropouts was greater in targeted schools than in non-targeted schools, across all districts, for all years except for 2021. This instance might be due to JPGE targeting the most vulnerable schools, which display the highest dropout rates. In 2023, the dropout rates for both non-targeted and targeted schools decreased compared to the preceding year.

Like indicator 1.2, these fluctuations are presumably due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the traditional learning environment by impacting learners' motivation and performance at school. Following governmental regulations, schools were closed from March to October 2020, and for another five weeks at the beginning of 2021, and extracurricular activities such as, school clubs were prohibited for an extended period. Ultimately, relatively more learners got left behind and dropped out. Particularly girls dropped out due to early pregnancy or enforced/voluntary marriages. Therefore, the difference in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools was lower in the pre-intervention period (i.e., 2019–2021) compared to the intervention period (i.e., 2022–2023). This trend might indicate how the COVID-19

pandemic played havoc on learning outcomes, particularly at the most vulnerable schools. However, neither of these differences was statistically significant.

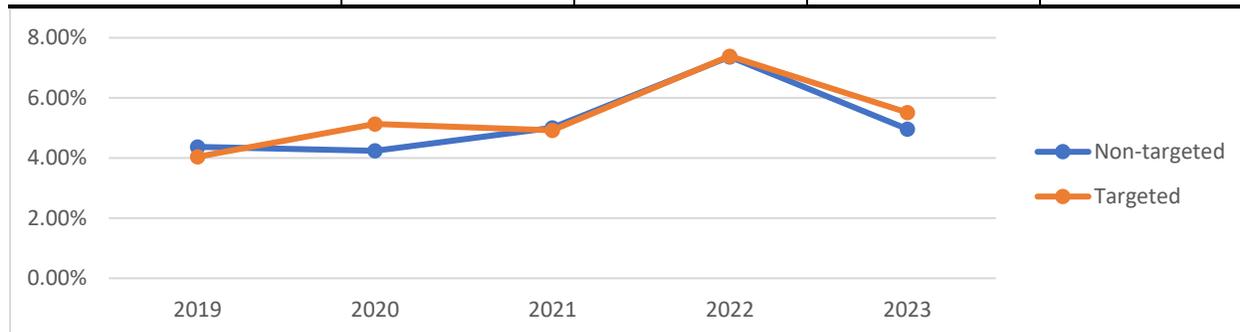
Due to the increase in the dropout rates in recent years, the latter has also deviated considerably from its target value of 3.5% for 2024 being currently 2.1 percent points above it at 5.6%, exceeding even the baseline value for 2020. Achieving the target value for 2024 seems difficult.

**Individual districts:** The results for the individual districts are similar to the overall results. Interestingly though, the dropout rates in 2023 are above the 2019 values in all districts, except in Mangochi. Nevertheless, the dropout rates for all districts are well above the target value for 2024. All districts saw an increase in dropout rates in 2021 in parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, Kasungu displays constantly the lowest dropout rates of all four districts across the years, thus representing an outlier in terms of dropout rates that significantly lowers the average across all districts.

If the difference between targeted and non-targeted schools from 2019 to 2023 is considered, a mixed picture emerges. In general, the dropout rates at the targeted schools are inferior to those of non-targeted schools for all districts. In Mangochi and Salima, the differences in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools are the greatest. However, these differences in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools in Mangochi and Salima decreased over the years as the dropout rates for non-targeted schools curbed. In Dedza and Kasungu, the respective differences between targeted and non-targeted schools increased generally in comparison to the preceding year. However, the targeted schools performed better in 2019 compared to the current assessment year 2023.

**Table 14 Dropout rates among boys 2019–2023 per district**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	4.37%	4.04%	5.15%	4.31%	2.07%	1.28%	7.18%	5.78%	4.65%	2.95%
2020	4.24%	5.13%	6.03%	5.77%	1.59%	0.67%	7.25%	8.10%	4.17%	3.37%
2021	5.01%	4.92%	7.22%	5.84%	1.35%	1.93%	8.50%	6.63%	4.08%	2.85%
2022	7.37%	7.39%	12.17%	11.01%	2.14%	1.69%	10.88%	8.58%	4.37%	4.75%
2023	4.96%	5.51%	7.63%	8.89%	2.08%	2.09%	6.86%	5.86%	4.29%	3.51%

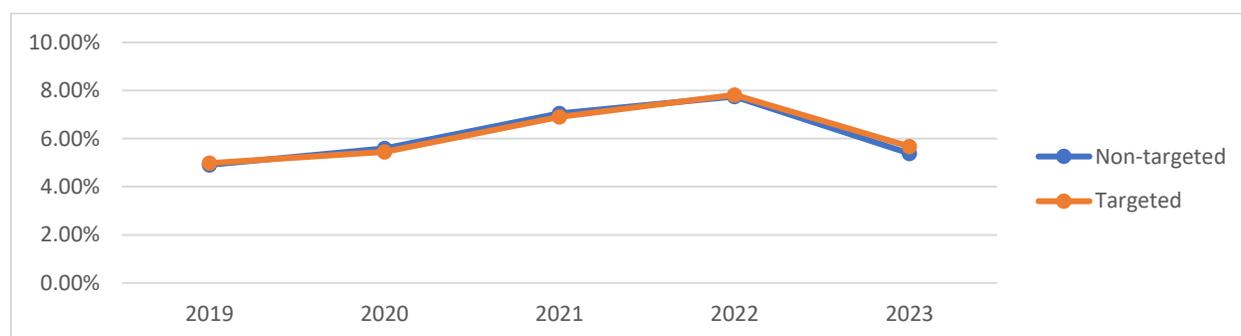


**Figure 7 Dropout rates 2019-2023 All Districts among boys**

**Disaggregated by gender:** For male learners, the trend that emerges is similar to the overall trend. Interestingly, the differences in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools in Dedza and Mangochi even increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in 2023, they declined once again to a level lower than that in 2019, the year preceding the third phase of the intervention (refer to table 14). Yet, boys drop out of school more in targeted than non-targeted schools consistently over the years.

**Table 15 Dropout rates among girls 2019–2023 per district**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	4.91%	4.98%	4.68%	4.38%	2.72%	2.59%	8.13%	6.61%	6.71%	4.71%
2020	5.59%	5.45%	6.61%	5.51%	2.72%	1.61%	9.30%	7.26%	6.08%	5.46%
2021	7.05%	6.91%	8.60%	7.09%	3.04%	3.65%	11.02%	8.76%	8.93%	5.67%
2022	7.75%	7.82%	11.37%	9.27%	3.18%	3.13%	10.84%	9.35%	6.51%	6.33%
2023	5.38%	5.67%	7.44%	8.06%	2.92%	2.38%	7.10%	6.17%	4.73%	4.26%



**Figure 8 Dropout rates 2019-2023 All Districts among girls**

For **female learners**, the trend that emerged deviated a little compared to the overall trend (see table 15). The differences in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools across districts improved (i.e., became greater) in the first two years of the JPGE III and also the COVID-19 pandemic before deteriorating in the subsequent years. For each district, the trend for female learners is similar to the overall trend. Also, for female learners, the difference in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools in 2019 (i.e., prior to JPGE III) was inferior to the one assessed for in 2023, the dropout rate at targeted schools surpassing the dropout rate at non-targeted schools. In general, proportion of dropouts was similar for men and women at both targeted and non-targeted schools across the year. Interestingly, female dropout rates are inferior to the male dropout rates at both types of schools (e.g., 9.27% and 8.06% vs. 11.01% and 8.89% for targeted schools) in Dedza for the years 2022 and 2023. In general, the differences between male and female dropout rates across districts for both targeted and non-targeted schools have curbed from 2019 to 2023, in particular for targeted schools (4.04% for boys and 4.98% for girls in 2019 compared to 5.51% for boys and 5.67% for girls in 2023).

Whether the harmonization of dropout rates can be attributed to the intervention was determined by a **DiD-analysis** (see Chapter 2). However, it is imperative to approach the interpretation of these results with heightened caution due to the acknowledged limitations (see Chapter 2.6), recognizing the nuanced complexities involved in assessing the intervention's effectiveness in influencing dropout rates across targeted and non-targeted schools.

**Table 16 Fixed effects binomial estimation dropout rates (all learners)**

	Dropout rate all learners				
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 3 Kasungu	Model 4 Mangochi	Model 5 Salima
Constant		-2.679*** (.0580)	-3.768*** (0.0554)	-2.360*** (0.0769)	-2.785*** (.1395)
Targeted school	-0.1768* (0.0892)	-0.1601 (0.1387)	-0.1564 (0.1742)	-0.1893 (0.1504)	-0.3360 (.2006)
Intervention period	0.1872*** (0.0408)	0.4368*** (0.0537)	0.1467* (0.0733)	0.0449 (0.0756)	-0.1623 (0.1814)
Targeted school x intervention period	0.0314 (0.0963)	0.1220 (0.1302)	0.0459 (0.1802)	-0.0110 (0.1639)	0.2808 (0.2703)
District	Yes	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo				
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	.165	.056	.003	.001	.017

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 17 Marginal effects of DiD for dropout rates (all learners)**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.000	0.002	0.004	0.997	0.005	-0.004	0.004
Dedza	0.006	0.010	0.596	0.551	0.860	-0.013	0.025
Kasungu	0.001	0.004	0.134	0.893	0.163	-0.007	0.009
Mangochi	-0.001	0.0117	-0.110	0.912	0.133	-0.024	0.022
Salima	0.013	.00126	1.063	0.288	1.796	-0.011	0.038

**All districts:** The result of the DiD-analysis indicates that the intervention across all districts is not statistically significant, i.e., suggesting that the effect of the intervention on dropout rates is not significantly different between the target and non-target schools<sup>9</sup>. This means that the intervention does not have a statistically discernible differential effect on the dropout rates based on whether the school was targeted or not (see table 16). As such, the lack of significance in the marginal effect<sup>10</sup> of the DiD-estimate suggests that any observed differences in dropout rates between targeted and non-targeted schools are not statistically meaningful (see table 17). However, it is important to note that the lack of statistical significance does not necessarily mean there is no practical significance (see qualitative evidence).

**Individual districts:** The DiD-analysis also indicates that the intervention is not statistically significant for each individual districts, which are further indications that the intervention had no statistically significant effect on dropout rates (see tables 16 and 17). Beyond the overall assessment, the evaluators conducted a district- and gender-specific counterfactual analysis of the effects of JPGE on dropout rates. In parallel

<sup>9</sup> Since the p-value is 0.997, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we would not reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the difference in the outcome variable between the two groups is statistically significant. This suggests that, based on the data, we cannot rule out the possibility that the true difference is zero.

<sup>10</sup> As the dependent variable is a percentage, a non-linear model was imperative to correctly estimate any possible effect. As such, the interaction term cannot be interpreted as the DiD-effect as it would be the case with a linear regression model. Instead, it is important to calculate the marginal effects of both intervention and non-intervention schools based on the non-linear model and interpret the significance of the difference in these marginal effects as the DiD-effect.

to the overall trend, the DiD-analysis of the marginal effects of both male and female dropout rates do not indicate a significant intervention effect (see tables 18 to 21).

**Table 18 Fixed effects binomial estimation dropout rates (male learners)**

	Male dropout rate				
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 3 Kasungu	Model 4 Mangochi	Model 5 Salima
Constant		-2.725*** (0.0664)		-2.489*** (0.0917)	-3.103*** (0.1625)
Targeted school	-0.1506 (0.1073)	-0.1522 (0.1632)		-0.1210 (0.1740)	-0.3538 (0.2786)
Intervention period	0.3007*** (0.0484)	0.5131*** (0.0624)		0.1702 (0.0895)	0.0075 (0.2279)
Targeted school x intervention period	0.0158 (0.1142)	0.1646 (0.1565)		-0.1156 (0.1864)	0.3049 (0.3452)
District	Yes	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo				
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	.149	.057		.001	.011

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 19 Marginal effects of DiD for dropout rates (male learners)**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.000	0.002	-0.231	0.817	0.292	-0.004	0.003
Dedza Kasungu	0.009	0.011	0.817	0.414	1.272	-0.013	0.032
Mangochi Salima	-0.009	0.013	-0.733	0.464	1.109	-0.034	0.016
	0.010	0.013	0.813	0.416	1.265	-0.015	0.036

**Table 20 Marginal effects of DiD for dropout rates (male learners)**

	Female dropout rate				
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 3 Kasungu	Model 4 Mangochi	Model 5 Salima
Constant		-2.637*** (0.0559)	-3.537*** (0.0515)	-2.251*** (0.0701)	-2.547*** (0.1361)
Targeted school	-0.2007* (0.0833)	-0.1672 (0.1302)	-0.0954 (0.1710)	-0.2471 (0.1429)	-0.3377 (0.1823)
Intervention period	0.0941* (0.0402)	0.3686*** (0.0573)	0.0776 (0.0720)	-0.0614 (0.0729)	-0.2767 (0.1590)
Targeted school x intervention period	0.0460 (0.0937)	0.0833 (0.1322)	-0.0125 (0.1776)	0.0774 (0.1621)	0.2703 (0.2459)
District	Yes	No	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo				
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,400	1,020	365
R <sup>2</sup>	.141	.039	.001	.003	.025

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 21 Marginal effects of DiD for dropout rates (female learners)**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.001	0.002	0.288	0.773	0.371	-0.004	0.005
Dedza	0.003	0.010	0.292	0.770	0.377	-0.016	0.022
Kasungu	-0.001	0.005	-0.111	0.911	0.134	-0.010	0.009
Mangochi	0.006	0.012	0.527	0.598	0.742	-0.017	0.030
Salima	0.016	0.013	1.216	0.224	2.158	-0.010	0.042

The target achievement for indicator 1.4 is **off-track**. The target value for 2024 is **unlikely to be achieved**.

Based on the overall, district and gender-specific comparison of intervention and non-intervention schools, the evaluation team concludes that **JPGE did not have a meaningful impact on the dropout rates** in targeted schools.

**Indicator 1.5:** Percentage of girls enrolled in targeted schools who have fallen pregnant during the school year.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
2%	1%	1%

**SMART assessment:** The indicator is assessed as SMART.

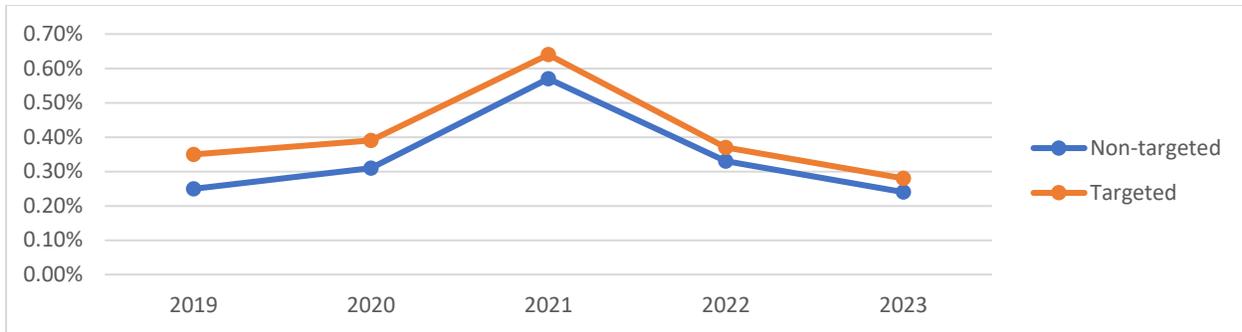
**Status assessment:** The table above shows the baseline and 2022 values for all schools targeted by the programme. According to the last progress report, average pregnancy rates of girls in targeted schools featured slight improvements. Pregnancy rates among enrolled girls in targeted schools decreased from 2% (baseline) by 1 percentage point.

As outlined in the status assessment of indicators 1.2 and 1.4, the evaluators calculated updated values of 2023 for this indicator for the MTE at hand, reverting to the same EMIS data source, yet to a reduced sample size of 145 targeted schools as only schools with full data sets could be included in the counterfactual analysis. Based on this sample, we observe the following values:

Baseline value (2020)	Updated Figure (2022)	Updated Figure (2023)	Target Value (2024)
0.3%	0.34%	0.25%	1%

**Table 22 Pregnancy 2019–2023 per district**

Year	All districts		Dedza		Kasungu		Mangochi		Salima	
	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted	non-targeted	targeted
2019	0.25%	0.35%	0.09%	0.19%	0.16%	0.25%	0.46%	0.42%	0.33%	0.46%
2020	0.31%	0.39%	0.19%	0.27%	0.22%	0.18%	0.51%	0.43%	0.39%	0.60%
2021	0.57%	0.64%	0.50%	0.57%	0.30%	0.16%	0.82%	0.77%	1.01%	0.72%
2022	0.33%	0.37%	0.27%	0.27%	0.18%	0.23%	0.51%	0.40%	0.44%	0.50%
2023	0.24%	0.28%	0.18%	0.30%	0.21%	0.12%	0.32%	0.27%	0.23%	0.32%



**Figure 9 Pregnancy rates 2019–2023 All districts**

**All districts:** In 2019, the percentage of girls who had fallen pregnant during the school year was 0.25% in non-targeted and 0.35% in targeted schools. Both targeted and non-targeted schools experienced a decrease in overall pregnancy rates throughout the years. Thereby, the difference in the percentage between targeted and non-targeted schools decreased to 0.24% in non-targeted and 0.28% in targeted schools in 2023. The data (see table 22) indicates a notable increase in pregnancy rates in 2021, potentially influenced by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both non-targeted and targeted schools experienced higher rates of pregnancy during this period. In this regard, anecdotal evidence from data collection referred to a perceived increase in the incidence of early marriages, which generally correlate with early pregnancies. The latter occurred as the lockdowns lifted the installed support systems for young girls (see qualitative data reported under indicator 2.2). The subsequent years (2022 and 2023) show a decrease in pregnancy rates, suggesting a potential stabilisation or response to interventions. According to the sample, the pregnancy rate with an average of 0.25% is already considerably below the target value of 1% for 2024. Consequently, achieving the target value for 2024 seems within reach.

Whether the harmonization of pregnancy rates can be attributed to the intervention was determined by a DiD-analysis (see Chapter 1.8). However, it is imperative to approach the interpretation of these results with heightened caution due to the acknowledged limitations (see Chapter 1.9), recognizing the nuanced complexities involved in assessing the intervention's effectiveness in influencing pregnancy rates across targeted and non-targeted schools.

The result of the DiD-analysis is that the intervention is not statistically significant, i.e., suggesting that the effect of the intervention on pregnancy rates is not significantly different between the target and non-target schools<sup>11</sup>. This means that the intervention does not have a statistically discernible differential effect on the pregnancy rates based on whether the school was targeted or not.

<sup>11</sup> Since the p-value is 0.475, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we would not reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the difference in the outcome variable between the two groups is statistically significant. This suggests that, based on the data, we cannot rule out the possibility that the true difference is zero.

**Table 23 Fixed effects binomial estimation pregnancy rates**

	Pregnancy rate all learners		
	Model 1 All districts	Model 2 Dedza	Model 4 Mangochi
Constant		-5.949*** (0.0855)	-5.117*** (0.0619)
Targeted school	0.0151 (0.0872)	0.2683 (0.1647)	-0.0906 (0.1321)
Intervention period	-0.2829*** (0.0600)	-0.1465 (0.1154)	-0.3589*** (0.0931)
Targeted school x intervention period	-0.0826 (0.1109)	-0.0358 (0.2257)	-0.1172 (0.1471)
District	No	No	No
S.E.: Clustered	by: EMISNo		
Observations	3,790	1,005	1,020
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07849	0.00325	0.02302

**Table 24 Marginal effects of DiD for pregnancy rates**

District	DiD estimate	Standard error	Statistics	p-value	s-value	Confidence low	Confidence high
All districts	0.000	0.000	-0.713	0.476	1.072	-0.001	0.000
Dedza	0.000	0.001	-0.342	0.732	0.450	-0.001	0.001
Mangochi	0.000	0.001	-0.414	0.679	0.558	-0.002	0.001

**Individual districts:** In all but one district, the difference in pregnancy rate between targeted schools and non-targeted schools has improved. In Kasungu, the pregnancy rate of targeted schools has even fallen below that of non-targeted schools. In Mangochi, this was already the case in the baseline year 2019. Only in Dedza, did the difference in pregnancy rate between targeted and non-targeted schools deteriorate slightly between 2019 and 2023.

The DiD-analysis indicates that the intervention is not statistically significant for any of the districts, which is another indication that the intervention had no statistically significant effect on the pregnancy rates.

The target achievement for indicator 1.5 is **on-track**. The target value for 2024 is **likely to be achieved**.

Based on the overall, district and gender-specific comparison of intervention and non-intervention schools, the evaluation team concludes that **JPGE did not have a meaningful impact on the pregnancy rates** in targeted schools.

**Indicator 1.6:** Number of targeted schools providing a minimum package of integrated services (SRHR, health and nutrition, WASH services, diversified nutritious meals).

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
0	199	199

**SMART assessment:** The formulation of this indicator lacks specificity, as it fails to define what constitutes a "minimum package of integrated services", both in the indicator formulation and in the reference manual. This ambiguity impedes a clear understanding of the indicator's intended outcomes. This lack of specificity and clear criteria may present challenges for schools in achieving the intended outcomes, as there is no clear benchmark for success. The indicator, as currently formulated, primarily reflects the presence of interventions without adequately capturing their substantive impact on schools.

Consequently, the indicator could automatically fulfil itself once the programme is operational, regardless of its impact on schools. This diminishes its relevance in assessing the true achievements of JPGE III. As such the indicator is not evaluable, which has led the evaluators to follow a more qualitative approach to exploring the offers in terms of SRHR, nutrition / school meals and WASH at the targeted schools.

**Status assessment:** The data collection process necessitated an exploratory approach due to the absence of operationalisation for the term "minimum package of integrated services". Additionally, the lack of monitoring data posed a challenge as all schools reached through the JPGE III intervention were automatically counted as having achieved this indicator when reporting to the donor. To enhance the understanding and status assessment of the indicator at target schools, qualitative data collection was imperative.

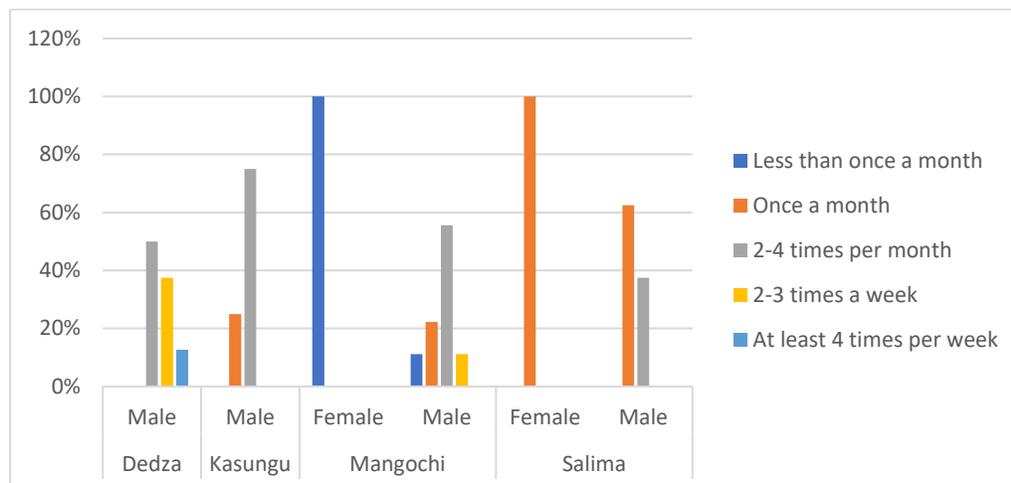
In assessing **SRHR services**, all 36 visited JPGE III schools in all four districts affirmed offering services related to SRHR to learners. SRHR services under JPGE III encompassed various components, including information campaigns, counselling, referrals to the distribution of family planning commodities (e.g., condoms and contraception pills) at health facilities, and testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Among interviewed head teachers, capacity building on SRHR emerged as the most frequently mentioned and most crucial provided service (N=55), mentioned five times more often than the second and third most frequently cited services: the provision of iron folic acid supplements and the implementation of awareness campaigns/formation of awareness groups (N=11, respectively).

Notably, while **SRHR education** is meant to be imparted through the life skills subject from standard 1 to 8, challenges arise as many teachers exhibit hesitancy in discussing SRHR topics with learners. Furthermore, FGDs with learners suggested that SRHR related topics were only taught from standard grade 6 onwards. To address this challenge, an initiative was undertaken at selected schools where the life skills curriculum was digitised using a dedicated app, termed the Life Skills Digital App. This app facilitated a structured SRHR course, covering topics such as, menstruation, sexuality, gender, and disabilities. Learners engaged with the digital course, which included exercises, followed by a 30-minute question-and-answer session with teachers. It is important to highlight that the implementation of the digital SRHR education component was not uniform across all intervention areas. Specifically, this initiative was operational in some schools in Dedza, Salima, and Mangochi, provided the school could contribute the digital infrastructure. Kasungu had not yet benefitted from this intervention at the time of the MTE due to its addition to the intervention zone at a later stage, under a separate funding source.

According to interviews with head teachers, **gender segregated SRHR advisory services** were provided at 89% of the visited schools, typically in private settings (92% of visited schools). Merely in Kasungu and Mangochi some schools reported challenges in providing private settings and/or gender segregated services. 98% of schools furthermore confirmed that advisory services were linked to a medical institution, if needed. This is particularly relevant given that no family planning commodities are (allowed to be) provided on school premises. However, in some cases, the medical institutions were far away from the schools, making it hard or impossible for potential service recipients to reach them.

To tackle this challenge, the provision of SRHR services at schools was enhanced through the introduction of mobile vans by the JPGE III implementing partner FPAM. The vans functioned as **mobile clinics to provide healthcare services**. Analyses conducted by the implementing partner before and after the implementation of mobile vans showed an improvement in service and outreach (INT\_1). The expanded outreach was particularly due to the introduction of and collaboration with so-called community-based distribution agents (youths), who proactively engaged with the community before the arrival of the mobile vans, mobilising young people and increasing awareness of the services available (INT\_1).

In terms of **frequency of service provision**, at least 50% of visited schools in three out of four targeted districts offered SRHR services 2-4 times per month. However, variations were observed, such as, monthly services in Salima (70% of visited schools) and yet lower frequencies in 20% of the schools visited in Mangochi (see Fig. 10 below).



**Figure 10 Availability of SRHR services to learners (head teacher survey) (N = 36)**

Despite this overall positive status, it is noteworthy that 39% of visited schools reported already having offered a **similar quality and frequency of SRHR services** before the initiation of JPGE III. However, it needs to be considered that JPGE was already in its third phase at the time of the MTE, which implies that many schools will already have benefitted from the prior phases, attenuating the weight of this finding.

### Supporting factors and bottlenecks: SRHR services

Particularly the availability of changing rooms, the provision of sanitary items and age-appropriate advice through community structures (e.g., mother groups) and external health professionals (i.e., health surveillance assistants), and the integration of SRHR topics into the subject of life skills stood out as **supporting factors** for the usefulness of SRHR services.

On the other hand, shame remains a major **hindering factor** in dealing with SRHR topics, which, for example, entails that pregnancy prevention remains a taboo and contraceptives at school level are either distributed unofficially or not all.

Regarding the provision of Health and Nutrition services, the conducted assessment showed that all 36 visited schools provided such services, with 75% of schools offering services at least four times per week according to interviewed head teachers. 95% of schools confirmed that these services were linked to medical institutions, if needed.

diversified and nutritious meals. In particular, head teachers (n=15 answers) perceived the complementarity of the JPGE health and nutrition component to Plan International's



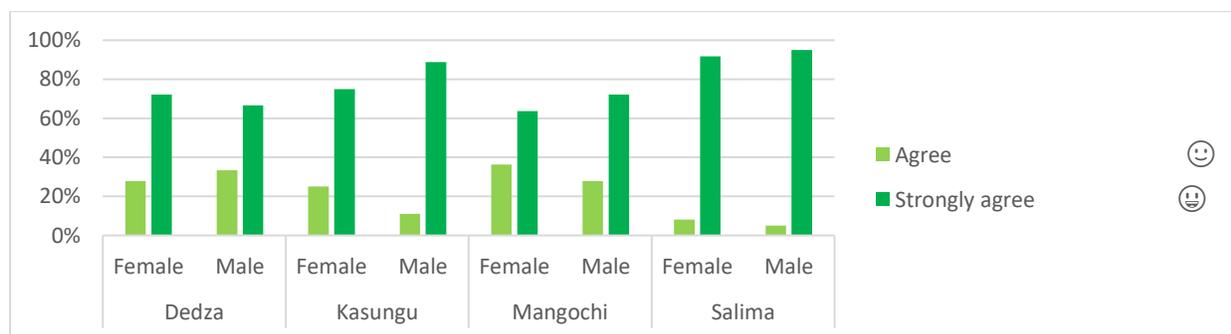
**Photo 1 Example of stored staple food provisioned by local farmers, including a storage overview and plan.**

gardens and orchards at schools as being a major added value. 95% of interviewed learners agreed that they had learned about nutrition and healthy meals at school. Former out-of-school children largely concurred, though differences existed between districts—(strong) disagreement became slightly apparent in Salima (5% of interviewed former out-of-school children, 3% of interviewed learners) and in Kasungu



**Photo 2 Example of an orchard at an intervention school**

(5% of interviewed learners). During FGDs, most interviewed learners showed an understanding of balanced meals, including the six food groups. A particular success factor for the understanding and retention of content on healthy meals and nutrition were school meals (n=27 answers among learners and parents), with some learners stating that school meals helped them take this knowledge home. In line with learners' perceptions, all interviewed parents at least agreed that their children had learned about nutrition and what healthy meals include at school (see figure 11). The agreement of parents was particularly high in the Salima district, and relatively the lowest in Mangochi.



**Figure 11 Agreement levels for the statement "At school, my children have learnt about nutrition and what healthy meals include." (N = 180 parents)**

To enable the provision of school meals, JPGE followed a home-grown school meals approach where local farmers and farmer cooperatives in the catchment areas of the schools provide ingredients for the preparation of school meals (e.g., cassava, fruits, rice) to schools and receive cash for it. The schools were then meant to prepare nutritious meals from it. Regarding the functionality and effects of the home-grown school meals approach followed by JPGE, 32 visited schools (head teachers) confirmed to **regularly receive food stuff** for the preparation of meals from local farmers or cooperatives. 98% of schools equally confirmed to be providing meals at least four times a week. In fact, the interviewed head teachers confirmed that they provide school meals on all five school days in a week. In Kasungu, for instance, meals were prepared and distributed during data collection and could be observed by the evaluation team. Each school had a menu board indicating the meals planned for the week. Furthermore, the schools had separate storage rooms for the staple food they purchased from local farmers and cooperatives. In most cases, ingredients for the school meals were directly supplied by smallholders. However, challenges persisted, with some schools relying on intermediaries instead of direct local farmer supply (FGD\_1) and some schools experiencing delays in the provision of funds by the district council (see efficiency chapter). This might also explain the observed differences in the amount of stored food, some schools having more food available than others. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this variation is

contingent on different cycles of food provision at each school, as well as available funds<sup>12</sup>. Although no vegetables or fruits were in storage, some head teachers confirmed to purchase them ad hoc as they are perishable. However, the meals prepared during data collection did not include any fruits or vegetables. Notably, 75% of the schools reported an increase in the frequency and quality of nutrition services since JPGE III. Conversely 25% did not perceive any difference to the time prior to JPGE III.

### Supporting factors and bottlenecks: School meal provision

The home-grown school meal approach offered additional benefits. For example, this approach enabled further dietary diversity in school meals. In particular, it allowed to integrate local and seasonal food, which not only yielded better dietary habits among children and parents but also represented cost-saving potential as schools are sourcing their food locally instead of paying more to transport food from other regions.



Photo 3 Example of the provision of diversified meals at an intervention school.

Head teachers frequently reported a delay of funds for food provision, oftentimes by up to two weeks. They consider this delay in funds as a major **bottleneck** for the functionality of the school feeding component. In addition, schools reported that WFP funds only cover food provision for six instead of nine weeks due to inflation, leading to shortages at schools and affecting the provision of school meals. Qualitative interviews further suggest that the unintended learner migration from non-intervention to intervention schools further burdens the school budget for food provision (INT\_11). Put differently, less food can be provided in the same amount with the same funds with increased enrolment rates. Relatedly, there appears to be a mismatch between the project team's expectation towards food provision and its reality. While most head teachers affirm to have to pay for the food at the time of distribution, project team members highlighted that there should be no need to pay farmers ad hoc.

JPGE foresees to generally reimburse farmers and cooperatives once funds are available, independently of the timing of the actual food provision (INT\_10, 11). However, only one school reported to cope with fund delays in this way.

In addition, there should be a mechanism at place to adapt funds to new circumstances (i.e., inflation or increased enrolments). Concretely, there should be a distribution plan that schools are requested to submit regularly with adaptation to the budget, if necessary, to mitigate any shortages in school meal provision. Schools and district councils are supposed to be aware of this theoretical possibility to request additional funds if needed (INT\_11). However, none of the interviewed head teachers alluded to this possibility.

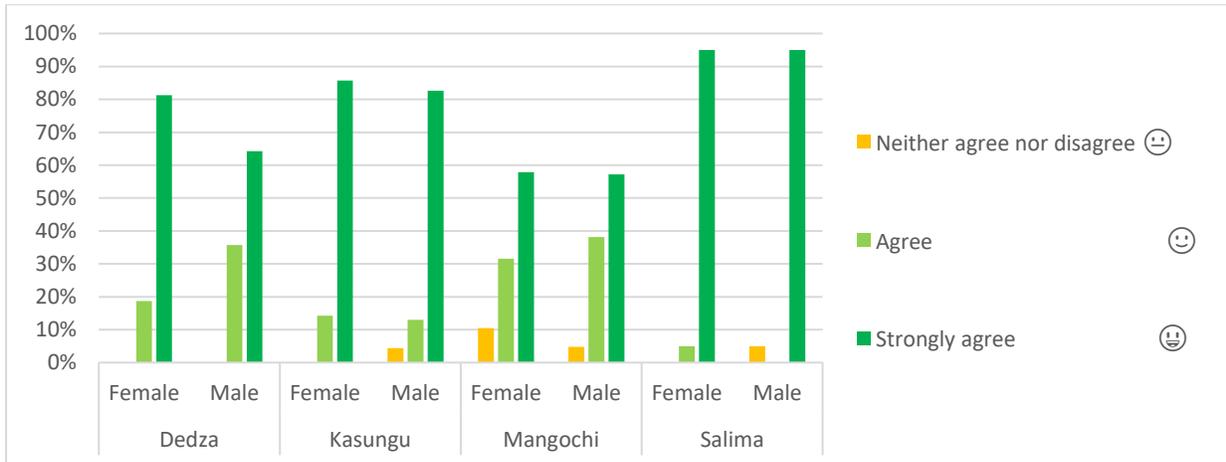
<sup>12</sup> This finding surfaced despite WFP's prepared addendum distribution plans aimed at assisting schools and addressing additional requirements. Similarly, the district-level Price Setting Committee, intended to communicate monthly recommended commodity prices to schools, was in place to enhance market transparency and support schools.



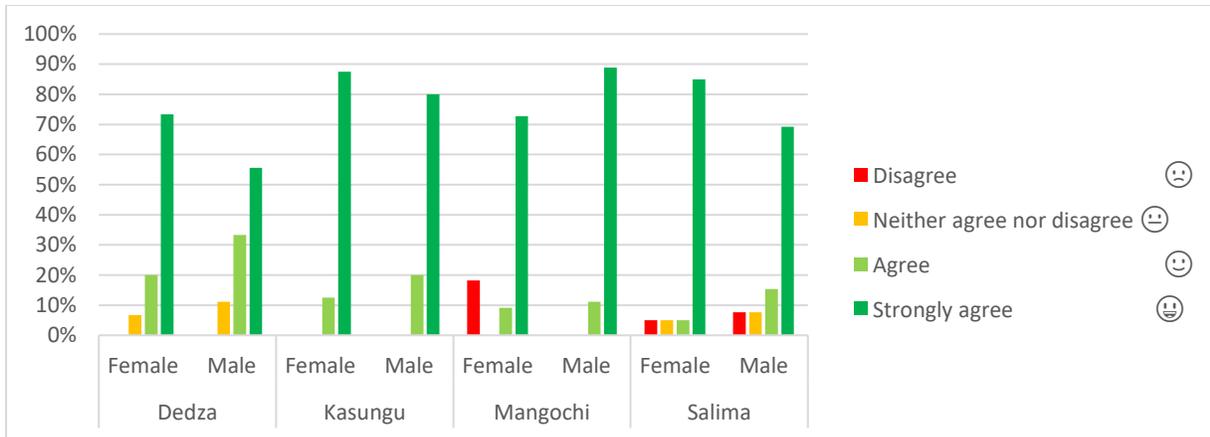
**Photo 4** Example of a washing facility and a complaint box for learners at an intervention school.

In the realm of **WASH services**, the assessment of 36 visited schools revealed a consistent commitment to providing these vital services to learners, with availability at least four times a week in almost all instances. While 70% of schools reported an enhancement in the quality and frequency of WASH services attributed to JPGE, an interesting dynamic surfaced in **Mangochi**, where **70% of schools asserted that their services had already had the same level (quality and frequency) before the programme's initiation.**

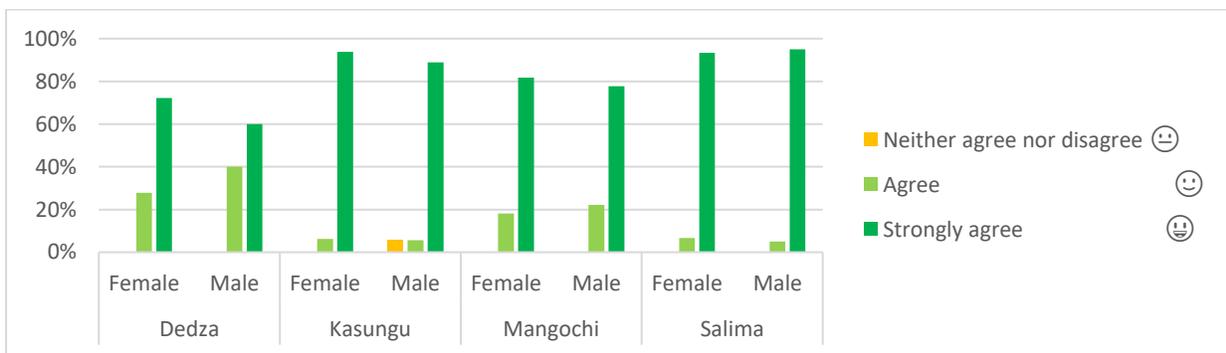
In the MTE survey, the perceptions of both learners and parents harmonized regarding the effectiveness of WASH services under JPGE, with most learners strongly agreeing that WASH topics were effectively integrated into the educational experience (see figure 12), and 85% of interviewed parents strongly affirming on average that their children had acquired knowledge about WASH at school. Interestingly, learners in Mangochi seem to agree less strongly.



**Figure 12** "At my school, I have learned about water, sanitation, and hygiene." (N=161 learners)



**Figure 13 "At my school, I have learned about water, sanitation, and hygiene." (N=98 former dropouts)**



**Figure 14 "At my school, my children have learned about water, sanitation, and hygiene." (N=171 parents)**

Gender-disaggregated data presented intriguing nuances. In Salima, no significant difference surfaced between the agreement levels of female and male learners to them learning about WASH practices at school. However, in Mangochi, a surprising revelation unfolded – male learners exhibited a notably higher degree of strong agreement compared to their female counterparts. Follow-up questions on this instance revealed that some girls had been absent during the intervention, and thus did not agree with the statement. Meanwhile, in Kasungu and Dedza, a reversal in the pattern was evident, with fewer male learners strongly agreeing to the statement than their female counterparts, showcasing a notable difference of 20 percentage points in those districts. This nuanced exploration of learner responses illuminates the diverse dynamics at play in different districts, providing valuable insights for tailored interventions and further improvements in WASH education under the JPGE III programme.



**Photo 5 Example of a separate toilet for girls at an intervention school**

## Supporting factors and bottlenecks: WASH services

According to the conducted head teacher interviews, the availability of gender segregated toilet facilities, mostly including change rooms for menstruating girls, was mentioned as most mentioned important service introduced by JPGE III and hence a **success factor** in driving improved WASH practices (n=26 answers), followed by improved sanitation and cleanliness (n=19 answers) and the availability of safe water (n=18 answers). Interviewed learners and parents confirmed the effective hygiene education and taught practices as main driving factors for retention of practices (n=95 answers). Among those, improved handwashing practices and the use of soap particularly stand out, which they carry home hence acting as multipliers of knowledge.

On the other hand, in some instances, parents voiced that children complain about unhygienic toilet facilities at school, hindering the consistent application of learned hygiene practices, and that wherever those are still missing. **Hindering factors** to the successful application of hygiene practices further included an insufficient provision of soap by the programme, as the schools only provide if funds are available, limited access to water at many schools (i.e., most water buckets being empty for most of the school day), hinting at the need for additional boreholes, and limited hygienic / functional WASH facilities (particularly latrines) available at schools.

Overall, the dimensions assessed under indicator 1.6 show that all three service packages are offered at the targeted schools in general. Despite variations in the extent of these service packages, the target groups perceive a positive change because of them.

**Outcome 2: Girls, boys and adolescents out of school are integrated back in schools, have increased access to complementary alternative learning and life skills, integrated services and are empowered and practice positive behaviours.**

**Indicator 2.1:** Proportion of graduates, especially girls, who completed an alternative learning programme<sup>13</sup> and are enrolled back in formal education.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
13% for Functional literacy (FAL) and 0% for CBE	CBE 248 (109 girls, 139 boys)	At least 50% of CBE completers 20% of those completing FAL

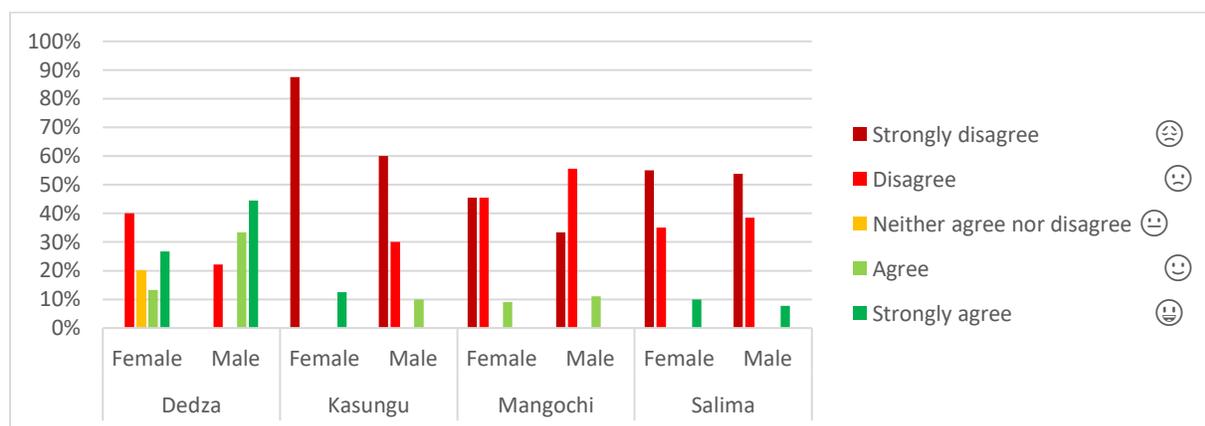
**SMART assessment:** The indicator is poorly defined as it attempts to measure two results dimensions at different results levels simultaneously (output: completion of the alternative learning programme, and outcome: enrolment back in school), making it not specific and not measurable. The baseline and monitoring values lack clarity and do not distinctly represent the expected measured dimensions, with varying measuring units. A refined indicator formulation could be: “Proportion of graduates (especially girls) from JPGE III alternative learning programmes enrolled back in formal education.” This revision aims to focus on a singular outcome – the re-enrolment of graduates into formal education. To adequately measure this revised indicator, consistent monitoring processes must be established to track the re-enrolment of graduates from the offered programmes, ensuring specificity and measurability. Given the

<sup>13</sup> In line with the definition of the indicator, the MTE assessed alternative learning programmes referring to both (i) the Functional Literacy (FAL) Programme and (ii) the Continuous Basic Education (CBE) Programme. While CBE, run by the Ministry of Education, aims to bring children back to school, FLP, which is run by the Ministry of Youth, targets adolescent girls. As most of these adolescents are mothers and some are married, FLP does not aim to bring them back to school, but to enhance personal empowerment and productivity.

outlined challenges, a strategic decision was made to shift the focus for this MTE towards collecting qualitative data.

**Status assessment:** Across all districts, 75% of interviewed former out-of-school children expressed disagreement (34%) or strong disagreement (41%) with the statement that the alternative learning programmes offered by JPGE III aided them in returning to school. District-wise, assessments revealed relatively consistent responses, with minimal variation in levels of agreement and disagreement. Half of the interviewed former out-of-school learners were oblivious of alternative learning programmes and, thus, did not attend them. Relatedly, various schools reported that there was no such intervention in their zone. In this regard, the evaluators observed during data collection in all districts besides Dedza that the target groups were not able to tell whether alternative learning programmes—if offered at all—belonged to JPGE.

Notably, Dedza stood out further, displaying a significant divergence between female and male former out-of-school children. In Dedza, 77% of male learners strongly affirmed that the alternative learning programs had facilitated their return to school, in stark contrast to the assessment of 40% among female former out-of-school learners. Furthermore, the overall data suggests a notable disparity in the perceived success of the alternative learning programmes, with Dedza showing a more positive outcome compared to the other three districts. In these districts, the feedback from interviewed children returning to school indicates little to no attribution of their re-enrolment to the JPGE III alternative learning programmes.



**Figure 15 "The alternative learning programme helped me to go back to school." (former out-of-school children; n=96)**

### Supporting factors and bottlenecks: Alternative learning programme

In assessing the alternative learning programmes offered by JPGE III, a range of factors emerged that either supported or hindered its success. On the side of **support factors**, strong community support, including encouragement from learners, teachers and parents played a significant role in convincing dropouts to return to school. The involvement of learners' councils and mother groups was furthermore reported to be effective to encourage out of school children to enrol at school again. Additionally, the provision of free school materials and the provision of school meals created incentives for a return to school. Learners who participated in the alternative learning programme furthermore reported that the remedial lessons in core subjects help them catch up on content they had missed.

On the side of **hindering factors**, limited awareness about the existence of alternative learning programmes was identified as a major barrier (see also KAP study 2022). The lack of motivation by out-

of-school children, coupled with peer pressure (i.e., negative attitudes of peers towards education), and personal circumstances (e.g., pregnancy or alcoholism) posed additional obstacles. Some learners had dropped out due to their parents' inability to pay school fees or provide school materials. Those interviewed had returned to school once funds were available again or experienced the support of their families and communities. The FGDs also mentioned that the alternative learning programmes displayed systematic weaknesses. For example, some programmes had issues with absent teachers, which demotivated learners to attend classes. Furthermore, some alternative learning programmes were exclusively tailored towards underaged learners. In turn, older dropouts from primary school felt ashamed in joining alternative learning programmes and refrained from doing so. Evening classes or alternative learning programmes revolving around adult learners could mitigate this issue.

Overall, throughout data collection for this MTE, the alternative learning programme has not emerged as a major factor pulling children back into school. Other factors, particularly related to the (non-) availability of (financial) resources and influences of peer and community groups (i.e., the mentorship and safe spaces component in form of mother groups and learners' councils, respectively) have shown to have had a greater influence on children and adolescents' decision and ability to return to school. Given anecdotal evidence which suggests that adolescents or adult dropouts have difficulties in following the same programme together with underaged learners, age-appropriate alternative learning programmes might prove more effective.

**Indicator 2.2** Proportion of girls and boys aged 10-24 who demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes towards SRHR.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
0	Above 75%	Above 80% annually

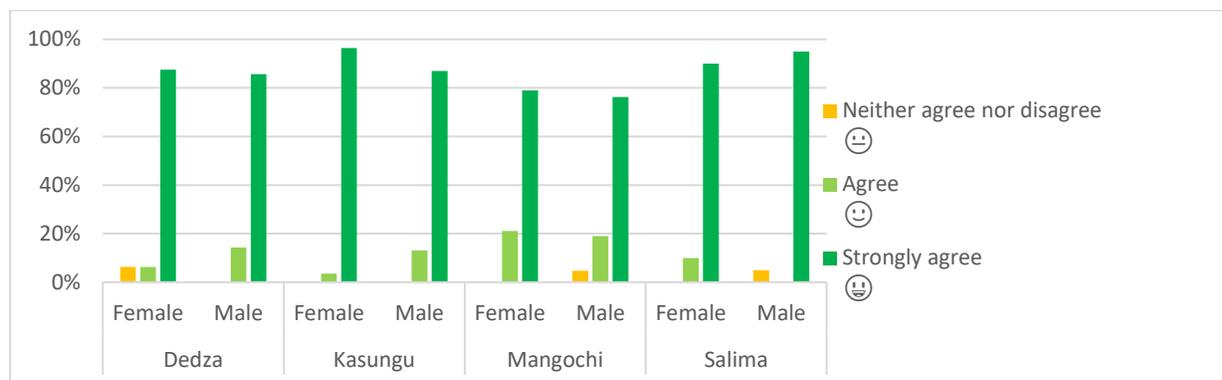
**SMART assessment:** The provided baseline value of 0 raises concerns as it seems implausible that none of the girls and boys at the intervention schools demonstrated positive behaviours or attitudes towards SRHR before the third phase of JPGE started. Furthermore, the latest reported value in 2022 lacks credibility due to the absence of concrete figures at the district level, with all data simply stating "above 75%" as a value. These discrepancies highlight significant questions regarding the reliability and accuracy of the monitoring processes and reported figures associated with this indicator. A thorough review and clarification of these processes are imperative for a more accurate assessment.

**Status assessment:** Monitoring data on behavioural change, supplied to the evaluation team for the years 2022 and 2023, offers insights into key characteristics and behaviours of the target group. These include metrics like attendance at health facilities, the adoption of modern contraceptive methods, and the incidence of violence experienced by girls, all presented in total numbers. However, the absence of baseline figures for these dimensions limits the utility of the monitoring data in determining the current status of the indicator. In July 2022, the project commissioned a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) baseline study to capture the knowledge, perceptions, and practices of learners (including children with disabilities), parents/guardians, community, and school-based structures at 11 intervention schools. However, the KAP study offers limited insights on positive behaviours and attitudes towards SRHR, only revealing a significant knowledge gap on the content and importance of SRHR services (i.e., over 50% of the parents were ignorant what SRHR services consist of.). Besides these data, the activity revolving around community based CSE forums with adolescents to address issues affecting them yielded a Behaviour Communication Tool, which offers meaningful insights to be reported under this indicator. This tool has captured positive and negative behaviours for all districts besides Kasungu. Replicating this

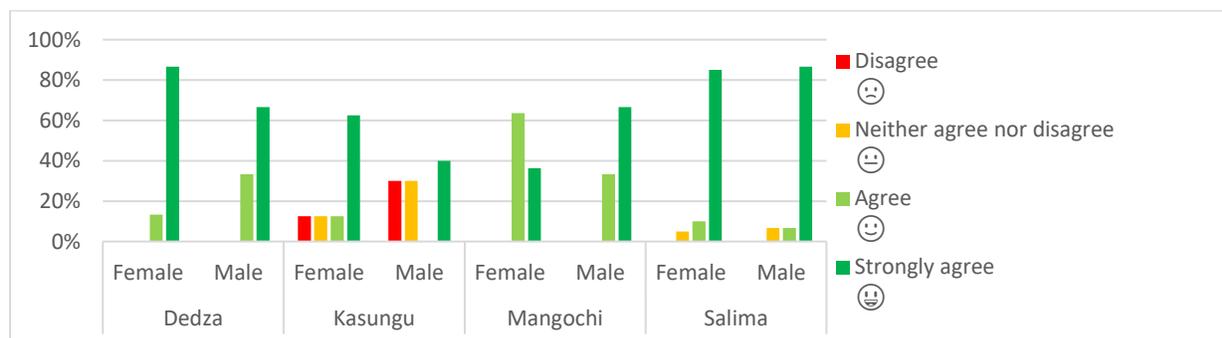
survey was out of scope for this MTE and would need to be done during the endline evaluation of JPGE, including all four districts.

To shed light on this indicator, the evaluation team reviewed the collected qualitative data to complement the understanding and current status of indicator 2.2 at the sampled target schools. In this regard, the evaluators asked learners about the extent to which they had learned about SRHR at their school to assess the **usefulness of the provided SRHR services** and complementary facilities. As depicted in figure 16 below, this assessment revealed that the large majority of interviewed learners affirmed having learned about menstruation, pregnancy, hygiene, and sexually transmittable diseases at school. Among former out-of-school children, the agreement approval rate was slightly lower than among those learners who had never been out of school. In this regard, male former out-of-school learners in Kasungu seem to disagree more with the statement compared to other districts and girls. Across the board, learners indicated to at least agree with the statements mostly because they experience the frequent visit of health professionals to their schools. They affirm getting capacitated on SRHR topics, receiving gender specific as well as individual counselling, and STD screenings. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that some learners apply the SRHR inputs.

*“Youth clubs in the community also used theatre and songs to disseminate sexual reproductive health messages.” (FGD\_former dropouts)*



**Figure 16 “At my school, I have learned about menstruation, pregnancy, and sexually transmittable diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS).” (n=161 learners)**



**Figure 17 “At my school, I have learned about menstruation, pregnancy, and sexually transmittable diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS).” (n=98 former dropouts)**

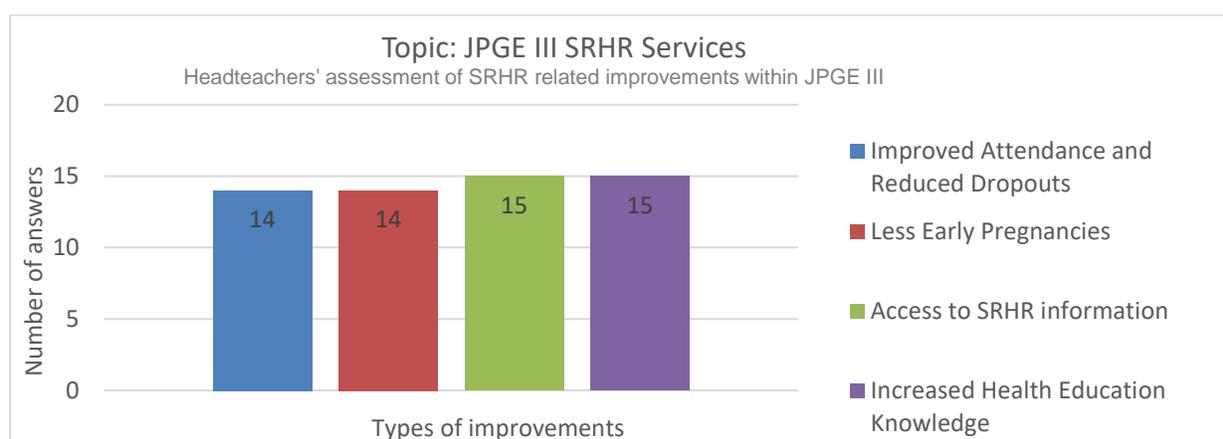
In addition, over 75% of all learners involved in the MTE survey (male and female on average across all districts) strongly believe that girls should be specifically supported to go to school. This perspective is primarily influenced by recognising girls' particular vulnerabilities, such as, facing higher risks of sexual

abuse and harassment, as well as contending with societal preconceptions. Furthermore, the respondents emphasised the greater necessity for empowering girls in the educational context.

*“Girls, if not supported, may easily drop out and be exposed to risky behaviours, pregnancies, and early marriage ... Girls easily succumb to peer pressure and temptations, emphasising the need for support ... Many girls have low self-esteem and need support to boost their confidence and self-reliance ... Empowering girls prevents them resorting to marriage as the easier option, fostering independence.” (FGD with learners and former dropouts).*

Insights from the surveys with head teachers further support the trend towards positive behavioural changes in terms of SRHR. As figure 18 shows below, the most noticeable changes with regard to SRHR behaviour comprises less early pregnancies (n=14 answers) and, as a consequence, improved attendance of female learners due to a reduction in dropouts (n=14 answers).

*“Girls did not go to hospitals as boys/men did not support them to do so as the preconception prevails that girls taking family planning measures will never bear children or are not good in bed” (INT\_5).*



**Figure 18 SRHR improvements at targeted schools (head teacher survey, own quantified qualitative assessment)**

### Supporting factors and bottlenecks: Behaviour towards SRHR

On the side of **support factors**, quantified qualitative insights underscore the importance of the regular visits of external health professionals, who lead capacity building on SRHR. Though the MTE could not assess the same attitudes on SRHR behaviour as the Behaviour Communication Tool, it revealed important positive impacts in terms of SRHR, which, in turn, hint at positive behavioural changes regarding SRHR.

Despite positive changes, JPGE did face **bottlenecks** in effectiveness under indicator 2.2, which became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, people feared to get infected in health facilities and avoided accessing them, including SRHR facilities. As a consequence, there was an increase in teenage pregnancies as school-aged children had been confined in communities, not going to school, and getting bored, which led to unprotected sex. Mother groups then helped to bring back dropped out pregnant girls to school (INT\_3). This shows the importance of effective capacity building and accessible SRHR facilities, especially during crises. Furthermore, gender biased preconceptions prevail, hinting at the necessity of further inclusion and awareness raising of boys and men in the matter of female SRHR.

**Outcome 3: Communities, parents, and education stakeholders demonstrate increased investment and support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out-of-school.**

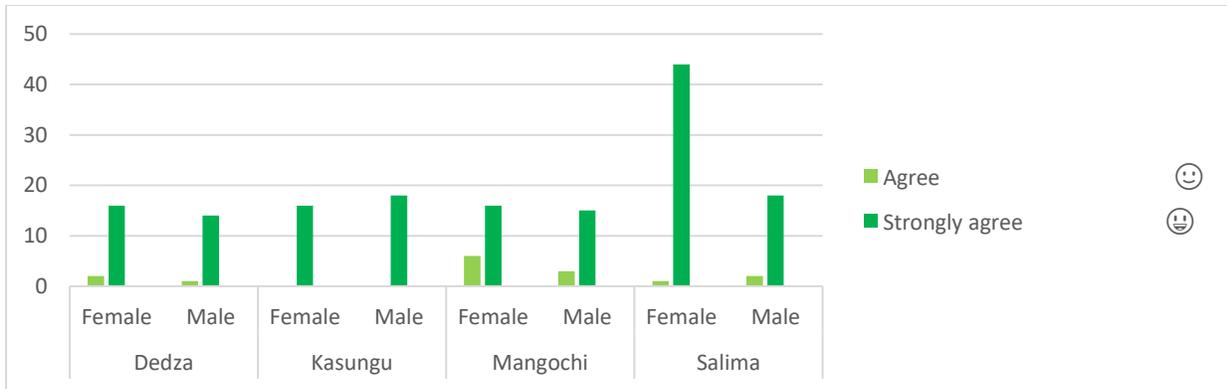
**Indicator 3.2:** Proportion of parents', caregivers' and stakeholders' understanding and promoting enrolment of girls in education.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
Not available	81%	75% (2024) Milestones: 11% (2021), 30% (2022), 52% (2023)

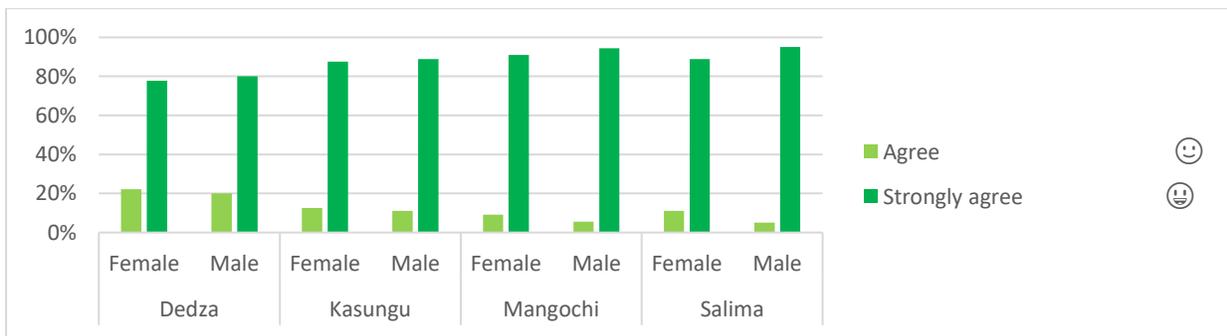
**SMART assessment:** The indicator is highly relevant to Outcome 3, aligning with the goal of increasing investment and support for education, life skills, health, and nutrition of children and adolescents. However, no baseline value is defined for the baseline year, and the baseline study conducted in 2022 (using data from 2021) reveals a value above the target value, rendering the indicator implausible and its measurement impossible.

**Status assessment:** Data for the assessment of baseline and monitoring data was collected through the KAP survey that JPGE III has commissioned in July 2022 (see indicator 2.2). While the KAP study assesses that 81% of parents, caregivers, and stakeholders understand and promote enrolment of girls in education, it also highlights that boys continue to be favoured in education promotion. As the scope of this MTE did not allow to replicate the KAP study on the relevant dimensions for this indicator, JPGE would need to repeat it during its endline evaluation for comparability of the results. As reported so far, the indicator seems to have surpassed its set target value. However, without a baseline value, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of this indicator in terms of changes due to the intervention. Furthermore, the KAP study remains relatively unclear which assessments compose the above mentioned 81% reported under this indicator.

To mitigate any ambiguity on the effectiveness of indicator 3.2 in the scope of the MTE, the evaluators asked parents and caregivers to indicate the extent to which they agree that (i) girls should be specifically supported in going to school and (ii) they actively support them in their education on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In addition, the evaluators asked the respondents for qualitative assessments to explain their ratings. Across all schools and districts, all male and female parents/caregivers at least agree that girls should be specifically supported in going to school and that they actively support girls in terms of education (see figures 19 and 20).



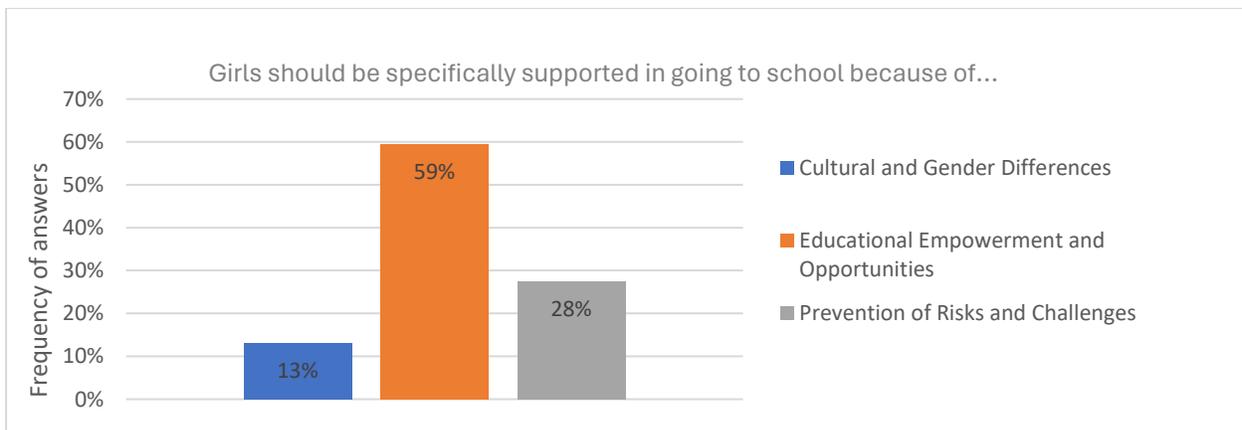
**Figure 19 Agreement levels for the statement "Girls should be specifically supported in going to school." (N=172 parents)**



**Figure 20 Agreement levels for the statement "I actively support girls in their education." (N=176 parents)**

In parallel to learners (see indicator 2.2), parents also highlighted girls' vulnerability as a key factor to actively support girls in education. In contrast to learners, however, by far the most important key factor for parents to actively support girls in their education is girls' particular need for educational empowerment and opportunities (see figure 21).

*"Girls need encouragement, guidance, and counselling to stay focused on education and future goals. ... Girls should have equal access to learning materials, uniforms, and support for better educational opportunities. ... Educating girls promotes their independence, provides better employment opportunities, and contributes to national education goals." (FGD parents).*



**Figure 21 Key reasons for supporting girls (N = 172 parents)**

When asked to what extent parents support their children in their school education, 43% of parents answered that they provide support by mainly encouraging girls to go to school and providing guidance and counselling to avoid risky behaviours. A quarter of the parents who participated in the survey further specified that they also provide financial and material support regarding school fees, material, and clothes, if possible.

To triangulate parents' assessments, the evaluators equally asked learners how they perceive the active support parents and caregivers provide towards girls' education. On average, above 90% of the learners surveyed (including former dropouts) at least agree with the statement that parents and teachers actively support girls in going to school. They corroborate that parents and teachers primarily provide emotional support and encouragement, followed by financial and material support. Respondents also pointed out that girls face cultural challenges like forced (early) marriages and household chores (especially, caring for elders) and, through physical differences (particularly menstruation), are more prone to dropping out than boys, and thus need additional support efforts. Interestingly, 5% of female learners and 15% of former dropouts surveyed in Salima disagreed to this statement. In Kasungu, the percentage of disagreement was relatively high among former out-of-school learners: 13% (20%) of female (male) former dropouts seem to believe that parents and teachers do not actively support girls in going to school. When asked to explain their assessment, they replied that teachers do not always have the awareness or capacities to properly support girls. In addition, they believe that both genders should get equal support.

*“Teachers do not take care of girls at school once they get sick [i.e., menstruate, having cramps]. Girls are told to go home and come back once they are okay. Only one teacher cares, giving the girls her pads if they start menstruating at school. ... It's not fair to support girls only when you have both girl and boy children.” (FGD\_ former dropouts)*

### Supporting factors and bottlenecks: Behaviour towards girls' education

On the side of **support factors**, parents and caregivers surveyed are aware of girls' particular vulnerability in terms of basic education. This awareness leads them to actively encourage girls to go to schools and support them financially as much as possible. In this regard, a key informant highlighted that targeting and involving parents in the intervention was a good fit and crucial (INT\_5).

Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence hints at potential **bottlenecks** for the effectiveness of indicator 3.2. Stereotypes in form of historic gender roles persist and limit girls' education. Similarly, the qualitative assessments suggest that female promotion in terms of their education is contingent on their family's socioeconomic situation (i.e., the extent to which their parents can support their education financially). In addition, male learners' buy-in is at stake as some of them disclosed to feeling left out of the intervention and the support regarding basic education.

**Indicator 3.3:** Number of parents with capacities and skills to provide support to learning for school going children, especially those with disabilities and special education needs.

Baseline value (2020)	Latest Reported Status (2022)	Target Value (2024)
83,4%	<b>83,4%</b>	<b>Overall: 5,100</b> Milestones: 1,020 (2021), 1,632 (2022), 1,347 (2023), 1,101 (2024)

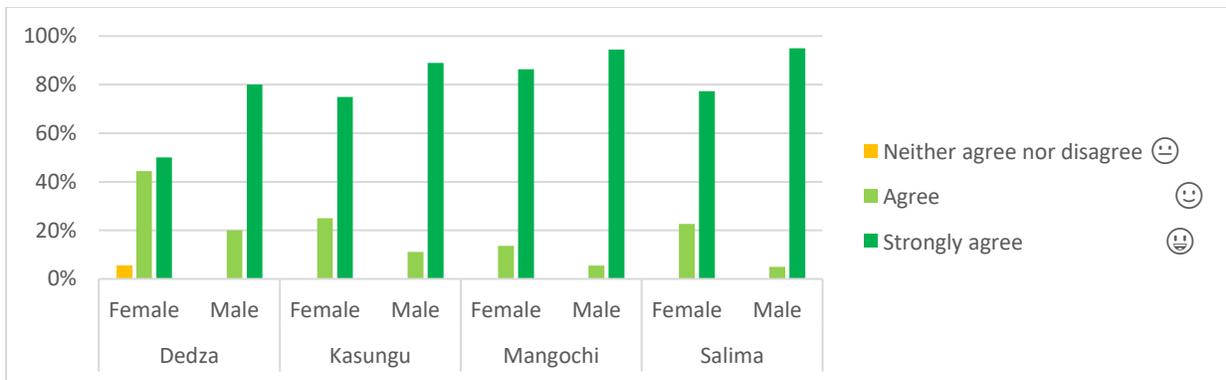
**SMART assessment:** The SMART assessment reveals several challenges associated with Indicator 3.3. Firstly, there is inconsistency in the measuring units between the baseline and target values. It remains unclear what the total numbers and percentages specifically refer to, and the indicator reference manual does not provide clarification on this matter. Moreover, the baseline and target values do not align coherently with the indicator formulation, introducing ambiguity that compromises the SMART criteria. The lack of clarity regarding the numerical representation and the absence of a clear correlation with the indicator's intended purpose raise concerns about the reliability and precision of this metric. A comprehensive review and clarification of the measuring units and values are essential to render this indicator more effectively aligned with the SMART criteria.

**Status assessment:** Data collection for this indicator presented challenges. While it was possible to ask parents the extent to which they agree in having the capacities and skills to provide educational support to learners, direct answers to the question of whether or not parents had children with special educational needs did not always render the desired answers; either because parents did not want to disclose this information or did not have children with disabilities. Against this backdrop, the evaluators adapted their approach in this regard asking the participants about their awareness and perception of children with special education needs in their respective communities as well as the support these children receive.

While this was the most effective approach for the given setting, it certainly limits the assessment of indicator 3.3 in terms of support toward learners with disabilities. This approach does not directly assess the number of parents with the capacities and skills to provide support to children with special educational needs. The assessment can only provide indications on the potential circumstances of learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the field mission revealed parents' limited understanding of the terminologies "disabilities" and "special educational needs." In consequence, the evaluators often had to explain what disabilities and special education needs entail as the majority of parents did not consider the whole spectrum of mental and physical impairments in terms of disabilities.

As figure 22 shows, almost every parent or caregiver surveyed (both male and female across all districts) affirmed having the capacities and skills to support their school going children in their education. Complementary qualitative assessments revealed that parents mostly support their school going children with encouragement and advice, followed by financial and material support.

*"I provide guidance and advice on the importance of education. ... I actively participate in school meetings and discussions with teachers. ... I review and check if my child has completed their school assignments. ... I purchase the school uniforms and necessary learning materials, like books and pens."  
(FGD\_parents)*



**Figure 22 Agreement levels for the statement “I have the capacities and skills to support my school going child(ren) in their education.” (N = 175 parents)**

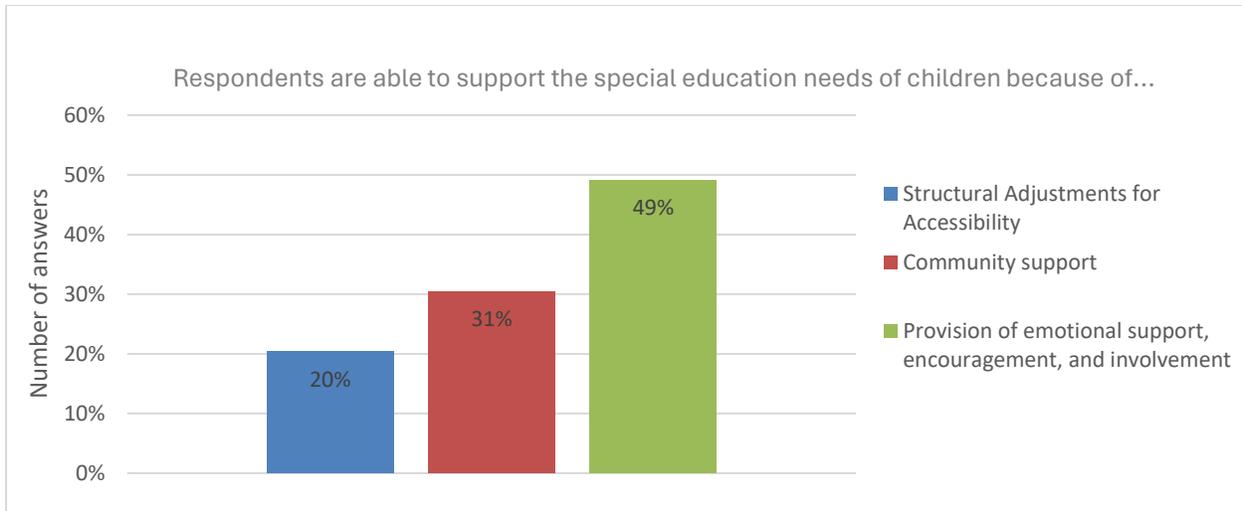
Regarding the support for children with special educational needs, 88% of parents (both genders) on average across all districts perceive that they are able to support learners with special education needs (see figure 22).



**Photo 6 Example of a disability-friendly toilet facility at a visited school**

Women tend to agree to a lesser extent than men, but they do not disagree. Like with the other children, parents provide emotional support and encouragement to learners with special educational needs to go to school. They encourage them to be a child like the others, promoting the integration of learners with disabilities in the (school) community (see figure 23). Anecdotal evidence also reports on a certain degree of community support. One parent told the evaluators during data collection that they sought financial help at the community church to finance a wheelchair for her physically impaired child. The church collected donations from its congregation members and could eventually buy the wheelchair. Afterwards, the child could go to school together with their peers. At school, the classrooms have ramps so that the child with the physical disability had no problems accessing the rooms. In fact, most of the visited schools were barrier free or had separate facilities (i.e., toilets or changing rooms) for children with special needs. The KAP study 2022 corroborates these findings as most parents (68%) agreed then that there was adequate school level care and protection for children with disabilities at school.

*“I encourage the interaction and inclusion of special needs learners in various activities. ... We promote equal treatment for all children, regardless of their abilities. ... We motivate parents to send their special needs children to school.” (FGD\_parents)*



**Figure 23 Key reasons why parents agreed in being able to support children with disabilities (N = 174 parents)**

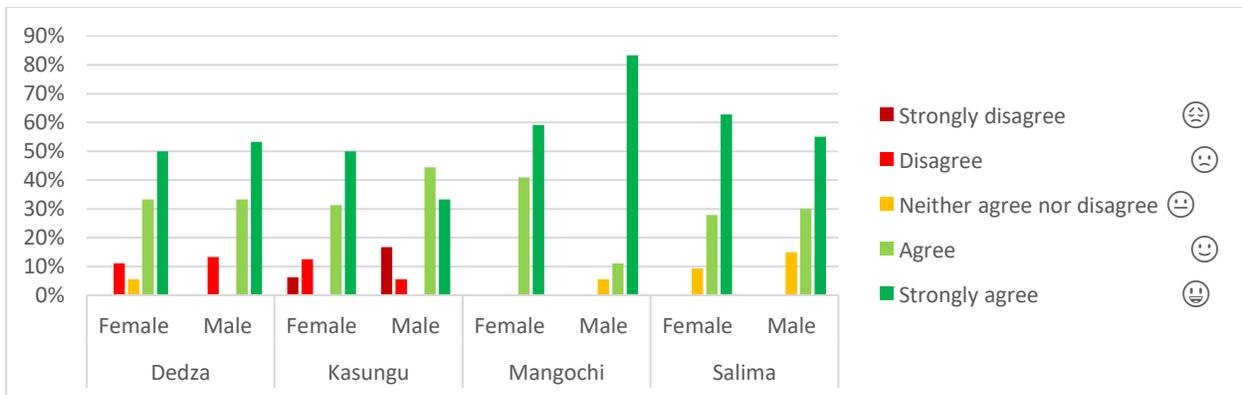


**Photo 7 Example of an intervention school with one wheelchair for children with disabilities.**

Northern part of the district that specialises in meeting such special educational needs. However, this school is too far away for most learners with disabilities to access without external help. In turn, they are left behind. In this vein, the KAP study reported also reported that nearly half of the children with disabilities are not attending school, despite available support.

However, 12% of the parents surveyed in Dedza and 21% of those surveyed in Kasungu, both genders respectively, at least disagree in being able to support learners with special education needs (see figure 24). This is because they either did not have any children with such needs in the community or highlighted infrastructural limitations of the school to support learners with special educational needs. Anecdotal evidence from one school pointed out that one learner with a physical disability could not attend school because they did not have any wheelchairs. In another school, parents shared that two children had to share one wheelchair. At a third schools, both parents and teachers highlighted that children with mental or audio-visual impairments could not get any support. In general, the schools often do not have neither the adequate material nor trained teachers to support these special educational needs. In Kasungu, one school reported of only one school in the whole

*“We do not have a special needs teacher. So, it’s difficult for us parents to help. Also, the next school for special children is too far away, so our children with disabilities stay at home.” (FGD\_parents).*



**Figure 24 “Parents are / the community is able to support the special education needs of learners.” (N = 174 parents)**

The interviews with school-going children (including former out-of-school children) equally affirmed that their parents are capable of providing learning support if needed. In this regard, they corroborated the support the parents have mentioned during their FGD. Among learners, an average of 91% (98%) of (former out-of-school) learners at least agree to the statement that their parents know how to help them with their schoolwork, while 7% (1%) were unsure, and 2% (1%) at least disagreed. The latter rating principally stemmed from female interview respondents in the Salima district. A very similar picture emerged among former out-of-school children, with only female respondents in respondents partially disagreeing to the statement.

#### **Supporting factors and bottlenecks:** Behaviour towards learners with special needs

On the side of **support factors**, parents and caregivers are generally aware of learners with special needs and show willingness in supporting them. Regardless of a child’s background, parents know the importance of education and encourage their children (regardless of gender and ability) to go to school, supporting them financially as far as possible. They also sometimes check on the status of their child’s homework. Anecdotal evidence provides insights on some cases where parents involved older children or teachers to help answer children’s questions on the homework.

However, some **bottlenecks** revolve around a lack of infrastructure or necessary training to effectively include children with special needs. This includes capacity building for teachers and learners, adapted curricula and school material (e.g., textbooks in braille), or sufficient ability aids (e.g., wheelchairs). Furthermore, shame also plays a role: anecdotal evidence suggests that some children with disabilities feel ashamed of their disability and thus prefer to stay at home, regardless of whether support is provided for them or not.

### **Effectiveness – Dimension 3: Unintended results**

#### **IX. Are unanticipated events and outcomes being sufficiently tracked?**

The programme does not systematically monitor and track unintended outcomes. An unexpected positive result that emerged during the MTE, however, pertains to the **empowerment of national mentors**, enhancing their capacities beyond the programme’s initial scope, and the development of the Health Facility Improvement Plan as a byproduct of the interventions (INT\_3). Furthermore, the programme’s expansion to include boys, whereas initially only girls had been targeted, was reported as having resulted in positive outcomes as it resolved tension and dissatisfaction among the boys (INT\_5). Additionally,

positive unintended results include the **multiplier effect** for farmers securing their own markets and the enthusiasm of cooperatives in exploring the school market for food provision, meaning that farmers were enabled to autonomously expand their market by reaching out to more schools and closing supply contracts (INT\_6).

The programme fostered **collaboration between health facilities and schools**, leading to teachers feeling comfortable contacting healthcare professionals for information or referrals for learners (INT\_8).

*“Before JPGE, teachers were afraid to talk to any health care professional. Now, they can contact them to get some information or referral for learners who intend to access services at the facility. There is freedom of interaction and improved relationships.” (INT\_8).*

Other positive unintended outcomes involve increased parental influence on girls' education, enhanced income and, as a consequence, enhanced living standards for farmers (“I used to be poor, now I am my own landlord.” (INT\_10)), and learners enjoying diversified meals at home as they have learned at school what balanced meals look like and equally apply this knowledge at home (FGD\_2, INT\_10).

However, **negative unintended results** equally emerged, highlighting the need for systematic monitoring of such outcomes (INT\_3). Unforeseen challenges include limitations in providing SRHR commodities within school premises, negatively affecting the accessibility of these services (INT\_4). The selective nature of the programme's mentorships, focusing on selected vulnerable boys and girls, resulted in a reported feeling of exclusion of non-selected learners (INT\_5). A similar disbalance occurred with regard to the distribution of computers to schools. Due to limited funds, not all targeted schools received computers, but merely those who could already provide solar electricity, leading to unselected schools feeling left out, which again yielded a loss of buy-in and willingness regarding capacity building on digital topics (INT\_9).

Notably, disparities in food production among smallholder farmers occasionally led to negative unintended results, putting at risk food security within the communities:

*“While in some areas, smallholder farmers produce enough food to sell to schools and communities, some only produce enough food for schools not sustaining their community throughout the whole year.” (INT\_6).*

Another negative unintended result of particularly the school feeding component pertains to the creation of inequalities between intervention and non-intervention schools through the programme, leading to the **migration of learners** from non-intervention schools to benefit particularly from the school feeding programme (FGD\_2; INT\_6). While on the one hand, this underlines the relevance and alignment of the school feeding programme to the needs of the target beneficiaries (see relevance dimension 2), it hints, on the other hand, at challenges in understanding and mitigating pull factors such as insufficient funds and coping mechanisms to deal with increased enrolment and increased teacher-pupil ratios at targeted schools, highlighting financial and/or logistical gaps in the programme (INT\_6, 7, 8, 10; FGD\_2).

The negative unintended results highlight the importance of systematic monitoring and adaptive management to address emerging challenges effectively and optimise programme impact.

**Overall**, Positive factors in SRHR services encompass successful linkage of advisory services to medical institutions (98% of visited schools) and the effective use of mobile vans, enhancing outreach. The integration of SRHR education into the life skills curriculum, aided by a digital app, brings innovation to

traditional teaching methods. However, challenges persist, such as teacher hesitancy in discussing SRHR topics and the need for broader implementation of digital education initiatives, not only at schools which already have a working digital infrastructure. The home-grown school meals approach and complementary health services receive praise, with 75% of visited schools reporting a frequent provision of school meals as well as improved health and nutrition services.

The assessment of increasing investment and support for education, life skills, health, and nutrition within communities reveals mixed results. While parents express strong support for girls' education, challenges persist due to historic gender roles and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, the assessment of parents' capacities to support children with disabilities highlighted potential gaps in understanding of different types of disabilities as well as gaps in infrastructure at schools.

Unintended positive outcomes include enhanced mentor capacities and collaboration between health facilities and schools. Conversely, negative results, like disparities in food production leading to a potential lack of resources in communities, and feelings of exclusion among non-chosen learners for certain interventions, underscore the need for systematic monitoring and adaptive management to optimise programme effectiveness.

### 3.4 Impact

In the realm of the assessment of impact, the midterm evaluation particularly scrutinized the potential contributions of the project to enhancing access to quality and inclusive education.

X. How many children, including adolescents, girls and boys, and children with disabilities, have benefitted (and in what way) so far?

A major weakness of the programme is the **lack of a comprehensive monitoring system**, bringing together figures and data on the interventions under the three components and hence, providing a clear picture of the number of people reached in the different target groups. Throughout the evaluation, the evaluation team could not get access to monitoring data on all components. A variety of approaches to monitoring exist by the different UN agencies and the subcontracted implementing partners, which hinders the derivation of a consistent and complete picture, while at the same time minimizing the risk for double-counting at the targeted schools.

However, according to the Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund Narrative Progress Reports 2021 and 2022 compiled for the donor (in the following abbreviated as progress reports) as well as EMIS enrolment data 2023 (own assessment), the evaluation team can overall conclude that JPGE directly reached the following target groups since the start of its third phase, featuring a slight but yet consistent upward trend:

- In **2021**, JPGE directly reached about 223,000 learners in schools (51 percent girls, 49 percent boys) through improved delivery and quality of education, school meals, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and information including comprehensive sexuality education, safety and protection services in 169 schools. In addition, more than 346,000 young people (aged 10-24 years, 45 percent girls and 55 percent boys) were engaged in from YFHS, and 72,000 out of school adolescents (86 percent girls, 14 percent boys) were engaged with trainings on life skills, alternative learning, adolescent nutrition support (Progress report 2021).
- In **2022**, 242,849 learners were reached in schools (52 percent girls, and 48 percent boys) (Progress report 2022) in 199 schools. A lower number than in the previous year, 260,173 young people (aged

10-24 years), (54 percent girls and 46 percent boys) benefitted from YFHS, and an equally lower number of 56,342 out of school adolescents (64 percent girls, 36 percent boys) were engaged in training on life skills, alternative learning, adolescent nutrition support.

- In 2023, 245,437 learners benefitted from the three components in 199 schools. Of these, 126,455 were girls (51.52%) and 118,982 (48.48%) were boys (EMIS enrolment data, own analysis). Due to the absence of access to monitoring data, no assessment could be deduced on the reached youth through health services and out of school children.
- In **2023**, 245,437 learners benefitted from the three components in 199 schools. Of these, 126,455 were girls (51.52%) and 118,982 (48.48%) were boys (EMIS enrolment data, own analysis). Due to the absence of access to monitoring data, no assessment could be deduced on the reached youth through health services and out of school children.

In addition, through its capacity development and awareness creation component, the project is expected to have had an additional leveraging effect, which is perceived as a key prerequisite for long-lasting behaviour change at the community level.

#### XI. To what extent has JPGE impacted access to quality and inclusive education?

JPGE has positively contributed to enhancing the access to quality education, evident in **increased enrolment** (n=34 answers, quantified qualitative assessment), **reduced absenteeism** (n=23 answers), and **improved learner performance** (n=23 answers), as reported by head teachers in the survey conducted by the evaluators. It has therefore had a positive contribution towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – Quality Education.

The programme has the potential to contribute to **maintaining girls in school** longer by delaying childbearing and reducing teenage pregnancy through SRHR education, hence contributing to higher attendance rates among girls. School attendance and performance, particularly of girls, has seen evidence of improvement as a result of the programme tackling the most pressing issues that keep girls from attending schools. In this regard, there was collaboration with local police forces in case of sexual harassment of girls, the support of school clubs and mother groups, learners' councils, and the daily food provision (INT\_5).

*“If you educate a girl child, you educate the nation.” (INT\_3)*

The quality of education at targeted schools has furthermore been enhanced through capacity building in terms of school management, which allowed teaching staff to create a safe and conducive learning environment at school.

In a similar vein, the programme contributes to empowering young people to make informed choices on SRHR (INT\_3, 8).

*“As long as young people are able to have access to SRHR services, they are able to continue their education, especially sexually active learners. Access to contraception helps girls to move forward coping with SRHR issues.” (INT\_8)*

The programme aspires to promote **inclusiveness for girls** in education by providing facilities like change rooms, thereby equally contributing to higher attendance rates. In spite of evidence for improvements on menstrual health hygiene and infrastructure (INT\_10), some interviewed girls yet

reported that their needs during their menstruation were not adequately responded to by teachers due to limited awareness and/or capacities to properly support girls:

*“Teachers do not take care of girls at school once they get sick (menstruation and cramps), they are told to go home and come back once they are okay.” (FGD)*

With regard to **inclusiveness of learners with special needs**, the programme aspired to mobilise learners with special needs to attend classes (INT\_6). The holistic approach of JPGE, particularly in the evaluated phase III, is acknowledged by interview partners for addressing disability issues through initiatives such as providing school materials in braille or tablets at some schools (INT\_7). However, challenges in accommodating special education needs are noted, with a lack of capacity building in this regard. Particularly teachers oftentimes do not have the capacities or skills to properly accommodate the needs of children with special educational needs (INT\_6).

Moreover, the evaluation team contends that the **school feeding component**, in spite of its challenges with regard to the timely provision of funds, holds significant potential to contribute to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Although the collection of representative data on literacy and poverty levels fell beyond the scope of this evaluation, existing literature strongly supports the positive impact of school feeding on literacy levels. A prior evaluation of WFP’s school feeding programme in Malawi revealed noteworthy advancements, particularly among girls in Standard 4, showing significant improvements in **listening and reading comprehension**. The report indicated that in targeted schools, there was a 54% increase in the number of children reading fluently above the benchmark compared to non-targeted schools (WFP, n.d.). Additionally, literature indicates that school feeding programmes can generate direct economic benefits for families, contributing to the reduction of poverty by enhancing income for households and communities. The value of meals in school is estimated to be approximately 10% of a household’s income, resulting in substantial savings, particularly for families with multiple children (Bundy et al., 2009). In contrast to alternative approaches, independent evaluations have furthermore identified school feeding as having one of the most robust causal connections to gender parity, equality, and inclusion in education (aligned with SDGs 4 and 5) (UNESCO 2019).

Overall, the programme's potential for impact primarily stems from the fact that it aspires, through its interlinked components, to remove barriers and provide tangible incentives at school level pulling out-of-school kids back to school, such as improvements in menstrual hygiene and the provision of school meals (INT\_10). The provided holistic package could serve as a model for replication in more schools, providing insights for the government's Malawi Implementation Plan (MIP), provided that funds are made available (INT\_2).

However, according to interviews, the programme's positive achievements created an increasing demand for secondary education, which the secondary education institutions cannot currently fulfil due to limited capacities and spots available for learners (FGD\_2, INT\_10). Hence, the potential impact of the programme faces a **limitation** wherever it naturally needs to rely on the expanded Malawian education system to carry forward key achievements. In this case, secondary education institutions would also need to appropriately support girls who have successfully made it through primary school with the support of the JPGE intervention.

In **essence**, the programme holds substantial potential for impact on access to quality education, aligning with SDG 4. It contributes to girls’ education through SRHR services and infrastructure and support inclusiveness efforts, despite challenges. The school feeding component, through its contribution to SDG 2, is assessed as plausibly contributing to enhanced literacy. The interconnected components of the

programme have potential for comprehensive impact at the targeted schools, yet the question of upscaling remains uncertain.

### 3.5 Efficiency

As part of the efficiency assessment, the midterm evaluation examined the extent to which project resources were used appropriately with regard to the translation into tangible results.

XII and XIII: Have the programme activities been executed on time, in expected quantity and quality? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the intended outcomes?

Generally, JPGE III has seen positive aspects in the execution of its programme activities. Usually, the programme has reportedly executed activities on time, in the expected quantity and quality, thanks to collaborative planning and adherence to government guidelines during COVID-19 (FGD\_1). Ministries have expressed appreciation for the selected indicators and the centralised formats used for most activities to reach target groups (INT\_6).

The programme achieved efficiency gains through its **integrated approach**, i.e., by consolidating relevant components at the same school (INT\_2). Funds provided were generally deemed sufficient to achieve or sometimes even overachieve certain intended results (INT\_5, 9). For instance, JPGE overachieved its targets set with its implementing partner MAGGA in terms of targeting girls and bringing them back to school (i.e., 146 schools in total) (INT\_5). Participatory planning with governmental partners ensured clear roles and responsibilities, with meetings held to address changes collectively (FGD\_1, INT\_7). Results were maximized (INT\_4, 8, 10, 11), allowing for more schools to be reached than initially planned in certain areas (e.g., Mangochi with 310 schools reached compared to 74 schools planned to be reached by WFP package) (FGD\_2). However, in other instances, a lack of resources to engage an appropriate number of operators to reach all facilities in all targeted districts and improve their service provision was reported to the evaluators (INT\_3).

However, there are areas with opportunity for improvements. At district level, the UN agencies followed a **participatory approach** to include relevant stakeholders in joint TWG and monitoring activities. While this approach is on the one hand assessed as positive by the evaluation team, given that it allows for the effective integration of grassroots expertise and exchange of knowledge, it has, on the other hand, reportedly led to delays in activities due to back-and-forth planning processes furthermore contribute to inefficiencies (FGD\_1).

The procurement strategy for the **digital intervention** leveraged existing hardware in schools, reflecting an efficient use of resources. Against this backdrop, UNFPA did not acquire additional tablets, relying on schools that were already equipped (INT\_4). While on the one hand, it is assessed as an efficiency gain by the evaluation team that existing infrastructure was reused, it led, on the other hand, to many schools not benefitting from the digital intervention as they lacked the required digital infrastructure, leading to enhanced unintended inequalities between schools. Furthermore, the naturally smaller scope which was limited to schools already equipped with digital infrastructure led to an additional inefficiency as JPGE could only roll out the digital life skills programme which they had developed at a very limited number of schools (INT\_4).

Adding to this, delays in funding processes have been reported at district level, interrupting, or delaying certain activities and hence, hindering their effectiveness. This occurs particularly during the first three months of the year. One implementing partner shared that they faced delays in the approval of work plans for the current year. The **delay in funding** at the level of implementing partners led to setbacks in implementation on the ground. As a result, outreach during the first three months of the year was notably low. Reportedly, this experience was shared by other implementing partners as well, indicating a structural problem of approving work plans and providing funding to implementing partners in time (INT\_1, 3, 7, 8).

For food provision, the implementation of the **home-grown school meals model** was highlighted as generally efficient, contributing to a bigger impact of JPGE despite higher costs (INT\_10). Funds were continuously reflected upon and adapted throughout the project implementation based on monitoring data (INT\_11). However, concerns were raised by interview partners about the delayed provision of funds to schools for the provision of school meals (INT\_5, 7, 8, 10, 11). The home-grown school meals approach followed by JPGE relies on schools directly sourcing the ingredients needed for the preparation of school meals from local farmers or cooperatives. In order to do so, they depend on receiving WFP funds from the district council. However, interview partners pointed out that frequent delays in the provision of funds from the district councils to schools undermine the effectiveness and hence, the efficiency of the component. Even though resources are made available by the programme, an ineffective distribution mechanism leads to a reduction in tangible outcomes, i.e., the provision of school meals. Adding to this challenge, interview partners pointed out that WFP offered schools the opportunity to request additional funds to account for shortages in food provision due to inflation (increased input and sale prices). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that school and district councils are partially not aware of such mitigating measures to counteract inefficient fund allocations for food provision (INT\_11), leading to additional inefficiencies in this component.

According to interviews, the overall implementation has proceeded well, with an **emphasis on quality, particularly in the SRHR component** and the ToT sessions (FGD\_1; INT\_1, 3). However, particularly for the SRHR component, it was reported that efficiency could yet be improved through better collaboration and coordination among implementing partners, with suggestions for more effective and frequent review meetings (particularly in terms of attendance) to share information on their services and schedules (INT\_1). In this regard, an interviewee reported that the independent mandate of the three UN agencies limited efficiency as there was a lack of a holistic monitoring, coordination, and collaboration across the different agencies (INT\_7).

Aligned with this finding, one interview partner critically asserted that JPGE tends to be **more focused on inputs than on outcomes** (INT\_2). On that note, stakeholders reported further inefficiencies regarding JPGE. Some indicated the need for improvement in assessing the quality of implementation, emphasising that the programme should go beyond measuring the number of people reached and consider how they were reached and what changed as a result of their engagement (INT\_4). Anecdotal evidence suggests that while resources were put to good use (production efficiency), the results do not resonate the expectations (allocation efficiency). In fact, JPGE selected the most vulnerable schools, which took a lot more effort to get started than less vulnerable schools, suggesting that the same funds could have been used to reach more schools if less vulnerable schools had been targeted (INT\_7).

To improve value-for-money and ensure consistent high quality and achievement of results on the ground, the evaluation team assesses that there is a need to monitor the quality of crucial interventions more closely. Throughout interviews, particularly the need to monitor the quality of food provision throughout all districts was voiced as a crucial concern, but also for the programme interventions as a

whole. Such monitoring activities could take place via quarterly visits of each intervention school, regular follow-ups, annual steering meetings, and a documentation of enrolment and attendance (INT\_10), thereby enabling a shift towards outcome-oriented monitoring and implementation and preparing the ground for enhanced efficiency.

**In conclusion**, the evaluation team assesses that JPGE generally executed activities effectively, meeting timelines and quality expectations. Collaborative planning with government partners and adequate funds contributed to (over)achieving certain targets, whereas resource limitations hindered a blanket approach for other interventions. Delays in funding processes, particularly during the first three months, and concerns about delayed provision of funds for school meals were reported, negatively affecting outcomes. While implementation quality was generally high, stakeholders suggested monitoring interventions more closely to improve efficiency and ensure consistent high quality and value-for-money on the ground.

### 3.6 Sustainability

Under the sustainability criterion, the midterm review assessed the capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders to ensure sustainability and maintain key project results over time, as well as the overall durability prospects of project results.

#### **Sustainability – Dimension 1: Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities**

XIV. and XV. How effectively has the JPGE III programme built (national) ownership and capacity? How conducive is the political, economic, and social environment to continue with the programme results achieved so far?

The effectiveness of the JPGE intervention in building ownership and capacity at relevant levels, as well as the assessment of the (economic/social/political) environment to enable a retention of results over time revealed mixed findings.

First of all, at the **community and school level**, the utilisation and capacitation of existing structures and the active community engagement were raised as points contributing to the sustainability of certain components (INT\_3, 7, 8). Positive aspects include the establishment and capacity building of a total of 80 Community-Based Distribution Agents per district, with a clear structure for continued access to commodities (e.g., contraceptive pills and condoms) even without direct involvement from JPGE and its implementing partners (INT\_1).

While capacity building (mentorship / ToT) is generally perceived as a sustainable approach, as people are, to some extent, expected to have an intrinsic motivation to carry forward behaviours and knowledge once they have seen the positive results the behaviour entails, certain risk factors exist in the Malawian education sector which undermine this assumption. These risks primarily pertain to **turnovers of capacitated personnel**, particularly at school and community level, due to retirement or displacement (INT\_8). Relatedly, the sustainability of the digital CSE initiative is contingent on factors like teacher transfers, emphasising the **need for improved knowledge management** and government cooperation. Consequently, there is a need for improved knowledge management, for enhanced knowledge multiplication / transfer to successors, and/or for a governmental commitment to not transfer capacitated teachers with relevant positions at their respective school to ensure that knowledge is not lost (INT\_9).

On the other hand, **capacity building of farmers** who proactively close supply contracts with non-intervention schools due to economic incentives has, in theory, potential for sustainability with spillover effects reaching non-intervention schools within the network of the district councils (FGD\_2). However, the sustainability of this vein highly depends on the **availability of funds** at school level. If no funds are available, schools are not able to pay farmers, leading to a discontinuation of the school feeding and related benefits for both learners and farmers.

At the **district level**, it was positively noted during interviews that the programme has contributed to building capacity at this level, empowering district councils and enhancing their network collaboration towards a common goal (FGD\_1). However, with regard to the **SRHR component**, factors related to commodity stock-outs at health facilities, logistical challenges, and dependence on governmental funds for medical supplies were raised as pivotal risk factors for sustainability (INT\_1, 3). Similarly, district youth friendly health service coordinators need transportation to access remote communities, which are sometimes up to 120km away from the facility. To do so, they require funds to cover fuel costs, which are oftentimes not available and hence hinder the access to remote areas. In addition, there is a dependence on governmental funds for medical supplies (INT\_3).

At the **national level**, there are positive indications of improved national MAGGA structures, fostering a network and buy-in that is expected to endure beyond the programme's duration (INT\_5). However, with regard to **governmental ownership and capacities**, concerns were raised during data collection that governmental buy-in may not suffice to sustain once the programme phases out (INT\_4). Although the programme has aspired to pilot model schools, thereby offering best practices and lessons for future government collaboration and interventions (INT\_5), the limited buy-in, leading to a limited willingness, paired with limited (financial) capacity to provide the needed funds, is expected to lead to a discontinuation of large parts of the intervention once JPGE comes to an end.

*“Sustainability is put at risk as long as the programme is not visible at national level. It needs high level support and buy-in. The government needs to understand the long-term benefits of such an investment to allocate a budget that could sustain the intervention, its upscaling, and remanence.” (INT\_11)*

Overall, **macroeconomic constraints** (i.e. the government having limited financial resources), leading to a continuous need for donor support, constitutes a pivotal challenge to the sustained success of the programme (INT\_10, 11). In particular, the government needs to understand the long-term benefits of such an investment to allocate a budget able to sustain the intervention, its upscaling, and remanence (INT\_11). Governmental buy-in is not given and risks to fade once project phases out (INT\_4). Addressing these challenges will be crucial for ensuring the lasting impact and effectiveness of JPGE III in the long run.

## **Sustainability – Dimension 2: Durability of results over time**

XVI. To what extent can the benefits of the programme continue after JPGE III funding ceases?

The assessment of the extent to which the benefits of JPGE are expected to continue after the cessation of funding reveals both positive and negative perspectives.

**School feeding**, particularly the approach followed by WFP in promoting a home growing model, greatly benefits learners but has no sustainability prospects of its own unless additional resources are provided (INT\_10). It is hence unlikely that any of the targeted schools will be able to continue with the school feeding programme after the phasing out of JPGE unless alternative funding comes in. While WFP

collaborates with the Ministry of Education as part of the framework of cooperation, and preliminary steps have been initiated to (i) develop a school feeding operational plan, including a roadmap for handover, and (ii) generate robust data contributing to a value for money study comparing the different school feeding models implemented in the country (progress report 2022), no concrete measures have been defined yet. It will be of fundamental importance to (i) help the Ministry of Education complete the value for money study to determine the most suitable school feeding approach for the Malawian context, and (ii) based thereon, support the government in thoughtfully allocating funds to ensure the continuation of school feeding not only at the JPGE schools, but in the entire country.

While sustainable structures to create access to **SRHR** knowledge have been created in some communities through the enhanced capacities of district councils, the capacitation of community-based distribution agents and the provision of the implementing partner with enhanced supporting infrastructure (mobile clinics), particularly the access to medical supplies is highly dependent on funds, not least to reach remote communities. The latter is hence at high risk of discontinuation once funding ceases. In addition, disparities in the advancement of districts, particularly of Kasungu which only joined the programme in 2022 and is hence yet in the early stages of implementation, pose a risk to district-specific sustainability of results (INT\_4).

The **alternative learning component** will require more awareness raising among the target groups (out of school children, but also supporting stakeholders such as mother groups and parents) to, first of all, become effective at a broader scale and secondly, be able to develop a lasting effect. Given that JPGE-external, community-based and/or NGO-driven alternative learning programmes already exist in some communities, synergies need to be explored to ensure a handover of relevant knowledge and experiences gathered over the remaining project period to stakeholders that are likely to continue with the intervention at grassroots level.

Within the **WASH** component, the indicator assessment revealed that unhygienic WASH facilities at schools, a lack of access to water and to supplementary items (soap) yet hinder the consistent application of improved WASH practices at many schools. The last progress report (2022) furthermore reveals that merely in 24 schools, latrines were improved by JPGE, while in 6 additional schools the latrines were in too poor conditions to be rehabilitated at all. Given the close interlinkage between WASH practices, nutritional outcomes and learning outcomes, as well as a **lack of sustainability prospects of WASH practices without functional WASH infrastructure**, the programme should consider prioritising the provision and improvement of WASH infrastructure, including functional latrines and boreholes, throughout the remaining implementation period.

**Capacity building at school level**, particularly of school management and teachers to enhance teaching quality, is at risk due to the outlined frequent turnovers in staff at Malawian primary schools and insufficient knowledge management / knowledge handover systems at primary schools.

Overall, the sustainability outlook for key outcomes of the JPGE intervention hinges significantly on funding availability. The degree of **funding dependency** emerges as a critical factor influencing sustainability prospects (INT\_5, 7, 8). The likely cessation of governmental support post-JPGE completion, particularly due to insufficient funds, poses a significant challenge, especially for outcomes dependent on financial resources for service provision, equipment supply, and maintenance (INT\_7, 8, 10).

*“Sustainability is a challenge as the government is not in the position to fund and spread a national food programme (...). Even with a strategy in place, the macroeconomic situation in the country does not allow own implementation, requiring a continuous support from donors.” (INT\_10)*

**In conclusion**, sustainability prospects of JPGE show mixed results. Supporting factors to sustainability include community engagement and local capacity building. However, challenges such as personnel turnover at school level and limited government buy-in / capacities for continued financial support risk undermining long-term impacts. Particularly cost-intensive interventions like school feeding face post-JPGE sustainability challenges, requiring strategic planning and additional resources. Addressing these challenges before project completion will be crucial for ensuring the lasting impact and effectiveness of JPGE.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the key feature and success factor of JPGE III is its joint approach to holistically address major key root causes to limited equitable and inclusive education (i.e., education, nutrition, and SRHR). In that regard, JPGE III aligns with national policies demonstrating a good understanding of educational needs and collaboration among implementing UN agencies. Furthermore, through its intended contributions to SDG 2 (zero hunger), 4 (quality education) and 5 (gender equality), the programme features alignment with the global Agenda 2030. JPGE III has demonstrated a commitment to shared responsibility and accountability by closely engaging local stakeholders and partners in the educational improvement process. Additionally, the project built on existing structures in the educational landscape of Malawi, collaborating with partners and donors, which aligns with the principles of shared responsibility and cooperation. Through the participatory involvement of schools and communities, JPGE III managed to build structures and capacities at school, community, and district levels. The conducted training and awareness raising helped communities recognise the connections between diverse nutrition, WASH, SRHR, and performance at school; knowledge that they can and intend to use in the future.

Nevertheless, persistent issues like infrastructure challenges, limited access to remote populations, or sociocultural barriers (e.g., shame or hesitancy in discussing school performance, school attendance or SRHR topics) prevail. In addition, school meal provision has shown to be crucial for school attendance on the one hand and a source for regional disparities and feelings of exclusion on the other hand. In this vein, JPGE III would need to further upscale its intervention nationwide to curb unintended regional disparities, working towards its objective set at national level, and prepare a viable exit strategy for handover for when it phases out. Such an upscaling is imperative for sustainability, whose potential is challenged by turnovers of capacitated beneficiaries and ongoing resource constraints. Concretely, limited government buy-in or capacities for continued financial support risk undermining long-term impacts. In particular, cost-intensive interventions like school feeding face post-JPGE sustainability challenges, requiring strategic planning and additional resources as a self-sufficient sustainability is currently not yet realistic. Addressing these challenges before project completion will be crucial for ensuring the lasting impact and effectiveness of JPGE III.

In terms of the principles of inclusiveness and leaving no one behind, the project put a focus on ensuring that all genders, particularly girls, and learners with special educational needs were targeted. Regarding female learners, the MTE unveiled some changes in terms of repetition rates (i.e., a significant intervention effect in Mangochi), curbed differences between male and female dropout rates (though no significant intervention effect), and a decrease in pregnancy rates (though no significant intervention effect). Though SRHR capacity building has revealed to have been the most frequent and crucial service provided for female learners, challenges remain (e.g., limited SRHR service provision on school premises) and need to be mitigated by further complementary health service providers. In addition, boys and men need to be further involved and sensitised on SRHR to mitigate gender-based preconceptions. Moreover, there is a high consciousness across all stakeholder groups in terms of girls' vulnerability regarding education. In general, parents mostly support girls in their education primarily by encouraging them to go to school and providing them guidance, financial, as well as material support. Regarding learners with special education needs, this MTE has shown some shortcomings in inclusive education as the visited targeted schools only provide limited support to include learners with special needs (e.g., limited wheelchairs for physically impaired learners or a lack in capacitated personnel or adapted school material / curricula).

## Lessons Learned:

What distinguishes the intervention is its **joint approach** of several UN agencies to address several issues simultaneously and holistically. JPGE has shown that the complementarity of different intervention components has the potential to create a holistic and synergistic impact on the targeted outcomes. Furthermore, the **involvement of experienced partners and the ministries** at national and district levels ensures effective project implementation and has shown primordial for sustainability. In particular, JPGE needs to **upscale the intervention** from its focus on selected facilities in only four out of 28 districts to all districts. The current focus restricts governmental buy-in and ownership, limiting the representation of JPGE results on education nationwide. Similarly, **JPGE's focus on specific schools** within a district, rather than targeting all schools, **contributes to discrepancies and growing inequalities** between school zones and yields unintended consequences of learner migration.

Across all intervention components, it has become evident that the **buy-in of the local community**, especially parents, is a major catalyst to promote equitable and inclusive access to education. In a similar vein, anecdotal evidence also highlights the importance of **continuously also involving boys** in a girl-targeted intervention to avoid unintended resistance. Of the three JPGE components, **food provision** has shown to be the **major** but also the **most fund-dependent pull factor** for learners to go to school. In this regard, it has become evident that **fund dependency** and the overarching issue of high poverty rates in the community **affect** the programme's **sustainability and impact**. Regarding project implementation, a key take-away is the necessity to **reflect SMART criteria** of the JPGE indicators **in terms of relevance and measurability** (e.g., clear definitions, to avoid varied interpretations and potential discrepancies in progress assessment). In particular, JPGE has been **more activity- than result-oriented** which limits its potential for impact.

To facilitate learning from the results and conclusions of this MTE, this section corroborates key factors of success and central weaknesses of the programme. Efforts and positive achievements in the key factors of success and weakness have the potential to leverage current achievements, mitigate current or future risks, or be applied to similar projects.

## Key Success Factors:

- ☑ **Proximity of SRHR Services to Schools:** Establishing specific SRHR services within 100 meters of school premises, including contraception, to enhance accessibility and address the unique needs of students.
- ☑ **SRHR Services:** Wherever available, changing rooms, provision of sanitary items, age-appropriate advice, and integration of SRHR topics into life skills contribute to the success of SRHR services.
- ☑ **WASH infrastructure:** Availability of gender-segregated toilet facilities, change rooms for menstruating girls, improved sanitation, cleanliness, and safe water contribute to improved WASH practices.
- ☑ **Alternative Learning Programme:** Strong community support, encouragement from learners, teachers, and parents, provision of free school materials, and school meals create incentives for the success of the alternative learning programme.
- ☑ **Regular Visits of External Health Professionals:** Regular visits of external health professionals positively impact capacity building on SRHR, leading to positive behavioural changes.
- ☑ **Capacity Building and Information Campaigns:** Implementing effective capacity building initiatives and information campaigns to empower girls, with a focus on keeping them in school.
- ☑ **Empowerment of Community Groups** (i.e., the mentorship and safe spaces component in form of mother groups and learners' councils, respectively): Utilising effective mechanisms like learners'

councils and mother groups for empowerment, trust-building, and addressing girl-specific issues. Particularly empowering learners' councils to be part of decision-making and stand up for their own rights.

- ✔ **School Feeding as an Incentive:** Using school feeding as a powerful incentive and means for enrolment, providing daily meals to encourage regular attendance.
- ✔ **District Engagement and Activity Levels:** Ensuring full district participation and maintaining high activity levels to drive the success of the interventions.

### Key Factors of Weakness:

- ✘ **Lack of Monitoring Transparency:** The lack of transparency in monitoring, including insufficient coordination of Education Management Information System (EMIS) and minimal participation from UN agencies in EMIS meetings, poses a monitoring challenge.
- ✘ **Lack of Effective Coordination Among Agencies:** The absence of a dedicated programming implementation unit for JPGE creates operational gaps and hinders effective coordination. Limited coordination at the national level, lacking a dedicated budget line, and reliance on only one central focal person hinders effective national coordination.
- ✘ **Insufficient WASH Infrastructure:** Improved WASH practices face challenges due to insufficient WASH infrastructure at schools, indicating a weakness in the programme's implementation. Limited provision of soap and access to water further pose challenges. Moreover, there is a maintenance issue of boreholes, for instance, at some schools.
- ✘ **Detrimental SRHR Attitudes:** Shame remains a major hindering factor, affecting the discussion and education around SRHR topics, leading to issues like the taboo of pregnancy prevention and unofficial distribution of contraceptives.
- ✘ **Detrimental Gender Stereotypes:** Detrimental gender stereotypes persist, reflecting a challenge in changing cultural attitudes and beliefs related to SRHR in the target schools and communities, and highlighting the necessity of further inclusion and awareness raising of boys and men in female SRHR matters.
- ✘ **Fear of Health Facilities during Crises:** During the Covid-19 pandemic, fear of getting infected in health facilities led to an increase in teenage pregnancies, emphasising the need for effective capacity building and accessible SRHR facilities during crises.
- ✘ **Lack of Information on SRHR for Learners with Disabilities:** The absence of information on SRHR for learners with disabilities indicates a gap in the inclusivity of the programme.
- ✘ **Inclusion of Learners with Special Needs:** Lack of infrastructure, necessary training, and feelings of shame among children with disabilities contribute to obstacles in effectively including children with special needs.
- ✘ **Limited Effectiveness of Alternative Learning Programme:** Limited awareness of the existence of the alternative learning programme, lack of motivation, peer pressure, and systematic weaknesses, such as absent teachers, pose obstacles to the success of the programme. Moreover, the output indicators 2.1 and 2.2 entail both FLA and CBE programmes, but FLA does not aim at reenrolment.
- ✘ **Limited Effectiveness of Teaching Component:** The unsustainability of teacher training due to frequent rotations and a lack of effective knowledge management systems highlights a weakness in capacity building. In addition, the intended results of teacher training / capacity building (outcome level indicators) are absent in JPGE's logframe, i.e., there is a disconnection between the programme's interventions and its indicators at outcome level.
- ✘ **School Meal Provision:** Head teachers report frequent delays in funds for food provision, up to two weeks, impacting the functionality of the school feeding component.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing scientifically robust recommendations for an evaluation involves a meticulous and evidence-based process. The evaluation team initiated this process by conducting a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, identifying patterns, trends, and critical insights. Stakeholders at various levels were actively engaged to capture diverse perspectives, including beneficiaries, implementers, policymakers, and other relevant actors. The programme's outcomes were benchmarked against pre-defined criteria or established standards, and a literature review was conducted to contextualise findings. Subject matter experts, both internal and external, were consulted to validate insights, contributing to the recommendations' depth. The logic model of the programme was critically evaluated, and an analysis was performed to assess internal and external factors. Recommendations were prioritised based on impact, feasibility, and relevance, considering short-term and long-term implications. The evaluation team strove to use clear and actionable language in articulating each recommendation to ensure easy understanding. Draft recommendations were shared with key stakeholders for feedback and validation. Additionally, a participatory workshop with implementing agencies facilitated discussions on the recommendations, refining them in the process. The recommendations are grouped according to topic, to support their actionable use. This comprehensive process ensures that recommendations are evidence-based, responsive to stakeholder input, and strategically aligned with evaluation goals.

Directed to	Topic	Finding	Recommendation	Options for implementation
JPGE (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA)	Indicators	Indicators do not capture JPGE objectives and results in their entirety.	<b>Priority 1:</b> KPI and outcome indicators should properly operationalise all dimensions of the programme objective and intended results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Either the programme objective (“improving their life opportunities”) or the indicators should be adjusted to achieve alignment.</li> <li>To enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning component, incorporate an outcome-level indicator to measure the intended results of this strand, bridging the gap between output and impact levels.</li> </ul>
		Some employed standard indicators do not effectively contribute to progress	Consider incorporating nonstandard indicators with a qualitative dimension to better assess the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define complementary qualitative indicators for key dimensions of JPGE drawing on primary data</li> </ul>

		<p>monitoring, given that the underlying data source is only updated after various years.</p>	<p>quality of change and enable more specific monitoring and programme steering based on results.</p>	<p>collection from intervention schools.</p>
		<p>Some indicators lack clear definitions, resulting in varied interpretations among stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Priority 2:</b> It is essential to precisely operationalise and define all dimensions of indicators, such as the "minimum package."</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for exit strategy / handover to governmental partner</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The indicator reference manual should be revised to include agreed definitions of all dimensions of the KPI and outcome indicators.</li> <li>• Clear data collection methods, tools and milestones should be defined for all indicators to allow for unified monitoring.</li> <li>• To achieve this, an externally moderated indicator workshop with all UN agencies should be considered.</li> </ul>
<p><b>JPGE (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA)</b></p>	<p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>Monitoring predominantly focuses on activity and low-output metrics (such as the number of persons reached) rather than the results level.</p>	<p><b>Priority 3:</b> Enhance monitoring practices by adopting a results-based perspective, moving beyond mere reporting of the number of persons reached. Integrate data from all three UN agencies into one joint monitoring process to be able to identify gaps and facilitate evidence-based programme steering.</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for exit strategy / handover to governmental partner</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme should consider introducing a joint results-based monitoring system which all three implementing UN agencies contribute to.</li> <li>• Mechanisms to prevent double counting of beneficiaries at the intervention schools should be explored and implemented.</li> <li>• Results-based monitoring should be strengthened across all relevant level (school, district and EMIS level).</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A joint vision of the programme in monitoring and frequent exchange meetings should be fostered among M&amp;E officers.</li> </ul>
		Monitoring activities are carried out independently by each agency, with infrequent exchanges on progress among UN agencies.	Increased coordination meetings are essential for monitoring across agencies, fostering harmonised implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish frequent coordination meetings as well as joint monitoring visits among WFP, UNFPA and UNICEF M&amp;E officers.</li> </ul>
<b>JPGE (WFP)</b>	<b>Nutritious school meals</b>	Most visited schools appeared to offer diverse school meals. However, vegetables and fruit were usually missing.	<p>Encouraging the promotion of school and community gardens, as foreseen by WFP, is recommended. While they will not suffice to address the nutritional needs of learners, they can be integrated into school lessons and serve as pilot gardens for replication by learners at home.</p> <p>Learners should then be encouraged to bring vegetables and fruits to school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement more school gardens at targeted schools.</li> <li>• Integrate school gardens into classes.</li> <li>• Encourage learners to implement home gardens and bring vegetables and fruit to school to be added to the school meals.</li> </ul>
<b>JPGE (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA)</b>	<b>WASH</b>	Improved WASH practices are partially undermined by insufficient WASH infrastructure at schools.	<b>Priority 5:</b> During the remaining project period, it is crucial to prioritise the establishment / rehabilitation of proper WASH infrastructure in all schools. This includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of latrines wherever needed.</li> <li>• Provision of boreholes (for WASH activities and the preparation of school meals) if they are dysfunctional / far</li> </ul>

			<p>ensuring easy access to water and providing / rehabilitating facilities such as latrines and change rooms wherever needed.</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for exit strategy</i></p>	<p>away from school premises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation of change rooms that are no longer functional.</li> <li>• Provision of sufficient stocks of soap.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Detrimental gender stereotypes around SRHR, such as beliefs that "girls will never bear children or not be good in bed if they take family planning measures," persist in target schools and surrounding communities.</b></p>	<p><b>SRHR</b></p>	<p>There is still sensitivity around SRHR topics at schools, as indicated by reports of "illegal" provision of contraceptives on school premises by district health workers and the fact that teenage pregnancies yet occur. It is imperative to intensify efforts to address the root causes of these issues.</p>	<p><b>Priority 6:</b> Low-threshold services, such as mobile clinics, should be further supported and intensified to ensure easy access to information and contraceptives when needed.</p>	
			<p>Intensified capacity building and awareness raising (learners, teachers and surrounding communities) is needed to address persistent detrimental beliefs around SRHR and family planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide capacity building on comprehensive sexual education (CSE) for teachers to enhance their knowledge and effectiveness.</li> <li>• Conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) for health facilities, including mentorship, to strengthen multiplication efforts. Emphasise technical cooperation over financial cooperation</li> </ul>

				for sustainability, prioritising the development of capacitated individuals.
		There is a lack of information on SRHR for learners with disabilities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure inclusivity by considering the needs of people with special needs in the districts. Adapt informative documents targeting them to be barrier-free and provide disability-friendly facilities.</li> <li>• Foster the delivery of the <i>Break the Silence</i> package.</li> </ul>
<b>JPGE (UNFPA)</b>	<b>Alternative learning programme</b>	There is a lack of awareness around the alternative learning programme in the target groups, undermining its potential effectiveness.	<p><b>Priority 7:</b> To enhance the impact of the alternative learning component among out-of-school children and supporting stakeholders, increased awareness is imperative. This entails targeted awareness campaigns for mother groups, parents, and the broader community.</p> <p>Leveraging existing community-based and NGO-driven alternative learning programs is essential to share knowledge and experiences, fostering a seamless transition and sustainability beyond the project period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and further engage with community-based and NGO-driven alternative learning programs already operating in certain areas. Establish partnerships to share best practices, resources, and experiences, ensuring a more comprehensive and effective intervention.</li> <li>• Increase awareness campaigns in collaboration with community leaders, emphasising the benefits of the alternative learning programmes and encouraging enrolment of out-of-school children.</li> <li>• Organise training sessions for mother groups, parents, and</li> </ul>

			→ <i>Relevant for <b>exit strategy</b> / handover to non-governmental partners</i>	other supporting stakeholders to familiarize them with the alternative learning approach, its objectives, and strategies for continued support beyond the project duration.
<b>Ministry of Education (JPGE)</b>	<b>Capacitation of teachers</b>	Training / Training of Trainers at schools is unsustainable due to frequent teacher rotation and a lack of effective knowledge management / knowledge handover systems at schools.	It is recommended to implement a comprehensive knowledge management and handover system at Malawian primary schools, incorporating effective strategies, such as, time overlaps between outgoing and incoming teachers. This approach ensures a seamless transfer of knowledge and expertise, mitigating the impact of frequent teacher rotations on the sustainability of training initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of the current rotation mechanism.</li> <li>• Revision and improvement of knowledge retention / management / handover practices at primary schools.</li> <li>• Develop standardised training materials and documentation that can be easily passed on to incoming teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>JPGE (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA)</b>	<b>Sustainability / Phasing out</b>	Sustainability prospects greatly hinge on the extent to which stakeholders carry results forward. Results are not expected to be sustainable without further support.	<p>It is recommended to: Identify and engage potential partners to continue key interventions.</p> <p>Provide timely communication to schools about the programme's continuity or phasing out.</p> <p>If JPGE is discontinued, ensure a well-planned phase-out period, avoiding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify organisations and entities interested and capable of continuing key interventions (e.g. the recently started MERP and the Spotlight Initiative, as well as grassroots organisations to carry forward the alternative learning programme).</li> </ul>

			<p>disruptions in the middle of a school year or term.</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for <b>exit strategy</b></i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a communication plan with clear timelines for informing schools about the program's future.</li> <li>• Develop a phased exit strategy that considers the academic calendar and avoids disruptions.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Priority 4:</b> It is crucial to assist the Ministry of Education in completing the value-for-money study to identify the optimal school feeding approach for Malawi. Subsequently, the focus should shift to aiding the government in allocating funds strategically to sustain school feeding, extending the initiative beyond JPGE schools to encompass the entire nation.</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for <b>exit strategy</b> / handover to governmental partner</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate a comprehensive information strategy for the integrated approach to raise awareness and garner support from government officials.</li> </ul>
		<p>It is crucial to build governmental capacities and ownership to further support and finance crucial programme interventions, thereby ensuring</p>	<p>Enhance awareness and national visibility to ensure more active governmental support.</p> <p>The project should disseminate insights gained from its approach and coordination and from</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of district officers on how to source funds for post-project sustainability.</li> <li>• Enhance coordination at the district level for effective information and knowledge</li> </ul>

		scalability and sustainability.	<p>scaling up to other districts by sharing lessons learned through a centralised platform or regular progress meetings.</p> <p>Prioritise capacity building for government officials, ensuring comprehensive awareness of the programme and enhancing national coordination to address challenges posed by staff turnover.</p> <p>→ <i>Relevant for <b>exit strategy</b> / handover to governmental partner</i></p>	<p>sharing. Involve government representatives to foster governmental ownership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a review meeting with all stakeholders to jointly discuss challenges and plan the programme interventions' future trajectory.</li> </ul>
<b>Ministry of Education (JPGE)</b>	<b>Sustainability / Phasing out</b>	It is important for the government of Malawi (MoE) to allocate sufficient funds and ensure adequate structures for a continuation and maintenance of key components, particularly the health and the school feeding components.	<p>The government of Malawi should invest efforts into the completion of the ongoing value-for-money study to identify the optimal school feeding approach for Malawi.</p> <p>Subsequently, sufficient budgetary resources should be allocated to sustain and scale-up successful components of the JPGE, particularly the school feeding and the health components.</p>	

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# ANNEX 1: EVALUATION MATRIX

<b>OECD-DAC Criterion Relevance - Is the intervention doing the right things?</b> The 'relevance' criterion focuses on the intervention's design. It refers to the extent to which the objectives and design of a development intervention are consistent with the (global, country and institution-specific) requirements, needs, priorities and policies of beneficiaries and stakeholders (individuals, groups, organisations, and development partners). It also identifies the ability of the intervention's design to adapt to a change in circumstances. "Relevance" is assessed in relation to 1) the <b>time of the intervention design</b> <sup>1</sup> and 2) from <b>today's perspective</b> <sup>2</sup> .			
Assessment dimensions	Evaluation questions	Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators	Evaluation Design and empirical methods
<b>Alignment with policies and priorities</b>	To what extent are programme objectives relevant to the education context and aligned to government priorities and policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Orientation at country education strategies and sector concepts</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategic reference framework for the project (e.g., national, regional and international strategies, sectoral and cross-sectoral change strategies, in bilateral projects especially partner strategies, internal analytical framework)</i></li> <li>• <i>Orientation of the project design at the (national) objectives of Agenda 2030</i></li> <li>• <i>Project contribution to certain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</i></li> <li>• <i>Explanation of a hierarchy of the different policies, priorities (especially in case of contradictions)</i></li> </ul>	Document review and criteria-led analysis

<b>Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders</b>	To what extent did the programme identify the needs of girls and adolescent girls and boys (especially the most vulnerable) and the relevant barriers to girls' and boys' education in Malawi?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consideration of stakeholders such as civil society and private sector in the design of the measure</i></li> <li>• <i>Operational Plan</i></li> <li>• <i>Reaching particularly disadvantaged groups (in terms of Leave No One Behind, LNOB)</i></li> <li>• <i>Consideration of potential for human rights and gender aspects</i></li> <li>• <i>Consideration of identified risks</i></li> </ul>	Document analysis, Interviews and focus group discussion
<b>Appropriateness of the design</b>	How useful are the project's performance indicators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Realistic project goal from today's perspective and in view of the available resources (time, finances, partner capacities)</i></li> <li>• <i>Consideration of potential changes in the framework conditions</i></li> <li>• <i>Dealing with the complexity of framework conditions and strategic reference frameworks and with possible overloading</i></li> <li>• <i>Adequacy of activities, instruments and outputs in relation to the project objective to be achieved</i></li> </ul>	Document analysis, indicator analysis, interviews

**OECD-DAC Criterion Coherence - How well does the intervention fit?**

This criterion refers to the intervention's compatibility with other interventions in a country, sector or institution as well as with international norms and standards. **Internal coherence** addresses the synergies and division of tasks between the intervention and other interventions of German development cooperation and also the intervention's consistency with the relevant international norms and standards to which German development cooperation adheres. **External coherence** considers the intervention's complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with the interventions of other partners, donors and international organisations. The "coherence" criterion relates both to the intervention's design as well as to the results it achieves.

Assessment dimensions	Evaluation questions	Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators	Evaluation Design and empirical methods
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<b>Internal coherence</b>	How well does the JPGE-III fit into the national policies, government priorities and norms of UNICEF in Malawi?	<i>Cooperation among UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA</i>	Document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions
	How good are the synergies and interlinkages among the JPGE-III partners (both UN and government) on this and other related programmes? (Were the various internal and external coordination mechanisms established relevant to the specifics of JPGE? What are the major challenges of coordination and why among the partners? Are there aspects of the JPGE that conflict with other UNICEF programmes?)		

<b>External coherence</b>	What is the role and relationship of the JPGE_III with other actors' interventions? What is the extent of partnership, coordination, and complementarity with the interventions of the Malawi government and other relevant actors? Are there aspects of the operation that conflict with the interventions of or one-UN programming or other actors?	<i>Cooperation and coordination between the three implementing agencies (UNICEF/WFP/UNFPA) and Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, Ministry of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water development, Ministry of Industry and Trade; Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, and District Councils situated under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.</i>	Document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions
	What were the strengths and gaps in achieving coherence and adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?		

**Effectiveness - Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**

'Effectiveness' refers to the extent to which the intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives (at outcome level), including any differential results across beneficiary and stakeholder groups. It examines the achievement of objectives in terms of the direct, short-term and medium term results.

<b>Assessment dimensions</b>	<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation Design and empirical methods</b>
<b>Achievement of the (intended) objectives</b>	Are the current interventions reaching the intended target?	<i>Indicators</i>	Monitoring data, interviews, survey

<b>Contribution to achievement of objectives</b>	To what extent have the project's action so far contributed to improving the quality of education for school aged girls, boys, and adolescents (objective)? <i>(originally: impact)</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	Inductive contribution analysis with mixed methods
	To what extent are key interventions contributing to achieving planned outcome results?		
	How many children, including adolescents, girls and boys, and children with disabilities, have benefitted (and in what way) so far? <i>(originally: impact)</i>		
	What are the major constraints so far?		
<b>Unintended results</b>	Are unanticipated events and outcomes being sufficiently tracked?	<i>Risk monitoring through MEL structure</i>	Interviews

**OECD-DAC Criterion Impact (higher-level development results) - What difference does the intervention make?**

Based on recognisable higher-level development changes (at impact level), the criterion of "higher level development results (at impact level)" relates to the extent to which the intervention has already produced significant positive or negative, intended or unintended results at the overarching level (contributions to the observed changes), or is expected to do so in the future. This includes any differential results across different stakeholders and beneficiaries. This criterion refers to the results of the development intervention.

<b>Assessment dimensions</b>	<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation Design and empirical methods</b>
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<b>Higher-level (intended) development changes<sup>1</sup></b>	To what extent has the JPGE III impacted access to quality and inclusive education?	<i>Indicators, impact evaluation</i>	Quasi-experimental analysis; qualitative triangulation; most significant change
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**OECD-DAC Criterion Efficiency - How well are resources being used?**

This criterion describes the extent to which the intervention delivers results in an economic and timely way (relationship between input and output, outcome and impact level). The evaluation dimension “**production efficiency**” refers to the appropriateness of the relationship between inputs and outputs. The evaluation dimension “**allocation efficiency**” refers to the appropriateness of the relationship between the inputs and the results achieved (project/development objective; outcome/impact level) by the intervention. The "efficiency" criterion relates both to the intervention’s design and implementation and to the results it achieves.

<b>Assessment dimensions</b>	<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation Design and empirical methods</b>
<b>Production efficiency</b>	Have the programme activities been executed on time, in expected quantity and quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Analysis of approaches and activities as well as technical cooperation instruments (personnel instruments, financing, materials and equipment) compared to possible alternatives with a focus on the minimum principle (use of comparative data if available)</i></li> <li>• <i>The project is oriented on internal or external benchmarks in order to achieve its effects economically</i></li> <li>• <i>Regular reflection of the resources used by the project with focus on economically use of resources and cost risks</i></li> <li>• <i>The overarching costs of the project are in an appropriate proportion to the costs of the outputs</i></li> </ul>	Interview with project management and team, document analysis.

<b>Allocation efficiency</b>	Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the intended outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Analysis of approaches and activities as well as technical cooperation-instruments in comparison to possible alternatives with focus on minimum principle (use of comparative data if available)</i></li> <li>• <i>Regular reflection in the project of the input-outcome relation and alternatives as well as cost risks</i></li> <li>• <i>The partner contributions are proportionate to the costs for the outcome of the project</i></li> </ul>	Interviews and document analysis
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<b>OECD-DAC Criterion Sustainability - Will the benefits last?</b>			
The 'sustainability' criterion relates to continued long-term benefits (at the outcome and impact level) or the probability of continued long-term benefits – taking into account observed or foreseeable risks – over time, particularly after assistance has ended.			
<b>Assessment dimensions</b>	<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Basis for Assessment / Evaluation indicators</b>	<b>Evaluation Design and empirical methods</b>
<b>Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities</b>	How effectively has the JPGE III programme built national ownership and capacity?	<i>Project documentation, stakeholder collaboration, intervention activities and outputs</i>	Interviews, survey, contribution analysis
<b>Durability of results over time</b>	How conducive is the political, economic, and social environment to continue with the program results so far?	<i>Project documentation, stakeholder collaboration, intervention activities and outputs</i>	Interviews
	To what extent can the benefits of the programme continue after JPGE III funding ceases?		

# ANNEX 2: CONSENT FORMS

## Informed Consent – FGD: Adult learners

Hello, my name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. UN organisations like UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA, along with the Malawian Government, want my team and me to gather information to check how well the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE) is doing. The JPGE is all about making sure that girls and boys can go to good schools and learn together without any problems. We're going to look at what the JPGE has done so far and see if it's going the right way. If we find anything that needs to be fixed, we'll suggest ways to make it better for the rest of the project.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves a focus group discussion about your experiences with the programme to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The focus group discussion will take you about an hour to complete.

You don't have to join in if you don't want to. It's totally fine. And if you start but change your mind later, that's okay too. You can stop anytime you like. If you decide to be part of it, you don't have to answer any question if you don't want to, and you can stop whenever you want. Being a part of the discussion or not won't change anything about the help you get. If you do want to join, please just tell us what you really feel and think so we can understand better. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. If you don't understand something, just ask us to explain.

We will never tell anyone else what you say or that you joined our discussion. Our team leader will save the information. Nobody outside the team will have access to it. And once we are done with the study, we will destroy any information. Please, don't talk also about our conversation with anyone outside the group if you decide to join.

Being in this study might not help you directly, but it could help others. Your answers might make the program better for everyone. We promise to be respectful and consider your thoughts and where you come from. If you ever feel uncomfortable or don't want to answer a question, that's okay. You can leave without any problems. There won't be any extra risks for you in this study.

Before you say yes or no to joining, we would like to answer any questions you may have. Therefore, you may contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns before the start of the focus group discussion.

Do you understand the context of this discussion, and do you want to join?

Yes  No

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Name

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Date and signature

## Informed Consent – FGD: Learners (minors)

Hello, my name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. UN organisations like UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA, along with the Malawian Government, want my team and me to gather information to check how well the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE) is doing. The JPGE is all about making sure that girls and boys can go to good schools and learn together without any problems. We're going to look at what the JPGE has done so far and see if it's going the right way. If we find anything that needs to be fixed, we'll suggest ways to make it better for the rest of the project.

We would very much appreciate your child's participation in this evaluation. Your child's participation involves a focus group discussion about their experiences with the programme to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Their contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The focus group discussion will take them about an hour to complete.

Your child doesn't have to join in if they don't want to. It's totally fine. And if they start but change their mind later, that's okay, too. If they decide to be part of it, they don't have to answer any question if they don't want to, and they can stop whenever they want. Being a part of the discussion or not won't change anything about the help they get. If they do want to join, please ask them to just tell us what they really feel and think so we can understand better. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. If they don't understand anything that is discussed, they can ask us, and we can explain to them.

We will never tell anyone else what your child says or that they joined our discussion. Our team leader will save the information. Nobody outside the team will have access to it. And once we are done with the study, we will destroy any information. Please, tell your child to also not talk about our conversation with anyone outside the group if they decide to join.

Being in this study might not help your child directly, but it could help others. Your child's answers might make the program better for everyone. We promise to be respectful and consider their thoughts and where they come from. If they ever feel uncomfortable or don't want to answer a question, that's okay. They can leave anytime without any problems. There won't be any extra risks for them in this study.

Before you say yes or no to your child joining, we would like to answer any questions you or your child may have. Therefore, you may contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns before the start of the focus group discussion. Do you understand the context of this discussion, and do you agree to your child joining?

Yes

No

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Informed Consent – FGD: Formerly out-of-school learners (adult)

Hello, my name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. UN organisations like UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA, along with the Malawian Government, want my team and me to gather information to check how well the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE) is doing. The JPGE is all about making sure that girls and boys can go to good schools and learn together without any problems. We're going to look at what the JPGE has done so far and see if it's going the right way. If we find anything that needs to be fixed, we'll suggest ways to make it better for the rest of the project.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves a focus group discussion about your experiences with the programme to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The focus group discussion will take you about an hour to complete.

You don't have to join in if you don't want to. It's totally fine. And if you start but change your mind later, that's okay too. You can stop anytime you like. If you decide to be part of it, you don't have to answer any question if you don't want to, and you can stop whenever you want. Being a part of the discussion or not won't change anything about the help you get. If you do want to join, please just tell us what you really feel and think so we can understand better. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. If you don't understand something, just ask us to explain.

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Being in this study might not help you directly, but it could help others. Your answers might make the program better for everyone. We promise to be respectful and consider your thoughts and where you come from. If you ever feel uncomfortable or don't want to answer a question, that's okay. You can leave without any problems. There won't be any extra risks for you in this study.

Before you say yes or no to joining, we would like to answer any questions you may have. Therefore, you may contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns before the start of the focus group discussion.

Do you understand the context of this discussion, and do you want to join?

Yes  No

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Name

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Date and signature

## Informed Consent – FGD: Former out-of-school children (minors)

Hello, my name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. UN organisations like UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA, along with the Malawian Government, want my team and me to gather information to check how well the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE) is doing. The JPGE is all about making sure that girls and boys can go to good schools and learn together without any problems. We're going to look at what the JPGE has done so far and see if it's going the right way. If we find anything that needs to be fixed, we'll suggest ways to make it better for the rest of the project.

We would very much appreciate your child's participation in this evaluation. Your child's participation involves a focus group discussion about their experiences with the programme to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Their contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The focus group discussion will take them about an hour to complete.

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Do you understand the context of this discussion, and do you agree to your child joining?

Yes  No

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Name

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Date and signature

## Informed Consent – FGD: Parents/caregivers

Hello, my name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting.

UN organisations like UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA, along with the Malawian Government, want my team and me to gather information to check how well the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE) is doing. The JPGE is all about making sure that girls and boys can go to good schools and learn together without any problems. We're going to look at what the JPGE has done so far and see if it's going the right way. If we find anything that needs to be fixed, we'll suggest ways to make it better for the rest of the project. We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves a focus group discussion about your experiences with the programme to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The focus group discussion will take you about an hour to complete.

You don't have to join in if you don't want to. It's totally fine. And if you start but change your mind later, that's okay too. You can stop anytime you like. If you decide to be part of it, you don't have to answer any question if you don't want to, and you can stop whenever you want. Being a part of the discussion or not won't change anything about the help you get. If you do want to join, please just tell us what you really feel and think so we can understand better. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. If you don't understand something, just ask us to explain.

We will never tell anyone else what you say or that you joined our discussion. Our team leader will save the information. Nobody outside the team will have access to it. And once we are done with the study, we will destroy any information. Please, don't talk also about our conversation with anyone outside the group if you decide to join.

Being in this study might not help you directly, but it could help others. Your answers might make the program better for everyone. We promise to be respectful and consider your thoughts and where you come from. If you ever feel uncomfortable or don't want to answer a question, that's okay. You can leave without any problems. There won't be any extra risks for you in this study.

Before you say yes or no to joining, we would like to answer any questions you may have. Therefore, you may contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns before the start of the focus group discussion.

Do you understand the context of this discussion, and do you want to join?

Yes  No

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Name of under-aged child

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Date and signature

## Informed Consent – KII: Head Teachers

My name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA) and the Malawian Government have asked me and my team to collect data for a mid-term and impact evaluation of the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE). The goal of the Programme is to address barriers to access to quality education for girls and boys and ensure achievement of inclusive and equitable access to education. This evaluation aims to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining timeline of the project implementation in phase III.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves an interview about your experiences with JPGE III measures to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The interview will take you about 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in the study, it is OK. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that is OK, too. You can stop at any time. If you agree to participate, you can decide not to answer any question and can stop at any time. Your decision about whether to participate in this study or to answer any specific questions will in no way affect any services that you receive. If you do choose to participate, we ask you to answer the questions honestly and openly so that we can understand your experience and find out what you really think and have experienced. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we ask. If something is unclear, you can ask us at any time to repeat or rephrase a question.

The information you provide will be strictly confidential and never connected to you. Other people will not know if you are in this study or what you have said. We will put information we learn from you together with information we learn from other people in the study. No one will be able to tell what information came from you. When we tell other people about this research, we will never use your name, and no one will ever know what answers you gave. Only a few researchers will have access to this information, and all information will be stored safely and destroyed under the care of the lead researcher.

The participation in this study may not benefit you directly, but it may benefit others, as your responses may improve the effectiveness of the program in improving inclusive and equitable access to quality education. The evaluation will be conducted with integrity and will be respectful of you, your individual views, cultures, and diverse contributions. However, if you feel uncomfortable during the interview, or with any of the questions, you do not have to answer them, and you can decide to leave the interview without any negative consequences. There are no further risks for you in this study.

Before you say yes or no to being in this study, we will answer any questions you may have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. You may also contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your support! Your contribution is very important to us. Do you confirm that you understand the context of this survey and that you want to take part in it?

Yes  No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Informed Consent – Project team

My name is Dr. Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. As you might be aware, UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA) and the Malawian Government have asked me and my team to collect data for a mid-term and impact evaluation of the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE). The goal of the Programme is to address barriers to access to quality education for girls and boys and ensure achievement of inclusive and equitable access to education. This evaluation aims to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining timeline of the project implementation in phase III.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves an interview about your experiences with JPGE III measures to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The interview will take you about 60 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in the study, it is OK. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that is OK, too. You can stop at any time. If you agree to participate, you can decide not to answer any question and can stop at any time. Your decision about whether to participate in this study or to answer any specific questions will in no way affect any services that you receive. If you do choose to participate, we ask you to answer the questions honestly and openly so that we can understand your experience and find out what you really think and have experienced. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we ask. If something is unclear, you can ask us at any time to repeat or rephrase a question.

The information you provide will be strictly confidential and never connected to you. Other people will not know if you are in this study or what you have said. We will put information we learn from you together with information we learn from other people in the study. No one will be able to tell what information came from you. When we tell other people about this research, we will never use your name, and no one will ever know what answers you gave. Only a few researchers will have access to this information, and all information will be stored safely and destroyed under the care of the lead researcher.

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Before you say yes or no to being in this study, we will answer any questions you may have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. You may also contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your support! Your contribution is very important to us. Do you confirm that you understand the context of this survey and that you want to take part in it?

Yes  No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Informed Consent – Project team/Political partner

My name is Dr. Heribert Damoser-Kuhn, and I work with Mainlevel Consulting. As you might be aware, UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA) and the Malawian Government have asked me and my colleagues to collect data for a mid-term and impact evaluation of the Joint Programme for Girls' Education (JPGE). The goal of the Programme is to address barriers to access to quality education for girls and boys and ensure achievement of inclusive and equitable access to education. This evaluation aims to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining timeline of the project implementation in phase III.

We would very much appreciate your participation in this evaluation. Your participation involves an interview about your experiences with JPGE III measures to improve inclusive and equitable access to quality education for girls and boys. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated in order to better understand the effects of the programme and draw lessons for the future. The interview will take you about 60 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in the study, it is OK. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that is OK, too. If you agree to participate, you can decide not to answer any question or stop at any time. Your decision about whether to participate in this study or to answer any specific questions will in no way affect any services that you receive. If you participate, we ask you to answer the questions honestly and openly so that we can understand your experience and find out what you really think and have experienced. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we ask. If something is unclear, you can ask us at any time to repeat or rephrase a question.

The information you provide will be strictly confidential and never connected to you. Other people will not know if you are in this study or what you have said. We will put information we learn from you together with information we learn from other people in the study. No one will be able to tell what information came from you. When we tell other people about this research, we will never use your name, and no one will ever know what answers you gave. Only a few researchers will have access to this information, and all information will be stored safely and destroyed under the care of the lead researcher.

The participation in this study may not benefit you directly, but it may benefit others, as your responses may improve the effectiveness of the program in improving inclusive and equitable access to quality education. The evaluation will be conducted with integrity and will be respectful of you, your individual views, cultures, and diverse contributions. However, if you feel uncomfortable during the interview, or with any of the questions, you do not have to answer them, and you can decide to leave the interview without any negative consequences. There are no further risks for you in this study.

Before you say yes or no to being in this study, we will answer any questions you may have at any time during the study. You may also contact my colleague Viola Kaufmann ([viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de](mailto:viola.kaufmann@mainlevel.de)) if you have any questions or concerns. Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your support! Your contribution is very important to us. Do you confirm that you understand the context of this survey and that you want to take part in it?

Yes  No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# ANNEX 3: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

*Generic Guideline, adapted to each interview partner (semi-structured interviews)*

**Name of interviewer:**

**Date:**

**Stakeholder(s) – Name/position (gender):**

## Relevance

1. Government, (UNICEF): In your perception, how well does the JPGE-III fit into the national policies and government priorities in Malawi? Please specify. (Probe UNICEF: norms of UNICEF)

2. All: In your perception, what are the crucial barriers that girls (and boys) face in accessing education in Malawi? To what extent does the project tackle those?

3. Project team: Project indicators are meant to support the project team in tracking progress towards the project goal over time. How useful do you find the defined indicators? What is challenging?

## Coherence

### *Internal*

4. **Government:** How well does the coordination among UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA work? (Probe: Are there any challenges?)

**Project team:** How do you perceive the collaboration with the other UN agencies involved? What is working well, what is challenging? (Probe: Internal coordination mechanisms established?)

5. **Project team:** To what extent does JPGE III complement the overall project portfolio at UNICEF / WFP / UNFPA? (Probe: Are there any conflicts?)

### *External*

6. All: To what extent would you say that JPGE III complements other projects (by other organisations) in Development Cooperation in Malawi? (Please specify donors and projects. Probe: Has the project made use of synergies? Is there an exchange between projects and a tangible desire for mutual learning? Are there duplications of effort?)

7. **Project team:** Are there any aspects of the intervention that challenges/conflicts with the interventions of either of UN programmes or other actors?

8. **Government:** In your perception, to what extent does the project complement (your) own efforts of (as) the political partner?

### Effectiveness

9. **All:** To what extent do you believe that JPGE III is on track to achieve its objectives? [Probe: Objective: School-aged children (esp. most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education, improving their life opportunities] (Probe: What are factors of success? What are bottlenecks that hinder reaching the objective?)

10. **All:** Are you aware of any unintended results (positive or negative) that have occurred because of the project? (Probe: are they systematically monitored?)

### Impact

11. **All:** To what extent has JPGE III contributed / has a potential to contribute to an improved access to quality and inclusive education for school-aged children? (Please explain!)

### Efficiency

12. **All:** Have project activities been implemented on time, in expected quality and quantity? Please elaborate. (Probe: Covid-19)

13. **All:** To what extent would you say that the project has been implemented efficiently? (Probe: Do you see room for a yet more efficient transformation of inputs into tangible results?)

14. **Gov partners:** To what extent has the project planning been participatory?

15. **Gov partners:** Were decision-making processes transparent and relevant decisions communicated in a timely manner?

16. **Gov partners:** Were roles and responsibilities clearly defined (in a written manner)?

17. **Gov partners:** Were there any tasks forces / regular working groups / committees established between the project and governmental partners?

18. **Project team:** To what extent was monitoring data used for project steering?  
(Probe: Regular reflection of the resources used by the project with focus on economically use of resources and cost risks, the input-outcome relation, and alternatives)

19. **Project team:** To what extent would you say that the costs of the project are in appropriate proportion to the achieved outputs to date? (Probe: Would there have been room for a better allocation of funds, leading to more results?)

20. **Project team:** Which learnings could be used from the predecessor projects?

### **Sustainability**

21. **All:** To what extent do you feel that key results of the project will last once the project phases out? What are risks to sustainability of results? (Probe: to what extent will the government have funds and capacities to continue the results and structures?)

22. **All:** What needs to happen (during the remaining project phase) to ensure that results last?  
(Prerequisites for sustainability)

### Remaining project phase

23. **All:** Do you have any recommendations for the remaining project period? (Probe: adaptations of the project setup / strategy to ensure that outcomes can be maximized)

24. **All:** Are any additional measures required to ensure that programme partners (UN agencies, implementing agencies, governmental partners) have the required capacities to successfully implement the project during the remaining project period?

## ANNEX 4: LIST OF SITE VISITS

Day	Date		Name of Headteacher or school focal person	Contact for Headteachers or focal person	Team 2 (Dedza & Mangochi)	Name of Headteacher or school focal person	Contact for Headteachers/focal person
		<b>Salima District</b>			<b>Dedza District</b>		
1	Oct 16	Chimbwira (500375)			Bolera (500041)		
		Chimbalanga (500358)			Chikololere (500271)		
2	Oct 17	Chipoka 1 (504197)			Chigwenembe (503393)		
		Chipoka 2 (500491)			Chimbiya (500367)		
3	Oct 18	Katlera (503500)			Kapiri (501067)		
		Mthunthama (501398)			Kaundu (501188)		
4	Oct 19	Kapira (501063)			Bondo (500047)		
		Demera (500633)			Chinkhumbe (500441)		
5	Oct 20	Mchoka (501722)			Mtakataka CCAP (503622)		
		Mkhula (503063)			Mtakataka Police (502045)		
Weekend Oct 21/22							
		<b>Kasungu District</b>	<b>Name of Headteacher or school focal person</b>	<b>Contact for Headteachers or focal person</b>	<b>Mangochi District</b>	<b>Name of Headteacher or school focal person</b>	<b>Contact for Headteachers/focal person</b>
6	Oct 23	Chatoloma (500167)			Chipeleka (500478)		
		Chamakala (500099)			Makumba (503546)		
7	Oct 24	Chipata (500477)			Chisawa (504428)		
		Chisemphere (504124)			Kasolo (503498)		
8	Oct 25	Chisumbu (504120)			Namitambo (504451)		
		Lingadzi (503039)			Nansato (502354)		
9	Oct 26	Kawiya (501226)			Koche Model (501282)		
		Lwangwa (501426)			Makawa (501489)		
10	Oct 27	Kakwale (500857)			kachere (503103)		
		Kapirinyanga (501068)			Kwisimba (503099)		

Note: 2 schools per day for each team

## ANNEX 5: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Interviewed institutions and number of interviewees (names of interviewed representatives not published for privacy reasons):

Institution	Number of interviewees
Primary school head teachers	36 (3f, 33m)
Parents / caregivers	176 (105f, 71m)
Learners	147 (74f, 73m)
Former out-of-school children	98 (54f, 34m)
Ministry of Education, Malawi	4 (0f, 4m)
Ministry of Health, Malawi	1 (0f, 1m)
Malawi Girl Guide Association (MAGGA) - Education	1 (1f, 0m)
Ministry of Agriculture, Malawi	2 (0f, 2m)
World Food Programme	4 (3f, 1m)
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	2 (2f, 0m)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	1 (0f, 1m)
Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM)	1 (0f, 1m)
Banja la Mtsogolo (Marie Stopes) (BLM)	1 (0f, 1m)
<b>Total</b>	<b>474</b>

## ANNEX 6: JPGE III LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Result level	Key Performance Indicators	Disaggregation	Baseline (2020)	Target (year)
<b>Goal</b>				
<b>School aged girls, boys and adolescent (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education improving their life opportunities</b>	Percentage of learners in Grade 7 that attain at least minimum competency in (i) literacy (ii) numeracy, by Sex	Subject and sex	Chichewa: 42.30% (43.90% girls and 40.80%) English: 3.60% (girls 3.60 and 3.50 boys); Mathematics 22.30% (girls 20.70% and 23.90% boys)	Chichewa: 50% (50% for girls, and 49% for boys)  English: 20% (22% for girls and 19% for boys) Mathematics: 31% (30% for girls and 33% for boys) (2024)
	Percentage of primary school-age children enrolled in primary school, by Sex	Sex	90% (87% boys and 92% girls) (EMIS 2018)	93% (90% boys and 97% for girls) (2024)
	Percentage of primary school-age children who dropout during primary school, by Sex	Sex	4.4% (4.6% girls); 4.4% boys (EMIS, 2020)	1.5% for girls, and 2.2 % for boys (2024)
<b>Outcome 1</b>			-	
<b>By 2024, school aged children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, in target areas have access to inclusive quality</b>	1.1 Percentage of children in Standard 8 who passed the national examination in the target areas, by sex	Sex	81.5%: 77% girls; 86% boys; (JPGE II 2020/final report)	85% (78% girls; 88% for boys) (2024)
	1.2 Percentage of children who repeated Standard 5 – 8 in the target areas, by sex	Sex	22.7% (22.7% girls; 22.7% boys) (JPGE II 2020/final report)	27% (25% girls; 29% for boys) (2024)

<b>education, delivered through integrated services in a safe and gender sensitive environment, that enhances learning outcomes</b>	1.3 Percentage of children at last grade of primary who transition to Secondary school in the targeted schools disaggregated by Sex	Sex	41.3% (42% girls; 39.7% boys) (JPGE II 2020/final report)	49% (54% girls; 42% for boys) (2024)
	1.4 Percentage of primary school-age children who dropout during standard 5 - 8 in the target areas, by sex	Sex	6% (6% for girls; 6% boys) (JPGE II 2020/final report)	3.5 % (3.0 % for girls, and 4.0 % for boys) (2024)
	1.5 Percentage of girls enrolled in targeted schools who have fallen pregnant during the school year		tbd	tbd
	1.6 Number of targeted schools providing a minimum package of integrated services (SRHR, health and nutrition, WASH services, diversified nutritious meals)	district	0	199 (2024)
<b>Output 1.1</b>			-	
<b>Teachers in targeted schools have strengthened capacities to provide quality inclusive education through child centred teaching and learning methods</b>	1.1.1 Number of schools meeting minimum National Education Standards (NES) in targeted districts, with a focus on special needs		n/a	60 (2021)
				90 (2022)
				120 (2023)
				169 (2024)
	1.1.2 Number of teachers in targeted districts trained in a) inclusive, GRP, lifeskills, and CSE b) diagnostic assessment and structured pedagogy /remediation in foundational literacy and numeracy	Sex	n/a	1652/289 (2021)
				1652/458 (2022)
				1652/747 (2023)
			(n/a)/916 (2024)	
1.1.3 Number of teachers that have applied diagnostic assessment and	Sex	0	289 (2021)	
			458 (2022)	

	structured pedagogy /remediation in foundational literacy and numeracy			747 (2023)
				916 (2024)
	1.1.4 Number of schools where head teachers have structured mentorship and coaching support to fellow teacher		0	42 (2021)
				84 (2022)
				126 (2023)
				169 (2024)
<b>Output 1.2</b>			-	
<b>Girls and boys in targeted areas demonstrate positive practices and participation to integrated SRHR, safety, health and nutrition services delivered in an inclusive and gender sensitive school environment</b>	1.2.1 Number of schools in target areas with a functioning violence prevention, reporting, referral and follow up mechanisms		166	210 (2021)
				280 (2022)
				350 (2023)
				500 (2024)
	1.2.2 Number of children receiving diversified nutritious school meals, disaggregated by gender	Sex	Girls: 108,174 (51%); Boys: 103,932 (49%)	Girls: 117,000; Boys: 112,000; per year (230,000 per year)
	1.2.3 Number of adolescent girls receiving IFA and albendazole tablets	Sex	141, 460	77,634 (2021)
				78,640 (2022)
				79,442 (2023)
				80,273 (2024)
	1.2.4 Number of adolescent girls and boys participating in ASRH interventions	Sex	0	26,000 children annually
				Girls 14,000
				Boys 12,000
	1.2.5 Number of learners in targeted districts accessing safe water	Sex	TBD	36,000 (2021)
				36,000 (2022)
				34,000 (2023)
				30,000(2024)
Overall:136,000				
Girls:68,000 Boys: 68,000				
1.2.6 Proportion of girls completing 2 doses of HPV dose annually		68%	75% (2021)	
			80% (2022)	
			85% (2023)	
			90% (2024)	

	1.2.7 Percentage of school children in targeted schools with increased knowledge and skills in nutrition (and nutrition related topics e.g. primary health, sanitation and hygiene), sanitation and hygiene knowledge and practices		n/a	<p>≥ 50% of those targeted</p> <p>15 % (2021)</p> <p>35 % (2022)</p> <p>45% (2023)</p> <p>50% (2024)</p>
	1.2.8 Number of children and adolescents reached with life skills and Sexuality education	Sex	0	10,000 annually children/adolescents
<b>Outcome 2</b>			-	
<b>Girls, boys and adolescents out of school are integrated back in schools, have increased access to complementary alternative learning and life skills, Integrated services and are empowered and practice positive behaviours</b>	2.1 Proportion of graduates, especially girls, who completed an alternative learning programme and are enrolled back in formal education	Sex	10% for Functional literacy (FAL) and 0% for CBE	<p>20% of those completing FAL</p> <p>At least 50% of CBE completers</p>
	2.2 Proportion of girls and boys age 10-24 who demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes towards SRHR	Sex	0	Above 80% annually
	2.3 Number and % of girls and boys in target areas enrolled in life skills programme that complete programme	Sex	0	<p>50,000 girls and boys trained</p> <p>1350 mentors recruited and trained</p>

				90% of girls and boys complete all mentorship sessions
<b>Output 2.1</b>			-	
<b>Out of school children and adolescents are enrolled and participate in quality complementary alternative learning and life skills programmes</b>	2.1.1 Number of adolescents that complete quality alternative complementary and skill development programmes	Sex	6000 (2020 enrolment FAL)	4,400 FAL
		Type of programme		10,300 CBE (2021)
			10300 CBE 2020 enrolment	4,400 FAL
				10,300 CBE (2022)
				4,400 FAL
				10,300 CBE (2023)
				10,300 CBE (2024)
<b>Output 2.2</b>			-	
<b>Out of school adolescent girls and boys benefit from increased availability of integrated SRHR, safety, health and nutrition services</b>	2.2.1 Number of health facilities offering a minimum package of services in JPGE districts		0	30
	2.2.2 Number of adolescent girls and boys accessing comprehensive youth friendly health services in health facilities	Sex	0	10,000 adolescents annually
				5,000 boys
				5,000 girls
2.2.3 Number of community based YHFS and SRHR trainers trained in targeted districts	Sex	0	270 annually	
2.2.4 Number of girls and boys in targeted districts reached with quarterly outreach and mobile clinics on SRHR and YHFS services	Sex	0	50,000 annually	

	2.2.5 Number of out of school adolescent girls receiving comprehensive adolescent nutrition package (IFA supplementation and deworming, promotion of dietary diversification, promotion of intake of fortified foods)		23.028	7,300 (2021)
				7,300 (2022)
				7,300 (2023)
				7,300 (2024)
<b>Outcome 3</b>			-	
<b>Communities, parents and education stakeholders demonstrate increased investment and support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out-of-school</b>	3.1 Number of districts with revised district education plan aligned to NESIP (2020 -2030) as part of the overall district plans.		n/a	4
	3.2 Proportion of parents, caregiver and stakeholders understanding and promoting enrolment of girls in education		n/a	Overall: 75%
				11% (2021)
				30% (2022)
				52% (2023)
	3.3 Number of parents with capacities and skills to provide support to learning for school going children, especially those with disabilities and special education needs		n/a	75% (2024)
				Overall: 5100
				1020 (2021)
				1632 (2022)
				1347 (2023)
			1101 (2024)	
3.4 Percentage of targeted smallholders selling through programme-supported farmer aggregation systems	Sex	TBD	TBD	
<b>Output 3.1</b>			-	
<b>Parents, guardians and key figures in</b>	3.1.1 Number of people reached with education, health	Sex	0	Overall: 70,000

<b>the communities are engaged as champions to support girls' and boys' access to education, life skills, and integrated safety, SRHR, and nutrition services</b>	and nutrition, SRHR, GBV messages through the implementation of a joint Social Behavior Change Communication strategy SBCC messages			10,000 (2021)
				20,000 (2022)
				30,000 (2023)
				10,000 (2024)
	3.1.2 Number of parents/guardians and children reached with integrated comprehensive parent child communication programme	Sex	0	40,000 parents/guardians annually and 50,000 children annually
	3.1.3 Number of smallholder farmers supported or trained	Sex	13.284	15,600 each year (52% female, 48% male)
<b>Output 3.2</b>			-	
<b>National and local institutions adopt and mainstream the integrated JPGE model into the wider policy and strategic framework to ensure scalability and sustainability of the project</b>	3.2.1 Number of adopted guidelines/standards /policy changes facilitating the integration of the JPGE model in national implementation framework		-	Inclusive Education (IE) policy
				School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Policy review
				YFHS Policy
				MHM standards
	3.2.2 Number of plans that support the implementation of the JPGE model at national and local level are in place		0	3 (1 phased roadmap for incorporating integrated model into policy implementation; 1 School Health and Nutrition Strategic plan reviewed; 1 school feeding operational plan with costing)

# ANNEX 7: TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1: SUMMARY

<b>Type of Contract</b>	Institutional Contract
<b>Description of Services</b>	Mid-term evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education- III
<b>Purpose</b>	To examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining two years of project implementation.
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess the impact, sustainability, coherence and relevance of the programme, including the inclusion of gender and human rights.</li> <li>2. Assess if project outputs are being delivered in the most efficient and effective way- i.e. whether programme management and communication arrangements are efficient, and whether the outputs are likely to lead to intended outcomes or if a different strategy is required.</li> <li>3. Test the quality of the results framework to inform the joint programme implementation team on the status of planned milestones based on observed findings.</li> </ol>
<b>Location/duty station</b>	Lilongwe (with some travel to the field)
<b>Expected Start Date</b>	03 April 2023
<b>Expected End Date</b>	31 August 2023
<b>Duration</b>	Five months
<b>Expected Budget</b>	US\$
<b>Reporting to</b>	Mussarrat Youssuf, Chief, REKM Section
<b>Budget Code/ WBS No</b>	<b>WBS:</b> 2690/A0/06/880/004/003
<b>Grant:</b>	SC200918

## 2: BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

#### Context

According to the Malawi's National Education Investment Plan (NESIP 2020), learners with special educational needs, orphans and other vulnerable children, and girls remain marginalized in terms of equitable access to quality education contrary to the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 which aims to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Inclusive Education (IE) and Gender are crosscutting issues affecting all levels of education. To comprehensively address IE, orphans, and vulnerable children and girls' education issues, the Ministry of Education developed and implemented the IE Strategy, National Girls Education Strategy and Re-Admission Policy. This has demonstrated that the Government of Malawi is committed to ensure that girls and boys realize their rights to quality, inclusive and equitable education, and acquire life skills so that they become more productive and innovative, and attain their full potential. Despite this, the realization of the right to education is a challenge.

The rise in population of school-age children and the expansion of the education system has been steady and dramatic (NESIP 2020). The drain on resources is not just recent; but has been a factor for the education system for a long time. As of 2022, there were 4,943,633 learners (2,525,257 girls) in primary school (EMIS, 2022). The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) was at 88 per cent, two per cent lower than 2018 but like 2020. The dropout proportion for primary was 4.7 per cent (4.8 per cent girls). Malawi registered an improvement in primary completion rate in 2022, 56 per cent as compared to 2021, 50 per cent (EMIS, 2022). Transition rate to secondary rate to secondary is still low for both girls and boys, 42.3 per cent and 42.7 per cent respectively. This means that the education system still has a lot of internal efficiency issues to be addressed.

Completion rate for primary dropped from 53 per cent in 2020 to 50 per cent in 2021. Transition rate to secondary decreased slightly from 37.6 per cent in 2020 to 37 per cent in 2021 (EMIS, 2021). The number of out-of-school children and young people in the official age range for given level of education who are not attending either primary, secondary, or higher levels of education has continued to increase, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. In Malawi, 6 per cent of children of primary school age are out of school. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the percentage of out-of-school children in the lower secondary increased to 16 per cent, and at the upper secondary level it increased to 34 per cent (MICS, 2019-2020).

In Malawi, the share of the education budget to GDP declined from 4.2 per cent in 2020/21 to 3.2 per cent in 2021/22, reaching the lowest level since 2016/17. This has made the education GDP share go below the level recommended by the Incheon Declaration on Inclusive Education which recommends Governments to allocate between 4-6 per cent of their GDPs to education if they are to achieve SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2017).

Children in Malawi, particularly girls and the most vulnerable, face multiple barriers that prevent their access to inclusive quality education and alternative learning pathways. These challenges are closely linked to poverty, malnutrition, inadequate access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene

facilities in schools, and the effect of HIV, which often prevents children, especially girls, from completing their education and reaching their full potential.

The Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015/16 revealed that approximately 35 per cent of adolescent girls (15-19 years of age) have anemia, while 13 per cent are underweight. The micronutrient survey of 2015 revealed that 17 per cent of adolescent girls aged 10-14 years and 21 per cent of girls aged 15-19 are anemic. In addition, 15 per cent of girls 15-19 years of age are folate deficient. School-age children and younger adolescents (6-14 years of age) also face nutritional challenges with anaemia affecting 22 per cent and zinc deficiency affecting 60 per cent of this age group (NSO, 2017). An estimate by UNICEF (2004) revealed that more than half of the world's schools lack clean toilets, drinking water and hygiene lessons for school children. Schools, particularly those in rural areas, often completely lack drinking-water and sanitation facilities, or have

facilities that are inadequate in both quality and quantity. According to WHO (2009) schools with poor water, sanitation and hygiene conditions, and intense levels of person-to-person contact are high-risk environments where diseases are easily transmitted.

The poor-quality indicators due to the lack of a safe and inclusive learning environment, good health and nutrition have contributed to low learning outcomes, such that only 1 in 4 children (26 per cent) aged 10-14 have foundational literacy skills, and 3 in 4 have foundational numeracy skills. This impacts Malawi's poor literacy rate of 75.5 per cent (female 68.8 per cent, male 83.0 per cent; urban 91.8 per cent, rural 72.1 per cent), such that 1 in 4 people (and over 3 in 10 women) are illiterate (MICS 2019-20).

To support the government address these barriers and promote sustainable solutions to improving access to quality education, the United Nations (UN) in Malawi secured funding through the Royal Norwegian Embassy and is supporting government to implement a four-year (2021-2023) multi-sectoral United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE III) that addresses education, nutrition, safety, and integrated sexual and reproductive health concerns in a holistic manner and also focusing on other aspects such as life skills, gender equality and community engagement. Beyond the school, the programme also focuses on the out-of-school adolescent girls and boys and ensure they are not left behind through supporting delivery of alternative learning pathways and promoting access to essential services. The UN JPGE III is implemented in four targeted districts of Dedza, Mangochi, Salima and Kasungu, and three United Nations agencies (WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA) are providing technical support. The programme goal is to address barriers to access to quality education for girls and boys and ensure achievement of inclusive and equitable access to education.

## **Background**

The Joint Programme on Girls' Education (JPGE) is a collaborative effort by the Government of Malawi with technical support from three United Nations agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) and financial support of the Royal Norwegian Government. The programme started in 2014 and is currently in its third phase (2021-2024). While the first phase of the programme focused on building and piloting a model, the second phase on the roll-out and expansion with more emphasis on government leadership, the approach for the third phase is to: capitalize on the gains, reinforcing the integrated approach and building more synergies for improved sustainability, while strengthening the focus on learning to ensure a quality, inclusive and equitable education. The JPGE III "*Learning for All in Malawi – Ensuring the realization of girls' and boys' rights to quality, inclusive and equitable education and life skills*" was included under the umbrella of the Malawi Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Acceleration Fund, acknowledging girls' education as one of the most important SDGs accelerators for the country.

The programme promotes a multi-sectoral approach addressing socio-economic, cultural, health, nutrition, and gender barriers. It also adopts a gender transformative approach, maintaining a focus on girls but ensuring the needs of boys are addressed and that they are actively engaged so they can be champions in promoting gender equality. The programme has been implemented in the districts of Dedza, Mangochi and Salima and expanded in 2021 to Kasungu. The programme is implemented in 199 schools in the targeted districts. It aims to strengthen the integration of the results framework and promotes adoption of comprehensive outcomes, key interventions to avoid duplication and foster further synergies, and with a robust sustainability strategy.

The programme aligns with the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS III 2017-2022), and the goals in key sectoral policies and strategies, particularly the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP). The programme directly contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Framework (UNSDGCF 2019-2023) particularly Pillar 2, Population Management and Inclusive Human Development. The programme aims to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, having a clear potential as an SDG accelerator, building on interlinkages among the goals. Specifically, the programme contributes to the SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). It adopts a more gender transformative approach and focuses on girls as well

as boys and most vulnerable and marginalized children both in and out of school. It will ensure that boys are actively engaged so they can be champions in promoting gender equality.

The **goal** (or impact) of the JPGE III is to ensure that school aged girls, boys and adolescents (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi benefit from quality education thus improving their learning outcomes and life opportunities.

The **theory of change** underlying the results framework is that if (i) adequate and qualified teachers, inclusive and gender responsive teaching methods, positive discipline at school and home, effective learning assessments are in place; if (ii) services are available and capacities of providers to deliver integrated services in and through schools are strengthened; if (iii) mechanisms supporting participation of adolescents girls and boys in schools are established and strengthened; if (iv) enhanced inclusive complementary alternative learning programmes are available and affordable; if (v) capacity of service providers to deliver integrated services to boys and girls out of school are strengthened; if (vi) awareness of availability of services, positive attitude and knowledge of ASHRH are enhanced; if (vii) community and parental and education stakeholders' support to promote positive attitudes and behaviour change is strengthened; and if (viii) central and local level engagement to ensure mainstreaming of the integrated JPGE approach and gender and disability, increased investments in education and complementary services is enhanced; then: (a) there will be a drastic reduction in dropouts, increased participation, reduced pregnancies, and learners will remain and complete quality primary school education leading to transition to secondary school; (b) there will be a significant reduction of out of school children, and specifically adolescents, who will acquire essential alternative learning including life skills and integrated SRHR, safety and nutrition services and (c) there will be an increase of investments and support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out-of-school by institutions at national and district level, communities and parents.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned results, several strategies have been identified. They range from equipping schools with inclusive, gender sensitive education materials; capacity building of teachers to support inclusive and gender sensitive education; strengthening quality classroom environment and assessment; provision of integrated services in and through schools and at community level (nutrition, health, WASH, safety and SRHR services); delivery of complementary, vocational and life skill programs for adolescents; promotion of empowerment, participation, change in attitudes, and positive behaviours; strengthening capacities of key protection stakeholders in communities to support violence prevention measures and support VAC awareness; promoting parent- child communication; engaging community, traditional and religious leaders to provide SRHR and SGBV information and services; to providing technical support to mainstream the JPGE integrated model in the wider national policy framework and within the right governance architecture and providing technical support to the government (including through financial and costing exercises) for developing of a gradual/phased roadmap for incorporating the integrated model into national policy implementation; while adapting delivery of services to suit the current COVID-19 pandemic mandatory provisions.

*The three key outcome areas of the JPGE III are:*

- 1) Increased access to quality and inclusive education by girls, boys and adolescents (especially the most vulnerable) delivered through integrated services in a safe and gender transformative school, that enhances learning outcomes;
- 2) Increased access to complementary alternative learning and life skills and integrated services by girls and boys out of school and;
- 3) Increased investment and support for education, life skills, health and nutrition of children and adolescents in and out-of-school by communities, parents and education stakeholders.

## **Key Partners**

The key implementing partners for the programme include the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education as the main and leading ministry. Others included the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water development; Ministry of Industry and Trade; Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (the District Councils); Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; Malawi Police; and a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Ujamaa Pamodzi Africa.

### JPGE III - Indicative Partner Mapping

Outcome	National Level leads	Districts Leads	Support partner	UN Agency
1	<b>Ministry of Education – Directorate of Basic Education</b> Ministry of Education – School Health and Nutrition (SHN), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Information	Director of Education Youth and Sports (DEYS, SHN coordinators, Youth officers), Director Agriculture (DADO), Principal Nutrition, HIV/AIDS Officers (PNHAO)	Ministry of Education – DTED, DIAS, Planning NGO/CSOs (tbd)	UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP
2	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth Ministry of Health	Director of Education Youth and Sports (DEYS, Youth officers), Director of Health and Social Welfare	NGO/CSOs (tbd)	UNICEF, UNFPA
3	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Information	Director of Health and Social Welfare (Youth Friendly Health Service coordinators, District Nutritionists)	NGO/CSOs (tbd)	UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP

The Malawi Government through the lead Ministry, the Ministry of Education and the three UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP) seek to hire a consulting firm of company to conduct a midterm evaluation of the JPGE III in consultation with the three agencies and the Ministry of Education.

### Objectives

The purpose of the midterm evaluation is to examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining two years of the project implementation.

Specifically the objectives of the midterm evaluation are:

1. To examine if the JPGE III objectives and outcomes are on track and recommend possible intervention changes for the remaining two years of project implementation.
2. To assess if project outputs are being delivered in the most efficient and effective way- i.e. whether programme management and communication arrangements are efficient, and whether the outputs are likely to lead to intended outcomes or if a different strategy is required.

3. To test the quality of the results framework to inform the joint programme implementation team on the status of planned milestones based on observed findings.
4. To Identify, document lessons learned and provide clear recommendations on further adjustment of the activities and the monitoring and evaluation framework of the JPGE for the remaining period of implementation.

## 2. SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work will be restricted to the implementing districts (Mangochi, Dedza, Salima and Kasungu), by understanding the project status and potential impact to the country.

The following scope of work is to be covered in this evaluation:

1. Programmatically, the evaluation will only cover the JPGE phase III from inception to current stage assessing its objectives and core activities. It will look at the entire programme and the theory of change it employed toward the school-aged girls, boys, and adolescent (especially the most vulnerable) in Malawi. in benefiting from quality education to improving their life opportunities. This will be done by assessing the level of achievement of the expected results as outlined in the results framework. The consulting firm will be required to review JPGE I and II strategy documents to understand the linkages.
2. Based on the findings, make recommendations of possible changes in the project's strategy and plan towards implementing the second half of the project.
3. Geographically, the evaluation will cover all implementing districts (Mangochi, Dedza, Salima and Kasungu), by understanding the project status and potential impact to beneficiaries. There is flexibility to make some adjustments based on the implementation strategy and methodology promised by the consulting firm.

### Evaluation Criteria

The midterm evaluation analytical framework should be constructed by the following OECD/DAC evaluation criteria:

### Evaluation Questions

Focus Area	Evaluation Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are programme objectives relevant to the education context and aligned to government priorities and policies?</li> <li>• Are the current interventions reaching the intended target?</li> <li>• To what extent have the project's action so far contributed to improving the quality of education for school aged girls, boys, and adolescents?</li> <li>• To what extent did the programme identify the needs of girls and adolescent girls and boys (especially the most vulnerable) and the relevant barriers to girls' and boys' education in Malawi?</li> <li>• How useful are the project's performance indicators?</li> <li>• Are unanticipated events and outcomes being sufficiently tracked?</li> <li>• Should the project design and strategy be modified to improve its relevance in the second half of the project? If so, how?</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well does the JPGE-III fit into the national policies, government priorities and norms of UNICEF in Malawi?</li> <li>• How good are the synergies and interlinkages among the JPGE-III partners (both UN and government) on this and other related programmes? Were the various internal and external coordination mechanisms established relevant to the specifics of JPGE? What are the major challenges of coordination</li> </ul>

	<p>and why among the partners? Are there aspects of the JPGE that conflict with other UNICEF programmes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the role and relationship of the JPGE_III with other actors' interventions? What is the extent of partnership, coordination, and complementarity with the interventions of the Malawi government and other relevant actors? Are there aspects of the operation that conflict with the interventions of or one-UN programming or other actors?</li> <li>• What were the strengths and gaps in achieving coherence and adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the programme activities been executed on time, in expected quantity and quality?</li> <li>• Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the intended outcomes?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are key interventions contributing to achieving planned outcome results?</li> <li>• What are the major constraints so far?</li> <li>• What measures are required to improve the capacity of the Programme partners in the second half of the Programme?</li> <li>• What midterm changes could be done to maximize the outcomes and effectiveness of JPGE III?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How conducive is the political, economic, and social environment to continue with the program results so far?</li> <li>• How effectively has the JPGE III programme built national ownership and capacity?</li> <li>• To what extent can the benefits of the programme continue after JPGE III funding ceases?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the JPGE III impacted access to quality and inclusive education?</li> <li>• How many children, including adolescents, girls and boys, and children with disabilities, have benefitted (and in what way) so far?</li> </ul>

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND TECHNICAL APPROACH

The JPGE III mid-term evaluation will follow the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards. The evaluation will employ a gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive, equity and human rights-responsive and ethical approach by: i) including disability, equity and gender in evaluation criteria and evaluation questions; ii) making evaluation methodology and data collection and analysis methods equity and gender-responsive and disability-inclusive; and iii) reflecting disability, equity and gender analysis in evaluation findings, conclusions and concrete recommendations and action points for a better integration of disability, equity and gender in the remainder of the Programme.

The evaluation team will use a mixed method approach through use of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze both secondary and primary data, attained from documentary reviews and existing monitoring systems (including the EMIS), surveys, key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) to ensure a robust evaluation. The purpose of using multiple methods is to triangulate data from different sources is to ensure reliability of data, develop a strong evidence base to support the findings and to provide the most relevant and credible answers to the evaluation questions. Primary data collection methods are to include:

- Key informant interviews: Consultations with key Programme stakeholders, including field staff, partners, school administrators, and community leaders.
- Focus group discussions: Gender balanced participation for learners, school governing structures and other target groups and stakeholders to assess implementation experiences and effectiveness, challenges and lessons learned, and develop recommendations for improvement. Child-focused methods should be employed when conducting FGDs with learners.
- Surveys: Structured survey questionnaires with a sex stratified representative, random sample of target population to quantitatively assess outcomes with greater scope, breadth and depth compared to standard routine programme monitoring. A strong consideration should be made to collect data from non-intervention schools within the target districts.
- Observation: Visits to selected communities will provide supplemental evidence and answers to the evaluation questions.

Primary data collected in the field will be supplemented by a desk review of the following:

- JPGE baseline survey report (2022), and the baseline data set;
- Routine data generated by the JPGE III monitoring mechanism, those of the line Ministry (EMIS), and/or implementing partners;
- Programme documents: JPGE I and II evaluation reports, JPGE III proposal, results framework, indicator matrix, workplan and budget, JPGE III baseline reports, Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) reports, etc.
- Periodic Progress Reports submitted to the donor: 2021, and 2022 Annual JPGE III reports.
- Other relevant documents and data: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) annual bulletin, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), etc.

It is suggested that a Quasi Experimental Design Approach be applied to ensure adequate assessment of the evaluation criteria related to the impact of JPGE III in making a difference in access to quality and inclusive education. Since a baseline is available, the evaluation team must integrate a before/after analysis in terms of the progress made so far toward programme outcomes. Because programme placement and participation decisions were already made prior to the design of the evaluation, and for the purpose of establishing the counterfactual and attribution in the intervention, a quasi-experimental design using the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) method and/or the Difference-in-Difference (DD) estimator should be employed using school-level data available through the EMIS to assess impact at mid-term. The Evaluation Team can also use EMIS, MICS, or DHS data to perform Trend Analysis of indicators related to access and other information related to infrastructures, learning materials, teachers, etc.

Being formative in nature, the evaluation methodology and for the purpose of establishing the counterfactual and attribution in the intervention, must focus on eliciting lessons learnt to help course-corrections. The evaluation methodology must ensure participation from and consultation with all key stakeholders, ensuring gender balance through a collaborative, inclusive and reflective process. UNEG ethical standards for evaluation must be incorporated in designing the methodology. A detailed design of the evaluation including the proposed methodology for each evaluation question and/or objectives, sample size, sampling methodology and the tools to be used will be proposed by the evaluation firm in its bid. It is expected that the methods and sampling proposed for assessing the effects of interventions on expected beneficiaries are sufficiently robust to ensure the credibility and internal validity of the evaluation results. The design should also specify how data collection and analysis methods will integrate disability, equity, and gender considerations throughout the evaluation process, including to the extent possible, inclusion of girls and boys, women, and men, including persons with disabilities, as well as a range of Programme stakeholders. The final methodology will be agreed to during the inception phase in consultation with the evaluation reference group.

The evaluators shall adhere to the following UN and UNICEF norms and standards and are expected to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches in their proposal. Guidance documents mentioned below are those that the evaluators are expected to comply with:

- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System 2016<sup>14</sup> (including impartiality, independence, quality, transparency, consultative process);
- Ethical Guidelines for UN Evaluations;<sup>15</sup>
- UNICEF Ethical Guidelines and standards for research and evaluation<sup>16</sup> and Ethical Research Involving Children<sup>17</sup>;
- UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality and UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality;<sup>18</sup>
- UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation<sup>19</sup>;
- UNICEF adapted evaluation report standards and GEROS<sup>20</sup>;
- UNICEF Guidance Note on Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation<sup>21</sup>;
- Disability-Inclusive Evaluations in UNICEF: Guideline for Achieving UNDIS Standards<sup>22</sup>
- Results-Based Management principles.

Close attention shall be paid to the conformity of different deliverables of this mandate with the GEROS standards, as UNICEF will not accept deliverables that do not comply with these standards or UNEG guidelines. The GEROS standards, that will be also used to determine the rating of the final report by a UNICEF-independent entity, will be shared by UNICEF with the evaluation team immediately after the signature of the contract. UNICEF will assure the quality of the evaluation and guarantee its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines and provide quality assurance checking that the findings and conclusions are relevant and proposed adaptations and recommendations are actionable. The inception report and draft final report will be subject to a satisfactory rating by an external quality assurance

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<sup>14</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016. Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

<sup>15</sup> UNEG Ethical Guidelines, 2020. Available at: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/2866>

<sup>16</sup> [UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 2021](#)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/eric-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

<sup>19</sup> [UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation](#)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/global-evaluation-reports-oversight-system-geros>

<sup>21</sup> [Guidance Note: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation](#)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/2866/file/Disability-Inclusive%20Evaluations%20in%20UNICEF:%20Guideline%20for%20Achieving%20UNDIS%20Standards.pdf>

facility, using quality assurance checklists (to be provided upon signature of the contract), before payment can be made. The evaluators will be responsible for ensuring that recommendations for quality improvement of the deliverables are fully addressed.

Considering the specific circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and cholera spread in the country, the methodology of the survey must consider the government measures introduced to prevent/contain virus transmission and valid at the time of conducting the data collection.

#### 4. DELIVERABLES

In alignment with the scope of work as described above, the consulting firm will be expected to perform the following activities and deliverables as per the schedule and estimated dates below. It is envisaged that the entire consultancy will be a total of 90 working days spread from 15 April to 31 October 2023 with workdays overlapping from month to month. Note that weekends are not included as workdays and there will be no double payment for the same days should the consulting firm wish to work on two different activities at the same time.

The following outputs are expected:

- The evaluation team will submit the Inception report, a draft review report, a ppt presentation, a summary brief of the evaluation (graphically designed), and final report (50-60 pages) all following UNICEF style book. 23 A learning brief will be developed to share with the wider audience.
- The report structure, format and quality should adhere to the UNICEF Evaluation Report standards and the GEROS Quality Assessment System. Quality assurance of the inception and draft report is mandatory. MCO will use ESARO office to have the mandatory review and ensure that the report and other relevant products meet UNICEF evaluation standards.

Here are the details:

<b>Task/Milestone</b>	<b>Deliverable/Outcome (e.g., Inception, progress, final reports, training material, workshop, etc.)</b>	<b>Estimated # of days</b>	<b>Planned Completion date</b>
1. Develop, submit and present an Inception Report articulating the work approach/ methodology and understanding of the work.	Detailed Inception report capturing the following: a) detailed evaluation methodology and approach b) preliminary findings based on document review and rationale c) draft data collection tools d) detailed work plan and budget; e) complete evaluation matrix.	8	25 April 2023
2. Prepare and submit both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools.	Data collection tools submitted, reviewed, and accepted.	12	8 May 2023
3. Conduct data collection.	Enumerators hired and trained, tested data collection tools refined, and data collection activity completed.	26	20 June 2023
4. Complete data cleaning and analysis.	Data analysis and interpretation completed. Raw and clean data submitted in spreadsheets including analysis logs.	13	11 July 2023

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF Style Book, September 2018.

5. Prepare and submit a draft midterm evaluation report.	Draft midterm evaluation report submitted. a) the report to follow the agreed format, b) key findings to include data visualization, such as charts, graphs, and info-graphics	15	24 July 2023
6. Conduct a validation workshop with key stakeholders.	Conduct a validation workshop to present and discuss evaluation findings, lessons learned and recommendations.	4	3 August 2023
7. Finalise and submit the final midterm report, results matrix, learning brief and powerpoint presentation.	Based on feedback from the validation meeting and written comments from technical review, finalise the JPGE III midterm report, results matrix, powerpoint presentation and clean datasets.	11	4 September 2023
8. Close Contract	All deliverables are met and outstanding issues are resolved.	1	14 September 2023

However, as the actual starting date may impact the dates estimated in the TOR, a detailed workplan with exact timeframes and actual delivery dates will be jointly agreed upon between the contractor and the supervisor upon contract signature.

## 5. PROPOSED PAYMENT SCHEDULE

All payments, without exception, will be made upon certification from the supervisor of the contract, of the satisfactory and quality completion of deliverables and upon receipt of the respective and approved invoice.

Travel (local) costs will be reimbursed on actual expenditures and upon presentation of original supporting documents. As per UNICEF operational guidelines, travel will use the most economical route.

#	Deliverables	per cent of the total fee payable
1	Upon satisfactory submission and approval of the inception report.	20 per cent
2	Upon Submission of a satisfactory progress report detailing the completion of data collection and presentation of preliminary findings to the three UN agencies.	30 per cent
3	Upon Submission of satisfactory midterm evaluation report as per UNEG standards; and presentation to stakeholder for discussion and review.	25 per cent
4	Upon Submission of a satisfactory final version of the midterm evaluation report, factsheet and summary of evaluation as per UNICEF template; and presentation to stakeholder validation meeting.	25 per cent

## 6. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT

The consulting firm will work under the overall supervision of the Chief of Research, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Section, who is responsible for overseeing and supervising the entire evaluation process ensuring independence, quality and compliance to UNEG standards with support from Research and Evaluation Specialist. REKM team will share evaluation standards/guidelines with the evaluation team in advance. The education team including the Education Specialist, Chief of Education and other team members will provide coordination support, engagement with stakeholders, ensuring participation from all partners as

requested by REKM section at critical junctures and provision of all key documents as requested by evaluation team. They will also support review and quality assurance of evaluation findings, analysis and recommendations from programmatic perspective. and on navigating and strategic issues on a need basis.

The JPGE III M&E team comprised of staff members from all three participating UN agencies as well as the government JPGE focal point and ESARO Evaluation Specialist will form the technical reference group for the evaluation. They will provide technical support to the consulting firm in the following areas:

- Providing input to the terms of reference of the midterm evaluation including purpose, objectives, scope, evaluation criteria and key questions to be covered.
- Providing comments and input on all main deliverables of the evaluation, including the inception report, the draft and final report and discussions on recommendations and their use. UNICEF as the contracting agency will have administrative oversight on the contract while UNFPA and WFP will provide technical inputs as part of the reference group.
- REKM team will ensure involvement and engagement with the evaluation reference group throughout the review process so that they contribute to the design, shaping and finalization of key deliverables.

Reporting and communication lines:

- The evaluation team will provide weekly updates to the REKM team by email and/or zoom with regards to progress, support required and observance of timelines for deliverables.
- With the contract supervisor to report progress guided by the agreed work plan.
- The UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR) office as necessary.

## **7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The bidding firm is required to clearly identify any potential ethical issues, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the data collection process in their proposal. UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis can be found at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/54796/file>. The procedure should be consistently applied throughout the evaluation process. The procedure contains the minimum standards and requires procedures for research, evaluation and data collection and analysis undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF (including activities undertaken by individual and institutional contractors, and partners).

Owing to the envisaged participation of human subjects in the evaluation, particularly with children, the evaluation team should investigate the requirements for ethical review board approval either from a recognized Institutional Review Boards in Malawi and/or via UNICEF's LTA for ethical approval. Any ethical issues that arise during the evaluation need to be documented including how the evaluators will respond or address each.

## **8. GENERAL CONDITIONS: PROCEDURES AND LOGISTICS**

This consultancy is open to both local and International firms or companies. The consulting firm will have to find their own office space and use their own equipment, including computers and other types of hardware and software. All costs related to performing and enabling the performance of the assignment, including travel and related costs, must be included in the financial proposal.

The consultancy firm will establish a team (maximum 5) with key experts appropriate for the tasks outlined in the consultancy assignment and budget. Interested international firms or companies are required to partner with local firms and/or experts.

## **9. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRE**

The required organizational experience and skill-set of the evaluation team for this assignment shall include the following expertise and experience:

- Well-established institution (university, research institute, NGO, or consulting company) with a minimum of 10 years of experience in designing, and conducting evaluations for integrated projects and programmes.
- proven track record and human resource capacity to recruit, train and mobilize the enumerators for data collection and expertise to collect data using mobile applications.
- Previous experience in conducting evaluations and studies for the UN or similar international organisations will be an asset;
- The team must consist of experts specializing skills in child rights and participation, gender equality, education, social policy, child protection, adolescent development and participation, health and nutrition.
- Excellent understanding of Basic and Inclusive Education in Malawi, child rights and girls' education issues;
- Experience in using non-traditional and innovative evaluation methods including child friendly and remote data collection methods;
- The firm must submit samples (at least 2) of similar work they have conducted recently.
- Demonstration of capacity to carry out the analysis and complete deliverables under possible travel restrictions and social distancing measures.

**Academic qualification- Team Leader:**

- A master's degree or equivalent in data science, demography, statistics, epidemiology, anthropology, sociology, development and social studies, Education, human rights, and gender or another related social science.

**Work experience:**

- A minimum of 10 years of professional technical experience in conducting evaluations particularly having led programme and impact evaluations of similar scope. Those with experience in the education sector will have an added advantage.
- Extensive experience for conducting evaluations and assessments in multi-sector programmes including education. Those with experience with the joint UN programmes will have an added advantage..
- Excellent technical experience in socio-economic research.
- Proven experience with donor funded projects is essential while experience with UN is a distinct advantage.
- Good experience in socio-cultural, geopolitical, and economic country context, as well gender equality principles is desirable.
- Experience in gender and right based programming (especially in the Education sector).

**Technical skills and knowledge:**

- Strong technical skills in programme/impact evaluation methods; including quasi-experimental evaluation methods and performing multi variate statistical data analysis (both quantitative and qualitative);
- Strong skills in both qualitative and quantitative survey design, analysis, and ability to synthesize complex issues.
- Knowledge of UNICEF evaluation standards and quality requirements
- Excellent communication and writing skills in English, with strong presentationskills

- Fluency in local languages including Chichewa and Yao is an asset for the data collection team leaders and members.
- Ability to work independently and accurately
- Ability to work effectively in teams and in a multicultural environment.
- High sense of integrity and results-oriented
- Computer skills, including internet navigation, and various office applications

**Academic qualification- Support Team Members :**

- A master's degree or equivalent in data science, demography, statistics, epidemiology, anthropology, sociology, development and social studies, Education, human rights, and gender or another related technical field

**Work experience:**

- A minimum of 7 years of professional technical experience in conducting studies/ surveys particularly programme evaluations.
- Those with experience in education (inclusive education), health, nutrition and child protection and rights will have an added advantage.
- Proven experience with donor funded projects is essential while experience with UN is a distinct advantage.
- Good experience in socio-cultural, geopolitical, and economic country context, as well gender equality principles is desirable.
- Experience in gender and right based programming (especially in the Education sector).

**Technical skills and knowledge:**

- Excellent communication and writing skills in English and interpersonal skills
- Fluency in local languages including Chichewa and Yao is an asset
- Strong technical skills in both qualitative and quantitative survey design, analysis, and ability to synthesize complex issues
- Ability to work effectively in teams and in a multicultural environment
- High sense of integrity and results-oriented
- Computer skills, including internet navigation, and various office applications

**10. APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS:**

Each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its price. In making the final decision, the selection team will consider both technical and financial aspects. The Evaluation Team first reviews the technical aspects of the offer, followed by review of the financial offers of the technically compliant vendors. The proposal obtaining the highest overall score after adding the scores for the technical and financial proposals together, that offers the best value for money will be recommended for award of the contract.

**The Technical Proposal should include but not be limited to the following:**

- **Methodology**  
Detailed Methodology including quasi-experimental approach, sampling techniques, data collection methods, etc. detailing how to meet or exceed UNICEF requirements for this assignment
- **Company Profile**

Ensure to include information related to the experience of the company as required and outlined in item 9 of this document.

- **Copy of the company registration**
- **References**  
Details of similar assignments undertaken in last *three* years including the following information:
  - o Title of Project
  - o Year and duration of project
  - o Scope of Project
  - o Outcome of Project
  - o Reference / Contact persons
- **Work Plan**  
Proposed work plan showing detailed sequence and timeline for each activity and man days of each proposed team member
- **Team Composition**  
Title and role of each team member
- **CV's**  
CV of each team member (including qualifications and experience)  
Ensure to include information related to the qualifications and experience of each proposed team member as required and outlined in item 9 of this document.
- Any project dependencies or assumptions

**The Financial Proposal should include but not be limited to the following:**

Bidders are expected to submit a lump sum financial proposal to complete the entire assignment based on the terms of reference. The lump sum should be broken down to show the detail for the following:

- **Resource costs**  
Daily rate multiplied by the number of days
- **Conference or workshop costs (if any)**  
Indicate nature and breakdown if possible
- **Travel Costs**  
All travel costs should be included as a lump sum fixed cost.  
For all travel costs, UNICEF will pay as per the lump sum fixed costs provided in the proposal.  
A breakdown of the lump sum travel costs should be provided in the financial proposal.
- **Any other costs (if any)**  
Indicate nature and breakdown
- **Recent Financial Audit Report**  
Report should have been carried out in the past 2 years and be certified by a reputable audit organization.

Bidders are required to estimate travel costs in the Financial Proposal. Please note that i) travel costs shall be calculated based on economy class fare regardless of the length of travel and ii) costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed the applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as propagated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Details can be found at <http://icsc.un.org>

**11. EVALUATION WEIGHTING CRITERIA:**

Offers will be evaluated based on the technical offer and the financial offers. The ratio between technical and commercial is fixed.

The total amount of points allocated to the technical components is 70. Only bidders that obtain **50 points and above** from the technical evaluation will be considered for the stage of financial evaluation.

The Technical Proposal will be scored against the qualification requirements indicated in the previous section of these TORs.

The Financial Proposal with the lowest amount will receive the highest score and the other proposals will receive proportional scores.

The proposal obtaining the highest overall score after combining the technical and financial scores that offers the best value for money will be recommended for award of the contract.

All financial proposals from bidders whose corresponding technical proposals fall short of the minimum threshold mark of 50 points shall not be opened.

Cumulative Analysis will be used to evaluate and award proposals. The evaluation criteria associated with this TOR is split between technical and financial as follows:

- 70 per cent Technical
- 30 per cent Financial
- 100 per cent Total

The total amount of points to be allocated for the price component is 30 points. The maximum number of points (30) will be allotted to the lowest price proposal of a technically qualified offer. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price, i.e.

All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price i.e.:

**Max. The score for price proposal (30) \* Price of lowest priced proposal**

**The score for price proposal X =**   
**Price of proposal X**

**Award of contract**

i) The award of the contract will be made to the contractor(s) whose offer has been evaluated and determined as: (i) responsive / compliant / acceptable, and (ii) having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to this tender i.e., Cumulative Analysis evaluation (point system with weight attribution).

The attached Annex A provides a detailed breakdown of the technical evaluation criteria.

**12. ENDORSEMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

Function	Name	Signature	Date
<b>Prepared and submitted by</b>	Cosnat Ntenje JPGE M&E lead		
	Abiba Longwe-Ngwira REKM Specialist		
<b>Reviewed by Supply</b>	Innocent Dube OIC, Chief of Supply		

<b>Cleared at section by</b>	Simon Jan Molendijk Chief of EADP		
<b>Reviewed and cleared by REKM</b>	Mussarrat Youssuf Chief of REKM		
<b>Approved by</b>	Mamadou Ndiaye OIC Deputy Representative Programme, UNICEF Malawi		
<b>Approved by</b>	Rudolf Schwenk Representative, UNICEF Malawi		

**ATTACHED:**

**Annex A – Breakdown of technical evaluation criteria**

<b>Technical criteria</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
<b>1.0 Academic Requirements</b>	<b>10</b>
I. A team leader with a master's degree or equivalent in data science, demography, statistics, epidemiology, anthropology, sociology, development and social studies, Education, human rights, and gender or another related technical field	5
II. Support team members with master's degree or equivalent in data science, demography, statistics, epidemiology, anthropology, sociology, development and social studies, Education, human rights, and gender or another related technical field	5
<b>2. a Professional Experience Requirements</b>	<b>20</b>
I. Team leader with a minimum of 10 years of professional technical experience in conducting and leading studies/ surveys particularly programme evaluations. Those with experience in the education sector will have an added advantage.	4
II. Support team members with a minimum of 7 years of professional technical experience in conducting studies/ surveys particularly programme evaluations.	4
III. Proven experience in conducting evaluations and assessments in multi-sector projects (education, health, nutrition, Child protection).	4
IV. Strong qualifications in quasi-experimental evaluation methods and performing multi variate statistical data analysis (both quantitative and qualitative);	4
V. Excellent technical experience in socio-economic research.	2
VI. Previous experience in conducting evaluations and studies for the UN or government institutions.	2
<b>2. b Other Requirements</b>	<b>10</b>
I. The team must consist of experts specializing in child rights and participation, gender equality, education, social policy, child protection,	

adolescent development and participation, and early childhood development.	5
II. Experience in using non-traditional and innovative evaluation methods including child friendly and child-participatory methods; and demonstration of capacity to complete deliverables under possible travel restrictions and social distancing measures (if needed during assignment);	5
<b>3.0 PROPOSED METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 The consulting firm demonstrates a good understanding of the assignment and explains the use of quasi-experimental methods well based on the information provided in ToR	15
3.2 The proposed work plan and approach to implementing the tasks as per the ToR are well articulated. (May include approximate durations, on-site and off-site meetings/ key milestones and key deliverables)	10
3.3. Provision of 3 traceable referees	5
<b>TOTAL FOR TECHNICAL CRITERIA*</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>* Minimum score required for technical compliance: 50 marks out of 70</i>	

# ANNEX 8: LIST OF NAMES - REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

1. James Namfuko, Deputy Director M&E, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi
2. Albert Sakah, JPGE National Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi
3. Lanken Nkhata, EMIS Focal Person, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi
4. Nicole Carn, Head of Programme, WFP
5. Daniel Svanlund, Head of M&E and VAM, WFP
6. Sandra Kamvazina, Malawi Programme Associate, WFP
7. Jeanprovidence NZABONIMPA, Regional Evaluation Officer, WFP
8. Cecilia Alfandika, Adolescents and Youth Specialist, UNFPA
9. Bernard Mijoni, Programme Specialist (M&E), UNFPA
10. Pilar de la corte Molina, AY SRH Specialist, UNFPA
11. Rudolf Nkhata, Data Management and Results Monitoring/Reporting Officer, Resident Coordinator's Office, Malawi
12. Chimwemwe Msowoya, Partnerships Officer/Acting Malawi SDG Fund Coordinator, Resident Coordinator's Office, Malawi
13. Bikul Tulachan, Regional Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF
14. Simon Jan Molendijk, Chief of Education, UNICEF
15. Abiba Longwe-Ngwira, Research and Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF (Secretary)
16. Mussarrat Youssuf, Chief, REKM Section, UNICEF (Chair)

# ANNEX 9: EVALUATION ETHICS APPROVAL

29 September 2023

Dr Felipe Bodewig Isidor-Serrano, PhD.  
Mainlevel Consulting AG  
Kölner Straße 3  
65760 Eschborn, Germany

RE: Ethics Review Board findings for: *Mid-term evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education III* (HML IRB Review #793MALA23)

Dear Dr. Isidor-Serrano,

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the above study were assessed through a research ethics review by HML Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 19 – 29 September 2023. This study's human subjects' protection protocols, as stated in the materials submitted, received **ethics review approval**. You and your project staff remain responsible for ensuring compliance with HML IRB's determinations. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring prompt reporting to HML IRB of proposed changes in this study's design, risks, consent, or other human protection protocols and providing copies of any revised materials;
- conducting the research activity in accordance with the terms of the IRB approval until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the IRB, except when necessary to mitigate hazards to subjects;
- promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in the course of this study;
- notifying HML IRB when your study is completed.

HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, IORG #850, FWA #1102).

Sincerely,



D. Michael Anderson, Ph.D., MPH  
Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director, HML IRB  
cc: Mussarrat Youssuf, Penelope Lantz, JD

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[www.unicef.org/evaluation](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation)

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January 2024