



**Government of the Republic of Malawi**

**TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT  
NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS MALAWI REPORT**

**Ministry of Education  
Lilongwe, Malawi**

**August, 2022**

# Transforming Education Summit

## National Consultations Malawi Report

### 1. TES National Consultation Process

**Convenors' names:** George Mindano and Steve Sharra

**Number of consultations:** Eleven (11)

**Dates:** 5th July to 6th August, 2022

**Types:** Key Informant Interviews; Focus Group Discussions (virtual and in-person); National Education Summit

**Geographical focus:** Nation-wide

**Number of participants for each consultation:** Ranged between one (1) and seventy (70)

**Age range of participants:** Not available

**Gender Participants:** 56 Males; 55 Females

**Number of participants from each sector (estimates):**

Sector	Number	Sector	Number
Education	35	Nutrition	3
Child Protection	2	Communication	5
Health	2	Information Technology	5
Labour	2	Social Protection	2
Environment	0	WASH	2
Finance	4		

**Number of participants from each Stakeholder Group (estimates)**

Stakeholder Group	Number	Stakeholder Group	Number
Teachers, educators,	12	Members of	0

facilitators and professors		Parliament	
Youths and Students	10	Multinational Corporations	1
School Leaders	4	Local authorities	N/A
City and Local Government Reps	2	Government and national institutions	30
Parents and caregivers	0	Public servants	50
Small/medium enterprises/Unions	4	Regional Economic Community	0
Large national businesses	3	Local Non-Governmental Organisations	5
Indigenous people and community leaders	2	International Non-Governmental Organisations	8
Scientific community, academic, universities and research institutes	6	Media	5

## 2. Principles of Engagement

Malawi's national consultations for the Transforming Education Summit were premised on the three principles of a whole-government approach; inclusion and equality; and a focus on the youth as agents of change. The consultations were guided by an analytical framework whose main goal was to facilitate the sharing of views and perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders towards raising ambitions for transforming Malawi's education system. The consultations were held within the broader understanding of challenges that are both global and national in nature. As is captured in the UNESCO report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, current global challenges have a particular urgency in the context of the newest emergencies emanating from the covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, nationalist jingoism, democratic deficiencies, inequality, and the war on science (UN, 2021). These challenges are even more acute for Malawi.

The country has veered off some of the SDGs as well as national development indicators. In education, two thirds of children do not access early childhood education (EMIS 2021). More than half of the children who enter primary school do not finish, and three out of four youths of secondary school age are not in school (National Statistics Office, 2020). Tertiary enrollment is less than one percent, and 70.1 percent of Malawians aged 15 and above do not have any school qualification (ibid.). The covid-19 pandemic pushed 9 percent of primary and secondary school

students out of the school system (*2021 Education Management Information System*). Girls and people with disabilities were affected the worst (Unicef, 2021).

Malawi's consultation process started with a desk review of key policy documents, followed by key informant interviews, guided by a set of questionnaires, held virtually and in-person. There were also Focus Group Discussions, also held virtually and in person, and a National Education Summit was convened where one hundred people were invited. Through these processes, evidence was generated on the state of the education system in the context of SDG 4, the *National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030*, and the *Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1)*.

To ensure the three principles of a whole-government approach, inclusion and equality, and a focus on youth as agents of change, stakeholders came from a broad spectrum of Malawian society. They included student representatives, youth organisations, teachers, teacher educators, civil society, the private sector, researchers and academicians, development partners, traditional leaders, and officials in ministries, directorates and government agencies responsible for Education, Gender, Youth, the environment, and Finance. Representatives also came from the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force and the National Planning Commission.

### **3. Consultation Focus and Outcomes**

#### **Thematic Action Track One: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools**

Consultations on this thematic action track focused on the use of evidence-based and systems thinking approaches to develop Malawi's human capabilities to ensure that educational institutions are inclusive, equitable, safe and health-promoting.

As with all the other tracks, evidence for this track was generated via three approaches. The first approach was the desk review of key policy documents that guide the education sector in Malawi. The second approach was key informant interviews comprising meetings with stakeholders relevant for the track. The third approach was the aforementioned National Education Summit. Through the key informant interviews and the education summit, several categories of stakeholders were consulted for this Thematic Action Track. Consultations identified challenges and opportunities, future trends and proposals for commitments based on current policy documents and general aspirations in relation to having inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools.

Stakeholders agreed that effects of school closures and lack of in-person education will continue to have lifelong impacts on the social, intellectual, and mental well-being of millions of young people across the globe, especially on those already vulnerable and marginalized. Protection from gender-based violence, child marriage, child labor, as well as prevention of early pregnancy and school dropouts will remain urgent.

#### **Game changer interventions, Strategic Levers & Enablers**

##### **i. Improving the quality, safety, and inclusion of school learning environments**

Stakeholders called for the need to define and equip all existing and new education institutions with a minimum priority integrated package to make schools and colleges safe, resilient to climate change disasters and health-promoting. This integrated package ought to comprise school health

and nutrition services, including school meals, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, nutrition education, life skills and comprehensive sexuality education, HIV prevention, vaccination, malaria prevention and control, deworming and bilharzia control, and menstrual hygiene management. The package should also include online safety for learners as they access digital learning.

The Government was called upon to provide equitable access to quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education to ALL children irrespective of their economic, social and refugee status, or gender, disability, religion or ethnic grouping. In doing so, Malawi will commit to legislating mandatory early childhood education and ensuring that every citizen has attained at least 12 years of education, inclusive of Early Childhood Education. Stakeholders called for the promotion of physical health assessments and screening for identification of learning disabilities in schools to ensure that learners are healthy, and are given the necessary curriculum, pedagogical and assistive support, including resources for people with albinism.

Stakeholders also called for the support of families of children with disabilities and economically disadvantaged families to enable every child to have 12 years of quality education. Stakeholders suggested promoting and improving disability-friendly infrastructure and construction designs in all educational institutions. Government is aware that concerns for safety, mental and physical health, and nutrition can also present obstacles for learning. Gender discrimination can impact participation in school, especially in times of crisis when school attendance is deemed unsafe, or when greater demands are placed on girls' domestic work and caregiving at home. By 2030, Malawi aspires to promote nutritional status of school-going children at ECD, Primary, CBE and secondary education levels; and to enhance the implementation of gender, child protection and safety at all levels in the education sector; and to implement and review the National Girls Education Strategy.

To achieve the above means both increasing enrolment to 100% and increasing primary and secondary school completion rates to 100% from the current 52% and 37% respectively by 2030. Furthermore, Malawi is committed to increasing the secondary school Net Enrolment Rate (NER) from current 15% to 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 EMIS as indicated in the EMIS; the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from the current 23.7% to 38% by 2025 and 52% by 2030 as well as the Primary transition rate (Total) % from the current 38% to 56% by 2025 and 76% by 2030 while decreasing the dropout rate from the current 13.35% to 11% by 2025 and 8% by 2030.

This means also addressing and reversing the high levels of learning poverty so that children are competent in reading, writing, with strong numerical skills, socio-emotional skills and, increasingly in today's world, with strong digital literacy skills. Stakeholders consulted proposed ensuring that inclusive education, gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Nutrition and HIV and Aids (SHNHA) and other crosscutting issues are integrated across all levels of the education system. Stakeholders agreed that for Malawian children today to be able to compete in the global market they will require that their fundamental right to health (to survive and thrive) and education needs are met. This means the country needs to continue to strive for and invest in improving quality of health services as well as quality teaching and learning environments (requires qualified and sufficient number of teachers in all grades).

## **ii. Renewed focus on inclusive and special needs education**

Stakeholders called for a renewed commitment to enhanced special needs education. Stakeholders called for acceleration of finalization, development implementation of a new policy on inclusive education. Additionally, stakeholders also called for the government to strengthen the rights to education of the displaced and stateless by ensuring educational inclusion of

refugees and displaced communities, recognizing their likelihood to become more common. The Government of Malawi was called upon to commit to achieving this. By 2030, Malawi intends to improve capacity for inclusive education in the education sector among specialist teachers and classroom teachers, head teachers and education officials at national, regional and local level. This will be achieved to promote inclusive education by training a critical mass of teachers for special needs education and constructing a special needs education institute as highlighted in the MIP-1.

### **iii. Expanding environments for early childhood education**

Stakeholders agreed on the need to strengthen and accelerate the adoption of society-wide systems of open and flexible models of early childhood education in different educational strategies, prioritizing family and community relationships, and cognitive, emotional, sensorial development. The summit acknowledged and echoed the government's understanding that for children to survive and thrive, Early Childhood Education (ECD) during this period of the life cycle is a critical ingredient. Global evidence shows that early childhood care and experiences, especially in the first 1,000 days of life, have a profound impact on brain and cognitive development, including longer-term effects on learning, skills gain, and ultimately income. Similarly, it is commonly agreed that pre-primary stimulation interventions for three-to five-year-old children, notably quality early childhood education (ECE), increases literacy levels, improves school enrolment and achievement, and enhances developmental outcomes.

Notwithstanding, access to appropriate services of early stimulation and learning opportunities for children ages 0–35 months is critically low, estimated at 5 percent. As of 2018, the NESIP 2020-2030 indicated that 48.73 percent of the total children population accessed ECD and 39.2 percent of children aged 36-59 months attended early childhood education services nationally (The 2021 EMIS indicated that 28 percent of 3-5 year-olds accessed ECD). Out of the total population accessing ECD centres, 51 percent of these are girls. In Malawi, most of the ECD services are provided by Community Based Child Care Centers (CBCCs) which have been established with active community participation and contribution, following support and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW).

Stakeholders supported the government's position and agreed on the need to make ECD mandatory by establishing ECD services at all primary schools, and make education from ECD to secondary mandatory and free to enable every Malawian to attain a minimum of 12 years of schooling. For ECD, Malawi will accelerate and strengthen equitable access to quality ECD by developing and implementing an equity-based ECD delivery system, as clearly committed in the MIP-1. Malawi intends to scale up construction of standardized gender and disability friendly ECD structures; reform the education system so that all primary schools should have early childhood development services; design and implement a mentorship and training programme for ECD instructors and formalize employment of ECD instructors by 2030.

As stated in its development blueprint, Malawi intends to ensure equitable access to quality ECD services for children aged 5- 6 years; improved quality of learning and teaching in ECD; improved governance and management of ECD and attract qualified caregivers by providing pay incentives; and increase funding to ECD.

Below are the ECD targets by 2030, as presented in the NESIP 2020-2030:

- Increase ECD net enrolment rate (NER) from current 48 percent to 70 percent in 2025 and 100 percent by 2030

- Increase ECD Gross enrolment rate (GER) from current 58 percent to 70 percent in 2025 and 100 percent by 2030
- Increase number of ECD centres operational from current 12,220 to 14,720 in 2025 and 17,220 by 2030
- Increase ECD percent of ECD centres providing supplementary meals from current 3 percent to 5 percent by 2030.
- Increase percentage of caregivers trained from the current 50 percent to 75 percent by 2025 and 100 percent by 2030
- Increase caregiver child ratio from current 1:69 to 1:30 by 2025 and 1:25 by 2030
- Increase ECD budget as percentage of national budget from current 0.2 percent to 2 percent by 2025 and 3 percent by 2030
- Increase ECD centres implementing the Malawian harmonized ECD curriculum from current 30 percent to 50 percent by 2025 and 100 percent by 2030.

#### **iv. Enrich learning environments beyond formal schooling and throughout life**

The summit and subsequent key informant interviews stressed on the need for renewed efforts to promote transformative adult education. Stakeholders called for implementation, monitoring and evaluation policies and programs to focus on the whole of life, including beyond labour market purposes, to address the changing educational needs of adults and the elderly. Malawi already is committed to achieving this by reducing illiteracy and enhancing skills development and education amongst adults for effective participation in personal, community and national development, as stated in the National Education Sector Investment Plan. By 2030, the country will accelerate promotion of linkages between adult literacy and education to formal education sector and livelihoods; provide adequate training and incentives to literacy instructors; promote and strengthen adult literacy and education coordination structures at community, district, and national levels; Thus, Malawi will provide non-formal/functional education facilities that facilitate inclusive quality teaching and learning, especially for youth with disabilities and establish an inclusive non-formal education programme, generally.

#### **v. Child protection and tackling gender-based violence**

Malawi will strengthen child protection and end school-related gender-based violence to ensure care and support for teaching and learning. As called by stakeholders, Malawi ought to provide curriculum-based, age-appropriate SRHR information and comprehensive sexuality education to female and male learners, and expose them to role models to enable them to stay in school. By 2030, Malawi will provide mental health services in all educational institutions from ECD to tertiary, including psycho-social support for learners, teachers and education professionals. In particular, for girls, Malawi realizes that equitable learning opportunities, especially for girls, are critical to support human capital development in the country. Several prolonged solutions to overcome constraints to equitable learning opportunities for girls are being pursued including promoting gender equality and equity norms within and out of the school environment, promoting female teachers as role models, targeted bursary system, and addressing GBV, among others.

To improve human capital and accelerate economic growth and development, and move the needle on human capital in the coming decades, aspirations from the consultations were clear that Malawi must strategically prioritize efforts today to decrease the high fertility rate, decrease the high maternal and neonatal mortality rates, make further progress in reducing chronic malnutrition that affects physical and cognitive development, bolster education and enhance skill development opportunities, and elevate the women's empowerment agenda.

## **vi. Strengthen school infrastructure, organization, administration, and supports**

The consultations highlighted the importance of strengthening and designing sustainable schools that are responsive to environmental conditions and climate change. This is highlighted in the MIP-1 where Malawi commits to constructing new primary schools; new classrooms in existing primary schools; new secondary schools; and laboratories in secondary schools and in primary schools as well as developing and implementing the National Open Distance and e-learning (ODEL) Transformation Strategy to promote online and distance learning. Thus, Malawi commits to improving quality and relevance of teaching and learning at all education levels through the provision of a minimum package of infrastructure, learning materials, and staffing at each school while improving student to qualified teacher ratio at all education levels. This also includes providing adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials (such as textbooks, teachers' guides, lab equipment, desks), including special needs TLMS for all primary, secondary and tertiary schools and capacitate functional literacy with trained instructors, supervisors and coordinators

By 2030, Malawi commits to strengthening the provision of integrated services in primary school (health, nutrition, psychosocial support, physical education and sports, safety) in collaboration with community and inter-sectoral partners; as well as provide high quality curriculum and resource schools with adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials for all while promoting use of locally available resources.

## **vii. Strengthening capacity for school governance**

Malawi is already committed to strengthening capacity for school governance by driving reforms that will establish regulated Boards of Governors for Secondary Schools and TTCs; and regulated School Management Committees established for Primary Schools by 2025. The intention is to formalise school management committees and governance bodies so they can take control of leadership, management and resource mobilisation for schools, among others.

## **viii. Preparing schools for future disruptions**

Stakeholders agreed on the need for Malawi to learn from past disruptions and pay attention to projected changes and demographic shifts to reinforce public education systems, avoid overcrowding and shortages, and ensure responsiveness and resilience to future change.

Like other countries, COVID-19 led to a loss of learning, the realization of the need to introduce new technologies for learning and at the same time highlighted the social inequity in many education systems across the world. The second global challenge where education has been negatively affected, and where education is itself as a critical solution, is climate change. Malawi suffered disastrous impacts caused by tropical storms and floods, further highlighting that educating children and citizens on the realities and impact of climate change is critical if the country is to successfully develop and implement the changes necessary to mitigate and adapt to our global environmental challenges.

For example, in the areas of the country affected by the tropical storms and floods a 32% drop in school enrolment was recorded. Covid-19 then induced school closures resulting in loss of learning for many learners. As observed during the pandemic, fundamental weaknesses were seen in the education system, mainly due to its over-reliance on face-to-face learning and limited application of e-teaching and e-learning technologies in educational institutions. For example, the six-month closure of schools during the 2019-2020 academic year resulted in an increase in the

number of learners, especially girls, dropping out of school. It is estimated that the Malawi education system lost 400,000 learners, including a total of 40,000 school-aged girls who fell pregnant and/or ended up in early marriages during this period. These recurrent disasters further entrench the loss of learning and inequalities within our education and social systems.

In view of this, the Government is implementing and supporting the building of a resilient and sustainable education system that is capable of withstanding future global or national shocks. Malawi is committed to providing pedagogical training to primary and secondary school teachers in e-learning provision; providing safe water sources and sanitation facilities, front-loading of education infrastructure such as building of additional classrooms to decongest schools personal protective equipment, commodities and supplies; school health programs; and quarantine and isolation facilities at boarding schools for looking after learners who test positive for Covid-19; adjusted scheduling of classes including shifting systems and initiatives to lessen occurrences of interrupted school terms will all be required and recruiting more teachers to reduce teacher-pupil ratio.

Through its *National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy Plan July 2022-June 2024*, the government is committed that going forward, the country should use the declined level of pandemicity to accelerate learning recovery and make schools more efficient, equitable, and resilient by building on investments made and lessons learned during the crisis. The plan seeks to shift from crisis to recovery – and beyond recovery, to resilient and transformative education systems that truly deliver learning and well-being for all children and youth.

The Education sector will continue to require support to sustain gains made in managing COVID-19 occurrences in schools. Some specific initiatives the country is planning to employ by 2024 include:

- Increased use of electronic media for knowledge sharing and communication:
- Learning materials that are easily exchanged between students and relevant materials that can be exchanged by e-mail, phone calls, SMS and using various social media platforms.
- Encouraging use of digital technologies, leading to a rise in digital literacy for individual learners, and wide scale use of E-learning initiatives
- Decongestion of classrooms through construction of 10900 low cost but cost-effective classroom blocks spread out to all 28 districts of the country;
- Strengthened capacity for water and sanitation services through drilling of 467 new boreholes at primary and secondary schools across the country; and maintenance of 22 others.
- Recruitment of 3,500 auxiliary teachers across the country. This was to expand staff compliment in the context of decongested classrooms

### **Thematic Action Track Two: Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development**

The consultations for Thematic Action Track Two in Malawi focused on learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development. Consultations were guided by the two following questions, which reflected the main areas of focus:

- a) Looking at the curriculum and how it is being taught and experienced by learners, what must be strengthened, or introduced, in order to achieve ecological, intercultural and interdisciplinary learning, and empower learners to take action and contribute to peace, sustainable development and societal transformation?

b) What commitments should the country make, in this regard?

Evidence for this track was generated via the aforementioned three approaches, namely a desk review, key informant interviews, and a national education summit. Through the key informant interviews and the education summit, several categories of stakeholders were consulted for this Thematic Action Track. Consultations identified challenges and opportunities with what is currently being taught, who has access to education, who is left out, and the aspirations of stakeholders as to how the education system in Malawi can be improved.

## **Game changer interventions, Strategic Levers & Enablers**

### **i. Early Childhood Education**

At the early childhood level, there are two significant challenges. The first one, according to the 2021 EMIS, is that only 28 percent of 3-5 year-olds in Malawi access early childhood and pre-primary education services, found mostly in urban areas which represent only 14 percent of Malawi's population, according to the 2018 Population and Housing Census. Most ECD services in Malawi are offered by private and civil society entities, and not the government. The second challenge is one of policy coordination. The ECD sub-sector belongs to the ministry responsible for gender, children and social welfare, rather than the ministry responsible for education. The result is that there are no national training institutions and programmes for ECD caregivers. The solution being offered to address these two challenges is to integrate ECD into the education system, as per Malawi's long-term vision, Malawi 2063, and its first ten-year implementation plan, the MIP-1. The MIP-1 stipulates that by 2025, every public primary school should offer ECD services. The MIP-1 also stipulates professional training for all ECD caregivers. In addition to bringing the ECD sub-sector under the education system, the MIP-1 also ensures 12 years of education for every Malawian. This will extend compulsory education from primary school to secondary school.

### **ii. Primary education**

At the primary school level, there have been gains in terms of access, with the enrolment rate now at 90 percent. The challenge has been retention over the eight-year cycle, with the survival rate from Standard 5 to 8 at 52 percent. The survival rate from Standard 1 to Standard 8 is much lower. In the Standard 8 national examinations in July 2022, there were 266,639 candidates. When the cohort entered Standard 1 in the 2015/2016 school year, there were 737,107 new entrants, and 382,126 repeaters, totaling 1,119,107 learners, according to the 2017 EMIS. This shows that over the eight-year cycle from Standard 1 to Standard 8, there were 852,594 learners who did not reach Standard 8, because they were either repeating, or they had dropped out.

When these learners drop out of the school system before reaching Standard 8, they have not acquired any skills that they could otherwise deploy, become self-reliant, and make meaningful contributions to their communities and nationally. Thus, another challenge at the primary school level emanates from the curriculum, and the way teaching and learning are conducted. Students that persist to Standard 8 and sit the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education examination meet another hurdle ahead of them. Malawi's secondary school capacity is able to absorb only 38 percent of those who pass the examination, leaving 62 percent with nowhere to go.

The consultations highlighted the importance of integrating and strengthening 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into curriculum and pedagogy. Stakeholders have called for a curriculum and pedagogical practices that enable learners to develop foundational literacy, numeracy, Socio-Emotional

Learning, and digital literacies, and technical skills for a knowledge-based economy throughout the education pipeline, including out-of-school youth and adults. We will enhance social and emotional learning (SEL) and essential 21st century skills content and pedagogies in the school curriculum from ECD to tertiary levels to produce graduates who are creative, critical thinkers and problem-solvers, and have empathy and compassion.

### **iii. Secondary education**

The Malawi Government has committed to constructing adequate secondary schools to increase transition rates to secondary school from the current 38 percent to 100 percent. Currently there are projects, funded by development partners and the Malawi Government, that are constructing new secondary schools, and expanding existing schools. There are also ongoing efforts to expand and equip existing and new schools with science laboratories, libraries, running water, electricity, Internet access, and digital technologies.

There are also efforts to introduce and strengthen technical and vocational education, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills in the curriculum starting from primary school to tertiary education to improve employability, enable self-employment and enhance job creation.

Stakeholders also stressed the importance of curriculum and pedagogical methods that nurture talent and allow learners to express their talents and abilities, including learners with special needs and gifts. The imperative of a curriculum and pedagogical methods that would enable learners to realise their potential entails strategic approaches in terms of the content, and the training of teachers at both pre-service and in-service levels. Some of the aspirations expressed around improvements to the curriculum are detailed under the Thematic Action Track on Digital learning and transformation.

Malawi has been severely affected by the climate crisis, and stakeholders expressed the need to enhance climate change and sustainable development content in the primary and secondary school curriculum to provide learners with knowledge and skills for resilience, adaptation, and taking action at school, community and national level.

### **iv. Tertiary education**

The challenges of access and equity affect Malawi's education system at the tertiary level as well, as highlighted in the consultations also. At 0.8 percent, Malawi's tertiary enrollment rate is among the lowest in the world. This is a problem whose roots go back to the high dropout rates at primary school, the very few secondary schools available in the country, and the even fewer tertiary education institutions. Malawi has six public universities, whose annual intake does not exceed 8,000. There are close to 30 private tertiary education institutions registered with the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), whose annual enrolments are not very high. The 2018 population and housing census reported that there were 89,665 people enrolled in tertiary education in Malawi, with males comprising 58.7 percent, and females making up 41.3 percent. The census reported a total of 3,634,180 people in the 15-24 age brackets, with females comprising 51.6 percent, and projected that as of 2022, there would be 4,057,480 youths in that category, with females representing 52.0 percent.

The aspirations that emerged from the consultations for Malawi's tertiary education sub-sector was for higher education institutions to excel in teaching and technical training, scientific research and technological innovation, while also expanding postgraduate and postdoctoral programmes. Currently selection into public universities is coordinated by NCHE, while private universities use

their own systems to admit students. Stakeholders called for the integration of the selection of students into both public and private universities to maximize available opportunities. Stakeholders also called for the widening of access to government loans and scholarships to ODeL tertiary students, which is currently not the case, and results in many deserving students unable to afford higher education. Another aspiration expressed in the consultations was to increase tertiary enrollment from the current 0.8 percent to 10 percent, to match the average for the African continent.

#### **v. Adult education**

Malawi has a large proportion of adults and parents who have had no education. The 2018 population and census revealed that 70.1 percent of Malawian adults did not have any school qualification, with females representing a higher proportion at 73.5 percent, versus males at 66.7 percent. Stakeholders called for the provision of education to all parents to enable them support their children's education and create a home and community environment that facilitates education provision. To this end, participants also called for the creation of a multi-sectoral Technical Working Group for young and adult education, and the integration of young and adult education into the education sector under the responsibility of the ministry responsible for education.

Stakeholders also called for seamless skills training curricula from primary education through secondary education to technical and tertiary colleges. In addition, there was a need, stakeholders stated, to integrate qualifications acquired from informal and formal sectors for proper interpretation and recognition by industry and stakeholders. Lastly, stakeholders observed that there are trained professionals and talented youths in refugee camps, whose potential contributions were not being harnessed due to homeland security restrictions. Almost half of the refugees are below the age of 18, and many of these were born in Malawi. Stakeholders called for refugee inclusion in national planning, and a review of laws surrounding refugees to allow their talents to contribute to national development. Awarding grant-aided status to primary and secondary schools that cater to refugees would go towards providing access and equity to quality education for all children in Malawi, including refugee children born in the country.

It was also observed that due to vested interests and scarcity of resources Malawians are often competing among themselves to promote individual aspects of education or individual sub-sectors. The government is committed to viewing the education system as a continuum from early childhood to university and beyond and that it should be open to all. No individual sub-sector will work on its own if the other sub-sectors are not working and this is the mindset change the government intends to inculcate to the public and public sector, including development partners with a direct and indirect interest in education.

### **Thematic Action Track Three: Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession**

#### **Game changer interventions, strategic levers and enablers**

##### **i. The student and teacher at the heart of Education Transformation**

Government and stakeholders agreed to put the student and, importantly, the role of the teacher at the heart of Education Transformation. By 2030, the government intends to change mindsets and send the message that investment in teacher training and teacher support must be equivalent in importance to investing in physical infrastructure such as roads. Nothing is achieved in education without good teaching. As such, the government is committed and lobbying for

resources to help professionalise the teaching profession, motivate the teaching workforce and make teaching a very attractive profession to a pool of talented candidates. Government intends to strengthen awareness and the attractiveness of the teaching profession by approving, operationalizing and implementing the draft National Teacher Policy by 2023 which aims to provide a framework for the professionalisation and standardisation of the teaching force to enhance teacher development and management, and support teacher collaboration for improved educational attainment.

## **ii. Dignify teachers and improve their working conditions**

Stakeholders and the government agreed that the need to improve working conditions can include reducing class sizes, improving school infrastructure, prioritizing health and safety, strengthening professional autonomy, increasing institutional support, and fostering cultures of collaboration. Stakeholders noted that although the environment in which teachers are trained is comparable within the region, the environment among which teachers are deployed to work is a problem that needs to be addressed. It was strongly suggested that when constructing schools, teacher houses should be part of the package at a minimum. As part of its reforms, the government is committed to establishing a Policy on Essential School Infrastructure Package by 2027, of which teacher housing is key.

## **iii. Evidence based decision making and demand driven recruitment**

It was agreed that the government should commit to enhancing demand driven recruitment career progression, and motivation strategies to attract and retain qualified teachers and personnel in the system. This will include review, development, dissemination, implementation and monitoring of result-oriented policies and programs as well as building capacity for inspectors and advisors.

## **iv. Ensure access and equity, quality and relevance and effective and efficient governance and management of teachers**

In response to the stakeholders' aspirations, the government reaffirmed its commitment to increasing the number of qualified teachers that contribute to the quality of primary and secondary education as stipulated in the MIP-1, NESIP 2020-2030 and the draft National Teacher Policy. This will be done by increasing equitable and inclusive access to Teacher Education; improved functional quality and relevant teacher training, including continuous professional development and quality assurance. This also entails improved governance, management and evidence-driven deployment of teachers. To this end, the government is implementing the Teacher Management Strategy. By 2030, government will provide accessible CPD to teachers with clear career pathways and ensure that they are applying evidence-based practice in instruction to reach all learners; increase the number of teacher trainers in TTIs and Institutionalize alternative modes of teacher training such as ODL; improve teacher training infrastructure such as teacher education institutions, demonstration schools, INSET centres and TDCs.

The establishment of the Teacher's Council reaffirms the government's commitment towards teacher welfare and teacher management from teacher training, recruitment, deployment, and performance until retirement.

## **v. Increase teacher training and recruitment**

Stakeholders decried the current qualified teacher-pupil ratio and encouraged the government to prioritize teacher training, recruitment and deployment based on need. Government is committed

to increasing enrolment of primary teachers in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) from the current 6,364 as of the year 2020 to 12,246 by 2030; enrolment of secondary teachers in Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) from 2,288 as of 2020 to 3,313 by 2030, as stipulated in the NESIP and increase the Gender Parity Index for Primary school teacher trainees from current 1.2 to 1.0 by 2030.

**vi. Incentives to attract and retain high performing teachers**

Considering that education is a human right, the Government will ensure that all learners, including girls, learners with special needs, and learners located in disadvantaged areas such as remote and hard to reach places, have access to quality education. To ensure equity and educational quality, effort shall be made to attract teachers to places that are mostly avoided and to compensate teachers for teaching in disadvantaged areas. In addition, the government already has female teachers, who act as role models for girls, to take up positions in rural and remote schools. It is anticipated that besides incentivizing teachers to work in remote areas, decentralizing enrollment into initial teacher education programmes will help to reduce challenges associated with teacher deployment since teachers will likely be willing to work close to their home areas where they understand the local culture and the language.

**vii. Upgrading of teachers' minimum qualifications at various levels and clear career structure**

Responding to calls to make the teaching profession attractive, the government will establish degree and diploma programmes in TTCs for primary school teachers by 2027, as indicated in the draft teacher policy. Government, through the draft teacher policy, wants to ensure that secondary school teachers have Bachelor's degrees as minimum qualification; ensure that teachers at teacher education level, have relevant Masters Degrees as minimum qualifications; ensure that all instructors in technical colleges have diplomas as a minimum qualification; ensure that instructors in CBE and out-of-youth education have minimum general qualification of MSCE and a certificate in pedagogy and ensure that caregivers have minimum general qualification of MSCE and a certificate in early childhood education.

An improvement in teachers' entry qualifications will help raise the status of the profession. A corresponding and clear career path that is adhered to will ensure that qualified teachers remain and advance within the teaching profession. As we have indicated in our draft teacher policy, we are committed to raise teacher quality by attracting the best candidates to teaching and retaining qualified teachers through upgrading of minimum teacher qualifications and adhering to a clear career structure. In essence, by 2030 the government is committed to operationalising the Continuous Professional Development Framework which will enable teachers with higher qualifications to continue teaching with appropriate remuneration and a progressive career path.

**viii. Maintaining qualified teachers**

Stakeholders expressed concern with teacher attrition and the need for the government to establish clear mechanisms to strengthen teacher retention. It is believed that highly experienced teachers can enrich their profession by mentoring new teachers, facilitating planning with co-teachers, and leading subject areas. In response, the government is committed to employ and establish, by 2027, a mentorship programme to support the transition of newly qualified teachers and novice teachers into new teaching environments, and continued professional growth of serving teachers.

Additionally, by 2027, government intends to develop a competency framework for identifying excellent teachers; review teachers' promotional guidelines to include attainment of CPDs, responsibilities, performance, and conduct; develop guidelines for training, deployment, compensation and advancement of specialist teachers for learners with special needs; and develop guidelines for training, deployment, compensation and advancement of specialist teachers for early grade levels as indicated in the draft national teacher policy. Government will also ensure that all teachers are trained in delivering inclusive education.

#### **ix. Enhance teacher professional development**

Stakeholders called for the need to enhance teacher welfare through incentives for the teaching profession by providing Continuous Professional Development, and educate teachers in pre-service training and through CPD (in person and digital) in action research so they can solve problems and innovate at classroom, school, community and national level. Government is committed to strengthening CPD by ensuring that the CPD framework and its subsequent implementation plan is operationalized. Thus, by 2025, the government is committed to expanding access to CPD opportunities through provision of residential, distance and online courses, including the self-learning e-CPD platform.

The government will also strengthen governance at school level; performance management appraisal; professional collaboration to encourage networking and develop communities of practice within and outside the country, as well as promote inclusive and gender sensitive professional development. In particular, by 2030, government intends to improve functional quality and relevant teacher training, including continuous professional development by increasing percentage of Colleges with ICT based learning support from the current 40 percent to 100 percent by 2025; increase percentage of primary teachers attending CPD, (male/female) from the current 50 percent to 100 percent by 2025 and decrease the TTC IPTE students: tutor ratio (all colleges) from the current 67:1 to 30:1.

#### **x. Teacher accountability**

In addition to CPDs, the Government intends to ensure that the teaching profession remains attractive and preserved. In 2022, the Ministry of Education launched the Teacher Code of Conduct and is promoting adherence to the Code of Conduct as part of ensuring that teachers are accountable to the system, including time on task. The Ministry is also strengthening mechanisms for teacher accountability to stakeholders including learners, parents, community members and school leaders as stipulated in the Teacher Management Strategy, which the Ministry of Education is operationalising. This will ensure productive teacher engagement and use of teachers' time on duty prudently and help curb issues of teacher absenteeism from school and classroom. The Ministry of Education will also continue to strengthen and capacitate the Directorate of Quality Assurance Services to improve monitoring activities leading to enhanced teacher accountability.

#### **xi. Knowledge exchange and social dialogue**

Considering the important role that teachers can play in collaborative, creative endeavours that translates knowledge and research into impact in society and the economy as observed at the summit and indeed interviews with stakeholders, Government has been challenged to promote social dialogue in the education system, and commit towards holding annual conferences or summits to give teachers and educational professionals a platform to share action research,

innovative and transformative practices, and also to award outstanding teachers and bring together education thought leaders and champions to function as Malawi's education think tank.

#### **Thematic Action Track Four: Digital transformation and education**

On the thematic track action dealing with digital transformation in education, consultations focused on identifying current technological innovations that the country is developing, or must develop, that must be supported and scaled up to transform education. Stakeholders were also asked about commitments that Malawi must state, to make digital learning a reality for the most marginalised sections of Malawian society.

The 2018 population and housing census reported that 51.7 percent of Malawian households had a mobile phone, while 33.6 percent had a radio. Possession of a television set was at 11.6 percent, and Internet access was at 16.4 percent. The 2021 EMIS reported that 70 percent of primary schools had no electricity, while for secondary schools, that figure was 18 percent. Out of the country's 1,524 public and private secondary schools, only 231 have a computer laboratory, representing 15.1 percent. There was no information on the percentage of primary and secondary schools that have Internet access, but from the available information, those percentages are likely to be low.

#### **Game changer interventions, Strategic Levers & Enablers**

Consultations on this action track proposed a commitment to an Open, Distance and eLearning (ODEL) transformative ecosystem that provides equitable access to quality and relevant education and promotes lifelong learning for everyone, everywhere and every time.

##### **i. Open, Distance and eLearning**

Stakeholders suggested that Malawi should commit to scaling up teaching at the right level through cost-effective tablet-based adaptive learning education technology. The Directorate of Open, Distance and eLearning in the Ministry of Education reported that the country is establishing an education radio station and to be followed by TV with nationwide coverage, and that plans are underway to establish digital secondary schools. We are accelerating implementation of the ODeL and ICT for Education policies.

##### **ii. Internet connectivity and cybersecurity**

Aspirations expressed during the consultations included the provision of electricity, Internet connectivity, and technology devices in every educational institution. Stakeholders proposed the reduction of tariffs on Internet data, especially for students, and improvements to network coverage for the entire nation. Widening access to devices through student loans, scholarships and grants were suggested as an important reform, alongside reduction of taxes for importation of devices, and local assembly of devices. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of ensuring cybersecurity security to ensure data privacy and online safety for learners and all citizens. To this end, The Government of Malawi has committed to implementing the SADC Cybersecurity Infrastructure Framework.

##### **iii. Virtual laboratories, simulation and gamification of learning**

Stakeholders from the ODeL community and youths representatives suggested the introduction of virtual laboratories and simulations, and the gamification of learning, to enhance the teaching and learning experience, and to widen textbook access, covering all subjects, especially science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). Stakeholders also called for the introduction of Digital Literacy in primary and secondary education to build a foundation for digital skills advancement.

#### **iv. ICT for students and teachers**

Stakeholders proposed that teachers needed to be trained in ICT skills for practical purposes, beyond theory. In addition, teachers should also be trained in broader areas of technological, including aviation and its wide scope that represents many aspects of information technology domains. Malawi had pioneered a drone academy that trained young people in assembling and using drones, and this needed to be scaled up so more young people could benefit from the training and skills.

### **Thematic Action Track Five: Financing education**

Consultations on this thematic action track focused on how Malawi and its development partners could strengthen the financing of education in Malawi, given the limited resources the country was able to generate. Guiding questions to stakeholders probed for what more the country could do to grow the economy, increase domestic revenue, and multiply education spending. There were also questions on what avenues existed for innovative financing, and what could be done to increase international aid and maximise its utilisation in the education system.

On the role of development partners, consultations focused on how international aid could be reconfigured to address the growing crisis of international debt servicing, and whether there were pathways for increasing the percentage of funding that went to education in Malawi. One of the most difficult problems in Malawi's education sector is very high Teacher-Pupil Ratios especially at primary school. The government is unable to recruit trained teachers due to wage bill caps in some of the conditions of international aid. Consultations dwelt on the question of how the international aid community could support Malawi to address the issue of wage bill caps so the government could recruit all the teachers the country needs.

### **Game changer interventions, Strategic Levers & Enablers**

#### **i. Resource mobilization**

On this thematic action track, the consultations proposed a guaranteed commitment from the Malawi Government to redouble resource mobilization efforts, reprioritize the fiscus, review legislation to eradicate leakages and grow trust funds, enhance equity and efficiency, utilise data in policy formulation, and enforce accountability in education spending.

#### **ii. Reviewing legislation and guarantee education allocations**

Stakeholders called for expedited action in enacting and enforcing legislation to end corruption and free resources to augment education financing. Stakeholders also called for the continuation of guaranteed allocations of at least 15-20 percent of national expenditure, and at least 4-6 percent of GDP, in the upper limits, for domestic financing of education. In addition, SADC countries have been called upon to increase the Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development to 1 percent of GDP and above, and Malawi has committed to this.

### **iii. Education levy**

Also suggested by stakeholders was a targeted, time-bound levy for education financing, with a specific end date. Items suggested for the levy included alcoholic beverages, water, or electricity. The levy should focus on a particular set of education projects agreed upon by education stakeholders. Alternatively, in recognition of levy-fatigue due to already existing levies, stakeholders suggested the rationalisation of existing levies so that they can benefit the broader education sector. Stakeholders suggested financial capitalization of productive sectors, echoing the Covid-19 Socio-Economic Recovery Plan (SERP).

### **iv. Increase tax-GDP ratio**

There were also suggestions for Malawi to commit to increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio by 5 percentage points by 2030, by implementing progressive, systemic and holistic tax reforms. Such tax reforms ought to stop tax evasion and tax avoidance.

### **v. Renegotiate aid, debt and wage bill caps**

Stakeholders recommended that Malawi should continue efforts to renegotiate terms and conditions of international debt serving, while engaging International Finance Institutions to renegotiate wage bill caps to increase budgetary allocations to education.

### **vi. Championing the new global compact for education**

Malawi should commit to being one of the champions of the new global compact for education, and should endorse the position advanced by the background paper for Thematic Action Track Five, which “proposes a transformative rights-based agenda for a new global compact for financing lifelong learning for all.”

In this regard, stakeholders recommended that Malawi endorses the UNESCO report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (2021) and its foundational principles of assuring the right to quality education throughout life, and strengthening education as a public endeavour and a common good. In so doing, Malawi also expresses agreement with the call for solidarity within societies, between generations and through international cooperation, as articulated in *Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary General* (2021), in order “to achieve a set of vital common goals on which our welfare, and indeed survival, as a human race depend.”

### **Expectations from International Community to help Malawi raise and achieve its ambitions in transforming education**

From the consultations, it emerged that while many of the commitments articulated by key informants and stakeholders were aspirational and would require more time and higher levels of resource mobilization efforts, there were also goals the Malawi Government has already committed to. These are expressed in current policy and vision documents, particularly the Malawi 2063, the Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1), the National Education Sector Investment Plan (2020-2030) which has been integrated into the MIP-1, and are also articulated in annual budget statements presented to the National Assembly, and State of the Union addresses.

Commitments that the government has already pronounced and are being implemented are synthesized into the 2-page statement accompanying this report. For Malawi to work towards achieving the aspirational commitments, there will be a need for greater support from the international community. The following are expectations for the roles that Malawi's international development partners can play in helping the country achieve its greater ambitions as raised through the consultations.

- Support Malawi in making education the central focus of Malawi's efforts to achieve the SDGs.
- Restructure conditions for international aid towards increasing the percentage of international aid that goes to the education sector
- Extension of maturity period for debt from short-medium term to long term
- Improved rating by International Credit Rating Agencies
- Support Malawi's efforts to improve efficiency in managing resources
- Reduce or write off Malawi's foreign debt burden
- Debt swaps and debt conversions to re-channel foreign debt into Malawi's education budget.
- Support to address illicit financial outflows
- Increased support to the Global Partnership for Education.

#### **4. Summary of outcomes from national consultations regarding the four key components**

##### **i. Recovery from Covid-19 disruption**

Malawi has enacted legislation and strategies to expedite the country's recovery from Covid-19 by targeting 70 percent of the population for vaccination, and by introducing a socio-economic recovery plan. Schools are offering remedial lessons, and the school calendar has been reconfigured to maximise school days. Additional teachers are being recruited, and the Government is in the final stages of establishing the Education Radio and, later, a Television station.

##### **ii. Transformation of education in the medium and long term**

Key propositions for the transformation of education in the medium and long have been described in the five tracks, and in the 2-page summary.

##### **iii. Review of national education targets and benchmarks**

Malawi's national education targets and benchmarks have been reflected in the five tracks and in the 2-page summary.

##### **iv. Ensuring sustainable public financing**

Malawi's commitments to public education financing and expectations from the role of the international community have been reflected in thematic action track number five, and summarised in the 2-page national statement of commitment.