

Evaluation Title: Summative Evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on Girls' Education (2014 - 2024)

Region: Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR)

Office: Malawi Country Offices (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA)

Evaluation Year: 2024

Approved and signed by:

Person-In-Charge for Follow-up of EMR:

Overall Response to the Evaluation:

The management of UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP, in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, welcomes the findings and recommendations of the independent summative evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on Girls' Education (JPGE) (2014–2024). We acknowledge the evaluation's recognition of JPGE as a relevant, coherent, and multi-sectoral initiative that effectively addressed key barriers to girls' education in Malawi. Its alignment with the Malawi Implementation Plan (MIP 1) and global commitments (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 17), as well as its adaptability during emergencies like COVID-19, and its inclusive focus on out-of-school girls and those with disabilities, are commendable. We note the programme's contributions to improved enrolment, attendance, gender-responsive pedagogy, and school feeding outcomes. Community-led models such as Safe Spaces, Mother Groups, traditional leader engagement, and the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme emerged as effective and sustainable approaches suitable for scaling.

However, we also recognize the programme's limited impact on higher-level educational outcomes, which was influenced by external shocks (COVID-19, floods, cholera), structural challenges (poverty, inadequate infrastructure, distance to school), and difficulties in maintaining pure control groups due to overlapping interventions. We agree that there is need to strengthen programme management, and revitalizing national coordination structures like the Steering Committee, with greater involvement of the Resident Coordinator's Office to ensure inter-agency coherence and accountability. We further acknowledge the importance of partnering with other development actors to address systemic challenges such as poverty, infrastructure, and disability support services—areas beyond the JPGE's direct scope. Lastly, the recommendation to scale up proven interventions and invest in disability-inclusive education—including teacher training, resources, and partnerships with specialized organizations—is well received and will inform future programming priorities.

Planned Use of the Evaluation:

The results of the evaluation will be used by the Government of Malawi, the three UN agencies and Royal Norwegian Embassy to make decisions on future similar support in Malawi.

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

Evaluation Recommendation 1: Several community-led interventions have demonstrated they can be effective drivers for girls' education and SRHR and can be sustainable and therefore need to be scaled up.

Rationale: These Interventions include the safe space model, the mother group model, and support to traditional leaders in leading efforts on education and abolishing child marriages through community by-laws.

Management Response: Agree

If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Scaling up selected community-led interventions such as the safe spaces, the mother groups, and support to traditional leaders' efforts, promoting education for girls, and abolishing child marriages.	UNFPA,	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Underway	Scaled up through different programmes in other UNFPA-focused districts	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1)

Evaluation Recommendation 2: Form district-level consortia involving NGOs, CSOs, and private sector actors to co-deliver education and health interventions, with shared resource mobilization responsibilities.

Rationale: While a programme is not expected to address all the challenges, deliberate efforts to seek collaboration with others addressing other drivers, such as poverty/livelihoods, and school infrastructure, as examples, would have enhanced the programme's impact on higher-level educational outcomes. The programme addressed multiple causes of poor educational outcomes for girls, but some significant drivers remained unaddressed and contributed to the programme having an insignificant impact on these outcomes, e.g. poverty, infrastructure.

Management Response: Agree

If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started	Actions taken	Supporting documents
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				Underway Completed Cancelled		
Support district administrations to convene NGOs, CSOs, and private sector players into consortia with formal agreements outlining co-delivery responsibilities and collective resource mobilization strategies for education and health programs.	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents Development & Participation, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, District councils.	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, Albert Saka, Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator	June 2026	Underway	UNICEF already set up technical working groups in all the districts comprising NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, community groups and district council structures involved in Education programming. UNICEF will continue strengthening the TWGs.	
	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Not started	Proposal under development	
Evaluation Recommendation 3: Introduce performance-based reviews for coordination platforms and assign district-level government leads to ensure accountability and continuity. <i>Rationale: Limited partnerships were identified, but several coordination platforms helped ensure program alignment and avoided duplication.</i>						
Management Response: Partially Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons: To be discussed with MoH as the lead						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents

Develop and roll out a performance assessment tool for district coordination platforms, and designate district officers to monitor implementation, ensure follow-up on action points, and report on progress quarterly.	UNFPA and MOH	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Not started	None, awaiting funding opportunities	
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 4: Transition PUNO-led platforms into government-led ones, ensuring regular reporting to district councils and developing a phased exit strategy for UN agencies to build government ownership. <i>Rationale: Several provisions supported PUNO coordination, but challenges in implementation and accountability undermined effectiveness.</i></p> <p>Management Response: Agree</p> <p>If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:</p>						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
This will be achieved through the support of TWGs as stated under Recommendation 1	UNICEF, Education and Adolescents Development & Participation, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, District councils	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, Albert Saka, Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator	June 2026	Underway	Continued support to the district TWGs for seamless transition of coordination from PUNOs to government.	
Support the coordination structures, such as the	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Underway	Established Interministerial -	

steering committee, to ensure effective operation.					MoG, MoH, MoY, and MoE steering committee for UNFPA SRHR and GBV-related programmes.	
Establish a programme management unit (PMU) to support coherent implementation and monitoring and evaluation	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Not started	Subject to funding	
Strengthen the participation of the Resident Coordinator's office (RCO) in national technical coordination structures of the programme to strengthen their knowledge and support for the implementation of the joint programme modality	UNFPA	UNFPA Representative / Deputy Representative	TBD	Underway	Done through other programmes	
Evaluation Recommendation 5: Advocate for integrating JPGE's approaches (e.g., gender-responsive pedagogy and inclusive education practices) into long-term sector strategies like the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). <i>Rationale: Over its life, JPGE influenced several policies and strategies but missed deeper integration at the national level.</i>						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Seize existing sector opportunities to advocate for the integration of JPGE approaches. (E.g., policy	UNICEF, Education and Adolescents	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist,	June 2026	Not started		

and strategic plan reviews etc.	Development & Participation, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	Albert Saka, Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator				
	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Underway	JPGE approaches have been presented in different forums as a good integrated approach, i.e., during the national Youth Conference and district forums	

Evaluation Recommendation 6: Strengthen local-level planning by decentralizing fund disbursement to district councils and enabling real-time reporting through a digital tracking system shared among stakeholders.

Management Response: Agree

If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Decentralize project funds disbursement to district councils.	UNICEF Education and Adolescents Development & Participation	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist	December 2025	Completed	Disbursement of project funds to district councils is already decentralized.	

					UNICEF sends money directly to district councils through Direct Cash Transfers. (DCT's). UNICEF is already strengthening local level budgeting (through support to Programme Based Budgeting).	
	WFP (funds for school feeding), Ministry of Finance, district councils	Sandra Kamvazina	31.07.2025	Completed	The funds are currently decentralized. The schools make their own procurement process	Project documents

Evaluation Recommendation 7: Improve disability inclusion and prioritize funding for disability-inclusive facilities in ongoing government school improvement programmes and integrate targeted SBC campaigns into health and education outreach services to maximize reach.

Management Response: Agree

If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Increasing investments in teacher training in inclusive education, and teaching resources and aids.	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents Development & Participation,	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, Albert Saka,	June 2026	Not started	Disability inclusion can be integrated into all existing activities funded by other grants.	

	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, District councils.	Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator				
	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	Continuous	Underway	This is part of the new programme, EMPOWER, in a few UNFPA-focused, outside UNJPGE-focused districts to be rolled out from 2025	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1).pdf
Expand the disability screening for students and partnerships or collaborations with disability organizations for assistive devices.	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents Development & Participation, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, District councils.	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, Albert Saka, Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator	June 2026	Not started	Continue supporting the Disability Screening for students through other existing interventions.	
	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika and Rose Khonje	TBD	Not started	Focus will be on partnerships and collaborations with disability organizations targeting out-of-school adolescents and youths with disabilities	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1).pdf
Evaluation Recommendation 8: Establish a rapid response team for logistical challenges in future programs and adopt annual pre-implementation readiness reviews to ensure all materials and resources are delivered before project activities commence.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Establish a Rapid response team.	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Not started	Awaiting funding	
Evaluation Recommendation 9: Develop a time-bound fund release protocol and assign accountability for disbursement delays, while piloting direct transfers to districts for high-priority programs to reduce bottlenecks.						
Management Response: Disagree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons: Agencies are independent and follow their procedures.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Evaluation Recommendation 10: Prioritize investment in improved classroom facilities and ensure access to quality teaching materials through district-level partnerships.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
This will be addressed similarly with the interventions under Recommendation 7. Improving classroom	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents Development & Participation,	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, Albert Saka,	June 2026	Not started	To be integrated into all existing activities funded by other grants.	

facilities and access to teaching materials will be integrated into other existing interventions.	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, District councils.	Chief of School Health and Nutrition, JPGE Coordinator				
Uploading the CSE Digital application to the already existing MoE school digitalization programme	UNFPA					
Evaluation Recommendation 11: Strengthen school feeding monitoring by training food committees and supporting with digital tracking tools that provide constant and reliable information to ensure consistent and equitable access to quality meals.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Train primary school and ECD centres food committees in food quality and proper distribution. This can also contribute to improving food quality.	WFP, district councils, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Education	Sandra Kamvazina, Programme Policy Officer – School Feeding	31.12.25	Underway	In the event of continued funding from the donor, WFP will conduct refresher trainings	Project partner reports
Digitize school feeding monthly and annual output and outcome reporting tools including attendance, dropout, commodity and funds tracking reports	WFP, district councils, and Ministry of Education	Monica Msiska, M&E Officer	31.12.25	Completed	WFP now uses the Open Data Kit (ODK) App to collect all output and outcome reports from schools, which are submitted monthly and annually in digital form.	Project partner reports

Pilot the Farm2Go tool that connects smallholder farmers to HGSF schools and other markets in 45 schools and 3 districts	WFP, district councils, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Education	Sandra Kamvazina, Programme Policy Officer – School Feeding	31.12.25	Underway	WFP has been piloting the Farm2Go App which connects SHFs in intervention districts to the HGSF schools and other markets.	Project partner reports
Support the Malawi Government to develop a Home-Grown School Feeding Programme scale-up roadmap and financing strategy. The Government plans to scale up the HGSF programme to all primary schools in Malawi.	WFP, district councils, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Education	Sandra Kamvazina, Programme Policy Officer – School Feeding	31.12.25	Underway	WFP is supporting the government of Malawi to define its scale plan through a roadmap. WFP is also supporting the Financing strategy	Roadmap and Financing strategy
Evaluation Recommendation 12: Establish clear cash transfer protocols with community oversight committees to monitor usage and provide targeted training to recipients to ensure appropriate use of funds.						
Management Response: Partially Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons: While UNICEF has cash transfer protocols for use by IPs, the community-level oversight component may be difficult to implement.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
HACT team currently provides the required orientation to partners to ensure appropriate use, reduce the risk of fraud, and	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents Development & Participation	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist	December 2025	Completed	HACT Team already provides the required training to all DCT recipients.	

<p>enhance the quality of reporting.</p>					<p>Cash transfer protocols already exist. UNICEF is enhancing accountability by establishing a harmonized Grievance Redress Mechanism at the community, Traditional Authorities (TA), and district levels. In addition to managing complaints as part of the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), this mechanism also includes sensitization on cash usage, as these transfers are unconditional. Furthermore, it helps link households to complementary social services, ensuring a comprehensive support system.</p>	

Evaluation Recommendation 13: Expand SRH education campaigns tailored to adolescent girls, leveraging peer educators and community health workers to bridge knowledge gaps and promote gender equity.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Conduct SRH education campaigns to create awareness among adolescent girls and create demand for the SRH services	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	Continuous	Underway	Integrated in other projects such as Action for Teens and Empowered projects in different districts	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1)
Evaluation Recommendation 14: Commission a study to understand the causal factors for increasing STI cases.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Conduct a KAP study to examine the root causes of high STI prevalence among adolescents.	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika & Abigail Simkoko	TBD	Not Started	Not started	
Evaluation Recommendation 15: Scale up the safe spaces but ensuring the target group is broadened to in-school 15–19-year-old girls. This would increase numbers and return on the investment.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Leverage the ongoing Assessment and Mapping of Children's Corners (CCs) under the SP GEAR programme to identify opportunities for strengthening protective, mentorship, and empowerment components for adolescent girls aged 15–19, particularly those in school.	UNICEF Child Protection and SP GEAR Team, in collaboration with Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare	Alexander Mwale, Child Protection Officer	June 2026	Underway	Assessment is still ongoing (data collection stage)	
Stakeholder discussion to come up with a safe spaces scale-up model targeting both in-school and out-of-school adolescents.	UNFPA,	Cecilia Alfandika	Continuous	Underway	Integrated in other projects such as Action for Teens and Empowered projects in different districts	Annex 1. 영문 PD Ver2 Malawi ACE Project 24122 6 - COMPLETE.docx
Evaluation Recommendation 16: Future support for mobile clinics should ensure the investment is integrated with other complementary interventions that address stigma (through youth-friendly social mobilization approaches) and enhance access to SRH/HIV services for young people. Combining mobile clinics with other interventions such as in-school SRHR service provision, community-based awareness programme, youth-friendly health initiatives, and peer support networks can create a holistic approach ensuring better utilization and greater impact.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Integrate Mobile clinics with other complementary interventions that address stigma (through youth-friendly social mobilization approaches) and enhance access to SRH/HIV services for young people.	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	Continuous	Underway	Integrated in other projects such as Action for Teens and Empowered projects in different districts	Annex 1. 영문 PD Ver2 Malawi ACE Project 24122 6 - COMPLETE.docx Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1)
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 17: Strengthen parent-to-child communication programs through school-based workshops and expand community mobilization campaigns addressing social norms to reinforce positive educational practices.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Continue engaging communities to promote	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	Continuous		Integrated in other projects such as Action	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC)

effective parent-to-child communication.					for Teens and Empowered projects in different districts	proposal 1st of December 2023 (1)
Evaluation Recommendation 18: Introduce mentorship programmes and financial support mechanisms, such as seed funding for income-generating activities, to improve retention and graduation rates.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
UNICEF is collaborating with the Technical Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TVETA) to support skills development for out-of-school youth, with a focus on livelihood skills such as carpentry. Graduates of this program receive startup capital to facilitate their entry into the workforce and promote entrepreneurship. Additionally, UNICEF is implementing a livelihood resilience program targeting vulnerable populations, which includes promoting financial inclusion, business	UNICEF – Education and Adolescents, Development & Participation, Social policy Ministry of Youth and Sports	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist, George Juwawo Social Protection Specialist and Judith Mususa Director in the Ministry of Youth and Sports	December 2026	Underway	Implemented a skills development intervention for out-of-school youth in collaboration with TVETA and a Women Economic Empowerment initiative through community-led SLGs	

management training, and providing seed capital for Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs) as well as women-led enterprises.						
Establish a mentorship programme for out-of-school girls.	UNFPA,	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Not Started	Not Started	
Evaluation Recommendation 19: Provide continuous capacity-building for government staff at district and national levels, focusing on embedding gender-sensitive and data-driven planning into institutional frameworks.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
UNICEF is supporting the capacity building of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) through a consultant who is expected to provide technical assistance in generating data and evidence for gender transformative education reforms, which will inform the development of the successor National Girls Education Strategy (NGES), a framework that is being led and developed by MoBSE.	UNICEF - Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	Lilian Saka, Adolescent Specialist	December 2026	Underway	The consultant is already on board.	

Conduct a training workshop on integrating gender-sensitive and data-driven planning into institutional frameworks.	UNFPA,	Cecilia Alfandika	TBD	Underway	Scaled up through different programmes in other UNFPA-focused districts	Copy of EmpowerED (PRODOC) proposal 1st of December 2023 (1)
Evaluation Recommendation 20: Incorporate resilience-focused interventions in future programs, such as scalable remote learning systems, flexible school calendars, and enhanced psychosocial support during crises.						
Management Response: Agree						
If a recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report the reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
UNICEF is currently supporting the development of the Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) for selected districts, which include some of the JPGE districts.	UNICEF - Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education District Councils	Lilian Saka, Education and Adolescent Specialist	December 2025	Underway	Supporting the development of the Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) for selected districts.	
Develop technical guidelines for resilience-focused interventions and build district-level capacity for psychosocial crisis response.	UNFPA	Cecilia Alfandika	December 2025	Underway	MHPSS integration guidelines are under development by MoY in collaboration with Caring Hand, a youth-led institution	

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Approved by:

Signature:

Date: