



Malawi

Country Context

Education in Malawi has experienced major changes since the advent of multiparty democracy and the introduction of free primary education in 1994. As a result of free primary education, school enrolment almost doubled from 1.8 million to 3.2 million between 1994 and 1997. Increased enrolment however, resulted in the need to expand the secondary school sub-sector. Many pupils (about 38,000) learn under trees, due to shortage of classrooms, and during the rains such makeshift learning under such outdoor conditions is disrupted. The consequences have been lack of resources that include inadequate funding, and shortage of teachers. For example, in most urban schools the pupil teacher ratio is 1:120, while in the rural areas the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:150 forcing the government to employ 25,000 unqualified teachers who now constitute more than half of the teaching work force. This number is still inadequate and there is uneven distribution of teachers with a concentration in urban areas. The impact of HIV/AIDS in the education sector is also a great problem needing urgent attention. For example in 2000/2001, about 6000 teachers died of HIV/AIDS related illnesses. The rate of death is greater than that of recruitment leaving huge gaps in the teaching force.

Often, teachers do not even possess a syllabus; the curriculum is overloaded and need to be revised to address gender issues, and life skills. Enrolment and attendance especially in the rural areas needs improvement. Dropout rates, particularly for girls are very high. According to the Government of Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2000), drop out rates are higher for girls and in the rural areas. For instance, the male drop out rate was estimated at 9.5% for boys and 14.1% for girls. Many pupils actually leave school without even acquiring basic literacy skills. The issue of quality education remains crucial in the Malawi education system.

The number of NGOs with an explicitly stated advocacy mandate is still very small. This gap in policy work makes greater mobilization necessary. It is important to note that the significant change in the political and governance environment in Malawi has created much opportunity and space for CSOs to engage in policy work. Parliamentary committees have over the past couple of years, been keener to work with and listen to CSOs. However there is still much room for improvement particularly in the enhancement of capacity of CSOs and communities to engage in policy processes in education.

Key Achievements

- Through CEF support the National education coalition (CSCQBE), which is the first initiative to bring many CSOs in support of one cause, is recognised by both government and donors as an essential partner in basic education delivery.

- CSCQBE recognised as civil society voice on education issues in parliament and making presentation to relevant parliamentary committees.
- CSCQBE participated in the development of the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) and Pro-Poor Expenditure (PPE).

Breakdown by Criteria

The Malawi MTR does not report on achievements by criteria. The reason cited for this is difficulty in distinguishing between which criteria the CEF sponsored projects are closest related to as many cover more than one criterion. This, in turn, is attributed to a lack of clarity in guidelines relating to specific objectives when proposals were sought. CEF supports more than 30 projects. Despite these things, it is clear that the programme has made some steps within criteria one and three and faces many of the same challenges experienced globally.

CRITERIA 1 and 3

One conclusion from the MTR is that much tighter organisation of coalition membership could have prevented many challenges faced by the programme now. It is recommended that the breadth of membership of the supported coalition is reduced. However a number of CSOs have been mobilised and are undertaking valuable educational projects. The MTR reports that an important achievement of the CEF is contribution to the capacity and achievements of the coalition. The coalition is well recognised by both government and donors and works closely with the media. However, the MTR highlights a lack of strategic direction and coordination retarding the coalition as well as an acute lack of capacity of CSOs. One area of planned CEF work is training for partners to increase their capacity for financial management. It is hoped that this will encourage more financially viable proposals.

Case Study: Achievement of Child Rights in Education (ACRE)

In Malawi CEF has placed considerable emphasis on building capacity of the CSO coalition and its members with an aim to draw up issues for advocacy from grassroots. One significant challenge is the high dropout rate of pupils in the Karonga district. This effect is especially high among girls due to forced marriages, child labour and sexual abuse.

CEF is supporting a two-year project aimed at strengthening understanding and capability of School Management Committees, Parent Teacher Associations, local leaders, district networks and education officials on child rights. The project aims to promote the rights of girls to gain access to and remain in school, addressing core issues such as cultural attitudes, sexual abuse and child labour.

Information on the project is shared at district level through government and CSO network, nationally through the education coalition and amongst other CEF

partners. The project has affected the implementation of the teachers' code of conduct and several outcomes have already provided input in the review of the education act.

As a result, ACRE projects are going to provide an advisor to assist with the drafting of the government manual for the training of SMCs & PTAs. In addition education has been included in the development agenda for the district assembly. Through regular monitoring by SMC, PTAs and local leaders, the project has reported increased enrolment and attendance especially among girls. There are reduced levels of misappropriation of teaching and learning material and the district ACRE education office is more proactive when dealing with the issues of abuse in school.