

Malawi

Summary of EFA FTI Endorsement Documents FTI Secretariat, September 2009

Introduction and Background of the Education System

Malawi has a relatively small economy with a population estimated at 13 million inhabitants in 2008, and increasing at the rate of 2.8% per year¹. The 5–16-year-old age group represents 37% of the total population, the highest proportion of that age group in the entire Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It is estimated that the population growth rate will slowly decrease, but that the primary school age group (6–13 years old) will increase by 20% by 2018.

The economy in Malawi remains one of the poorest in the world, although it recorded real GDP growth of 7.9% in 2008 and went up to 9% in 2008. 63% of Malawians live on less than US\$2 a day. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is US\$3.5 billion, and the average income per capita is US\$250. The 2008 MDG report highlights that at current rates of progress, Malawi may achieve 75% of the MDGs by 2015 (eradicating extreme poverty; achieving universal primary education; gender equality, reducing child mortality, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing global partnership for development). The country is unlikely to attain two of the eight MDGs (promoting gender equality and women empowerment and improving maternal health). A number of other social indicators remain very poor, such as 50% of under-five children are stunted.

Even though it is reported that the country is on target to achieve universal primary education, a 2009 education sector analysis report revealed that Malawi is still a long way from attaining the same indicator due to internal inefficiencies in the education system. For instance, access to standard 1 is almost universal but a high dropout rate leaves only a 35% primary completion rate. Low retention rates are highest among the rural poor. The context of primary education in Malawi is characterized by demographic pressure, a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, striking poverty, and very low human and social development. If universal primary education is to be reached before 2018, primary school places for 4.8 million² children will be needed by then, a 45% increase from 2008. Construction of these facilities will pose a strain on the current modalities of infrastructure provision. Further, 82% of the population lives in rural areas where the supply and demand of schools is weaker.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic dramatically affects the education sector, due to the deaths of teachers and parents, teachers' absenteeism and the increasing number of orphans. The adult (15–49 years old) prevalence rate is 12%, and children orphaned by AIDS represent 7% of the children under 17 years of age (in addition to the 5% of children orphaned for other reasons). HIV/ AIDS occurrences are highest in the Southern region and are concentrated in urban areas.

The internal efficiency of the system is weak, largely due to very high repetition rates, with public resources used for repeaters or schooling for students who will not complete the cycle. The system currently requires 23 student years to produce one standard 8 graduate, instead of 8 years.³ The quality of education is generally poor, and is deteriorating. According to the Southern African Consortium for

¹ Malawi Growth & Development Strategy, Annual Review 2008, Ministry of Economic Planning & Development.

² The figure of 4.8 million children is derived from the CSR and assumes that 20% of students will be repeaters with a constant repetition rate between 2008 and 2018.

³ CSR, 2009.

Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), scores and national examination pass rates are poor. The number of children who reached a minimum level of mastery in English reading was barely 9% in 2004. The decline was attributed in part to the 1994 Fee Free primary policy, which was a welcome development, however, was not planned for adequately.

There is also a severe shortage of teachers, with a high average pupil-teacher ratio of 80:1 in 2007, and an even higher pupil-to-qualified-teacher ratio of 88:1. Teacher allocation across location and divisions/districts is uneven, with the deployment of teachers highly skewed toward urban areas (46:1) instead of rural areas (86:1). Access to each level of education suffers even more from location and income. The budget allocation for education is still low when compared to other African countries. Total education public recurrent expenditures in the 2007/08 fiscal year represent 19.4% of total government recurrent expenditures. The education budget does not give a particular priority to the primary level, though it receives the largest share of the recurrent education expenditures (44% in 2007/08 of the total). The budget gives very low priority to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and literacy, each receiving less than 1%.

General Observations on the Plan

Malawi's National Education Sector Plan (NESP) sets out the Government's view of Malawi's education sector goals, objectives and proposals how such goals and objectives will be realized over the coming decade (2008-2017). The goals and objectives relate to (i) expanded equitable access to education, (ii) improved quality and relevant education, and (iii) improved governance and management, as three key factors for making a positive difference in education. The plan outlines the goals and activities with financial implications for the five sub-sectors (primary, secondary, technical and vocational training, teacher education and higher education). The NESP was produced between 2005 and 2008.

The Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) is a medium-term plan, designed to translate the vision of the NESP into operational terms and to meet the requirements for Malawi to be included in the FTI partnership. The ESIP identifies and articulates strategic priorities for the sector during the ESIP implementation period 2009-2013 in order to fulfill the strategies to achieve the NESP goals in the medium term.

Some of the main policy reforms include (i) accelerated school construction/rehabilitation, teachers' houses, girls' hostels, and construction/rehabilitation of TTCs and TDCs, (ii) promotion of gender equity in the education system, (iii) in-service and pre-service teacher development including innovative strategies for Open Distance Learning program, (iv) increasing provision of teaching and learning materials to all students in basic and secondary schools, (v) introducing direct promotion between standards in standard 1 to 4 to reduce repetition over the long term, (vi) introducing double-shifting in schools with high pupil:teacher and pupil:classroom ratios, and (vii) decentralization of management and financing of primary education by institutionalizing Direct Support to Schools.

Donors' Appraisal Report

The Development Partners in Malawi have provided a comprehensive appraisal of the NESP and ESIP. They used the FTI Appraisal Guidelines to help provide some useful parameters for the review. They outline issues of concerns and emphasize the strengths of the NESP and ESIP. They are also upfront about the challenges the government faces with the limited capacity of ministry officials and weak systems of accountability throughout the system. The ESIP document describes the issues realistically and proposes feasible solutions.

The Development Partners describe one of the biggest challenges ensuring adequate skills transfer at all levels and assisting teachers to function and perform under an outcomes-based instruction model. The Development Partners (e.g. DFID, USAID and GTZ) are helping to support decentralization efforts, which will contribute to addressing issues of capacity and especially the role of education

implementers at all levels. Efforts to strengthen decentralized and informed decision-making based on reliable data and the support to Direct Support to Schools (DSS), specifically around quality, governance and management (including accountability) issues, are being harmonized and linked to help provide a final analysis and model for MoEST to take forward, with continued support from the Development Partners. It is emphasized that the MoEST and its Development Partners are working on a comprehensive capacity development strategy to support the implementation of the NESP.

Some issues that have not been adequately addressed are with regard to financing. In 2007/08, public recurrent expenditure on primary education was 44% of the total, however this is far less than the 64% in the FTI Indicative Framework. The NESP envisaged that this proportion would increase to 53% in 2009 and remain at or near this level until 2016. The ESIP indicates that it is planned to increase this figure to 66% in 2011/12 and 69% in 2012/13. While these figures indicate a positive trend in the re-ordering of priorities within the education budget and a reallocation of resources accordingly, there is still the need to provide a deeper analysis that will clearly indicate how this will be accomplished.

Overall, Malawi's donors have made significant strides towards harmonization. There is a pooled funding for sector wide approaches (SWAp) in health, HIV/AIDS, Agriculture and Education. More than twenty donors have committed funds to education and basic education since 1999. The government is about to sign a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Financing Arrangement with the Development Partners which will pave the way for pooled funding in the first instance, and strengthen the education sector SWAp later on.

The appraisal of the plan has formally been discussed with MoEST in Task Force meetings, ESIP preparation workshops with all stakeholders and during regular meetings between the Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, other Ministry officials and the Education Development Partner Group. It has also been discussed with the Ministry of Finance and Department of Public Procurement as part of a wider discussion of the Joint Finance Arrangement (JFA). The NESP is considered a 'living document' with a long-term strategic focus. Comments by Development Partners and other stakeholders from the appraisal and further complementary reviews will be incorporated into the ESIP, the operational document, during annual joint sector reviews and later redefined and reflected in annual work plans and budgets.

(The data from this section relies heavily on Malawi Country Status Report (CSR 2009) and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy Annual Review (2008).