

**MALAWI LOCAL EDUCATION DONOR GROUP
APPRAISAL AND ENDORSEMENT
OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS
FOR THE FAST TRACK INITIATIVE**

Overall comments:

Under the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI), the donor community has substantially increased resources in education for countries that propose technically sound and fiscally sustainable education sector plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary completion by 2015. Malawi has taken significant steps towards the achievement of the MDGs. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) continues to experience limited capacity in planning, procurement and financial management. Both the Government and Development Partners recognize that the resulting approach to planning has been inefficient, and that the needed reforms will require a comprehensive plan. In this context, the preparation of the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) by the Government and the Local Education Group has allowed for harmonization among the stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing key issues in the sector to support the development of a sound education plan. The resulting NESP (2008-2017) and ESIP (2009-2013) are ambitious plans that seek to address the major issues affecting the sector in general and basic education in particular with a focus on access and equity, quality and efficiency.

Strengths

- The introduction of Free Primary Education leading to an increased demand for education
- Education policy and reform an integral part of national policy in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
- Education a top priority by the President for his second term
- Increased aid harmonisation and alignment under Government leadership
- Strengthened collaboration between GoM and Development Partners to agree priorities for reform and develop sound medium term plans
- Use of insightful analytic work as basis of ESIP (esp. Country Status Report, 2009)
- Ministry of Finance willing to provide additional resources for education sector based on sound fiscal planning
- Economy growing at 7-8% p.a.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology willing to address reforms through innovative interventions (double shifting, school-based funding and reduced repetition)
- Provision of alternative means for initial teacher education through Open and Distance Learning
- Tangible initiatives by Ministry of Education to address capacity constraints, especially in financial management and procurement
- Education Infrastructure delivered through a dedicated Management Unit in the Ministry
- Successful implementation of a national Direct Support to Schools (DSS) which can be further expanded
- Basic Education Provision made for Out-of-School Youth

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Concerns

- Insufficient priority accorded to reduced repetition and improved promotion rates
- Inadequate attention paid to assessment and monitoring of learning outcomes
- Weak systems of accountability throughout the system
- Inter-ministerial coordination inadequate
- Inequitable allocation of funds between sub-sectors and income groups
- Inadequate allocation of funds to education, and proportion of resources to primary education
- Capacity for financial management and procurement weak across the system
- Limited capacity for teaching service management and continuing professional development
- Limited capacity for school infrastructure development

Conclusion

The Development Partners to Education in Malawi conclude that the plans are realistic and feasible. We also conclude that education, particularly at primary/basic levels, is in need of significantly increased financial and technical support. Given that the Government re-commits itself to the sector and to carrying out the necessary reforms as a matter of priority, the Development Partners will continue to support the sector and shift to more harmonised programmatic support. Accordingly, we support the Government's application for Catalytic Funds within the FTI Partnership for financial assistance in the sum of US\$ 90 Million over a three-year period up to 2013 with commitments to 2015 where possible. In view of the capacity constraints in the sector and the Government's plans to overcome them, the Development Partners request the assistance of the FTI partnership in three annual tranches of US\$ 15, 30 and 45 million.

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