

USAID’S CBP GRANTS PROJECT PERFORMANCE REPORT (PPR) FORM

Grant Number:	CBP008
Grantee Name:	BLANTYRE INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH(BICO)
Grant Number:	CBP008
Grant Title:	Strengthening Pediatric Eye Care in Northern Malawi
Country:	Malawi
Duration:	18 months (October 7, 2019-April 7, 2021)
Type of Report:	Quarter 1 report
Period of coverage:	7 th October 2019 – 31 st December, 2019

Instructions for Quarterly Report:

Please complete the following for each quarter

1. Description of the activities and Progress –

Goal:

The overall goal of the project is to improve access to quality refractive error and low vision services and establish a referral system for vulnerable children in the northern region of Malawi. The project started on 7th October 2019 and has 4 main **objectives:**

Objective 1: Strengthen the quality of pediatric clinical services at the Mzuzu tertiary hospital serving the northern region.

Outcome: Pediatric oriented ophthalmologist and the clinical team trained, essential operating theatre equipment is in use to increase examinations and treatment.

Objective 2: Establish refractive error and low vision services at the Mzuzu tertiary hospital to serve the northern region.

Outcome: Optical shop is established; children receive optical and low vision devices and the services are sustained by revenue earned.

Objective 3: Establish regular screening, referral and treatment services in primary schools.

Outcome: Teachers are trained to screen; students are refracted and receive eyeglasses and are treated for non-surgical and surgical treatment.

Objective 4: Strengthen resource centers to manage visually impaired children with low vision. Outcome: Children receive a comprehensive examination, corrective treatment and teachers demonstrate skills to manage children and low vision devices.

Target Audience and Geographic Focus:

The primary beneficiaries of this project are visually impaired / blind children (1-19 years) and their families in the northern region that have limited access to eye care services .The secondary beneficiaries are the adults who benefit from the service, the eye department staff of the Mzuzu hospital, eye health workers and teachers in 6 districts and also the Ministry of Health and Education, Special Needs Department, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Gender.

Progress:

On 7th October the project agreement was signed between USAID CBP and BICO , officially marking the start of the project implementation. This was immediately followed by a visit to Mzuzu Central Hospital, where a meeting with staff resulted in a memorandum of understanding signed between BICO and Mzuzu Central Hospital, where BICO is currently housed – after been given office space there, and recruitment/deployment of staff for the project completed. Three major activities were then planned for the first quarter (according to milestones) and these included 1) Stakeholders sensitization workshop 2) Training of Itinerant teachers 3) Monitoring of routine data collected at Mzuzu central hospital .

1) Stakeholders sensitization workshop

Blantyre Institute for Community Outreach (BICO), organized an orientation workshop for different stakeholders Ilala Crest Lodge in Mzuzu on 7th November 2019. The workshop was attended by officials from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Special Needs Department, the Media, faith-based organizations and others working in disability fields. The meeting was meant to discuss with all stakeholders who would be involved in the implementation of the project on how best to do the job successfully and also possibly to identify other stakeholders who might have been left out.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the media, faith based organizations involved in disability, BICO staff, and staff from resource centres and special needed education department in the Ministry of Education. In total there were 34 participants.

The objectives as follows.

- To orient staff and partners on the new Low Vision Project
- Share progress made in the previous Low vision project
- Develop a joint work plan and strategies on project implementation
- Discuss on roles expected from each partner and stakeholder

Opening remarks were done by the Ministry of Education -Special Needs and Inclusive Education Desk Officer for Northern Region. He thanked BICO for considering the north as he noticed through experience that indeed many visually impaired children face a lot of problems in seeing and writing both in class and during exams. He assured that they are ready to work with BICO for a successful implementation of the project.

The following strategies were discussed:

- Conduct awareness in schools, religious gatherings and village gatherings e.g funerals
- Study existing data, then follow up
- Identify New Linkages a good connection between the specialists, schools, and communities.
- Liaising with District education managers office to link with School Health and Nutrition officer (SHN) officer, Primary education advisors (PEAs) and Head teachers.
 - Orienting teachers on screening using visual acuity charts and torch
 - Procure and distribute visual acuity charts and torches for eye screening in schools.
 - Conduct eye screening campaigns in Community-Based Care Centers (CBCC)
 - Orienting gate keepers on eye care screening under BICO project.

- Engaging specialists for confirmation of the screened children by teachers and gate keepers
- Undertaking visual impairment documentaries through community radio stations
- Traditional leaders to engage workers to disseminate information on visual impairment
- Health workers to intensify information dissemination and Orientation of community leaders, parents and school management committees on visual impairment and how they can come in to support the project
 - Training of teachers on how to identify learners with visual impairment and how to teach them
 - Integration with already existing programmes
 - Conducting awareness campaigns targeting learners, community members, parents and guardians on eye health
 - Public announcements
 - Radio jingles
 - Radio programmes (talk shows, discussions)
 - Networking with other community radios e.g. Tuntufye(Karonga), Nthalire(Chitipa), Tigawane (Mzuzu), Chilundu(Nkhatabay), Usiska(Nkhatabay)
 - Use National media e.g. nation and times group for project announcements

The meeting conducted with dividing different roles to be played by stakeholders and agreeing on implementation time frames, with the project officer to monitor progress. All participants were enlisted on a whatsapp group for northern region pediatric eye care, for easy communication.

2) Training of teachers

This activity was conducted in Mzuzu from the 8th to the 9th of nov 2019.

The objectives of the training were:

- To equip Itinerant Teachers (ITs) with skills on how to identify learners with visual impairment
- Teach ITs how to identify and record learners with visual impairment
- How to refer all learners with visual impairment
- To strategize on parental awareness about the low vision project
- To discuss on steps to be followed to ensure that the identified children get proper treatment in time
- To discuss myth and facts about the use of vision

The training was officially opened by the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Desk Officer for Northern Region. A total of 31 participants attended the training, among whom 25 were specialist teachers that are involved with children who have different disabilities including visual impairment. The 25 specialist teachers were custodian of 454 visual impaired children, among whom only 16 were blind, and 25 had either glasses or low vision devices. The rest of the children were neither properly assessed by an eye health workers, or had been assessed but could not get the required

management. It was agreed that the project needed to reassess and give necessary advice to the children, teachers and parents. The participants were asked to come up with lists of children who had already been identified to have visual problems so that they can be helped as soon as possible. For easy communication and updates, and a WhatsApp group was created where discussing about visual impaired children would be a key objective. All participants were also encouraged to cooperative in project activities for its successful implementation. Screenings were planned to start in first quarter of 2020, after the health workers training.

3) Monitoring of routine data collected at Mzuzu central hospital.

The project officer of BICO and optometrists were tasked with the assignment of collecting all data for children presenting at Mzuzu central hospital, and this exercise started in October 2019. Between October and December 2019, a total of 323 children aged 1 to 19 years were seen at Mzuzu Central Hospital, as shown in the data below:

	Oct to Dec 2019		
Summary 1st Quarter			
Age	Male	Female	Total
Less than 1 year	10	13	23
1 to 14 years	135	133	268
15 years to 19years	17	15	32
Total	162	161	323
Diagnosis			
Refractive error	1	12	13
Allergic conjunctivitis	95	92	187
Trauma	3	5	8
aphakia post surgery	1	0	1
Bacterial Conjunctivitis	55	42	97
Glaucoma	2		2
Dry Eye Syndrome	3	5	8
Others Conditions	2	5	7
Total	162	161	323
Management			
Recomended glasses	1	12	13
Recommend eye drops	150	138	288
Recommend referal for surgery	2	4	6
Referral for review	3	1	4
Other	6	6	12
Total	162	161	323

Glasses were not distributed as the BICO optical centre at the hospital was still being organized, but these will be distributed starting first quarter of 2020.

2. Key Achievements –

- Successfully conducted stakeholders’ workshop and Itinerant Teachers’ Training as arranged
- Successfully set up BICO offices in Mzuzu ready for operations in the second quarter.
- Completed staff recruitment.
- Started collecting data of all children seen at Mzuzu Central hospital.

3. Challenges faced:

- The demand seem to be much higher than anticipated: 25 teachers already had over 400 children identified with visual impairment needing assessment. It was reported there were more than 1000 teachers in the region and setting criteria for selecting a subset of them for the project remain a challenge. Resources permitting the project needed to be scaled at a much larger platform to cover more teachers.
- Teachers demanding services (examination and reading glasses) at the expense of children. Selected teachers indicated that they needed to be helped first before the children, though the project had listed them as secondary beneficiaries. This needed clear explanation to the teachers who were in turn needed to identify children, yet themselves needed services.
- This being the first time such a project is being implemented in northern Malawi people were finding it difficult to understand what the project is about- therefore the media has been used to increase awareness. Voice of Livingstonia Synod radio was chosen because many of their programs are aired in their local language.

4. Planned activity for next period

These will all be implemented in quarter 2:

- The low vision refresher training for the key low vision clinical implementers – to be facilitated by an external Low Vision consultant.
- The Health worker training targeting eye health workers from the entire northern Malawi, and facilitated by BICO
- Establishment of the functioning Optical centre in Mzuzu, which can distribute glasses and low vision devices.
- Screening of children in resource centres, and appropriate management
- Capacity building for the eye department of Mzuzu Central Hospital, including training for the ophthalmologists and also providing surgical supplies.

5. Monitoring report: see attached

6. Success stories: to be reported next quarter:

7 Findings: None