

Annex D. Summary of the Early Grade Reading Materials Survey in Malawi



Geography and Demographics

Size:	118,484 square kilometers (km ²)
Population:	18 million (2015)
Capital:	Lilongwe
Urban:	16% (2015)
Administrative Divisions:	28 districts
Religion:	83% Christian 13% Muslim 3% None 2% Other

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2015).

Note: Population and percentages are rounded.

Literacy

Projected 2015 Literacy Rates: ^a	Overall	Male	Female	2013 Primary School Age Population (aged 6–11 years): ^a	2.8 million
Adult (aged >15 years)	66%	73%	59%	2013 Primary School GER: ^a	141%, up from 137% in 1999
Youth (aged 15–24 years)	75%	75%	75%	2013 Pre-primary School GER:	Data unavailable
Sample EGRA Results ^b	Language:	Chichewa		Oral Reading Fluency:	Mean: 15.4 correct words per minute
	When:	2012			Standard deviation: 1.2
	Where:	Nationwide			39% zero scores
	Who:	1,854 P4 students		Reading Comprehension:	0% reading with ≥80% comprehension

Notes: EGRA = Early Grade Reading Assessment; GER = Gross Enrollment Rate; P4 = Primary Grade 4. Percentages are rounded.

^a Source: UNESCO (2015).

^b Source: Pouezevara et al. (2013).

Language

Number of Living Languages: ^a 16		
Major Languages ^b	Estimated Population ^c	Government Recognized Status
English	16,000 (L1) (1993) 540,000 (L2) (2003)	de facto “official” language
Chichewa	6,500,000 (L1) (2009)	de facto LWC
Tumbuka	1,180,000 (L1) (2009)	None
Yao	1,760,000 (L1) (2009)	None
Lomwe (Malawi)	2,290,000 (L1) (2009)	None
Nyakyusa–Ngonde	149,000 (L1) (2009)	None
Sena (Malawi)	468,000 (L1) (2009)	None
Kokola	200,000 (L1) (2000)	None
Tonga	271,000 (L1) (2009)	None

Note: L1 = first language; L2 = second language; LWC = language of wider communication.
^a Source: Lewis et al. (2015).
^b Most languages go by several different names; several languages have the same name. In case of confusion, refer to the *Ethnologue* at www.ethnologue.com (Lewis et al., 2015).
^c Source: Lewis et al. (2015). The date of the speaker population estimate is given in parenthesis when available.

Malawi Findings in Brief:

In 2013, Malawi changed the language in education policy to require English as the language of instruction at all levels; however, in practice, Chichewa, one of the official languages and the dominant language of wider communication, continues to be used heavily in Primary Grades 1 through 4. The study surveyed 354 titles. The data set is characterized by the overwhelming dominance of Chichewa language materials (308 titles [87 percent]), leaving the other major languages with only a handful of titles each, if any at all. The publishers of the surveyed materials were approximately split between domestic government entities and faith-based organizations, each producing approximately one-third of the overall inventory, whereas commercial publishers were much less involved. Of the surveyed titles, a large majority (315 [89 percent]) were copyrighted, with 32 titles (nine percent) granting permissions for reuse under specific conditions, including 23 titles (six percent) by the Malawi Institute of Education that were licensed under Creative Commons. Although supplementary materials outnumbered textbook-related materials in most of the countries in the survey, the ratio in Malawi was greater than four supplementary materials for every textbook, and narrative texts alone constituted more than half of the inventory. However, similar to other countries in the survey, the Malawian materials were characterized by a lack of pre-primary materials and a high percentage of supplementary texts with greater than 75 words per page. In general, a low incidence of potentially sensitive content and gender and ethnic/religious imbalance was observed. However, persons with disabilities were not frequently featured in the illustrations of the materials surveyed.

1. Language in Education Policy in Malawi

The language in education policy in Malawi has vacillated between multilingualism and monolingualism. During the colonial period, particularly in the lower primary grades, Chichewa was used as the primary language of instruction (LOI) in the central and southern regions, and Tumbuka was employed in the northern region. After independence, Chichewa was elevated to the status of “national” language and prescribed as the only medium of instruction in the lower Primary Grades 1–4 (Chilora, 2000). In 1996, following the move to a multiparty political system in 1994, the Malawi Government changed the policy to allow for the use of the local “mother tongues” as the LOIs in Primary Grades 1–4, with a transition to English in Primary Grade 5 (Secretary for Education’s letter, reference number IN/2/14, March 28 1996 as cited in Issa and Yamada, 2013).

In 2014, the Minister of Education announced that English was to become the LOI beginning in Primary Grade 1, in accordance with the new Education Act passed in 2013 (Masina, 2014). However, the National Reading Strategy (2014–2019) of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) still promotes reading and language development in both English and Chichewa for children enrolled in early primary grades (Malawi MoEST, 2014). Chichewa continues to serve as the main LOI for Primary Grades 1–4 (Issa and Yamada, 2013).

2. Data Collection

The data collectors surveyed a total of 354 titles from 33 stakeholders, visiting each of the country’s publishing centers, including Mzuzu in the North, Lilongwe in the Central region, and Blantyre, Zomba, and Balaka in the South. The data collectors obtained 200 of those titles (56 percent) directly from the publishers.

3. Findings

A. Availability of Materials for Early Grade Reading in Malawian Languages

Materials by Language

The data collectors surveyed 354 titles written in seven different languages: six African and one European (English), as shown in **Table D-1**. Chichewa was by far the most common language encountered, featured in 309 titles (87 percent).

Each of the major languages in Malawi was represented in the survey except for Nyakyusa-Ngonde and Tonga, which have estimated populations of 300,000 and 170,000, respectively (Lewis et al., 2015). Despite the language in education policy that was in place from 1996 through 2013, which stated that “mother tongues” should be the LOIs in the lower primary grades, all of the other Malawian languages besides Chichewa were vastly underrepresented in the materials compared to Chichewa.

¹ In Malawi, the primary grades are referred to as “standards.”

One title was written in Chichewa using Arabic script; all of the other titles used a Latin-based script. The surveyed materials included eight bilingual titles: seven of them were Chichewa-English, and one was Yao-English. Because the focus of the study was on African languages, English titles were not targeted unless they appeared bilingually beside an African language.

Table D-1. Languages in Which Materials Were Found in Malawi

Language ^a	Language ISO 639-3 Code ^b	Estimated Speaker Population in Malawi ^c	Titles per Language	Percentage of Titles Surveyed ^d
1 Chichewa	nya	6,500,000 (2009)	309	87.3%
2 Tumbuka	tum	1,180,000 (2009)	18	5.1%
3 Yao	yao	1,760,000 (2009)	14	4.0%
4 Lomwe (Malawi)	lon	2,290,000 (2009)	10	2.8%
5 English	eng	16,000 (L1) (1993) 540,000 (L2) (2003)	8	2.3%
6 Sena (Malawi)	swk	468,000 (2009)	2	0.6%
7 Kokola	kzn	200,000 (2000)	1	0.3%

Note: ISO = International Organization for Standardization; L1=first language; L2= second language.

^a Most languages go by several different names; several languages have the same name. In case of confusion, refer to the *Ethnologue* at www.ethnologue.com (Lewis et al., 2015). Language/dialect distinctions that have been assigned separate ISO codes are provided in parentheses.

^b ISO 639-3 is a code that aims to define three-letter identifiers for all known human languages (SIL International, 2015).

^c Source: Lewis et al. (2015). Dates for the speaker population estimates vary by language.

^d Due to bilingual titles, the total will surpass 100%.

Types of Materials

Table D-2 details the types of materials found by language. Key observations include the following:

- 66 titles (19 percent) were textbooks or related materials, and 288 (81 percent) were non-textbooks.
- Student literacy textbooks were the most common subtype of textbook-related materials (52 titles [79 percent]); these textbooks outnumbered teacher’s guides (12 titles [18 percent]) by more than a 4:1 ratio. The data collectors found only two student literacy workbooks (3 percent).
- Narrative texts were the most common subtype of the supplementary materials (183 [64 percent]); informational texts were also common (101 [35 percent]).

Table D-2. Number of Different Types of Materials Found, by Language

Languages ^a	Textbook Related					Non-textbook/Supplementary						Total	Percentage of Total Titles
	Student Literacy Textbook	Student Literacy Workbook	Literacy Teacher's Guide	Subtotal	Percentage of Total Titles	Narrative	Informational	Reference	Poetry, etc.	Subtotal	Percentage of Total Titles		
Chichewa	43	2	7	52	14.7%	151	96	2	1	250	70.6%	302	85.3%
Chichewa/English	2	—	4	6	1.7%	1	—	—	—	1	0.3%	7	2.0%
Kokola	1	—	—	1	0.3%	—	—	—	—	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
Lomwe	—	—	—	0	0.0%	10	—	—	—	10	2.8%	10	2.8%
Sena	—	—	—	0	0.0%	2	—	—	—	2	0.6%	2	0.6%
Tumbuka	3	—	—	3	0.8%	10	5	—	—	15	4.2%	18	5.1%
Yao	3	—	1	4	1.1%	9	—	—	—	9	2.5%	13	3.7%
Yao/English	—	—	—	0	0.0%	—	—	1	—	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
Total	52	2	12	66	18.6%	183	101	3	1	288	81.4%	354	100.0%

Note: Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% because of rounding.

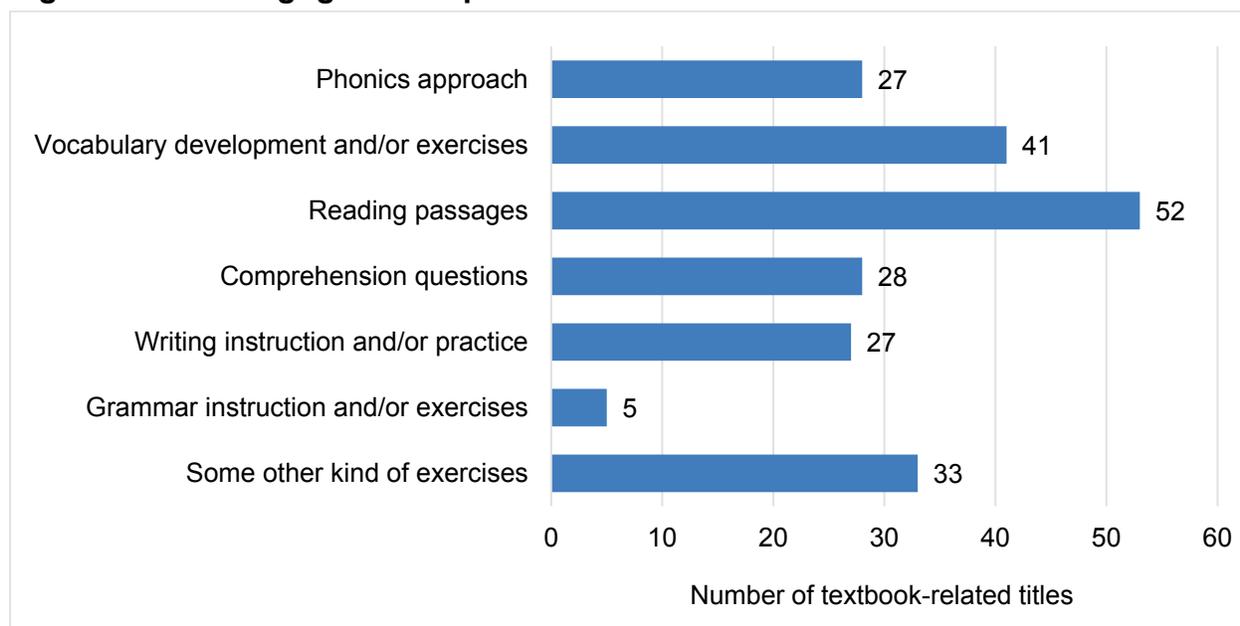
^a Languages are presented in alphabetical order. Most languages go by several different names; several languages have the same name. In case of confusion, refer to the language International Organization for Standardization (ISO) code and the *Ethnologue* at www.ethnologue.com.

B. Usefulness of Available Materials for Early Grade Children

Pedagogical Components of Textbooks

The data collectors analyzed the 66 textbook-related materials with regard to their pedagogical components. As shown in **Figure D-1**, the most common component was reading passages, with 52 titles (79 percent). The least common component was grammar instruction and/or exercises, with five titles [8 percent]). Fewer than half of the materials (27 [41 percent]) used what could be construed as a phonics approach to reading instruction.²

Figure D-1. Pedagogical components in textbook-related materials



Note: Multiple responses were possible per title.

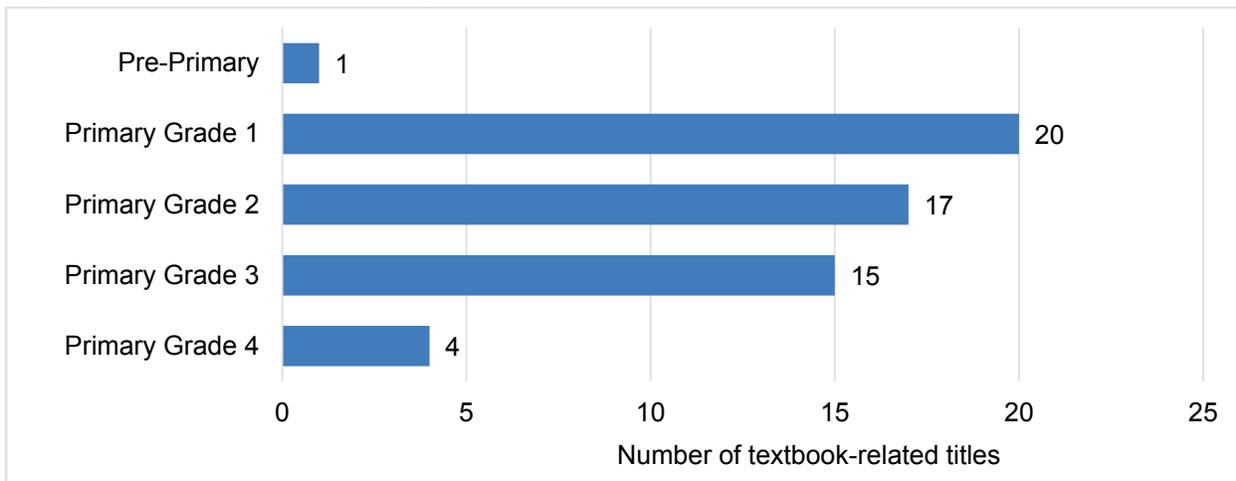
Level

Designated Textbook Levels

Out of the 66 textbook-related titles examined, 56 (85 percent) were explicitly designated for a specific grade level in the formal education sector, with the highest number for Primary Grade 1 (**Figure D-2**). The data collectors found only one title (two percent) labeled for a pre-primary level. Although the survey targeted kindergarten through Grade 3 materials, the data collectors included materials that were designated for higher primary grades if they judged them to be potentially useful in lower grades. In this case, the data collectors included four titles (six percent) that were designated for Primary Grade 4.

² A “phonics approach” focuses on the connection between the written letters and the sounds they represent in speech. Phonics approaches may include exercises involving sound recognition and manipulation, blending sounds into syllables or words, and segmenting syllables and words into individual sounds.

Figure D-2. Publisher-designated levels for textbook-related materials



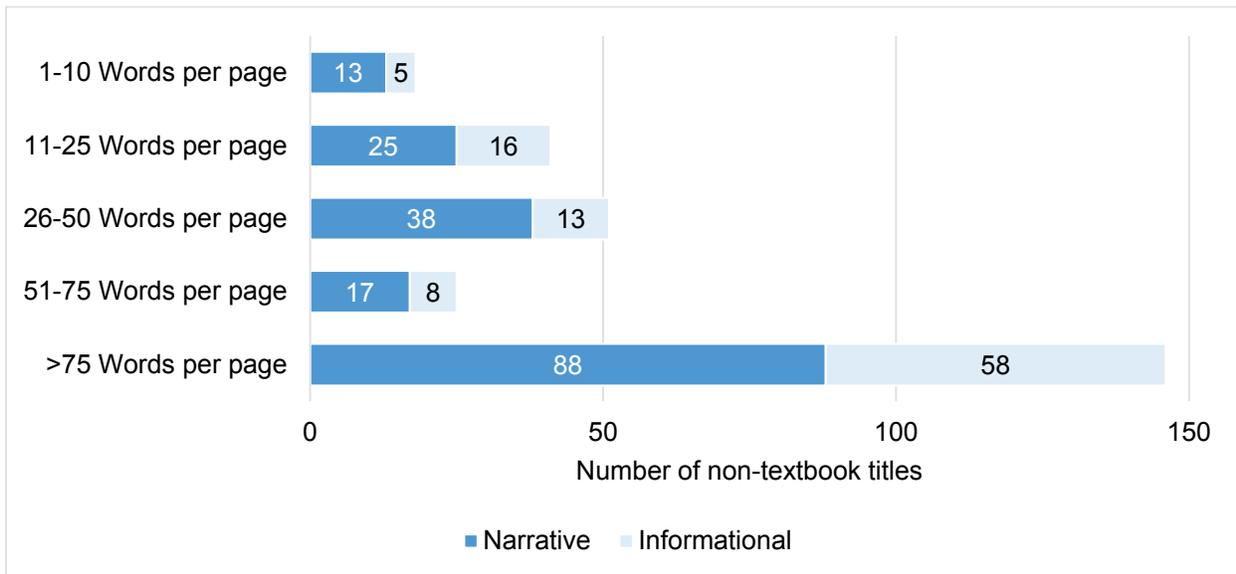
Note: Multiple responses were possible per title.

Non-textbook Levels

Because supplementary materials were not expected to be labeled for a particular grade level in most cases, the data collectors used a count of the maximum words per page (wpp) to serve as an approximate proxy for relative reading difficulty levels. This calculation was performed for 281 narrative and informational texts.

As shown in **Figure D-3**, the majority of the supplementary titles (146 [52 percent]) contained more than 75 wpp, the most advanced of the words per page range options. Relatively few titles were found at all of the lower levels.

Figure D-3. Number of narrative and informational non-textbook titles by maximum words per page

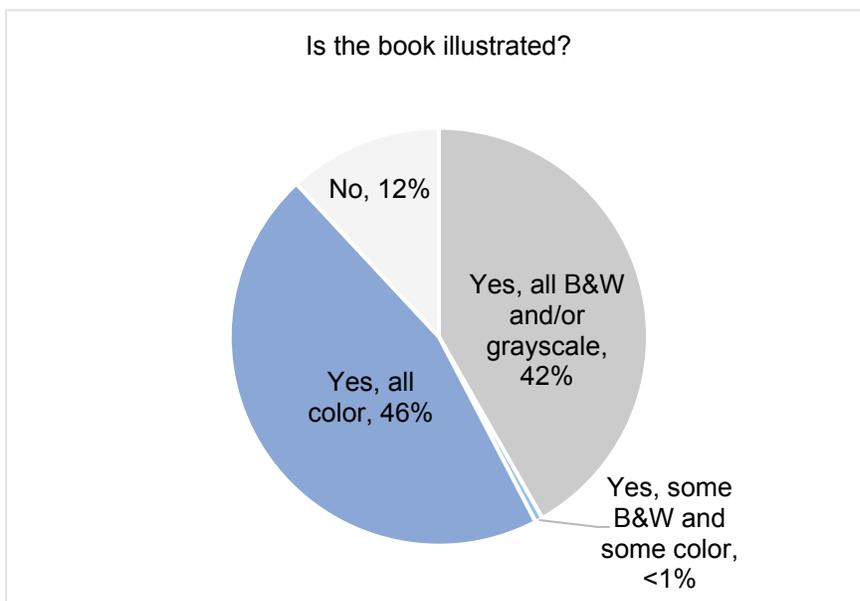


Note: This calculation was not conducted for poetry or reference titles.

Illustrations

Of the 354 materials surveyed, the vast majority of titles were illustrated; only 43 (12 percent) were not (**Figure D-4**). Illustrations in full color (164 titles [46 percent]) and in black and white and/or grayscale (147 titles [42 percent]) were used in almost equal proportions.

Figure D-4. Presence and type of illustrations



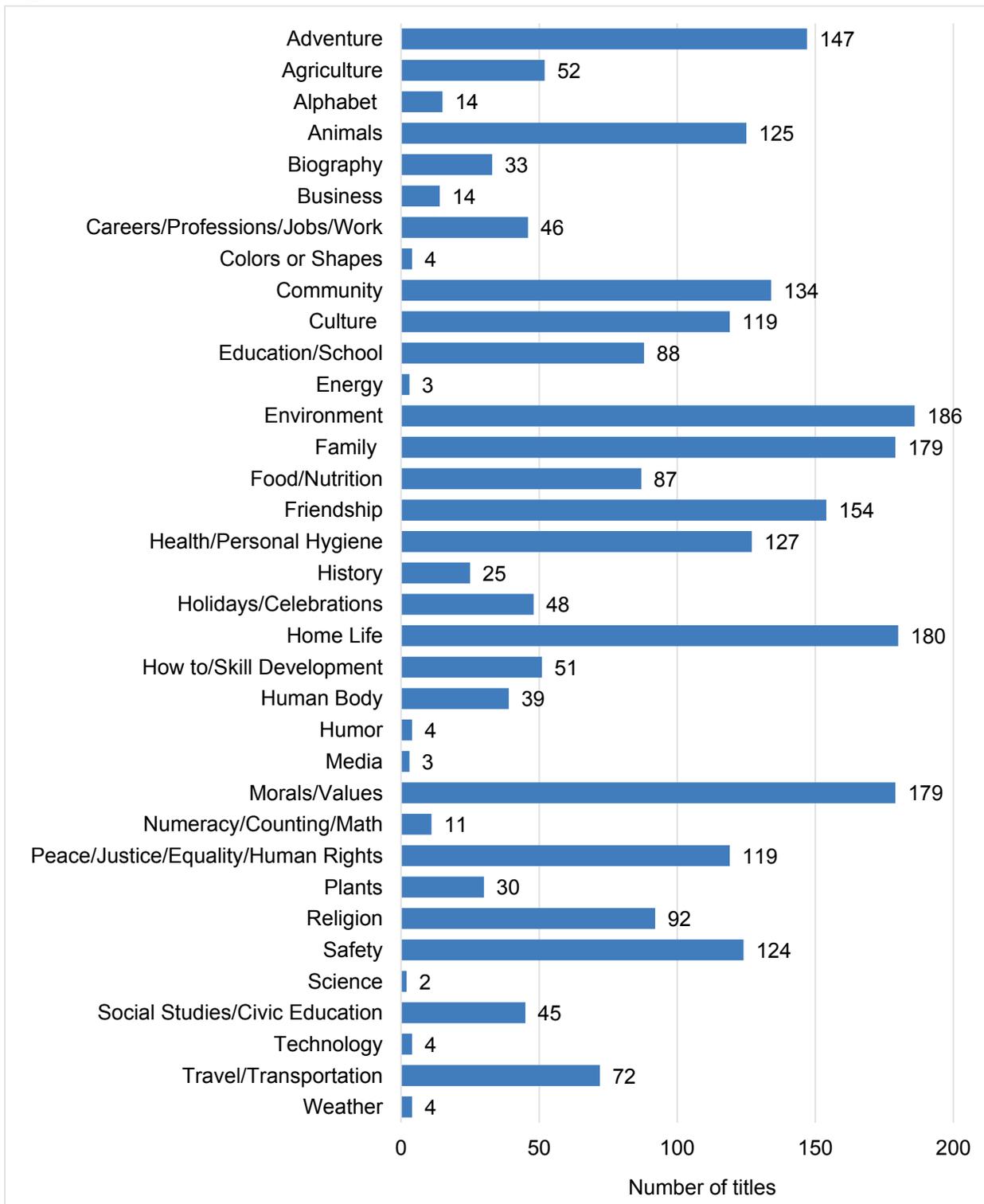
Content Themes

The data collectors examined 339 of the titles for content themes, excluding teacher’s guides and reference materials. The data collectors skimmed the texts and/or illustrations and checked off the most prominent themes featured from a set list. The data collectors could select any number of themes because no limits were set for the minimum and maximum numbers. The number of titles tagged for each theme is presented in **Figure D-5**.

The most common theme was environment, appearing in 186 titles (55 percent), followed closely by home life (180 [53 percent]), family (179 [53 percent]), and morals/values (179 [53 percent]). The least common topics found in the surveyed titles were energy and media (each with three titles [one percent]) and science with two titles (one percent).

Of the 339 titles examined for content, 92 (27 percent) contained explicitly religious content. Of these, 89 (97 percent) featured Christianity and eight (nine percent) Islam. Some titles contained content related to both religions.

Figure D-5. Content themes



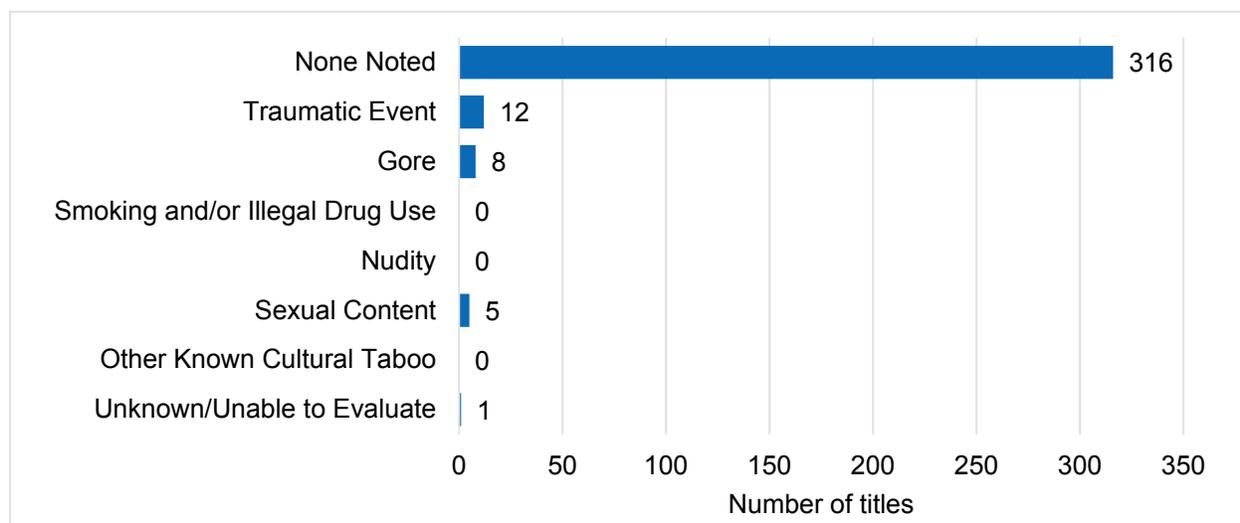
Note: Multiple responses were possible per title.

Content Familiarity and Appropriateness

The data collectors analyzed 339 titles for the familiarity of the content for the target audience (i.e., a typical child who is a native speaker of the language of publication). Teacher’s guides and reference materials were excluded from this item. The data collectors judged 301 titles (89 percent) as containing “very familiar” content and 32 (nine percent) as containing “semi-familiar” content. The data collectors did not find any materials that they judged to be “mostly unfamiliar” to the target audience. The data collectors were unable to evaluate six titles (two percent) regarding the familiarity of the content.

The data collectors also examined the illustrations of these 339 titles for any potentially sensitive content such as traumatic events, gore, smoking and/or illegal drug use, nudity, or other known cultural taboos. The data collectors did not find any potentially sensitive content for the large majority of the titles examined (316 [93 percent]). The only types of content flagged for their potentially sensitive nature were traumatic events (12 titles [four percent]), gore (eight [two percent]), and sexual content (five [one percent]) (**Figure D-6**).

Figure D-6. Potentially sensitive content in the illustrations



Note: Multiple responses were possible per title.

Frequency and Equality of Representation

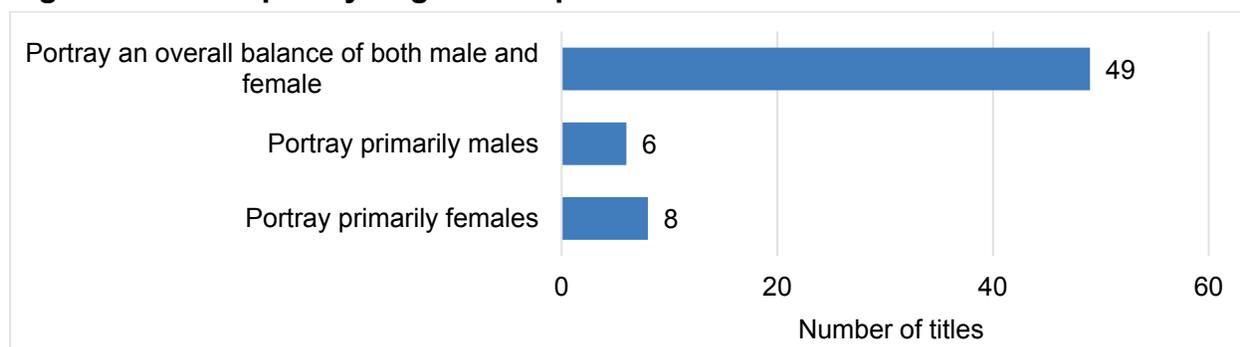
The data collectors examined a subset of 73 titles regarding the frequency and equality of representation of people in the illustrations according to gender, ethnic or religious group identity, and disability. The data collectors did not evaluate all titles for these questions; exclusions included teacher’s guides, reference materials, and titles that were not illustrated with humans or anthropomorphic animals.

Gender

The data collectors evaluated the illustrations in 73 titles for the frequency of representation of each gender. In 10 titles, gender was not apparent. Of the remaining 63 titles, the data collectors determined that 49 titles (78 percent) portrayed an overall balance of both genders, six (10 percent) featured primarily males, and eight (13 percent) featured primarily females (**Figure D-7**).

The data collectors evaluated 50 titles for which there was sufficient basis to compare whether the genders were depicted “with equal skills, knowledge, accomplishments, or roles.” Of those titles, they judged that only one (two percent) portrayed the genders unequally.

Figure D-7. Frequency of gender representation in the illustrations

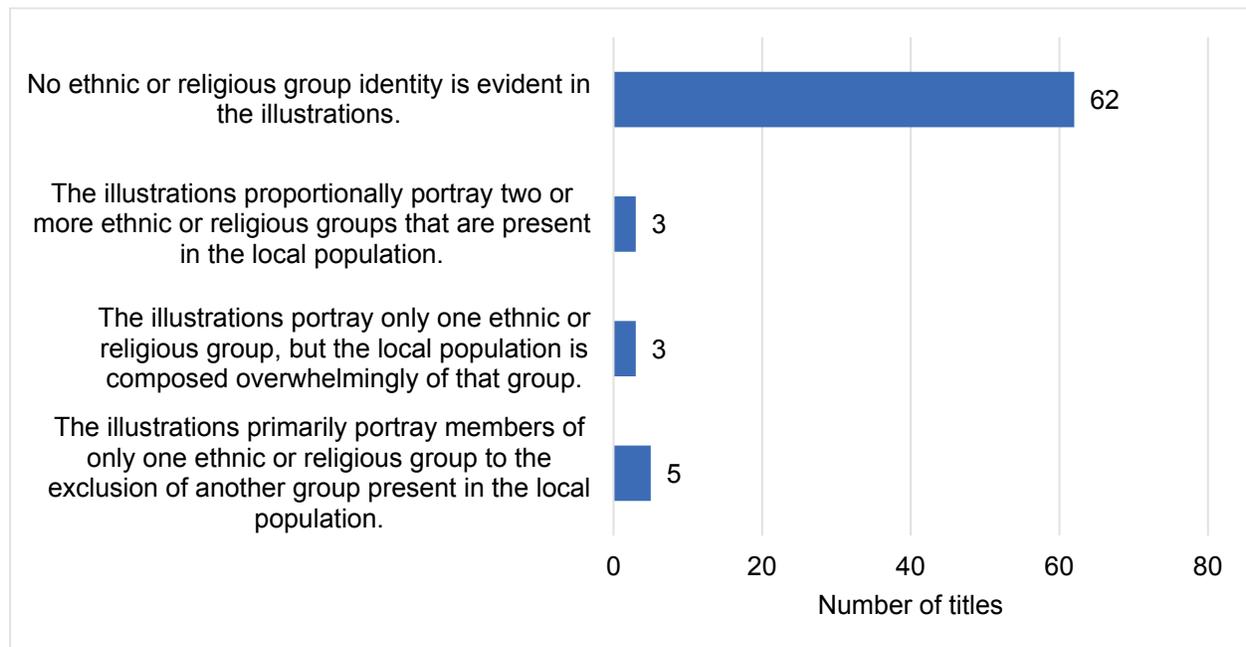


Ethnic and Religious Group Identity

In addition, the data collectors examined 73 illustrated titles for their portrayals of ethnic and religious groups (**Figure D-8**). Most (62 [85 percent]), of the illustrated titles did not portray identifiable ethnic or religious groups. Of the remaining titles, five (seven percent) were perceived to portray one ethnic or religious group to the exclusion of other groups present in the local population. All five of these titles contained religious content that focused on either Christianity or Islam to the exclusion of other religions.

For the overwhelming majority of titles, the data collectors judged that there was an insufficient basis for the comparison of the portrayal, if any, of ethnic or religious groups in the illustrations. The data collectors were able to evaluate only seven titles (10 percent) for the question of whether different ethnic or religious groups were depicted “with equal skills, knowledge, accomplishments, or roles.” Of those titles, the data collectors judged that four titles (57 percent) portrayed different groups in this manner; three (43 percent) did not.

Figure D-8. Frequency of ethnic/religious group representation in the illustrations

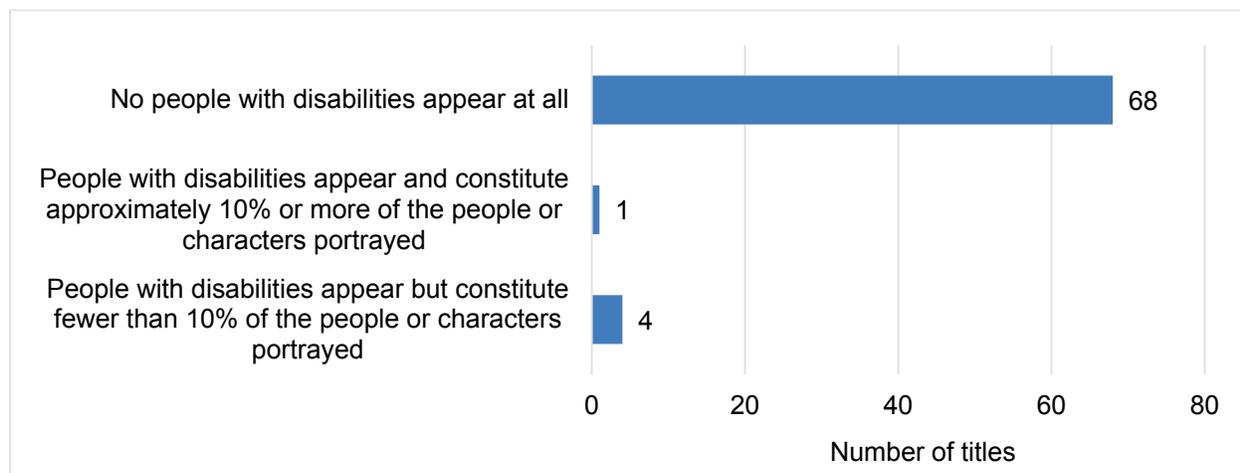


Disability

The data collectors also examined the illustrations in these 73 titles for the frequency of representation of people with disabilities. Overwhelmingly, the materials surveyed lacked any illustrations of people with disabilities (**Figure D-9**); this group appeared in just five (seven percent) of the 73 titles.

For the five titles in which people with disabilities were portrayed at all, the data collectors judged three of the materials (60 percent) as portraying people with disabilities “with skills, knowledge, accomplishments, and roles that are typically attributed to those without disabilities.”

Figure D-9. Frequency of the representation of people with disabilities in the illustrations



C. Feasibility of Reusing, Adapting, and Reproducing Available Titles

Copyright, Restrictions, and Permissions

Of the 354 titles surveyed, 290 (82 percent) were copyrighted. Fewer than half of the titles contained an explicit statement concerning restrictions or permissions for reuse. However, 88 titles (25 percent) included a statement equivalent to “All Rights Reserved,” 25 titles (seven percent) were licensed under Creative Commons, and six titles (two percent) granted permissions for noncommercial use. The titles licensed under Creative Commons used the CC-BY type of license, which grants the most extensive permissions of all the Creative Commons options, and 23 of the openly licensed materials (six percent) were published by the Malawi Institute of Education.

Medium

The data collectors surveyed 348 of the titles in hard copy; six titles were inventoried in soft copy; and 10 titles were available in both media.

D. Landscape of the Production of Children’s Reading Materials in African Languages in Malawi

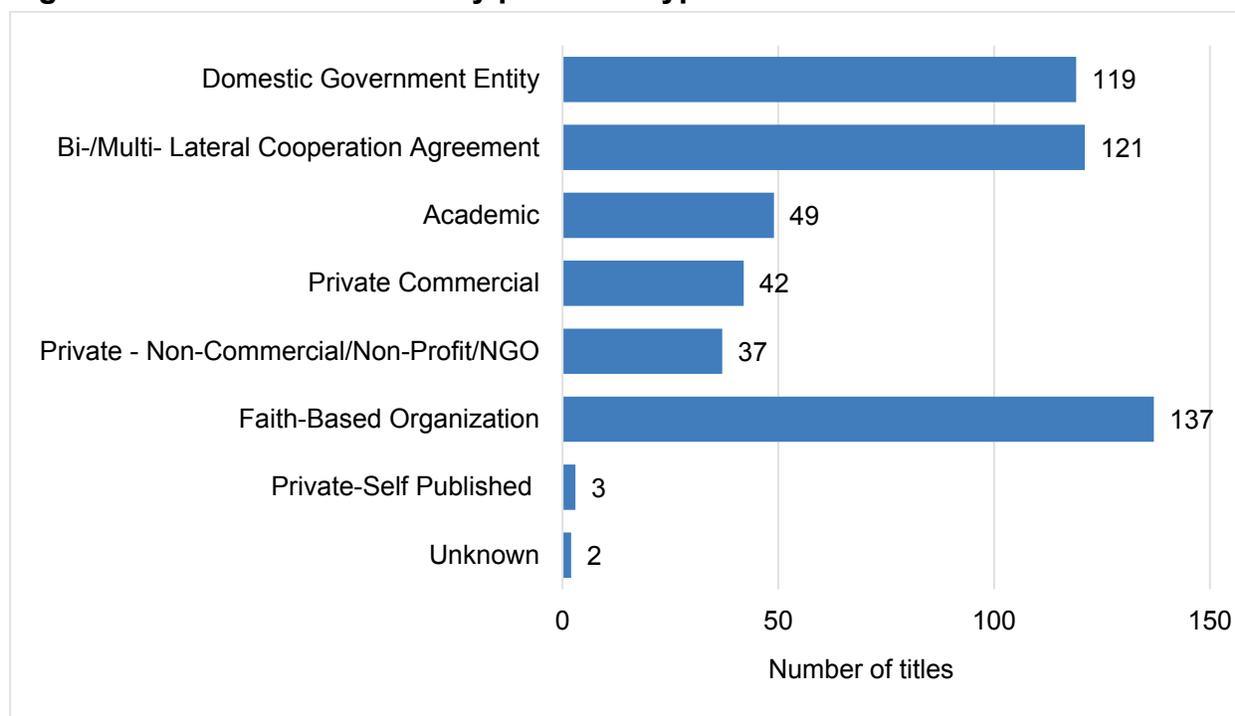
Publisher Types

Of the 354 materials surveyed, the publishing types were approximately split between domestic government entities (119 [34 percent]) and faith-based organizations (137 [39 percent]), as shown in **Figure D-10**. However, of the 119 titles produced fully or in part by the government, 107 (90 percent) were part of a bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreement with an international donor.

In all, bilateral or multilateral donors helped to publish 121 (34 percent) of the surveyed titles. These donors included the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, 88 [25 percent]), the German Society for International Cooperation (20 [six percent]), the Canadian International Development Agency (15 [4 percent]), the United Kingdom’s Department for

International Development (15 [4 percent]), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (six [two percent]).

Figure D-10. Number of titles by publisher type

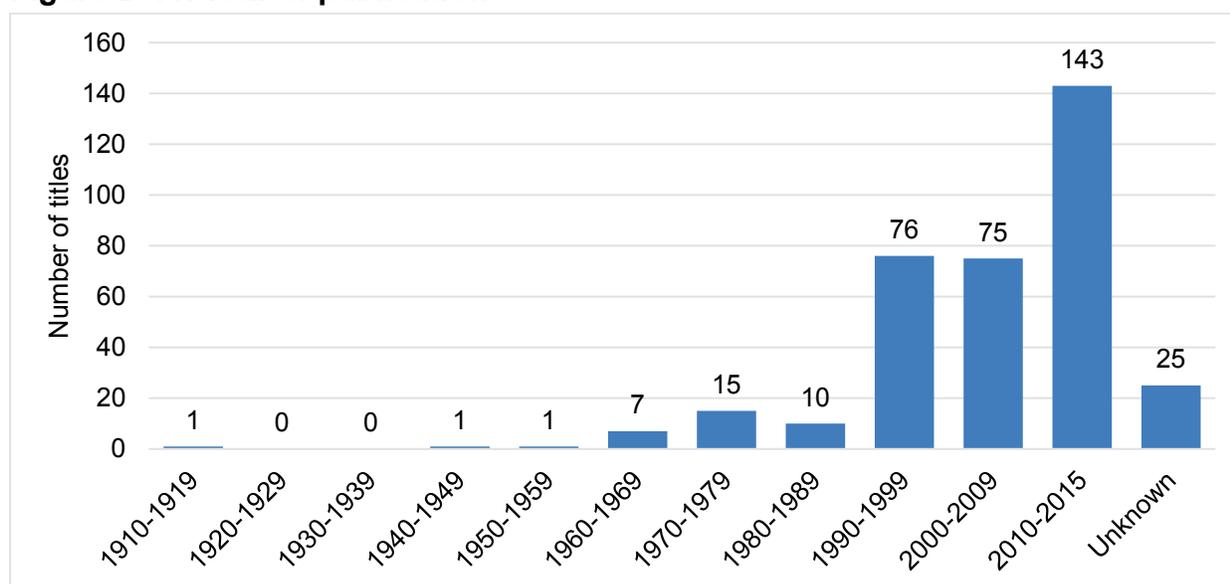


Note: Many titles were produced jointly by two or more organizations; therefore, the number of organizations represented here exceeds the number of titles surveyed. Publishers can also be included under multiple categories.

Year of Publication

Compared to other countries in the survey, Malawi’s inventory was slightly older on average, with 143 titles (40 percent) having been published in the past five years, and 218 (62 percent) since 2000 (**Figure D-11**). Although 35 titles (10 percent) were produced before 1990, the data collectors found 21 (60 percent) of these 35 titles in libraries and the Zomba National Archives. These older materials may not be readily available outside of libraries and archives.

Figure D-11. Year of publication



International Standard Book Number

Of the 354 titles surveyed, 232 titles (66 percent) contained an International Standard Book Number (ISBN). This relatively high rate of ISBN use is largely due to 121 of the titles (34 percent) that were produced under bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements and 29 titles (8 percent) that were published by Cambridge University Press.

Price

The data collectors were unable to record a price for the vast majority of the titles examined for this survey. Of the 354 titles surveyed, only 31 (nine percent) had a marked price, which ranged from \$0.22–\$4.36 (U.S. dollars [USD]).³ For the 11 student textbooks with a known price, the average cost was \$2.40 (USD); for the 18 narrative titles, it was \$1.24 (USD). However, because price data are missing for so many titles, these averages cannot be guaranteed as being representative.

4. Remarks

The availability of reading materials is a challenge in the Malawian context. A 2013 study commissioned by USAID found that only nine percent of Primary Grade 2 students had a school textbook or supplementary reader (Pouezevara et al., 2013). This current survey suggests that there may be materials locally available that can be further examined for quality and appropriateness with a goal of broadening their accessibility. However, there may need to be an increase in the production of materials for the earliest reading levels because most of the non-textbook materials surveyed were concentrated in the category of 75 words or more per page.

³ Exchange rate is 1 Malawian Kwacha = 0.0022 USD.

Additional research could be conducted to more clearly define the gaps in the inventory of reading materials in Malawian languages for young students.

The findings of the survey also suggest that there is a rich involvement of faith-based organizations, the donor industry, and the government in the production of books in Malawian languages for the early primary grades. There is less involvement of private commercial companies. Malawi may present an interesting opportunity to encourage low-cost or free materials online. Because the commercial interests of the groups involved in bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements and faith-based organizations differ from private publishers, they may be more willing to make their materials available for free. Additional research and discussions with the organizations that have produced the existing materials would help to clarify the feasibility of this opportunity.

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