

MALAWI COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

In this Spotlight, the main focus is on children living in remote areas.

1.0 Introduction and background

The Campaign in Malawi will focus on children living in the remotest areas. These children lack access to basic health, quality education and child protection services. Barriers include poor and/or lack of health, education and child protection infrastructure such as schools, health facilities and staff houses and poor road network. As a result these areas are often underserved in both the provision of health, education and child protection supplies and services as well as requisite staff to deliver the services. Where staff is available, it is often inadequate, ill-resourced, poorly motivated and highly burdened—compromising the service delivery itself further.

The group of children we are focusing on cuts across all the program themes in Malawi providing a platform for a cross-cutting campaign that is broad-based and collectively owned. It resonates perfectly with the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and is anchored by all three breakthroughs.

1.1 Brief overview of the country situation

The first and most basic right of children is the right to life and the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. However, Malawi is characterized by a heavy burden of disease evidenced by high levels of child and adult mortality rates and high prevalence of diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS and other tropical diseases. The health indicators remain poor and often vary greatly according to residence, age, wealth, and educational status. Malaria accounts for about 34% of all outpatient visits, about 40% of all hospitalization of children under five years old and 40% of all hospital deaths. Many health services – especially in hard to reach rural areas – remain limited, and are sometimes of poor quality when available due to lack of qualified health personnel, equipment, and supplies. Only 46% of the population has access to a health facility within a 5 kilometer radius and only 25 percent of the population lives within 25 kilometers of a hospital.

In Malawi, over the past seven years, a strong suite of legislation, policies and programmes have laid a firm foundation for attempting to get all school-aged children into schools. These policies and programmes have led to increased primary school gross enrolment from 3.6 to 4.5 million between 2008 and 2013. The net enrolment also increased from 73% in 2006 to 83% in 2009 and to 85% in 2013. Although some progress has been made by government to attract primary school enrollment and attendance into public schools, there are still a number of challenges. School-related costs such as user fees, note books and uniforms limit children's ability to exercise their rights to basic education. The high pupil/teacher ratios continue to affect the quality of basic education. Other challenges include high dropout rates of school girls as a result of pregnancies. In 2013, 5,870 girls dropped out of school as a result of pregnancies. Most of these statistics are worse in rural hard to reach areas as compared to urban areas. Despite the increase in gross and net enrolment rates in primary schools, they have not been matched by improvements in the quality of education. The large class sizes and overcrowding due to inadequate teachers and infrastructures continue to impede critical foundational learning in the early years of schooling. The quality of education is also affected by the unequal distribution of teachers especially in rural areas. Most female teachers prefer to teach in urban areas.

One out of five females and one out of seven males aged 18 to 24 years in Malawi experienced at least one incident of sexual abuse before turning 18 years of age¹. Of those who had their first sexual intercourse prior to age 18, one out of three females and one out of ten males experienced their first sexual intercourse as unwilling—meaning that they were forced or coerced to engage in sexual intercourse.

Two in five females and two in three males aged 18 to 24 years in Malawi experienced physical violence prior to the age of 18 years. Among these, 25% of females and 40% of males reported physical violence perpetrated by an adult family member, and one in five females and two in five males reported a peer as the perpetrator.

While disaggregated data by location (rural/urban) for violence against children is hard to come by, it is common knowledge that children in remote areas are likely to experience more violence than their counterparts in other areas.

2.0 Overview of social exclusion

The large majority of the population (82%) still lives in rural areas where school supply and demand is weaker. 63% of Malawians live on less than US\$2 a day. Malawi has the highest malnutrition prevalence in the SADC region and an overwhelming 44 percent of preschoolers have stunted growth. There are an estimated 122 children per 1,000 who die before the age of five, which is similar to the SADC average. The adult (15 years and older) literacy rate is estimated to be 69% in Malawi, which is lower than the SADC average (75 percent). Illiteracy of parents impedes the achievement of education for all because these parents are less likely to enroll their children in school compared to literate parents.²

The poor retention rate in primary education comes from a lack of school demand, in particular among the poorest. Economic difficulties and behavior such as early marriage, pregnancy, and family responsibilities explain the fragility of school demand. The lack of supply (crowded classrooms, open-air or temporary classrooms, and incomplete schools) also has a negative effect on retention. 16% of pupils are enrolled in a school that does not provide the eight grades of the primary cycle and these students are likely to drop out before completion.³

2.1 Drivers of exclusion

The Malawi Child Poverty Survey shows that poverty and location are major drivers of deprivation among children in Malawi. According to the survey, the most vulnerable group are children who are deprived (3+) and living in households below the poverty line. The national average for deprived children is 31 percent but when the data is disaggregated by location, it emerges that 34 percent of deprived children are in rural areas. In terms of location, there are stark differences in service provision and access between rural and urban areas. Quantity and quality of health, education and child protection services diminish as the distance from an urban center increases, with children in the remotest areas experiencing the poorest quality of service, if they experience any at all.

¹ Violence Against Children and Young Women in Malawi: Findings from a National Survey, 2013

² The Education System in Malawi—World Bank Working paper No. 182 of 2010

³ Ibid

In education, teacher allocation across location and divisions/districts is uneven, with the deployment of teachers highly skewed toward urban areas (46:1) instead of rural area (86:1). The budget priority for education is still in the bottom half when compared to other African countries. Within the education budget, there is a lack of priority for the primary level and it keeps decreasing.⁴

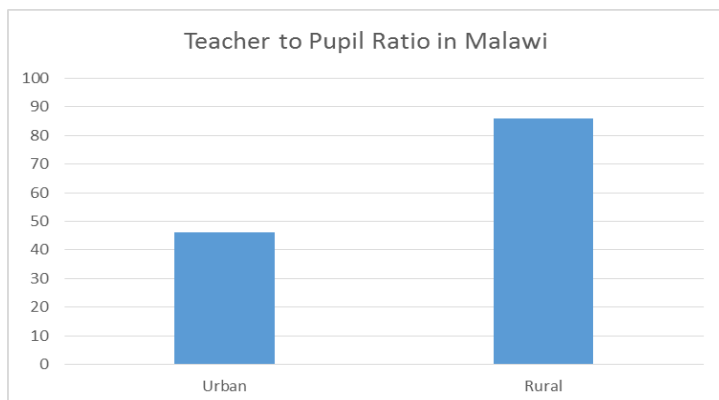


Figure 1: *Teacher to Pupil Ratio Across Locations*

Access to basic health services for children in hard-to-reach areas (Within 5 kilometers of a health facility) remains a challenge. Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) who are supposed to be the first point of contact in hard-to-reach areas hardly stay in their catchment areas due to poor housing and poor access to

social services such as schools for their children. This perpetuates the vicious cycle of poor service provision. Data collected for HSAs not residing in their catchment areas in four districts below shows the gravity of the problem.

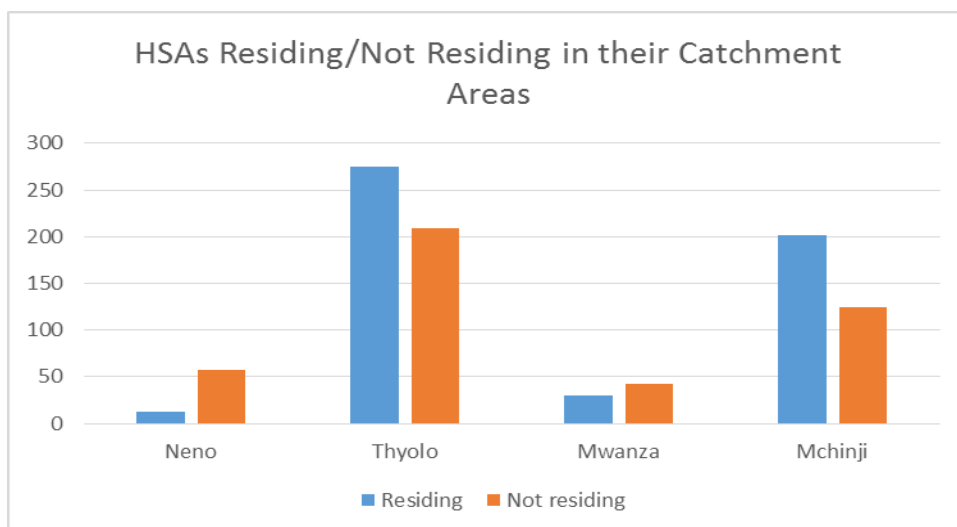


Figure 2: *HSAs residing in their catchment areas*

Two thirds of females and males aged 18 to 24 years who experienced child abuse prior to age 18 years told someone about an incident of sexual abuse, but fewer than 10% received professional services. Almost two-

thirds of females and half of males aged 13 to 17 years who experienced child sexual abuse prior to age 18 years told someone about the incident but only 3% received professional services.

Half to two-thirds of females and males aged 13 to 24 years who experienced child physical violence prior to age 18 years told someone about it but fewer than 11% received professional services.

While disaggregated data by location (rural/urban) for access to service for children affected by both sexual and physical violence is hard to come by, it is most likely that children in remote areas have less access to the limited services than those from more accessible urban and peri-urban areas.

⁴ Ibid

3.0 Policy analysis

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy – MGDS II (2011 – 2016) seeks to achieve the goals set out in Malawi’s vision 2020 document. The MGDS II objective is to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth and infra-structure development. Social development and social support are two thematic areas within the MGDS II. Education, child development and protection, youth development and supporting the vulnerable are key sub-thematic areas.

3.1 Education policy

The National Education Sectoral Plan – NESP (2008–2017) has the education sector as a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and as an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and voiceless. The mission of the education sector is to provide quality and relevant education to the Malawian nation. The NESP has five strategic priorities. The principle strategic priority is “to improve the equity, relevance, access and efficiency in basic education”. A supporting strategic priority is to double the enrolment on secondary education by 2017, by focusing on the retention of girls in up-grading the quality of secondary education.

The Government of Malawi (GoM) has seen enrolment increase. Nevertheless, in 2013 only 85% of children were enrolled. The bulk of the 15% of those who were not enrolled were from the rural areas. The GoM has some way to go in meeting the NESP strategic objectives; it is evident that equality in education and access to education in rural areas require greater policy focus. Furthermore, the supporting priority focus of retaining girl children in school is challenged. The relevance of education is badly compromised by poor student – teacher ratios and poor teacher morale.

The GoM needs to review its strategic priorities in light of what it has thus far achieved. GoM needs to address, as a matter of urgency, girl child retention and some of the education priorities in light of education disincentives, such as teen pregnancy, low teacher morale and education quality.

3.2 Health and nutrition policy

The Health Sector Strategic Plan – HSSP (2011–2016) supports the achievement of the MGDS II health sector goals. The HSSP goal is to “achieve a state of health for all people of Malawi that would enable them to lead a quality and productive life”. The HSSP mission is to provide strategic leadership by the Ministry of Health for the delivery of quality, equitable and efficient health services to the people of Malawi. The HSSP has four outcomes, which all revolve around the delivery of a high quality Essential Health Package (EHP).

As the social exclusion analysis illustrates, the number of HSAs residing in their catchment areas will make it extremely difficult for the Ministry of Health to achieve a quality, equitable and efficient health service. Similarly the Malawi Child poverty Survey shows that income poverty has a rural focus; it is unclear from the HSSP how a quality, equitable and efficient essential health package is to be delivered, when 62% of rural households are deprived and 44.5% are poor.

At present the National Nutrition Policy has been revised but a Nutrition Act is yet to be enacted. Government should implement the Nutrition for Growth Commitments it made at the Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2013 if the alarming malnutrition statistics that hovers above 40% are to be reduced.

3.3 Child protection policy

Despite Malawi making a good progress in enacting a comprehensive law on children; the Child Care Protection and Justice Act (CCPJA) in 2010, there are still a number of laws and provisions that need to be reviewed and adopted. The Constitution of Malawi and other pieces of legislation continue to have different definitions of a child. The minimum age of marriage in the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act (2015) was raised from 15 to 18 years, but until the Constitution is amended, the raised age can still be contested in the courts of Malawi.

The government must come up with a National Action Plan for Children or a comprehensive national child policy. Malawi should also conduct its child rights impact assessment to inform national child protection interventions.

ANNEX 1: DETAILED POLICY ANALYSIS

Education Policy

Rationale	Situation in Malawi	Policy Proposals	Expected Results
Budget priority for primary education is a necessity if the education system is expected to reach universal primary completion (UPE).	In the last decade, the budget priority for primary education declined. Schooling conditions, such as class size, have deteriorated due to an expansion of enrollments, which was not matched by corresponding increases in teachers for the Sub-sector. The student-teacher ratio (STR) of 80:1 in Malawi is around twice the Southern African Development Community (SADC) average (41:1). The recurrent expenditure per student in primary education is around MK3,000, which is equivalent to only 8.3 percent of GDP per capita (compared to an average of 12 percent in the SADC region and	<p>Increase the amount of public resources for primary education by making it a priority to allocate new resources to this sub-sector, in particular for training and recruiting additional teachers.</p> <p>Prioritise resource allocation to schools in remotest areas for construction of school blocks and teachers' houses.</p> <p>Enforce teacher deployment policy to ensure that schools in remotest areas have adequate, qualified and well-motivated</p>	Improved schooling conditions will make for an improved quality of education for all children including those in remotest areas.
Universal access to Standard 1 is necessary to reach UPE.	Four percent of children never attend primary education, which affects the achievement of UPE and limits enrollment in post- primary cycles.	Identify the unreached children and assess their specific needs to ensure they go to school.	Universal access to Standard 1 for all children in Malawi means no children are left behind.
The government is responsible for providing equal learning conditions for all children. This means ensuring that the allocation of teaching staff is well- balanced throughout the territory and matches the needs of	Large disparities exist among education divisions and schools in Malawi. While some schools have two teachers for 200 pupils, others have six teachers for 100 pupils. The Shire Highlands and South Eastern divisions have the lowest allocated number of government-funded teachers compared to the number of students.	<p>Implement— without exception—the school-based, post-recruitment system.</p> <p>In consultation with teachers' unions, design and implement a stable, incentive- based system for rural and remote areas.</p>	Inequalities in learning conditions among students will be reduced once there is a more consistent allocation of teaching staff and textbooks

Source: Adapted from Education Management Information System—Education Statistics 2013

Health & Nutrition Policy

Rationale	Situation in Malawi	Policy Proposals	Expected Results
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<p>Budget priority for health and nutrition is a necessity if high rates of Under-five malnutrition and mortality rates have to be reduced</p>	<p>The allocation of resources to health in the last few years has been haphazard and shy of the 15% Abuja Declaration commitment. In the 2015/2016 National Budget, resources to District Health Offices (DHO) have significantly declined prompting most DHOs to cut on essential services such as meals for in-patients in district hospitals and Health Centres.</p> <p>Malnutrition continues to be a heavy burden in Malawi with under-five stunting rates marginally declining from 47% in 2010 to 42% in 2013.</p>	<p>Increase the amount of public resources for health by making sure government allocates 15% of the national budget to health in alignment with the Abuja Declaration</p> <p>Prioritise resource allocation for nutrition by making sure that government expenditure on nutrition rises from 0.1% of national budget to 0.3% of national budget by 2020 in line with Nutrition for Growth Commitments</p> <p>Move the Nutrition Bill into an Act of Parliament</p> <p>Prioritise resource allocation to health centres in hard to reach areas and construct health centres/village clinics in hard to reach areas.</p> <p>Review and implement policy for</p>	<p>Improved health financing will make for an improved quality of health for all children including those in remotest areas.</p>
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Child Protection Policy

Rationale	Situation in Malawi	Policy Proposals	Expected Results
<p>Ready availability of child protection services in all areas will improve access to preventive and remedial services and reduce all forms of violence against children</p>	<p>All forms of violence against children continue to prevail in Malawian society and is likely to be entrenched in rural remote areas. Access to preventive and remedial services remain poor in all areas with rural remote areas likely to be gravely underserved.</p>	<p>Finalise the Child Labour Policy</p> <p>Expedite the process of putting all the Child Protection Workers (CPWs) on the Government's payroll. The State should further recruit and train more CPWs</p> <p>Prioritize and target social services for children belonging to the most vulnerable Groups</p> <p>Enforce the age of marriage as enshrined in the just passed Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill</p> <p>Prohibit by law all forms of violence against</p>	<p>Improved access to child protection services for all children including those in remotest areas</p>

Child Rights Governance

Rationale	Situation in Malawi	Policy Proposals	Expected Results
<p>Lack of sufficient, effective and equitable spending is one of the biggest barriers to the realization of children's rights.</p>	<p>Despite children constituting about 52% of Malawian population, inadequate public resource allocation and spending on key sectors and programs benefitting children has remained one of the biggest barriers to the realisation of children's rights in Malawi. For instance in 2012, Malawi spent about 5.4% of its GDP on education compared to the Dakar target of 9%. In addition, although significant progress has been made on budget transparency from 28% in 2008 to 52% in 2012, in the Open Budget Survey Index a lot still needs to be done to ensure fiscal accountability and transparency and for budget</p>	<p>The State should take deliberate measures to increase funding to key sectors on children such as Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare at both national and local level for the full implementation of the CRC in light of article 4 of CRC.</p>	<p>Adequate and more visible resourcing for child rights by the State at both national and district level resulting into full enjoyment of basic rights by children</p>

<p>The Constitution of Malawi and other pieces of legislation continue to have different definitions of a child undermining the efforts to protect and uphold the rights of a child including the delivery of justice system</p>	<p>Despite Malawi making a good progress in enacting a comprehensive law on children; the Child Care Protection and Justice Act (CCPJA) in 2010, there are still a number of laws and provisions that need to be reviewed and adopted. The Constitution of Malawi and other pieces of legislation continue to have different definitions of a child. Although the minimum age of marriage in the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act (2015) was raised from 15 to 18 years, but until the Constitution is amended, the raised age can still be contested in the courts of Malawi.</p> <p>Furthermore, Malawi is yet to come up with the National Action Plan for Children or comprehensive national</p>	<p>Harmonise all the definitions of the child from different pieces of legislation in accordance with UNCRC article 1 and other related principles and provisions.</p> <p>Develop a systematic process for child impact assessment to assess new laws, policies and programmes for their impact on child rights.</p> <p>Develop detailed and comprehensive national strategy/national action plan for children and should be adequately resourced and disseminated.</p>	<p>Harmonised pieces of legislation that would effectively protect and uphold the rights of the child</p> <p>Improved government accountability in the implementation of legal provisions to end violence against children</p>
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