

DEPARTMENT FOR EVALUATION

Annex 6 to report 7/2022

Evaluation of Norway's inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation

Case study from Malawi



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Abbreviations

ADC	Area development committees	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
BICO	Blantyre Institute of Community Ophthalmology	Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
CDBC	Chisombezi Deafblind Centre	NRC	Norwegian Red Cross
CPC	Child protection committees	NSIE	National Strategy on Inclusive Education
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	OPD	Organisation of persons with disabilities
CSO	Civil society organisation	PEA	Primary education advisors
DEC	District executive committee	PTA	Parents and teachers associations
DEMIS	District education management information systems	RNE	Royal Norwegian Embassy
DEN	District education network	SC	Save the Children
EMIS	Education management information system	SDG	Sustainable development goals
FEDOMA	Federation of Disabled Persons' Organisations of Malawi	SMC	School management committees
FGD	Focus group discussion	SNE	Special needs education
GoM	Government of Malawi	ToC	Theory of Change
GPE	Global Partnership for Education	ToR	Terms of reference
IE	Inclusive education	TTC	Teachers training center
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped	TWG	Technical working group
MDGS	Malawi and Growth and Development Strategies	UN	United Nations
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MoGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Elderly Affairs	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MUB	Malawi Union of the Blind	ZEMIS	Zone education management information system
NABP	Norwegian Association of Blind and Partially Sighted		



Executive Summary

Education efforts in form of special needs education (SNE) for persons with disabilities in Malawi predate independence and can be traced to missionary activities, as with other forms of education in the country. In the post-independence period, more focus was given to investing in special schools and resource classroom centres attached to public schools. However, only a small proportion of learners with disabilities could be accommodated in the few SNE centres. For example, in 2007 there were estimated to be approximately 70,000 learners with special education needs, and for these were only 650 SNE teachers equipped with knowledge and skills to provide additional support to these learners¹

There are several major challenges that teachers and learners with and without disabilities face in schools which would need to be addressed to enable effective access to education:

- Teachers' lack of experience, knowledge and skills in teaching learners with disabilities.
- Teachers' lack of specific skills, such as sign language.
- Inadequate teaching and learning resources.
- Frequent absenteeism from school by learners and high drop-out rates.
- Negative attitudes by the teachers and the community towards learners with disabilities.
- Lack of interest and commitment towards education by learners.
- Inaccessible school infrastructure.
- Lack of assistive devices.
- Lack of early identification, assessment and intervention services.
- Inadequate teaching-learning and specialised materials.
- Understaffing and inadequate numbers of classrooms leading to very large class sizes.²

This has led to a recognition that SNE is no longer the most tenable way of reaching and providing education to the many children with disabilities in the country.³ In recent years, a consensus has emerged around the need to take an IE approach that ensures the participation of all learners in schooling.

¹ A. Chavuta A.N. Itimu-Phiri S. Chiwaya N. Sikero G. Alindiamao. (2008). Montfort Special Needs Education College and Leonard Cheshire Disability International Inclusive Education project. Baseline Study. August 2008

² Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Malawi (2016) *National Strategy on Inclusive Education*.

³ A. Chavuta A.N. Itimu-Phiri S. Chiwaya N. Sikero G. Alindiamao. (2008). Montfort Special Needs Education College and Leonard Cheshire Disability International Inclusive Education project. Baseline Study. August 2008

Box 1: Theory of Change, Inclusive education in Malawi**IF:**

Learners with diverse needs, including learners with disabilities, are provided with appropriate support in an inclusive setting

When inclusive education practices accept learners with all levels of special education needs

And, learners receive classroom support, their teachers have the relevant skills, and funding is sufficient

THEN:

The learners can develop more positive self-esteem

Access will be in place for appropriate teaching and learning resources

And, the needs of all learners will be addressed so that each learner is allowed an opportunity to succeed

The underlying theory behind the efforts to promote IE in Malawi presupposes that IE is achievable: A review of the documents and reports of the two projects analysed in this evaluation, and interviews with various stakeholders show that they strove to achieve these objectives through similar interventions, including:

- Capacity strengthening
- School environment adaptation
- Awareness and sensitisation
- Advocacy and influence

The interventions were expected to contribute to an increase in the demand and supply of IE at community/school level; strengthened capacity of teachers and support staff for effective delivery of IE; strengthened school level systems and structures to support delivery of IE; and improved data management systems for IE. These would in turn contribute to improved systems and supportive policy for IE, as well as increased enrolment, retention, and completion for learners with children with disabilities. Ultimately, this would lead to improved learning outcomes for children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Improving teacher awareness and skills has been a central part of this. A good start has been made on reforming the teacher training curriculum with the input from Save the Children. The rolling out and adoption of the training modules in all teacher training colleges has been sluggish, although, the continuous professional development for in-service teachers seems to be on course. The key assumptions were that the Government of Malawi would put into place the relevant and appropriate supportive policy, invest in recruitment of teaching staff in public schools, construct adequate infrastructure, as well as initiate the necessary curriculum reforms for teacher training colleges and increase resource allocation to support implementation of IE in the country. Another important assumption was that the schools where IE was being actively piloted would serve as models from which other schools would learn from and scale-up. This is an area where the assumptions behind theory of change for learning from model schools have proven to be, in many respects, inaccurate.

The government has had the political will and the policy/strategy to raise overall IE ambitions in the country. However, clear plans to enhance the recruitment, management and coordination of IE human resources in IE are lacking, and resources invested

have been severely insufficient. The two projects have supported a modest amount of infrastructure development, such as ramps, modified toilets, and walkways, but there remains an acute shortage of classrooms and all the other amenities needed for effective delivery of IE. The teachers continue to handle classes with up to over one hundred students. The pupil-teacher ratio remains far too high to achieve the desired results of IE, even in the targeted schools. In a wider perspective, the evaluation finds that constraints to IE reforms – requiring massively increased investments in human resources and infrastructure – mirror constraints in the education sector in general.

Due to this and other factors, the evaluation team judges that, without a significant increase in public investment to expand human resource capacities and upgrade infrastructure in IE and SNE in particular, and in the education sector in general, the core assumption that the two projects will ultimately contribute to achieving broad outcomes is in doubt.



Photo: The Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted

1

Overview of the projects/programmes



1.1 Background information and justification for inclusive education efforts in Malawi

Education efforts in the form of special needs education (SNE) for persons with disabilities in Malawi predates independence and is traced to missionaries as with other forms of education in the country. Up to independence, the provision of SNE in the country remained a preserve of the missionary effort, although in the post-independence period, particularly from the 1980s to around 2015, more focus was given by the Government of Malawi to investing in special schools and resource classroom centres attached to public schools. Thus, SNE remained the main approach delivered through special schools and resource classroom centres within the mainstream schools. However, the numbers of learners with disabilities could not be accommodated in the few SNE centres established to assist learners who required SNE support. For example, the education management information systems (EMIS) of the Ministry of Education showed in 2007, approximately 69,943 learners with special education needs, and for these only 650 SNE

teachers were equipped with knowledge and skills to provide additional support to these learners.⁴

This case study is based on and informed by findings from two projects: The Atlas Alliance led Inclusive Education Project in Malawi 2016-2019; and the Save the Children Inclusive Education in Malawi project 2015-2018, which were both designed as a response that would address these challenges. This would involve contributing to a) increased capacity of teachers and parents to address the learning of children with diverse needs, particularly learners with disabilities in a mainstream school environment; b) improved school systems and structures; c) increased demand for and supply of inclusive education within the community through existing mainstream schools, and; d) a pro-inclusive education policy that is supportive to planning and delivery of inclusive education in the country. Both projects represent part of the contribution of Norway to support the inclusive education effort in Malawi as one of the focus countries during the period of the under review 2010–2020.

There has been a disability focus in about 10-15% of the education support provided in Malawi since 2015.

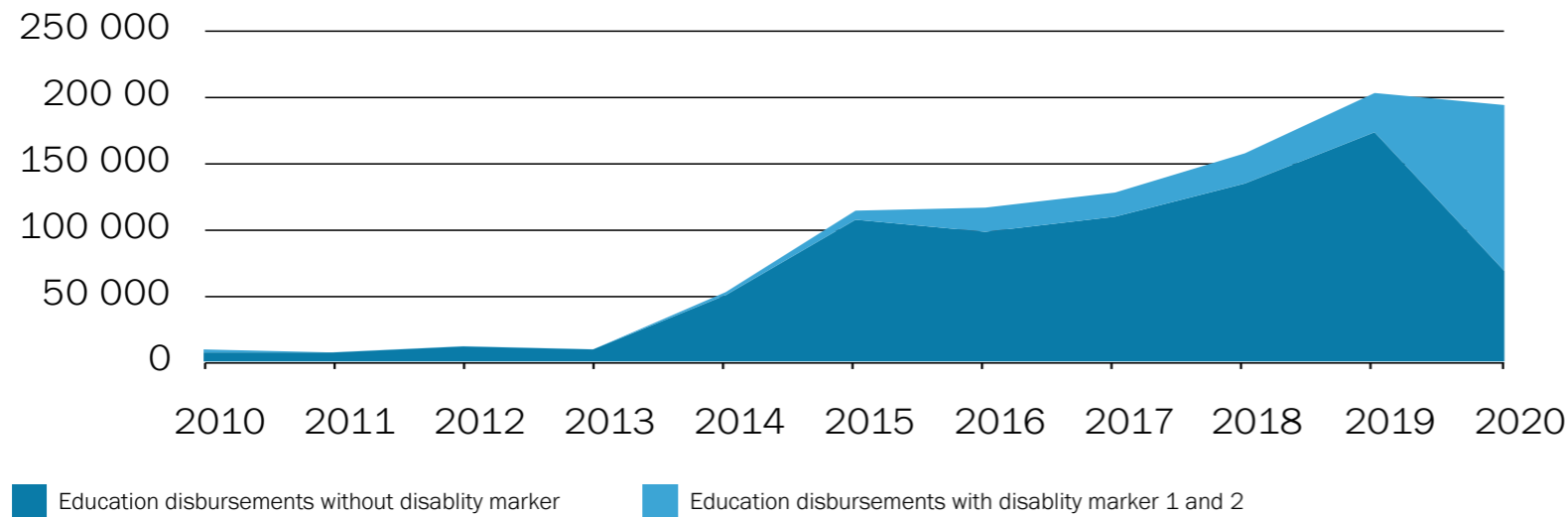
There was steady growth in support to the education sector in Malawi up to 2019. The decline in funding dispersed in 2020 is related with the COVID-pandemic. Notably the disability inclusive share of the educational support increased to 65% in 2020 following the disability coding of a large contribution to the joint UN programme on girls' education (88 million NOK).

In the period of review support has been provided to a wide range of sectors. In 2015, Norway made education a priority sector for collaboration with Malawi and supported the "Education sector implementation plan II (ESIP II) through GPE". Inclusion of children with disabilities was a focus area for the support with the objective of improved education sector coordination to achieve better quality in education, participation by girls and vulnerable and marginalised groups, including those affected by food insecurity.

Specific support was provided to Save the Children Malawi and the campaign for female education programme for girls education, as well as the special needs teacher training programme of Save the Children Malawi, all of which were considered disability inclusive.

⁴ A. Chavuta A.N. Itimu-Phiri S. Chiwaya N. Sikero G. Alindiamao (2008). *Montfort Special Needs Education College and Leonard Cheshire Disability International Inclusive Education project. Baseline Study. August 2008*

Figure 1: Malawi, Share of Education disbursements with disability marker 2010-2020



Support was provided by the Embassy to the joint UN programme on girls education, implemented by UNICEF, World Food Programme and UNFPA, with the aim to ensure quality and retention of girls in school, which had a limited focus on disability inclusion. Voluntary Services Overseas International received funding for the “Unlocking talent through technology” programme. There was also support provided to an inclusive education project implemented by Save the Children, which has contributed to a broad-based inclusive education strategy of the government supporting the ‘leaving no one behind’ agenda.

“Joint program for girls' education II” ended in June 2020, at which point the Embassy requested technical advice, including a field visit, to ensure that the next programme focused on increased quality and new priorities, including learning outcomes and the inclusion of children with disabilities. In addition, assistance and technical support was requested by the Embassy to help in following up the development of a new GPE programme in Malawi.

The major donors to education have established a donor coordinating committee on education which aims to share experiences to avoid the duplication of activities. The Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education. Again, in the Norwegian Embassy the education counsellor (active in the years 2014-2020) had an important role. At the level of coordination, Norway has taken its turn as chair and co-chair of coordination of the development partners group on education and a co-chair of the technical working group on inclusive education. The aims of the latter have been to work with the Government and partners to ensure learning and participation for children living with disabilities. This has also contributed to the development of a policy on inclusive education, through the third phase of the Joint programme for girls education and across the education portfolio. It is emphasised that coordination between global and bilateral development in education has been a priority for the embassy in Lilongwe. Bilateral agreements have enabled the Embassy to follow both global and bilateral funding streams closely and report back to headquarters about achievements and challenges.



1.2 Project/programme objectives, activities, major reported results

1.2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECTS

The Atlas Alliance 2016-2019 (QZA-15/0470) project was comprised of four complementary programme components, namely a) human rights programme; b) inclusive education and learning programme; c) health and rehabilitation programme, and; d) economic empowerment.⁵ This case study focuses on the inclusive education and learning programme component as implemented in Malawi by two Atlas Alliance members – the Norwegian Association of Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP) and Signo Foundation in partnership with local partner organisations including the Malawi Union of the Blind (MUB) (NABP partner); and the Chisombezi Deafblind Centre (CDBC) (Signo's partner). MUB is an organisation of people with disabilities (OPD). It is made up of persons with different degrees of vision loss – blind

and partially sighted. Chisombezi DeafBlind Centre offers specialised care programmes including special needs education to the deafblind children and youth.⁶ For this project, CDBC's interventions were in Salima district which involved St. Francis of Assisi primary School – a mainstream inclusive education primary school – used to serve as a model IE school for other schools in the zone.⁷ St. Francis of Assisi primary school was constructed by CDBC with funding support from church donors in USA and Germany, and from individuals and a school in Norway. The total funding for this project was approximately NOK 7 million.⁸

The Atlas Alliance project 2016-2019 aimed to ensure that persons with disabilities (males and females) access quality inclusive education and learning on the basis of equal opportunity, so that they – persons with disabilities (men, women, boys and girls) gain the skills and knowledge they need to participate effectively in society.⁹ At the national level the project contributed to

the processes that led to the development of the inclusive education policy and capacity strengthening of teachers. At the community level it has led to increased engagement of communities, parents, teachers and persons with disabilities to raise their awareness and knowledge about inclusive education as well as to mobilise them to participate, but also to contribute to inclusive education effort through structures such as school inclusion teams, school management committees, parents and teachers associations and parents support groups.¹⁰

This project strove to galvanise cooperation among the Atlas Alliance partners in Malawi, to work together to influence the planning and delivery of inclusive education, particularly to ensure that a) schools in the target communities include learners with disabilities; b) education authorities provide quality education to learners with disabilities, and; c) children with disabilities get the skills they need for daily living, adequate communication and mobility skills.¹¹

⁵ Atlas Alliance Norad agreement number: QZA-15/0470 End of Project Report 2016-2019

⁶ Interview with the project management

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Atlas Alliance, Norad agreement number: QZA-15/0470 Grant Agreement

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Interview with the Project management

¹¹ QZA – 15/0470 Grant Agreement



The Atlas Alliance projects were delivered through three layers of partnership to reach the target beneficiaries. First at **the national level**, both projects worked in partnership with OPDs in this case MUB and CDBC both disability focused organisations to implement the activities but also in advocacy and policy influence interventions and platforms such as the National IE technical working group. At the **district level**, the implementation involved OPD structures and the District Development Council, the District Education Office (mainly the District Education manager), and the primary school adviser, area development committee and other actors, mainly agencies and organisations that provide complementary services to enable children with disabilities to access education. At the **community/school level**, the partners work with the school management structures i.e., school management committees and parents and teachers associations, village development committees and the parents especially organised under self-help initiatives such as mother groups.

The **Save the Children Inclusive Education in Malawi Project QZA 14/0023 2015-2018** was funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Norway at NOK 40 million.¹²

The main goal of the project was to enable deprived children (including marginalised girls in and those that dropped out of school, children from ultra-poor households, children with disabilities and those children that are excluded from the school system for a variety of reasons) to learn and develop from a safe and inclusive education system. The project interventions included a) increasing the demand and support for inclusive education in the targeted communities; b) strengthening the government systems that leverage the planning and delivery of inclusive education; c) improving teacher education development and support for inclusive education; d) strengthening school level systems and structures for enabling inclusive learning environments in schools; e) action research to inform inclusive education policy and practice; and, f) improving data management systems for inclusive education.¹³

The project was implemented in partnership with a consortium of two faith-based organisations and the Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA) as lead OPD, and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST)– Special Needs Education (SNE) Department, and Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Elderly Affairs (MoGCSW) – Departments of Social Welfare and Disability and Elderly Affairs; as well as teacher training colleges in the country.

At the district level, the project worked with OPDs, like-minded civil society organisations (CSOs), district executive committees and the district education network, while at the community, zone and school levels it engaged with area development committees (ADCs), child protection committees (CPCs), parents and teachers associations (PTAs), school management committees (SMCs) and mother groups and parents.

¹² Save the Children (2019). *Inclusive Education in Malawi Project. End of Project Report 2015-2018*

¹³ Save the Children (2015) *Inclusive Education in Malawi Project Proposal*

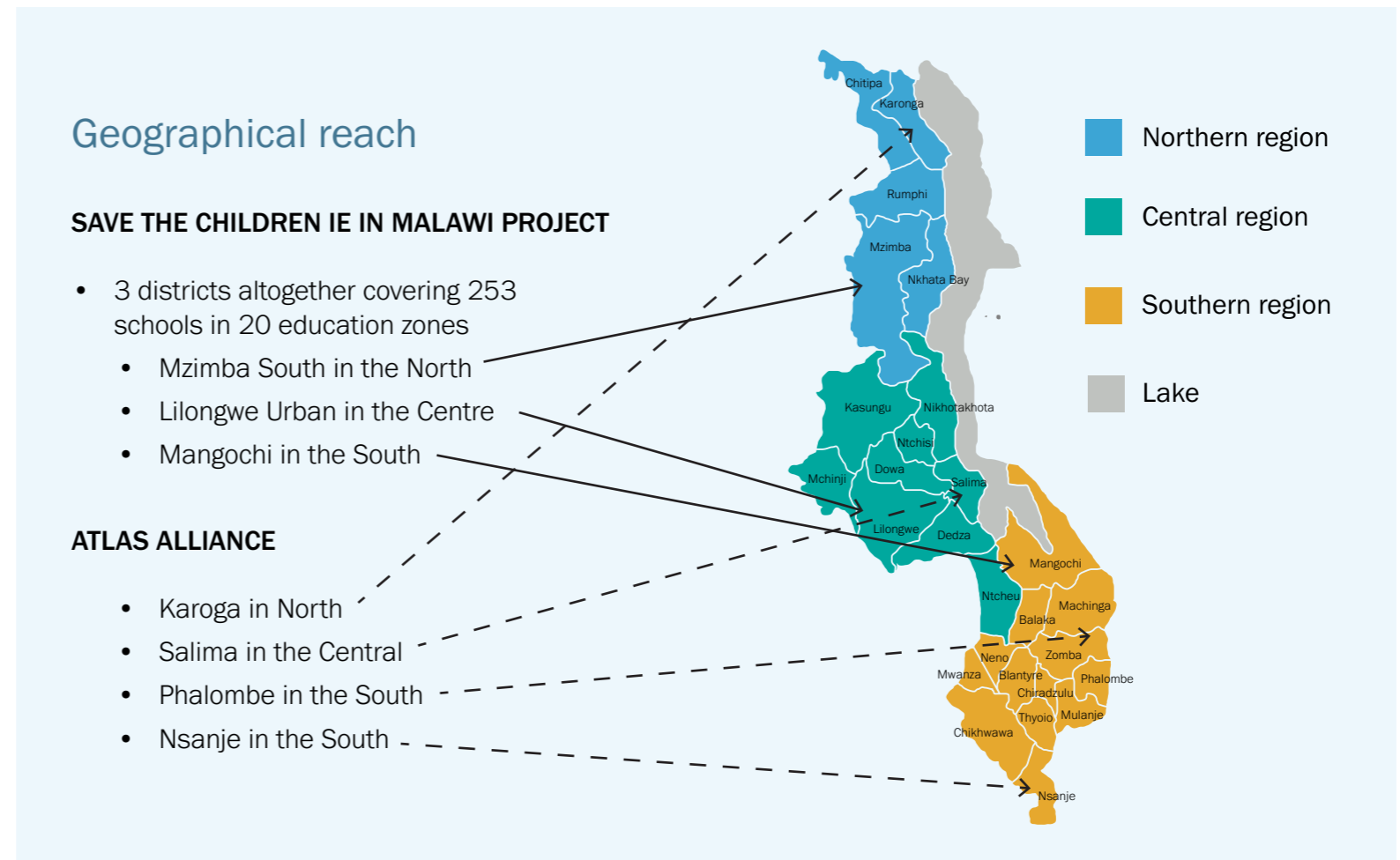


1.2.2 REACH AND COVERAGE

A review of the project documents shows that the Atlas Alliance IE project component, covered 4 districts, namely: Salima by CDBC; Phalombe, Nsanje and Karonga Districts by MUB. The Inclusive education in Malawi project implemented by Save the Children together with three local partners which targeted three districts of Mangochi in the South, Lilongwe Urban in the Central Region and Mzimba South in the North. The project was planned to reach out to 253 schools across the 20 targeted zones (119 in Mzimba South, 121 in Mangochi and 13 in Lilongwe Urban).

Figure 2 shows the target districts in each region by each of the two projects. Suffice to note that the Save the Children project targeting had a zonal concentration approach, taking on many schools in a zone, compared with Atlas Alliance approach which focused on a few individual schools in a district.

Figure 2: Geographical coverage of the two projects



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Malawi-with-districts-and-administrative-zones_fig1_337760557

1.2.3 OVERARCHING RATIONALE, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

A review of project documents and other relevant literature such as the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) and interviews with various stakeholders showed that there were several challenges and barriers that teachers, learners with and without disabilities were facing in schools which had to be addressed to enable effective access to education. These challenges include, among others: lack of knowledge and additional skills in teaching learners with disabilities; inadequate teaching and learning resources; frequent absenteeism from school by learners and high drop-out rates. Other challenges included negative attitudes by the teachers and the community towards learners with disabilities; lack of interest and commitment towards education by learners; inaccessible school infrastructure and lack of assistive devices.¹⁴ Others included inaccessible

school infrastructure, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, water points, playgrounds and fences around the schools; teachers' lack of experience, skills and knowledge to teach diverse classrooms, such as use of sign language, curriculum differentiation skills; lack of early identification, assessment and intervention services; teachers lacking motivation, inadequate teaching-learning and specialized materials; understaffing, large class sizes and inadequate numbers of classrooms in schools; poverty; and long distance to schools.¹⁵

This made the special needs education approach no longer the most tenable way of reaching and providing education to the many children with disabilities in the country.¹⁶ Taking an Inclusive Education approach that ensures the participation of all learners in schooling was therefore considered more appropriate.¹⁷ According to Pinnock H. & Lewis I. (2008), inclusive education is a dynamic process that acknowledges that all children

can learn; respects differences in children: age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability and other cultural and social status; enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children; and promotes an inclusive society¹⁸ The underlying theory behind inclusive education presupposes that IE is achievable:

- a) If the needs of all learners are addressed so that, each learner is allowed an opportunity to succeed.¹⁹
- b) When learners with diverse needs, including learners with disabilities, are provided with appropriate support in an inclusive setting, they can develop a more positive self-concept.²⁰
- c) When inclusive education practices accept learners with all levels of special education needs.

¹⁴ Interviews with staff of various agencies including Save the Children, MUB, MACOHA, and FEDOMA

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Malawi (2017). *National Strategy on Inclusive Education*

¹⁶ A. Chavuta A.N. Itimu-Phiri S. Chiwaya N. Sikero G. Alindiamao (2008). *Montfort Special Needs Education College and Leonard Cheshire Disability International Inclusive Education project. Baseline Study. August 2008*

¹⁷ Interview with Save the Children staff

¹⁸ Pinnock H. & Lewis I., (2008). *Making schools inclusive: How change can happen. Save the Children's experience*

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Schmidt M. & Cagran B. (2008). *Self Concept of students in inclusive settings. International Journal of Special Education Volume 23 No1 pp. 8-17*



- d) The educational opportunities of learners with diverse needs are maximized when these learners receive classroom support, their teachers have the relevant skills, and funding is enough to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources.²¹

Therefore, the overarching goal of the two projects contributing to this case study, that is, the Save the Children inclusive education in Malawi project and the Atlas Alliance project, was to ensure that deprived children/children with disabilities (boys and girls) access inclusive and equitable quality education in a safe and inclusive education system. This would be achieved through the removal of barriers to learning, participation, attendance and achievement as clearly laid out by the National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2016-2021. The two projects therefore aimed to increase access to inclusive education to children often excluded from education by various factors including disability, poverty and other social barriers.

A scan of the two projects shows that the two projects aimed to:

- a) Strengthened capacity of the target schools to deliver quality inclusive education to all learners.
- b) Increased demand for and supply of inclusive education.
- c) Improved school systems and structures that can support delivery of safe and inclusive learning for all children in the school.
- d) A supportive policy and systems that leverage planning, delivery, monitoring and coordination of Inclusive education in the country.

The key interventions implemented through these two projects were:

- a) Policy advocacy and influence at national level aimed creating an enabling policy and supportive policy environment and systems that can leverage planning, delivery, coordination of IE at all levels as well as monitoring and learning (mainly Save the Children project);
- b) Community awareness and sensitization to create demand for IE at community and school level (both projects)
- c) Supporting school systems and structures to ensure that the school environment is attractive, accessible and conducive for all learners, (both projects) and;
- d) Strengthen capacity of teachers (both projects) peers and school heads (Save the Children) to enable them to effectively meet the learning needs of all learners in the school

²¹ Farrell P., Dayson A., Polat F., Hutcheson G., & Gallannaugh F. (2007). *SEN Inclusion and pupil achievement in English schools*. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs Volume 7 No 3 pp. 172-178

1.2.4 MAJOR RESULTS

A review of the two projects progress and of project and evaluation reports show that the two projects have achieved their targets, as summarised below. The major results from the Save the Children project have been more clearly documented than the Atlas Alliance project. Table 1 below shows a snapshot of the major results of the two projects.

The end of project evaluation report of Inclusive Education in Malawi project,²² shows that by 2018 (project end) the project had resulted in an increase in enrolment of learners with diverse needs, from 3,865 at baseline to 11,789 at end term, representing a considerable overall percentage increase of 33.5%. Dropout rates fell significantly at end line in the three impact districts schools. The dropout fell significantly from 6% at baseline and 2.6% at mid-term to 0.4% at end line in the supported schools. For learners with diverse needs, the dropout rate of fell massively from 7.1% at mid-term to 1.76% at end-term. In the same fashion, attendance rate of children in target schools

Table 1: A snapshot of key achievements of the two projects

	Save the Children	Atlas Alliance		Total
		MUB	CDBC	
Number of districts targeted	3	4	1	8
Number of zones covered	20	N/A	N/A	
Number of schools served	253	7	3	263
Number of learners with disabilities	11,789 ²³	227	84	
Number of teachers trained	1217	189	69	
Number of learners trained (peer to peer)	1946	N/A	N/A	
Number of resource rooms built/ rehabilitated	9	N/A	3	
Number of schools assisted to have accessible toilets	10	6	2	16
Number of children being served by the resource centres	1,863	227	245	2335
Number of children served with assistive devices	291	78	xx	

²² Save the Children (2019) Inclusive Education in Malawi Project. End of Project Report (2015-2018). July 2019

²³ This includes all learners with diverse needs but the actual documented children with disabilities stated to be benefiting from the resource centres is put at 1,863 (946 boys; 917 girls)

increased from 97.4% at mid term review a considerable 99.6% at end-line, denoting the degree to which the inclusivity of the schools in the target districts have ensured the safety and well-being of learners.

1.3 Roles of national and local stakeholders in the two projects

The two projects shared stakeholders with the only difference being the focus and level of targeting. While Save the Children was more involving and targeted stakeholders from national to community level, Atlas Alliance mainly involved its national level implementing partners (Malawi Union of the Blind and Chisombezi Deafblind Centre). The two Atlas Alliance implementing partners in turn focused more on involving partners at district and community/school levels since their interventions had a lesser footprint at national level. The Save the Children project had a strong national level policy advocacy and influence footprint.

Table 2: Stakeholders and roles

	Stakeholder	Roles
Save the Children IE Project	Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST)	The role of the MoEST was to provide policy and strategic oversight on issues of IE; assist with provision of pre-service and in-service for teachers on IE through Department of Teacher Education and Development. It was also responsible for providing teacher supervisory support by primary education advisors; mentor teachers on IE by Itinerant teachers working as mentors and coordinate referral system for IE issues by the Department of IE and SNE; conduct regular coordination of school based activities by district education managers (DEMs) and lead national level steering committee activities; as well as provide bursary support for the ultra-poor for the ultra-poor children; and train its partner agencies on IE referral system and how to respond effectively to referrals received.
Save the Children IE Project	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW)	The role of the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW) was to provide technical and policy advice on issues of disability, gender and early childhood development; identify deprived children; coordinate community mobilization with primary education advisors and specialist Teachers on IE through district social welfare officers and community development assistants; provide technical and policy advice on issues of child protection; and support social cash transfers for the ultra-poor households.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance	Ministry of Health and Population Services (MoHPS)	The role of the Ministry of Health and Population Services (MoHPS) was to assess exclusion factors related to disability; provide sexual reproductive health information and services to girls; and advise on and provision of assistive devices.



Table 2: Stakeholders and roles

	Stakeholder	Roles
Save the Children IE Project	National IE Technical Working Group	Mainly to advise the Government of Malawi, particularly the MoEST on matters concerning planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of IE in the country.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance	Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA)	As a statutory organisation with technical expertise on community based rehabilitation (CBR), the role of Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) in the project was to provide technical expertise on CBR; referrals on disability issues; ensure mainstreaming of disability issues in all sectors of the government; support in identifying, assessing and referring deprived children through its experience with CBR. MACOHA district offices and staff were involved by the two projects in the activities at the district level, particularly for coordination purposes by the Atlas Alliance project given that the two implementing partners do not have district level offices.
Save the Children IE Project	Implementing Partner Organisations	The implementing partners were responsible for implementing the project activities in the target districts. These include Livingstonia Synod in the North, Blantyre Synod in the South, and Federation of Disability Organisations of Malawi (FEDOMA) in the centre. In addition, they were responsible for focusing on community mobilization and identification of deprived children beyond the work of MACOHA.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	FEDOMA	As an umbrella/ coordinating body FEDOMA provides a unifying voice for organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) and their membership. In addition, FEDOMA in addition was responsible for providing technical input on disability issues across the project. It was expected to be the lead agency for implementing national and community advocacy efforts for the rights of children with disabilities, but also girls and ultra-poor that are excluded from attending school. In addition, FEDOMA was expected to provide advice on the production of the inclusive education manuals and trainings; sensitise the community on IE; and support monitoring efforts of the project activities.
Atlas Alliance Project	Malawi Union of Blind and CDBC	MUB and CDBC as partners for Norwegian Association the Blind and Partially Sighted and SIGNO respectively were the national partner organisations in Malawi responsible for implementing the Atlas Alliance project activities in the country.



Table 2: Stakeholders and roles

	Stakeholder	Roles
Atlas Alliance Project	Teacher Training Colleges	The CDBC/Signo project has worked closely with Montfort Special Needs Education College (MSNEC) since 2010. In 2010-2015 CDBC/Signo collaborated with MSNEC to open a diploma program on deafblindness. The collaboration has contributed to the training of special needs education teachers. During the current project period 2016-2019 the collaboration focused on reviewing and revising the syllabus for the diploma program. Since 2014 a total of 35 teachers (F:8, M:27) have graduated in Malawi through this effort.
Save the Children IE Project	Teacher Training Colleges	Three teacher training colleges; Montfort (Grant-aided), Machinga and Lilongwe Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) – both government managed TTCs – were responsible for providing the short-term service contracts to provide specific support in the development of inclusive education curriculum related materials and in-service training modules for teachers.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	District Education Committee (DEC)	Being the entry point for all education activities in the district, the DEC provides and oversight role over the district steering function for the IE programme. This structure was an entry point and used for the two projects.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	District Education Office Manager	Provides an oversight of all primary and secondary schools in the district. The two projects used the office of the district education manager, and most especially the district inclusive education/SNE officer in the mobilisation, organisation and delivery of IE training and continuous professional development activities.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	Primary Education Advisors (PEAs)	The primary role of PEAs is to conduct monthly supervisory visits to schools to collect enrolment data, identify any issues related to school infrastructure and teaching needs; provides general support to teachers. In the IE project the role of PEA was sensitise teachers on the importance of inclusive education as well as provide on-going sensitisation of schools and communities about the programme.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	Head teachers and deputy head teachers	The role was to provide supportive supervision to teachers, gives school data to PEA each month as well as overall responsibility for school leadership on inclusive approaches. At school level, the head teacher and deputy head teachers have been the pivot for the school level project activities.

Table 2: Stakeholders and roles

	Stakeholder	Roles
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	School Management Committee	Provide representation in the bursary committees and assist in the delivery of the community mobilisation activities and open days. The two projects targeted the school management committees for awareness to ensure that they support the school level IE initiatives.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	Parents and Teachers Association	Raise awareness and community mobilization; and engage in open days to better understand IE. The two projects also targeted the PTAs as a structure for mobilising the participation of parents in the project activities at school and the community.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	IE classroom Teacher	The role of the classroom teacher was to collaborate with the specialist teachers as inclusive education Leads in implementing the inclusive education agenda at school and classroom level; coordinate with case managers to support needs of deprived children; track children in the communities; utilize IE approaches in the classroom; participate in trainings; and engage parents through open days to better understand IE.
Save the Children IE Project and Atlas Alliance Project	Mothers Group	The role of mothers groups was to support girls to attend school; follow up with girls who are absent/drop out; ensure that girls are getting the full benefit of the project by prioritizing attendance and working diligently in supporting girls to stay in school and learn. The two projects involved the mothers groups at school level to address the special gender needs for the girls with disabilities particularly those related to sexual and reproductive health.

1.4 Relevant policies, guidelines, etc. applied in the project/programmes

The **Constitution of Malawi, 1995** as amended contains specific provisions that directly address disability. Section 13(g) empowers the Malawi government to take necessary actions or measures to ensure full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society. Sections 20(1) and 20(2) prohibits discrimination of anybody based on disability, and implicitly recognizes the equal status of persons with disabilities to that of everyone else. Section 23(4) obliges government to guarantee and safeguard the safety and security of children with disabilities, and to ensure provision of adequate support and/or care to the children. Section 30(2) enjoins the state to take all necessary measures for the realisation of the right to development. Such measures shall include, amongst other things, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, shelter, employment and infrastructure. Section 31(3) provides for enjoyment of persons with disabilities of any benefits on the same footing with other persons without disabilities at workplaces. The employers are expressly given an obligation to treat all their employees equally where equal work of equal value is involved.



The **Persons with Disabilities Disability Act, 2012**, serves as a tool for implementing constitutional provisions and enforcement of the National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (NPEOPD) through the promotion and protection of their rights. It provides for, among others, the development of accessible communication formats and adoption of Sign language as an official language; development of universal standards of accessibility; equitable access to education and regular data collection on disability to inform planning. The Act domesticated most of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which Malawi had ratified in 2009.

The **Education Act of 2013**,²⁴ promotes **equal access to education for all people in Malawi “irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability or any other discriminatory characteristics” and provides for tuition-free education in Government schools and compulsory education for every child below the age of eighteen (18)**. The Act also promotes the harmonisation

of national education policies and policy guidelines such as Free primary education (FPE) Policy, Inclusive education policy guidelines, and Decentralization policy. The Act aligns the education priorities in Government of Malawi's vision 2020 and the Malawi and Growth and Development Strategies (MDGS).²⁵

Malawi Vision 2020,²⁶ provides a long-term development perspective for Malawi which envisioned intended progress in relation to the country's development by the year 2020. It focused on equitable redistribution of income to address disparities in access to among others, education, employment and business opportunities between people in the urban and rural areas, persons with disabilities and the non-disabled and between men and women. The policy sought to improve access, quality and equity at the various levels of the education system by building capacity in the education system through training of specialist teachers and putting up more accessible school infrastructure. The strategy also highlighted similar intentions for the development vocational

training education, youths, sports, and others including enactment of relevant legislation on disability. The NPEOPDS and the Disability Act are some of the outcomes of the implementation of the Malawi Vision 2020 agenda.²⁷

The **National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (NPEOPD)** recognises constitutional and UN provisions and declarations on disability. The policy promotes mainstreaming of disability as an integral component of national and sectoral policies, programming including monitoring and reporting arrangements. The policy comprises 13 specific priority policy areas for mainstreaming disability in sectoral policies and programmes as follows: disability prevention, early identification and intervention, rehabilitation, accessibility, transport, information and communication, education and training, economic empowerment, social welfare and social protection, self-representation and participation, sports, recreation and entertainment, housing, research and appropriate technology and HIV and AIDS.²⁸

²⁴ Government of Malawi (2013). Education Act. Lilongwe: Government of Malawi

²⁵ Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare Persons with Disabilities (2018). *The National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMS&IP), 2018 - 2023*

²⁶ <http://www.sdn.org.mw/malawi/vision-2020/>

²⁷ ibid

²⁸ Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (2006). *National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*



The National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMS&IP) 2018-2023. The NDMS&IP guides the public and private sector to effectively mainstream disability in their respective policies, plans, strategies and programmes at all levels of national development. It promotes equitable access to services such as education, health, livelihoods and empowerment for persons with disability. It particularly focuses on the need to mainstream disability in all sectors.²⁹

The **National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2018-2020**,³⁰ highlights the commitments to inclusive education and focusing on special needs as a crosscutting issue. It details interventions that are being implemented in the education sector to improve access to education by children with disabilities.³¹

The **National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) 2017-2021**,³² spells out the interventions that are being implemented over the period 2017-2021 to improve or strengthen the delivery of inclusive education in Malawi.³³ The NSIE has a number of outcomes, such as increasing capacity for inclusive education, increasing the number of learners in primary and secondary education, and improving financing availability.

Furthermore, during the 2018 Global Disability Summit,³⁴ the Malawi Government committed to: improve early identification assessment and interventions for children with disabilities by 2021; undertake capacity building of teachers to manage learners with disabilities at all levels by 2022; and train caregivers in inclusive early childhood development by 2022.³⁵

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) 2017-2022, identifies improving education as one of the priority areas and it is considered a pre-requisite for socio-economic development. The Government's ambition is to improve access to quality primary, secondary and tertiary education through increased infrastructure, better quality teaching, and improved governance and accountability structures.³⁶

²⁹ Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare. (2018). *National disability mainstreaming strategy and implementation plan 2018-2023*. Lilongwe: Ministry of gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare.

³⁰ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2018). *National Education Strategic Plan 2018-2020*. Lilongwe: Ministry of education, Science and technology

³¹ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2017). *National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017-2021*. Lilongwe: Ministry of education, Science and technology.

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/731878/Global-Disability-Summit-Summary-Commitments_2.pdf

³⁵ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020) *National Education Sector Investment Plan, 2020-2030*

³⁶ <https://malawi.un.org/en/42159-malawi-growth-and-development-strategy-mgds-iii-2017-2022>



2

Findings related to relevance



For this case study we use the OCED DAC definition of relevance as the extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.³⁷

2.1 Alignment with the need for inclusive education

The two projects were a response to the need for ensuring that the hitherto large numbers of vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, that were excluded gain access to education in the mainstream education stream using IE approaches. Interviews with various stakeholders including staff of Save the Children, MUB and CDBC, teachers, parents, members of National IE technical working group, district officials and members of local OPD branches showed that, although the Government of Malawi (GoM) had for almost two decades responded to the education needs of persons with disabilities, the results had remained limited in scope and reach. The main thrust

of the education for persons with disabilities had remained through special needs education, which was limited in terms of its effectiveness. It could only reach few learners with disabilities, thus excluding many other learners including those enrolled in mainstream schools. The continued focus on SNE was therefore inconsistent with the national aspirations as espoused in policy orientation particularly from about 2015. Some of the gaps noted through interviews with various stakeholders showed that SNE was only reaching a few children and but also was unfordable for many parents. Additionally, many children with mild to moderate disabilities who could benefit from education through mainstream education were not accessing quality learning and often dropping out of school because they were not properly assessed to determine a strategy that could accommodate their learning needs in the classroom. Moreover, the classroom teachers lacked requisite skills to deliver effective learning for children with diverse needs. The projects were therefore relevant in that they represented an appropriate response to the needs of such excluded children.

³⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revise-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>



2.2 Alignment with international aspirations towards inclusive education

The GoM signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, ratified it in 2009. Accordingly enacted the Disability Act in 2012, developed the National disability mainstreaming strategy in 2012, as well as the strategies such as the National Inclusive Education Strategy 2016-2021 as a way of both domesticating but also fulfilling its commitment to articles 7,³⁸ and 24 (1) which states that: “the countries agree that all people with disabilities have the right to education” and (2) which mandates the state parties to ensure that: (a) “People with disabilities are not excluded from education because of their disability, and children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary and secondary education because of their disability”,³⁹ while (4) requires state parties “to take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education”.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Malawi as a member of the UN, is committed to the fulfilment of the international commitments to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDG 4, and in particular target 4.5 in particular, requires governments to “ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations,” target 4.8 to “build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”⁴¹

“We have mobilized 14 children with disabilities that have gone to secondary schools and about 40 children that have visual impairment that have enrolled in primary schools. At the Nazombe primary school we have 30 learners with visual impairment; and 35 with other disabilities, altogether 65 children with disabilities.”

– A female visual impairment participant Phalombe district MUB branch.

³⁸ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. September 2016.

³⁹ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. September 2016.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4 https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/?gclid=CjwKCAjw14uVBhBEEiwAaufYx5Ya9qOYHlHAV9Pt2vRrgE3Kg0FeIVXySoS3PZsPieCa1ifH5un0LRoCcolQAvD_BwE



2.3 Alignment with the national goals and commitment to inclusive education

As noted above, the projects were aligned with the strategic goals of the following government strategic policies and programmes.

- Malawi Vision 2020, which sought to improve access, quality and equity at the various levels of the education system by building capacity in the education system through training of specialist teachers and putting up more accessible school infrastructure.
- The National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (NPEOPD) which among others education and training,
- The National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMS&IP) 2018-2023 which promotes equitable access to services such as education.
- The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2018-2020,⁴² which commits to inclusive education and focusing on special needs as a crosscutting issue.
- The National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) 2017-2021,⁴³ which aims to improve or strengthen the delivery of inclusive education in Malawi.
- Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) 2017-2022. Improving education is one of the priority areas of the MGDS (2017-2022) and considered a pre-requisite for socio-economic development. The Government's ambition is to improve access to quality primary, secondary and tertiary education through increased infrastructure, better quality teaching, and improved governance and accountability structures.⁴⁴

⁴² Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2018). National Education Strategic Plan 2018-2020. Lilongwe: Ministry of education, Science and technology

⁴³ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2018). National Education Strategic Plan 2018-2020. Lilongwe: Ministry of education, Science and technology

⁴⁴ Government of Malawi (2018). Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III 2017-2022, 13th March 2018



3

Findings related to effectiveness



We define effectiveness as the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, considering their relative importance.⁴⁵

3.1 Increased enrolment children with disabilities in schools

As indicated in sub section 1.2.4 above, the ultimate objective of these two projects was to increase access to education to children with disabilities and other vulnerable children in the target areas. This was expected to include improved school environment and systems, and positive attitudes of communities, parents, teachers and fellow children. It was expected that the target schools would serve as a model for other schools in the intervention area to copy and hence increase their capacity to supply IE, and in combination with the sensitised communities and parents, increase the demand and hence enrol more children with disabilities in the neighbourhood. In the same vein, the outcomes and lessons drawn from the projects would be used for advocacy purposes to influence government policy on IE.

In as much as this may not be attributed solely to these two individual projects, the interventions in the inclusive education sector supported by the Norway over the last decade have contributed to a significant impact to inclusive education in the target schools and zones. A review of the Save the Children's inclusive education in Malawi project end of project evaluation report showed an increase in enrolment of children with special education needs from 3,865 (baseline) to 11,789 (end-line), representing a 67.2% increase in the target schools.

“We have mobilized 14 children with disabilities that have gone to secondary schools and about 40 children that have visual impairment that have enrolled in primary schools. At the Nazombe Primary School we have 30 learners with visual impairment; and 35 with other disabilities, altogether 65 children with disabilities.”

– A female visual impairment participant Phalombe district MUB branch.

The inclusive education in Malawi end of project report and the Atlas Alliance end of project reports attribute this increase in enrolment to the engagements that the project had with different stakeholders at National, District and Community levels to raise awareness of IE and thereby creating demand and support for inclusive education in the targeted districts.⁴⁶

The end of project evaluation report for the Atlas Alliance does not provide consolidated statistics data on enrolment but the MUB progress reports and data collected from St. Francis of Assisi primary school show an increase in enrolment of children with disabilities in the schools.

Interviews with Save the Children staff and staff of implementing partner agencies showed that the project had increased enrolment, retention, completion and transition. For example, there was evidence of more children transitioning from ECDs to primary schools, because of the early identification and intervention, but also more children (boys and girls) with disabilities completing and transitioning to secondary schools. This was also attributed to the reforms in the assessment

⁴⁵ OECD-DAC (2019) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation - Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

⁴⁶ Save the Children (2019). Inclusive Education in Malawi Project. End of Project Report (2015-2018). July 2019



(examination) of children with special learning needs, where Malawi national examinations board was allocating more time to learners with disabilities.⁴⁷

Visits to a few schools and interviews with teachers showed different scenarios regarding enrolment of children with disabilities in the schools visited. For example, at St. Francis of Assisi primary school, in 2017/2018, the school opened with an enrolment of a total of 22 learners with disabilities (boys=12; girls = 10) and in the year 2019/2020 the enrolment had increased to 40 (boys =18; girls = 22).

Analysis of the available enrolment data and observation of the learners with disabilities in the schools visited shows that the majority of these children had mild levels of disabilities that could easily be managed through minor adjustments by the classroom teacher, for instance to know where to position and sit the learner with visual and hearing impairments, or which group to align the child with learning difficulties etc. This was attributed to their ability to assess their learners and then respond to their learning needs.⁴⁸

The increase in enrolment of learners therefore may not be solely due the attracting of new learners with disabilities but mainly due to the more effective assessment of learners by the classroom teacher, which means that these children would presumably still have been in school, but not accessing effective learning.

That said, this is not meant to minimize the value of the contribution of these projects, but rather explains the benefit of correct early assessment of learners needs and planning accordingly to assist them to achieve learning, which may as well contribute to enabling improved learning experiences and interest of the learners which may explain the cited increased retention and completion rates.

A scan through the raw data from the schools visited and observation of the schools in action revealed that there were lesser numbers of children with moderate to profound physical disabilities, and profound visual, and learning difficulties. The teachers interviewed in the three schools visited categorically stated that the

children with more profound disabilities such as those with severe mobility challenges, blindness, self-care challenges, multiple disabilities such as deafblindness and autism could not be managed in the current nature of mainstream classes. First, because the trained IE teachers did not have the skills required to manage their learning needs in the class, and second, the learning environment with such over-crowded classrooms, the poor state of toilet facilities and other hindrances mean that schools cannot sustain their learning needs. That is the reason the GoM has taken a hybrid (referred to as “twin-track”) approach,⁴⁹ which promotes both Inclusive education while still maintaining SNE schools to cater for the learners with profound disabilities.

“The training of teachers is not deep enough. For instance, a child that is blind and needs to use braille, cannot be helped, because the school lacks such equipment.”

– FGD with teachers, Kaphuta primary school

⁴⁷ Interviews with FEDOMA, MACOHA and MUB staff.

⁴⁸ Interview with teachers in Kaphuta Primary School

⁴⁹ The Malawi Inclusive Education strategy uses the term “twin-track” and defines it as a strategy that stresses “the need for educating all learners in an inclusive setting; however, some learners with SEN will continue receiving their education in special settings as the system moves towards full inclusion” (NSIE 2017-2021)

For that matter, the teachers observed that such children were still excluded even from the target schools, since they are considered candidates for SNE institutions.

“Some children both girls and boys with disabilities that need specialised training and care are still out of school, particularly those whose parents cannot afford to take them to such institutions”

– FGD with teachers, Kaphuta primary school

Furthermore, reviews of project progress reports from the two projects and interviews with teachers showed that, besides enrolment, the retention and completion rates of children with disabilities in their schools had improved. The teachers attributed the retention to the change of attitude of parents, communities and peers to support the learning process of their children, but more so, because of the gained skills, they were making the learning experience more interesting and attractive to all children.⁵⁰

“Some teachers and children have been sensitised. There is change of attitude. The teachers have also received the training. They are better skilled.”

– FGD with teachers, Kaphuta primary school

The parents interviewed in Mzimba and Salima, asserted that because of the sensitisation they received, they were now interested in, and were participating more in the learning process of their children. A parent participant in a focus group discussion at St. Francis of Assisi primary school, Salima remarked:

“As parents we share with fellow parent our self-help parents' group, through which we share ideas. We sometimes take turns to come to school to support our teachers. We also follow-up our children to check on their learning progress.”

– Male parent

“As a parent I have learnt to be more responsible. I know I must transport my child to school. And at times I help other children too.”

– Male parent

However, attitudinal change needs a protracted strategy. For example, focus group discussions with learners with disabilities showed that they still face repulsive attitudes from their peers at school, while others are still out of school because of the non-supportive attitudes of their parents.

“Sometimes we get teased in our school about our disabilities. For example, some children call me ‘opanda chala’ (fingerless), because I miss some fingers.”

– A male participant in a focus group discussion with boys, Migowi primary school

⁵⁰ Teacher participant, Kaphuta Primary School

“I also do not like it when other children tease me and call me names, especially when I perform better than them in class. They think I beat them because they think teacher favours me and because of sitting in front of class yet I am tall.”

– Girl with visual impairment, focus group discussion with girls from St. Francis of Assisi, Nakaledza and Mnema primary schools.

Negative attitudes of parents were also cited by the group of persons with disabilities as a challenge they still have to deal with when mobilising parents to take children with disabilities to school. “They consider children with disabilities useless”,⁵¹ and when “we fail to convince the parents, we involve the village heads and other stakeholders”.⁵²

“There are other children that are not attending school in the community because for instance one of the girls is used by the mother to do baby-sitting for young ones. Others do not come to school because their parents do not see value in them. Others are not in school because they lack mobility aids.”

– Focus group discussion with girls, Migowi primary school.

Besides negative attitudes, some children are not in school because they lack mobility aids. Indeed, one of the challenges to inclusion is lack of access to assistive devices to aid mobility such as wheelchairs; communication support such as hearing aids; and vision aids such as spectacles, magnifying glasses as well as equipment to aid learning such as Braille Machines, Orbit Readers, etc. Interviews with various stakeholders referred to MACOHA as an agency that should support learners with disabilities with grants to acquire such devices.

“Shortage of learning materials and assistive devices such as Perkins Braille and paper are hard to get because they are expensive. The parents cannot even manage writing frames. However, even if they did have, the teachers do not know how to read braille.”

– Participant in a focus group discussion with members of an OPD in Phalombe.

On one hand, the challenge of shortage of assistive devices seemed more pronounced in Phalombe and Salima, both Atlas Alliance impact districts, than in Mzimba which is a Save the Children impact district. This is possibly because Save the Children project procured and supplied assistive devices for learners with disabilities in its impact schools. However, assistive devices remain out of reach for many learners with disabilities in the other districts all over the country.

⁵¹ Female participant (person with disabilities) in a focus group with Phalombe MUB Branch

⁵² Male participant (person with disabilities) in a focus group with Phalombe MUB Branch



Although there are many referral service providers in the country to support the provision of assistive devices such as ABC Hearing Clinic, Sound seekers, Starkey Foundation, Skard Special Needs Support, BICO and Sandithandiza, 500 Miles Orthotic and Prosthetic Centre, they remain unaffordable for many parents.⁵³

3.2 Policy change

An in-depth analysis of various documents from the two grantees (Save the Children and Atlas Alliance), showed that during the period 2015-2018 their interventions had an influence on the policy landscape. Different stakeholders interviewed at national level, including staff of Save the Children and its partners, MUB, MACOHA and FEDOMA all asserted that their advocacy work contributed to influencing the development of the 5-year National IE Strategy 2017-2021.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the engagement with government has contributed to the changes such as the MoEST's decision to restructure the department of SNE to become a department of IE and SNE, which is an indicator

of the government's commitment to promoting IE.⁵⁵ Another result cited regarding policy includes the changes in the Education management information systems (EMIS) to start capturing disability disaggregated data by adopting tools developed with support by Save the Children.

“At national level we have influenced policy review – we now have a national IE strategy. We have an IE department which transitioned from department of SNE. EMIS now captures disaggregated data that captures learners with disabilities and other vulnerabilities. At district level there is improved monitoring and now there is disaggregated data because there are EMIS officers at district and zone levels”

– Interview with a staff of an implementing partner, and member of the National technical working group.

That said, there were differences in the approaches to policy influence between the two projects. On one

hand, Save the Children recognised the gaps in policy on IE in the country and opted to commit resources to work with different partners to engage with government to influence policy change. Besides, it had a much clearer advocacy strategy on IE. On the other hand, the major thrust of the Atlas Alliance partners in the country has been to “ensure policy implementation through demonstrating how inclusive models work, to point out gaps and deficiencies in the situation on the ground, and to persuade the government to allocate financial and human resources”.⁵⁶ However, there is no clear strategy that links the advocacy effort at the community level with the national level policy development processes, either at individual OPD like MUB or joint effort through FEDOMA. As such, interviews with partners at the national level showed very little or no documented MUB and CDDB policy influence footprint at the national level,⁵⁷ although there is general acknowledgement of the contribution of OPDs “towards the agenda setting for a strong national policy framework in Malawi and contributed technical inputs for the NSIE (2017)”.⁵⁸

⁵³ Save the Children (2018). *Inclusive Education in Malawi. End of Project Report*

⁵⁴ Interview with various staff of Save the Children, Implementing partners, and members of the Technical Working Group

⁵⁵ Interviews with members of the national Technical Working Group

⁵⁶ Maxton Tsoka (2018) *The disability field in Malawi: from single organisation interventions to collective impact?*

⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁸ *ibid*



Overall, however, policy change is a protracted and concerted process, what is important is to start and energise the process, as one participant remarked

“We caused the Government (of Malawi) to appreciate inclusive education as the policy (to pursue). We created a network of stakeholders supporting and appreciating IE. (And) created examples that IE is possible and through it one can reach many children that would otherwise be left behind.”

– Interview with a project staff.

3.3 Capacity development

Regarding strengthening of governance and management of structures from MoEST to the community, the support from Norway contributed to the reorganisation of the MoEST to ensure better planning and delivery of IE. The end-term review of the Atlas Alliance project established that the project was not implemented in isolation but was linked to the education policy environment in Malawi towards inclusive education.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the MoEST reorganised and restructured from having its central focus on SNE to addressing the need for planning better to deliver IE for all learners locked out of the education system while still catering for the needs of learners with severe disabilities. A department for special needs education was restructured into the department of Inclusive Education thus expanding its scope to address the education of all vulnerable children.⁶⁰ Interviews with stakeholders, for example, cited the new leadership of the department to be more skilled and focused to provide a more strategic leadership to the department.⁶¹

Of particular importance too, were teacher training curriculum reforms where the GoM committed to pilot the reform in Lilongwe and Mchinga training colleges and thereafter would roll it to all other teacher training colleges in the country, which is yet to be realised.⁶² Through the Save the Children project, three teacher training colleges, that is; Montfort, Mchinga and Lilongwe were supposed to pilot the integration of the project sponsored IE pre-service training modules. Although, the modules have not yet been fully rolled out and integrated in all the teacher training colleges, the content was being used in the in-service training conducted under the project and the continuous professional development sessions.

For mainstream schools to offer effective inclusive education, changes in attitudes, competence and practices of all stakeholders including the teachers, the SMCs, the PTAs, and parents, as well as children, in addition specialist teachers. Interviews conducted in the three sites during the country visit showed SMCs and PTAs and mother groups were sensitised and have been involved in most meetings and decisions regarding

⁵⁹ Haug, M, Tsoka.M, and Acharya. B, (2019) The Atlas Alliance: the effectiveness and results of advocacy and inclusive education in Malawi and Nepal. Real time evaluation of the Atlas Alliance, 2016-2019.

⁶⁰ Save the Children (2018). *End of Project Evaluation Report*.

⁶¹ Interview with development partners

⁶² Interviews with Save the Children Staff



implementation of IE activities within their schools. Project reports from Save the Children and MUB and interviews conducted with parents and school teachers showed that most of the awareness and sensitisation was done through meetings with, and open days/ feedback meetings targeted to specific groups such as SMCs, PTAs and mother groups, local leaders, teachers, learners' representatives village headmen, religious leaders, child protection workers, hosting PEAs and assistant centre coordinators. During such open days, different activities were performed by learners, parents and mother group members with key messages on IE and child rights. This created awareness and understanding of key issues negatively affecting children's education and how different stakeholders can collectively promote the IE practices in schools and in their communities. One traditional chief that participated in one of the FGDs in Salima, summed the results of community sensitisation thus:

“ As a chief I was motivated and started mobilising the community to ensure that the children with disabilities are brought to school like any other child. ”

– Traditional chief.

In Phalombe, the local branch of the organisation of persons with disabilities (MUB) was engaged in mobilisation of communities and awareness raising to ensure that children with disabilities are enrolled in schools.

“ Our role in the project was to raise awareness of the communities in the district about the need to take children with disabilities to school, mobilise children with disabilities from their homes to schools, and generally people with disabilities should be included in all aspects of society ”

– Male member of Executive Committee for MUB Phalombe district branch.

At the community/school level, both projects have contributed to the following efforts: training of classroom teachers to enable them to gain basic skills to develop IE lesson plans and manage better the learning process of learners in IE classes.⁶³ Both projects therefore invested in training of head teachers, classroom teachers and even children as peer educators to augment IE delivery in the target schools. Review of the project reports shows that Save the Children inclusive education in Malawi project trained total of 1227 (834 males and 393 females) school leads (head teachers, deputy head teachers and section heads), 1217 (822 males and 395 females) classroom teachers, and 1946 (969 males and 977 females) school children as peer educators.⁶⁴ MUB reports for 2017 and 2019 show that a total of 379 (184 males and 195 females) teachers were trained under the project, 69 were trained under the CDBC project component. In the Save the Children project the training was conducted with facilitators from the training colleges supported by SNE teachers in the district, while in the Atlas Alliance districts it was conducted by facilitators organised through the office of the

⁶³ FGDs with teachers

⁶⁴ ibid



district education manager. In either case, interviews with teachers showed that the training was not standardised. For example, on one hand the Save the Children sponsored in-and pre-service training used the IE source book, which is more structured with six units including:

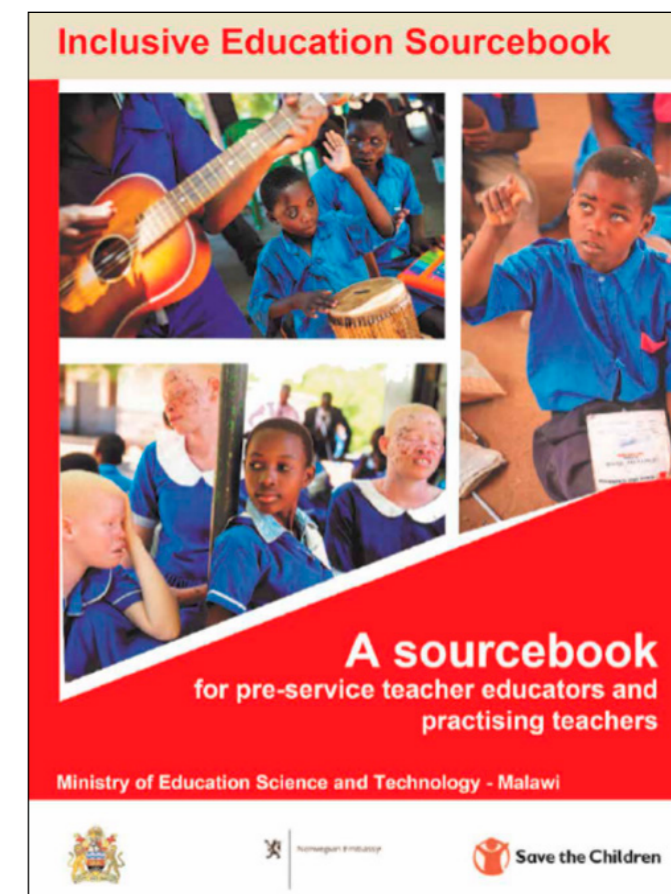
- UNIT 1 Inclusive education:
- UNIT 2 Identification of deprived children and case management in IE
- UNIT 3 Inclusive pedagogy
- UNIT 4 Inclusive school management
- UNIT 5 Working with parents, families, communities and other stakeholders to create an inclusive learning environment
- UNIT 6 Psychosocial care and support for deprived children in schools

On the other hand, the Atlas Alliance MUB supported training in their 2018 report shows that the training of teachers covered the following content:⁶⁵

- National and international legal instruments on education of children with disabilities
- Practical experiences on teaching children with disabilities
- Network support through parents, teacher/learner and learner to learner relationship including the community support towards the education of children with disabilities
- Functional assessment of children with disabilities
- Demonstration of practical teaching strategies on child centred approach
- Inclusive lesson planning and differentiation
- How to make and use effective teaching aids that cost nothing

However, the teachers that participated in FGDs in Kaphuta, Migowi, St. Francis of Assisi primary schools showed that the training given to them as part of the project had equipped them with the basic inclusive teaching knowledge, skills and practices. As a result, they were able to assess the learning needs, arrange and

Figure 3: MoEST IE Sourcebook



⁶⁵ Interview with MUB staff

position their learners in their classrooms to meet their learning needs. They also reported to be allowing more time to the learners with diverse needs where needed.

“Initially there was poor placement of children in the classroom. The principle was shortest in front and tallest at the back. But now we assess the children and place/position them better where they can for example see better or hear better and learn better from their peers. As a result, we are seeing improved pass rates. We also appreciate our learners better. We assess their performance based on their capabilities.”

– Teacher, St. Francis of Assisi, primary school

Where the teachers find difficulty, they refer the specific learners to the resource room and/or consult with the specialised teacher for support.⁶⁶ However, the review showed that use of resource rooms is limited on one hand by the availability of the SNE teachers. In situations where there is one deployed in the school, such as in the case of Kaphuta, the SNE teacher is

assigned a mainstream class and spends a lot of time out of the resource room. On the other hand, such as in the case of Migowi where the SNE teachers had either retired or transferred to other schools, the utility of the resource room remains void until the promised new SNE teachers report to the school for the station. This makes the learners with disabilities frustrated, as they voiced their displeasure during a focus discussion with girls at their school.

“Last year we had a special teacher. The special teacher that was in the school was transferred to another school. This makes us lose out, because we are not able to learn properly since the other teachers do not know sign language.”

– FGD with Girls, Migowi primary school

The other major challenges for the IE classroom teacher cited by teachers across the various schools visited remains that of large numbers of children in their classrooms, and the inadequate teaching and learning resources and furniture. The challenges of lack of

learning resources and extreme lack of facilities (e.g., children sitting on the floor due to lack of chairs and desks) in their classrooms were cited often by children that participated in focus group discussions across the three schools that were visited.⁶⁷ This therefore casts doubt on the quality of education being received. For example, the claim that teachers are able to prepare individualised teaching plans for learners that have learning challenges in the classroom, would look far-fetched when handling a class with over 100 learners, with hardly any movement space in the classroom, with majority of the learners seated on the floor.

Interviews with staff of Save the Children and its implementing partners; staff of MUB and CDBC as well as FGDs with teachers and with members of SMCs and parents showed that community and parents awareness and sensitisation were leading to increased interest and participation of the parents in school activities and support. For instance, the parents in schools such as Nakaledza and Mnema primary schools, which had not been supported financially by the Atlas Alliance project, were mobilising their own resources to construct additional classroom blocks,

⁶⁶ FGDs with teachers at Kaphuta, Migowi and St. Francis of Assisi Primary Schools

⁶⁷ FGDs with girls and boys in Kaphuta, Migowi Primary Schools.



adapt their school environments through construction of ramps to make their schools more accessible. In Kaphuta one parent reported that he was helping in transporting other children with disabilities besides his, to come to school.⁶⁸

3.4 Strengthening school systems and structures to support delivery of Inclusive Education:

Some of the significant barriers to planning and delivery of IE are in school systems and physical structures. The school system includes the way the curriculum is configured and delivered at school level, the structuring of the delivery of syllabus content to the learners, organisation of co-curricular activities, governance systems and structures such as how the teachers, parents and learners are involved. On the part of systems, both projects worked with schools to involved various stakeholders to ensure that the target schools are prepared and receive learners with disabilities. Besides the specific training provided to the school leads and children (Save the Children) as well as the classroom teachers and children (both projects), the

two projects also reported organising sensitisation activities targeting the other critical school governance structures such as the SMC, PTA and the mother groups, religious leaders, community leaders such as traditional chiefs. Through these meetings challenges to IE at school and community level were shared, and their commitment solicited. In so doing they were motivated to play an active role in ensuring the success of IE in the schools. Consequently, the project reports reviewed and the interviews with various stakeholders showed that these engagements led to increased participation of communities in mobilising funds to adaptations of the school environments, and mobilisation of parents to bring children to schools. Interviews with parents and teachers in Migowi primary school (MUB) and St. Francis of Assisi (CDBC), for example, reported the schools organising regular feedback sessions which allow parents to come to schools to interact with teachers and children and follow-up the progress or lack of it of their children.⁶⁹

In addition, the two projects invested in construction/rehabilitation of a few resource rooms and equipping them to support the learning for children with special

learning needs enrolled in these schools. For example, in the entire Save the Children target districts only 9 were supported to become functional. In Phalombe District targeted by MUB, there were only three and one of the three visited at Migowi primary school did not have SNE teachers. Interviews with teachers showed that they were not being optimally used. The special needs teachers (referred to often as specialised teachers) are supposed to manage the resource rooms which were expected to have all the requisite resources also to provide specialised training for children for instance that need to learn Braille, learning sign language, etc. However, discussions with teachers in the three schools visited showed that the resource rooms lacked the resources such as Braille machines, Paper, Orbit readers, even simple writing frames, magnifiers, etc. None of the three resource rooms visited even had a simple sign language chart on display, thus casting doubt on their utility. Even if these were available, the other challenge would be their utilisation, as this is dependent on the specialisation of the SNE teacher. The ideal situation would be deploying at least three special needs teachers covering the three faculties, that is, visual, hearing,

⁶⁸ FGD with parents at Kaphuta Primary School

⁶⁹ Interviews with Parents, teachers, St.Francis of Assisi Primary school



and learning impairments. Furthermore, the special needs teachers were positioned as reference points for assisting the referred children with specific needs, but feedback suggests that they spend most of their time in mainstream classrooms teaching, mainly due to the overall shortage of teaching staff in the country. The lack of SNE teachers at the resource rooms was not because of the shortage of teachers, but rather lack of a strategy for coordinating these human resources. The few SNE teachers were not incentivised to remain committed to teaching in primary schools, thus there seems to be an exodus of SNE teachers to secondary schools. Also, the few that remain are not properly deployed for optimal use linked to the IE efforts under this review. Furthermore, interviews with different stakeholders also showed a serious attrition of the trained teachers through regular transfers, which undermines the project gains.

The interviews with Save the Children staff and meetings stakeholders in the Atlas Alliance project in Salima also reported the participation of communities

in raising funds to support adaptations of the school physical environment by constructing door ramps, accessible toilets and pathways, construction of changing rooms; taking own initiative supporting children from ultra-poor households with basic needs. Some schools making referrals of some learners to District Hospitals and service providers such as Blantyre Institute of Community Ophthalmology (BICO),⁷⁰ Besides the local effort, the Save the Children project reported to have supported 10 schools to adapt their physical environments to make them more accessible for all children including those with disabilities, while CDBC has been supported St. Francis of Assisi, an inclusive school, to implement IE interventions. All these were meant to serve as models for other schools in the neighbourhood to learn from and replicate in their own schools.

The two projects recognised the need for assistive devices for learners with disabilities in the pursuit of their education. The Save the Children IE in Malawi project committed to support 180 children (60 children

per district per year) and altogether 540.⁷¹ The end of project report shows that “291 children with disabilities (178 males and 113 females) supported with assistive devices to enable them remain in school”.⁷² The Atlas Alliance project too, committed some resources for assistive devices and resource books mainly to support the blind and partially sighted learners in the target schools. The MUB 2018 progress report, for example shows that the project had provided learners with 49 braille hand frames and 44 stylus, 29 Perkins Braille machines, 2 computers with Jaws, 321 Braille books and 181 large print books.⁷³ The two projects were dependent on external agencies for assessment and supply. Project progress reports from Save the Children showed that there were delays in the process and that they could not supply assistive devices to children with disabilities until the third year due to challenges of assessments and procurement.⁷⁴ The two projects, however, do not indicate the total numbers of learners with disabilities viz a viz those served to determine the percentage served. For example, in the provision of assistive devices and learning materials

⁷⁰ Save the Children (2019) End of Project Report

⁷¹ Save the Children. (2019) Project proposal

⁷² ibid

⁷³ MUM. 2018 Progress reports

⁷⁴ Save the Children, Project progress reports 1, 2 & 3.



the MUB intervention only focused on learners with visual impairments, leaving out the other categories of learners with disabilities.

Through the CDBC/Signo collaboration, two novel booklets about deafblindness targeting parents and teachers have been developed and distributed, more than 200 copies, to all identified parents of children with deafblindness and to teachers and schools. In terms of systematic replication, St. Francis of Assisi primary school started as a model inclusive education school. Two other schools in the neighbourhood, that is Nakaledza and Mnema Primary Schools, were included in the project mainly to understudy St. Francis of Assisi primary school. The teachers from the other two schools have been trained and some minimum community sensitisation undertaken. Any activities such as open day sessions the teachers and some students from the other two schools are invited to attend. As a result, the model has been replicated in the two schools. They reported comparable results from their effort such as increase in enrolment, retention and completion rates, increased participation and support from parents to the schools' efforts to make them accessible and inclusive, such as raising funds to construct ramps, modifications

to toilets to make them accessible, etc.⁷⁵ Interviews with the Save the Children project staff showed that a few other schools in their impact areas had also started replicating the models with own resources, mainly leveraged by parents. This shows that replicating the model is possible, albeit not widespread.

3.5 Improved data management systems for inclusive education

One component supported by the Save the Children IE in Malawi Project was inspired by lack of disability disaggregated data in the EMIS. The baseline survey established that schools do not keep records of children with disabilities because mainstream teachers do not have tools for identification of children with disabilities in their classrooms. Therefore, one of the challenges that the project faced during its implementation was the lack of readily available disaggregated data on children with disabilities in schools. EMIS had hence been displaying the inclusivity but not fully as verification with EMIS data structure showed that disabilities (special needs) section is disaggregated by low vision/blindness, deafness and learning difficulties but not physical impairment and albinism. Data on girls who

are re-admitted in school after dropping out due to child marriages and teen-age pregnancies was also not captured. EMIS also did not capture data on survival rates. This meant that data that MoEST had been collecting was under-reported as the Ministry had no IE Assessment tools for identification of children with disabilities by teachers in schools.

A workshop was therefore conducted with MoEST-SNE and planning departments to establish the best way to incorporate the IE data in the EMIS so that there is inclusion of IE data in the EMIS database. Following this workshop, data collection tools were developed to enable schools to collect data on inclusive education and adjustments were made on EMIS to ensure that data collected is entered and analysed. The project further supported MoEST with trainings of DEMISOs and ZEMISOs in general excel and data management. The project also conducted data management trainings for partner and SC staff and data quality assurance exercises in the impact districts to check the quality of data that was being reported.

⁷⁵ Interview with teachers at St. Francis of Assisi Primary School



Initial school based data was collected by the project's district coordinators from the District education management information systems (DEMIS) offices at the DEM's Offices in all the impact districts in January 2016. Data that was collected included:

- list of schools in each zone,
- enrolment of learners (segregated by gender) by school by class,
- number of teachers per school (segregated by gender) and
- number of resource centres and specialist teachers in the districts.

The project supported MoEST in the review and adaptation of assessment tools and referral forms that were being used by government. This resulted in the project refining the tools to be simple and easy to use by regular teachers. The revised assessment tools were approved by MoEST after trial testing them and incorporating feedback from the trainings and workshops that the project conducted at different levels

with different stakeholders. The project supported the printing of some copies of the tools. The project further developed an IT Mobile Platform using KOBO Collect to collect data of identified deprived children using the assessment tools. In addition, District education management information system (DEMIS) officers and Zone education management information system (ZEMIS) officers from the impact districts were also trained in IE data management and basic statistics.

The project also developed a data flow map to ensure proper movement of data from the schools to the district and national levels. Efforts were made to ensure existing data management structure and system within the MoEST is used and this was strengthened by the project's monitoring and evaluation component through trainings that targeted ZEMIS and DEMIS officers in basic statistics and IE data management in collaboration with the MoEST-planning department.

The end of project report concludes that by the close of the MoEST planning department migrated the IE data collected using KOBO Collect to the EMIS at the MoEST.⁷⁶ This was supposed to be operationalised by linking the data management system at Save the

Children with the EMIS. The effort to fully integrate the disability data collected using the Toolkit developed with the project support into EMIS has continued in the follow-on project.

⁷⁶ Save the Children (2018) *End of Project Report*



4

Findings related to sustainability/ ownership



In the context of this case study, sustainability is used to refer to the likely continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed – the probability of continued long-term benefits. It is assumed that this will be strongly contingent on ownership among key national and local stakeholders.⁷⁷

First it is noted that the two projects were funded and implemented by non-governmental organisations, although with varying degrees of involvement of government structures at the national and district levels. They employed similar approaches at the school/community level. At the national level, the Save the Children IE in Malawi project worked very closely with the relevant government structures, including the MoEST and MoGCSW, as well as the OPDs, academia and to some extent some other development actors. It therefore had a greater influence and higher prospects for ownership of systems and structures than other interventions that have been introduced as a result of the project interventions. For example, the interviews with national level stakeholders showed that the GoM recognises the National IE Technical working group

as the national structure that is in the most strategic position to advise on matters of IE in the country. However, ownership would require the MoEST to occupy the driving seat and give direction on the minimum standards for planning and delivery of IE in the whole country. Interviews with some stakeholders at the national level alluded to the challenge of some other agencies implementing other IE models in the country that deviate from what should be the standard that has evolved from and leveraged by the IE Education in Malawi project.⁷⁸

At the sub-national and community level, both projects have involved all the requisite structures including district executive committee (DEC) and District education network (DEN), ADCs, CPCs, PTAs, SMCs and Mother Groups and parents. There is evidence of spread effects of ownership for the new approaches beyond the districts and schools receiving direct assistance. This is largely due to mass awareness raising conducted through the two projects within the target areas.

“ We have witnessed behavioural change among parents and communities which is key to sustainability. The project has also contributed to building capacity of parents and teachers. Some parents volunteer to support the teachers in class in turns. They make their own rosters and in turns help the teachers especially taking care of the children's needs. Communities are supporting schools in the target areas for instance to provide resources needed to adapt the environment to make them more accessible for learners with disabilities. ”

– Interview with a project staff

The project has also contributed to teacher training curriculum reforms which have been piloted in at least one teacher training college. This was supposed to be rolled out to cover all other colleges. However, while this is promising, the sluggishness in rolling it out speaks to the future uncertainties concerning this important reform. Continuous professional development is another area the GoM is committed to ensure that the in-service teachers can improve their skills, including IE skills. However, long-term, and more sustainable results

⁷⁷ OECD-DAC (2019) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation - Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

⁷⁸ Interview with project staff

would require institutionalising enhancement of IE skills in mainstream teacher training colleges in the country.

The continued benefits of the two projects are also dependent on the GoM taking bold steps in addressing some of the pertinent challenges identified such as shortage of teachers in schools, construction of extra school infrastructure especially classrooms to ease pressure and likely fatigue of teachers resulting from handling overcrowded classrooms which limits the efficacy of IE. This relates to broad needs for greater investments in the education sector. It is unlikely that IE efforts alone will be able to drive improvements to address the shortcomings in schools in general. Progress is being made, but it remains heavily reliant on donor resources.

“The policy change that is supportive to IE is also crucial. The teacher training colleges are now passing out more IE teachers. The government is engaging with more development partners such as USAID, EU etc to support IE.”

– Interview with a project staff

The continued benefit and sustainability of IE is also contingent on the government's effort to address the issue of assistive devices. For example, while at the primary education level, children are managing without the necessary special learning aids and assistive devices, these are needed at post primary stages of education. Even in situations where assistive devices are provided, like in the case of the Save the Children IE project, they remain expensive for children from ultra-poor families and the scope and scale of this support is limited. Although, MACOHA has the mandate to provide grants that can enable learners with disabilities to attend school, the agency is hugely underfunded to meet the demand from learners with disabilities including acquisition of assistive devices.

The two projects have worked on the assumption that by creating model schools, the IE interventions in the model schools would be significantly scaled up by the neighbouring schools and districts. There is no strong evidence to support this assumption. In the case of Salima, where it seems to be happening, it is because the other two schools were deliberately mobilised to follow the model of the St. Francis of Assisi primary school. As the head teachers interviewed stated, the

schools were challenged to compete with each other to excel. Besides, the project took an extra stride to train the teachers and sensitise the parents and children.

“Enrolment of children with disabilities has increased in all the 3 schools. Even those children that had dropped out of school have returned. There are also registering better attendance and completion rates. The initiative started at St. Francis of Assisi Primary School but has been scaled up to cover two other schools, and we see more schools in the zone coming to the school to learn from us.”

– Participant head teacher, in a focus group discussion at St. Francis of Assisi primary school.

The evaluation notes that this remains an 'exception that proves the rule' with regard to scaling up and replication of the models that have been developed.



5

Reconstructed Theory of Change



A review of the project documents and reports of the two projects and interviews with various stakeholders shows that although there were no linkages/synergy between the two, they showed similar interventions, including:

- capacity strengthening,
- school environment adaptation,
- awareness and sensitisation, and,
- advocacy and influence.

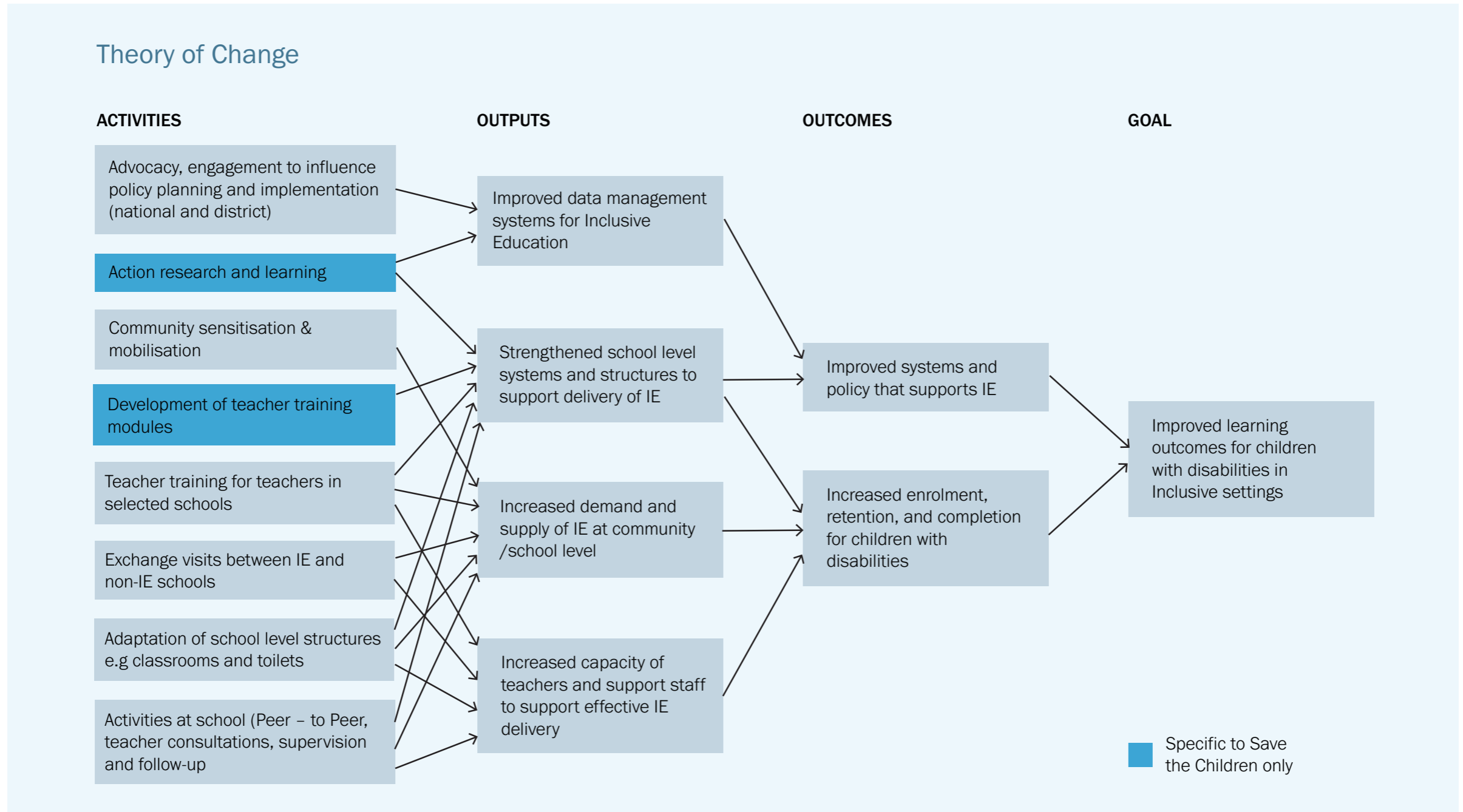
The interventions were expected to contribute to an increase in the demand and supply of inclusive education at community/ school level; strengthened capacity of teachers and support staff for effective delivery of IE; strengthened school level systems and structures to support delivery of IE, and improved data management systems for IE.

These would in turn contribute to improved systems and supportive policy for IE as well as most importantly increase in enrolment, retention and completion for learners with children with disabilities. Ultimately, this would lead to improved learning outcomes for children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The key assumptions were that the GoM would ensure that it puts in place the relevant and appropriate supportive policy, invest in recruitment of teaching staff in public schools, put in place adequate infrastructure, as well as initiate the necessary curriculum reforms for teacher training colleges and increase resource allocation to support implementation of IE in the country. Another important assumption was that the impact schools would serve as models from which other schools would learn from and scale up. This is an area where the assumptions behind theory of change for learning from model schools has proven to be, in some respects, inaccurate.



Figure 4: Reconstructed Theory of Change



The review of project documents and interviews with various stakeholders has shown that the GoM has had the political will and the policy/strategy to direct all IE intentions in the country, however, the recruitment, management and coordination of IE human resources has remained unclear. The two projects have supported minimum infrastructure development such as ramps, modified toilets, walkways, but there remains an acute shortage of classrooms and all these other amenities needed for effective delivery of IE; and in some instances, even toilets. The teachers remain handling classes three times more the population an ordinary classroom should have. The pupil-teacher ratio remains abnormally high to achieve the desired results of IE, even in the target impact schools. In a wider perspective, the evaluation finds that constraints to IE reforms requiring investments in human resources and infrastructure mirror constraints in the education sector in general. As such, sustainable and widespread replication of the successes of these two projects will be contingent on wider fiscal reprioritisation.

A good start has been made on reforming the teacher training curriculum with the input of the IE in Malawi project, but the rolling out and adoption of the training modules in all Teacher Training colleges seems to be sluggish, although, the continuous professional

development for in-service teachers seems to be on course. This is an area where there would seem to be good prospects for achieving some of the core aims of these projects by building on this foundation. It would require political will, but modest resources.

The assumption that the impact schools would serve as models for scaling up, remains unpromising. The expectation is that the SNE teacher in the resource

room remains the itinerant teacher to scale up the model in the other schools in the Zone (and beyond), besides managing the increased demand in the classroom and the resource room. It is apparent that this is expecting too much from one individual. The scaling up requires to be guided by driven individuals as in the case of Chisombezi DeafBlind Centre's model in Salima.



Photo: The Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted



6

Lessons learnt



Shared goals but missed opportunities for linkages and synergy between the two projects and with other interventions:

The two projects that inform the case study had similar modalities and were funded by the same donor, but there were no demonstrated linkages and synergy between the two. Although the interventions were implemented in different impact districts, zones and schools, and there could have been coordinated use of some resources such as the training source books, and more sharing between the two projects of strategies and lessons.

Strengthened capacities, but unclear theory of change for contributing to systemic capacity development due to conflicting priorities and overall weaknesses in the education sector evidenced by:

- Poor management of IE human resources across the education sector leading to poor or sub-optimal utilisation of the few specialised teachers who spend more time in mainstream classrooms and insufficient time in resource rooms where they are needed most by both pupils and teachers;

- Transfers of specialised and IE trained teachers from the model schools and deliberate and uncontrolled departure of specialised teachers to secondary schools;
- Slow pace (and uncertain process) in rolling out the reformed teacher training across all teacher training colleges in the country.

Strong justification for a hybrid approach: Currently the majority of the enrolled children in the IE schools are those with mild to moderate levels of disabilities. Those with more profound disabilities cannot benefit from the current mainstream school settings. There is, therefore, a need to rethink IE and where it is more (or less) effective – particularly regarding children with profound impairments. The GoM currently promotes a hybrid approach which allows SNE institutions to continue supporting children with profound disabilities, while IE continues with those with mild to moderate disabilities. There is strong justification for supporting this pragmatic approach.

Unclear approach to overcome shortage of assistive devices:

Children that would otherwise benefit from assistive devices such as hearing aids, spectacles, IT assisted technology such as Orbit readers, notepads, laptops etc. are not supported, because majority of the parents cannot afford this equipment. MACOHA as a government agency that should provide grants to support learners with disabilities to access assistive devices is underfunded. Some agencies such as Starkey Foundation, who are giving a hand in provision of hearing aids, only reach a small group.

Lack of GoM resources puts into question sustainability and scalability of lessons from the two projects:

The GoM has exhibited commitment towards IE but there is limited funding for IE to effectively increase reach and quality at school level. The current target model schools are still characterised by:

- Inadequate teaching materials and textbooks;
- Shortage of furniture and other equipment;
- Shortage of teachers with teacher to pupil ratio as high as 1:100 which makes implementation of IE at classroom level almost impossible.



7

Conclusions



The case study has shown that the two projects have made significant contribution to the Malawi's strategic goals for education for all, as espoused in the NESP 2018-2020 and other national commitments. The projects have supported the GoM to actualise the NSIE 2016 – 2021 and to some extent proven the case that IE is possible, in spite of all the noted challenges. The two projects have led to a steady increase in enrolment, retention and completion of children with mild to moderate disabilities in the target schools. The study has also highlighted the justification for and relevancy of the GoM's case for maintaining a hybrid approach, i.e., promoting IE while maintaining specialised SNE institutions for those with profound disabilities. The case study has also shown improvements in resident capacity to deliver IE, although more needs to be done, but that a more sustainable approach would be to roll out the IE teacher training curriculum in all the teacher training colleges in the country.

The case study has also shown that taking the IE school model approach within the district and educational zones with the assumption that other schools will scale up the model can only happen if accompanied with significant investments in teacher training and awareness. There must be some minimum leverage for the scale up to happen.

The case study has also shown that the GoM, despite the support to restructuring and repositioning to lead the IE effort, has not yet realigned its structures, resources and strategies to offer optimal IE results. For instance, the SNE teachers continue to cross over to secondary schools which offer a better pay, those still in service are often transferred from strategic IE schools to non-target schools, and worse still, there is a failure to deploy the SNE teachers efficiently in the resource rooms for optimal results.

All of these conclusions point to how Norwegian support has contributed with models that are successful at the project level. There are also some significant contributions to systemic learning and policy development. However, application of these systemic changes is stymied by severe resource gaps and unclear theories of change for applying lessons from resource endowed projects in settings characterised by this extreme scarcity of human and material resources. This also puts into question the sustainability of these interventions without external support.



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