

The Role of the Education Systems in Combating Child Labour

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

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List of Acronyms

IDS	:	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
EFA	:	Education for All
EMIS	:	Education Management Information System
FPE	:	Free Primary Education
GOM	:	Government of Malawi
HIV	:	Human Immune Virus
ILO	:	International Labour Organisation
IPE	:	Initial Primary Teacher Education
MDG	:	Millennium Development Goals
MGDS	:	Malawi Growth & Development Strategy Paper
MOEST	:	Ministry of Education, Science & Technology
NESP	:	National Education Strategic Plan
ODL	:	Open and Distance Learning
OVC	:	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PIF	:	Policy Investment Framework
TV	:	Television
STI	:	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	:	United Nations
UPE	:	Universal Primary Education

1.0 Abstract:

Despite the fact that ILO conventions on child labour have been ratified by many governments world-wide still worst forms of child labour are traceable and its impact is being felt globally. To date child labour remains a challenge to Education for All (EFA) goals and the right to education for children. This paper highlights efforts by the Government of Malawi (GOM) through which Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is striving to eliminate child labour. It is urged that Ministry's policies are playing a bigger role in the elimination of child labour and the exercise of reinstating school drop-outs due to child labour.

2.0 Introduction

Malawi adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and developed the Malawi Growth and Strategy Paper (MGDS) in order to suit the needs of the Malawi population at the global village. In respect of MDG goal number 2; Education for All (EFA) by the year 2015, Malawi embarked on Universal Primary Education (UPE) though not compulsory to have the masses access education at primary school level. The Malawi educational system has put in place the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) as a way of achieving access, quality and equity in education alongside the EFA goals.

It is in this regards that in order to achieve the intended goals through NESP; the policy clearly stipulates that there should be no discrimination when accessing education in Malawi regardless of race, sex, status, colour and ethnic group. The NESP draws on the first and second education development plans, the Policy Investment Framework (PIF) and the Long-term Development Perspective for Malawi (Vision 2020). Subsequent to these policies, it is also drawn from the current medium-term national development strategy (the Malawi Growth Development Strategy – MGDS)(quote the source). The NESP operationalises the MGDS broad educational development priorities which recognize education as a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless. Precisely the broad national goals in the MGDS are:

- a) *To equip students with basic knowledge and skills to enable them to function as competent and productive citizens in a free society.*

- b) *Students with disabilities are able to live an independent and comfortable life.*
- c) *To provide the academic basis for gainful employment in the informal, private and public sectors and*
- d) *Provide high quality professionals in all fields*

2.1 NESP Thematic Areas

Insert an introductory statement here to introduce the thematic areas

1. Expand equitable access to education to enable all to benefit.
2. Improve quality and relevance of education to reduce drop out and repetition and promote effective learning, and
3. Improve governance and management of the system to enable more effective and efficient delivery of services.

Despite calls for education to be non-discriminatory; orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) have always been at a disadvantage globally. There have been several international agreements affecting child labour.

After the implementation of UPE, GOM through MOEST has put in place a lot of interventions with the aim of reducing drop-out rate due to child labour. Children who quit school to work in gainful employment are mostly found in the commercial agriculture especially tea and tobacco growing rural areas where child labour is rampant due to poverty and the impact of HIV and AIDS with high rate of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and child headed families. Basu, (2007), states that,

Mandating compulsory education is regarded as a move effective than out-lawing child labour, because attendance at school is easier to monitor...'

Although UPE is not compulsory, several interventions have been implemented with the aim of keeping children in school while MoEST is in the process of making basic education compulsory. Some of the interventions include the following:

- Re-admission policy
- Complementary Basic Education
- Free Primary Education
- School Feeding Programmes

- Construction of girls boarding schools
- Building of additional Teacher Training Colleges
- Bursary Scheme for OVCs
- Networking with NGOs also striving to eliminate child Labour

2.2 Thesis statement

The desk study wishes to highlight policies aimed at increasing access and equity to quality in the education of learners through retention, Re-admission Policy, FPE policy, Bursary scheme, Building of additional school blocks and teacher training colleges. MoEST will to keep on implementing strategies to do away with worst forms of child labour by following the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) strategies. Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and National Educational Sector Plan (NESP) on providing Education for All by the year 2015.

3.0 Hypothesis

This paper is based on the policies and interventions by Government of Malawi through MoEST which if properly implemented could help:-

- Reduce drop-out rate due to child labour
- Increase awareness on child rights by all stakeholders.
- Provide complementary basic education to the under-privileged who dropped out of school due to child labour.
- Extend school access and raise school quality

3.1 Challenges

As opposed to EFA goals and UPE, children's earnings play a vital role in most low income households' survival strategies. It is an uphill task for MoEST to encourage school attendance and discourage children's work among families living in absolute poverty. **Exposure to socio-economic** shocks such as the recession which has its after-shocks being felt in Malawi has brought about retrenchment, devaluation of the kwacha therefore having influence on child labour on the most affected households. **Natural disasters** such as flash floods, earthquakes bring about loss of property and crops and if the victims are not given assistance fast enough; this brings about high probability of child labour and less probability of attending school despite all the policies and initiatives by Government to keep children school.

Poverty and orphanhood due to the impact of HIV and AIDS has brought about double orphans who grow up in child-headed families with siblings looking after one another. These children often are vulnerable to sexual abuse, early or unwanted pregnancies and if policies aimed at reducing household vulnerability are not implemented then child labour becomes the order of the day which may hinder MoEST efforts to achieve Education For All (EFA) by 2015.

3.2 Methodology

This study mainly concentrated on the Political Will by MoEST to eliminate child labour by keeping in school the hard-to-get children, who are mostly OVCs in the remote areas and semi-urban areas. These tools highlight interventions portraying efforts by GOM through MoEST to eliminate child labour and keep children in school. Most of the data emerged from available information from policies and EMIS. The study methodology entailed review documentation and reports from MoEST Headquarters, Central West Educational Division Office (CWED) Ministry of Gender, Women and Child Development. The internet provided relevant information which helped to indentify knowledge gaps in child labour issues which led to school drop-outs and emerging issues on the elimination of child labour in Malawi.

The only limiting factor to the desk study was time and non availability of the most recent data especially on the hard-to get children with the influence of culture and beliefs. There was no appropriate time to conduct baseline survey in order to collect primary and secondary data. Information has been based on face to face interviews with MoEST official in the Basic Education Section, EMIS data, already existing information and policies aiming at eliminating child labour and child trafficking and information obtained from internet.

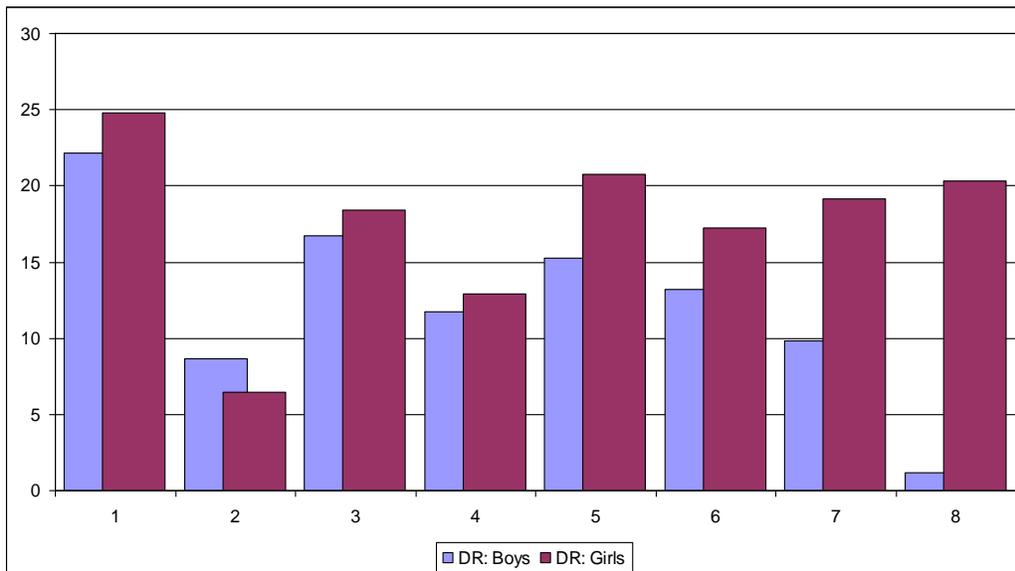
4.0 Rationale

The issue of Child labour is global and worse in the developing world. Children face a lot of challenges due to vulnerability, the impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and sometimes cultural background to which they belong to. In Malawi, some cultural beliefs have forced the children to drop out of school right after maturity into early and forced marriages. There has been little or no knowledge at all on sexual reproductive health which has led many misguided children to fall pregnant or contract STIs whilst at the same time dropping out of school. The girl child has been discriminated for a long time in memorial and she has always been a scapegoat in times like

'who gets the school fees first' and these factors need solutions that go beyond the education sector alone but for all children to access equal and quality education in Malawi.

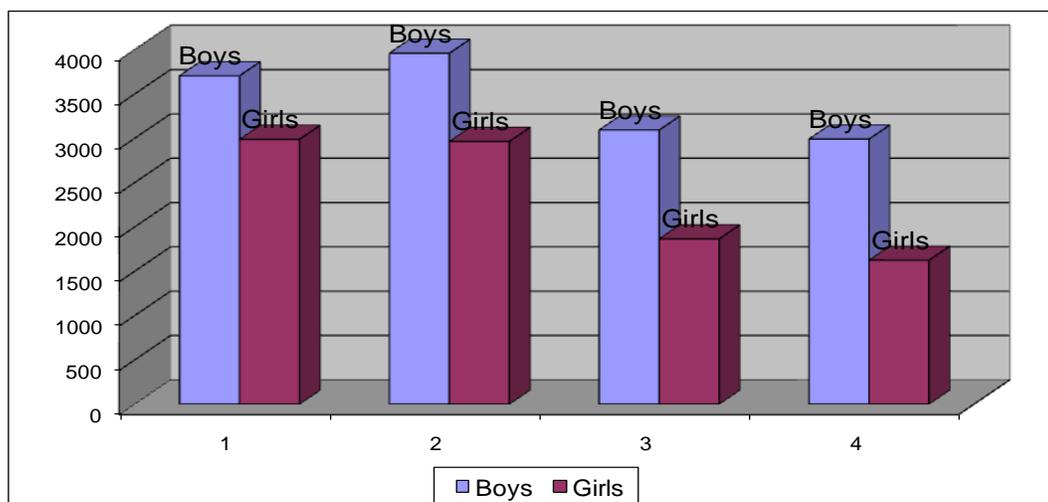
Lack of awareness on the evils of child labour, has heavily impacted on the girl child and statistics have shown that girls face high rates of school drop-outs as compared to boys as shown in the enrolment and drop-out rate by form in the figures below;

Figure1. Drop-out rates for Boys and Girls in Primary school by class



Source: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edustats>

Figure 2: Secondary Enrolment by form for boys and girls



In figure 1 the enrolment rate decreases for girls as they reach form 4. One of the reasons being high dropout rate for girls at primary school level as already indicated that girls face a lot of challenges as they are expected to work all the time rather than boys. In some areas cultures also play a larger part in girl drop-outs.

It is in this regard that this paper will bring awareness to stakeholders on the need for implementing the already existing strategies put in place by MoEST to eliminate child labour and work towards the reduction of drop-out rate. The constitution of Malawi section 23 (5) sees children as persons under the age of 16 years. Malawi has ratified the ILO Convention 138 on the rights of the child but serious attention needs to be focused on implementation. In most areas it is very difficult to differentiate child work and child labour.

Below is a list of hazardous work that can harm children involved in the worst forms of child labour whether found in the rural areas or urban areas.

- **Box 1: List of hazardous work**
- Going to the river or lake for fishing
 - Mining and quarrying
 - Portage of heavy loads
 - Work in manufacturing industries or tobacco/tea/cotton farms where chemicals are produced or used without proper ventilation.
 - Work in places where machines are used
 - Work in places such as bars, hotels and places of entertainment where a child may be exposed to inappropriate behavior, sexual exploitation and abuse

It has already been stated that discussion of child labour issues are sensitive especially in remote areas where most families live in absolute poverty and have been hit by the impact of

HIV and Aids. In some areas child labour is influenced by cultural background whereby children are supposed to work even though it may interfere with their education. For example children are supposed to herd cattle, look after their uncle's fish nets or work to compensate their parent quota of work in the tobacco estates where they work as tenants.

The pictures below show some worst forms of child labour despite free education implemented by the Government of Malawi (GOM).



Photos of Child Labour in Malawi: Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Case Study:-

Kondwani is a ten year old who is a cattle herder not by choice but because he is an orphan. He lives with his uncle who has a fairly large herd of cattle and by village standards the uncle is regarded as a rich man. As a young boy Kondwani thinks he is enjoying because he is not bothered to wake up in the morning to go to school but he takes the cattle to other places for grazing while his uncle's children go to school. Kondwani gets one meal a day and sometimes hyenas become a threat to him as he comes back from cattle herding in the evening or at night

as he is returning to the village. He does not have proper clothes for his job and he becomes a victim in cold or hot weather and even when it rains because every day of the year he must take the cattle herds out for grazing. When asked about Kondwani's future; the uncle responds that Kondwani is already a reach boy because he is looking after his late father's property which is his property as well.

Kondwani is at risk of being mauled by wild animals, getting sick because of the extreme weather conditions he faces everyday of his life; and getting no education at all in a country which has offered basic primary education for free without any discrimination.

5.0 Political Will

On political will, MoEST has put in place deliberate interventions that are helping in the elimination of child labour nationwide. Some of the interventions are, school feeding programmes, Free primary education, Bursary scheme, Re-admission policy, Girls Boarding school, complementary Basic education, networking with NGO's who are directly connected with issues of child labour and building of additional Teacher training colleges and classroom blocks and more teachers houses.

MoEST with assistance from INICEF introduced school feeding programmes in selected schools in its Educational Districts countrywide. Primary school going children are given porridge prepared by members of the PTA with an aim of keeping the children in school rather than letting them go hawking or look for casual labour as a way of survival after school hours. Bruns, B, *et al* 2003, observed that 'Child Labour is one of the threats to education.' Hence the war against child labours through Education.

Free Primary Education though not compulsory, has helped to keep children from poor families in school and has seen many proceed to secondary education. The drop-out rates have decreased over the years and work that could have compromised children's education in Malawi due to lack of school fees is being tackled by adults as a result of awareness campaigns by MoEST. Kamlongera A.F. stated that Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 has led to:

- Increased net and gross enrolment rates approximately over 70% of school-age children enrolled in school since.
- Improved equity for girls and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) (41.1% of the total enrolment in 2006 were orphans, and

Deteriorating education quality, due to high enrolment rate which has brought about congestion especially at primary school level,(see pictures below) need for more school blocks, teaching and learning materials and training more teachers; a thing which MoEST has embarked on in its recent projects. Additional Teacher Training College, (Liwonde); introduction of IPTe and ODL programmes.



Photos of Free Primary Education in Malawi: Source: www.remaketheworld.org

The Government of Malawi has embarked on complementary Basic Education (CBE) which intends to take on board drop-outs from standards 1 to 4 (9-13 year old) to catch up and re-enter formal school and in general offer literacy/completion of the primary education cycle for the youth. This is a structured curriculum which has been matched to formal primary school but tailored as a 3 year course with emphasis on local language, literacy and numeracy. To sustain the project, MoEST has provided 8,100 learners in 357 learning centres spread across 7 districts with the highest drop-out rate according to Kamlongera A.F. (2009). MoEST has provided Adult Literacy Classes to 132,000 learners in 8,000 centres spread across 34 education districts, briefed 8 DEMs and 120 PEAs on their role in the delivery of adult literacy classes, developed an English curriculum for Adult Literacy Classes and paid Honoraria arrears for 8 months at K500 per month to 8,000 Adult Literacy Instructors. Below are photos showing adult learners in a classroom situation



Photos of Adult Education in Malawi: Source: <http://farm1.staticflickr.com>

On networking with NGOs and other stakeholders that are directly concerned with issues of child rights and child labour NGOs like CRECCOM, Concern Universal, Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company and Alliance One have been in the forefront tackling issues of providing education by committing their social responsibility for example by building school blocks the initiative of the Tobacco Companies at Chinkhoma (and Area 25, Kabwabwa CDSS) putting its education policy in place. MoEST has allowed its staff who are either school managers or education officials to attend a Child and Classroom Management course at Lund University, in Sweden with the aim of keeping children in school and do away with issues which scare away children like Child labour which is a violation of child rights to education.

5.1 Concern Worldwide Basic Education Policy

Concern's Universal Malawi is one of the NGOs which has been following its Worldwide Basic Education Policy which has the following key points:

That Education is a human right and a key factor to:-

- Reduce poverty and child labour, and promoting education.

5.2 How Concern----- responds to NESP strategy

The overall goal of the education programme is to contribute towards all Malawian children realizing their right to quality education (MDG 1 & 2).

The immediate objective is to improve equitable access to quality education for learners particularly girls and vulnerable children to successfully complete primary education in targeted education zones of Nsanje District. The organisational strategy aims to achieve improved delivery of services by District Education Management Office; Increased protection of learners in the targeted zones with specific focus on a safer learning environment for girls Strengthen capacity of SMCs and PTAs and promote community participation.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Unless the factors that lead to school drop outs are addressed the child labour will continue unabated. Factors that are both internal and external to the school system must be addressed. However addressing such factors as class-pupil ratio, pupil-teacher ratio and household poverty requires a well coordinated and concerted approach; and commitment from government, development partners and private sector.

Child labour is a concern for all stakeholders and therefore it need a joint intervention by all Ministries for example, Labour, Finance, Education, Gender, Agriculture, Sports Forestry, Lands and Housing etc... All parties involved should share and use the available knowledge, data and experiences to help remove barriers to education and to improve education planning which means for example, during an awareness campaign for HIV and AIDS; issues of child labour can be tabled.

It should be very necessary to reach people living in remote areas so that they become aware of the importance of education, because they are often ignorant of the dangers of child labour. While some poor parents do send their children to school, others send them to

From the literature review it can be concluded that indeed there is need to help in the reduction of drop-out rates due to pregnancy by taking into consideration the MGDs, MGDS, NESP, deliberate policy from MOEST and most of all provision of strategies in Malawi primary and secondary schools for children who are at greater risk. There is need to have running TV and radio programmes on the effects of child labour, networking with both the targeted stakeholders, educational institutions, Local and Religious leaders NGO's, Organisations.

MoEST and other stakeholders in the education systems need to deal with tendencies that push children out of school and by promoting inclusive education that allows all children to benefit from education and help them stay in school. A better understanding of the interrelationship between child labour and education could help to keep in school children who are pulled into work as a result of household poverty, socioeconomic shocks, social and cultural norms that favour children's contribution to household economies.

There is need to for MoEST to continue providing a flexible curriculum to the local context, and schooling procedures which will still encourage high enrolment rates as the free primary education, school feeding systems and complementary basic education. work.

Lack of knowledge on child rights and child labour by teachers, school managers, parents and community leaders and even the children themselves can result into high rates of school drop-outs, blind violations on the right to education for the child and even high rates of school drop-outs among teenage girls due to pregnancy because of lack of knowledge on sexual reproductive health and substance abuse

Even though FPE has been seen to improve enrolment and have the masses get basic primary education, there are still some children and youth who still are out of school due to a number of factors. It is in this regard that there is need to conduct research in other areas as it has been noted that there are other factors that contribute to child labour which in turn result to school drop-outs. It is very necessary for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to conduct research in the areas of Child Rights and Classroom Management both at primary and secondary school level, Sexual Reproductive Health, The Role of Guidance and Counselling to out-of school children and the impact of CBE to teen mothers and hard-to-reach youth.

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