



Malawi's Efforts in Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4:

Quality Education

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There is a gap in Malawi's efforts in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education. SDG 4 objectives entail the provision of inclusive and quality education and the promotion of a lifelong learning environment for all by 2030. Malawi is a signatory to the SDGs and is bound to work towards attaining the objectives and targets. Thus, Malawi has been making significant progress in attaining SDG 4: Quality Education through reforming its education instruments and implementing new programs that support equality and inclusivity in learning for students in rural and urban schools. However, there are barriers to delivering effective and measurable impacts of equal access and measurable outcomes of the education systems. These are due to a lack of funds, poor infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning resources, and a shortage of teachers, just to mention a few. Furthermore, recommendations to improve the education system in Malawi are explored in this presentation.

Malawi is making significant progress in

ensuring quality education through the implementation of the Malawi Education Reform Program (MERP). The program was initiated through synergies among the Malawi Ministry of Education, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the World Bank. Malawi's effort in introducing the program is in line with achieving equal access to education for both boys and girls bridging the gender as inscribed in the SDGs. The learning environment has been improved for lower primary government schools as vulnerable students are being awarded bursaries and scholarships to complete their education as seen in Linga Community Day Secondary and Mpondagaga Community Day Secondary Schools. As the Education Act of 2013 states, Notable progress in achieving SDG 4 is being made in the identified districts, however, more should be done in rural areas like Lupachi, Traditional Authority Kanyenda in Nkhotakota District where girls are being forced into early childhood marriages or leaving school due to poverty and financial constraints. The program has been successful in providing access to education, thus, progressing in attainment of

the SDG 4.

Malawi is making progress in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes a lifelong learning environment for all. In line with SDG 4 which ensures that all boys and girls complete free primary and secondary school by 2030, the Ministry of Education initiated the Primary School Improvement Program (PSIP) which aims at reducing the school drop-out rate in all primary grades, improving the promotion rate in all classes, and improving governance and management in primary schools. The PSIP ensures that there is accountability in the management of schools through its structures that ensure that all learners learn while in classrooms not under trees. The program is also improving the sanitation system as there is easy access to and provision of sanitary wear in the ablutions and sanitary rooms for girls to use during menstruation. The program has significantly improved the quality of education and the environment, increasing the education outcomes as students are staying in school.

Malawi has been contributing to the attainment of quality education through synergies with civil society providing meals in public primary schools which has decreased the school dropout rate. The Ministry of Education partners with the World Food Programme and Mary's Meals finance the meals provision in schools. Learners are given nutritious porridge flour in primary schools for all learners. There has been infrastructure development as there are constructing kitchens in schools where they are implementing this program, in areas like Mpondagaga Zone, and Chankhokwe primary school in Nkhotakota District, Other Districts where this program is being implemented include Mangochi, Dedza, Kasungu and Salima. This is crucial to providing children with food as they start learning as families are poverty-stricken and there is a rise in food shortages. Chilumba Primary in Nkhotakota

District is benefiting from a home-grown feeding program where the school is leading agricultural production for its consumption and improving the practical aspect of education as students plant soya beans, groundnuts, rice and maize.

Malawi is making a significant impact toward achieving SDG 4 by introducing compulsory early childhood learning according to Malawi 2063 on Enabler 5, which focuses on Human Capital Development. ECD is now a compulsory formal education. Students are being exposed to Early Childhood Development Centers where children are exposed to real classroom situations. Although there is a lack of learning materials and resources most students are engaged and exposed to learning platforms at an early age. The education programs being implemented are improving the quality of education that incorporates a strong element of academic excellence, technical and vocational skills for labour market, entrepreneurship, and implementation of the vision by constructing more Vocational Training centers and Teachers Training Colleges in Salima and Mchinji Districts respectively. However, more training centers must be established to allow for equal access to quality education. Malawi's effort to develop mechanisms of improving equitable quality education at all levels is pushing for the attainment of SDG 4 as some areas have improved the education delivery systems.

Malawi has been progressing in improving access to education and achieving the SDG 4 targets by incorporating special needs learners. The provision of special needs education is bettered through the training of teachers and repairing infrastructure to cater to the learners and allow for easy access to all available resources. The inclusive education system is training teachers at MontFort Special Needs Education College in Chiladzulo District and mobilizing funds for purchasing Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) to help learners in their education quest. In addition, the

Ministry of Education adopted one model of constructing school blocks whose entrances have slanting slabs so that students with walking difficulties find it easy to enter their classrooms. These developments are being made to improve access to education. However, most rural areas are being neglected as these services are not yet available to inclusively provide equal access and quality education. Hence the ministry needs to ensure that the services are offered in all districts to ensure that all children living with disabilities benefit.

Malawi has been making significant progress towards attaining SDG 4 through the initiation of the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) aimed at funding secondary students in rural areas. Malawi through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in 2019 signed a decree on the constituency bursary scheme for the needy under the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) for bursaries and scholarships for the needy students in Secondary schools. The financial constraints that families face in paying for secondary education for their students have decreased due to this program. However, due to the number of children affected, some students do not receive education grants. The funds are allocated by the District Council for all the Constituencies. It is the Area Development Committee and Village Development Committee that submit names of potential beneficiaries to the Child Protection Committee and Primary Education Advisor in the Constituency. An assessment process is done, and funds are directly deposited to schools for the chosen beneficiaries. The effort being made to provide funding for rural secondary education students is improving education access, but more funding needs to be accessed to ensure that all students benefit from the program. However, the UNICEF (2023) report For Every Child Quality Learning reveal that 88% of net enrolment in primary schools has been completed and only 33% have completed their education.

Poor education outcomes are also being influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and teacher strikes. Although there are efforts being made, not enough is being done to keep children in schools as the completion rates are low. However, Malawi has been making efforts to push for the attainment of SDG 4 despite the other barriers and limitations.

Recommendations

1. Allocate more educational funding and increase scholarships and bursaries to be accessed by more beneficiaries under the Constituency Development Fund.
2. Include the Special Needs Education support system in the teacher education program and institutionalize special needs education in primary, secondary, and tertiary education.
3. Increase the Gross Domestic Product for the education sector.
4. Introduce budget trackers in the Education Ministry to improve accountability for funding programs.
5. Introduce relevant skills development programs for youth and adolescents.

In conclusion, Malawi has been making significant progress in achieving SDG 4 even though there are still gaps in accessing equitable education for development and better learning outcomes. Therefore, there must be a concerted effort from all concerned stakeholders to ensure that the country's education system promotes the desired equitable quality of education for all. This presentation has outlined some of the progress Malawi has made towards improving the quality of education, the challenges it faced, and recommendations made to improve the education system in the last decade of action.
