



SCALE MALAWI

TaRL-INFORMED REMEDIATION PROGRAMME

Scaling Phase, 2026-2028

Summary Brief for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)

Prepared from the Scaling Phase Proposal as a standalone reference document

July 2026

About This Document

This brief summarises the key technical and operational framework of the Scaling Phase Proposal for the Malawi TaRL-Informed Remediation Programme (April 2026-December 2027), organised for ease of reference for MoEST. It draws directly on the full proposal and focuses on the programme summary, the changes made to the technical model following the pilot in Mchinji District, the workplan, systems-strengthening roles and responsibilities, expected results, the MEL framework, Value for Money, and the Theory of Change.

1. Programme Summary

The April 2026-March 2028 scaling phase expands the TaRL-informed remediation programme to 300 schools across Machinga, Karonga and Mchinji Districts, building on the 80-school pilot delivered in Mchinji District (September 2025-March 2026). The programme complements the national literacy curriculum and the National Mathematics Curriculum Reform (NMCR), ensuring that TaRL-informed remediation reinforces national curriculum goals. Its central purpose is to test whether a contextualised, level-appropriate remediation model can be delivered with fidelity, cost-effectiveness and equity through MoEST systems at scale. Through an independent evaluation led by IPA – combined with IPA’s parallel role generating real-time evidence through Test-Learn-Adapt cycles – the scaling phase will generate the operational, cost and system-level evidence required to inform MoEST’s national adoption decision, future financing through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and a costed National Remediation Strategy for 2027–2030.

Mchinji District serves as the programme’s dedicated innovation site for continued piloting and refinement of the model for Standards 1&2, building on the original pilot. The district also offers an opportunity for developing and testing an integrated model of TaRL informed approach with BEFIT technology. The scale-up to the two new districts, and the IPA-led independent impact evaluation, focus on Standards 3&4, where the model is more established and scale-ready.

The programme aligns with MoEST’s priorities on addressing learning poverties in Malawi, FCDO’s priorities on foundational learning, value for money, inclusive education and sustainable system reform, and contributes to SDGs 4, 5, 10 and 17.

Five Core Objectives

- Refine and validate TaRL-informed teaching and learning materials (TLMs) for Standards 1-4 through a MoEST-led, evidence-based review and validation process.
- Strengthen MoEST capacity to lead remediation through training, mentoring, supervision, monitoring and data use at national, district and school levels.
- Embed remediation within existing assessment and monitoring systems, ensuring alignment with national frameworks and decision-making processes.
- Improve equity and inclusion, with particular attention to girls and learners with disabilities and strengthen safeguarding practices.
- Develop a cost-effective, government-owned remediation model with a clear pathway to national scale-up through GPE-supported reforms.

Delivery is structured as a progressive transfer of leadership to MoEST. Across the two-year period, VVOB and TaRL Africa shift from direct delivery to coaching and system strengthening, with MoEST assuming responsibility for training cascades, TLM validation, mentoring oversight, and monitoring and review.

By the end of 2027, Malawi will have a tested, adapted and government-owned remediation model, jointly implemented by MoEST, VVOB and TaRL Africa, with IPA generating and facilitating evidence for Test-Learn-Adapt cycles and independent evaluation. The model will be tested and refined under scale conditions, embedded within MoEST systems, and expanded nationally from September 2027, with time-bound technical assistance from VVOB and TaRL Africa available through December 2027.

2. Changes to the Technical Model Based on Lessons from the Pilot

Learnings from the pilot phase reinforce four design principles that govern the scaling phase:

- **Simplify without sacrificing fidelity:** assessment tools, training content and monitoring instruments are streamlined to reduce teacher burden while preserving the core instructional logic.
- **Focus on routine mastery:** training and mentoring concentrate on a small set of high-leverage classroom routines rather than broad conceptual coverage, consistent with evidence from Zambia and Uganda.
- **Activate government systems, do not parallel them:** supervision, data review and accountability are routed through MoEST structures, not project mechanisms.
- **Test scalability from the outset:** the 300-school expansion is designed to answer whether MoEST systems can deliver this model with fidelity, not merely to extend reach.

IPA's Role in Real-Time Learning to Inform Scale

Research and learning are embedded within implementation so that delivery is continuously refined and scaling decisions are evidence-based. The partnership with IPA in the two new scale-up districts adopts a Test-Learn-Adapt (TLA) approach, aligning learning activities with implementation milestones and leveraging existing MEL data, supplemented with targeted data collection. Learning priorities are driven by identified scalability gaps, with evidence generated on impact and cost-effectiveness to inform scaling decisions. Structured pause-and-reflect moments with MoEST, FCDO and partners translate insights into operational improvements, financing decisions and a scalable model design.

In Mchinji District, VVOB and TaRL Africa lead dedicated innovation and adaptation cycles for Standards 1&2, testing and refining the early grade model in real classroom conditions. These cycles are distinct from the IPA-led evaluation strand: they are practitioner-led, iterative and exploratory, generating operational insights that directly inform future iterations of the model and the global evidence base on early grade remediation.

Headline Changes by Thematic Area

Thematic area	Pilot finding	Key change for scaling phase	System-level implication
Systems embedding & MoEST ownership	Teacher absenteeism (up to 29%) and inconsistent timetable protection threatened fidelity; remediation operated through parallel project mechanisms.	Three-tier accountability (school leaders, PEAs/ZEMs, MoEST Taskforce); assessment tools, TLMs and data systems co-owned by MoEST; EMIS alignment strengthened.	Remediation is embedded in MoEST systems, not layered on top of them; functions operate through government structures with progressively reduced external support.
Implementation model	S1&2 assessments were too complex/time-intensive; whole-class approaches dominated; grouping was inconsistent, especially in S1&2.	Two-phase model for S1&2 (Readiness Period then FLN Period), refined through Mchinji innovation cycles; for S3&4, explicit minimum small-group/individual practice time across all three districts.	Innovation track (Mchinji, S1&2) generates evidence on early grade TaRL; scale-up track (S3&4, all districts) reduces teacher burden without added school hours.
Training	Training was somewhat conceptual and insufficiently grounded in realistic classroom conditions.	Redesigned to be practice-based, with modules on large-class management, transitions and inclusion; S3&4 training is delivery-ready; S1&2 content adapted iteratively.	Stronger MoEST ownership of the cascade; training aligned to the MoEST-approved calendar; HT/PEA modules link remediation to timetable protection.
Assessment & data use	Assessment was a standalone event; data was inconsistently used for grouping; data collection was burdensome for teachers.	Assessment repositioned as a continuous instructional tool; streamlined S3&4 protocols; S1&2 timing/form explored through Mchinji innovation cycles; ZEMIS officers trained across all districts.	Data flows from classroom to zone to district through structured review; accountability for data entry, validation and use is distributed across MoEST, not held by the project.
Mentoring & coaching	Observations were not focused; feedback was general; practice sessions used sample rather than real learners.	Coaching refocused on five observable routines (assessment accuracy, grouping, transitions, time-on-task, materials use);	Mentoring aligned with PEA/CPEA supervision routines, reducing parallel structures; actionable,

Thematic area	Pilot finding	Key change for scaling phase	System-level implication
		duration increased to 7 days (mentors)/6 days (teachers); MoEST co-selects/co-assesses trainers.	evidence-based feedback protocols strengthen the support chain.
Inclusion & safeguarding	Teachers lacked confidence/strategies for learners with disabilities; safeguarding was a separate, low-awareness project activity.	TLM package includes inclusive adaptations and low-cost substitutes; Inclusive Education Directorate engaged from the outset; safeguarding embedded in mentor training and monitoring visits.	Inclusive practice is observable and monitorable through mentor tools; programme reinforces (rather than duplicates) MoEST's existing frameworks.

3. Workplan

Implementation Stages

Stage / Period	Key Activities
Stage 1: Preparation & System Readiness (Apr-Jun 2026)	Entry meetings; validate district/zone selection and design through Taskforce; finalise training packages and assessment tools; train new National Trainer/Master Training (NT/MT) cohort; practice teaching/mentoring; print and distribute TLMs.
Stage 2: Training & Practice (Jul-Aug 2026)	Deliver mentor training (7 days) and teacher training (6 days, S3&S4); orient school leaders (HTs as mentors); train district teams in assessment verification, data entry and dashboard use.
Stage 3: Implementation Launch & Baseline (Sep 2026)	Practice classes; baseline learning assessments in 300 schools, incl. Impact Evaluation (IE) sample schools; begin daily remediation sessions; launch structured mentoring cycles.
Stage 4: Implementation, Monitoring & Midline Learning (Oct 2026-Mar 2027)	Ongoing implementation with routine mentoring/supervision; monthly Taskforce reviews; midline assessments (Mar 2027); begin drafting National Remediation Strategy; A/B testing in Mchinji District.
Stage 5: Consolidation, Transition & Scale-up Planning (Apr 2027-Mar 2028)	Refine materials/tools using midline data; national consolidation workshop (Jul 2027); finalise and submit National Remediation Strategy (May-Jun 2027); disseminate IE results; transition leadership to MoEST; close phase with final report (Mar 2028).

Key Deliverables

- Validated, scale-ready teaching and learning materials for S1 to S4.
- Baseline, midline and endline learning assessment datasets.
- Quarterly and annual progress reports aligned with FCDO requirements.
- A costed National Remediation Strategy (2027-2030) and Scale-up Plan.
- Strengthened MoEST systems for training, supervision, monitoring and data use.

Deliverables, Responsibilities and Timeline

Deliverable	Lead	Support	Timeline
Quarterly progress reports	SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST	Jul 2026; Oct 2026; Jan 2027; Apr 2027; Jul 2027; Oct 2027; Jan 2028
Scale-ready TLMs (S1-S4)	MoEST (DQAS, MIE)	SCALE Malawi Project Team	Jun 2026
Annual progress report	SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST	Apr 2027
School-level baseline assessments (MMR)	Districts/SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST (DQAS)	Sep 2026
Trained National & Master Trainers	MoEST (DQAS/DTED)	SCALE Malawi Project Team	Jun-Jul 2026
Trained teachers & mentors (300 schools)	MoEST (DQAS/DTED)	SCALE Malawi Project Team	Aug-Sep 2026

Deliverable	Lead	Support	Timeline
School-level midline assessments (MMR)	Districts/SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST (DQAS)	Dec 2026
School-level endline assessments (MMR)	Districts/SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST (DQAS)	Jun 2027
Scale and Sustainability Workshop	MoEST	SCALE Malawi Project Team, FCDO	Jul 2027
Adapted implementation model & materials (post-endline)	MoEST (Programme Taskforce)	SCALE Malawi Project Team	Jul 2027
Costed National Remediation Strategy (2027-2030)	MoEST	SCALE Malawi Project Team	Jul 2027
Final Programme Synthesis Report	SCALE Malawi Project Team	MoEST	Mar 2028

Routine baseline, midline and endline assessments listed above form part of the programme's MMR system and are distinct from the independently led IPA impact evaluation.

4. Systems Strengthening: Roles and Responsibilities

Six Pillars of Systems Strengthening

These are collective outcomes, led by MoEST and supported by the SCALE Malawi project team, that translate programme outputs into durable institutional change.

Pillar	What this looks like in the programme	Departments & officials targeted
1. Shared Vision & Priorities	MoEST leadership focuses clear efforts on the model as a national FLN priority; consensus built across directorates; champions advocate for adoption and resource allocation.	Secretary for Education Science and Technology (SEST); DQAS; Directorate of Basic Education; Directorate of Teacher Education; Directorate of Policy and Planning
2. System Architecture	Governance, accountability and operational processes established and maintained; DQAS-chaired Programme Taskforce as national coordination body; MMR dashboard embedded in MoEST infrastructure.	DQAS (Taskforce chair and QA oversight); DBE (school supervision accountability); DTED (CPD integration); District Education Managers (DEMs); Zonal Education Managers (ZEMs)
3. Enabling Environment	Coordination across national, district, zonal and school levels; termly District/Zonal Review Meetings; training calendars aligned to MoEST calendar; remediation timetabled and enforced.	DEMs (district coordination); ZEMs and PEAs/CPEAs (zonal supervision); Head Teachers (school-level coordination); Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), zonal offices and schools as training and coaching hubs
4. Data & Evidence	MMR system generates and uses data at every level; ZEMIS officers manage entry; assessment data integrated into EMIS; IPA evidence feeds Taskforce decision-making.	DQAS (data oversight and EMIS integration); ZEMIS officers (district data management); DEMs and ZEMs (data review and use); Planning Department (budget evidence use); IPA (independent evidence generation)
5. Technical Capacity	MoEST trainers, mentors, SEN specialists and school leaders can deliver remediation without external support; MoEST-certified training; TLM validation via DQAS.	DTED (CPD and in-service training frameworks); DQAS/MIE (TLM development, validation, and procurement); Teacher Service Commission (TSC) (teacher certification and deployment); National Trainers; Master Trainers; PEAs/CPEAs
6. Leadership & Routines	Officials at every level adopt leadership routines: HTs protect the remediation hour; PEAs mentor; DEMs chair reviews; Taskforce convenes monthly.	Head Teachers (timetabling, school-level leadership); PEAs/CPEAs/Deputy Heads/Section Heads (mentoring routines); DEMs/ZEMs (district review leadership); DQAS Taskforce (national accountability); Planning Department (sector planning alignment)

Government Partnerships, Advocacy and the Path to Adoption

Systems strengthening, government partnerships and advocacy are mutually reinforcing: systems strengthening builds capacity and generates the evidence and credibility that advocacy draws on; partnerships embed the programme in MoEST's governance architecture and create the access through which systems strengthening occurs; advocacy converts evidence into political and financial commitment. Champions across DBE, DQAS, Planning and DTED sustain adoption

momentum beyond the programme period. This mirrors what has proven durable in comparable TaRL programmes in other contexts: structured inter-directorate coordination, senior political champions, evidence converted into policy briefs, and a financing pathway linked to existing budget cycles.

Roles and Responsibilities Across Programme Phases

Leadership transfers from the SCALE Malawi Project Team to MoEST across three phases.

Level / Actor	Phase 1 (Apr-Dec 2026) SCALE Malawi Project Team Led	Phase 2 (Jan-Aug 2027) Joint Delivery	Phase 3 (Sep 2027-Dec 2027) MoEST Led
MoEST National (DQAS, DBE, DTED, MIE, Planning)	Co-chair Taskforce; validate design decisions; co-select/co-assess National Trainers.	DQAS chairs Taskforce, leads reviews using MMR data; MoEST leads presentations (incl. to LEG); NTs lead cascades without direct VVOB delivery.	DQAS independently leads Taskforce; presents evidence to ESWG; DTED owns training system and engages with TSC on credentialing process.
Zone Level (ZEMs, PEAs, CPEAs)	ZEMs co-chair Zonal Review Meetings; mentors trained, begin monthly visits; Master Trainers cascade training.	ZEMs independently facilitate reviews using zone data; PEAs/CPEAs mentor without project supervision; CPEAs lead refresher cascades.	PEA mentoring fully integrated into routine supervisory functions, no parallel structure; ZEMs include remediation in zonal planning.
School Level (HTs, Section Heads, Teachers)	HTs complete leadership module, begin mentoring; teachers deliver remediation daily and submit MMR data.	HTs and mentors lead school-based mentoring independently; teachers use data to regroup learners; SEN Specialists refer learners with disabilities.	Remediation routines (timetabling, grouping, assessment, MMR) fully embedded; safeguarding/GEDSI practice embedded in routine HT/teacher practice.
Governance Structures (Taskforce, Review Fora, TSC)	Taskforce constituted with agreed ToR, meets monthly; District Review Meetings operational in all 3 districts.	Taskforce (DQAS-chaired) reviews implementation independently and validates test-learn-adapt adaptations; National Remediation Strategy drafted with Planning/Finance input.	Taskforce validates the National Remediation Strategy; MoEST presents to World Bank; strategy aligned with NESIP for resource mobilisation.

Key Systems Strengthening Tasks by Phase (Core Domains)

Task Domain	Phase 1 (Apr-Dec 2026) SCALE Malawi Project Team Led	Phase 2 (Jan-Aug 2027) Joint Delivery	Phase 3 (Sep-Dec 2027) MoEST Led - Handover Priority
Training & CPD	Finalise practice-based training packages; train/certify first NT/MT cohort; train mentors/teachers across all 3 districts.	MoEST NTs lead all district cascades without direct delivery; VVOB quality-assures via observation; refresher training embedded termly.	DTED integrates training into in-service CPD framework and engages with TSC on NT/MT certification; cascade self-sustaining without project input.
Materials & Curriculum	DQAS/MIE begins co-led TLM validation; revised TLM package printed and distributed to all 300 schools.	DQAS/MIE finalises and approves the revised TLM package for 2027 onward; national procurement planning initiated.	DQAS/MIE owns TLM revision and procurement independently; curriculum integration formalised in timetable policy.
Assessment & Monitoring	MMR system built and tested; ZEMIS officers trained; baseline (Sep 2026) and midline (Dec 2026) assessments completed.	ZEMIS officers manage district-level MMR independently; midline/endline assessments completed and reviewed in district/national fora.	MMR fully integrated into EMIS; DQAS operates the dashboard without project support; IPA synthesises impact/cost-effectiveness evidence.
Governance & Accountability	Programme Taskforce constituted; district MOUs signed; landscape/political economy mapping completed.	Taskforce (DQAS-chaired) reviews monthly using MMR data independently; National Remediation Strategy drafting begins using evaluation evidence.	Taskforce validates and submits the model to GPE for adoption and scale; remediation included in annual MoEST work plans and budgets.

5. Key Results

Measurable short-term and long-term improvements are expected in foundational learning outcomes, teaching quality, government system capacity, equity and institutional ownership, directly aligned with the five programme objectives and the Theory of Change. Short-term results are tracked through the programme MMR system and the IPA independent evaluation (baseline, midline, endline); long-term results are evidenced through logframe milestones, cost-effectiveness analysis and post-programme assessment. All indicators are disaggregated by gender and disability status where applicable.

Objective / Outcome Area	Short-Term Results (within scaling phase)	Long-Term Results & Pathways to Scale (by/after Mar 2028)
Obj. 1 - Validated TLM package (S1-S4)	100% of TLMs validated as inclusive (MIE co-led); ≥90% of teachers report satisfaction; 300 schools receive complete grade-differentiated TLM sets before launch.	TLM package eligible for national MoEST procurement; government-owned, MIE-steered revision/procurement cycle established; integrated with the National Reading Programme and NMCR.
Obj. 2 - Practice-based cascade training fully MoEST-led	≥3,130 trainees complete training across 300 schools; ≥80% show knowledge improvement in post-training evaluation; 100% of Master Trainers can lead cascades without direct delivery by Jun 2027.	Trainers certified and embedded in ongoing CPD structures; practice-based training model documented and replicable without external TA.
Obj. 2 - Strengthened mentoring/supervision chain	100% of schools receive ≥1 structured mentoring visit per term; ≥75% of school-based mentors provide monthly structured mentoring.	Mentoring integrated into PEA/CPEA core functions; school-based mentor role institutionalised within MoEST school management framework.
Obj. 3 - Remediation integrated into MoEST governance/accountability	MoEST Taskforce (DQAS-chaired) convenes ≥4 national reviews/year using MMR evidence; ≥60% of design decisions formally informed by MEL findings; assessment tools and data systems co-owned by MoEST (DQAS, DTED, MIE).	Remediation embedded in MoEST planning, budgeting and accountability cycles; assessment cycle aligned with MoEST's national assessment calendar; adaptive management model formally adopted.
Obj. 3 - Scaling model validated and ready for national adoption	300 schools implementing validated model with fidelity across 3 districts; 100% of scaling roadmap milestones rated complete/in progress; independent IPA evaluation (baseline, midline, endline) completed in two new districts; cost-effectiveness analysis completed.	National Remediation Strategy (2027-2030) costed, validated and endorsed, for consideration under future GPE/World Bank-supported financing opportunities; evidence base sufficient for MoEST national adoption decision and GPE financing application; Malawi model documented and shared as an example of government-led remediation at scale.
Obj. 4 - Safeguarding embedded at school/district level	Safeguarding protocol operational across all 300 schools; ≥80% of school leaders complete the safeguarding module.	Safeguarding responsibility distributed across MoEST structures (HTs, PEAs, district child protection officers), not held by the project team.
Obj. 5 - Government-owned delivery architecture established and tested at scale	Three-tier accountability operational; remediation-hour protection rate ≥85%; phased TA transfer completed (MoEST-led phase fully operational by Jun 2027-Mar 2028).	National Remediation Strategy (2027-2030) endorsed by MoEST, costed and aligned with WB financing cycle; MoEST sustains functions within government budget.
Obj. 5 - Cost-effectiveness and scalability evidence generated	Cost per learner calculated via IPA analysis in the two new districts; scalability assessment completed across 3 districts; financing mapping (GPE, WB, domestic) completed.	Cost-effectiveness (\$ per SD gain) comparable to or better than regional benchmarks; costed roll-out model embedded in MoEST's NESIP and WB grant application.

6. MEL Framework and Evidence Architecture

The MEL and VfM framework are designed around a single purpose: generating the evidence needed to answer the pilot's central scaling question – whether a TaRL-informed, contextualised remediation model can be delivered with fidelity, cost-effectiveness and equity through MoEST systems at scale, without continued external support. It moves from delivery evidence → implementation optimisation → system validation → national adoption, ensuring scale decisions are evidence-based and owned by MoEST beyond the project period.

The framework integrates five complementary evidence streams into a single adaptive architecture aligned to the Logical Framework and Theory of Change, each governed through MoEST-led structures rather than parallel project mechanisms.

Evidence Stream	Data Generated	Optimisation Function	Primary Owner
Stream 1 - Routine MMR (school → district → national)	Remediation-hour protection; time-on-task; absenteeism; grouping fidelity; inclusion coverage; mentor visit frequency.	Real-time identification of fidelity gaps; triggers targeted school	MoEST (DQAS/district teams); ZEMIS officers; school-based mentors

Evidence Stream	Data Generated	Optimisation Function	Primary Owner
		support and district corrective action.	
Stream 2 - IPA Independent Impact Evaluation	Learning gains in the two new districts (literacy & numeracy, S3&S4), disaggregated by gender/disability; baseline, midline, endline vs. comparison schools; fidelity/absenteeism data.	Validates that gains are attributable to the model; identifies which subgroups benefit most; informs targeted adaptation.	IPA (independent); shared with MoEST Taskforce and FCDO via the Research Working Group
Stream 3 - Cost-Effectiveness & Scalability Analysis	Cost per learner reached and per learner achieving proficiency; cost breakdown by component; national scenario modelling.	Identifies highest-value components; models cost reduction as government absorbs delivery functions.	IPA (cost-effectiveness); VVOB (financial data); MoEST Planning Directorate
Stream 4 - Test-Learn-Adapt (TLA) Cycles	Structured learning questions answered through targeted data collection, A/B comparisons and pause-and-reflect reviews at key milestones.	Enables real-time adaptation before scale-up; tests specific implementation hypotheses; generates operational learning.	IPA (TLA design & facilitation); VVOB & TaRL Africa (implementation adaptation); MoEST Taskforce (decisions)
Stream 5 - GEDSI-Disaggregated Equity Monitoring	Participation/progression by gender and disability status; safeguarding compliance; inclusion coverage; qualitative insights.	Flags systematic exclusion; drives inclusive adaptations to materials, training and grouping.	MoEST (MMR dashboard); IPA (equity disaggregation in the IE); MIE gender and SEN units

IPA's Dual Role: Independent Evaluation and Real-Time Evidence for Scale

IPA sits at the centre of two connected but distinct functions. **First**, as independent evaluator, IPA leads the impact evaluation in the two new scale-up districts – measuring learning gains, effect sizes by gender and disability status, and delivery fidelity against comparison schools, with findings shared with MoEST Taskforce and FCDO through the Research Working Group. **Second**, as **TLA partner**, IPA co-designs and facilitates the Test-Learn-Adapt cycles that run throughout implementation (not only at endline): defining learning questions jointly with the Taskforce, providing methodological input and analytical facilitation as evidence is synthesised, and supporting the Taskforce to make validated, evidence-based adaptation decisions in real time. This second function is what allows the programme to adapt continuously rather than only learn retrospectively, and it is central to how the scale model is designed, tested and refined.

TLA governance runs through the existing MoEST Taskforce: learning activities are jointly defined (with IPA providing methodological input and facilitation) aligned to programme milestones and logframe indicators; evidence is collected through the MMR system, assessment data, mentor observation records and targeted qualitative data collection; findings are synthesised through the Taskforce (with IPA providing analytical facilitation and quality assurance); and the Taskforce makes adaptation decisions based on validated findings, with VVOB and TaRL Africa supporting implementation of the changes. Adaptation decisions and their rationale are documented for the national model and learning agenda.

7. Value for Money

VfM is a core design principle embedded in the delivery model and MEL framework, aligned with FCDO's 5Es framework: only models that are demonstrably effective, cost-efficient and equitable will be embedded in the national model and strategy for scale-up.

VfM Dimension	What We Are Measuring	Design Choices That Drive Value	How Evidence Is Used
Economy	Cost per TLM set; cost per training day per trainee; cost per mentoring visit; cost of MMR system maintenance.	Leveraging existing MoEST resources (TTCs, ZEMIS officers, PEAs/ZEMs as mentors); low-cost TLM substitutes; cascaded training eliminates per-trainer cost at scale.	Tracked by VVOB finance team; compared to pilot baseline and regional benchmarks (Zambia ≈ US\$5.50/learner); informs cost reduction for the national model.
Efficiency	Trainees certified per training day; schools reached per PEA mentor; assessments submitted per collection cycle; MoEST-led vs VVOB-led activity ratio.	Cascade model multiplies training reach without proportional cost increase; school-based mentors extend coverage at zero marginal cost.	Efficiency ratios tracked termly; MoEST-led activity % reported as a proxy for cost-efficiency of ownership transfer; TLA Phase 3 models minimum viable supervision package.

VfM Dimension	What We Are Measuring	Design Choices That Drive Value	How Evidence Is Used
Effectiveness	Learning gains (SD improvement) per US\$ invested; % of learners reaching grade-level proficiency; effect sizes by gender, disability and baseline level.	Practice-based, narrow-scope training targets highest-leverage routines; protecting the remediation hour maximises instructional time per learner.	IPA endline provides the cost-effectiveness ratio, compared to other remediation programme evidence; cost per SD gain informs the WB/GPE financing case.
Equity	Learning gains/participation by gender and disability status; inclusion coverage rate; proportion of lowest-level learners in level-appropriate groups.	GEDSI-disaggregated MMR dashboard flags exclusion; inclusive TLM adaptations; SEN training embedded in modules.	Equity indicators are non-negotiable thresholds for the national model; models with systematic gaps are not endorsed without adaptation.
Equity-in-Reach	Proportion of schools in high-poverty/remote zones; geographic distribution; proportion of below-grade-level learners reached.	District selection prioritises high-need areas; three-district design tests the model across varied contexts.	Scalability assessment includes equity-in-reach analysis; the scale-ready model specifies targeting criteria for national expansion.

Cost-Effectiveness Evidence and Benchmarks

TaRL approaches have consistently delivered learning gains of 0.1-0.3 standard deviations per learner across contexts. A large-scale RCT in Zambia, implemented through government systems, demonstrated significant learning gains in both literacy and numeracy at scale. In Ghana, the cost per child for a government-integrated TaRL model was approximately US\$5.50, driven primarily by teacher training; in Zambia's Catch-Up programme, delivery costs were US\$9.63 per learner over two years - US\$6.83 per 0.1 SD (literacy) and US\$9.00 per 0.1 SD (mathematics). This programme's cost-effectiveness analysis will generate the first rigorous cost-per-SD estimate for a government-owned TaRL model in Malawi.

The design choices most likely to drive cost-effectiveness are: 1) the MoEST-led cascade model, eliminating incremental external training delivery costs; 2) integrating mentoring/supervision into PEA/ZEM routine functions, eliminating parallel supervision cost; 3) the progressive transfer of MMR management to ZEMIS officers, eliminating the data management cost currently carried by VVOB; and 4) the essential TLM package, reducing per-school materials cost while maintaining fidelity. IPA's TLA Phase 3 analysis will model the cost trajectory under these assumptions, providing a validated unit cost range for the national scale-up model.

VfM Decision Points

Decision Point	VfM Evidence Reviewed	Adaptation Decisions Available
Pre-Launch Verification (Jun 2026)	TLM unit costs vs procurement plan; training cost per trainee vs budget; district selection cost implications.	Adjust TLM quantities/sourcing; revise training modality (residential vs hub-based).
Post-Baseline Review (Oct 2026)	Training cost per certified MT; TLM delivery cost/timing; baseline implementation cost tracking initiated.	Rationalise training components with low knowledge-gain returns; accelerate/delay TLM revision.
Midline Learning Review (Apr-Jun 2027)	Cost per learner reached; preliminary cost per SD estimate; supervision cost breakdown; A/B testing results.	Scale back or intensify supervision based on evidence; adjust TLM package; initiate three-scenario national cost modelling.
Endline Consolidation (Sep-Dec 2027)	Final cost per SD gain; cost-effectiveness ratio vs regional benchmarks; total cost per learner (government-owned vs externally managed).	Validate national strategy and cost modelling; confirm WB/GPE financing envelope; identify further cost reduction for national rollout.

8. Theory of Change

The scaling phase tests a single, central hypothesis: that a TaRL-informed, contextualised remediation model – grounded in the assess-group-teach-at-level instructional sequence – can be delivered with fidelity, cost-effectiveness and equity through MoEST systems at scale, without dependence on continued external support. The pathway to impact proceeds through three reinforcing mechanisms:

- **Improved classroom practice:** better assessment tools, contextualised materials and practice-based training equip teachers to deliver level-appropriate instruction with reduced burden and higher fidelity.
- **Strengthened government systems:** MoEST-led governance, cascaded training, mentoring and data-driven review translate school-level improvements into durable institutional capacity, not project-dependent delivery.
- **Evidence-to-policy transition:** an independent external evaluation and structured Test-Learn-Adapt cycles – with IPA generating and feeding real-time evidence into implementation, not only assessing it retrospectively – produce the operational, cost and system-level evidence required for MoEST’s national adoption decision, GPE/WB financing, and the costed National Remediation Strategy (2027-2030).

Theory of Change statement: *If Malawi’s MoEST integrates structured, level-appropriate remediation into routine school practice, and builds the systems (training, supervision, materials and data use) to deliver it with fidelity at scale, then learners – especially those furthest behind – will improve foundational literacy and numeracy, and Malawi will have a cost-effective, government-owned model ready for national scale-up.*

Results Chain (Condensed)

Inputs	Outputs (by end of scaling phase)	Short-Term Outcomes (during scaling phase)	Medium-Term Outcomes (by/after Mar 2028)	Impact (long-term goal)	Impact Indicators (IPA evaluation)
Differentiated S1&S2 and streamlined S3&S4 assessment tools; revised TLM package with inclusive adaptations; strengthened training packages; phased VVOB/TaRL Africa TA (lead-demonstrate → joint → MoEST-led)	Scale-ready, MoEST-endorsed assessment package; validated, curriculum-aligned TLM package; MoEST Trainers certified to lead cascades independently; strengthened mentoring/supervision model	Teachers deliver remediation with higher fidelity (accurate assessment, appropriate grouping, more small-group/individual instruction, reduced loss of instructional time); assessment faster and more consistent	MoEST independently leads training, TLM validation, monitoring and review, integrated into CPD, assessment and school management routines; % cascades led by MoEST without direct delivery	Improved foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes for learners in Standards 1-4, particularly those furthest behind, through sustainable adoption of a government-owned, scalable, inclusive remediation model.	Learning gains (endline vs baseline, programme vs comparison); effect size by gender/disability; cost-effectiveness (\$ per SD gain)

Key Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation	Monitoring Trigger
Teacher absenteeism undermines implementation fidelity	Three-tier accountability (HT timetabling; PEA/ZEM supervision; MoEST Taskforce oversight); classroom support and handover protocols agreed at school level.	Monthly MMR: remediation-hour protection rate below 75% triggers Taskforce review
MoEST staffing instability disrupts cascade ownership	Roles anchored in institutional structures (DQAS, DBE, DTED, MIE), not individuals; training documentation supports continuity.	Taskforce composition and attendance tracked termly
TLM printing/distribution delays constrain delivery	Pre-planned procurement with district-level tracking; minimum materials defined for fidelity; low-cost local substitutes included.	Distribution verification before implementation launch
Political/administrative instability disrupts continuity	MoEST-led governance reduces single-actor dependency; IPA evaluation evidence secured at each cycle for independent use.	Taskforce reviews context regularly; contingency protocol agreed with FCDO
GPE/WB financing pathway does not materialise	National Remediation Strategy aligned to MoEST and GPE/WB planning cycle from outset; cost-effectiveness evidence strengthens the case; FCDO engagement.	Strategy presented to GPE/WB by Q3 2027; alternative financing mapped