

The Education Agenda

Increase Financing Of ECD



Make Secondary School Curriculum Skills-centred!



Accredit Deserving Tertiary Institutions



Supporting and Adequately Financing Education is NOT a Question of Compromise – It is a MUST!

Foreword

The May 2009 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections are just around the corner. This is the period when those vying for political positions sell their manifestos, basically outlining what the individual members of Parliament and/or the political party that they are affiliated to will do to serve the citizens of Malawi.

This period is critical as it is also the time when a number of stakeholders take stock of what the present Government has so far achieved in various sectors during the past five years it has been in power, so that the next government should improve on areas the present government has not fared well, irrespective of whichever party ascends to power.

However, it is also pertinent to note that some, if not most, of the issues that emanate from the campaigning by the politicians themselves are merely based on their own political whims to get into power rather than on honest assessment of the issues on the ground. This is where, therefore, it is critical that the civil society plays an important role in objectively thrashing out issues that affect the people from an independent, participatory and informed perspective.

It is on this understanding why the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) has engaged various stakeholders and, most importantly, the communities themselves to identify issues within the education sector that affect them and bring them to the attention of the politicians who are vying for political positions, particularly Parliamentarians.

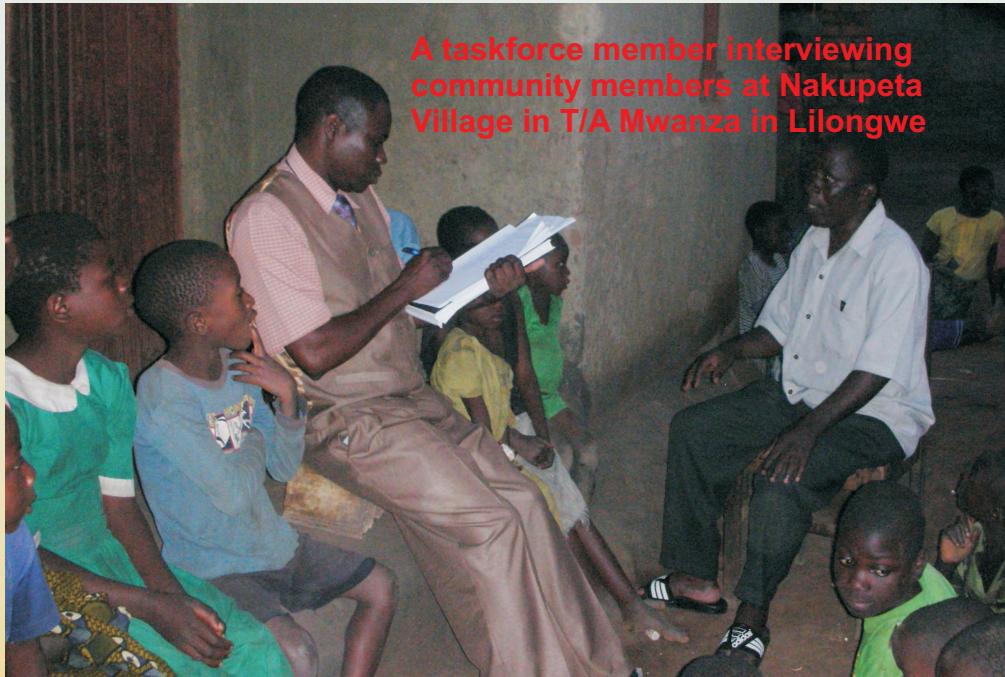
While some of the issues are specific to a particular education sector like primary, secondary or tertiary, some issues that were generated are crosscutting. Examples include gender disparities within all sectors of education; mushrooming of sub-standard schools; the plight of special needs children; low motivation among teachers characterised by low remuneration; insufficient housing and the ineffective Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme; and poor dissemination of policies.

We hope that with this Education Agenda, we will be able to increase awareness amongst the political parties on matters requiring urgent attention with regards to education in Malawi. We will use this important document to lobby for more support towards education.

As a crucial catalyst for development, this Education Agenda seeks to profile issues that politicians should focus during the campaign and after the elections.

**Lexon Ndalama,
Chairperson
Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE)**

The Process



A special taskforce was set up consisting of individuals representing selected institutional members of the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE). Among other things, the taskforce reviewed the following materials which formed the basis for the Education Agenda:

- National Education Sector Plan (NESP)
- Malawi Country Status Report, 2009.
- Malawi EFA Dossier by CSCQBE
- Mid-Year Joint Sector Review 2008/09
- Budget Studies Documents (CSOs and GoM)
- OSISA/ANCEFA/GCE Mission Report 2008

The taskforce members used desk research to identify the key issues based on the list of literature as stated above. The taskforce members also generated inputs from the Malawi Social Forum 2009 as well as the People's Manifesto, a document produced by the civil society in Malawi outlining issues that also require urgent attention by the next Government, and education is among them.

Mindful of the fact that this Education Agenda is supposed to be a balanced document, the taskforce members focused on key successes, challenges and way forward when reviewing the documents. Issues bordering on Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and Education for All (EFA) Action Plan for each level of education have been highlighted in the Agenda.

Attempts were also made to generate inputs from communities through rapid surveys and group discussions. The findings helped a great deal to understand the issues from the community perspectives so as to link them with available policies and interventions.

After gathering the issues, the taskforce analysed and grouped them into four broader themes namely; Early Child Development; Primary Education, Secondary Education and Tertiary education. Consequently, even the layout of this Education Agenda is based on these parameters.

Section 1:

Early Childhood Development



by very few trained volunteers on the ground.

- ✎ Currently there is no clear linkage between ECD and other key education policies at primary level.
- ✎ One of the positive strides is that the ministry has produced a considerable amount of ECD reading materials. However, most these materials are yet to be distributed to the districts due to transport and other logistical challenges.

Overview

- ✎ The Ministry of Gender, Women and Child Development launched the National Policy on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in 2003 which seeks to provide guidelines and coordination of ECD activities.
- ✎ Although Government has trained at least ten main facilitators in each district to implement the programme within its ECD structures resulting an increase of beneficiaries' access rate from 5.6 percent in 2003 to 29 percent in 2009, there is still limited financing of ECD programmes. For example, ECD was allocated only MK 350,000 in the 2007 national budget.
- ✎ Most of the financial support come from the development partners rather than from Government coffers, in a way justifying World Bank and UNICEF's fears that many developing countries were giving ECD the least attention in spite of its value and importance to the global crusade against poverty.
- ✎ So far, there has been poor coordination of EDC programmes in districts characterised

We Demand that...

- ✎ The next Government should increase the financing of ECD programmes
- ✎ The next Government should establish District ECD coordinators in each district to ensure smooth and effective coordination of ECD activities
- ✎ The next Government should harmonise inter-sectorial ECD interventions in order to standardize operations, foster effective coordination, and avoid duplication of interventions .
- ✎ The Ministry of Education must find ways of distributing the ECD materials into the districts.

Section 2:

Primary Education

Overview

the Government has made some notable achievements in basic education beyond just the introduction of free primary education in 1994, which brought with it a number of its own challenges. The following are some of the achievements:

- ✎ Primary school enrolment increased from 1.6 million in 1991/1992 to 3.3 million in 2007.
- ✎ Government has been increasing primary allocation, even though not sufficiently
- ✎ Government achieved gender parity at primary level in 2006.
- ✎ The development of a 10 year National Educational Sector Plan for the improvement of quality, access, equity, governance and management.
- ✎ The introduction of Feeder Schools and Village based schools, and
- ✎ Government introduced School management committees to ensure sustainable management of primary schools.

While the government has made commendable efforts to improve quality, access and equity of basic education, there are still a lot of challenges facing basic education as follows:

- ✎ There is need to construct more school blocks to cater for the expansion that resulted from the introduction of free primary school.
- ✎ There is lack of adequate qualified teachers. There has been increased teacher-pupil ratio which reached up to 1: 220 in 2008
- ✎ High dropout and repetition rates in primary school are high with repetition reaching up to 20% in 2006.
- ✎ Limited resources for children with special needs.
- ✎ Poor retention and completion of girls especially in standards 5 to 8
- ✎ Insufficient teaching and learning materials.
- ✎ Low transition rate from primary to secondary school, and to tertiary schools

We Demand that...

- ✎ The next Government should increase education spending to enable NESP implementation. This implies Ministry of Finance increasing average recurrent spending on education by around 5% annually, and external assistance doubling.
- ✎ The next Government should restructure education spending to invest more in primary education..
- ✎ The next Government should begin to focus more on literacy and numeracy in the early years to get a solid base of children who can progress effectively through primary and upwards. The expensive cycle of dropout, repetition and poor learning must be broken.
- ✎ The next Government should get around 12,000 additional primary teachers into classrooms by 2012 to bring class sizes down to a 'teachable' level. This is on top of the 18,500 teachers who should graduate from teacher training colleges.
- ✎ The next Government should build around 2,500-3,000 classrooms a year over the next five years.
- ✎ The next Government should introduce measures aimed at keeping girls in school and helping them at least match the learning achievements of boys.

Section 3:

Secondary Education

PHOTO

Overview

With free public primary school education since 1994, about 30 percent of primary school children are currently matriculating on to secondary school; this situation on the ground has created a bottleneck at the secondary school level particularly with the Community Day Secondary Schools Infrastructure i.e. boarding facilities and classroom sites, and teacher housing.

Government allocation towards education has been decreasing over the last couple of years and now stands at about 20%. This has led to inadequate access to secondary education and there needs to be particular emphasis on special needs students, orphans and needy ones. The following are some the challenges dogging the secondary education sector:

- ✎ Limited access to marginalised children including orphans and special needs children
- ✎ Lack of qualified teachers especially in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS)
- ✎ Poor retention especially for girls due to long distance to school and unfavourable gender environment like toilets, among other things

We Demand that...

- ✎ The next Government should improve motivation for teachers, including remuneration, equitable access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and good housing
- ✎ The next Government should increase enrollment and make selection and admission of students more equitable, including for special needs children and Other Vulnerable Children (OVCs)
- ✎ The next Government should monitor performance and strengthen internal efficiency of the secondary education sub-sector. For instance, the “Ministry of Education needs to adhere to national guidelines and not let other stakeholders build incomplete schools without teacher houses or toilets.
- ✎ The next Government should introduce free secondary education with proper structures and commitment.

Section 4:

Tertiary Education

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“I finished secondary school and i passed very well, but i don’t know where to go for further studies because i can’t afford any course”

Overview

While tertiary education in Malawi is provided by the University of Malawi, University of Mzuzu, Catholic University, University of Livingstonia and Share world Open university, Government training colleges which offer courses in Teaching, Forestry, Agriculture, Technical subjects and Secretarial skills, among others, tertiary educations still remains a luxury for many Malawians in terms of accessibility. Most colleges are still expensive for an average Malawian.

However, the coming of other tertiary institutions has made a positive impact on the expansion of tertiary education in the country.

✎ Other positive strides in this sector include the following:

- ✎ Introduction of the University of Malawi Parallel programme system;
- ✎ Accreditation of Catholic University;
- ✎ Setting up of the Commission for higher education.

Key challenges include outdated and irrelevant facilities in most colleges and the University of Malawi. i.e. machines, labs, and other learning materials

We Demand that...

- ✎ The next Government should expand accessibility to colleges in terms of opportunities and making the cost affordable by an average Malawian student.
- ✎ The next Government should make available learning materials, particularly relevant and up-to-date books in all universities
- ✎ The next Government should make timely accreditation of more institutions and create a conducive operating environment for the accredited colleges
- ✎ The next Government should de-link politics from the accreditation process of private colleges
- ✎ The next Government should put in place a structures for supporting private institutions/colleges, such as expansion grants.
- ✎ The next Government should expand technical & vocational institutions

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- ✎ Mr. Lexon Ndalama and Mr. George Chidalengwa from Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM);
- ✎ Mr. Chandiwira Chisi from Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN);
- ✎ Mr. George Mwika Kayange from Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre (CRIDOC);
- ✎ Mr. Kalako Mondwiwa from Participatory Rural Development Organisation (PRDO); and
- ✎ Mr. Benedicto Kondowe and Ms. Carolyn Carr from CSCQBE.



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