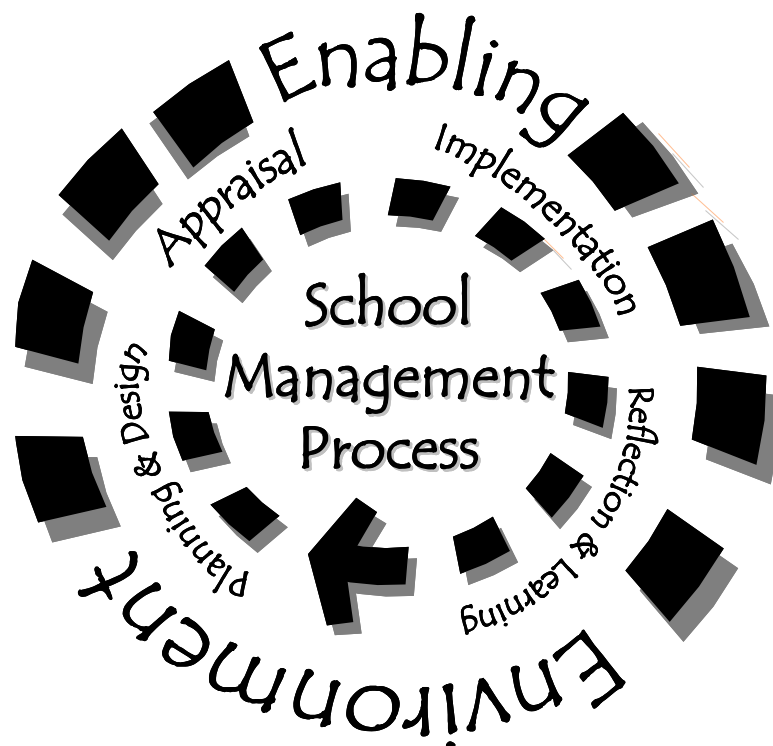**Malawi Government**

National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management

"The Move Beyond Bricks Towards Community Involvement in Whole School Development

August 2004
Supported by DFID and DANIDA

FOREWORD

The Government of Malawi considers the provision of primary education as the main contribution of the education sector to poverty reduction. In order to realise quality basic education for every child in the country, Government has undertaken a number of strides, aside from introducing Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. The Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) which was developed in the year 2000 lays out detailed policy commitments.

However, the education sector still faces enormous problems. Following the introduction of FPE Government has on one hand catalysed an increase in access to basic education for Malawian children. On the other hand, the need for adequate and effective mechanisms to sustain the increased enrolment has in the process become more pronounced. There is, therefore, urgent need for more effort to enhance the quality of education.

Promotion of access to and quality of primary education requires a combined effort from all stakeholders. The role of local communities, a key stakeholder, can therefore not be overemphasised. Local communities form the essential third element that brings together Government and Development Partners to ensure greater access and better quality education.

In Malawi there is a long history of community participation in development activities, including schools. Unfortunately though, this has generally only involved helping with construction and fund raising, and not in whole school management. In addition, confusion in the implementation of FPE led to a mistaken perception by some communities that they no longer had any responsibilities for their local schools.

My ministry therefore considers the development of this National Strategy to be timely. The overall objective of the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management is to provide an enabling environment and coordinated support mechanisms that will ensure the maximum sustainable participation of communities in the management of primary schools throughout Malawi. This strategy is also in line with a recommendation in the PIF which states that Government shall establish guidelines on community participation in primary education provision while taking into account significant variations among different communities.

Lastly but certainly not least, I urge all stakeholders in the education sector to continue supporting initiatives aimed at building the capacity of local communities so that they are able to effectively participate in managing their primary schools. The future of our country depends largely on how much investment we make in education of our children.

Dr. S.A. Hau
Secretary for Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Glossary

ADC	Area Development Committee
AEC	Area Executive Committee
CAC	Community AIDS Committee
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training
CPEA	Coordinating Primary Education Adviser
CRECCOM	Creative Centre For Community Mobilisation
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
DA	District Assembly
DAC	District AIDS Committee
DDC	District Development Committee
DEC	District Executive Committee
DEM	District Education Manager
DFID	Department for International Development
DP	Development Partner
DSPS	DANIDA Sector Programme Support
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LEA	Local Education Authority
MASPA	Malawi Schools Parents Association
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoGYCS	Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services
MSSSP	Malawi Schools Support System Project
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PcoSP	Primary Community Schools Project
PEA	Primary Education Adviser
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
PTA	Parent and Teacher Association
QUEST	Quality Education through Supporting Teachers
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SM	School Management
SMC	School Management Committee
TDC	Teachers' Development Centre
TUM	Teachers' Union of Malawi
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Village AIDS Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee

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1.   Challenges In The Primary Education Sector

Background: Education in Malawi

1.1   Education is a high priority for the Malawian Government. The Malawian Government has shown its strong commitment to the education sector by increasing its share of the national recurrent budget from 22% in 1993/94 to 28% in 1999/00, which is the highest in the Southern Africa Region. Within this allocation there has been a clear shift in favour of primary education[1]. The development of the Policy Investment Framework (PIF)[2] lays out detailed policy commitments and is regarded by the majority of stakeholders as an excellent plan for the education sector.

1.2   However, the sector still faces enormous problems. In primary education sector, the removal of school fees in 1994 saw the enrolment rate rise by more than 50% to its current level of approximately 3 million[3]. This expansion, although welcome, has placed huge strains on the education system, and the key problem facing education in Malawi at the present time is one of quality. For primary education, the dropout rates, especially for girls, are very high, and many pupils leave school without even basic literacy skills. Those who do not drop out, absenteeism is rife, especially around key periods when agricultural labour is required in the fields. Girls are particularly affected by this situation.

1.3   Communities form the essential third element that brings together Government and Development Partners to ensure quality education.

Figure 1: The Three Essential Elements To Ensure Quality Education
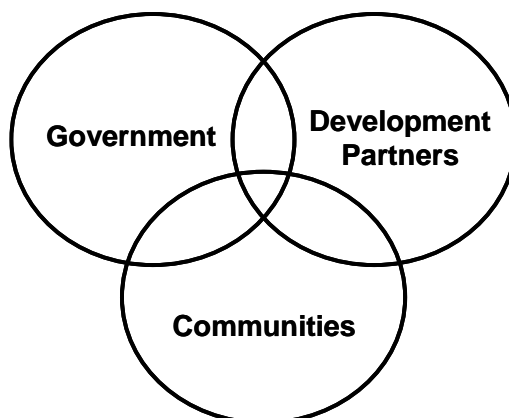
1.4   In Malawi there is a long history of community participation in development activities, including schools. However, this has generally only involved helping with construction and fund raising, and not in school management. In addition, confusion in the implementation of Universal Primary Education led to a mistaken perception by communities that they no longer had any responsibilities for their local schools.

1.5   In general the key problems facing the basic education sector in relation to the lack of community participation in the management of primary schools are as follows:

• The issue of education quality in relation to teacher quality, teaching and learning materials and teaching environment.

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[1] Malawi 2000 Public Expenditure Review, and Government of Malawi 2000-2001 Budget
[2] Ministry of Education, Sports and Technology, *Policy Investment Framework* 2000
[3] Malawi Government, *Education Basic Statistics* Malawi 1997

- Government has yet to develop guidelines or demonstrate its full commitment to community participation.
- Poor community – teacher relations.
- Community participation in School Management Committees is, in most cases, only on paper.
- The capacity of the district level education structures is poor, and their role under decentralisation is as yet unclear.
- Successful piecemeal initiatives have yet to be drawn together to inform a National Strategy for the participation and empowerment of School Management Committees.

1.6   The Policy Investment Framework (PIF) is explicit on the importance of community participation in the management of schools[4]. It states:

- 100% of School Management Committees will be effectively functioning by 2012.
- Government shall establish guidelines for community participation and school management.
- School management will be supported through training programmes for Primary Education Advisors (PEA's), Senior School Staff (SSS), and School Management Committees.
- The Government, in consultation with stakeholders, will develop guidelines for the working relationship between Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), Teachers Union Of Malawi (TUM) and School Management Committees.

School Management Committees and Parent Teachers Associations: The Current Situation

1.7   According to the Education Act (1962), every school should have a School Management Committee (SMC), composed of community members. The School Management Committees, its function should be to meet regularly, to address school issues such as infrastructure, teacher performance, teacher discipline, quality of teaching, absenteeism, etc., as they affect the day-to-day running of the school. In addition, it is recommended by the Ministry that every school should have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) made up of parents and teachers together with community leaders. These would typically meet, three or four times, a year to mobilise communities and hold the School Management Committee to account.

1.8   In reality, School Management Committees and PTA's often do not exist, or if they do, are largely dormant. In addition, where School Management Committees do exist, their role is still predominantly one of organising the maintenance of school infrastructure. There is very little participation from communities and parents in other more contentious school management issues, such as the monitoring of teachers performance.

1.9   One key reason for this is the lack of training for School Management Committees and for school staff. This is compounded by the poor relations that exist in many situations between staff and communities. Communities often lack confidence to deal with better educated teachers, while at the same time, teachers often fear and resent School Management Committees as they see them as a potential mechanism to exercise power and control over them.

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[4] Refer to Section 1.5.3; Policy Investment Framework

District And National Support Structures

1.10   Through the PIF, the Government is committed to the development of School Management Committees. However, this is a long way from being fully realised or implemented. Guidelines have yet to be developed, and a substantial commitment of resources is required in order to facilitate the emergence of these committees, and see those already in existence become fully functional and effective.

1.11   In recent years, educational support structures have substantially improved. Each District is split into a series of 8 - 12 education zones, each of which has a Primary Education Advisor (PEA) and a Teacher Development Centre (TDC) where training can be carried out. A series of Donor initiatives, particularly from DfID, have sought to increase the capacity of the PEA's and support systems for schools.

1.12   In addition, the current decentralisation process is set to see substantial responsibilities devolved to the District Education Office (DEO), which in theory should make the system far more responsive to the needs of communities and schools. Education is one of the five line Ministries identified for the first phase of decentralisation. Education is also linked into the overall decentralised planning structure, with District Assemblies, Area Development Committees and Village Development Committees. However, one of the biggest constraints at the district level is the lack of human capacity.

2. Partnership And Resource Opportunities: Developing A National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management

Participatory Process For Gathering Information

2.1   In order to gather information and learn more from what others were doing in relation to community participation in primary school management, a total of six districts were selected and visited during the process of developing this strategy. The districts were selected in consultation with the Ministry, and were chosen on the basis of those that i) have received significant support from development partners (Mangochi, Chiradzulu and Machinga Districts), ii) have received some support from development partners (Lilongwe Rural West and East), and iii) have received little or no support from development partners (Rumphi and Ntchisi Districts).

2.2   During these visits meetings were held with DEM's, CPEA's, PEA's, teachers, School Management Committees, Parent Teacher Associations, Traditional Leaders and members of the community. In addition, consultation meetings were held with some twelve development partners at their national and regional offices in Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Blantyre and Zomba.

Initial Strategising Meetings With Government And Development Partners.

2.3   Two separate one day strategising meetings were held with Government and Development partners. The first meeting with the Government was attended by thirty one participants representing the Ministry Headquarters, Divisions and Districts. The objectives of this meeting were to:

- Map current and past projects at the national level.
- Identify who is doing what, where and how.
- Identify possible best and appropriate practice.
- Develop recommendations for the National Strategy.

- Begin the process of identifying some key elements and components of a National Strategy

At the end of this meeting participants chose five members to present the outcome of this strategising meeting at the final National Strategy Workshop.

2.4 The second meeting with Development Partners was attended by participants representing fifteen organisations. The objectives of this meeting were to:

- Map current and past projects at national level
- Present key aspects of Development Partners projects, including approaches, methodologies, partnerships, training material etc
- Identify common approaches to community participation
- Identify and share good practices
- Begin the process of identifying some key elements and components of a National Strategy
- Discuss the role of the Ministry and Development Partners in the role out and implementation of the National Strategy.

At the end of this meeting participants chose five members to present the outcome of this strategising meeting at the final National Strategy Workshop.

Coordination With Other Research And Literature Review.

2.5 This included regular consultations with Malawi Parent Teachers Associations (MASPA), a local NGO, and the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) at the University of Malawi, who, during the course of developing the National Strategy, conducted a research study on the importance and role of community sensitisation and mobilisation in improving the quality of basic education. Their research study was conducted in Thyolo, Mwanza, Mangochi, Dedza, Dowa and Rumphi Districts. A review of existing literature with regards to past and current projects and future donor initiatives was also conducted during the course of developing the National Strategy.

National Workshop For The Development Of A National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management

2.6 Participants from the Government and Development Partners came together for a five day workshop with the objective of developing a draft National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management. The workshop brought together the outputs from the previous stages of the process. During the course of the week a group of participants carried out field visits in order to test some of the proposed elements of the National Strategy. The feedback from the field visits then fed back into revisions to the draft National Strategy.

Final Drafting, Review And Dissemination Of The National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management

2.7 Following the national workshop, a final draft strategy document was produced and circulated to all stakeholders for comments and suggested revisions. A series of dissemination meetings were conducted across the country for both Government and Development Partners. Comments were then incorporated into a final National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management document.

Activities Of Development Partners In The Education Sector

2.8   Currently there are a number of separate programmes that address the issue of community participation in the management and running of schools. However, to date these interventions have been piecemeal and largely operate in isolation from each other.

2.9   DFID have been the most active donor in the primary education sector. Its Malawi School Support System Project (MSSSP) has trained PEA's countrywide and constructed a large number of Teacher Development Centres (TDC). MSSSP, through the PEA's, trains senior school staff (the three most senior teachers) in school management. This training contains elements on the importance of community participation in school management and how to work with communities.

2.10   In addition, the Primary Community Schools Project (PCoSP) has been involved in the construction of new primary schools country-wide. At each of these schools, community participation was paramount, and innovative training materials were successfully developed for training School Management Committees.

2.11   Another initiative is the USAID funded Social Mobilisation Campaign for Educational Quality Project (SMC-EQ) which is being implemented by the Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CRECCOM), a local NGO that grew out of a USAID project that focused on the promotion of girls primary education (GABLE SMC). CRECCOM trains School Management Committees, local leaders and teachers separately using Primary Education Advisors (PEA) and Community Development Assistants (CDA). The target groups draw up complementary school action plans. Training mainly focuses on community mobilisation for development activities. Materials developed by CRECCOM would be very valuable and relevant to any future programme.

2.12   Save the Children US has also been a major actor in the area of community mobilisation, through its Quality Education through Supporting Teachers (QUEST) programme to improve education quality in three districts. They have also developed a number of innovative training materials.

2.13   Many other development partners are also in some way involved in community management of primary schools, whether NGOs, Churches or other organisations. A key aim of this National Strategy is to draw on the wide range of experiences and lessons learned, and to pull them together under one co-ordinated framework.

Roles And Responsibilities Of Stakeholders Involved In Primary School Management

2.14   The following table provides a summary outline of the roles and responsibilities of each of the different stakeholders at the national, district and primary school level that will participate in the promotion of community participation in primary school management. It also summarises the changes in attitudes and practice that will be required to ensure this occurs.

Table 1 : Roles And Responsibilities Of Various Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities	Proposed Change
Ministry of Education Headquarters - Planning Department / Local Government	To co-ordinate all stakeholders working in primary school management, and keep up to date records of all activities.	To provide guidance and direction to all stakeholders. Need to be the central 'planning' hub of all activity.
Ministry Headquarters Basic Education	Provide definitive guidelines on the range of areas related to Primary School Management. Ensure that these are implemented.	To develop guidelines and consistent approaches. Need to provide overall policy guidance whilst decentralising key powers.
Ministry of Education Division Level	Co-ordination at a division level, including information gathering on all activities being carried out. Role to phase out with Decentralisation.	To be more proactive in dealing with Development Partners.
Ministry of Education District Level	DEM co-ordinates all activities within the district together with the District Assembly - this role will increase under Decentralisation.	To become more proactive in dealing with Development Partners to ensure that activities are carried out in the most efficient and effective manner, and there are no duplication or replication of activities.
Ministry of Education Sub-District Level (Zones)	PEA's have a key role in mobilising and training communities and teachers, and brokering a process of ongoing school management.	To learn to work with Community Development personnel as multi sectoral teams under new decentralised structures.
Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services Sub-District Level	CDA's to work closely with PEA's and AEC members to mobilise and train communities around school management. Also responsible for ensuring that issues of Gender and HIV/AIDS are fully integrated.	To learn to work with Education personnel as multi-sectoral teams under new decentralised structures.
Parent Teacher Associations	Mobilise Communities and hold School Management Committees to account.	Often don't exist, therefore need establishing.
School Management Committees	Manage resources at the school including those teachers working and pupils studying there.	Often don't exist, or are untrained, unaware of their roles and very often subservient. Therefore need establishing and strengthening.
Traditional Authorities	Give leadership to communities on the need to be fully involved in school management.	To be made aware of the increased role communities should be playing in education 'beyond bricks' and towards 'whole school development'.
Communities	To elect and hold accountable the School Management Committee through PTA, and to take an active interest in the ongoing management of their school.	To understand the value of Education, and how their participation in School Management can make a difference.
District Assembly	To increasingly have control over education activities in the district with the onset of decentralisation, and appraise, prioritise and fund education plans.	To have their capacities and systems built, and move beyond a purely infrastructure based view.
Stakeholders	**Roles and Responsibilities**	**Proposed Change**

Area Development Committee	To co-ordinate planning processes at an area level for schools in their area.	To be brought to life and ensure that women are actively involved.
Village Development Committee	To co-ordinate planning processes at a group village level for schools in their area.	To be brought to life and ensure that women are actively involved.
Development Partners	To provide services and resources to supplement government efforts in the sector, and to influence ongoing policy dialogue.	To be far more co-ordinated amongst themselves as well as respecting and supporting the jurisdiction of the Ministry and the decentralised planning process.

Moving Towards Sustainable Participation

2.15   To date, the single most common form of community participation in education is through the provision of labour, and/or material resources. This National Strategy views this type of participation, where communities role is perceived as one of providing material resources such as bricks, as *unsustainable participation*. For *sustainable participation* to occur, community participation needs to move beyond this, towards participation in *whole school development* which requires far more emphasis on the overall management of their children's education.

2.16   The following table outlines six different levels of participation and helps to illustrate how community participation in primary school management should move towards *sustainable participation*.

Table 2 : The Ladder Of Participation[5]

Level Of Participation	Type Of Participation	Description
Level 6	**Self-mobilisation**	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.
Level 5	**Interactive Participation**	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
Level 4	**Functional Participation**	People participate by being formed into committees, around specific predetermined objectives of the project, for example, School Management Committees. Such participation does not tend to be in the early stages of project cycles, but is instead after the major decisions have been made. These committees tend to be dependent on external facilitators, but may become self-dependent over time.
↑ Sustainability Threshold ↑		
Level 3	**Participation for Material Incentives**	People participate, by providing resources such as labour or materials (for example making bricks for school construction) in return for food or cash.
Level 2	**Participation in Information Giving/ Consultation.**	People participate by answering questions by researchers and expressing their views. The results are not shared with communities and questioners have no obligation to take on board people's views.
Level 1	**Passive Participation**	People are just told what is going to happen, as an announcement by those administering the project or activity.

[5] Adapted from Pretty (1994)

2.17   It is generally agreed that any participation of communities that fall into levels 1 to 3 (i.e. below the sustainability threshold) cannot be described as sustainable participation. As such, this National Strategy aims to facilitate community participation of the types described in levels 4 to 6 (functional, interactive and self-mobilisation).

3.   Framework For The National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management

3.1   The overall framework for the National Strategy was developed during the five day national workshop. In developing the framework, reference was made to the previous strategising meetings with Government and Development Partners, as well as outputs from past and previous research studies.

The following figure delineates the overall framework of the National Strategy.

Figure 3 : Framework For The national Strategy For Community participation In Primary School Management
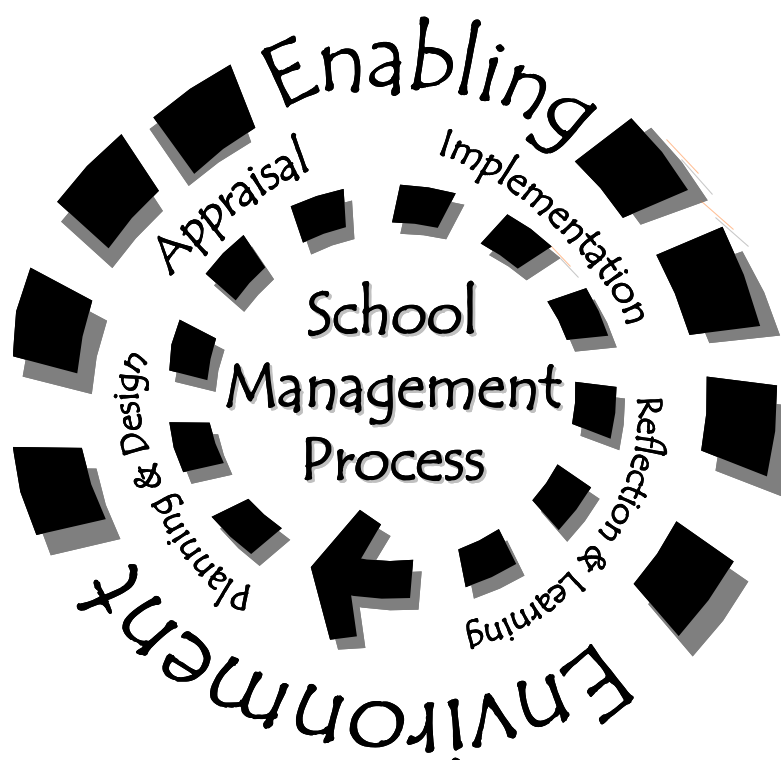
3.2   The framework comprises of two distinct layers i) the foundation layer, or **enabling environment**, which represents the general context within which primary schools will be managed, and ii) the implementation layer, or **school management process**, which is further divided into an ongoing cycle of four phases: *planning and design, appraisal, implementation and reflection and learning*.

4.   Elements Of The National Strategy

4.1   For each of the two layers (enabling environment and school management process), the following sections identify a number of key elements. For each element the strategy provides an objective, (or ideal state), together with details as to how this should be achieved, which, wherever possible, is based on past experience and best practice.

The Foundation Layer: The Enabling Environment

Introduction

4.2   The foundation, or **enabling environment**, represents the general context within which primary schools will be managed. As such, it contains elements that have been identified as being pre-requisites that need to be in place in order for community participation in primary school management to proceed effectively.

Element : Institutional Set-up

4.3   *Objective: Effective institutions are in place with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that give due consideration for the future decentralisation of roles and responsibilities to the District level.*

4.4   The following section splits the process into two; firstly, the institutional structures at the **Government Level** that need to be in place and functioning, and secondly the institutional structures at a **Community Level**.

Institutional Structures At The Government Level:

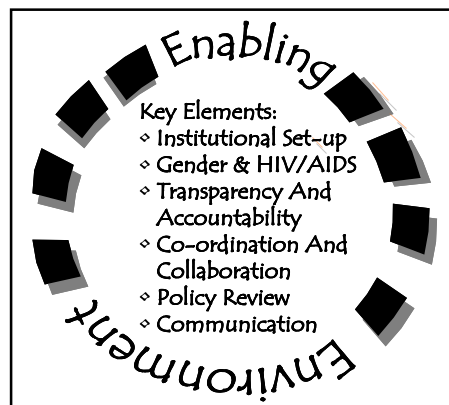4.5   The Government of Malawi is currently undergoing a process of decentralisation, and it is within the context of this institutional change that this National Strategy should be designed to ultimately operate.

4.6   Under a system that has not yet decentralised, the lines of command are typically vertical, originating directly from Ministry Headquarters. This also includes the allocation and monitoring of all financial, human and material resources.

4.7   Under the decentralized system, the vast majority of authority for running primary schools will be devolved to the district level. For education, the District Education Manager (DEM) will report directly to the District Assembly. Central Government Ministries will continue to exist, but will no longer channel financial resources to primary schools. Instead resources for education will flow from the Treasury to the National Local Government Finance Committee, who will then allocate funds directly to each district using the formulae approved by the parliament. The Line Ministries will retain responsibility for *'policy formulation, policy enforcement, inspectorate, establishment of standards, training, curriculum development, international representation, etc'*[6].

4.8   The National Strategy should, wherever possible, work through district structures, and in doing so, strengthen the ongoing decentralisation process. In doing so, this will ensure that the National Strategy will still remain relevant after decentralisation has taken place. It also means that any future financial resources for primary schools should be channelled through the districts wherever possible. Funding for school construction, or other related development projects, should be channelled through the District Development Fund (DDF). This means that requests for funding projects or activities, as detailed in School Improvement Plans, should be submitted to the VDC, who then passes them onto the ADC, and then up to the   District Assembly to become part of the District Education Plans and the overall District Development Plan (DDP).

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[6] Department of Local Government and District Administration, *National Decentralisation Policy*, Paragraph 11.2

4.9   In the immediate future, funding for other school management activities, such as training and monitoring, are likely to come directly from the relevant Ministries. However, as the decentralisation process continues to roll out, these resources will also begin to be directly allocated to District Assemblies. So for example, the District Education Manager will have a budget specifically for community participation in primary school management, which will fund such things as; PTA meetings, training of School Management Committees, and all other related community school management activities.

4.10   The aim of decentralisation, through the devolution of powers to the District level, is to increase efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. However, this is by no means assured, and the most significant problem is the lack of capacity at the District level. The challenge for the National Strategy For Community Participation in Primary School Management is to work with these structures to ensure that their capacity is built, and the promise of greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability does in-fact become a reality.

Institutional Structures At The Community Level:

4.11   At the community level, the two key institutions are the School Management Committee and the Parent Teacher Association. It is advisable that every school in Malawi should have these two mechanisms in order to facilitate the participation of communities in primary school management. The two sets of linking and support organisations are the District Line Ministry Teams (AEC members) and the District planning structure (VDC, ADC, and DA). In addition, in districts where they are operating, Development Partners provide support to one or more of these institutions.

4.12   The following sections examine each of these institutions in turn, with consideration for their constitutions, roles and responsibilities, and where appropriate, a comparison of their respective roles.

i)   School Management Committees (SMC)

4.13   School Management Committees are composed of members of the community served by the primary school. The overall role of the SMC is to oversee the management of school resources and those working at the primary school in close collaboration with school staff, and the community as a whole. SMC's are a legal requirement for all schools, as stipulated in the Education Act (1962).

4.14   SMC's comprise of nine members (as at the date of developing this National Strategy, before revision of 1962 Education Act was completed), as follows:

- One member is the DEM or his/her representative.
- One member is nominated by the proprietor of the school.
- One member is appointed by the local education authority (LEA).
- Four elected members are parents of children who attend the school.
- Two members from the community who have an interest in education are co-opted by the parents.

4.15   Co-opted members, and those nominated by the proprietor and the LEA, have a tenure of two years. The four parents are elected annually at a PTA meeting. Members who fail to attend three consecutive meetings should be dismissed. If the Committee is inactive or mismanages funds it is disbanded and subsequently re-elected.
However, the composition of SMC members should be in line with the new Education Act once it has come into effect. In addition, a three-year term of office for SMC members will be piloted in a number of districts, subject to change for adherence to the Education Act

4.16   School Management Committees have three office bearers; a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Under the National Gender Policy[7], at least one of these positions must be held by a woman. Meetings of the SMC are held at least once a school term. Meetings can only be held if the chair and four members are present, including two parents.

4.17   The relationship of the SMC to other primary school level institutions are as follows:

- *Parent Teachers Association (PTA)*

    The School Management Committee is elected at a PTA meeting which is attended by all teachers, parents and community leaders. Such meetings should be widely publicised well in advance to ensure that they are well attended – such publicity should consider the role of churches, traditional leaders, pupils, etc.

    The School Management Committee should be regularly audited by the PTA. The SMC will be expected to provide a detailed report on its actions at the regular PTA meetings, and be able and willing to answer any questions raised by the PTA and community. This requirement will be included in the Social Contract, which is drawn up as part of the School Action Plan (refer to specific elements under the **planning and design** and **implementation** phases below).

    The School Management Committee can call on the PTA to mobilise the community around issues of school development, as outlined in the School Action Plan.

- *District Line Ministry Teams*

    The School Management Committee receives training and ongoing technical support from the District Line Ministry Teams. These teams include the AEC members

    The School Management Committee is also accountable to the District Line Ministry Teams for its actions and must report on its activities at the same time it reports to the PTA, as described above.

- *District Planning Structures*

    The SMC is responsible for submitting the School Improvement Plan, and any specific proposals for development of their primary school taken from this plan, through the district planning structure. Submissions will be made through their Village Development Committee (VDC) who will then pass it up through the District planning structure to the District Assembly. At the district level the School Improvement Plan (or selected components of the School Action Plan) will become part of the District Education Plan, which is ultimately a sub set of the overall District Development Plan. In light of the overall district plan, the availability of resources and the quality of the SMC proposals, the District Assembly will either approve or disapprove the submissions from the SMC. In cases where proposals are not approved, then the District Assembly will be expected to provide detailed reasons as to why proposals were rejected.

    If successful, and their proposals are approved for funding, then the SMC will receives funds for their proposed activities or projects through the District Development Fund. The SMC is fully accountable for these funds and will be required to provide appropriate financial and progress reports through the District Planning Structure. Such reporting could be linked to the SMC reporting back to the PTA at each of the regular meetings, as described above.

4.18   Finally, mechanisms should be explored on how SMC's could be federated and

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[7] Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services *National Gender Policy* 2000

represented at the ADC level. One way of achieving this would be through formation of Zonal School Committees.

ii)   Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)

4.19   The Parent Teacher Association comprises of all parents, teachers and community leaders who, as a group of people who share a common interest in education, come together to discuss the needs of their primary school. As such, the PTA effectively represents the community as a whole. The main role of the PTA is to elect and hold accountable the School Management Committee on issues of relevance to their primary school, and to mobilise the community to assist in the implementation of plans developed for the primary school. PTAs are not a legal requirement, but they are central to ongoing community participation in primary school management.

4.20   The PTA is made up of all parents and teachers together with community leaders. Its meetings are organised by an executive committee comprised of ten members:

• Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary
• Vice-chair and vice-secretary
• 5 Committee Members

4.21   Again, as stipulated in the National Gender Policy, at least 30% of office holders should be women. The head teacher assumes the role of secretary to the PTA. In addition, the chairperson of the PTA must be a different person to the chair of the School Management Committee.

4.22   The relationship of the PTA to other primary school level institutions are as follows:

• *School Management Committee*

    The PTA is responsible for electing the SMC and holds the SMC accountable through regular audits and reviews of its activities during regular PTA meetings. The PTA mobilises members of the community on behalf of the SMC. The PTA is responsible for providing the SMC with relevant information relating to issues of concern in the community towards the upkeep and management of their primary school.

• *District Line Ministry Support Teams*

    The election of the PTA executive committee is facilitated by the District Line Ministry Team. Following elections, the PTA executive committee receives sensitisation and training from the District Line Ministry Team. The regular reports made to the PTA by the SMC on its activities are also shared with the District Line Ministry Support Team.

• *District Planning Structures*

    The regular reports made to the PTA by the SMC on its activities are also shared with the appropriate District Planning Structures.

iii)   Comparison Of The Functions Of The SMC's and PTA's

4.23   The following table gives a comparison of the separate functions of the SMC and the PTA.

Table 3: Functions Of SMC's And PTA's

Functions of a School Management Committee	Functions of Parent Teachers Association
- Monitoring attendance and punctuality of both teachers and pupils at school. - Advising the proprietor of the appointment and dismissal of non-teaching staff. - Assisting in the enrolment of pupils. - Encouraging pupil's attendance. - Ensuring recommendations made by the Ministry of Education are implemented. - Advising the proprietor whether the conduct of the school is in accordance with the wishes of the local community. - Checking, inspecting and maintaining school buildings and equipment. - Initiating development projects at the school with the help of other community members. - Monitoring the quality of learning at the school. - Overseeing the development of the School Action Plan.	- Electing the School Management Committee. - Mobilising the community around issues identified in the School Action Plan. - Making the SMC aware of issues of concern in the community regarding the primary school. - Holding the SMC to account through the holding of regular meetings to which they must report on their actions.

iv) <u>District Line Ministry Support Teams</u>

4.24   The District Line Ministry Support Team comprises of the AEC members in the area in which the primary school is located. The roles and responsibilities of the District Line Ministry Support Teams are as follows:

- Provide sensitisation, training and other ongoing capacity building to the SMC and PTA.
- Facilitate and monitor the election of the PTA and SMC.
- Ensure that the SMC is held accountable for its actions.
- Brokers any disputes between the various community level institutions.

v) <u>District Planning Structures</u>

4.25   The District Planning Structure comprises of the Village Development Committee (VDC) at the Group Village Level, the Area Development Committee (ADC) at area or Traditional Authority level, and finally the District Executive Committee (DEC) at the District Assembly level. The roles and responsibilities of the District Planning Structures are as follows:

- Forwarding School Improvement Plans to the District for inclusion in the District Education Plan and District Development Plan.

- Approving, deferring or rejecting specific applications for development funding made by the SMC.

- Where applications for funding are approved, funds are channelled through the District Planning Structure from the District Development Fund (DDF). The District Planning Structure holds the SMC, together with the PTA, accountable for the correct use of funds.

vi) <u>Development Partners</u>

4.26   Development Partners are all those organisations that support community participation in primary school management. Such organisations include Donors, NGO's, religious organisations, etc. The roles and responsibilities of Development Partners are as follows:

- Provide capacity building support to the District Line Ministry Support Teams.
- Provide capacity building support to the District Planning Structures.
- When providing resources, Development Partners will do so through the appropriate District structures.
- Ensure that any support that is provided is done so in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner so to ensure that there is no duplication and replication of activities.

4.27   The following recommendations outline specific areas where Development Partners should pay particular attention in their support of SMC's and PTA's:

- With regard to resource allocation, more effort should be directed towards building capacity of SMC's through appropriate training provision and awareness raising. However, PTA's should receive an orientation on their roles and functions following their formation as an association. Ward Councillors and local Members of Parliament should also receive an orientation on the role of SMC's and PTA's.
- Through the management structure of the National Strategy, appropriate research should be commissioned to learn and understand more about the reasons why some SMC's remain dormant and ineffective.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that PTA's and SMC's are fully aware of the differences in their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, no members of SMC should hold office in the PTA at the same time

Element : Gender And HIV/AIDS

4.28   _Objective: Gender and HIV/AIDS are fully integrated as cross cutting themes into the process of community participation in primary school management._

4.29   The current situation indicates that women are not adequately represented in School Management Committees. Therefore, all those involved in supporting community participation in primary school management, including Development Partners, should pay particular attention to issues of gender in their work. Development partners should therefore have elements of gender clearly incorporated into their approaches.

4.30   At the community level, deliberate efforts should be made to create an environment in which women can be fairly represented in School Management Committees. The participation of women in School Management Committees should not be measured only by the number of women on the School Management Committee. Women should also be included in the key leadership positions in School Management Committees. **Women should make up at least 50% of the membership, and hold at least 30% of leadership positions in School Management Committees.** This should be part of the selection criteria during the process of establishing a School Management Committee. This also means that at least one of the three main office holders should be female (chairperson, treasurer or secretary).

4.31   Where women are unable to take up leadership positions due to lack of skills and confidence, Government and Development Partners should consciously seek to build the capacity of women to ensure their effective participation in primary school management. This should be done through programs that provide appropriate training and capacity building.

4.32   The National Gender Policy should be adopted and gender training should be an integral part of all school management training. Community Development Assistants (CDA) can train the School Management Committees. This training should be co-ordinated by community

services personnel who fall under the Director of Administration in the District Assembly. There is also a prospective post of Training Officer in the District Education Office, which, if filled, could also work with the CDAs and other AEC members, Development Partners, and government officials in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services and undertake appropriate adult literacy trainers of trainers programme.

4.33   HIV/AIDS prevalence statistics show that despite numerous HIV/AIDS related interventions, infection rates are still on the increase. This indicates the need for more appropriate forms of civic education. The School Management Committees provide an excellent forum for conducting HIV/AIDS education at the community level. Development Partners should ensure that HIV/AIDS education is incorporated into all levels of their training programmes.

4.34   The aims of the training should be twofold; firstly it should increase knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS issues by the SMC themselves. Secondly, through this capacity building, it should enable them in turn to further educate communities. Wherever possible the SMC should seek to establish links with Community AIDS Committees (CAC), Village AIDS Committees (VAC) and District AIDS Committees (DAC).

4.35   All elements of the **school management process** outlined in the sections below (planning and design, appraisal, implementation, and reflection and learning) should consider and ensure the incorporation of issues related to gender and HIV/AIDS at all times.

Element : Transparency And Accountability

4.36   _Objective: All stakeholders involved in community management of primary schools are fully transparent in all their actions and at all times._

4.37   Transparency and accountability at all levels is essential to ensuring the most equitable, effective and efficient allocation of resources towards primary school management. The following sections look at how this can be achieved.

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should develop guidelines on the minimum levels of transparency and accountability for all key stakeholders. At all levels, stakeholders should be made aware of the crucial role transparency plays in ensuring the effective and efficient allocation of resources in an equitable manner.

- At a national level, the Ministry should make available information on plans related to primary school management, together with output based budgets. As plans are implemented, timely information should be made available to enable monitoring and ensure accountability.

- Information on national plans and their progress should be disseminated through district structures, preferably in the vernacular. A short progress report by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on a quarterly basis would be one possibility.

- Civil Society Networks at a National level have a responsibility to monitor the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and ensure that it meets its standards of transparency, and is held accountable for its actions.

- Development Partners must also meet minimum levels of transparency and accountability by providing information on their plans and budgets to both the Planning Department in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, as well as District Assemblies where they are implementing project activities.

- At a community level, School Management Committees should be transparent in all their dealings. This should be done through holding regular PTA meetings that require the SMC to account for their actions in a public forum. Such meetings should be held at regular intervals during the year (quarterly) with additionally meetings should any major issue arise. These meetings or **'social audits'** can be included as part of the Social Contract (for further details refer to the element below on Social Contracts, under the **Implementation** phase).

- School management committees should be required to produce a progress report for presentation during PTA meetings. The same report can also be used for upwards accountability to Development Partners and Government. The report should be linked to the School Action Plan, and should detail what was achieved, what and where resources were used, whether objectives were met, and if not, why not. Communities should be given the opportunity to scrutinise the reports given by the SMC through debate, questioning and commenting.

- Communities need to be sensitised on the importance of transparency and accountability from the School Management Committees they have elected. This can be achieved through innovative approaches, such as participatory theatre.

- Communities through their PTA must be empowered to dissolve those institutions that have failed to perform, and elect new ones.

Element: Co-ordination And Collaboration

4.38   *Objective: All stakeholders involved in community primary school management co-ordinate and collaborate all their activities through the sharing of information, knowledge and resources.*

4.39   Many studies have shown that it is generally the case that stakeholders very rarely collaborate or co-ordinate their activities. This leads to negative impacts, such as the inequitable distribution of benefits, duplication and replication of activities, conflict and confusion. The following sections highlight how these negative impacts can be minimised through better collaboration and co-ordination.

- The planning department at the Ministry of Education take a leading role in developing a catalogue of all projects pertaining to community participation in primary school management.

  This catalogue should be regularly updated in conjunction with donors, NGOs, CONGOMA, and the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. The catalogue should give details of areas where projects are required, which could then be taken up by Development Partners. Government should disseminate changes to the plan on an annual basis, outlining where projects are; where gaps exist; and ensure that there is an equitable spread of resources throughout the country. Alternatively, the Government should look into the possibility of maintaining and updating the catalogue through simple web site technology that has an interactive updating facility.

- Development Partners could be referred to this catalogue before implementing projects in order to reduce duplication and replication. They would also be required to seek guidance and agreement from the Ministry of Education prior to embarking on projects.

- Regular meetings and seminars between stakeholders should be conducted. At National or divisional level, such meetings (promoted as the National Strategy review meeting) could be conducted once a year. Establishing such forums could help review and share information. Government should initiate this process, whilst Development Partners should convene the meetings and work hand in hand with the Ministry of Education, other relevant Ministries and communities.

- At these meetings key policy issues will be agreed, such as the standardisation of payment frameworks and training materials.

- At a District Level, all stakeholders will be co-ordinated by the District Assembly in line with the District Planning Process. District Education Plans[8] will be developed as a subset of District Development Plans, and all Development Partner activities will be required to fit in with these plans.

- Liaison will have to be close between the National planning office and the Districts. As decentralisation begins to take effect, intra-district planning should be fully handed over to the District teams under the direction of the Director for Education. The National planning office should continue to deal with inter-district planning and equitable resource distribution, and continue to maintain an up to date catalogue of all projects and activities in collaboration with District offices.

- At the primary school level, the SMC and all sub committees should coordinate effectively with each other through the development of a single School Action Plan, rather than working individually in isolation of each other through different uncoordinated plans. Such coordination of plans, functions and responsibilities will avoid duplication and replication, for example collection of revenues and funds for operation.

Element: Policy Review

4.40   *Objective: Policies reflect the needs expressed by communities through their participation in primary school management and are reviewed regularly to ensure they suit the changing environment.*

4.41   Policies effecting community participation in primary school management need to consider and reflect community priorities if they are to become workable. A participatory process of policy dialogue is therefore essential. Policies therefore need to be formulated with the institutionalised participation of communities. This means that any policy review, or changes, should either be instigated by, or be based on, consultation with communities. The following sections look at how any form of policy review should be operationalised.

- Policy suggestions from communities should be channelled up through the district structures to the national level by both the Government and Development Partners.

- Wherever possible, community representatives should be involved directly in policy dialogue at both district and national levels.

- Any proposed changes to policies should be preceded by consultations with communities through research and focus group discussions. Development partners can play a key role in facilitating this.

- Appropriate forms of communication need to be carefully considered. Tools such as the radio and drama are important mediums of communicating complex policy information. Consideration should also be given to how such policy dissemination can be simplified through, for example, translation.

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[8] JICA has already begun this process in a selected number of pilot districts.

Element : Communication

4.42 <u>Objective:</u> *There is effective, clear and open communication between all stakeholders involved in primary school management.*

4.43 The dissemination of information through effective communication cannot be underestimated. Careful consideration should be given to how information flows from both the 'bottom up' / 'top-bottom', as well as horizontally, and the means by which this information is communicated. The following sections outline how this should be achieved.

- Government and Development Partners should ensure that they communicate how and where they will be operating. This will require Development Partners to participate in District level meetings where they should provide adequate details relating to their activities, including levels of funding.

- When communities are expected to make a contribution to a particular project, this should be clearly communicated from the outset. Failure to do so will ultimately lead to confusion, misunderstanding and possible conflicts.

- Consideration for the availability of alternative forms of communication should be considered at all times. This would include the use of, participatory drama, songs, illustrations, etc. The communication of messages should also be considered in light of the target population. For example, written forms of communication are likely to have far less impact than drama and illustrations, especially where there are high levels of illiteracy.

- Communication channels should be through existing structures; the District Line Ministry Support Team and the District Planning Structures (DA, ADC and VDC)

- PTA meetings offer an ideal opportunity to communicate a variety of different messages to the wider community.

- Wherever possible, consideration should be given to communication using local languages.

The Implementation Layer: The School Management Process

Introduction

4.44   The second overall layer, or implementation layer, is the **school management process**. This layer is further sub divided into an ongoing cycle of four phases: *planning and design, appraisal, implementation and reflection & learning*. Under each of these four phases a number of key elements have been identified that will contribute towards, and support, the implementation of community participation in the management of their primary schools.
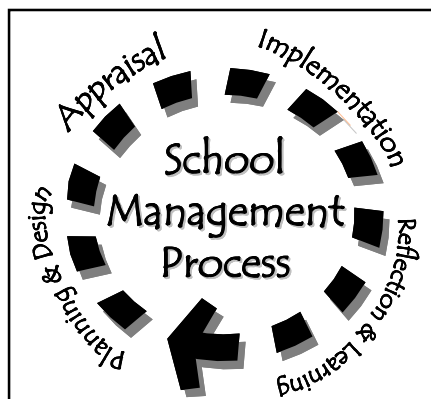
Phase 1 : Planning And Design

4.45   Under the planning and design phase, a key element is the generation and agreement of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). This should be based on the felt needs and priorities of the community, and the process should involve all stakeholders at the school.   The emphasis should be on management issues throughout this process, looking beyond basic infrastructure projects, to communities becoming actively involved in the day to day running of their schools. School Action Plans should feed into District Education Plans, which become a component of the overall District Development Plan.
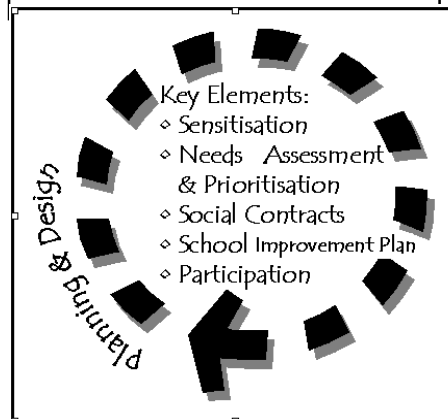
4.46   Another key element under the **planning and design phase** is the generation and agreement of the *Social Contract*. The social contract is an agreement drawn up at the PTA meeting which outlines the roles and responsibilities of all those who are involved in the primary school. It is a public document displayed at the school, and as such, holds a considerable amount of symbolic weight.

Element: Sensitisation

4.47   *Objective: Communities are empowered to participate in the management of their primary schools through awareness of their roles and responsibilities.*

4.48   There is an urgent need to raise the awareness of all those involved regarding the importance of community participation in the management of primary schools. This should be achieved in the following way.

- The process of sensitisation should begin with officials at the District level or DEC but a resource person, whereby staff should fully understand the importance of community participation and involvement, and be equipped with the appropriate community development skills.

- At a community level, sensitisation should be carried out by the AEC members. In areas where they are present, Development Partners should provide support and resources to this sensitisation process. Where possible such resources should be provided through Government staff using standardised incentives to ensure sustainability.

- The sensitisation of communities should begin with traditional leaders and other civic and political leaders such as councillors. These leaders should then work with the AEC members to sensitise the communities as a whole.

- Initially, sensitisation should focus on the role of communities in the management of their primary schools, the role of the School Management Committees, and how this impacts on the quality of education. Over time role in school improvement should cover a wide range of issues such as; education quality, HIV/AIDS behaviour change, environmental issues, accountability, etc. However, issues of gender must be addressed as early as possible in the process to ensure the maximum participation of women from the outset.

Element: Needs Assessment And Prioritisation

4.49   *Objective: Through a thorough understanding and analysis of issues, and with the full participation of all stakeholders, the most appropriate needs concerning primary school management are prioritised.*

4.50   The first stage in any planning or management process is for those involved to develop a thorough understanding of the issues, and to prioritise these in order of importance. It is critical that participation in this first generative process is as inclusive as possible, since it is central to generating ownership and enthusiasm for subsequent activities. The following outlines how this should be achieved.

- Needs, opportunities, problems and solutions should be identified, analysed and prioritised by communities themselves, including pupils. This process should be facilitated by AEC members, with the support and assistance of Development Partners wherever possible.

- Appropriate participatory tools, such as ranking and mapping, should be used. Different groups in the community, such as women and the youth, should be consulted separately in order to triangulate and generate genuine priorities. The influence of external facilitators, such as the AEC members should be avoided at all times. This would also include other influential members of the community, such as school teachers, who often have a key interest in infrastructure related projects, at the expense of school management issues.

- Other sources of information should be fed into the discussion, particularly district development plans and district education plans[9]

- Special effort should be made to ensure that issues related to primary school management are identified and analysed in detail, rather than focusing purely on infrastructure related issues. Specific participatory tools could be developed at a national level and incorporated into community participatory guidelines in order to achieve this.

- The identification of priorities should give consideration to how easily problems can be solved, the level of resource requirement (both from internal and external sources) and the likelihood of future sustainability.

Element : School Improvement Plan

4.51   *Objective: Detailed School Improvement Plans are developed and agreed by all stakeholders for the participation of communities in the management of their primary schools.*

4.52   Having identified the priority issues, a School Improvement Plan (SIP) will then be developed. The School improvement Planning process is a key element of galvanising the

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[9] JICA has been instrumental in developing these plans in some districts.

participation of communities in the management of their primary schools, through the identification of solutions to the problems their primary school faces. This should be achieved in the following way.

- The School Improvement Plan should be drawn up by the SMC and PTA , with input and guidance provided by the by AEC members This process should be done at an inaugural PTA meeting where all interested community members are present, as well as all primary school staff.

- Using a standard simple format developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the final School Improvement Plan should clearly detail the proposed activities, who is doing what, the timeframe, the resources required (both from internal and external sources) and the need for external technical support. The School Improvement Plan should also identify measurable indicators for change indicating who is responsible, which can be used at a later stage for monitoring and evaluation. Wherever possible, measurable indicators should be consistent, and should contribute towards those highlighted in the District Education Plan, PIF, as well as PRSP.

- Wherever possible, indicators should be consistent and contribute towards those highlighted in the District Education Plans, as well as the PRSP

- Wherever possible the School Improvement Plan should link into other district planning processes, such as village action plans, zone plans and District Development Plans, and, District Education Plans.

- Wherever possible existing planning tools developed by the Decentralisation Secretariat should be used.

- Each primary school should only have one School Improvement Plan at a time. In cases where a number of stakeholders are involved, agreement should be reached between all parties in relation to who is doing what, and what staff and resources are allocated to different aspects of the project. This is essential in order to reduce the possibility of duplication and replication of activities. Such coordination should also ensure that a common approach is taken when implementing activities. The School Management Committee should take overall responsibility to ensure that activities are planned in a coordinated manner.

- Once the School Improvement Plan has been drawn up, it should be made public and displayed at the school as a way of increasing commitment and accountability. A copy of the School Action Plan should also be sent to the VDC and ADC. Copies should also be sent to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Headquarters through VDC, ADC and DA for use by the planning department to inform their cataloguing of projects, and also do development partners working in the area of the school.

Element : Social Contracts

4.53   *Objective: Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the management of the primary school are negotiated, defined and agreed in the form of a Social Contract which will then be communicated, implemented and monitored.*

4.54   The Social Contract is the key mechanism for delineating roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in managing their primary schools. It minimises confusion of roles and responsibilities, and at the same time ensures that everyone's expected contribution is clearly delineated.

4.55   The Social Contract can be described as a negotiated agreement between all parties for sharing roles and responsibilities that will ensure the smooth running of the primary school, and the quality of education of the children who attend the school. The following sections outline how this should best be achieved.

- Governance issues should be enshrined in Social Contracts to address concepts such as rights, obligations and participation.

- The Social Contract should detail contributions, statutory roles and requirements, procedures for monitoring adherence to these defined roles and mechanisms for holding all parties accountable for their actions.

- The Social Contract should follow after the development of the School Improvement Plan, ideally during the first PTA meeting, and should be developed in a participatory way involving all stakeholders, including the community. Once agreed, the Social Contract should be displayed publicly for everyone in the community to refer to.

- The Social Contract formulation should be facilitated by the AEC members, with the assistance of a Development Partner where possible. The Social Contract should be revisited on an annual basis, or as the need arises, for revision and further refinement as required.

- Government needs to develop guidelines on the development of Social Contracts. However, they will of course vary from school to school, but they should all have at least some uniform basic tenets.

- The Social Contract, which also includes the School Activity priorities, forms the basis of the PTA meetings in which the School Management Committee is held accountable for its actions. An opportunity should also be given to the PTA and other stakeholders at the meeting to scrutinise whether all those mentioned in the Social Contract are in fact performing their roles as stated.

- Action research should be carried out in the future in order to gauge the impact of Social Contracts, and to ensure the further refinement of the process based on experiences and lessons learned.

- In schools that belong to other proprietors such as religious institutions, social contracts have to be agreed upon by the Government, Development Partners, the proprietor and the community.

Element : Participation

4.56   *Objective: Communities are actively participating in the management of their primary schools.*

4.57   In order to ensure effective participation in the management of primary schools, communities should be participating at the top three levels of the ladder of participation (as described above in Table 2). Communities should therefore have control over resources and should be equally involved in all decision making. Success in generating community participation can also be measured using this ladder. In other words, community participation should be considered as a continuum, whereby communities start at a given point and then progress up the ladder to higher levels of sustainable participation. The ladder of participation should also be used by communities as part of the school planning process that monitors and assesses;

i) the current level of sustainable participation, and ii) desired future levels of sustainable participation. Effective community participation should seek to develop a sense of community

ownership in the management of their primary school. The following sections outline how this should be achieved.

- Communities should be aware and understand the entitlements, rights, duties and responsibilities in delivering quality primary education.

- Government should ensure that donors and development partners do not impose their own conditionalities regardless of the views of the community and current Government policies.

- Communities should be fully involved through their PTA's when prioritising the key issues effecting the management of their primary school.

- Communities, through their PTA, should participate in the election and dissolution of School Management Committees, and in the planning and implementation of activities.

- Cross visits to other communities should be facilitated wherever possible in order to promote active participation, learning and exchange of ideas.

- Locally available skills should be utilised wherever possible as a means of promoting ownership and future sustainability.

- The School Management Committee should be the organisation with overall responsibility at the primary school level. Other school based committees should be subcommittees of the School Management Committee and should therefore coordinate their activities and report to it. The School Management Committee should also be represented on the VDC at the group village level.

- Development Partners and Government should agree to aim for the top three levels of participation in all situations, and to move away from the situation where communities simply contribute labour and materials.

Phase 2 : Appraisal

4.58   Under the **appraisal phase**, there is a need to develop appropriate budgets to fund activities identified in the School Improvement Plans. Linked to this is the need to mobilise as many resources as possible from communities, which would then be complemented with resources from Government and Development Partners.   Only through doing this will adequate ownership be developed and the process become a sustainable one.
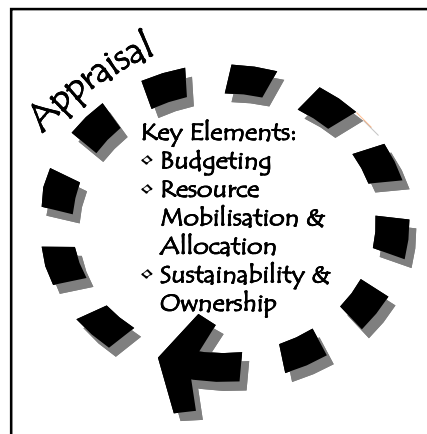
Element : Budgeting

4.59   *Objective: Communities, through their School Management Committees, are in control of funds for their primary school, whether raised internally from the community, or from external Development Partner and Government sources.*

4.60   A key responsibility of the School Management Committee is to manage all the resources meant for developing their primary school in an efficient and transparent manner. This will be a key test of the competency and commitment of the SMC. Therefore, substantial support is required to make this a reality. The following section outlines how this should be achieved.

- The need to provide appropriate training for School Management Committees, and particularly the treasurers of these committees, to ensure that there are adequate skills to manage and account for funds allocated to projects. Such training should be carried out by AEC members with assistance from Development Partners.

- Budgets should be drawn up in accordance with a simple standard format which is easy to understand. In addition, the format for reporting expenditures should also be simple and clear.

- Following the development of the School improvement Plan, the School Management Committee, with assistance from the head teacher and PEA, should draw up a budget for the activities. This should then be shared with the community via the PTA.

- The School Management Committee, with the assistance of the AEC, is responsible for sourcing funds. Funds and other resources may be sought from the community, which would be facilitated by the PTA. If funds are being sought from external sources, such as from Development Partners and Government and / or the school proprietor, then the request for funding should be passed up through the District Planning Structure by first submitting a proposal with a budget to the VDC. At the district level, resources may be made available from the District Development Fund which will ultimately seek funds from the budget drawn up against the District Education Plan.

- Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that budgets are gender targeted, ensuring that issues of access and equity are addressed, through the consideration for the needs of women. For example, the provision of training at specific times so as to allow a greater number of women to participate may have greater cost implications, or the provision of adequate facilities that cater specifically for women, such as sanitation.

- Budgets should be monitored by both the communities and the DEM or his representative, such as the PEA. Community monitoring should be carried out through

periodic social audits which should be held at the same time the School Management Committee is reporting back to the PTA on its actions.

Element : Resource Mobilisation And Allocation

4.61   *Objective: Adequate quality human, financial and material resources are provided, and allocated, in accordance with the priorities in the School Improvement Plan.*

4.62   Communities need to provide resources wherever possible, but in doing so, they should also demand an agreed level of service from the Government. Development Partners also have a key role in supplementing the resources available through the Government.

- Wherever possible, communities should provide human, financial and material resources. Such community contributions should be negotiated at the time of drawing up the School Improvement Plan, and should form part of the Social Contract. Communities should be encouraged to raise their own funds in order to contribute towards the costs of managing their schools.

- There needs to be realism in drawing up plans, with consideration being given to the availability of resources. In cases where there is uncertainty with regards to the availability of resources, best and worst case scenarios should be developed. In cases where resources are limited then they should always be allocated to the highest priority activities through a participatory analysis.

- Development Partners and Government will supplement community resources through allocations from the District Development Fund.

- Where communities are unable to provide human resources due to a lack of skills, specific provision should be made in the School Improvement Plans for developing these skills wherever possible. For obvious reasons, it is always a better option to develop the skills locally, rather than depend on the skills being provided externally. A specific example may be the need to provide adult literacy training.

4.2.3.3   Element : Sustainability And Ownership

4.63   *Objective: Communities are empowered to take responsibility for the sustainable management and ownership of their own primary schools.*

4.64   Through community participation, ownership of the primary school by the community becomes a reality, which should ultimately lead to its sustainable day to day management. The following sections outline some of the ways in which sustainable management and ownership of primary schools can be promoted.

- The AEC should work together with the community and carry out a stakeholder analysis to establish the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the management and running of their primary school. Such analysis should also assess capabilities, skills and the availability of resources.

- Payment of community members and government staff in the form of **allowances** for participation in meetings, trainings, etc., above and beyond what is sustainable should be avoided at all times. If possible, this type of **allowance payment** should be avoided altogether.

- Wherever possible, local skills and low maintenance appropriate technologies should be used.

- Development Partners should recognise that empowerment takes time and that the community will gradually gain greater confidence as they become more involved and learn from their actions over time.

- All Development Partners should work with communities through the appropriate government structures. The AEC should be the key link to communities, with facilitation and assistance from Development Partners wherever required. Development Partners should avoid at all cost creating separate parallel structures and systems.

- Maximum use must be made of decentralised planning and development structures, with funds being channelled through the District Development Fund in order to ensure sustainability, uniformity and the equitable distribution of resources, and at the same time, preventing possible duplication and replication.

4.65 Given that the sense of school ownership by communities in urban schools is far below that of rural schools, the following are possible options for enhancing participation and ownership in urban based schools:

- Introduce incentives such as sitting allowance for PTA's and SMC's. The allowance would be paid by the City Assemblies, or the particular school, where funds permit. One way of raising such funds would be through fines imposed on parents who fail to attend SMC and PTA meetings. Likewise, to enhance accountability, City Assemblies' internal auditors should audit SMC accounts. Where funds permit, the audit may be carried out by external auditors.

- SMC's should be proactive in raising their own funds, through for example, fund raising events, such as school fairs, etc.

- Teachers should at times give pupils homework that deliberately requires the involvement of both the pupils and the parents.

- Parents should be involved when interviewing candidates for the post of PEA.

- SMC's in partnership with the Police, should initiate Community Policing mechanisms in urban schools to protect school property.

Phase 3 : Implementation

4.66 A crucial element during the **implementation phase** is *capacity building*, and here the main recommendation is that a uniform approach be developed by all those involved. Lastly, the element of *supervision and monitoring* is considered very important, in particular, the accountability of the School Management Committee to the community and the government through the process of reporting to PTA meetings through the social audit process.
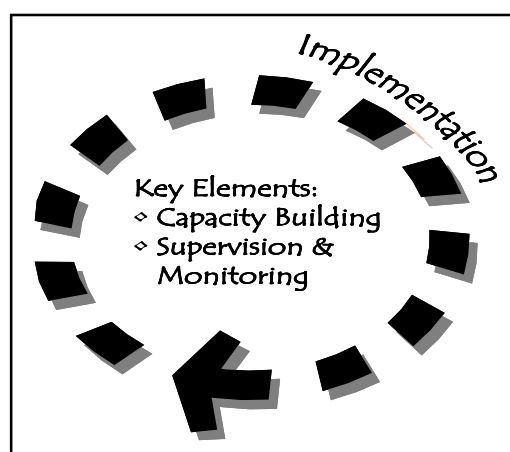
Element : Capacity Building

4.67   *Objective: SMC's, PTA's and other stakeholders are carrying out school management functions effectively having been equipped with adequate and appropriate skills through uniform and consistent approaches.*

4.68   There is unanimous agreement that capacity building for SMC's, PTA's and other stakeholders, such as the AEC, is an essential element towards achieving sustainable community participation in primary school management. However, it is equally important that approaches and methodologies used for capacity building are uniform, with the same messages being disseminated in order to reduce confusion, and to ensure clarity and agreement with regards to different stakeholders roles and responsibilities. The following sections outline how this should be achieved.

- A standard tool should be developed for use when identifying gaps in skills and capacity, whilst training should seek to build on existing skills and competencies.

- A standard set of training materials should be developed by the Government in conjunction with Development Partners, or at best, a minimum level of training guidelines need to be developed in order to at least ensure uniformity in approaches.

- The AEC members should be trained by Development Partners in conjunction with the Government. Consideration should be given to the need to develop district level trainer of trainers approaches in order to reduce costs over the long term, ensure a multiplier effect, and hence widen the coverage.

- The AEC should then carry out capacity building training of all community stakeholders. This should include the School Management Committee, the PTA's Executive Committee, the Head-teacher and senior staff and key community leaders.

- Communities as a whole should not be recipients of specific training, but should be sensitised through their PTA meeting as to the importance of community participation in primary school management and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

- Specific School Management Committee office holders should receive targeted skills training, such as; chairing meetings, book-keeping, supervision, store-keeping, etc. This would also include broader cross cutting training related to gender and HIV/AIDS.

- In cases where different Development Partners are involved in training in the same location, they should work closely to ensure that uniform and consistent messages are being put across. Ideally, in such cases, Development Partners should reach agreement on the use of standardised training materials and approaches so as to reduce confusion and ensure uniformity.

- The provision of training should be planned well in advance and agreed with communities who may have to make special arrangements in order to attend. Wherever possible, those who are providing the training should be flexible in meeting the needs of communities in terms of timing and location. In addition to more structured training, cross-visits between schools should be used as a complementary means of building capacity and sharing experiences.

- All capacity building initiatives should be gender sensitive, and should focus specifically on building the capacity of women in order for them to fully engage in primary school management. All training materials should reflect this emphasis.

- Special consideration should be given to the level of literacy of those receiving training, and where appropriate, special consideration should be given to the manner in which training is conducted, as well as the possible need to provide targeted literacy training.

Element : Supervision And Monitoring

4.69   *Objective: The community and other stakeholders are regularly supervising and monitoring primary school management activities.*

4.70   Mechanisms should be put in place to enable the community, through their PTA, and any other interested stakeholders, to monitor how activities outlined in the Social Contract and the School Improvement Plan are progressing. The following sections provide details on how this should be achieved.

- The School Improvement Plan and the Social Contract should detail exactly who is responsible for what activity. This will assist in being able to monitor the roles and responsibilities of those identified, and provide an appropriate level of accountability for any decisions and actions previously taken.

- Social Contracts should provide for regular reviews of the School Improvement Plan in order to monitor progress towards objectives. At such reviews, participatory monitoring tools should be used to ensure the full participation of the community in the process of monitoring progress.

- This review, or social audit process, should be conducted during the regular PTA meetings. At these meetings, the School Management Committee will be required to make a written report of their activities. These reports would also include an outline of what activities the various sub committees of the School Management Committee have undertaken. These meetings could be facilitated by the AEC members who will be expected to compile reports on progress, which would then be consolidated at a District level. This will then provide a basis for district wide monitoring of the progress of community participation in primary school management.

- At the district level, the District Education Manager) would prepare regular reports on the progress of community participation in primary school management, providing feedback against the targets set out in the District Education Plan. Such reports would be made quarterly to the District Assembly Education Committee.

- Annual National Strategy review meetings should be held in order for all Government stakeholders and Development Partners to review progress towards implementing this National Strategy and strengthening the role of communities in the management of primary schools. Issues would be discussed and plans developed for the next year. A joint progress report and work plan would also be produced at the end of this meeting.

Phase 4 : Reflection And Learning

4.71   The National Strategy was produced through an extensive consultative process, and should therefore be considered a **living document** based on the experiences and lessons learned of all those stakeholders involved in the sector. It should not be considered as the definitive answer to community participation in primary school management. It is critical that a process of reflection and learning continue, which should feed back into its further improvement and refinement. What has been presented in this initial version of the National Strategy should not be considered as the final product, but rather a starting point around which future experience and lessons learned will lead to further refinement and detail. In addition, institutionalised mechanisms need developing in order to disseminate future experiences and lessons leaned to all those involved.
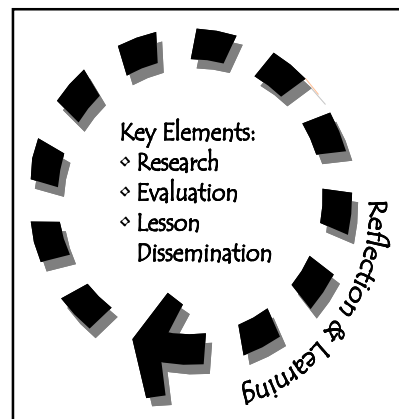
Element: Research

4.72   *Objective: Targeted in-depth research into specific topics provides a deeper understanding of the issues, concerns, and future opportunities and directions regarding community participation in primary school management.*

4.73   As communities begin to play a greater role in the management of their primary schools, there will be a continual need to learn from on going experiences. This will require targeted research, which should be designed in a way that seeks to provide greater understanding and deeper insights into the future direction of community participation in primary school management. The following sections provide some details on how this should be achieved.

- Potential action research activities should be identified at the annual National Strategy review meetings, and should be developed in a way that further informs the ongoing refinement of the National Strategy.

- Research should utilise both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and approaches, and should be focused on providing specific and workable recommendations to improve community participation in primary school management.

- Research should be a joint effort carried out by both Development Partners and the Government. Wherever possible, such research should give consideration to way in which it can build the capacity of Government. The research should be co-ordinated by the Planning Department in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in order to reduce duplication and replication.

- Research findings should be widely disseminated to all stakeholders through appropriate forums, such as the annual National Strategy review meetings. Research findings should also be translated and disseminated through district structures to communities themselves.

- There should be periodic reviews of research being carried out both regionally and internationally with consideration for the relevance of the findings to Malawi.

- Future research should also be linked to the wider process of education policy review, ensuring that policies reflect community priorities for quality education.

Element: Evaluation

4.74   *Objective: All primary school management activities are evaluated, and the results are shared and used in both present and future initiatives by all interested stakeholders.*

4.75   The evaluation of community participation in primary school management is one of the most important elements of this National Strategy. Evaluation should therefore be incorporated into all primary school management activities in order to facilitate the process of learning at all levels, and in support of any future refinement of this National Strategy. The following sections outline how this should best be achieved.

- Government and Development Partners should ensure that adequate funds, expertise and other relevant resources are allocated to the evaluation of primary school management activities and initiatives.

- Formative and summative evaluations should be conducted. In addition, consideration should be given to the use of both internal and external forms of evaluation.

- Wherever possible, participatory methods should be used to evaluate activities and initiatives, with consideration for training of communities in simple participatory evaluation approaches.

- All Development Partners should ensure that their projects include an evaluation component. This should also state clearly the means by which the results of the evaluations will be disseminated. This will help ensure that results from evaluations feed into future primary school management initiatives.

- The results from evaluations should be made available at every level. The Planning Department in the Ministry of Education should be furnished with copies of all evaluation reports. Evaluation reports should also be stored at the district and community level.

Element: Lesson Dissemination

4.76   *Objective: Lessons and experience from the on-going implementation of the National Strategy are made widely available and accessible to all stakeholders.*

4.77   Government and Development Partners should work together to ensure that all relevant lessons and experiences learned during the on-going implementation of this National Strategy are widely disseminated. This should best be achieved in the following way.

- Progress reports prepared by Government and Development Partners for the annual National Strategy review meetings should include a section on lessons learned and experiences during the period.

- Opportunities should be actively sought to ensure that lessons and their implications are shared widely through publications, meetings, briefings, seminars and web sites on the internet.

- Lessons should be disseminated to communities through the most appropriate means. For example, simple newsletter, posters, radio programmes, etc. Government and Development Partners should pay particular attention to ensuring that communities are included in the dissemination of lessons.

5.   Conclusions And Future Steps

Introduction

5.1   From the outset, the intention has been to ensure that the development of this National Strategy For Community Participation In Primary School Management becomes a **living strategy**, reflecting the lessons learned and experience of all stakeholders in the sector. Such an approach has sought to generate broad consensus between all stakeholders, and ultimately, ownership of this National Strategy.

5.2   As the first version of this strategy is finalised, there will be a need to continue the process of **keeping the strategy alive**, by ensuring that it is widely distributed, used by those involved in strengthening the role of communities in primary school management, and constantly refined in light of on-going experiences and lessons learned.

5.3   In the context of the move towards a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) in the education sector, it is essential that efforts are put in place to ensure co-ordination and collaboration between Development Partners and the Government. In addition, for those stakeholders supporting and strengthening the role of communities in primary school management, the pooling of resources will promote efficiency, effectiveness, maximise impact, and reduce the possibility of duplication and replication of activities.

5.4   Based on the experience gained during the course of developing this National Strategy, the sections below provide a summary of some potential future steps, and make some tentative suggestions as to how they might be pursued.

Recommended Pilot Activities And Required Action

Mapping And Cataloguing

5.5   An important activity that needs to be undertaken is the development of a comprehensive database that attempts to catalogue the activities of stakeholders supporting and strengthening the role of communities in primary school management. The database would promote co-ordination and collaboration between all stakeholders, and ensure equitable distribution of resources and reduce the possibility of duplication and replication. The natural home for this database would be the department of planning in the Ministry of Education, although smaller databases should also be collated at a district level. The planning department should also take responsibility for consolidating the database at a national level and ensuring that it is regularly updated. Such a database would draw on the information and experiences from the current school mapping and micro-planning projects.

5.6   An immediate next step would then be to develop and set up this database. This should be done firstly on a pilot basis, looking at perhaps a few districts, or a few stakeholders, or a combination of both. The pilot should develop a standardised set of guidelines for submitting information on the activities being undertaken by stakeholders, including the levels of investments being made.

5.7   Thought should be given to the manner in which information could be collected and presented. A simple electronic database could be developed for storing all the data that is collected. A simple web site could also be developed that has an interactive updating facility that allows those with access to the internet to enter data on line.

Networking, Communication And Dissemination Of Information

5.8   Throughout the National Strategy, the process of networking, communication and dissemination of information is a common reoccurring theme. If this National Strategy is going to be implemented, and the ownership of it by all stakeholders is to continue, then it is essential that ways in which these processes will continue should be identified as soon as possible.

5.9   Immediate work therefore needs to be done on institutionalising a regular forum where all stakeholders can come together to share their experiences, decide on refinements to the strategy and share plans for future activities. The National Strategy has suggested the convening of an annual National Strategy review meeting that would draw participation from all those stakeholders involved in supporting and strengthening the role of communities in primary school management.

5.10   Consideration should also be given to the merits of establishing federated School Management Committee structures. This could include the development of zonal, district and national level School Management Committees, or Associations.

Standardisation Of Approaches

5.11   Another common theme throughout the strategy is the need to move towards more standardised approaches to community participation in the management of primary schools. Of course the National Strategy is a first major step in this direction, but it has also thrown up a number of additional challenges which still need to be addressed and resolved.

5.12   There needs to be an open discussion on the desirable levels of uniformity in approaches. For example, during the development of the National Strategy, the issue of standardising training materials was raised a number of times. Therefore, work needs to be done on exploring the extent to which this is both possible and desirable, and then action should be taken to standardise the materials and approaches to the appropriate level.

5.13   Similarly, the contentious issue of payments was often raised. This includes payments made to communities when participating in the implementation of projects, allowances being paid to participants during training events, etc. Most stakeholders adopt different approaches, with communities very often seeking to work with the Development Partner that pays the highest allowance. This situation often leads to situations where Development Partners are competing amongst each other for the participation of communities. Again, work needs to be done on deciding what levels of uniformity are possible in this area, and what levels are indeed desirable to provide a common position when dealing with communities.

5.14   There are also a number of other issues that need to be addressed, which includes:

- The basic framework and guidelines for developing Social Contracts.
- The development of simple guidelines for School Improvement Plans.
- Defining exactly how the education sector will realign itself under sectoral devolution and decentralisation
- Simple methods and approaches for drawing out management issues from communities and moving away from simple provision of infrastructure.

5.15   Many of the above issues may require some targeted action research activities in order to pilot approaches geared towards developing sets of guidelines and best practices.

Policy Review

5.16   The impact of the National Strategy will be felt on a number of other policy forums, and there will be a need to interact with these to ensure consistency. Within the education sector, the major activity will be the incorporation of the National Strategy into the revision of the Education Act.

5.17   Outside the education sector, there needs to be a close working relationship developed with the decentralisation authorities, particularly on the development and refinement of School Improvement Plans, and their relationship to the whole district planning process.

On-going Monitoring And Research

5.18   The need for on-going monitoring and research should be a cross cutting area of continued activity. There will also be a need to continually monitor the progress made by all stakeholders in the implementation of this National Strategy. The suggestion made by the National Strategy is for this to occur during an annual National Strategy review meeting.