Girls’ Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review

Final Report

Submitted to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) with support from UNICEF

Education and Development

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Complementary Basic Education</td>
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<td>CDSS</td>
<td>Community Day Secondary Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEC</td>
<td>Civil Society Education Coalition</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>CSS</td>
<td>Conventional Secondary Schools</td>
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<td>DfID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Direct Support to Schools</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>ESIP</td>
<td>Education Sector Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>FPE</td>
<td>Free Primary Education</td>
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<td>GAC</td>
<td>Gender Appropriate Curriculum</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>GPI</td>
<td>Gender Parity Index</td>
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<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender Responsive Budgeting</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German Society for Technical Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDCJ</td>
<td>International Development Centre of Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHS</td>
<td>Integrated Household Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCE</td>
<td>Junior Certificate Examinations</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPAG</td>
<td>Joint Programme on Adolescent Girls</td>
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<td>JPGE</td>
<td>Joint Programme on Girls’ Education</td>
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<td>LGPI</td>
<td>Local Government Performance Index</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MANEB</td>
<td>Malawi National Examinations Board</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MES</td>
<td>Malawi Millennium Development Goal Endline Survey</td>
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<td>MGDS</td>
<td>Malawi Growth and Development Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIE</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
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<td>MoEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
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<td>MSCE</td>
<td>Malawi School Certificate Examination</td>
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<td>NAR</td>
<td>Net Attendance Ratio</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>National Education Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESP</td>
<td>National Education Sector Plan</td>
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<td>NGECOS</td>
<td>National Girls’ Communication Strategy</td>
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<td>NGEN</td>
<td>National Girls’ Education Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGES</td>
<td>National Girls’ Education Strategy</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>ODSS</td>
<td>Open Day Secondary Schools</td>
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<td>PCAR</td>
<td>Primary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIF</td>
<td>Policy Investment Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing Power Parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSIP</td>
<td>Primary School Improvement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSLCE</td>
<td>Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTAs</td>
<td>Parent–Teacher Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACMEQ</td>
<td>Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHN</td>
<td>School Health and Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNE</td>
<td>Special Needs Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSCAR</td>
<td>Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector Wide Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEVET</td>
<td>Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMS</td>
<td>Welfare Monitoring Study</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and for the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST). The authors of this report, Sally Robertson, Dr Elizabeth Cassity and Dr Esthery Kunkwenzu would like to thank both UNICEF and the MoEST for their support with the consultation process. We would also like to thank Mary Kimani for her work in initially setting up this project and both Kylie Cockle and Meredith Bramich for their valuable support with proofreading and editing this report. Importantly, we would like to thank all of those we consulted with during this project. We are very grateful for their generosity in sharing their experiences with us.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Enhancing girls’ access to high-quality education is a global priority that is articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is also a national priority in Malawi. For example, the vision, as outlined in Malawi’s National Girls’ Education Strategy (NGES), is that ‘All girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country’s sustainable social, economic development by 2018’ (MoEST, 2014c, p. 9).

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was contracted by UNICEF, to conduct an education sector review of girls’ primary and secondary education in Malawi. The review aimed to:

- outline the current context and challenges relating to girls’ education in Malawi
- identify the key factors contributing to gender inequalities in educational access and outcomes
- provide an overview of the policies and strategies currently in place to enhance girls’ education
- provide recommendations to help feed into future policy and program decisions.

A wide range of factors contribute to issues of access, quality and equity in girls’ education in Malawi. Addressing the sociocultural factors, school infrastructure and facility factors, and economic factors that impact on girls’ education has been a priority of the Malawi Government, along with many donor and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The NGES, launched in 2014, is a key strategy document that outlines the Government of Malawi’s priorities. The NGES was designed to harmonise the approaches of different stakeholders working in girls’ education (MoEST, 2014c). However, stakeholders still experience many challenges in addressing girls’ education issues.

Stakeholders from government, donor organisations, NGOs, United Nations (UN) organisations and community members were consulted as part of this research and were asked for their perspectives on the successes, challenges and future priorities for girls’ education. Four overarching themes were identified from these consultations.

The first theme was the need for a holistic approach to girls’ education. A range of cultural, social and economic factors impact girls’ opportunities to access and participate in quality education and there is a need to address these by taking a multi-sectoral approach to policy and programming. It is critical to ensure that there are links throughout the early childhood development (ECD), primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, and there is a need to take a community-based collaborative approach in order to enhance girls’ education outcomes.

The second theme was the need for processes and structures to facilitate a coordinated and collaborative approach to girls’ education in Malawi. It is essential to build on the successes and address challenges for effective coordination and collaboration between different types of stakeholders and programs. As part of this, there is a need to enhance communication processes between different government ministries and between district and national-level government stakeholders.

The third theme was funding. The national budget and developing a practice of gender-responsive budgeting are important tools in supporting resources for girls’ education. There are numerous challenges associated with ‘piecemeal support’ where funding, resources and programming are only for specific initiatives or sectors, and may only be for a short period of time. Bursaries and scholarships are also crucial in supporting girls’ education.

The fourth theme was evidence-based decision making. There is a critical need for an evidence-based decision-making approach to programs, practices and policies by identifying and prioritising the fundamental issues to address in girls’ education. This includes documenting and building on the lessons learned in girls’ education and through collecting and using valid and reliable data.
The Government of Malawi along with donors and NGOs have already taken important steps in enhancing girls’ education. Seven priorities to further enhance girls’ education in Malawi were identified as part of this research.

1. **Build the evidence-base about what works in girls’ education in Malawi**

   There is a need to continue to understand and maximise the impacts of programs and policies on enhancing girls’ education through robust research, evaluation and monitoring processes, and effective dissemination of the findings.

2. **Develop a girls’ education database**

   The development of a comprehensive database that contains up-to-date information about girls’ education programs and organisations that support girls’ education could assist with the coordination of programs and enhance collaboration between stakeholders.

3. **Focus on supporting school completion and transitions throughout the system**

   Significant gains have been made in increasing the enrolment of girls’, particularly in primary school. There is now a need to prioritise addressing the issues that contribute to girls dropping out of school with the aim of improving primary and secondary school completion rates. Further research is required to investigate how to strengthen the opportunities for girls in Malawi to transition between all levels of education, from ECD through to tertiary education and into the workforce.

4. **Focus on enhancing the quality of education**

   It is essential that girls have access to high-quality education, for example, through the provision of well-trained teachers and high quality learning resources. There is a need to prioritise girls’ education initiatives that support girls to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the education system and beyond. This includes ensuring that there are sufficient and high-quality physical and human resources in schools, including classrooms, textbooks and qualified teachers, and ensuring that the curriculum and assessment practices are appropriate for all students.

5. **Continue to focus on addressing inequality**

   It is crucial to prioritise addressing the social, cultural and economic inequalities faced by girls that result in gender inequalities in educational access and outcomes. Girls’ education initiatives should aim to reduce inequity, particularly among groups in Malawi who currently face further disadvantages such as special education needs and families with lower socioeconomic status.

6. **Conduct a review of the current government structures for coordinating girls’ education programs**

   There are opportunities to enhance effective multi-sectoral collaboration between different girls’ education stakeholders. A thorough review of the current Malawi Government structures for coordinating girls’ education programs and policies could assist in identifying the most appropriate government structures going forward.

7. **Prioritise initiatives that support community and government ownership**

   There is a need to prioritise programs that support ownership and build capacity among community and government stakeholders if they are to have maximum impact and sustainability.
1 INTRODUCTION

Girls’ education is both an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching other development objectives (UNICEF, 2015, p. 1).

1.1 Girls’ education: An international and national priority

While many countries have made significant progress towards improving gender equality in education under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), much more still needs to be done in order to achieve gender equality globally. The importance of gender equality in education has been re- emphasised in Goals 4, 5 and 10 of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- Goal 4 is to ‘ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning’ and includes targets around ensuring that both boys and girls have access to high quality and equitable primary and secondary education.
- Goal 5 is to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.
- Goal 10 is to ‘reduce inequality within and among countries’.

The benefits of ensuring that girls have access to high-quality education are broad reaching. Enhancing girls’ education has well-documented benefits for girls’ health, social and economic outcomes. Improving educational outcomes for girls not only benefits the girls themselves, but also their families, communities and wider society.

Malawi was one of the 193 UN member countries that unanimously agreed upon the SDGs in September 2016 (UNDP, 2015). Despite major progress in the number of girls who attend primary school, girls in Malawi continue to be disadvantaged, particularly in terms of their access to secondary school and in their educational outcomes. Both boys and girls also have high levels of grade repetition and school dropout, and often commence school later than the official starting age of six years.

1.2 Malawi girls’ education sector review: Purpose and methodology

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was contracted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to conduct an education sector review of girls’ primary and secondary education in Malawi. The aims of this review are to:

- outline the current context and challenges relating to girls’ education in Malawi
- identify the key factors contributing to gender inequalities in educational access and outcomes
- provide an overview of the policies and strategies currently in place to enhance girls’ education
- provide recommendations to help feed into future policy and program decisions.

In this report, background information from the literature is presented first to address the aims of the education sector review. Specific data sources used to describe the current context and challenges regarding access, quality and equity in girls’ education are described in Section 3.

Comprehensive information about the context of girls’ education in Malawi, in addition to information presented from relevant literature, was also gathered through consultations with key stakeholders who work in girls’ education in Malawi. A premise of these consultations was to capture evidence of perceptions and experiences of stakeholders to provide a more holistic overview of girls’ education in Malawi.

The consultations gathered information from the following sources:

- interviews and focus groups
The questions used to guide the interviews and focus group consultations are provided in Appendix A. The participants included stakeholders from the following sectors:

- national and district-level government
- donor organisations
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- UN organisations
- community members (including a traditional authority leader and a school leader).

The number of participants at each interview and focus group ranged from one to nine. These consultations provided insight into how stakeholders perceived the successes and challenges of girls’ education in Malawi and what they perceived as the priorities for girls’ education over the next five years. Consultations were scheduled to last approximately one hour, and stakeholder responses were recorded in writing by the research team. Stakeholders were assured that their names or any identifying information would not be used in reporting without their consent.

A questionnaire was designed to gather data to complement the interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) asked respondents about their organisation’s girls’ education programs; the perceived challenges of girls’ education in Malawi; and areas where further support is needed. Questionnaires were distributed and collected during consultation meetings and during the Second National Girls’ Education Conference. Eight questionnaires were completed, two of which were completed by stakeholders who also participated in interviews.

The research team also attended the Second National Girls’ Education Conference held on 1 June 2017 in Lilongwe, Malawi. This report draws on information conveyed in the presentations and discussions at this conference.

The research team presented the initial themes identified through the interviews, questionnaires and the conference at a project validation meeting attended by stakeholders. Feedback gathered at the validation meeting has also been incorporated in this report. The stakeholders who attended that meeting were from national-level government, donor organisations, NGOs and UN organisations.

This study used a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research captures data on perceptions of actors, which provide a holistic overview of the study and multiple interpretations of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to analyse stakeholders’ perceptions, the data explored four themes that consistently emerged from the consultations: a holistic approach to girls’ education, processes and structures for coordination and collaboration, funding, and evidence-based decision making. These four themes are presented in Section 6.

1.3 The structure of this report

After this introduction in Section 1, Section 2 provides a brief overview of the primary and secondary education system in Malawi. Section 3 discusses the education system in terms of issues relating to the equity, efficiency and quality of the education system, and presents data on enrolment, retention and learning achievement at primary and secondary school levels. Section 4 examines the key factors that have an impact on girls’ education. Section 5 discusses the major policies and strategies in Malawi designed to support girls’ education. Section 6 provides the findings from the stakeholder consultations. Finally, Section 7 provides recommendations for future directions and priorities, drawing on both the literature and the stakeholder consultations.
2 OVERVIEW OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN MALAWI

Malawi’s formal education system comprises eight years of primary education and four years of secondary education. A brief overview of the primary and secondary education system in Malawi is provided below.

2.1 Primary education

2.1.1 Overview

While access to early childhood development (ECD) has increased in recent years, participation rates are still low with around 40 per cent of ECD-age children enrolled in ECD (World Bank, 2015). Therefore, primary education is the first formal education experience for many students (MoEST, 2014a). Primary education in Malawi officially lasts for eight years from Standards 1 to 8, with the official primary school ages being 6 to 13 years. In 2013, the Education Bill was passed, which made education compulsory until 14 years of age (Ministry of Labour, 2016). However, as discussed throughout this report, many students do not start primary school until they are older than six and many drop out before reaching the age of 14.

In Malawi, primary school education falls into the category of basic education, which also includes ECD, complementary basic education (CBE) and adult education (Ravishankar, El-Tayeb El-Kogali, Sankar, Tanaka, & Rakoto-Tiana, 2016). CBE was developed to allow out-of-school children and youth to access basic education (MoEST, 2014a). CBE programs are run by NGOs to deliver a separate curriculum over three years with the aim of students reaching a Standard 6 level (MoEST, 2014a). Prior to the introduction of CBE, education for out-of-school youth was primarily delivered through functional literacy programs, however, these were designed to support both adults and out-of-school children (Jere, 2012). CBE specifically focuses on supporting out-of-school youth and is included in Malawi’s National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008-2017 (MoEST, 2008a).

Primary education, like secondary education, is under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)\(^1\). A policy of decentralised governance was implemented in 1998 and established 34 education districts that were responsible for primary education (Ravishankar et al., 2016). Since 1998, there have been further projects aimed at decentralisation, including the Direct Support to Schools (DSS) program and the Primary School Improvement Program (PSIP) (Ravishankar et al., 2016). The aims of decentralisation were to encourage and strengthen partnerships in educational development and management with national government, local communities, NGOs, the private sector and the donor community (Rugimbana & Liwewe, 2013). The primary and secondary education sector responsibilities are divided between the central and district authorities, as is shown in Exhibit 1.

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\(^1\) ECD and adult education fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and programs for out-of-school youth fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports (MoEST, 2013).
Exhibit 1 Decentralisation of MoEST roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central authority</th>
<th>Local government, council secretariat</th>
<th>Other organisations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole sector (excluding early childhood)</td>
<td>Whole sector (excluding early childhood)</td>
<td>Whole sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting policy and standards</td>
<td>• Planning (participatory) and budgeting</td>
<td>• School management committees/PTAs: some functions related to school (fundraising, budget, expenditure, civic education, oversight, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regulation, monitoring, inspection and evaluation</td>
<td>• Monitoring examinations</td>
<td>• Early childhood development centres (e.g. playgroups, nursery schools, childcare centres) run by NGOs, faith-based organisations, the private sector and communities: all functions relating to the centre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• National projects</td>
<td>• Teacher loans (including secondary) and allowances</td>
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<td>• Human resources (hiring, firing, promotion and transfers)</td>
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<td>• Payroll</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Capital investment/expenditure (incl. contracting, procurement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teaching/learning materials (e.g. textbooks)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Management of donor funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary/tertiary education</td>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recurrent expenditure and procurement</td>
<td>• Recurrent expenditure and procurement (except textbooks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Data collection</td>
<td>• Data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Monitoring standards</td>
<td>• Monitoring standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Capital investment via Local Development Fund and Constituency Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Allocation of school bursaries and some capital investment (e.g. desks; oversight school management committees)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pupil enrolment and transfers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal involvement in secondary exams, school management issues, etc.</td>
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</table>

Source: MoEST (2014a, p. 36)

The majority of primary schools are operated by the public sector, which includes both government facilities and religious agencies. According to the Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2015 Report, in 2014–15 there were 5415 public primary schools (including government and religious schools) and 323 private schools in 2015 (MoEST, n.d.-c). The number of schools has increased by an average of 1.6 per cent per year between 2011 and 2015 (MoEST, n.d.-c).

All teachers at primary school level can teach any grade level and teach all subjects (MoEST, 2014a). Some schools run double shifts, whereby one group of students is taught in the morning shift, and another class is taught in the afternoon shift, in an effort to reduce the students-to-teacher ratio and to reduce classroom resource needs (MoEST, 2014a).

2.1.2 Curriculum

Malawi embarked on the Primary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) in 2001. The PCAR was conducted by the Government of Malawi through the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), with the support of international donors, who included the Department for International Development (DFID), the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014). The new curriculum developed as a result of the PCAR – the ‘Curriculum and Assessment Framework’ – has an outcomes-based focus and emphasises using learner-centred pedagogies and continuous assessment (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014). This
curriculum describes what students are expected to learn at different stages in their learning process within different learning areas and the achievement benchmarks. From 2007, the curriculum was rolled out in a phased approach to different grades (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). The curriculum aimed to address the interests, values and needs of both boys and girls (Maluwa-Banda, 2003).

2.1.3 Assessment

In order for students to be promoted to the next grade, they must sit a test at the end of each grade (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). As is described later in this report, there are high rates of grade repetition in Malawi for both boys and girls.

At the end of primary school in Standard 8, students sit the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE), which determines their eligibility to attend secondary school (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). The PSLCE examinations are managed by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) (Maluwa-Banda, 2003). The PSLCE includes six subjects: English, Chichewa, social/religious studies, maths, science, and art/life skills (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). Pass rates for the PSLCE tend to be low, particularly for girls.

2.2 Secondary education

2.2.1 Overview

Secondary school officially starts at age 14 and lasts for four years, from Form 1 to Form 4. According to the EMIS 2015 Report, in 2014–15, there were 1454 secondary schools, which included 1094 public schools (including government and religious schools) and 360 private schools (MoEST, n.d.-c). In 2014–15, more boys were enrolled (53%) than girls (47%) in secondary school (MoEST, n.d.-c).

Unlike with primary education, there are fees associated with attending secondary education (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016). However, cash transfers and bursaries are provided to some of the most vulnerable students (MoEST, 2014a). The Education Sector Implementation Plan II (ESIP) target for 2017 is to provide bursaries to 12 000 students (MoEST, 2014a). According to the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report, the number of bursaries provided to students exceeded the target, with 14 449 government bursaries provided: 6143 to girls and 8306 to boys (MoEST, n.d.-b). Additional bursaries were also provided by UNICEF and CAMFED, the majority of which were received by girls (MoEST, n.d.-b).

Public secondary schools in Malawi include Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS), Open Day Secondary Schools (ODSS) and Conventional Secondary Schools (CSS), which also include boarding schools (Chimombo, Meke, Zeitlyn, & Lewin, 2014). Students are ranked based on their scores in the PSLCE, with the highest scoring students entering CSS, while students who pass the PSLCE with lower scores are able to attend CDSS and ODSS (UNESCO, 2010, cited in JICA & IDCJ, 2012).

CDSS have a quota system, with an equal split of girl and boy enrolments (Samati, n.d.) as part of Malawi’s 50/50 Selection Policy (MoEST & Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). CDSS are mostly located in rural areas and receive high government subsidies, which means fees are lower compared to CSS (Samati, n.d.). Spaces for CSS are limited with selection based on achievement in the PSLCE. However, there are more boarding spaces available for boys than girls, and there are typically fewer girls enrolled in CSS (Ng’ambi, 2011; Samati, n.d.). ODSS were previously known as night schools, and were designed to allow students of any age to attend secondary school (MoEST, n.d.-c). These schools are located within the existing infrastructure of secondary schools with learners attending part-time (MoEST, n.d.-c; The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development & The World Bank, 2010).
2.2.2 Curriculum

The Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (SSCAR) began in 2009 led by the MIE (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). The SSCAR was designed to incorporate the outcomes-based education and student-centred teaching included within the PCAR (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). It was also designed to cover topics including gender, HIV/AIDS, climate change and special-needs education. The secondary curriculum was intended to be implemented in 2010, however, for budget reasons it was postponed (JICA & IDCJ, 2012), and the curriculum implementation commenced in 2015.

The introduction of the National Education Standards (NES) in May 2015 was another significant curriculum reform for both primary and secondary education (MoEST, 2015). The standards were developed by the MoEST and were designed to ‘articulate clearly the educational experiences and achievements which key stakeholders, in particular students and their parents and carers, should expect their own schools to deliver ... and how the success of schools in achieving these outcomes for their students should be measured.’ (MoEST, 2015, p. ii). The standards include:

- outcomes for students
- aspects relating to the teaching process that support student outcomes
- standards relating to leadership and management processes that support effective teaching and learning.

The standards are aligned to both the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II and also the NESP 2008-2017.

2.2.3 Assessment

The SSCAR shifted away from using only summative assessment, to place emphasis on using both formative and summative assessments. Students have also, until recently, had examinations after junior secondary and senior secondary school.

The Junior Certificate Examinations (JCE) was used to assess students after two years at secondary school. However, from the 2016–17 school year, the JCE has been phased out to encourage students to remain in secondary school for the full four years (MoEST, 2016). The final JCE was held in 2016 (MoEST, 2016).

The Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) takes place at the end of a student’s four years of secondary education. The results from the MSCE are used to determine whether that student is eligible for higher education (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). An MSCE is required for university entrance and for secondary teacher training college (MoEST, 2014b). Tertiary education in Malawi includes teacher training colleges, technical and vocational training schools and universities (MoEST, 2014b). University-level education typically lasts for four years.

Technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training (TEVET) is run by both private and public providers and offers technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training to students with secondary level schooling (Khan & Mupuwaliywa, 2016). Due to the limited places, students who do not receive their MSCE often find it difficult to access the formal TEVET system provided through the seven technical colleges by the TEVET Authority. However, students that drop out of secondary school can sometimes access non-formal training opportunities provided by other organisations, such as through NGOs (Khan & Mupuwaliywa, 2016; The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development & The World Bank, 2010). In 2014, of the 1300 apprentices enrolled in technical training colleges, only 30 per cent were female (Khan & Mupuwaliywa, 2016). One of the goals outlined in the NESP is to increase access to TEVET to female students (MoEST, 2008a).
3 ACCESS, QUALITY AND EQUITY IN GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN MALAWI

This section provides an overview of girls’ participation in primary and secondary education in order to outline the current context and challenges regarding access, quality and equity in girls’ education. The information presented includes data on school enrolment, dropout, grade repetition and school completion rates.

This section draws on data from a range of sources including:

- The EMIS 2015 Annual School Census Report (EMIS 2015) (MoEST, n.d.-c). This report for the 2014–15 school year covers all primary and secondary institutions with questionnaires completed by head teachers, deputy head teachers and school heads. EMIS 2015–16 data was not available at the time of writing this report.
- The Welfare Monitoring Study (WMS 2014) (National Statistical Office, 2015c). This sample-based study covered a random sample of 14,000 households nationwide with questionnaires administered to participants between November 2014 and February 2015.

Due to the different timeframes, methods and target populations for these studies, some differences in the data exist. For example, the UIS statistics provided are based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) which defines the official ages of primary school as 6–11 years and secondary school as 12–17 years, while other sources such as EMIS, WMS 2014 and MES 2014, are based on the official ages of primary and secondary school in Malawi (6–13 years and 14–17 years respectively). The aim of Section 3 is to provide an overview of the context of girls’ education in Malawi in order to investigate some of the needs and possible ways to enhance it.

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2 While the EMIS 2015 Report provides gender disaggregated data, information is not provided about whether differences reported between boys and girls are statistically significant.

3 The MoEST confirmed that EMIS 2015–16 data was unavailable at the time of writing this report. During subsequent report revisions, data from the 2015–16 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) drawing on EMIS 2015–16 data was available and was added to this report. However, the full EMIS 2016 report was unavailable during the report revisions.


5 There were sometimes large variations in the data reported between different sources and some inconsistencies within some data sources also existed.

6 See http://uis.unesco.org/country/MW
3.1 Primary school

3.1.1 Enrolment

Around 4.8 million learners were enrolled in primary schools in the 2014–15 school year. Data from MoEST indicate the following student enrolments:

- 59.4 per cent in religious agency-owned schools
- 38.9 per cent in government-owned schools
- 1.7 per cent in private schools (MoEST, n.d.-c).

The WMS 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015c) also found that similar numbers of boys and girls were enrolled in these types of primary schools.

Enrolment numbers for both boys and girls decreased across each of the primary school grades, as can be seen in Exhibit 2 (MoEST, n.d.-c). Decreases in enrolments resulted from grade repetition, particularly in Standard 1, and student dropout, both of which are discussed further below.

### Exhibit 2 Student primary school enrolment, by school type, grade and gender 2014–15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>204 594</td>
<td>207 025</td>
<td>317 487</td>
<td>319 983</td>
<td>6351</td>
<td>6428</td>
<td>1 061 868</td>
<td>1 061 868</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>157 370</td>
<td>160 913</td>
<td>246 834</td>
<td>242 984</td>
<td>6057</td>
<td>6154</td>
<td>820 312</td>
<td>820 312</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>152 560</td>
<td>147 744</td>
<td>220 369</td>
<td>225 311</td>
<td>5195</td>
<td>5449</td>
<td>756 628</td>
<td>756 628</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>116 721</td>
<td>120 806</td>
<td>175 349</td>
<td>182 106</td>
<td>5100</td>
<td>4764</td>
<td>604 846</td>
<td>604 846</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>105 199</td>
<td>107 612</td>
<td>155 149</td>
<td>159 587</td>
<td>5003</td>
<td>5154</td>
<td>537 704</td>
<td>537 704</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>81 333</td>
<td>82 649</td>
<td>123 205</td>
<td>126 379</td>
<td>4687</td>
<td>4891</td>
<td>423 144</td>
<td>423 144</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 7</td>
<td>65 631</td>
<td>64 718</td>
<td>100 214</td>
<td>99 622</td>
<td>4168</td>
<td>4440</td>
<td>338 793</td>
<td>338 793</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 8</td>
<td>52 710</td>
<td>44 632</td>
<td>84 178</td>
<td>73 195</td>
<td>3113</td>
<td>3073</td>
<td>260 901</td>
<td>260 901</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>936 118</td>
<td>936 099</td>
<td>1 422 785</td>
<td>1 429 167</td>
<td>39 674</td>
<td>40 353</td>
<td>4 804 196</td>
<td>4 804 196</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c, p. 20)

The official age for commencing primary school (Standard 1) in Malawi is six years of age. However, many girls and boys commence their first year of primary school when they are older than the official starting age, as can be seen in Exhibit 3. Of all new enrolments in the 2014–15 school year, 18.3 per cent were overage boys and 17.1 per cent were overage girls (MoEST, n.d.-c). Further work is needed to ensure that boys and girls are able to access primary school at the official starting age.
Exhibit 3 Age of new entrant students, by gender 2014–15

Source: EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c, p. 26)

The gross enrolment rate (GER) is one measure of school accessibility, as it indicates the total enrolment of students (regardless of age) as a percentage of all official primary-age students (6–13 years). According to the EMIS 2015 Report, the GER is similar for both boys and girls, and is over 100 per cent due to the presence of children at school who are under the age of six or over the age of 14 years (MoEST, n.d.-c). In 2015, the GER for females was 147 per cent and for males was 144 per cent (UIS, 2017).

The net enrolment rate (NER) indicates the proportion of official school-age students (6–13 years) enrolled in school as a percentage of all 6–13 year old students. However, as reported in the EMIS 2015 Report, these rates are also above 100 per cent due to factors such as the lack of birth registration (MoEST, n.d.-c). The large number of students who attended school outside of the official age can have implications for educational infrastructure needs, the experiences of students and teachers in the classroom, and for educational planning and funding.

The WMS 2014, however, found that the NER was 87.8 per cent for girls and 85.7 per cent for boys (National Statistical Office, 2015c). The NER was higher among girls (and boys) from families where the household head8 had higher levels of qualifications. For example, the NER for girls from households where the head of the household had a secondary or post-secondary qualification was over 95 per cent (National Statistical Office, 2015c). In households where the highest qualification of the household head was junior primary level, the NER was 85.8 per cent for girls and where the household head had no formal educational qualifications, the NER was just 69.8 per cent (National Statistical Office, 2015c)9.

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7 Calculated based on the ISCED classification of primary school which included Standards 1–6.

8 The head of the household, as defined in the WMS (National Statistical Office, 2015c) is ‘the person commonly regarded by the household members as their head. The head would usually be the main income earner and decision maker for the household.’ (p. 13).

9 Information is not provided in the WMS 2014 report regarding whether these differences were related to socio-economic status.
The MES 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015a) looked at the net attendance ratio (NAR) for primary school-age students, that is, the percentage of children of primary school-age that are attending either primary or secondary school. The NAR was similar for both boys and girls (94% girls, 93% boys). That is, around 6 per cent of primary school-age students were not attending primary or secondary school. The MES 2014 highlighted that there were large disparities between girls from the richest and poorest families. Among the wealthiest quintile, the NAR for girls was 97.3 per cent compared to 89.4 per cent for girls from the lowest wealth quintile (National Statistical Office, 2015a).

The gender parity index (GPI) indicates the ratio of female-to-male students enrolled at all grade levels. In 2015, the GPI for primary education was 1.00, which indicated equality in enrolments (MoEST, n.d.-c). However, it is also important to look at completion, grade repetition and promotion rates in order to gain a more nuanced view of girls’ and boys’ access to education.

3.1.2 Dropouts, grade repetition and grade promotion

Dropout rates at primary school were slightly higher for girls than boys. According to the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b), in 2016 a total of 10.2 per cent of girls and 8.8 per cent of boys enrolled dropped out of primary school. Another study that drew on EMIS data, looked at dropout rates between 2010 and 2015 and found that at Standard 7, the dropout rate was much higher for girls than boys, as shown in Exhibit 4 (McConnell & Mupuwaliywa, 2016). Dropout rates were also high for both boys and girls at the beginning of primary school in Standard 1.

Exhibit 4 Student dropout rates 2010–2015 for Standards 1–7, by gender

![Image of Exhibit 4]

Source: McConnell and Mupuwaliywa (2016, p. 2), calculated using EMIS data

Large numbers of boys and girls repeated a grade at primary level during the 2014–15 school year, with 524,377 boys (22.5% of total enrolments) and 497,304 girls (21.3% of total enrolments), as can be seen in Exhibit 5 (MoEST, n.d.-c). The repetition rate indicates the number of students who have repeated a grade for two or more consecutive years as a percentage of enrolments in that grade in the previous year. Repetition rates were particularly high in Standard 1 for boys and girls.

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10 This included students who were not attending school and those attending preschool.
Exhibit 5 Grade repetition rates 2014–2015 for Standards 1–8, by gender

![Graph showing grade repetition rates for boys and girls across Standards 1 to 8.](image)

Source: EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c, p. 48)

Similar repetition rates were also found in the WMS 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015c) and there were no statistically significant differences in repetition rates between boys (25.3%) compared to girls (22.0%). Repetition rates for girls were lower where their household head had a post-secondary qualification (16.3%) or a senior secondary qualification (18.4 per cent) compared to those with a junior primary qualification (25.5%) or no formal education qualification (22.9%) (National Statistical Office, 2015c).

High repetition rates have negative impacts on the efficiency of the schooling system and can also often impact negatively on students by increasing the risk of dropout (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development & The World Bank, 2010). The 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) reported that a USAID study had found that students in Malawi who repeated a grade in primary school were more likely to drop out. ‘Some studies on student learning have questioned the pedagogical benefits of holding pupils back.’ (UNESCO, 2012, p.41).

The promotion rate indicates the proportion of students from a cohort who are enrolled in the next grade for the following school year. As can be seen in Exhibit 6, the rate of grade promotion is low for boys and girls across all grades, due to the high rates of grade repetition and dropout. The lowest promotion rate for girls was in Standard 8, where only 61.5 per cent of girls were promoted from Standard 7 to 8, while 68.4 per cent of boys were promoted from Standard 7 to 8 (MoEST, n.d.-c).
3.1.3 School completion rates

Primary school completion was a major goal of the MDGs and this has been reinforced and expanded in Goal 4 of the SDGs. School completion rates are an important measure of the retention capacity of an education system.

Primary school completion rates were generally low in Malawi and girls had lower completion rates than boys. According to the EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c), the 2014–15 primary school completion rate for girls was 47 per cent compared to boys whose completion rate was 56 per cent (see Exhibit 7). While there was a large number of girls who accessed education in Malawi at the beginning of primary school, the proportion decreased towards the upper primary school grades. The primary school completion rates have been fairly stable for boys and girls over the past five years, as shown in Exhibit 7.
Primary school completion rates reported in the MES 2014 were lower than those reported in the EMIS 2015 Report. According to MES 2014, 54.2 per cent of boys completed primary school and only 38.1 per cent of girls completed primary school (National Statistical Office, 2015a).

The MES 2014 also reported on school survival rates\(^{11}\) at primary education, that is, the percentage of students entering Standard 1 who reached Standard 8 (National Statistical Office, 2015a). Slightly fewer girls than boys that commenced in Standard 1 reached Standard 8 (77.4% boys, 73.6% girls). Fewer students from rural areas reached Standard 8 compared to students from urban areas (83.6% urban, 74.5% rural) and survival rates also varied substantially by socioeconomic status (57.0% poorest wealth quintile, 87.8% richest wealth quintile) (National Statistical Office, 2015a). The survival rates reported in the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) were much lower (29.0% for girls and 36% for boys), and highlighted the need to enhance the retention of students, particularly girls, between Standards 5 and 8.

### 3.2 Secondary school

#### 3.2.1 Enrolment

The number of secondary school enrolments increased by 39.7 per cent between 2011 and 2015. Of the total 358,033 students enrolled in secondary schools in the 2014–15 school year, there were more boys than girls enrolled (53% boys; 47% girls). While in 2015 GPI for primary schools was 1.00, this fell to 0.88 in secondary, indicating that there were more boys enrolled in secondary schools than girls (MoEST, n.d.-c).

The official age for attending secondary school in Malawi is 14–17 years of age for Forms 1–4. Transition rates from primary to secondary school are low in Malawi. According to the EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c), 35 per cent of boys and 37 per cent of girls who had completed Standard 8 the previous year transitioned to their first grade of secondary school (Form 1). However, as fewer girls than boys completed Standard 8, there were fewer girls than boys in Form 1 of secondary school. The transition rates found in the MES 2014 were higher than those outlined in the EMIS 2015 Report (55.3% boys, 61.0% girls), and there were higher rates of transition among wealthier families (National Statistical Office, 2015a).

The GER rates vary substantially between different sources, due to the different methods used to calculate these rates. According to the UIS, the GER for secondary students in 2015 was 41.0 per cent for females and 45.5 per cent males (UIS, 2017)\(^{12}\). The EMIS 2015 Report states that these rates were 22.3 per cent for females and 26.3 per cent for males (MoEST, n.d.-c). Likewise, the NER rates also vary. The NER indicates the proportion of official school-age students (14–17 years) enrolled in school as a percentage of all 14–17 year old students. According to the EMIS 2015 Report, these figures were 15 per cent for girls and 16 per cent for boys (MoEST, n.d.-c). The UIS calculates the NER based on the proportion of students ages 12–17 years enrolled in school. The UIS reported that in 2015 the NER was 36.0 per cent for females and 37.3 per cent for males (UIS, 2017). Regardless, of the methods used

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\(^{11}\) Further information about how survival rates are calculated is provided in the MES 2014 Report (National Statistical Office, 2015a, p. 172).

\(^{12}\) Calculated based on the ISCED classification of secondary school which included Standards 7-8 in addition to Forms 1-4.
to calculate the GER and NER, it is clear that accessibility to secondary school is low for boys and girls in Malawi.

Accessibility also appeared to be lower among girls from rural areas compared to urban areas. The WMS 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015c) found that the NER for secondary schools was significantly higher for girls in urban areas (32.7%) compared to girls in rural areas (8.8%), with the same pattern observed for boys (29% NER for boys in urban areas; 5.9% NER for boys in rural areas). The NER was also higher for both girls and boys as the level of education of the household head increased, as is shown in Exhibit 8. While education level is likely to be related to socio-economic status, the relationship between NER and socioeconomic status was not provided in this report.

**Exhibit 8** NER for secondary school, by gender and education level of household head 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of education completed by household head</th>
<th>NER (%)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior primary</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior primary</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior secondary</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior secondary</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Statistical Office (2015c)*

Research indicated that a large number of girls in Malawi did not attend school past the primary level. The MES 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015a) found that while the NAR at primary school level was 94 per cent for girls and 93 per cent for boys, this fell to just 18 per cent for girls and 14 per cent for boys at secondary school. That is, only 18 per cent of all girls in Malawi aged 14–17 attended secondary school. While around 23 per cent of girls in this age group did not attend any form of schooling, around 60 per cent of girls attended primary school (National Statistical Office, 2015a). The NAR varied substantively according to a family’s socioeconomic status. The MES 2014 found that the NAR was much higher among the wealthiest quintile (45% NAR for girls) compared to the lowest wealth quintile (4% NAR for girls).

### 3.2.2 Dropouts, grade repetition and grade promotion

In addition to fewer girls being enrolled in secondary school, a greater number of girls dropped out than boys across all four grade levels, as is shown in Exhibit 9. Of the 184,817 boys enrolled in 2014, 6042 boys dropped out in the 2014–15 school year (3.3%) (MoEST, n.d.-c). Of the 161,787 girls enrolled in 2014, 8898 girls dropped out in 2014–15 (5.5%) (MoEST, n.d.-c). The WMS 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015c) also found significant differences between males and females in school dropout rates, with dropout rates of 4.5 per cent and 7.1 per cent, respectively.
Exhibit 9 Number of student dropouts 2014–2015 for Forms 1–4, by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
<th>Form 3</th>
<th>Form 4</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1598</td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>6042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2554</td>
<td>2547</td>
<td>2109</td>
<td>1697</td>
<td>8898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4425</td>
<td>3945</td>
<td>3711</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>14940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c, p. 64)

Of the 184,817 boys enrolled in 2014, 6,189 boys dropped out in 2014–15 (3.3%) (MoEST, n.d.-c). At the same time, of the 161,787 girls enrolled in 2014, 7,256 girls dropped out in 2014–15 (4.5%) (MoEST, n.d.-c). In addition to higher dropout rates, a greater number of girls repeated Forms 1, 2 and 3 compared to boys, as shown in Exhibit 10. According to the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b), the greatest difference in promotion rates between boys and girls was between Forms 2 and 3, where only 75.9 per cent of girls were promoted from junior secondary to senior secondary compared to 81.1 per cent of boys.

Exhibit 10 Number of students repeating Forms 1–4 in 2014–2015, by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
<th>Form 3</th>
<th>Form 4</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>3171</td>
<td>6189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2503</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>3144</td>
<td>7256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>4079</td>
<td>2610</td>
<td>6315</td>
<td>13445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EMIS 2015 Report (MoEST, n.d.-c, p. 63)

However, much higher repetition rates were reported in the WMS 2014 than in the EMIS 2015 Report. According to WMS 2014, 26.4 per cent of females and 27.1 per cent of males repeated a grade in 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2015c). There were no significant differences in repetition rates by gender; however, repetition rates were higher in urban areas than in rural areas and lower according to the highest level of education achieved by the head of the household (National Statistical Office, 2015c).

Secondary school completion rates were not available from the EMIS 2014 or 2015 Reports; however, in 2016, only 58.3 per cent of students passed their examinations at the end of Form 4 (MoEST, n.d.-
b). Further, very few students in Malawi transitioned to tertiary education – the GER for tertiary education was only 1 per cent (UNDP, 2016).

The UNDP 2016 Report provides the expected years of schooling for both boys and girls, which is the ‘number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child’s life.’ (UNDP, 2016, p. 213). The expected years of schooling for girls is 10.7 years and for males is 10.8 years. Of those aged 25 years and older, the mean years of schooling for females is 3.8 years and for males is 5.0 years (UNDP, 2016). Data from Malawi suggest that the majority of boys and girls do not achieve the expected years of schooling outlined in international literature.

### 3.2.3 Primary and secondary learning outcomes

On average, boys had higher pass rates than girls on all three examinations in the three compulsory examinations within the Malawi education system. The pass rates for the PSLCE (taken after Standard 8), the JCE (taken after Form 2) and the MSCE (taken after Form 4) can be seen in Exhibit 11.

**Exhibit 11 PSLCE, JCE and MSCE pass rates 2009–2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Pass PSLCE</th>
<th>% Pass JCE</th>
<th>% Pass MSCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the WMS 2014, 69.7 per cent of females and 59.0 per cent of males over 15 years had no formal educational qualification (National Statistical Office, 2015c). The proportion of men and women with no formal educational qualifications was higher among those aged 45 years and older. However, the proportion with no formal qualifications aged 15–24 years remained high at 63.4 per cent.

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) conducts a regional assessment in the Southern and Eastern African region, assessing reading and mathematics achievement of students in Grade 5. The latest results released were from the third round of SACMEQ.
(SACMEQ III), which was conducted in Malawi in 2007. The results from SACMEQ IV have not been released and are not yet available.

In 2007, boys in Malawi performed significantly better than girls in both reading and mathematics in SACMEQ (Milner, Mulera, & Chimuzu, 2011). The national SACMEQ report made the following policy recommendation ‘Boys still performed better than girls in both reading and mathematics. The Ministry should improve the learning conditions in schools and in classrooms with special attention given to the needs of girls. The conditions should facilitate child-centered teaching and continuous assessment’ (Milner et al., 2011, p. 138).

The UIS found that the youth (ages 15–24 years) literacy rates were similar for males (74.9%) and females (75.2%) but that for females over 15 years, the literacy rates were lower than for males (females 59%; males 73%) (UIS, 2017). The MES 2014 reported that the youth literacy rate for females was lower than for males (females 72.4%, males 77.8%) (National Statistical Office, 2015a). The literacy rates for both females and males increased according to socioeconomic status, with the differences between the poorest and richest wealth quintiles being more pronounced for females, as can be seen in Exhibit 12.

**Exhibit 12 Youth literacy rates (ages 15–24 years), by gender and wealth index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wealth index quintile</th>
<th>% literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorest</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Statistical Office (2015a)*

### 3.3 Summary

While the number of girls attending primary school is now similar to boys, there are still many areas where further progress is needed, both for girls and boys. In particular at primary school, some of the key issues for girls’ education in Malawi highlighted in the literature included that there were:

- significant numbers of girls (and boys) who were overage when they commenced school
- larger proportions of girls from poorer families that were out-of-school compared to girls from wealthier families
- higher dropout rates for girls than boys, with girls having particularly high dropout rates at Standard 7

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15 As noted previously, many studies did not include information on whether the differences between boys and girls reported were statistically significant.
Girls’ Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review

- high rates of grade repetition for girls (and boys) across all grades, but particularly at Standard 1 and particularly among girls from families where the household head had lower levels of education
- low rates of grade promotion for girls (and boys), with girls having lower promotion rates from Standard 7 to 8 than boys
- lower rates of primary school completion for girls than boys
- lower pass rates for girls than boys in the PSLCE and lower achievement of Grade 5 girls than boys in reading and mathematics in SACMEQ III.

Gender parity at secondary school has not yet been reached in Malawi. The literature reviewed in this section highlighted a range of challenges for girls at secondary school, including that there were:

- fewer girls than boys transitioning from primary to secondary school, with fewer girls than boys attending secondary school and high rates of girls out-of-school
- high proportions of girls that were not enrolled in school, with particularly high rates among those from rural rather than urban areas, and girls from families where the household head had lower levels of education
- more girls than boys that dropped out of secondary school
- more girls than boys that repeated a grade, with repetition rates (for boys and girls) being higher for students from urban rather than rural areas and higher among students from families where the household head had lower levels of education
- lower pass rates for girls than boys in the JCE and in the MSCE
- lower literacy rates for females (ages 15–24 years) from poorer families compared to females from wealthier families
- few students that transitioned from secondary to tertiary education.

In addition to considering the challenges regarding girls’ access to education, it is also essential that the experiences of girls at school is also taken into account. Some of the factors affecting girls’ school experiences in addition to factors that may impact girls’ ability to enrol and stay in school are discussed in Section 4.
4 FACTORS THAT AFFECT GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN MALAWI

In Malawi, the education sector’s mandate, as outlined in the NESP 2008–2017 (MoEST, 2008a), is ‘to promote education in Malawi irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or any other discriminatory characteristics’ (p. iii). In order to promote and enhance the educational outcomes of girls in Malawi, it is important to identify the range of factors that have an impact on their educational experiences in Malawi, including their opportunities to attend and stay in school, their school experiences and their learning outcomes.

As is outlined in the ESIP II (MoEST, 2014a), there are three overarching factors that the Malawi National Girls’ Education Strategy (NGES) identifies as contributing to gender disparities:

1. **sociocultural factors**, which include the impact of teachers, marriage, pregnancy and household responsibilities
2. **school infrastructure and facility factors**, which include the impact of a lack of adequate sanitation facilities and other school resources, and distances girls travel to school
3. **economic factors**, which include the direct costs and perceived opportunity costs of girls attending school.

Section 4 briefly discusses the key factors that contribute to girls’ education in Malawi, in particular the sociocultural factors, school infrastructure and facilities factors, and economic factors. Where possible, research into the opinions and possible impacts of these factors on girls’ education is provided. The purpose is not to evaluate the quality of this research but to provide an overview of the possible factors that contribute to girls’ educational experiences in Malawi.

4.1 Sociocultural factors

The research identifies key factors that inhibit girls’ ability to actively engage in education. Some of these key factors discussed include teacher-related factors, school related gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy.

4.1.1 Teacher-related factors

Malawi has a high ratio of students to qualified teachers, which means that it can be challenging for teachers to address the needs of all students in a class. This can be particularly challenging given that the age and abilities of students in a given grade can vary widely, meaning that students have different learning needs.

After school fees were abolished in 1994, a large number of unqualified primary school teachers were recruited in order to keep up with the increase in enrolments (Al-Samarrai & Zaman, 2007). There have been significant gains made in reducing the student-to-qualified-teacher ratio, for example, between 2012 and 2013, the ratio reduced from 95:1 to 76:1 (MoEST, 2014a). However, since 2013, the ratio of students to teachers has slightly increased. According to the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b), the ratio of students to qualified teachers was 80:1 in 2016. The student to qualified teacher ratio is particularly high in rural schools. In 2016 the ratio was 82:1 in rural schools compared to 67:1 in urban schools (MoEST, n.d.-b).

According to the ESIP II (MoEST, 2014a), the goal for primary schools is to reduce the ratio of students to qualified teachers to 63:1 by 2017. In secondary schools, the goal is to reduce the student to science
teacher ratio\textsuperscript{16} to 50:1 in 2017. Steps to achieve these goals identified in the Sector Implementation Plan (MoEST, 2014a) included:

- increasing the number of double shifts provided in schools
- providing needs-based school grants to allow schools to hire contract teachers
- recruiting and training additional teachers.

Steps are also being taken to ensure there are sufficient numbers of teachers in rural schools, through the provision of incentives for rural teachers (MoEST, 2014a). However, even if the goal of 63:1 is achieved by 2017, this ratio is still higher than UNESCO’s Education for All recommended target of 40:1 (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016). The 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) highlighted that there is still a need to increase the number of secondary schools running double shifts, with the goal of 30 per cent of secondary schools providing double shifts by 2017. However, as of 2016, only 4 per cent of secondary schools ran double shifts due to the shortage of teaching staff (MoEST, n.d.-b).

In addition to the shortage of qualified teachers overall, there are also lower numbers of female teachers compared to male teachers at both primary and secondary levels. As of 2015, approximately 42 per cent of primary teachers in Malawi were female, and only 22 per cent of secondary teachers were female (MoEST, n.d.-c). Shortages of female teachers are most pronounced at rural schools compared to urban schools (MoEST, n.d.-b).

As outlined in the ESIP II (MoEST, 2014a), one of the goals is to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of female teachers to help to promote a school environment that is gender-sensitive and to provide girls with school role models. The importance of increasing the number of female teachers, particularly in rural schools, is also recognised in the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (MoEST, 2008b). This document includes strategies to increase the number of female teachers, such as providing salary incentives, developing an enrolment policy whereby half of those in teacher-training institutions are female, and ensuring that there is sufficient accommodation for female teachers at teacher-training institutions.

A range of research indicates that teacher quality is a crucial factor that can affect student achievement (see for example, Aga Khan Foundation, 2010; Asim, Chase, Dar, & Schmillen, 2015; Petrosino, Morgan, Fronius, Tanner-Smith, & Boruch, 2015). Malawi continues to have large numbers of unqualified teachers. For example in 2015, 48 per cent of secondary teachers were not professionally trained, whereby they did not have a diploma in education or a degree with a teaching certificate (MoEST, n.d.-c). In primary schools, the MoEST’s policy is to recruit teachers with a MSCE or higher, however, many teachers still have the JCE as their highest level of qualification (MoEST, n.d.-c). According to the UNDP (2016) Report, nine per cent of primary school teachers did not have the minimum qualifications required to teach at primary level.

As part of SACMEQ III, both students and teachers were assessed in their reading and mathematics skills. In 2007, the results showed that only 28 per cent of teachers in Malawi achieved the highest level for mathematics and 64 per cent reached the highest level for reading (Milner et al., 2011).

\textsuperscript{16} For secondary school, targets for student to teacher ratios are only provided for science teachers and not for other subject teachers.
Properly trained teachers have the potential to enhance learning outcomes for both boys and girls in Malawi.

King and Winthrop (2015) discuss the importance of both male and female teachers using gender-sensitive pedagogy. As is stated in the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report on gender (UNESCO & UNGEI, 2016):

> The perpetuation of gender inequality through schooling can be reduced through good quality pre-service and in-service gender-sensitive training in which teachers query their own gender-related attitudes, perceptions and expectations of children, and learn ways to diversify their teaching and assessment styles. (p. 52).

This Global Education Monitoring Report outlines that in a 2014 early grade reading study in Malawi, 28 per cent of the 5000 Standard 1–3 teachers observed did not use appropriate and gender-sensitive language.

4.1.2 School-related gender-based violence

School-related gender based violence (GBV) includes various forms of physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment that girls suffer while in and around the school surroundings, including violence perpetuated by students and teachers. GBV has been reported to contribute to girls’ absenteeism and dropout in Malawi, with girls staying away from school due to fear of harassment and abuse (e.g., Leach et al., cited in King & Winthrop, 2015; Burton, 2005, cited in UNESCO & UNGEI, 2015).

King and Winthrop (2015) discuss that little research has been conducted to examine the relationship between school-related violence and educational achievement. There are also challenges in gathering accurate data on the prevalence of GBV, as it is often under-reported.

Mellish, Settergren and Sapuwa (2015) conducted a literature review on GBV in Malawi and found four studies on GBV among school children. Many of these studies were small-scale; however, the authors noted the apparent high prevalence of school-related GBV. One study involved nine districts and sought to understand the impact of GBV on girls’ education. Questionnaires were provided to girls who were both enrolled and out-of-school and 61 per cent reported that their experiences of GBV had impacted their school performance (Bisika et al., 2009, cited in Mellish et al., 2015).

USAID conducted a study in four districts in Malawi (Mzimba North, Ntchisi, Balaka and Thyolo) investigating grade repetition and dropouts in primary schools (USAID, 2014), and found in their interviews with community school leaders that there were reports of teachers being harsh and using offensive language towards students, particularly to over-age girls and students repeating grades. In this study, 35 per cent of students cited that one of the reasons for truancy was being afraid of their teachers.

4.1.3 Marriage

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world (UN Women, 2017). Approximately 10 per cent of girls are married before age 15 and 50 per cent marry before age 18 (National Statistical Office, 2015a). In February 2017, the Malawi Government adopted a constitutional amendment that raised the legal age of marriage from 15 years to 18 years for boys and girls to reduce child marriages and its impacts, including on girls’ education (UN Women, 2017).

The Malawi Youth Status Report 2015 notes that marriage can take place for reasons such as poverty, cultural expectations and pregnancy (Ministry of Labour, 2016). For example, in some areas of Malawi, cultural practices exist whereby some form of payment is made to the girl’s family in exchange for her marriage, where the ‘bride price’ is known as ‘lobola’ (Ministry of Labour, 2016). In some districts in
Malawi, female initiation practices exist that can result in pregnancy and may also encourage early marriage (CSEC, 2014; MoEST, 2014c).

Marriage is one of the most common reasons for girls dropping out of secondary school in Malawi. According to head teachers, marriage accounted for 16.6 per cent of school dropouts and is the third most common reason for girls dropping out of secondary school after school fees (27.7%) and pregnancy (27.6%) (MoEST, n.d.-c). The WMS (National Statistical Office, 2015c) found that marriage was the most common reason provided by adolescent girls for not attending school in the previous school year. Of the 13 per cent of girls aged 14–17 who indicated that they did not attend school in the 2013–14 academic year, over half stated that this was because they got married (National Statistical Office, 2015c). Another study examined the impact of marriage and childbirth on school dropout in Malawi and found that marriage was a stronger predictor of dropout than childbirth. The study concluded that ‘for most girls in the current school and community contexts in Malawi, marriage and schooling are typically incompatible’ (Omoeva, Hatch, & Sylla, 2014, p. 25).

In the final evaluation of the Joint Programme on Adolescent Girls’ (JPAG) in Malawi (Munthali, M bendela, Mezuwa, & Banda, 2015), early marriages were identified as a key issue contributing to school dropouts. The evaluation identified that adolescent girls may marry due to poverty, family expectations and/or because they do not see the value of education.

4.1.4 Pregnancy

Pregnancy is another key factor that affects girls’ dropout and grade repetition rates. According to the MES conducted in 2014 (National Statistical Office, 2014b), approximately, 5 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 had given birth before the age of 15 years and around 35 per cent of women aged between 20 and 49 had given birth before the age of 18 years.17 The 2015–16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (National Statistical Office & ICF International, 2017) found that 22 per cent of women aged between 15 and 19 had given birth and that teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile were more likely to become pregnant at a younger age compared to those in the highest wealth quintile.

According to the EMIS 2015 Report, the second most common reason for girls dropping out of secondary school was pregnancy, which accounted for 27.6 per cent of all female dropouts (MoEST, n.d.-c).

A readmission policy for school-age student mothers to recommence school after dropout due to pregnancy was implemented in 1993 and revised in 2006 (Rugimbana & Liwewe, 2013). However, the MoEST’s gender audit report (Rugimbana & Liwewe, 2013) identified that there were challenges in implementing the policy. For example, some students experienced the inability to re-enrol in school due to the stigma of being a school-age mother, and some teachers were unfamiliar with the readmission policy procedures.

4.2 School infrastructure and facility factors

4.2.1 Distance to school

Many students in Malawi have to travel long distances to school. A World Bank Report on primary education in Malawi found that in 15 of 34 educational districts, the average distance between households and the nearest school is over four kilometres (Ravishankar et al., 2016). The report also

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17 Data were not gathered in this survey on the number of women aged between 20 and 49 that had given birth before age 15.
states that in around half of the educational districts, up to 30 per cent of schools are not accessible during the rainy season. The WMS 2014 found that 38 per cent of households reported that it took 30 minutes or longer to reach the nearest primary school and 5.9 per cent reported that the nearest primary school was more than 60 minutes away (National Statistical Office, 2015c). For secondary school, 80.4 per cent of households reported that the closest school was more than 30 minutes away and 44.1 per cent reported that it was more than 60 minutes away (National Statistical Office, 2015c). Travel times to secondary school tended to be longer for households in rural compared to urban areas (National Statistical Office, 2015c).

Research on girls’ education has often cited long distances to school as a challenge for girls’ access to education, due to concerns around safety, and/or due to the costs associated with transporting girls to school (King & Winthrop, 2015). For example, in the final evaluation of the JPAG (Munthali et al., 2015), long distances to school were seen as a challenge faced by many students, and affected dropout rates, attendance and academic performance. Some participants identified that they felt unsafe travelling long distances to school and many also felt that the long distances travelled affected their academic performance due to arriving at school tired. Some schools in Malawi do not go up to Standard 8, therefore students sometimes also had to travel to even more distant schools in order to be able to continue their education.

As part of the ESIP II (MoEST, 2014a), the MoEST identified that additional girls’ hostels would be built as well as piloting the provision of bicycles in order to reduce travel times to school for girls. There have also been initiatives focused on constructing schools closer to communities, however, the MoEST has highlighted that it can then be difficult for the Government of Malawi to deploy teachers and resources to smaller remote schools (MoEST, 2014c).

4.2.2 School facilities and resources

Increasing the number of toilets and enhancing water facilities is identified as a goal in the ESIP II in order to ensure that the facilities are appropriate for girls (MoEST, 2014a). A lack of adequate toilet and water facilities can have an impact on girls’ attendance rates, particularly once girls reach puberty (USAID, 2014). Programs such as UNICEF’s Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Program (WASH) aim to provide these facilities to schools in need (UNICEF Malawi, n.d.).

Further, another goal of the ESIP II is to increase the number of beds available at boarding schools (MoEST, 2014a). Secondary schools do not always have sufficient space for girls to attend, and boarding schools have fewer places available for girls than boys (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development & The World Bank, 2010).

While not unique to the education of girls, other resource constraints in Malawi schools include shortages of classrooms, desks, instructional materials and stationary (USAID, 2014). For example, according to the EMIS 2015 Report, students often share one textbook between two or three students for mathematics and English at secondary school, where the desired ratio is one textbook for every student (MoEST, n.d.-c). A study conducted by USAID on student retention and absenteeism found that poor infrastructure contributed to students missing school during the rainy season. Where students have a high amount of absenteeism, this ‘contributes to inadequate learning and acts as catalyst for lack of achievement of educational outcomes among students’ (USAID, 2014, p. 17).

It is not just the availability of school resources that is important, but also the quality and appropriateness of these resources. King and Winthrop (2015) discuss how classroom resources can reinforce traditional stereotypes of girls. The Gender Appropriate Curriculum (GAC) unit at Malawi Institute of Education was established in 1992 in order to offer training on gender sensitivity and ensure that curriculum and textbooks portrayed positive role models to women (Miske, 2013). However, the
impact of their work on learning outcomes has not been studied (Miske, 2013) and the unit is no longer in operation.

4.3 Economic factors

4.3.1 Poverty and hunger

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 greatly reduced the cost of accessing primary school. However, school fees still exist for secondary school and there are also associated costs for both primary and secondary, such as the cost of transportation, uniforms and school supplies. Because of this, families may not enrol their children in school, enrol them late, or withdraw them prematurely from school. For example, a study of six districts in Malawi found that 28 per cent of girls dropped out due to poverty (CSEC, 2014). Results from the Local Government Performance Index (LGPI), a survey implemented in 2016, found that 23 per cent of students dropped out of school for financial reasons, such as an inability to pay for uniforms, supplies or school fees (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016). According to the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b), school fees accounted for 39 per cent of all dropouts from secondary school in the 2015–2016 school year.

In 2013–2014, around half (50.7%) of the population in Malawi lived below the national poverty line and 70.9 per cent were below the purchasing power parity (PPP) of $1.90 per day (UNDP, 2016). This can make it very difficult for families, particularly large families, to afford to send all of their children to school. If a family can only afford education for some of their children, they may educate their sons rather than their daughters (Scharf, 2007, cited in Chimombo et al., 2014).

The third Integrated Household Survey (IHS 2010/11) found that around a quarter of the population in Malawi were unable to meet the minimum recommended daily food requirement (National Statistical Office, 2014c). Further, one in six children in Malawi under five years was underweight (National Statistical Office, 2015a). School feeding programs have been implemented in some schools in Malawi to address child hunger, with the aim of enhancing enrolments and student achievement by providing students with the energy needed to focus on school. According to the WMS 2014, almost 40 per cent of children in primary school included in the survey participated in a school feeding program (National Statistical Office, 2015c)18.

4.3.2 Domestic work

Often it is the opportunity cost rather than direct costs that contribute to challenges in school attendance for girls (King & Winthrop, 2015). For example, girls in Malawi are often required to contribute to household chores such as fetching water, firewood, preparing and cooking food, cleaning the house and looking after siblings. While boys in Malawi are more likely to spend a greater amount of time than girls in economic activities, more girls than boys are likely to spend greater than 28 hours a week doing household chores, as can be seen from the MES 2014 results (National Statistical Office, 2014b). For example, 6.8 per cent of girls aged 12–14 years old compared to 2.1 per cent of boys complete more than 28 hours of household chores per week (National Statistical Office, 2014b).

Domestic tasks often compete with girls’ time to attend school and to complete homework. With the high prevalence of HIV in Malawi, girls may also play a particularly important role in the household if

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18 Information was not available on how frequently students participated in feeding programs or on whether there were any differences in participation by gender.
they need to care for sick parents or if they have lost one or more parents (Kane, 2004; MoEST, 2014c). In Malawi, there are almost one million orphaned children aged 0–17 years old who have lost one or both of their parents (UNDP, 2016).

According to the EMIS 2015 Report, family responsibilities was the most common reason for girls dropping out of primary school (MoEST, n.d.-c). The Malawi Youth Status Report 2015 (Ministry of Labour, 2016) noted that girls often have heavy domestic workloads that can result in school absences, grade repetition and school dropout. Results from the 2016 LGPI survey identified that girls were twice as likely to drop out of school because of household work compared to boys (22% girls; 11% boys) (Institute of Public Opinion and Research & University of Gothenburg, 2016).
5 GIRLS’ EDUCATION POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN MALAWI

A brief overview of the key overarching policies and strategies that are designed to support girls’ education in Malawi are discussed in Section 5. Policy development focused on increasing girls’ access to education has existed since the early 1990s, and a range of initiatives emphasising specific goals and objectives has been developed since the mid-2000s. Further information about how these strategies are being implemented and some of the benefits and challenges experienced by stakeholders in relation to these policies and strategies are discussed in Section 6.

5.1 Free Primary Education

Primary school enrolments rapidly increased following the introduction of FPE in 1994. After the introduction of FPE, which removed school fees, enrolments increased from 1.8 million in 1993 to 4.8 million in 2015 (MoEST, n.d.-c; Ravishankar et al., 2016). The FPE Policy resulted in both boys and girls having increased access to education. Additionally, the gender gap between girls’ and boys’ enrolments also decreased during this period (Kendall, 2006).

5.2 Policy and Investment Framework

The Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) provided guidance to the education sector between 1995 and 2005 (MoEST, 2008a). The PIF aimed to:

- increase the educational opportunities for students in Malawi
- reduce inequalities across social groups and regions
- enhance the quality and relevance of education
- develop an institutional and financial framework to sustain schools in Malawi
- increase funding and strengthen the financial management capacity of the education sector (MoEST, 2008a).

The PIF supported the goals outlined in the long-term development strategy Vision 2020 (developed in 2000) and the 2015 Education for All (EFA) goals (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). The PIF included goals to support girls’ access to all levels of education with the aim of achieving 50 per cent or more of female enrolments. Another goal included ensuring that the curriculum would be reviewed to make sure that it was gender sensitive (MoEST, 2000, cited in Maluwa-Banda, 2003). The GAC unit at the Malawi Institute of Education was established in 1992 (Maluwa-Banda, 2003). The GAC unit was responsible for providing gender-sensitivity training in teacher education and ensuring that the curriculum and teaching resources were gender appropriate (Maluwa-Banda, 2003).

5.3 National Education Sector Plan 2008–2017

The NESP 2008–2017 outlines the aspirations, goals and strategies for the education sector from 2008–2017 (MoEST, 2008a). It built on the goals of the PIF, as well as drawing on the goals of Malawi’s first and second education plans from 1973–1980 and 1985–1995, respectively, and on the MGDS (MoEST, 2008a)\(^1\). It was developed by the MoEST along with the development partners including DFID, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), GTZ, The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNICEF, USAID, World Food Program (WFP), UNESCO and the World Bank.

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\(^1\) The MGDS provides the strategy for socioeconomic and industrial growth for Malawi with the ultimate aim of poverty reduction (JICA & IDCJ, 2012).
The NESP 2008–2017:

… reflects the Government of Malawi’s commitment to both regional (Southern African Development Community and the African Union) and international (the Millennium Development Goals) targets and priorities, and it incorporates the ideals Education For All (EFA) National Plan of Action (MoEST, 2008a, p. 3).

The NESP also outlined a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) for the government and donors for education sector planning, development and financing (MoEST, 2008a). The NESP in turn informs the Medium-Term Expenditure, the District Education Plans and the Annual Implementation Plans (MoEST, 2008a).

The overall mission of the education sector, as outlined in the NESP is ‘to provide quality and relevant education to the Malawian nation’ and the mandate is ‘to promote education in Malawi irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or any other discriminatory characteristics’ (MoEST, 2008a, p. iii). The NESP is broad reaching, covering all levels of education, including basic education (including early childhood development, out-of-school youth, CBE, adult literacy and primary education), secondary education, teacher education development, technical education and vocational training, and higher education (MoEST, 2008a). Throughout the NESP, there are goals for these five sub-sectors of education around the following three overarching areas: enhancing access and equity; improving the quality and relevance of education with the aims of reducing dropout and repetition and promoting learning; and, improving governance and management to ensure service delivery is effective and efficient.

In addition to goals relating to improving the quality and access to education for all students, the NESP also includes goals and priorities specifically relating to girls’ education, which are:

- to support girls in isolated areas in Standards 6–8
- to establish mother groups in primary schools by 2017–18 to support girls’ education
- to improve the infrastructure of secondary schools, including the construction of girls’ hostels
- to maintain an enrolment quota in government secondary schools whereby 50 per cent of enrolments are girls
- to improve the enrolment and retention of girls at school through providing bursaries, the necessary amenities, advocacy campaigns, and ensuring the Readmission Policy is implemented (MoEST, 2008a).

The NESP also forms the basis for decisions about funding from both the Government of Malawi and also from development partners. One of the goals of the NESP is to facilitate a more coordinated approach to program and project implementation in the education sector, with the NESP outlining that all interventions should be developed within the NESP framework (MoEST, 2008a).

5.4 Education Sector Implementation Plan

The ESIP I (2009–2013), and the subsequent ESIP II (2013/14 – 2017/18) were developed in order to support the achievement of the goals outlined in the NESP (JICA & IDCJ, 2012). The overarching goal of the ESIP II is to work towards quality education.

The ESIP II provides an overview of the development context in Malawi before providing priority policy reforms and priority programs across the five education sub-sectors. The key policy goals for primary education include:

- Policy Goal 1: Ensure that 50 per cent of students reach Standard 4 literacy and numeracy levels by 2017
- Policy Goal 2: Attain a motivated, high-performing teaching staff
- Policy Goal 3: Increase internal efficiency of primary education
Policy Goal 4: Improve management/resource delivery through higher school-funding and decentralised procurement of teaching and learning materials (MoEST, 2014a).

The key policy goals for secondary education include:

- Policy Goal 1: Improve access to secondary schooling
- Policy Goal 2: Improve quality and equity in secondary schooling
- Policy Goal 3: Improve secondary school management (MoEST, 2014a).

In addition to providing policy priorities across the five education sub-sectors, the ESIP II also discusses cross-cutting issues across the education sector, one of which is gender. The ESIP II is informed by the Malawi Girls Education Strategy (NGES) (discussed in more detail in Section 5.5), which identifies three main factors that contribute to gender inequality: sociocultural beliefs; school infrastructure and facilities; and economic factors. The ESIP II includes strategies to address these three factors identified in the NGES, which are summarised in Exhibit 13.

**Exhibit 13 ESIP II actions to reduce gender disparities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key actions identified in ESIP II</th>
<th>Action objectives as identified in ESIP II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural beliefs – Directly addressing negative cultural values in the community</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocate funds through Primary School Improvement Grants for programs to reduce GBV and retain girls.</td>
<td>To ensure schools are respectful towards girls, to reduce GBV and to retain girls in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure sufficient female teachers are employed.</td>
<td>To ensure that the school environment is more gender-sensitive; to provide girls with role models in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to focus on mother groups in primary schools.</td>
<td>To provide counselling to girls; to address potential conflicts with teachers or school management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further sensitisation on MoEST’s Revised Readmission Policy at divisional, district and school levels.</td>
<td>To ensure girls who have dropped out (e.g. because of pregnancy) are welcomed back to school; to provide safe spaces for breastfeeding to enhance readmissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural beliefs – Reducing the negative implications of selected traditional values</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on early grade learning.</td>
<td>To ensure girls can read, write and count; to ensure that girls have confidence to continue learning; to illustrate to parents that investment in their daughter’s education is worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in high quality teachers, textbooks and classrooms.</td>
<td>To reduce early school dropout by girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit repetition rates to 10% and provide remedial education to low achievers.</td>
<td>To reduce repetition rates for girls; to ensure that girls who need additional support receive it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School infrastructure and facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide sanitation facilities in 40% of primary schools.</td>
<td>To ensure that boys and girls have separate hygiene facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct 60 girls’ hostels.</td>
<td>To ensure girls have adequate accommodation; to reduce girls’ travel to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut down low-quality, informal CDSSs with inadequate facilities.</td>
<td>To ensure girls are absorbed into higher-quality neighbouring schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot the provision of bicycles.</td>
<td>To reduce the travel time to schools for girls due to the integration of CDSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Improvement Grants (PSIP)</td>
<td>To reduce the cost of primary education through the provision of stationary, uniforms and female hygiene products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue bursaries and cash transfers.</td>
<td>To ensure that poorer girls are able to attend school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from MoEST (2014a, p. 52-54)*
The ESIP II also includes different funding scenarios, with options provided for low, medium and high funding situations, based on funding inputs from government and from development partners. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is also provided and includes baseline data from 2012, with annual targets for indicators including enrolment, dropout, completion, and examination pass rates for girls and boys (MoEST, 2014a).

MoEST undertakes annual reviews of the sector in order to monitor progress towards the NESP and ESIP II goals (MoEST, n.d.-b). The 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) includes a review of progress towards the 2015 targets, some of which are specifically related to girls’ education and some of which are related to improving educational outcomes for all students\(^{20}\). The report identified a number of areas where progress had been made, such as: reducing the student to teacher ratio in primary school; increasing girls’ enrolment rates; and increasing the percentage of female students who received bursaries. However, the report also identified a number of areas where the 2015 targets were not met, including: the number of qualified female primary school teachers; the ratio of students to textbooks; the repetition rates for girls at primary school; the school survival rates and completion rates for girls at primary school and the secondary gender parity index (MoEST, n.d.-b).

The 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b) identified that a major challenge for the ESIP II had been the lack of resources available and noted that there was a need to embark on resource mapping prior to development of a new NESP and ESIP. With the NESP and ESIP II strategies expiring in 2018, a final review of the NESP is currently being conducted which will assist in identifying priorities for 2018 and beyond.

### 5.5 National Girls’ Education Strategy

The NGES was launched in 2014 and outlines the Government of Malawi’s strategy to promote girls’ education, and includes guidance to all stakeholders working in girls’ education (MoEST, 2014c). The vision outlined in the strategy is that ‘all girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country’s sustainable social, economic development by 2018’ (MoEST, 2014c, p. 9).

The strategy aims to increase girls’ access to and completion of primary, secondary and tertiary education, including through improving the quality of education; improving attendance and pass rates; and removing barriers to education for girls (Ministry of Labour, 2016; MoEST, 2014c). The priority areas for the five-year plan for primary, secondary and tertiary education are shown in Exhibit 14.

\(^{20}\) Data for some of the indicators were not yet available. Further information on progress towards the ESIP and NESP 2015 targets is available in Annex 4 of the 2015–2016 Education Sector Performance Report (MoEST, n.d.-b). Note that some inconsistencies were found between the information provided in the main body of the report and Annex 4, such as girls’ and boys’ repetition rates at primary school.
**Exhibit 14** NGES five-year program priority areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area</th>
<th>Primary education objectives</th>
<th>Secondary education objectives</th>
<th>Tertiary education objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Quality improvement for girls’ education | • To reduce girls’ repetition rates in all standards.  
• To improve girls’ PSLCE pass rate.  
• To improve girls’ attendance rate.  
• To reduce student-to-qualified-teacher ratio.  
• To reduce primary school learner and teacher absenteeism.  
• To improve school and classroom standards. | • To improve girls’ transition rate to secondary education.  
• To improve girls’ performance.  
• To increase girls’ transition rate from secondary to tertiary. | • To increase percentage of girls studying mathematics, science and technology. |
| Traditional beliefs and social cultural factors affecting girls’ education | • To reduce girls’ Standards 5 to 8 dropout rates by 50%.  
• To improve girls’ primary school survival rate to Standard 8. | • To increase safety and security for girls. | • To increase girls’ enrolment in higher education institutions. |
| Policy, system and school factors | • To enhance implementation of all girls’ education supportive policies.  
• To improve girls’ safety and security at school and community.  
• To improve girl-friendly learner environment. | • To enhance implementation of all girls’ education supportive policies. | • To enhance coordination between MoEST, Private sector and NGOs in dealing with issues of girls’ education. |
| Economic factors | • To improve the socioeconomic status of girls. | • To eliminate secondary school girls’ dropout. | • To improve socioeconomic status for female students in higher education. |
| Effects of HIV and AIDS | • To eliminate the effects of HIV and AIDS on girls’ education. | • To improve girls’ capacity to effectively manage their lives. | • To mitigate effects of HIV and AIDS. |
| Conducive environment for girls in higher education institutions | | | • To improve the conducive environment for female students in colleges. |

*Source: NGES (MoEST, 2014c, p. 27-32)*
The NGES is aligned to the MGDS II, the NESP, the ESIP II and the National Girls’ Communication Strategy (NGECOS), which is discussed further in Section 5.6 (MoEST, 2014c). The NGES is designed to:

- bring together different partners working in girls’ education including ministries, civil society organisations (CSOs), NGOs and academics, in order to promote girls’ staying in school and support girls to succeed in school (and beyond)
- provide a tool for planning, implementing, mobilising resources, monitoring and evaluating girls’ education interventions
- measure progress against the NGES targets and the EFA goals, through the M&E framework.

5.6 National Girls’ Education Communication Strategy

In 2010, a girls’ communication strategy was drafted by MoEST along with stakeholders in government ministries, district officials, CSOs, media and school institutions, with financial and technical support from UNICEF (MoEST, 2014d). The strategy was reviewed in 2011 and subsequently the girls’ education communication strategy was developed and rolled out between 2014 and 2017 (MoEST, 2014d).

In the strategy document Dr MacPhail Magwira, the Principal Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, describes the purposes of the strategy as follows:

The strategy has been designed to address the root cause of low participation of girls in education at various sub-sector levels. It will also outline ways in which the Ministry and its development partners will provide technical support to stakeholders to promote girls’ education and information to mobilize actions by all including the grassroots level. The outcome will be to create an environment that makes caregivers, families, leaders and communities reason differently in giving priority and taking action to educate the girl child. (MoEST, 2014d, p. v).

The primary target audience, as identified in the strategy document, is those who have a direct influence on girls’ opportunities to enrol and progress in education. Strategies and goals for engaging the different audiences are identified and an implementation plan and M&E framework are also included within the strategy document (MoEST, 2014d).

5.7 Readmission Policy

Malawi’s Readmission Policy allows school-aged mothers to return to school after having a child. The Readmission Policy was introduced in 1993 and was revised in 2006 in order to make its implementation more effective. However, challenges have been identified, including a lack of support for the policy from some education stakeholders, and the lack of an implementation plan, and an M&E plan (McConnell & Mpuwaliywa, 2016). For example, a study conducted by the Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) found that while many teachers were aware of the readmission policy, many were not familiar with the implementation procedures and had not seen a copy of the policy (CSEC, 2014). A gender-audit report in 2013 identified that follow-up on the policy needed to be strengthened (Rugimbana & Liwewe, 2013) and a revision of the Readmission Policy is currently being undertaken.
6 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN MALAWI

This section explores the four key themes identified from the qualitative data collected through the consultations:

1. a holistic approach to girls’ education
2. coordination and collaboration processes and structures
3. funding
4. evidence-based decision making.

The information for Section 6 primarily draws on data collected through the following sources:

- interviews and focus groups conducted (as shown in the consultations schedule in Appendix C)
- eight questionnaire responses
- observations and presentations from the Second National Girls’ Education Conference held in Lilongwe on 1 June 2017
- feedback from stakeholders gathered through the project validation meeting, where the preliminary findings from the consultations were presented and discussed.

Due to the project timeframe and scope, stakeholders consulted were primarily those working at the national-level, with only one district included. Therefore, further research would be needed to gather more district-level perspectives on girls’ education. Those consulted included people from national and district-level government, donor organisations, NGOs, UN organisations and community members.

Three overarching research questions guided the qualitative component:

1. What is working well in girls’ education in Malawi?
2. What are the challenges faced in girls’ education in Malawi?
3. What are the future priorities for girls’ education?

Stakeholder perspectives on these research questions are discussed within each of the four themes and corresponding sub-themes. Overlaps and connections between these different themes are also highlighted. The data gathered through these stakeholder consultations supplements the data gathered through the literature review on Access, Quality and Equity in Girls’ Education in Malawi (Section 3), Factors that Affect Girls’ Education in Malawi (Section 4) and Girls’ Education Policies and Strategies in Malawi (Section 5).

6.1 A holistic approach to girls’ education

The first theme identified from the stakeholder consultations was the need to focus on a holistic approach to girls’ education. A range of cultural, social and economic factors impact the ability of girls to access and participate in quality education across education sectors. Stakeholders suggested that a holistic approach be adopted, whereby these myriad factors and the connections between them need to be considered. In order to address this wide range of factors, there is a need for a multi-sectoral approach to policy and programming. Taking a holistic approach to girls’ education also includes ensuring that there are links throughout the ECD, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Finally, a community-based collaborative approach was identified as a key approach to address the range of challenges facing girls as they engage in education. Each of these sub-themes is discussed below.

6.1.1 Addressing the economic, cultural and social challenges for girls

In Malawi, girls face economic, cultural and social challenges that combine to undermine their ability to stay, complete and succeed in not only primary, but also secondary and tertiary education. In terms
of economic challenges, jobs may not be available upon graduation from school or a girl’s family may require her help at home rather than school; or, a family may not have the funds available to enable her to continue to secondary or tertiary education if she does not have a bursary or scholarship. Addressing issues associated with poverty, through providing financial support in the form of bursaries for girls and cash transfers for families were viewed as important focus areas by many stakeholders, and these are further discussed in Section 6.3.3.

Some stakeholders discussed the importance of situating girls’ education in the broader development context in Malawi. The lack of job opportunities in Malawi can mean that education for girls is not always highly valued or prioritised by families, or by girls themselves, because it is not seen as resulting in economic benefits. Employment in Malawi is still largely in the agricultural sector. A 2013 labour force survey reported that 64.1 per cent of the respondents worked in agriculture, followed by 16.2 per cent in wholesale and retail trade (National Statistical Office, 2014a). This reinforces the importance of taking a holistic approach, as these challenges relate not just to education but to the development of the economy as a whole.

Stakeholders mentioned numerous cultural and social challenges, such as early marriage, early pregnancy and GBV, that impact upon a girl’s ability to remain actively engaged in school. In discussing the issue of GBV, a government stakeholder suggested the need to create safe spaces for both boys and girls by creating awareness of issues of violence both in school and out of school.

Many of those consulted also mentioned the additional challenges faced by girls with disabilities and suggested a greater focus on supporting the holistic needs of girls with disabilities. For example, one government stakeholder representing the disability sector observed:

> Being a girl with a disability is a double jeopardy. Such children lack self-esteem and require a lot of affirmative action and support.

Some stakeholders discussed that a particular challenge was the lack of teachers trained in supporting students with special education needs. A study on children with disabilities in Malawi identified a range of cultural, social and economic factors which often contributed to students with special education needs not attending school in Malawi (Munthali, Tsoka, Milner & Mvula, 2013). These factors included social stigma, school fees and the cost of learning resources, high rates of grade repetition and the lack of appropriate learning resources, specialist teachers and school facilities.

During the Second National Girls’ Education Conference and during the consultations, there were many examples provided whereby a holistic approach to girls’ education was being used within programs to support girls’ education. The district-level stakeholders also discussed the wide range of inputs that can support girls’ retention, especially in secondary school, including well-trained teachers, improved infrastructure, facilities for girls, safe spaces and relevant resources. These stakeholders also discussed the importance of ensuring the support occurs at different stages in a girls’ education, explaining that many girls drop out earlier than interventions are designed for, with many girls dropping out at Standards 1–4.

One approach highlighted by multiple stakeholders was the importance of identifying and nurturing role models to advocate for and support girls’ education. In particular, role models can help girls negotiate the complex social, cultural and economic circumstances in rural areas. These role models could include female teachers, as well as traditional authorities and other community leaders. This is further discussed in Section 6.1.4. In order to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by girls, there is a need to take a multi-sectoral approach, as discussed below.
6.1.2 A multi-sectoral approach

With the numerous and varied challenges for girls, many stakeholders consulted resolved that these needs can only be addressed with a collaborative multi-sectoral approach. As one stakeholder highlighted, girls’ education is not an ‘education only’ issue, but requires collaboration across multiple interrelated sectors. Stakeholders discussed the interconnectedness of issues faced in girls’ education and the cross-cutting nature of issues spanning across different sectors. For example, initiatives to support girls’ sexual and reproductive health involved stakeholders working across both the health and education sectors. Throughout the consultations, the importance of different sectors working together to address girls’ education issues in a coordinated and collaborative manner was emphasised.

The Second National Girls’ Education Conference provided an opportunity for stakeholders from different sectors to share their experiences of their work in girls’ education. While the overwhelming majority of participants at the conference were from the education sector, it was clear that any improvement in girls’ education outcomes requires collaboration across various sectors. For example, one keynote speaker said that there was a range of evidence that the education sector needs to work together with the health, youth, gender and agricultural sectors in order to improve outcomes for girls. A manager of a large donor fund stated that a multi-sectoral approach is the only way to address girls’ education, explaining that it is not an education-only issue.

During the consultations, the importance of different government ministries working together was also highlighted. For example, during one consultation, a government stakeholder emphasised the need for government departments to work together in policy and programming for girls’ education. This stakeholder stated:

It boils down to HOW policies are being made, and if ministries don’t speak to each other there is a challenge ...

At present, many stakeholders suggested that there is already a robust policy and legal framework that encourages a multi-sectoral approach, however, challenges exist in disseminating and promoting these policies and strategies, as well as in implementing them. Some of the key policies and strategies that provide a robust framework include the following:

- The NGES (MoEST, 2014c) has provided focus and identified areas of need, as well as brought together partners working in girls’ education.
- The National Gender Policy (2012-2017) addresses a range of thematic areas (education and training, reproductive health, food and nutrition security, natural resources and environment management, governance and human rights, poverty eradication and economic empowerment).
- The Gender Equality Act (2013) provides opportunities for ensuring that key social service sectoral interventions equally benefit women, men, girls and boys.
- The Readmission Policy (1993) provides students, particularly girls, with the opportunity to re-enrol in school after pregnancy or dropping out.

Each of the frameworks and policies outlined above support a multi-sectoral approach to girls’ education. For example, both the Gender Policy and the Gender Equality Act are explicit in outlining that gender cross-cuts the range of sectors. The NGES, discussed in detail in Section 5, also makes clear linkages between education, health and social services. Finally, the Readmission Policy acknowledges the important ties between education, health and sexual health.

It was acknowledged by a range of stakeholders that the critical next step is to empower communities (discussed in Section 6.1.4) and ensure dialogue between organisations at national, district and grassroots levels. In addition to this, a number of stakeholders also suggested that a multi-sectoral
approach was ‘strong’ at district level, but that national level ownership of a multi-sectoral approach was comparatively ‘weak’.

During a district-level government consultation, it was observed that departments actively engage with one another and consider how they work with one another across sectors to meet girls’ educational needs. The department representatives at the meeting included the District Education Manager, Special Needs Focal Point, and the Departments of Labour, Social Welfare, School Health and Nutrition, and Youth. A donor organisation stakeholder also acknowledged:

The strength of the program is that we have a very strong district presence, but not so strong at the national level … very weak national-level ownership. There are no linkages between district and national levels of coordination. We are trying to bridge the gap between national and district levels.

Some of the stakeholders offered ideas on how to ‘bridge the gap’ between national and district levels. Some of these suggestions included:

- a form of an inter-agency network for girls, national commission or taskforce to tackle multi-sectoral issues – this could take the form of a commission to create political will
- a space for NGOs and government to work together
- an assembly of services so that girl-focused issues are addressed holistically
- identification of an inter-agency ‘focal person’ in girls’ education.

The current girls’ education problems require a multi-sectoral approach in order to deal with the issues in a holistic manner. The importance of coordinating and collaborating between different sectors is further discussed in Section 6.2.

6.1.3 Linking the system: ECD, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels

An important aspect of focusing on a holistic approach to education for girls is identifying ways to improve linkages in the education system. As one NGO stakeholder reflected, ‘Unless we focus on retention and completion, our commitment to education will be meaningless.’ Ensuring that girls not just enrol, but continue to progress and stay engaged through the school system is essential if real progress is to be made in girls’ education in Malawi.

While there is evidence of increasing enrolment of girls at primary school levels, they still have low enrolment and completion rates at the secondary and tertiary levels. Transition and completion rates are low from primary-to-secondary levels and between secondary-to-tertiary levels. These issues are compounded by the fact that there is a lack of secondary schools and places across the country, and by the fact that many families cannot afford the school fees.

Some stakeholders discussed the need to increase access to secondary education for students and how this would require a holistic approach and strong leadership. For example, one NGO stakeholder stated:

For me [the priority should be to provide] access to secondary education and make it free. It is possible. If there was strong leadership in the Ministry that could regulate all players in this field, they could make secondary education free.

With the introduction of FPE, enrolments rapidly increased resulting in increased pressure on the system. Any plans to expand free education in Malawi will necessarily also consider the resources required to ensure the quality of education. As is stated in a recent report examining what works in girls’ education:

the global community has also learned from experience that simply reducing fees or instituting compulsory education without a commensurate commitment to ensuring a supply of high-quality teachers, classrooms, and books and supplies can lead to severely overcrowded classrooms and a
deterioration in quality, making clear the need to design both access and quality strategies together. (Sperling & Winthrop, with Kwauk, 2016, p. 8)

There is little data on the ECD system, but stakeholders suggested that while they value the importance of ECD opportunities for both girls and boys, there are scant resources to support adequate development of the ECD sector. For example, one stakeholder explained that all ECD teachers are voluntary positions.

Some stakeholders discussed the need to create closer connections between the different levels of the education system. For example, one district-level government stakeholder stated:

We also want students to go on from primary to secondary. However, we don’t have enough space in secondary schools for everyone. We also have high dropout at Standards 1 and 2 as we don’t have early childhood centres to prepare them. We have tried to come up with an idea for cluster education. We want a cluster where there’s ECD, Primary and Secondary all within the same area. ECD is in a different Ministry so that’s also a challenge.

Stakeholders often said that counselling, role modelling and raising awareness about girls’ opportunities and rights was also necessary to support girls in negotiating their way through the school system. Some stakeholders emphasised the need for a mechanism that accompanies the Readmission Policy so that a student returning to school receives holistic support. One NGO stakeholder organises girls’ camps to both ‘inspire and create the space to talk about what they [girls] have been through’. This same NGO develops career progression packs to inform girls about career and further education opportunities. In this way, information dissemination about system linkages and opportunities provides a pathway of support for girls.

At the Second National Girls’ Education Conference, donor organisation stakeholders discussed the challenges for adolescent girls. The participants suggested that adolescent girls were most affected by social, cultural and economic factors, which contributed to high dropout rates. The following quotations highlight various stakeholder views on key challenges for girls’ education and the need to expand system linkages:

For basic education, we are looking at the distances between schools. Students have to walk long distances to school and girls are most affected by this … Dropout rates tend to be higher if students have further to travel so we want schools that are closer. We used to say schools should be within 5 kilometres of a student’s home, but that is too much. (district-level government stakeholder)

The challenge seems to be that partners are still all providing support at the primary level. From the National Girls’ Education Conference on Thursday, it seems they’re all only focused at one level so I feel this is a gap. (donor organisation stakeholder)

While these comments highlight the challenges facing the education system in Malawi, they also provide reflections on how to start exploring solutions to creating better linkages, especially for girls, throughout the education system.

6.1.4 Community approach

Power is in the community, (NGO stakeholder)

The community is arguably the heart of where change needs to occur if girls’ education is to overcome the range of challenges, especially in terms of reducing grade repetition and dropout rates and supporting completion rates. A number of stakeholders also discussed the need to create linkages between the community and schools in order to create a supportive environment for girls’ education.

A growing number of traditional authorities have provided a way forward in terms of modelling options for supporting girls to access, participate in and complete school. Many stakeholders also acknowledged
the importance of traditional authorities as advocates for girls’ education. One traditional authority discussed the development of a system in her area to facilitate, promote and support girls’ education. This system includes mother groups, community policing, community-based organisations, village headmen, and child protection officers working together to support girls’ education and girls’ empowerment.

One UN stakeholder discussed a range of initiatives coordinated by her organisation in collaboration with traditional authorities and local communities. Her organisation views chiefs as ‘key change makers.’ Some of these stakeholder initiatives include:

- supporting chiefs as advocates for girls’ education. ‘The chiefs are custodians of culture so they’re an important entry point’
- supporting chiefs to work with the development of mother and father groups to support girls’ education
- encouraging community dialogue for equality by working with well-known artists and musicians as role models
- working with parent teacher associations (PTAs) to create supportive environments in schools, including the development of a training manual on gender equality.

Parents, mother groups and father groups have been identified as critical supporters of girls’ education. At the Second National Girls’ Education Conference, a senior government stakeholder emphasised the critical role of parents in girls’ education. However, many stakeholders mentioned that some parents in rural communities do not see the value of education because of a lack of jobs or other economic opportunities, or because of deep-rooted cultural beliefs about the roles for girls and women.

Many stakeholders also discussed the importance of engaging both men and boys in issues of girls’ education. For example, one donor organisation stakeholder stated:

> We need to make it clear that girls’ education is for the sake of both boys and girls – boys are as much a stakeholder and beneficiary. It’s really about gender equality.

Some NGO and donor organisation stakeholders mentioned the importance of using a bottom-up or grassroots approach as a useful way to develop community-focused interventions. In other words,

> In order to engage communities, we use a methodology whereby the community comes up with solutions to their own problems. We can help guide discussions, inform them about laws, but we aim for community-led interventions and we act as facilitators. (UN stakeholder)

Regardless of the implementation approach, it is important that there is buy-in and ownership from the community. One stakeholder discussed the need to enhance collaboration between program implementers and the community, explaining that girls’ education programs may be unsustainable if they do not support the local community to develop the capacity to continue to run the program at the end of the project cycle.

In short, in approaching the challenges and solutions to girls’ education, a range of stakeholders said that the community is fundamental to holistic support. A range of sectors intersect at the community level, and a coordinated approach to multi-sectoral support and finding linkages throughout the education system has emerged as a key theme critical to girls’ education.

### 6.2 Processes and structures for coordination and collaboration

Section 6.1 highlighted the importance of collaboration and coordination between different sectors, between different levels of the education system and between different stakeholders, and in particular, the involvement of the community. The second theme identified from the stakeholder consultations was
the need for effective processes and structures to facilitate a coordinated and collaborative approach to girls’ education in Malawi. This theme builds on the discussion from Section 6.1, and explores the opportunities and challenges for collaboration between NGOs, donor organisations and government stakeholders, between programs and between national and district-level government stakeholders.

There are a large number of organisations working in girls’ education throughout Malawi. One NGO has a database of 200 organisations working in girls’ education, while another NGO has 87 organisations in its database. One NGO stakeholder estimated that there could be in excess of 1000 organisations and/or programs focused on girls’ education. While it is positive that so many stakeholders are focused on girls’ education, the sheer number of stakeholders can make coordination and collaboration between organisations challenging.

Many stakeholders discussed the impacts of a lack of coordination and collaboration between programs and stakeholders. For example, one stakeholder talked about the impact of a lack of collaboration on program sustainability saying:

Some projects also just use government as a figure-head rather than … working in collaboration with government. Programs are more sustainable if they involve government and government is not just a spectator. Sometimes when a project finishes, an organisation will ask government how they will now sustain the program, but if government hasn’t been involved previously, then it’s difficult to sustain. (national-level government stakeholder)

One of the impacts of the lack of collaboration and coordination systems was the uneven distribution of girls’ education programs throughout Malawi. Some schools, areas or districts may have multiple programs operating, sometimes resulting in the duplication of efforts, while other areas may have very little support. For example, one school leader said:

There’s currently isolation amongst the programs – different organisations bring an idea similar to another one that is already being implemented.

Another stakeholder provided an example of the duplication of bursaries, with some girls receiving more than one bursary simultaneously, while others in need missed out. One donor organisation stakeholder stated:

Currently there are too many agencies working on the same cause using various strategies making it too agent heavy/too person heavy … Having lots of partners is expensive and not sustainable.

During the consultations, one of the challenges highlighted was the different processes by which programs are implemented in Malawi. Some stakeholders discussed how some organisations approach districts or schools directly about implementing a girls’ education program, rather than program planning occurring at a national level. For example, one national-level government stakeholder stated:

Some organisations go direct to schools when assisting girls hence the Ministry fails to bring all the providers together.

Some stakeholders also discussed how national-level stakeholders may not be aware of programs or their impact if they have been implemented directly in districts due to the large numbers of different programs, the short-term nature of some programs and due to reporting and communication challenges. A suggestion provided by multiple stakeholders consulted was the development of a database containing information about girls’ education programs. This is discussed in Section 6.4.3.

However, some stakeholders felt that districts were in the best position to make girls’ education program decisions, as they are able to consider the needs of the local community and how the program fits with other existing programs. Both national and district-level stakeholders discussed the importance of
program implementation going through the appropriate district-level channels. For example, one national-level government stakeholder stated:

… some of the partners go directly to districts. They are meant to go to the District Education Office and then to the council, and discuss whether they can do the program in that area. But then some partners go directly to the district or to the school rather than through the proper process. Once a program is operating it’s very difficult to stop that program as the community will be upset. We need a mechanism to control who goes into the district.

The need for enhanced reporting and communication mechanisms between the national and district levels was highlighted by both district and national-level stakeholders. For example, one UN stakeholder suggested:

There is a disconnect between district and national structures and weak reporting mechanisms. They only learn about what each other are doing when the Minister asks for a report.

A national-level government stakeholder stated:

A lot of the time we can follow up and see if a program has had an impact. But sometimes it’s hard if they [the programs and organisations] have gone direct to schools. You have to ask for the information and sometimes you don’t even know what’s happening. With decentralisation it’s had its own challenges. The organisations say that they are working with district council so we don’t get information at a national level.

Some stakeholders discussed the different processes and structures that are currently in place to facilitate collaboration and coordination between different government directorates and between different organisations that focus on girls’ education. Those consulted discussed both what was working well and what opportunities there were for further improvement.

Some stakeholders talked about the importance of the national-level strategies in facilitating the coordination of initiatives. For example, one stakeholder discussed the importance of the NGES in helping stakeholders to identify priorities and gaps in support, resulting in greater collaboration between those working in girls’ education. As outlined by a national-level stakeholder:

The [NGES] document has helped us to identify areas to focus on. It has also brought together all the partners. We are still working on working together but at least we’re able to come together and talk together about what they’re doing. There used to be a lot of duplication, but now we’re able to identify who is doing what and suggest people may need to work in another area where there hasn’t been as much focus.

Some stakeholders discussed the different forums currently in place to support coordination and collaboration and some of the ways these were supporting collaboration and some of the ways they could be enhanced. For example, stakeholders discussed the following forums:

- Some stakeholders felt that the Education Technical Working Group and Sector Working Group provided useful opportunities for donors and MoEST to discuss activities and exchange information. The Education Working Group is currently chaired by the Royal Norwegian Embassy. However, some stakeholders discussed the need for more frequent meetings and more in-depth dialogue about girls’ education.
- The National Girls’ Education Conferences were viewed by many stakeholders as important forums for enhancing collaboration and communication. However, some stakeholders talked about the need for more follow-up after the conference to try and achieve commitments from the different ministries around steps to enhance collaboration.
- Many programs implemented have sought to establish structures for working collaboratively with a range of implementing organisations and with various ministries, for example through
the establishment of national steering committees. However, some stakeholders discussed the challenges of their programs having strong linkages between both the district and national levels.

- The National Girls’ Education Network (NGEN) brings together over 150 members including governmental, multilateral, international and national and community-based NGOs and individuals working in girls’ education in Malawi (NGEN, n.d.). The NGEN’s work has, however, recently been limited due to a lack of funding. As funding has since been secured for the network, the NGEN hopes to re-engage members in collaboratively working to advocate and promote girls’ education.

- The CSEC also provides a network for organisations to collaboratively ‘come together in the pursuit of the right to quality education in Malawi.’ (CSEC, 2016)

Numerous stakeholders shared their views about the most appropriate national-level government structures for coordinating girls’ education programs. Different directorates within MoEST including Basic Education, Secondary Education, Special Needs Education (SNE) and Planning Directorates, and other ministries, such as the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Youth are involved in designing and implementing girls’ education initiatives. Currently, the responsibility of coordinating girls’ education is held by the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) directorate located within the MoEST. SNH is responsible for cross-cutting issues including girls’ education, HIV and AIDS and school nutrition.

Many stakeholders felt that there was a need for a change to this existing coordination structure. Those consulted discussed a variety of challenges with girls’ education being coordinated by SHN including that:

- girls’ education is not always prioritised because of the many different responsibilities of SHN
- there are limited resources dedicated to the coordination of girls’ education within SHN
- other directorates do not always allocate sufficient budget for girls’ education because it is seen as being the responsibility of SHN
- there are internal communication challenges within MoEST that can make the sharing of information on girls’ education difficult
- the MoEST does not always have the mandate to coordinate girls’ education across different ministries.

A number of stakeholders provided diverse suggestions as to possible structures for coordinating girls’ education. Some of the opinions of those consulted included:

- Coordination should be the responsibility of the Planning Directorate as they are best positioned to take a coordination role in the MoEST
- Coordination should be the responsibility of the secondary education directorate due to the challenges faced by adolescent girls and due to the current fee challenges at secondary school level
- The MoEST could establish a girls’ education desk to coordinate girls’ education activities across all the directorates
- Coordination should be elevated to a higher office so that they have a mandate to coordinate girls’ education, such as through the Ministry of Finance or the Office of the President and Cabinet. For example, one donor organisation stakeholder stated ‘One line ministry cannot coordinate others without a mandate into other ministries. For example, if MoEST was coordinating this, then girls’ education wouldn’t be a high priority in the Ministry of Health.’
Another stated, ‘The only person who can make things happen is the Chief Secretary who [can] call all Ministries together.’ (UN stakeholder)

- Coordination should not be elevated to a higher office, as ‘it will just be another layer and not solve the problem. There is need for a commitment to coordination that takes out the complexity of reporting to several and discrete parties for the same cause’ (donor organisation stakeholder)

- The Secretary of Education could provide leadership on who coordinates girls’ education, through forming a coordinating unit on girls’ education or an inter-ministerial committee on girls’ education

- The Ministers of Education, Health and Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare could be brought together to discuss the most appropriate platform for the different ministries to work together.

In summary, while those consulted felt that there were opportunities to enhance the processes and structures in place to support coordination and collaboration, there were different views about the approaches that should be taken. However, there was a shared view among all stakeholders that promoting coordination and collaboration could improve the impacts of girls’ education programs. In talking about the importance of all types of stakeholders working together, one government stakeholder summarised:

I wish that we’d speak the same language and understand each other, so that we can work together with helping girls in Malawi. That’s what I’d like to see in 5 years.

### 6.3 Funding

While the donor, government and NGO communities are, in general, aligned to an approach to girls’ education that is holistic, collaborative and coordinated, it is only funding and resources that can foster the implementation and operationalisation of programs and policies. Under this theme of funding, this section first discusses the importance of the national budget and developing a practice of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in supporting girls’ education policy and programming into the future.

Second, this section discusses a key challenge to a holistic and coordinated approach to girls’ education. ‘Piecemeal support’, a term used by a range of stakeholders, refers to funding, resources and programming that are given only for specific initiatives or specific sectors, and that may be for only a short period of time, and therefore, are unsustainable in the long-term.

Third, this section addresses some of the issues with bursaries and scholarships. While this form of targeted support is critical in assisting girls to complete secondary education, and in some instances even tertiary education, some stakeholders identified more funding could be allocated to these initiatives. Some stakeholders also indicated that there is a need for better targeting and management of bursaries to ensure that girls in need benefit from this support.

#### 6.3.1 Budgeting

Two NGO stakeholders discussed the importance of GRB as a tool to ensure inputs to girls’ education could be monitored and evaluated. The CSEC is one organisation that has conducted research on the gender responsiveness of the national budget. As is outlined in the CSEC’s analysis report:

The national budget is the most important policy tool available to a government and ultimately reflects its socioeconomic priorities … the way that government raises revenue has a different impact on women and girls as compared to men … (CSEC, 2015, p. 7).

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women underscores that gender-responsive budgeting entails identifying and reflecting needed interventions to address gender
gaps in sector and local-government policies, plans and budgets. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a tool to analyse gender-differentiated impact of revenue-raising policies and the allocation of domestic resources. (CSEC, 2015, p. 7).

In other words, GRB aims to analyse the different impacts of national and local expenditure as well as revenue policy on women and girls, and men and boys. A key finding is that the national budget needs to be more specific on gender disaggregation (CSEC, 2015). While the budget is gender-policy aware, outputs and measures indicated in the education budget are not gender specific and do not provide adequate measures to achieve gender equality. For example, most of the key output targets (such as those relating to student enrolments and teacher-training programs) do not contain gender disaggregated data. Similarly, the numbers of teachers deployed to rural areas is evident, but the data does not indicate the number of female teachers deployed to rural areas (CSEC, 2015).

At the same time, the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare has adopted guidelines on gender budgeting, M&E at national and district levels. The current output-based budget framework provides room for line ministries to be gender responsive (CSEC, 2015), however, does not provide gender-disaggregated information. This creates problems for effective M&E. The issue of developing evidence-based policy and practice is discussed at length in Section 6.4.

One government stakeholder suggested that consideration needs to be given to allocating a certain part of the budget specifically to girls’ education. Currently, resources are allocated to schools without specific funding being set aside for girls’ education. This stakeholder also suggested that the government relies significantly on donors to fund girls’ education.

The CSEC analysis report emphasises the importance of ensuring that the education sector is funded in a sustainable way and highlights the need to invest sufficient local resources in addition to donor resources into the development budget. In a review of education financing in Malawi (Hall & Mambo, 2015), the report concludes that while additional resources are needed in Malawi, it is perhaps more important to focus on the coordination of financial resources, including that from donors. The report also highlights the importance of improving the cost efficiency of the education sector, including addressing the high student repetition rates and enhancing the government’s management capacity (Hall & 2015). A school head consulted discussed the erratic funding from government, which made it difficult to manage school resources. Government budget cuts make the job of head teacher particularly challenging as funding cuts can impact teacher performance.

A donor organisation stakeholder suggested that budget equality for schools needed to be assessed, citing the finding that CDSS absorb around 80 per cent of secondary student intake, yet they have the least budgetary support. Hall and Mambo (2015) also found that at secondary and tertiary levels, students in the highest wealth quintiles benefit from government spending more than those from the lowest wealth quintiles.

Another government stakeholder mentioned that the problem with policy implementation is funding and financial resources. Much is said about commitment, the stakeholder said, but disbursement is erratic, and this makes policy implementation very erratic. In addition, the CSEC report highlights that there have also often been significant delays in the provision of teacher salaries, and insufficient funding allocated for teaching and learning materials in the 2016–2017 budget. For example, the CSEC report points out that the budget for constructing primary school classrooms more than halved between 2015–2016 and 2016–2017, despite the continued high student to teacher ratios. One of the recommendations in this report included the need to review the resource allocation to ensure that financial resources are allocated towards items which ‘directly contribute towards the transformation of the lives of men, women, boys and girls to which the budget is intended for.’ (p. 38).
6.3.2 Piecemeal support

As discussed at the outset of Section 6.3, piecemeal support describes current practice in girls’ education whereby funding, resources and programming may be allocated for only a short period of time or may be focused on particular sectors, rather than using a holistic, multi-sectoral approach. One government stakeholder described the challenges associated with piecemeal support, stating:

At times it’s hard to coordinate with everyone and it can be very piecemeal. If there’s proper coordination and if there is a more cohesive program, then the impact would be greater. The impact is not very substantial if each area only implements a small part.

A district-level government stakeholder talked about the impact of short-term programming, saying:

If you have support for only one or two years, it is piecemeal and glossing over some things and leaving unfinished business.

A number of stakeholders working in or with government at the district level observed that some departments were being left out of implementation because of piecemeal approaches. For example, stakeholders said the Department of Labour is often not included within girls’ education issues because of a lack of funding and resources. As indicated by stakeholders, the challenge is that the issue of child labour has an impact on girls’ (and boys’) education, however, this was overlooked in some districts.

The NGEN suggested that networks potentially present an opportunity to address piecemeal approaches. District-level stakeholders also said they use a ‘whole approach’ to girls’ education and discuss issues at the committee level.

Another NGO that supports a girls’ education network suggested that piecemeal support is partly a result of reduced funding due to donor fatigue. As a result, many organisations are not as well-funded, which has implications for the strength of the network membership.

In summary, numerous stakeholders consulted for this study indicated that funding limitations and diverse donor priorities for girls’ education results in ‘piecemeal support’, which potentially undermines efficiency and holistic programming. With the limited resources available, there is therefore a need to work collaboratively to make the most effective use of resources and to focus on the fundamental issues in girls’ education, as discussed in Section 6.4.1. Some form of coordination between donors and government should be a priority in addressing the challenge of making ‘piecemeal’ support more holistic.

6.3.3 Bursaries and scholarships

The provision of bursaries and scholarships was identified by stakeholders as a key input that enables more girls and women to attend and complete both secondary and tertiary education. When targeted effectively, such bursaries can make all the difference for girls from poor families to access education. The challenges, as identified by stakeholders, is that there are insufficient bursaries available to support girls and families in need and there is not appropriate targeting for girls.

At the same time, stakeholders suggested that while the provision of a bursary is helpful, a bursary alone does not cover all of a girl’s needs. One stakeholder added that mentoring is an important aspect of a bursary or scholarship program and another suggested the importance of cash transfers in order to provide support for the whole family.

An NGO stakeholder said that research from grassroots organisations identified that girls did not feel they had future options after school – they did not know where they were going and what to do next. For example, one NGO found in their own monitoring program that ‘school dropouts are occurring even where students have financial support for fees and their uniforms’.
Some NGOs described the successes and challenges of their programming in terms of financially supporting girls through a full course of schooling, as outlined below.

- In one district, an NGO has a bonus program whereby they pay bonuses to performing schools that are retaining girls and helping vulnerable girls to stay in school. The NGO reported that the program is effective because schools can spend funds on other resources.
- An NGO identifies girls and private donors then channels funds through the organisation to support girls through secondary school. This stakeholder described the positive impact of this support saying ‘scholastic support is a small grant but gives confidence to girls’.
- One organisation identified a challenge with scholarships is the need for ongoing support. For example, two girls were supported through secondary school and selected to go to tertiary education, but they still need funds to continue through to the tertiary level.
- One NGO said that sometimes they lose a sponsor, which is difficult because while the organisation encourages girls to persevere, a girl may be unable to go further because of a lack of available funding.
- A donor organisation stakeholder said that while her organisation has kept girls in school with bursaries, the issues seem to be that students are not seeing why there is a need to finish school.
- One stakeholder described how the provision of a bursary alone is not sufficient for girls with disability as there are other needs which also need to be addressed.

Further research could also be conducted to explore how bursaries and scholarships for girls could best support girls in Malawi in the long-term. For example, an experimental cash transfer program in Zomba found that out-of-school girls were more likely to benefit from cash transfers beyond the conclusion of the program compared to girls that were already enrolled in school (Baird, Chirwa, McIntosh, & Ozler, 2015). Another study which focused on schools in Lilongwe, found that in the short-term girls who received cash transfers were less likely to drop out and be absent from schools and that there were improvements in JCE scores, but not improvements in MSCE scores (Kim, 2016).

Given the timeframe and availability of stakeholders, this report was unable to conduct an in-depth analysis of the role of bursaries and scholarships for girls’ education. Nevertheless, the key issues and challenges have been documented to highlight how organisations aim to provide financial support to girls to support them in completing a full course of education.

### 6.4 Evidence-based decision making

The fourth theme identified from the consultations was the need for girls’ education programs, practices and policies to draw on the best-available evidence of what works in girls’ education. In order to support evidence-based decision making, stakeholders discussed the need to:

- identify and prioritise the fundamental issues to address in girls’ education
- document and build on the lessons learned in girls’ education
- collect and use valid and reliable data.

In this section, stakeholders’ perspectives in each of these three sub-themes are discussed.

#### 6.4.1 Focusing on the fundamental issues in girls’ education

Section 6.1 (a holistic approach to girls’ education) discussed the wide range of economic, cultural and social challenges faced by girls, as well as the need for taking a multi-sectoral approach to policy and program implementation. While there are a multitude of interrelated factors that can have an impact on girls’ education, the consultations highlighted the need to identify and focus on the core underlying
factors that enable or constrain education opportunities for girls. For example, one donor organisation stakeholder stated:

We need to understand the drivers of dropout. There are drivers that lead to girls getting pregnant – we need to work out what the drivers are that lead to this and work with this chain looking at the causes.

While support is needed for girls who become pregnant, this stakeholder emphasised the importance of providing support to girls before this situation occurs. District-level stakeholders consulted also talked about the need to understand the drivers of dropout, the factors that support girls staying in school, and the issues facing adolescent girls.

Many of those consulted also discussed the need for resources to be directed towards key issues and populations that they believed had not currently been well-addressed and were likely to have the greatest impact on educational participation and achievement. While perspectives varied on what these focus areas should be, many spoke of the need to focus on:

- the full range of the education system (ECD, primary, secondary, tertiary)
- the recruitment of more female teachers, particularly in rural areas
- addressing the unique needs of both rural and urban girls
- supporting girls with special education needs
- issues relating to poverty and cultural practices and expectations
- community empowerment
- issues relating to both health and education
- the retention of girls in school, rather than focusing on enrolments. For example, as one UN stakeholder stated, ‘I think there is a need to restructure programs/activities towards retention of girls in schools. Enrolment seems to be going well especially in lower grades, but retention in upper grades remains very low.’
- districts where little support has been provided to date.

Some stakeholders discussed the different ways to identify priority areas including: the need to consider a range of health and education indicators, the need to conduct research and evaluation into what works in girls’ education, and the importance of involving local communities in identifying particular areas to focus on and possible solutions to address these needs. Some donors also use results-based financing, whereby funding is provided on the condition that programs are shown to have an impact.

The NGES was also highlighted by a few stakeholders as providing a useful prioritisation of girls’ education issues, for example, one government stakeholder stated:

The National Girls Education Strategy has also been important. It used to be that everyone did what they wanted but the document is now guiding everyone … The document has helped us to identify areas to focus on.

Many donor organisations and NGOs also have specific priority areas that are aligned to their strategic plans. Some stakeholders emphasised that there is a need for all organisations to have a clear strategy and goals, and for these to be aligned with national-level priorities.

Different stakeholders have different priority areas and different views about key issues to focus on. However, there is a need to continue documenting and building on the lessons learned and to have access to valid and reliable data in order to help prioritise girls’ education support and to evaluate progress. Both of these topics are discussed further below.
6.4.2 Documenting and building on lessons learned

One of the goals identified from the First National Girls’ Education Conference was for partners to ‘build on already existing best-practices rather than starting from scratch’ when designing and implementing girls’ education programs (MoEST Planning Directorate, 2017). During the Second National Girls’ Education Conference, the MoEST identified that this goal had only been partly achieved and that there was still a need for partners to build on existing best practices (MoEST Planning Directorate, 2017).

Many stakeholders also emphasised how important it is for programs to be results driven and the need to document and to build on lessons learned about what works well and what areas could be improved in girls’ education in Malawi. For example, one government stakeholder stated:

> We have learned a lot from the interventions that we’ve had. We should be looking at the results from the programs that are implemented. If the results are negative, then we should look at why this is. In the next five years, I’d love to see projects that are results driven.

A range of stakeholders identified that there is a need for enhanced M&E processes for girls’ education programs. Robust M&E systems are important for understanding program strengths and areas for improvement, and for understanding the possible impacts of programs on girls’ education. Improving M&E processes was seen as important both for government ministries and also NGOs. For example, one UN stakeholder discussed that often there is a lack of follow up on government initiatives, saying that:

> ‘… the government often has good initiatives, but there is not often good follow-up and monitoring, so this work often falls back on NGOs and CSOs.

In order to enhance M&E processes, some stakeholders suggested that there was a need to develop a monitoring framework that could be used by all implementing organisations in order to track progress and areas for improvement. For example, one NGO stakeholder stated:

> … there is currently no uniform system for NGOs to follow and track whether we are making progress.

Currently, a brief M&E framework exists within the NGES (MoEST, 2014c). However, during the Second National Girls’ Education Conference, it was highlighted by the MoEST that most organisations did not use the framework and that many were not aware that the tool existed (MoEST Planning Directorate, 2017). As outlined in the NGES, the MoEST has the responsibility to lead the implementation of the framework, which is designed to ‘be part of the larger education sector M&E framework, which will be applied by all stakeholders in the education sector’ (MoEST, 2014c, p. 40). The framework is intended to provide guidelines for stakeholders around M&E interventions by providing a series of performance indicators that relate to the goals of the NGES and information about sources of information to measure progress against the desired outcomes.

Capacity building in conducting M&E was identified as an area of need for both NGOs and government organisations. Implementing robust M&E processes is continuing to become increasingly important in the monitoring of progress against the SDGs (Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015) and is also commonly a requirement for receiving funding from donors.

Robust M&E processes can, however, be resource-intensive and may not always be possible for small-scale programs without technical and financial support. Further, previous research has found evidence that many impact evaluations commissioned suffer from methodological issues, which means that program impacts are not effectively measured (see for example, Center for Global Development, 2006). Robust M&E also requires access to valid and reliable data, and this is further discussed in Section 6.4.3.
There were also many examples of organisations that had conducted mid-term or final evaluations of programs. For example, as discussed during the Second National Girls’ Education Conference, a mid-term review of the Joint Programme on Girls’ Education (JPGE) was conducted in December 2016 to:

- understand the progress made since the program was implemented in 2014
- evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the program inputs and processes
- identify the lessons learned, in particular around the cross-sectoral approach used (JPGE, 2017b).

The lessons learned from the previous JPAG (2010-2014) and Phase I of the JPGE (2014-2017) have been used to plan the Phase II of the JPGE (JPGE, 2017a).

MoEST also monitors performance of the education sector including progress against girls’ education targets identified in the NESP and the ESIP II (MoEST, n.d.-b). With the NESP concluding in 2017 a team of consultants have recently commenced the final review of the NESP in the second half of 2017, and some of these team members attended the project validation meeting.

The importance of documenting and sharing lessons learned among different stakeholders was also emphasised. One organisation discussed their funding uncertainties and discussed the importance of documenting their approaches and successes in the hope that other organisations would continue with this work. A stakeholder from a UN organisation explained:

> We’re trying to document what we’re doing, if we’re not able to continue with work, we’d love others to.

Pilot programs are commonly implemented in Malawi and only some continue beyond the pilot. Some stakeholders discussed the importance of learning from these short-term programs in order to reap their full benefits. It was also acknowledged that it was essential to understand the local context and to involve the community when designing and implementing girls’ education programs. Therefore, while it is important to share lessons learned from organisations and programs, when new programs are implemented, it is also essential that they consider the unique social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which they will operate.

Forums such as the National Girls’ Education Conferences were viewed by many as important opportunities for organisations to share lessons learned from girls’ education programs. Many also felt that while knowledge-sharing platforms existed, there were opportunities for improvement, including through enhancing the accessibility of program reports for the general public, and ensuring that both district and national-level government officials were informed of the outcomes of programs by enhancing collaboration and communication processes (as discussed in Section 6.2).

### 6.4.3 Access to valid and reliable data

Having access to valid and reliable data on a range of education-related indicators is necessary for organisations that work in girls’ education in Malawi in order to be able to understand the current context of girls’ education, to identify priorities for support, and to understand changes over time. Some stakeholders discussed the wide-range of indicators that their organisations draw on. They use data on educational access and outcomes, such as data from EMIS, and indicators beyond the education context, such as health-related indicators gathered through demographic health surveys, to make program decisions. For example, one donor organisation stakeholder emphasised the need for a multi-sectoral approach and the need to consider broad indicators other than just education indicators such as HIV/AIDS prevalence and maternal mortality.

Some stakeholders discussed the challenges involved in obtaining timely, valid and reliable data for program and funding decisions. Demographic surveys are not conducted annually in Malawi, and time...
is also needed to analyse and report on the data before releasing it. EMIS data is collected annually; however, EMIS reports are not always publically available for one or two years after the information has been collected. For example, this sector review draws on the most recent EMIS data available which are from the 2015 academic year. Previous research notes that as support from donors for EMIS has been reduced, this has resulted in delays in the release of data due to human and financial resource challenges (Bernbaum & Moses, 2011; Ng’ambi, 2011). One stakeholder discussed the potential issue of organisations using out-of-date data, explaining that many organisations identify what districts to work in, or what issues to focus on, based on old EMIS data. However, there may have been interventions implemented since the data were collected, and the impact of these interventions will not yet be reflected in the EMIS data available.

A few of those consulted also discussed the accessibility of EMIS data. For example, on their website, the CSEC provides copies of EMIS reports in addition to copies of education policies and government reports to make this information more accessible to their members and to other stakeholders. CSEC discussed the importance of this data being publically accessible so that it can be used to shape education policy and program agendas.

One government stakeholder discussed the need for different ministries to work closely with the National Statistics Office to facilitate the flow of information. Another stakeholder also identified that there may be opportunities to conduct more in-depth analysis of EMIS data, in order to make it more useful for stakeholders. The opportunity for more in-depth analysis and utilisation of EMIS data has also been noted in a report by the World Bank which stated that:

> While the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is able to collect sufficient amounts of data, they are not effectively analyzed and used. Consequently, available evidence about education system functioning found in the EMIS does not adequately feed into interventions, actions and mid-course corrections of on-going programs and activities. (World Bank, 2015, p. 3)

Some stakeholders noted that there was sometimes contradictory data provided in different databases; some noted issues with the reliability of EMIS data. For example, one stakeholder discussed the challenges of obtaining reliable information on attendance because of a lack of a formal tracking system. Some districts have provided students with unique codes that enable students to be tracked through the schooling system. Malawi has also commenced the process of implementing a national identification system, which also aims to help in ensuring access to education and health services (Malawi News Now, 2016). One stakeholder also discussed the challenges associated with measuring dropout rates, explaining that these can only be measured at the end of the year as many students have extended periods of absenteeism due to the impact of the farming season.

In addition to using publically available databases, many organisations also collect their own project-specific qualitative and quantitative data as part of their M&E processes. For example, one stakeholder discussed using EMIS data only for measures of attendance to complement their own data collected. Other programs have attempted to conduct real-time monitoring of attendance, however, some noted the technical challenges associated with this.

While the focus of the consultations was not on gathering information from school-level stakeholders, one school head discussed how the cancellation of the JCE meant that less data was now available for the school to understand the learning outcomes of their students. During the consultations, some

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21 Available from: http://www.csecmw.org/Government.html
stakeholders discussed using data on examination pass rates in order to identify program needs and possible impacts on student achievement.

A specific gap identified by many stakeholders was the lack of a database containing information about the different organisations and programs operating in Malawi that focus on girls’ education, including information about where they operate. It is not currently known how many different organisations operate in Malawi and currently only small-scale databases exist that provide information on girls’ education program providers. For example, the CSEC has a database with information on its member organisations and the NGEN developed a database containing information about its members’ programs in 2016.

At the Second National Girls’ Education Conference and during the consultations, it was suggested that it would be beneficial to have a comprehensive central database with information about organisations and programs working in girls’ education to address issues of duplication, to enhance collaboration and to identify areas of need. Further, one of the recommendations from the First National Girls’ Education Conference was to ‘Execute a mapping exercise in order to determine the impact of projects’ (MoEST Planning Directorate, 2017). It was identified by the MoEST at the second conference that this work had not yet commenced but that there were opportunities to conduct this work (MoEST Planning Directorate, 2017). It is not clear whether the MoEST intends that this mapping would be incorporated into a central database.

Further work would be needed in order to identify what information would be included in such a database; how the data would be collected given the number of organisations operating; the different processes for commencement of programs, including organisations approaching districts and/or schools directly; the short-term nature of some programs; and the processes and organisation(s) responsible for ensuring the database is maintained and contains up-to-date information.

The development of such a database could help address the need identified by stakeholders of having comprehensive information about different programs and organisations that focus on girls’ education. In order for the database to be useful to stakeholders, it would be essential that the database be updated regularly to ensure that the information was current. A regularly updated and comprehensive database could support enhanced coordination between stakeholders and could support stakeholders in being able to share lessons learned and to build the body of knowledge about any successes in girls’ education in Malawi.

The CSEC and NGEN 2016 databases are provided to UNICEF alongside this report (see Annex A and B).
7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The Government of Malawi has taken important steps to create a supportive policy environment for the promotion of girls’ education. For example, the NGES provides a strategy for all stakeholders both government and non-government for promoting girls’ education. The Readmission Policy and the current policy review that aims to enhance the implementation of the Readmission Policy is another important step the government is taking to support girls’ education.

Further, there is strong support from donors and NGOs for girls’ education. Many of these stakeholders aim to work with government stakeholders to implement, evaluate and learn from girls’ education initiatives. Among those consulted as part of this research, there was a strong common drive from government stakeholders, NGOs and donors to implement evidence-based initiatives to provide holistic support to girls. The importance of working in a collaborative manner and involving the community, district and national-level stakeholders was also emphasised during the consultations.

Based on the literature review and consultations, a series of recommendations is offered. Due to the short-term nature of this sector review project, many of these recommendations necessarily involve further research and consultation. It is also necessary to re-emphasise that most of the consultations involved national-level stakeholders and further district consultations would be beneficial in the future.

Recommendation 1: Build the evidence-base about what works in girls’ education in Malawi

In order to understand the impacts of programs and policies on girls’ education, there is a need to conduct and support research, evaluation and monitoring. The consultations highlighted the need for organisations to continue to build their capacity in M&E, for clear girls’ education targets to be set and measured, and for stakeholders to have access to reliable gender-disaggregated data to inform program and policy decisions.

From both the literature and from the stakeholder consultations, it is evident that supporting girls’ education in Malawi requires a holistic and multi-sectoral approach. There are a wide range of factors that have an impact on girls’ education experiences and these require comprehensive support. There is a need to continue to build on understandings about how organisations, programs and policies in Malawi can best work together to address issues such as child marriage, child labour, GBV and pregnancy. In order to better understand how to enhance girls’ education in the Malawi context, there is also a need for transparency around communicating the impact of initiatives, including what does and does not work. Those consulted emphasised the importance of using existing forums and creating new opportunities for stakeholders to share and discuss lessons learned and future directions. While much is already known about effective strategies for supporting girls in Malawi, there is a need to continue refining and building on what is known.

With limited funding available, there is also a need to prioritise resources on strategies and programs that are effective and evidence-based. Learnings from international and Malawi-based research can assist in identifying strategies and interventions that are known to be effective in supporting girls’ education and promoting gender equality. For example, the GPE, UNGEI, and UNICEF (2017) suggest a two-pronged approach to girls’ education, firstly including gender-targeted interventions focused on addressing the specific barriers faced by girls because of their gender and, secondly, including gender-integrated efforts, whereby gender differences and inequalities are considered across all aspects of the education sectors. In order to support this approach, a list of promising interventions to target barriers faced by girls is provided in the GPE, UNGEI and UNICEF (2017) report, drawing on the work from researchers including Unterhalter et al. (2014) and Sperling and Winthrop (2015). When implementing programs and policies, there is a need to consider what is appropriate, effective and feasible specifically in the Malawi context.
Recommendation 2: Develop a girls’ education database

Many stakeholders suggested the development of a comprehensive and regularly updated central database with information about organisations and programs working in girls’ education. Such a database could support stakeholders working across different sectors to have a greater awareness of who is doing what in girls’ education in Malawi. The database could help to address issues of duplication, to enhance collaboration and to identify gaps in support.

Before such a database is developed, it is recommended that a wide range of stakeholders are consulted regarding the purpose of the database, its scope, the methods for disseminating information in the database and the management of the database, to ensure it contains current information. Given the vast number of organisations operating in Malawi to support girls’ education it will be essential that a well-established process for gathering and updating the database is established. Such a database would require ongoing funding and management.

Recommendation 3: Focus on supporting school completion and transition to the next level of education throughout the system

Since the introduction of FPE in 1994, the Malawi government has focused on ensuring that girls and boys have equal access to primary education. Significant progress has been made in increasing girls’ access to education, in particular to primary school education. However, significant challenges still exist, with high dropout and grade repetition rates for girls, low completion rates and limited secondary school places. There is therefore a need to move beyond focusing on enrolments, and for policies, strategies and initiatives to focus on the retention of girls in school and on preventing school dropout. Considering the timing of girls’ education support is also crucial, with some stakeholders emphasising that support systems need to be provided earlier than they are at present in order to try to prevent dropout.

It is essential that there is long-term support from government, donors and NGOs for programs which have successfully enhanced the retention of girls in school. The ESIP II included goals to reduce girls’ grade repetition rates and to improve transition rates between primary, secondary and tertiary education. While some progress was made towards these goals, there is a need to recommit to these goals as part of the next NESP and ESIP. As part of this planning, there is a need to identify and prioritise strategies which will effectively support the achievement of these goals and to ensure that there is sufficient resources allocated to supporting these. Regular monitoring and review of policies and strategies is also essential for identifying progress towards improving girls’ retention in schools. For example, with the recent revision of the re-entry policy, it will be important to monitor the effectiveness of this revised policy.

A clear message from stakeholders was that there is a need for government, donor organisations and NGOs need to provide support to girls’ education across all education sectors from ECD through to tertiary education, and to support the transition of girls between these different education settings. Further research is needed into opportunities to strengthen girls’ access to ECD and tertiary education, as this was beyond the scope of this sector review, which focused on primary and secondary education.

Recommendation 4: Focus on enhancing the quality of education

In addition to the completion of school, it is critical to ensure that girls have positive experiences at school and learn the skills necessary to succeed in the education system and beyond. The SDGs not only emphasise the importance of boys and girls having access to education, but also the importance of high-quality education. For example, target 4.1 states that ‘By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes’ (UNESCO, 2016, p. 7).
The results from the regional assessment program SACMEQ III indicated low levels of achievement in reading and numeracy, with girls having lower levels of achievement in both reading and numeracy than boys (Milner, Mulera, & Chimizu, 2011). Overall, Malawi students had the lowest average SACMEQ scores of all countries that participated for reading, and the second lowest for numeracy (McConnell & Mupuwaliywa, 2016). Once released, the SACMEQ IV results will provide important information about the learning outcomes for girls and boys from this latest assessment cycle.

Ensuring there are sufficient and high-quality physical and human resources in schools is an important area of focus. Malawi currently experiences significant shortages of classrooms and qualified teachers, particularly female teachers. Investing in pre-service and in-service teacher training will not only have benefits for female students, but has the potential to improve the learning outcomes of all students in Malawi. Further, regular reviews should be conducted to ensure that the curriculum and assessment practices are appropriate for all students in Malawi and that students are supported in their learning.

**Recommendation 5: Continue to focus on addressing inequality**

A continued focus on addressing inequality is required at all levels of the education system, which requires policy dialogue and programming that addresses the specific needs of all students. The findings of this report indicate that gender inequalities exist in a range of areas across the education system, including in participation in secondary education and in examination results. In some areas of Malawi, gender inequalities also exist in the social and cultural expectations of girls, for example, in regard to household chores, early marriage and career options. Some girls experience further disadvantage, especially those with special education needs, those from families with lower socioeconomic status and those from rural areas. Continued support of initiatives that focus on equity and reducing disadvantage should be a priority.

UNICEF is currently in the process of developing the next Education Sector Plan which will be implemented in 2018, and the review of MoEST’s NESP has recently commenced, which will inform the subsequent NESP. These are opportunities to prioritise girls’ education and to reduce inequality as key education sector goals within these key strategy documents. It is essential that future education plans and budgets are gender-responsive and support progress towards the SDGs. The GPE, UNGEI and UNICEF have developed a resource to support the development of gender-responsive education sector plans (GPE, UNGEI, & UNICEF, 2017). For example, the following seven components are described as being important characteristics of credible education sector plans: guided by an overall vision; strategic; holistic; evidence-based; achievable; sensitive to the context; and pays attention to disparities. In developing the next Education Sector Plan, it may be useful to draw on resources such as this to ensure that the plans address the key issues of equity, efficiency and learning, while ensuring that the plan is also feasible and able to be implemented and monitored effectively. As is described in the report by GPE, UNGEI, & UNICEF (2017) drawing on the work by Jha and Kelleher (2006):

> Gender equality in education does not simply mean equal numbers of girls and boys… nor does it mean treating them the same. It involves understanding where differences and inequalities exist among girls and boys in terms of needs and rights; identifying any practice or trend that prevents boys or girls, or both, from realizing their full potential to grow into responsible and empowered individuals; and ensuring that the ESP [Education Sector Plan] addresses these in a meaningful way. (p. 7)

**Recommendation 6: Conduct a review of the current government structures for coordinating girls’ education programs**

There are currently challenges faced in working collaboratively, both within MoEST and across ministries, on girls’ education initiatives and also in collaboration between national and district-level government stakeholders. While it was agreed by stakeholders that coordination and communication
processes should be enhanced, there were varied opinions about what the most appropriate government structures and processes should be for coordinating girls’ education programs.

Some of the features that have been identified in the literature as being key to successful gender coordination units or ‘gender desks’ within government include the need for the unit to be:

- at a sufficiently high level so that they can influence decision making
- supported in ongoing capacity building in areas such as gender-sensitivity training and collecting sex-disaggregated data, monitoring and reporting
- provided with sufficient funding and long-term support
- supported to co-ordinate multi-sectoral communication and programming (CIDA, 2003).

It is recommended that there is a review of the current government structures and that minister-level stakeholders are engaged in discussions about the most effective structures for coordinating girls’ education programs in the future.

**Recommendation 7: Prioritise initiatives that support community and government ownership**

Genuine government and community participation in the planning, implementation and review of programs is critical to achieving and sustaining positive results. It was apparent from the consultations that strong support and buy-in for girls’ education initiatives is needed at both the national and district levels.

There is a need to prioritise programs that support government and community ownership and commitment to girls’ education initiatives if they are to have ongoing impacts. Collaboration between all stakeholders including donors, NGOs, government and communities is essential to developing effective approaches to program design and implementation. Effective communication and capacity-building strategies are necessary for supporting ownership and sustainability of initiatives.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Background information
1. What do you do in your current role in the area of girls’ education?
   - What specific activities are you engaged in girls’ education?

Ministry/department/organisation involvement with girls’ education
2. What role does your organisation have in improving girls’ education?
3. What are your organisation’s/department’s goals and targets around improving girls’ education at primary/secondary level in Malawi?
4. What are some of the specific ways that your organisation/department is trying to meet these goals?
5. Please describe an example of where your organisation/department has been successful in making a difference to girls’ education. What have been the main factors that have contributed to this success? What was the impact?
6. What are some of the challenges that your organisation/department faces in enhancing girls’ education?
   - What do you think would help to address these challenges?
   - What are the impacts of these challenges?
7. What other organisations/ministries are you currently working with in girls’ education?
8. Can you identify any strategies for enhancing the coordination and collaboration between different organisations/departments working in girls’ education?

Context of girls’ education – access, equity and quality
9. What key policies and programs are currently in place in order to reduce grade repetition for girls? What is working well? What improvements could be made?
   - What sociocultural, school infrastructure and economic factors are being addressed? (These are the factors that are identified in the Malawi Girls Education Strategy document)
   - Are these policies/programs implemented at the primary or secondary level or both?
   - Are they implemented nationwide or in particular districts?
   - How did these policies/programs come to be implemented?
   - What has worked well and what have been the challenges in regard to funding/resourcing?
10. What key policies and programs are currently in place in order to reduce school dropouts and to increase primary and secondary school completion rates for girls? What is working well? What improvements could be made?
    - What sociocultural, school infrastructure and economic factors are being addressed? (These are the factors that are identified in the Malawi Girls Education Strategy document)
    - Are these policies/programs implemented at the primary or secondary level or both?
    - Are they implemented nationwide or in particular districts?
    - How did these policies/programs come to be implemented?
What has worked well and what have been the challenges in regard to funding/resourcing?

11. What key policies and programs are currently in place in order to enhance educational outcomes for girls? What is working well? What improvements could be made?

- What sociocultural, school infrastructure and economic factors are being addressed? (These are the factors that are identified in the Malawi Girls Education Strategy document)
- Are these policies/programs implemented at the primary or secondary level or both?
- Are they implemented nationwide or in particular districts?
- How did these policies/programs come to be implemented?
- What has worked well and what have been the challenges in regard to funding/resourcing?

**Girls’ education – future priorities and needs (demand/supply) and the enabling environment**

12. In your view what should the priorities be in girls’ education over the next 5 years in Malawi? What is already being done to address these priorities? What else would be needed in order to address these priorities?

- What do you see as the key challenges for girls’ education in Malawi at primary and secondary that need to be addressed?
- What funding/resourcing would be needed?

13. Where is there a need for more support for girls’ education in Malawi? (This could be support needed in a particular region, for a particular target group, or for a particular focus area).

14. Where is there already sufficient support for girls’ education in Malawi? (This could be in a particular region, for a particular target group, or for a particular focus area).

15. What do you believe are the key factors that enable girls’ education programs to be successful?

**Factors affecting girls ‘education**

16. In your view, what are some critical factors that impact girls’ ability to attend school?

- How do teachers have an impact on girls’ attendance in school? Families? Communities?

17. What are some key challenges for girls to actively participate and achieve in school?

- How do teachers have an impact on girls’ active participation and achievement in school? Families? Communities?

**Other**

18. Is there anything else you would like to say?
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has been contracted to conduct a sector review of girls’ education at primary and secondary levels in Malawi. We are gathering information through a literature review, interviews with key stakeholders working in girls’ education in Malawi and through this questionnaire. The information gathered will be used to develop a report for UNICEF which outlines the context of girls’ education, including challenges and opportunities and recommendations for future priorities.

Thank you very much for filling in this brief questionnaire about your organisation’s involvement in girls’ education in Malawi. In the report we would not include your name, email or phone number, but may provide a list of the organisations involved in girls’ education.

1. Contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/position:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please indicate whether your organisation/department is involved in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle one</th>
<th>Number of programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Funding girls’ education programs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Implementing and/or developing girls’ education programs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Managing/monitoring girls’ education programs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Contributing to girls’ education in other ways (please describe):</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What levels of education does your organisation/department focus on? (Please tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please tick all that apply</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Early childhood education and development (ages 0-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Lower secondary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d) Upper secondary  

e) Tertiary  

f) Non-formal education  

g) Life skills  

h) Technical and vocational  

i) Adult  

j) Other (please specify):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. What girls’ education interventions is your organisation/department involved in?</th>
<th>Please tick all that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Provision of textbooks, school supplies or uniforms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Safe transportation to school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Financial support (scholarships, cash transfers, loans)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Literacy and/or numeracy programs targeted to include girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Support for 21\textsuperscript{st} century skills for girls (i.e., ICT, problem-solving)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Creating safe spaces for girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Life skills programs (in formal or non-formal school/education settings)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Tackling violence against girls and young women and/or providing support for victims of sexual violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Academic mentoring programs for girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Sanitation and/or hygiene supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Providing information/education about benefits of supporting girls to stay in school; developing campaigns to get girls in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Supporting nutrition or school feeding programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Improving knowledge of sexual and reproductive health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) Building girl-friendly school facilities (such as toilet facilities, girls hostels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Support for girls to enrol, re-enrol and/or stay in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) Community-focused education programs on the benefits of supporting girls’ education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Girls’ Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review

q) Creating incentives for female teachers and/or school leaders
r) Policy support for gender sensitisation in the school environment (for example, gender sensitive teaching pedagogies and curricula)
s) Policy support for the right to education
t) Girls’ and women’s advocacy support
u) Information about the risks of early/child marriage
v) Capacity support for key stakeholders (teachers, parents, district officials, government, etc.) involved in girls’ education
w) Other (please specify):
x) Other (please specify):
y) Other (please specify):

5. **Would you like to give any specific information about the interventions you are involved in?**

6. **Is there any further information you would like to provide about your organisation/department?**

7. **In your view, where is there a need for more support for girls’ education in Malawi?**
   *(This could be support needed for a particular focus area, or in a particular district/region in Malawi, or for a particular group).*
8. What challenges currently exist in coordinating girls’ education interventions and activities in Malawi?

9. Can you identify any strategies for enhancing the coordination and collaboration between different organisations/departments working in girls’ education?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire 😊
## APPENDIX C: CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and start time</th>
<th>Activity and organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday 30th May 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.00am</td>
<td>Team meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00am</td>
<td>Meeting with UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Chief Director, MoEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Secretary of Education, MoEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Technical Reference Group (Representatives from MoEST, Royal Norwegian Embassy and WFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution and collection of questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday 31st May 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Interview with Gender Focal Person, School Health and Nutrition Directorate, MoEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Interview with Secondary School Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>Interview with Gender Focal Person, Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Interview with Deputy Director, Basic Education Directorate, MoEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 1st June 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Second National Girls’ Education Conference on ‘<em>Working Together Towards Promoting Opportunities for Girls through Quality Education</em>’, Sunbird Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution and collection of questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday 2nd June 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Attend National Girls’ Education Network Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Interview with Director of Special Needs Education, MoEST</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30am</td>
<td>Interview with JPGE Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Team Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday 5th June 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Interview with Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00am</td>
<td>Interview with World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Interview with Royal Norwegian Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday 6th June 2017</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00am</td>
<td>Interview with UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Interview with UN Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Interview with The Forum for African Women Educationalists - Malawi Chapter (FAWEMA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday 7th June 2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00am</td>
<td>Travel to Dedza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Focus group with District Education Manager, Special Needs Focal Point, and the Departments of Labour, Social Welfare, School Health and Nutrition, and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Interview with traditional authority leader</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with: mother and father group members, village headmen, community police, child protection, girls’ education band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 8th June 2017</td>
<td>9:00am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 9th June 2017</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 12th July 2017</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
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</tbody>
</table>