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MALAWI STUDY

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The bedrock of inclusion: why investing in the education workforce is critical to the delivery of SDG4

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

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About the organisations that commissioned this report

ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. It works with over 15 million people in 45 countries, with communities, people's organisations, women's movements, groups and networks, social movements and other allies to overcome the structural causes and consequences of poverty and injustice. ActionAid connects work at community level with broader efforts and struggles for justice to make the greatest contribution towards a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Education International is the voice of teachers and education workers on the global level. It is the world's largest federation of education unions and associations, representing 32 million educators in nearly 400 organisations in over 170 countries and territories, across the globe. More information on Education International's work in inclusive education and decent work for persons with disabilities can be found here.

Light for the World is a global disability and development organisation enabling eye health services and supporting people with disabilities in some of the poorest regions of the world. We break down unjust barriers to unlock the biggest potential! We focus on the poorest and hardest to reach, because they need it most. We aim to change the entire system, because we want our impact to last. We work with partners, because together we are stronger. We work with underserved communities in countries including Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan and Uganda.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This report, which focuses on Malawi, is part of a multi-country study undertaken on behalf of ActionAid, Education International and Light for the World in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania.

The research explores the current state of investment in the education workforce for disability-inclusive education, and the realistic requirements for putting inclusive education into practice. It was carried out using a combination of desk review and qualitative engagement, including consultation of peer reviewed and grey literature such as government reports, policy briefs and issue papers, and interviews with 96 key informants across the five countries.

Investing in the education workforce is the bedrock of inclusion and critical to ensuring all children, especially those with disabilities enjoy their right to education. Whilst well-trained and qualified teachers are at the forefront of this process, they cannot work alone. Support from equally well-trained and qualified education leaders, administrators, and support personnel (e.g. therapists, psychologists, community-based rehabilitation workers and specialists in braille and sign language) is key to an education system equipped to respond to children's diverse learning needs. As such, whilst much of the research centres on teachers, acknowledging their fundamental role in the education process, we have opted for a wider scope of analysis in order to understand the extent to which the broader education workforce is currently equipped to include all children, especially those with disabilities, and deliver on SDG4.

In addition, whilst recognising that, inclusive education aims to address the diverse needs of all learners. this study focuses specifically on disability-inclusion.

This report opens with an introduction, providing some background and highlighting key evidence from around the world that helped to shape the scope of the country studies. This is followed by the in-depth country study. It also highlights (often serious) gaps in knowledge and data, which hampered the achievement of the country studies.

A thematic analysis of the research findings was conducted, to inform the development of the report and develop actionable country-specific recommendations. This found:

- That implementing inclusive education requires investment in education sector financing and widespread change of structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures;
- That a long-term perspective is needed to achieve impactful and sustained change (inclusive education should not be funded through one-off, short-term initiatives);
- That existing structures and systems should be utilised and strengthened;
- That inclusive education involves a range of stakeholders including government at all levels and across ministries (including education, health, finance and social services), teacher training institutions, schools, civil society organisations and communities, and involves a shift in attitudes and beliefs about education and the rights of persons with disabilities.

The study acknowledges certain limitations. While recognising that provision of quality, public disability-inclusive education involves system-wide change at all levels, some important issues were outside of the scope of the research project. For example, strategies to address attitudinal barriers and discriminatory practices, and investments to improve access to school such as transport and accessible infrastructure. It is also important to note that the study focuses on public basic education and did not include the private education sector.

PHOTO: SAMANTHA REINDERS/ACTIONAID

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FOREWORD

This report presents important findings on the right to education by evaluating the current state of investment in the education workforce to ensure disability-inclusive education, and the realistic requirements for putting inclusive education into practice. The study was carried out using a combination of desk review and qualitative engagement, including consultation of peer reviewed literature and government reports, policy briefs and issue papers, and one on one interviews with key informants in Malawi.

In addition to highlighting gaps and challenges in current provision the report also underscores the positive steps already being taken by the government of Malawi to ensure disability-inclusive education in Malawi. It further outlines a range of practical recommendations the government can take to better deliver on its commitments as it progresses towards SDG4. To summarise, the government needs to increase the **size** of the national budget overall through progressive tax reforms, allowing it to expand its existing revenue base and thus increase the **share** of the budget available for education. The government also needs to ensure greater **sensitivity** in education budget allocations and expenditure and enable increased **scrutiny** by citizens and civil society movements to ensure precious resources arrive on time where they are needed most.

When Malawi joined the global community in making commitments to ensure sustainable development by 2030, this included the promise to ensure **inclusive** and **equitable** quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030 highlights the Government of Malawi's ambitious education agenda for the next 10 years. The document reinforces and builds on provisions in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education, placing a significant emphasis on inclusion in education, especially for children with disabilities, and this is to be commended.

However, this cannot be achieved without meaningful investment in the education sector including its workforce. The study reminds us that Malawi has one of the greatest teacher shortages in the world and needs an additional 82 461 teachers[i] just to reach a pupil-teacher ratio of 60:1 by 2030. It is unfortunate then, that the government of Malawi has not allocated resources for teacher recruitment in the draft budget 2020/2021.

This report serves as a reminder that although the education sector is a key government priority as illustrated by budget allocations that consistently meet the upper end of global education financing benchmarks, these remain unequal to the real needs across the country. In addition, goals and targets can only be achieved if resources are disbursed on time, if steps are taken to improve internal efficiencies and the implementation of harsh austerity measures re-considered.

Thus, while we commend government's ongoing prioritization of education in Malawi, we appeal to the government to take urgent steps to ensure that amounts allocated to the sector are commensurate with need and, in particular that funds are allocated to the training, recruitment and support of the additional teachers and other education workforce members without whom, targets such as those set out in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education and the National Education Sector Investment Plan cannot be achieved.

I would like to reiterate ActionAid Malawi's commitment to continue working with the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to ensure the delivery of quality and equitable education for all in Malawi so that the right to education is fulfilled and no child is left behind.

Limodzi Tingathe!

Assan Golowa
Executive Director

GLOSSARY

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used by the project team.[i]

Disability	Following the WHO and UNCRPD social definition of disability as an *"evolving concept"* that results from the interaction between an individual with impairments and contextual factors such as attitudinal, social and physical environments, resulting in limitations of one's ability to participate fully in activities and effectively in society on an equal basis with others. For the purpose of this study we will use the internationally comparable impairment categories - physical, intellectual, behavioural, sensory - unless disaggregated differently within country-specific data.
Education support personnel	Those trained in inclusive education, including itinerant teachers, resource centre staff, specialists in child development (including speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) and special needs teachers.
Inclusive Education	Following the UNCRPD definition,[1] inclusive education is: (a) A fundamental human right of all learners and not, in the case of children, the right of a parent or caregiver. Parental responsibilities in this regard are subordinate to the rights of the child; (b) A principle that values the wellbeing of all students, respects their inherent dignity and autonomy, and acknowledges individuals' requirements and their ability to effectively be included in and contribute to society; (c) A means of realising other human rights, and the primary means by which persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty, obtain the means to participate fully in their communities and be safeguarded from exploitation. It is also the primary means of achieving inclusive societies; (d) The result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminating barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on inclusive education as it relates to disability.
In-service training	Any learning opportunity for teachers who are already certified as per country qualifications and/ or teaching in practice.
Pre-service training	Includes *"recognised and organised, private and public educational programmes designed to train future teachers to formally enter the profession at a specified level of education. Graduates receive a government recognised teaching qualification."*[2]
Schools – Inclusive	Schools designed so that children with disabilities attend regular classes with age-appropriate peers, learn the curriculum to the extent feasible, and are provided with additional resources and support depending on need.
Schools – Integrated	Schools that provide separate classes and additional resources for children with disabilities, which are attached to mainstream schools.
Schools – Special	Schools that provide highly specialised services for children with disabilities and remain separate from broader educational institutions, also called segregated schools.
Special needs education	Education for children with additional needs related to difficulties to learn or access education compared with other children of the same age, for example due to disadvantages resulting from gender, ethnicity, poverty, learning difficulties or disability.

i. Unless otherwise noted, the definitions included here are direct text as presented in the World Report on Disability (WHO and World Bank, 2011)

ACRONYMS

CSEC	Civil Society Education Coalition of Malawi
DFID	Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MK	Malawi Kwacha
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NESIP	National Education Sector Investment Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSIE	National Strategy on Inclusive Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

...in most low- and middle-income countries, children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than any other group of children.

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Rethinking inclusive education starts with strengthening the education workforce

Despite global commitments, children with disabilities are being left behind

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) makes inclusive education an explicit global priority, and all member States have committed to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"* by 2030.[3]

Yet, in most low- and middle-income countries, children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than any other group of children.[4] As the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report noted, *"the promise of reaching the furthest behind first is not being kept"*, and *"children with disabilities are particularly at risk of exclusion from education"*.[5]

A lack of data, comparable measurements and agreed definitions means that credible global statistics are lacking.[ii] But the best estimates are that, in low- and lower-middle income countries, around 40% of children with disabilities are out of school at primary level, and 55% at lower secondary level, although these numbers vary enormously between countries.[6] In many lower-income countries, even when children with disabilities do attend school, they are segregated from their classmates, receive a poorer overall quality of education, and are more likely to drop out than their peers.[7] In 10 low- and middle-income countries, children with disabilities were 19% less likely to achieve minimum proficiency in reading than those without.[8]

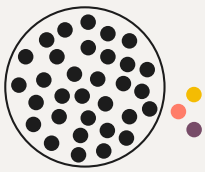
ii. This is also a global issue, as the UIS noted: "because of the scarcity of national data, it is currently not possible to generate statistics on the status of persons with disabilities with regard to education that are regionally or globally representative"

Far too little is known about how disability intersects with other disadvantages, but some studies suggest that girls with disabilities are among the most marginalised groups in society, as a result of social norms and cultural biases around gender and disability.[9]

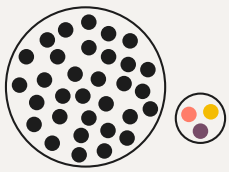
In 2020, widespread school closures introduced in 194 countries in an effort to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic shed a harsh light on existing inequalities, both revealing and reinforcing patterns of disadvantage and discrimination in access to education. With an estimated 91% of the global school population affected by these measures, learners with disabilities are among those most likely to be excluded and face additional setbacks to their education due to factors such as a lack of accessible resources or technology to support continuous remote learning, or a scaling back of specialised support measures.[10]

A summary of the evidence on inclusive education

Adapted from Principe T. (2018) Rethinking Disability: A primer for educators and education unions.



***Exclusion** occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.*



***Segregation** occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impaiments, in isolation from students without disabilities.*

***Integration** is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardised requirements of such institutions.*

***Inclusion** involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.*

Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structured changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

Box 1. What do we mean by inclusive education in this study?

At its simplest, inclusive education means that all children learn together in the same schools. This requires education systems that can adapt to the different learning needs of all students. Inclusive education is widely seen as a philosophical approach to education which ensures that diverse students of all backgrounds learn together in the same classroom, and seeks to transform education systems in order to respond to these different needs - irrespective of abilities or disabilities.[11] For the purposes of this report, however, the authors focus on disability-inclusive education specifically, while recognising the broader understanding of "inclusive education". Finally, because inclusive education is a process which can take time, the study also aims to situate current efforts by governments as part of a process of moving *towards* inclusive education.

A well-trained education workforce is the bedrock of inclusion

Poor quality of teaching, inadequate teacher numbers, limited training for workforce development and lack of financing are all cited as significant barriers to the provision of inclusive education.[12]

Inclusive education begins with qualified teachers who are provided with the necessary support to address different pupil needs. In many low- and middle-income countries, teachers have no or limited experience of teaching children with disabilities, and are not trained in inclusive teaching or using accessible classroom tools and materials.[13]

The recent United Nations Disability and Development Report identified a number of actions needed to achieve SDG4 for persons with disabilities, including providing *"training to teachers and other education specialists to gain knowledge and experience in inclusive education for persons with disabilities".* However, it found that many teachers lack the *"skills necessary to support children with more challenging learning needs, including those with severe physical or intellectual disabilities, in mainstream classrooms."*[14] This echoes a 2018 study by Education International, which found that 72.5% of teacher union respondents from 43 countries believed pre-service and in-service training on inclusion to be insufficient, leading a small minority of teachers to pay for their own training.[15]

Teacher quality is the most important determinant of the quality of education and learning outcomes at school level, and teacher preparation to respond to diversity in the classroom is key to ensuring that all children have a positive learning experience. As such, it is crucial to ensure that all teachers – new recruits as well as those already in classrooms – are trained in inclusive education.

However, given that in sub-Saharan Africa only 64% of primary and 50% of secondary school teachers are trained, most teachers lack even the most basic preparation to teach, let alone training in inclusive pedagogy.[iii, 17]

Inclusive education begins with qualified teachers who are provided with the necessary support to address different pupil needs. In many low- and middle-income countries, teachers have no or limited experience of teaching children with disabilities, and are not trained in inclusive teaching or using accessible classroom tools and materials.

In addition, training available in many lower-income countries is often based on the medical model[iv] or on special needs education (which segregates children), rather than the human rights-based framework on which inclusive education is based. Beyond increasing teachers' skills to modify their teaching strategies, training in inclusion also plays a crucial role in improving teacher attitudes, which are *"central in any reform design to improve inclusion."*[18]

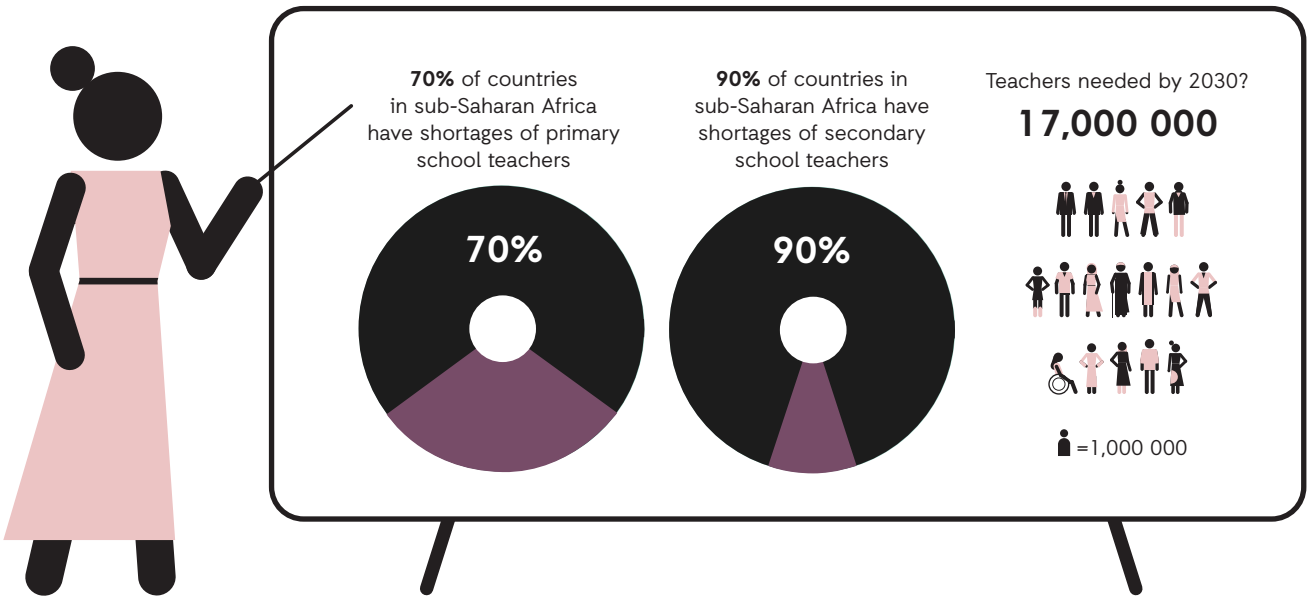
Class size matters

SDG4 calls on countries and development partners to *"substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers"* by 2030. Not only are teachers a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, but the equity gap in education is exacerbated by the shortage and unequal distribution of teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas.

Currently, in most low-income countries, teachers routinely deal with classes of over 40 pupils with a wide range of abilities, especially in the most marginalised and remote areas where classrooms are more often overcrowded due to huge teacher shortages. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, more than 70% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa face acute shortages of primary school teachers, and 90% have serious shortages in secondary education, the largest teacher gap in the world. To keep up with population growth, sub-Saharan Africa will need to recruit 17 million new teachers by 2030.[19]

iii. Across 10 francophone sub-Saharan African countries, just 8% of teachers for grades two and six had received in-service training on inclusive education.

iv. The medical model sets children with disabilities apart from the rest of society (i.e. the child has a "problem" that needs "resolving"). This was the predominant model of thinking around disability until a few decades ago, when the social model of disability shifted understandings of disability away from a charitable welfare-based and rehabilitative approach and towards a social justice, and human rights-based framework – on which inclusive education is based. In many cases, training for teachers is yet to integrate this model fully.



As noted in a report commissioned by Education International, *"Teachers need smaller class sizes in order to be able to teach to every student [and practice inclusive education]. Teaching to 35 diverse learners is significantly more challenging and complex than teaching to 16 diverse students". The report concludes that "classroom materials and technologies are useful, but they cannot replace the value of a skilled teacher available to all her/ his students".*[20]

Teachers need support in the classroom

Providing more and better training for teachers is necessary but not sufficient to achieve inclusive classrooms. In many countries, teachers are not only in short supply, but are also *"isolated, and not supported to provide effective teaching and learning".*[21]

Teachers require supportive working conditions to deliver inclusive education. This may involve additional resources to provide specially designed learning materials and any necessary classroom adaptation.[22] Governments must also develop inclusive curricula that can help teachers break down barriers faced by children with disabilities in the classroom. This involves ensuring that curricula can adapt to the needs of a diversity of learners, while also better representing diversity.

Unfortunately, in many low- and lower-middle income countries, teachers are chronically underpaid, with salaries below the average for jobs requiring a similar level of skills. Rural and poor areas are the most understaffed, with few incentives for teachers to work there.

To ensure inclusive education, teachers are critical. But they cannot work alone. As the Education Commission noted, teachers need leadership and support to be effective and help the learners with the greatest need.[23] Support from specialists in other sectors, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, or specialist teachers experienced in teaching children with disabilities, is also essential.[24] Research has shown that these education support personnel play a key role in the learning team necessary to adequately support children and young people with disabilities.[25]

Also critical are adequate remuneration, decent working conditions and incentives for teachers to grow their skills and knowledge and stay in the profession. Governments need to ensure good systems of financial incentives, and improved distribution of teachers qualified in inclusive education. Education International research from 2018 considered that: *"As teachers' skills and responsibilities increase, so too should their compensation".*[26] Unfortunately, in many low- and lower-middle income countries, teachers are chronically underpaid, with salaries below the average for jobs requiring a similar level of skills. Rural and poor areas are the most understaffed, with few incentives for teachers to work there. For these reasons, Education International and national teachers' unions continue to advocate for improved working conditions to support the shifts in strategies in the classroom needed to deliver SDG4.[27]

1.2. Increased public spending on the education workforce is critical to achieve inclusion

Equipping teachers with the right skills and support to teach inclusively requires significantly more resources, and an expansion of the workforce. Teachers are aware that a lack of resources acts as a major brake to ensuring inclusive education. Respondents to an Education International study carried out in 43 countries consistently highlighted budgets and funding as a barrier to creating more inclusive classrooms.[28]

Existing research shows that commitments to inclusive education and reforms to the workforce rarely make it from 'on paper' commitments into annual government budgeting processes. Budgeting for the education workforce in lower-income countries tends to rely on simplistic calculations in sector plans that are disconnected from ongoing budget discussions.[29] Rarely is significant financing for the recruitment, training, deployment and support of teachers to practice systemic inclusion reflected in budgets. Even where there are resources, they are well below what is needed.[v]

The Education Commission has pointed out that teacher salaries already represent a significant share of recurrent education budgets in most countries, and Ministers of Finance manage competing demands.[30] As such, requests for increased investment in the education workforce must be convincing, especially as a long-term investment, and a thorough cost-benefit analysis of any workforce reform is required for policymakers to change the status quo. This must be informed by dialogue with the workforce and trade unions.

Inclusive education requires both system-wide change and a transformation of the education workforce. Yet without substantial new funding for education, the financing required to transform education systems, and the teaching force in particular, for inclusion is likely to remain out of reach. Evidence suggests that States which have historically invested in segregated schools tend to lack the political will to move towards inclusive education systems.[31] However, while costly in the short term, investment in inclusive education is more cost-effective over time than building two separate systems, *and* brings additional benefits associated with more trained teachers on the ground.[vi]

Study after study has evidenced that, in the long-run, investing in inclusive education makes economic sense, because inclusive teaching can be synonymous with quality, and also because it precludes the need to invest in two parallel education systems.[32] In lower income countries, a fairly strong body of research points to the inefficiency of multiple systems of administration, organisational structures and services.[vii]

In other words, in many lower-income countries it is necessary to increase investment in education in order to transform an education workforce equipped to deliver inclusive education. Yet the gaps are vast. The 2015 Global Education Monitoring Report estimated that achieving targets for inclusive and quality education up to secondary level for low- and lower-middle income countries by 2030 would require a tripling of public funding for education.[viii] This increase is required not only to deal with increased demand, but, crucially, to meet commitments to quality and inclusion.

As such, transforming the workforce to deliver system-wide inclusive education requires substantial increases in public budgets. This can be supported by applying ActionAid's "4S education financing framework" (see Box 2) which clearly identifies four principles of education financing to ensure that countries are allocating and spending adequate resources to meet SDG4.

...in the long-run, investing in inclusive education makes economic sense, because inclusive teaching can be synonymous with quality, and also because it precludes the need to invest in two parallel education systems.

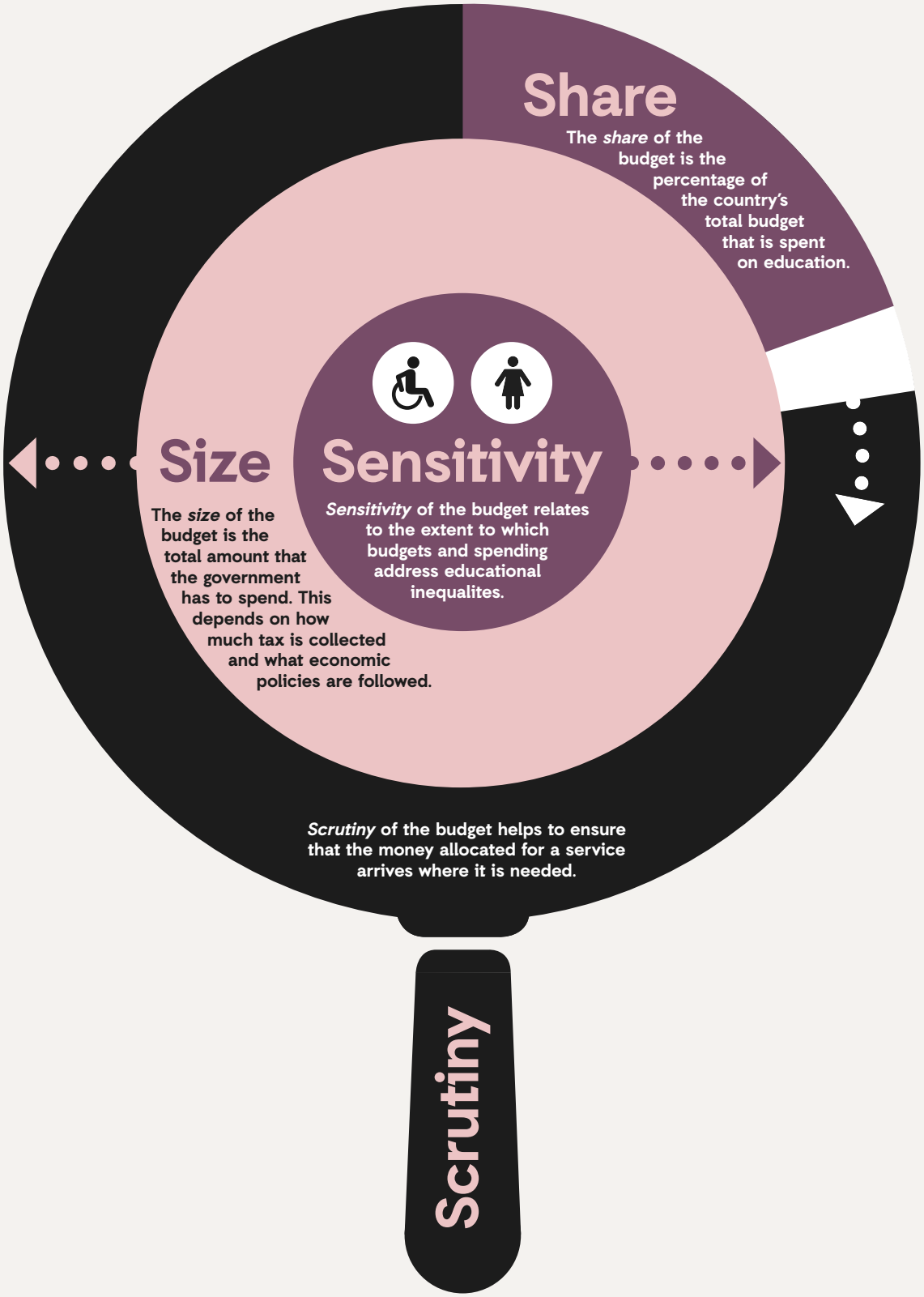
v. Evidence on this is limited. However, a number of studies suggest this to be the case and build a picture. For instance, Light for the World (2016) Costing Equity: The case for disability-responsive education financing, showed a lack of funding overall, and specifically on teaching. The UN Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 also notes a lack of budget for inclusive education overall. Finally, the Education Commission (2020) noted a lack of budgeting for workforce transformation.

vi. In the long run, it has been noted that setting up separate systems costs more. For example, an OECD report estimated that the average cost of putting students with special educational needs in segregated placements is seven to nine times higher than educating them in mainstream classrooms. However, in the short term there is a need for initial up-front investment.

vii. Quoted in World Bank 2004, Inclusive Education: An EFA Strategy for all Children. This was based on common conclusions across a number of studies: Primary sources include OECD, 1994; OECD, 1995; OECD 1999; OECD 2000; O'Toole & McConkey (1995) Innovations in Developing Countries for People with Disabilities; EURYDICE, 2003.

viii. Education for All (2015) Global Monitoring Report. Pricing the right to education: The cost of reaching new targets by 2030. Note: if lower-middle income countries are included, the minimum cost rises to $403 per student.

Domestic Financing for Education: *The 4 Ss*



Box 2. ActionAid's 4S education financing framework

ActionAid's 4S framework identifies four clear principles that must be applied to ensure that countries meet the SDG4 twin promises of quality and inclusion:

1. A fair **SHARE** of the budget is spent on education - meeting or exceeding UNESCO benchmarks of 20% of national budget or 6% of GDP - with a particular focus on marginalised groups, including children with disabilities.
2. A good **SIZE** of overall budget is raised through a progressive tax base, maximising the availability of national resources for investment in public services, ensuring that those most able to pay (the wealthiest) support those least able (the poorest) to do so. This also requires macroeconomic policies which can support budget increases, such as reducing debt servicing or limiting austerity policies.
3. Budgets are **SENSITIVE**, with a focus on equity in public expenditure in order to redress broader inequalities in society (such as stipends for the education of children with disabilities, or greater investment in inclusive teachers in poor rural areas).
4. Public **SCRUTINY** of budget expenditure to ensure that funds arrive on time (especially in disadvantaged areas) and are spent effectively. This may require, for instance, enabling civil society groups to have oversight of budget development and expenditure.

SHARE: International public spending benchmarks must be met

The UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action establishes a target for countries to allocate up to 20% of their national budget or 6% of GDP to meet SGD4 by 2030. Countries with the furthest to go to meet SDG4 targets and indicators will need to meet or exceed the higher targets for budget allocations to the sector. High levels of investment are needed to provide more trained and well paid teachers to deal with increased pupil demand,[34] whilst meeting commitments to quality, equity and inclusion.[35] Yet many countries are presently falling short of these targets, as public education expenditure is, on average, 4.4% of GDP and 13.8% of total public expenditure.[ix]

When an insufficient share of the budget is allocated to education, governments tend to look for ways to cut back on spending on teachers, and the financing for teachers' wages, training and support gets squeezed. This can mean that not enough teachers are employed, or that funding for mechanisms to retain teachers and incentivise appropriate deployment, class sizes, and so on is insufficient.

PHOTO: AISHA KATUNGWE/ACTIONAID

ix. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2020-21 provides data for latest available year (2017), although as the report notes, data were missing for 54% of countries.

Box 3. International financing institutions restrict the expansion of public budgets for workforce capacity

Currently the capacity of many countries to increase the education share of their budget and invest in a workforce able to deliver commitments to quality, inclusive education is under threat. For many decades, the prevailing economic wisdom has been antithetical to the kinds of investment required to expand the education workforce. In 2007, research by ActionAid in 17 countries showed that, between 2003 and 2005, a prominent International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programme loan criterion was a wage bill ceiling that limited the number of public sector workers (such as teachers) that could be hired.[36] The IMF later removed the criterion; but there was still pressure on governments behind the scenes to reduce spending on public sector wages.[37]

With debt levels now spiralling, IMF advice again risks limiting investment in the education workforce. According to the Jubilee Debt Campaign, external debt payments by developing countries grew 85% between 2010 and 2018, from 6.6% to 12.2% of government revenue.[38] In this context, the advice of the IMF becomes even more powerful as they negotiate new debt relief programmes. Evidence from ActionAid in 2020 shows a spike in IMF programmes carrying similar conditions to the structural adjustment programmes, with countries struggling to maintain budgets for essential services, and limiting workforce investment.[39]

SIZE: Financing an inclusive education workforce requires increased public budgets

The 2014 Global Education Monitoring Report noted that: *"Countries that require additional teachers will have to increase their overall budgets for teacher salaries".* The report went on to state that US$ 4 billion additional funds were required annually in sub-Saharan Africa to pay the salaries of the additional primary school teachers required by 2020, after taking into account projected economic growth.[40] Given chronic shortages in teaching staff in all countries in this study, and with many teetering on the edge of debt crises, this is a huge problem for achieving SDG4 in all countries (see Box 3 above).

Public taxation is the most effective source of long-term, sustainable funding for recurrent budgets such as workforce costs, and with only a decade to go to meet the 2030 targets, many countries need to increase overall revenue and availability of domestic resources.

In 2010, the UN estimated that a minimum of 20% tax-to-GDP ratio would be needed to deliver on the MDGs.[41] More recently, research from the IMF and World Bank[42] indicates that tax-to-GDP ratios lower than 15% are insufficient to finance even the most basic state functions.[43] As an example, in 2017, the average tax-to-GDP ratio in OECD countries was 34.2% whilst in sub-Saharan Africa, the average ratio was just 17.2%.[44] In other words, whilst the appropriate level of taxation depends on each country's characteristics, a sizeable increase tax capacity is likely to play a significant role in countries' ability to deliver basic public services and attain the SDGs. Indeed, in 2019, the IMF estimated that most low income countries would need to spend an additional 15 percentage points of GDP or more to reach the SDG targets, suggesting that increasing tax to GDP ratios by 5% in the medium-term (around 5 years) would constitute an ambitious yet realistic way forward.[45]

Taking action to remove harmful corporate tax incentives, tackle tax avoidance, evasion, corruption and illicit financial flows are key, if governments are to raise new funds for education relatively quickly.[46]

SENSITIVE: Budgets must address equity and inclusion

It is not enough to spend *more* money on disability-inclusive education, education budgets also need to be spent *better* and with greater sensitivity. A greater focus on equity is required in the deployment of resources– both human and financial –to benefit all learners, including those with disabilities, and ensure that the education workforce is available and able to manage inclusion. This process must start by identifying where

financing and teachers are required, to target the needs of children with disabilities, and support system-wide inclusion more broadly.

In all five countries included in this study, it proved difficult to assess spending in relation to equity of teacher deployment compared to the need for teachers for inclusive education across the country. This is, in part, due to a lack of data to assess needs (i.e. numbers of teachers trained in inclusion or where they are deployed). Without more coherent baselines, effective planning and budgeting for inclusion is impossible.

As the Global Education Monitoring Report notes, a larger share of resources needs to be allocated to compensate for disadvantage, so that *"even as marginalized groups are mainstreamed, a twin-track approach targeting them is needed, since the cost of serving their support needs is much higher, especially for students with disabilities".*[47] This means that school funds need to positively discriminate in favour of more vulnerable learners, so that everyone can be on a more equal footing. This is particularly true for children with disabilities, who may require additional support such as assistive devices, specialised resources, or referral to medical support.

To do this, it is vital to put equity and inclusion at the heart of government financing formulae. These must address individual disadvantage such as disability, but also broader horizontal inequalities such as geographical inequality, and may require extra teacher incentives or support for deployment to remote areas.

Even where funds are allocated to inclusive education, improving oversight, scrutiny and accountability is crucial to ensure that budget allocations are properly targeted, arrive in full and on time, and are effectively and transparently spent

SCRUTINY: Ensuring that education expenditure meets inclusion needs

Even where funds *are* allocated to inclusive education, improving oversight, scrutiny and accountability is crucial to ensure that budget allocations are properly targeted, arrive in full and on time, and are effectively and transparently spent.[48] Moreover, some small allocations can be traced for *"special education"* that can reinforce segregation. This echoes the findings of a study which found that only 31 of a sample of 76 country budget documents from low- and low-middle-income countries had any mention of *"special education"*, and this was often a separate line in the overall education budget, rather than under the appropriate age or level of education, or in ministry budgets other than education, with no plan for integration into the education sector.[49]

Governments should also create the conditions to enable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to monitor the fulfilment of government commitments and stand up for those excluded from education.[x]

PHOTO: SAMANTHA REINDERS/ACTIONAID

x. For instance, according to the recent UNESCO GEM report 2020-21 a 2001 NGO campaign in Armenia resulted in a new legal and budget framework to roll out inclusive education nationally by 2025.

PHOTO: MAKMENDE MEDIA/ACTIONAID

SECTION 2. COUNTRY STUDY: MALAWI

Background to the Malawian education system

Malawi is one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 172 out of 189 countries on the 2019 UNDP Human Development Index. 52% of the population of Malawi is considered multi-dimensionally poor, experiencing multiple overlapping deprivations in health, education and standard of living.[50]

Improving education is one of the priority areas of the Malawi Government's Growth and Development Strategy (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.

Since free primary education was introduced in 1994, the education sector has experienced substantial progress in Malawi. Notable improvement has been made in access to basic education, which the Global Partnership for Education notes has continued to improve with an average annual growth rate of 4%.[51]

However, while access has improved, achieving SDG4 by 2030 will be a challenge, with major concerns over both quality and equity. Overall, as outlined in the Global Education Monitoring report, *"the sector faces multidimensional challenges such as inadequate school facilities, high pupil-teacher ratios, low learning achievement and huge capacity gaps in school inspection and supervision."*[52] Very few children in Malawi are learning the basics, and the poor and marginalised tend to drop out before completing primary school, let alone going on to complete lower-secondary.

Against this backdrop, exclusion of the most marginalised is often very high. According to the World Inequality Database on Education, 25% of the poorest quintile completes primary school, versus 75% of the wealthiest. Even fewer (6%) of the poorest children manage to finish lower secondary compared to nearly half (48%) of the wealthiest.[53]

The challenge of scaling up the SDG4 commitments for Malawi is further complicated by having one of the world's youngest populations, with 58% under the age of eighteen.[54]

2.1. Current state of disability-inclusive education

Data on disability

There is limited data on the number of children with disabilities in Malawi, or their experience of the education system.

As of 2018, the Malawi census reported a total population of 17,563,749, of which the Government estimates 1,556,670 (10.4%) are persons with disabilities over five years of age. It is estimated that 612,749 children aged 5-19 (*very* broadly within the range of primary and secondary school-going age) have a disability, of which 320,854 (52%) are boys and 291,895 (48%) are girls.[55]

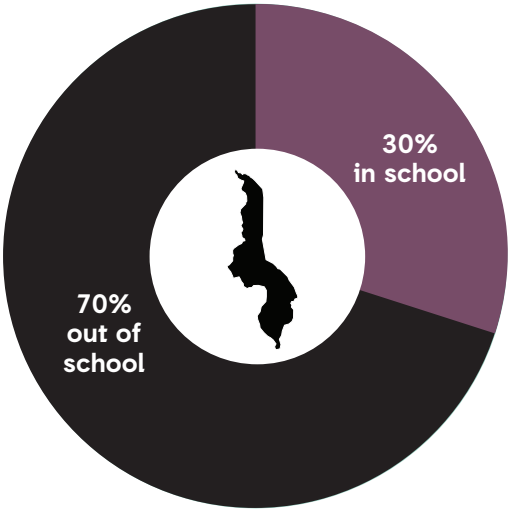
The 2018/19 Education Sector Performance Report indicates a total of 3.3.% children with special educational needs enrolled in primary school in 2019, marking a small increase from 2.2% in 2015. At secondary level, the proportion of learners with special educational needs rose from 1.3% in 2015 to 2.4% in 2019.[56]

Despite the lack of data regarding the nature of these children's special needs, comparing these percentages to total enrolment figures suggests that an estimated 183,916 children with special needs were enrolled in school in 2018/19, of which 174,851 at primary and 9,065 at secondary level. In other words, roughly 30% of the total number of 5-19-year-olds estimated to have a disability.[xi] Either way, the figures show that progress in improving access for children with disabilities is still very slow, compared to the growth rates of access overall and that the majority of children with disabilities continue to be excluded from education.[57]

Significantly, the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (NSIE) has no further figures or estimates on children with disabilities (i.e. total numbers, age groups, types of disability etc.), which leaves gaps in estimating real needs. Neither are there any figures on the progress (retention and completion) of children with disabilities in education. UNICEF has noted that, in Malawi, a *"lack of comprehensive disability statistics has been identified as one of the major barriers to effective planning and budgeting for children with disabilities".*[58]

The Global Partnership for Education reports that children and young people with disabilities are 5.8% less likely to have ever enrolled in school, 6.4% less likely to have completed primary schooling, and 4.3% less likely to have completed secondary school compared to peers without disabilities.[59]

Children with disabilities in/out of school in Malawi.



Government commitments to inclusive education

Malawi ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2009, and the Government has developed several laws and policies to promote, fulfil and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. These include the National Constitution, the National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Disability Act (2012), which incorporates provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNCRPD (See table 1).

In terms of specific policy commitments to educating children with disabilities, the NSIE was introduced in 2017 as part of the second Education Sector Implementation Plan (2014-2020), outlining commitments to inclusive education and focusing on special needs as a crosscutting issue. The NSIE has a number of outcomes, such as increasing capacity for inclusive education, increasing the number of learners in primary

xi. Author's calculations based on data from national census, and national enrolment data.

and secondary education, and improving financing availability. Significantly, the strategy is also costed.

The 2008-2017 National Education Strategic Plan and Policy and Investment Framework reinforce the Government's commitment to create an enabling environment for children with special educational needs within the mainstream school system. This includes commitments to the development of teachers for inclusive education.[60]

During the 2018 Global Disability Summit, 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.[61]

More recently, in March 2020, the Council of Ministers approved the new National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) 2020-2030. This is aligned with international and regional policy frameworks including the Sustainable Development Goals, and further commits to the delivery of inclusive education by outlining ambitious inclusion targets to be reached by the end of the implementation period.[62]

Table 1: List of Laws and Policies Related to Disability-Inclusive Education

Policy/ Law	Issuance Date	Relevance
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	2 January1991	Article 28 - Ratification of the UNCRC by the Malawi Government is indicative of commitments to ensure the basic human rights of children including the right of every child to education.
The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi	1995	Article 20(1) - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Article 25 - Provides that all persons are entitled to education.
National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities	2006	The policy identifies exclusion as the major challenge facing children and promotes equal access and inclusion of children with disabilities in education and inclusive education training programmes for teachers. The policy emphasises that inclusive education should be supported and encouraged through wide awareness raising, development of the skills and capacities of teachers, provision of assistive devices, adoption of effective communication systems, accessibility and research in special needs education.[63]
Special Needs Education Policy	2007	Recognises education as a basic human right and encourages inclusive education.[64]
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified 27 Aug 2009	Article 24 - Obligates States to ensure that *"persons with disabilities can access inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in communities in which they live."*
The Disability Act	2012	Recognises the rights of all persons with disabilities to education on the basis of equal opportunity. Section 10 - Government shall recognise the rights of persons with disabilities to education on the basis of equal opportunity and ensure an inclusive education system and lifelong learning. Section 11 - prohibits discrimination in education or training institutions on the basis of disability.
The Education Act	2013	Section 4(1) – Promotes education for all people in Malawi without discrimination based on a number of grounds including disability.

Responsibilities for Inclusive Education

Table 2 highlights the key roles and responsibilities related to financing and workforce development for inclusive education in Malawi, as set out in the NSIE.[65]

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is responsible for developing and implementing standards, policies, plans and strategies related to education in Malawi, and the overall coordination and implementation of the NSIE. Implementation, including the distribution of teachers and monitoring, is the responsibility of the District Education Offices. Within MoEST, the Department of Special Needs Education is responsible for national coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of special needs education, including facilitating the training and professional development of specialist teachers, advocacy, collaboration with other stakeholders, and mobilising and allocating resources.

The NSIE establishes an Inclusive Education Coordination Unit at national and district levels to *"coordinate the planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of inclusive education in Malawi"*, provide technical support and *"build capacity of MoEST directorates, divisions and district education management on inclusive education management and financing"*.[66] To further support this, the NESIP also promotes the development of a standalone policy for inclusive education with guidelines to improve governance and the management of resources allocated to inclusive education across the sector.[67]

Table 2: Roles and Responsibilities for Inclusive Education in Malawi

Shareholder	Key roles and responsibilities
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	• Lobby Ministry of Finance to allocate more resources for inclusive education • Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education to ensure quality • Review existing education policies and laws to embrace inclusive education principles • Strengthen national and international partnerships in the implementation of inclusive education • Strengthen capacity building in the education sector on inclusive education
District Education Managers	• Ensure the district education plans, programmes and budgets are inclusive • Strengthen the capacity of district education management teams on inclusive education • Supervise and regularly monitor the implementation of inclusive education in the district • Facilitate the development of inclusive district Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)
Malawi Institute of Education	• Conduct in-service training for teachers and administrators on inclusive education
Ministry of Health and Disability Service Providers	• Provide specialised training to teachers and parents in the area of disability
Civil Society and Private Sector	• Strengthen lobbying and advocacy programmes with various players for inclusive education activities • Lobby for inclusive policies and practices within the education sector • Assist the Government in resource mobilisation
Development Partners	• Provide technical, material and financial resources to implement inclusive education activities • Promote coordination strategies among partners to avoid duplications and inefficiencies in inclusive education programmes, • Create a forum where different partners in inclusive education can share experiences in the implementation of inclusive education

Current state of inclusive education provision in Malawi

Currently, the Government of Malawi addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities through the training and deployment of special needs education teachers to special schools; in theory using itinerant special needs education teachers to support clusters of mainstream schools and through placements in mainstream schools.

In mainstream schools, inclusive education is implemented with the support of resource rooms. Students with special needs are taught in regular classrooms but receive additional support in the resource room.[68] In 2017, there were 140 primary and 37 secondary resource centres nationwide.[69] This is well below need; in fact, using latest estimates for total numbers of children enrolled in primary and secondary school level this equates to one resource centre per 1,039 children.[xii] Although the total number of resource centres at secondary level slightly increased by 1.7% between 2017 and 2018 the government's own Education Sector Performance Report judges the total number to be too small to have any impact on national goals.[69]

Moreover, these centres are often not well established or resourced, and the approach tends to perpetuate the exclusion and marginalisation of girls and boys with disabilities due to the shortage of special needs education teachers and the lack of resource centres in most schools.[xiii]

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted that the majority of children with disabilities in Malawi are not in school, and those who are enrolled tend to drop out early *"due to issues of accessibility and a one size-fits-all curriculum".*[70] The inadequacy of resource centres to promote inclusive practices is acknowledged in the NESIP, which includes targets to construct an additional 1,675 centres by the end of 2024.[71]

The NSIE introduced the approach of gradually moving towards inclusive education: *"Through this strategy, the Government stands to preserve special schools and resource centers and use them as a resource to promote inclusive education…At the same time, this strategy mainstreams special needs education interventions into the general education programmes and activities to promote Inclusive Education".*[72] As noted in 2017 by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *"in Malawi, inclusive education is being implemented using a twin-track approach*[xiiv] *whereby severe cases still go to special schools while those learners with mild cases go to inclusive setting[s]".*[73] The NSIE states that *"inclusive education does not mean closing special needs education schools."*[74] However, as one interviewee stated *"a paradigm shift from special needs education to inclusive education"* is required.

There has undoubtedly been progress in terms of education provision for children with disabilities in Malawi in recent years. There is still a long way to go in the journey towards inclusive education in Malawi, but the combination of achievements to date, and the strong emphasis on inclusion in the 2020-2030 NESIP, set the ground for significant progress over the next decade. The Malawi Civil Society Education Coalition highlighted a number of positive steps forward:[75]

- Launch of the NSIE;
- Increased training of teachers for inclusive education, including increased intake at the only institution providing specialist training (Montfort special needs education college) and the expansion of specialist training for mainstream teachers at the Machinga teacher training college, and the inclusion of basic training on inclusive education in all teacher training colleges;
- Orientation of primary school teachers on inclusive education through continuous professional development in primary schools;
- Revision of construction standards to address the disability-friendliness of all infrastructure at all levels of education.[76]

Nevertheless, ambitious plans need to be tempered with realism. For example, the results-based indicator framework of the NESIP includes targets of 98% of special needs education learners enrolled at primary level and 97% at secondary level by 2029. Whilst this is to be congratulated, it also requires further interrogation in terms of feasibility, not least because it suggests a

xii. Authors own calculation, using the total number of children with disabilities enrolled in primary and secondary education in 2018/19 divided by the total number of resource rooms at primary and secondary level according to the data available.
xiii. Personal communication, October 2019
xiv. Note that the use of the term 'twin-track' within this quote is different from the 'twin-track' approach used to ensure that rights of people with disabilities are met by including both mainstreaming strategies and providing disability-specific programming and supports where required. But it is based on the Malawian government understanding and definition of inclusive education.

baseline of 40% enrolment in 2019, which is much higher than the rates of 3.3% and 2.4% indicated in the 2018/2019 Education Sector Performance report.[77]

Gaps and challenges in the provision of inclusive education

There are a number of challenges to operationalising disability-inclusive education in Malawi's already strained and underfunded education sector. The Malawian submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with a Disability in 2017 stated: *"The challenges facing teachers and learners include lack of knowledge and skills in teaching children with disabilities, inadequate teaching and learning resources, negative attitudes by teachers and the community towards children with disabilities, inaccessible school infrastructure and a lack of assistive devices."*[78]

This research has identified a number of key gaps, with a particular focus on teaching. These gaps must be understood in the context of the Government's commitment to inclusive education, and their strategy to ensure that those with mild disabilities are included in mainstream schools whilst continuing to provide special needs schools for those with more complex needs.

In reality, most children with disabilities remain in pre-existing special needs schools. These are almost exclusively in urban areas, and cater mainly for learners with visual and hearing impairments. This accounts, in part, for the low levels of enrolment of children with disabilities. Although the Malawian Government increasingly encourages learners with special needs to enrol in mainstream schools, a lack of facilities forces many to transfer to special schools catering to their specific disabilities.[79]

The Government's current strategy is to use itinerant and special needs education teachers and resource centres to support the move towards inclusive education in mainstream schools. Specialist teachers are expected to support mainstream education to become more inclusive, whilst also continuing to work with special needs schools. However, the overall number of teachers specialised in special needs education is very low. The Malawian submission to the 2017 Committee on the Rights of Persons with a Disability estimated that there were 1,100 specialist/itinerant teachers[80] to cater for an estimated 93,502 learners with special education needs.[xv] In other words, only one trained teacher for every 85 children with disabilities in school at that time.

Moreover, education support personnel and leaders in mainstream schools lack the knowledge and skills needed to identify and teach children with disabilities according to the principles of inclusive education.[81]

PHOTO: SAMANTHA REINDERS/ACTIONAID

xv. Interviewees reported that, currently, special needs education teachers receive the same salary as mainstream teachers, although previously an incremental credit was added upon successful completion of the training course.

If there is chronic undersupply of teachers trained in special needs education for mainstream and special needs schools, the number of teachers trained in inclusive methods is likely to be even lower. While this study was unable to find total numbers, it is clear that the majority of specialist training has been provided through ad-hoc, short-term initiatives. The curriculum is limited, and few lecturers in teacher training colleges have theoretical knowledge or practical skills in inclusive education. This has created an ongoing emphasis on special needs, as opposed to inclusive, education, with specialisation in different types of disability. In-service professional development opportunities and incentives overall, and specifically related to inclusive education, are inadequate. Finally, many schools are in remote locations and lack even the most basic infrastructure to support inclusion, and so cannot cater for many children with disabilities. Inadequate teaching and learning materials,[82] and lack of consideration for the diverse nature of disabilities in the procurement of materials, all confound attempts to move towards inclusive education.[83]

Arguably the biggest barrier to inclusive education in Malawi is the severe and persistent shortage of qualified teachers.[84] According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, Malawi has one of the world's *"most dramatic teacher shortages, equivalent to 2% of the global teacher posts standing empty"*.[85] The average pupil-to-qualified teacher ratio in primary school was 70:1 in 2018.[86] The Ministry of Education estimates that, in order to reach its target pupil-teacher ratio of 60:1 by 2030 (already much higher than the UNESCO recommended maximum of 40:1), an additional 82,461 teachers are needed, of which 44,205 at primary and 38,256 at secondary level.[87]

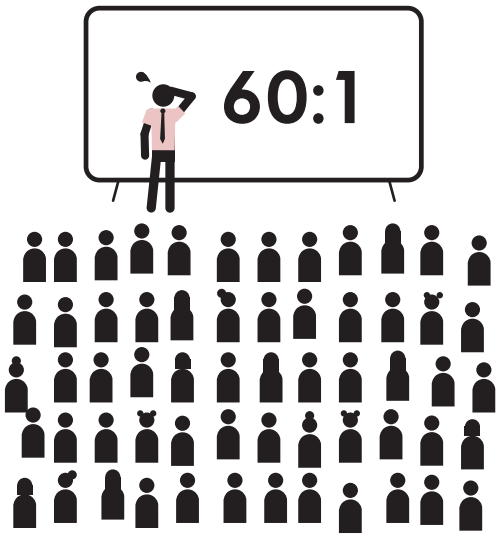
In addition, pupil-teacher ratios vary significantly across the country, ranging from 45:1 in urban Zomba to 84:1 in Machinga,[88] and markedly higher in marginalised rural areas. For example, a teacher survey conducted by the World Bank in a sample of 13 schools in rural Blantyre showed that the pupil-teacher ratio varied from 43 to 573 pupils per teacher.[89]

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report this is, at least partly, due to an inefficient system for distributing teachers. Teachers are deployed according to enrolment figures at district rather than school level, which results in a misalignment of provision to actual need.[90] The Government's decentralisation policy attempts to overcome this, but confusion exists between central and district level responsibilities for the hiring and performance management of teachers.

Malawi has one of the world's "most dramatic teacher shortages, equivalent to 2% of the global teacher posts standing empty".

The current wage and incentives structure does little to get teachers to where they are most needed, or retain the best teachers in the profession. Though the Government of Malawi introduced a rural teachers' allowance to encourage teachers to work in remote areas, one study found that this is received by 85% of the teaching force,[91] thus no longer acting as an incentive but rather as a supplement to low wages overall. Teachers trained in special needs and inclusive education also require incentives, including for working teachers to complete training.[xvi] This would help to stem the flow of trained teachers specialised in inclusive education to private or NGO-run schools, and boost retention in the public sector.

Many of these challenges are acknowledged in the NESIP, which includes plans to reform the school-based rural allowance scheme and enforce the implementation of primary teacher deployment guidelines to ensure the provision of adequate teachers to the neediest schools.[92]



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xvi. Interviewees reported that, currently, special needs education teachers receive the same salary as mainstream teachers, although previously an incremental credit was added upon successful completion of the training course. Personal communication, October 2019

2.2. Workforce Development in Inclusive Education in Malawi

The number of teachers trained in inclusion is unclear

The NSIE emphasises the need to strengthen teacher capacity for inclusive education, and outlines a number of strategies toward this end. Overall, there is a lack of information on the total numbers of teachers trained in inclusive and/ or special needs education. Table 3 outlines key strategies deployed by the Government of Malawi, alongside information on teaching staff.

Table 3: Teachers for Public-Sector Inclusive Education

Number of public school teachers[93]	• Mainstream primary school teachers: 64,056 Specialist teachers / Itinerant teachers: 1,100
Number of public school teachers trained in inclusive education	• 270 teachers trained in inclusive education techniques (2011) as part of Inclusive Education Advocacy Programme[94] • 178 mainstream teachers attended inclusive education in-service training[95] • 1,000 teachers trained through MoEST 'short' workshops on inclusive education[96] • 734 trained through the Malawi Council for the Handicapped Community Based Rehabilitation programme in inclusive education[97]
Number of teacher training institutions which provide pre-service training in inclusive education	• Seven government-supported teacher training colleges (Blantyre, Karonga, Kasungu, Lilongwe, St. Joseph's, Nalikule and Machinga) • Six private teacher training colleges[98] • Two government supported teacher training programmes in special needs education (Montfort College and the University of Malawi). • Emphasis is on special needs education. There is no module on inclusive education in teacher training colleges, although there are topics within the Education Foundation Studies module.[xvii] • There is no government-supported special needs teacher training beyond primary school.

A key MoEST strategy to address the shortage of specialist teachers is the Itinerant Teaching Programme, where specialist teachers support learners with special education needs across mainstream schools within zones, although the numbers are well below need.[99]

Very little information was found on numbers of education support personnel, though interviewees indicated that there are no formal education personnel supporting the implementation of inclusive education at the school level. They noted that, without specific personnel to support inclusive education, this falls to the teacher, fellow learners and parents. One interviewee from a civil society organisation noted that *"often it's the parents themselves who bring their children to school. PODCAM [Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi] members may have a more coordinated structure but it's not a government programme and it's basically voluntary".* Some projects hire teaching assistants, though this is not funded by the Government and relies on development partners and/ or communities. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also noted that the hiring of teaching aides is thwarted by lack of resources.[100]

The plans outlined in the NESIP should improve the data on teacher training, as it aims to ensure timely teacher education data linked to the EMIS through the Teacher Education Management Information System. Unfortunately, however, concrete targets for this have yet to be defined in the results framework.[101]

xvii. Personal communication, October 2019

2.3. Workforce training for inclusive education in Malawi

The NESIP outlines concrete plans to construct 14 new teacher training colleges by 2029, as well as a stand-alone "Teacher Training Institute of Inclusive Education" by 2024.

The NSIE emphasises the need for workforce development to support inclusive education.

A 2016 study found that teachers were generally accepting of inclusive education, but recognised the need for professional development and in-school support including specialised and assistant teachers.[102] Teachers have expressed a need for skills to modify or adapt teaching to address diverse learners, and recommended that they should be included in the design of training for inclusive education.[103] They also indicated that they wanted more recognition and support from the Government, including better pay and more respect for the profession.[104] The NSIE includes *"improved teacher education and motivation for inclusive education"* as an outcome, though it is not clear what this should look like or how it should be achieved.[105]

Under the MoEST, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) is responsible for curriculum development, continuing professional development for teachers and administrators and teaching materials. As of 2012, there were 33 education specialists among the 176 MIE staff,[106] though it is not clear how much technical capacity for inclusive education pedagogy they have. The latest reform of the teacher training curriculum occurred in 2007, led and supported by development partners.

The NESIP outlines concrete plans to construct 14 new teacher training colleges by 2029, as well as a stand-alone "Teacher Training Institute of Inclusive Education" by 2024. Additional plans to improve capacity for inclusive education amongst specialist and classroom teachers, head teachers and education officials at national, regional and local levels include setting aside resources for:

- Training teachers on the assessment of learners with diverse needs;
- Training teachers in inclusive education, Braille, sign language and maintenance of assistive devices for learners with special educational needs;
- Promoting continuous professional development for teachers on the use of inclusive education tools in primary education;
- Ensuring the provision of teachers and materials specialised for inclusive education.

The plan includes an overall target of enrolling 35,025 teachers in teacher training colleges by 2029 (of which 26,774 at primary and 8,251 at secondary level). Within five years, the Government aims to have 35,000 teachers trained in inclusive education, 27,500 trained in the assessment of learners with diverse needs, 7,500 trained in Braille, 4,000 trained in sign language and 2,800 trained in the maintenance of assistive devices.[107] Whilst this suggests positive strides towards achieving inclusion, it is not clear how all these teacher training targets fit together, as there appears to be a lack of harmonisation between the figures in the results framework and the implementation plan.

PHOTO: FLETCHER SIMWAKA

Pre-Service Training

At present, there is one government-supported programme training teachers in special needs education, through both traditional and distance learning. The programme offers a three-year diploma course for teachers to specialise in special needs education at the primary level and graduates approximately 100 specialist teachers per year.[108, xviii] Qualified teachers with at least four years teaching experience are selected for this programme and provided paid study leave by the Government. Once qualified, the graduates can work in mainstream classes or as resource teachers in a single school or in the itinerant programme, in public, private or special schools.

There is also some content related to inclusive education within mainstream teacher training programmes, though not sufficient to meaningfully contribute to the provision of quality, inclusive education.[109] MoEST has introduced one compulsory inclusive education module into primary teacher training colleges,[110] which aims to sensitise teachers and provide them with basic skills and knowledge required to identify and handle learners with disabilities,[111] however overall, content related to inclusive education appears limited.[112]

Interviewees were not aware of any support available for people with disabilities who wanted to train as teachers (except exemptions related to the mathematics aptitude test) or of any accommodations for practicing teachers with disabilities. One noted that there is no *"specific or deliberate strategy to recruit [people with disabilities] to become teachers"* although others mentioned some individual persons with disabilities trained as teachers, and an NGO initiative that had sponsored persons with disabilities to become teachers.

"there is need for a clear understanding of the concept of inclusive education, what issues as teachers that they can promote within their classroom so that inclusive education is achieved".

KEY RESPONDENT, MALAWI

However, it was not clear how many individuals had been trained, or how many were still actively teaching[xix]

In-Service Training

Interviewees pointed to a widespread lack of understanding of the concepts of inclusive education among teachers. One noted that the *"majority of teachers under the Ministry are not aware of the strategy so we have very few teachers trained and not aware of what should be done". Therefore, as another stated, "there is need for a clear understanding of the concept of inclusive education, what issues as teachers that they can promote within their classroom so that inclusive education is achieved".*

The MIE conducts in-service training for teachers and administrators on inclusive education, and provides manuals and teaching materials for division and district education offices to promote and monitor continuous professional development activities within their areas.[113] MoEST also plans for MIE to conduct a national curriculum review to strengthen its responsiveness to the needs of diverse learners.[114]

A recent unpublished baseline study conducted by ActionAid Malawi indicated that 178 general education teachers had attended in-service inclusive education training, funded by GIZ. A total of 1,000 teachers have also reportedly participated in workshops on inclusive education conducted by MoEST.[115] The itinerant teaching programme also enables specialist teachers to provide basic training to teachers in mainstream schools on how to improve inclusion in the classroom.[116]

In 2018, UNICEF noted that there was no budget for continuous professional development and recommended the Government make allocations for in-service training to improve the quality of education.[117] The NESIP 2020-2030 responds to this by highlighting plans to promote continuous professional development for teachers in a range of issues, including the use of inclusive education tools in primary education, and aim to reach an average of 0.6% of primary school teachers and 0.5% of secondary school teachers each year.[118]

xviii. Montfort College runs one cycle of 200 specialist teachers once every three years. Personal communication, October 2019

xix. Two men with hearing impairments have trained as teachers and both are currently teaching. One person was trained through DAPP. Personal communication, October 2019

2.4. Financing Workforce Development in Inclusive Education

Despite progress, resources are still insufficient to deliver inclusive education.

Financing for inclusive education has been woefully short in Malawi. In 2017, the Government reported a huge gap between estimated spending needs and actual allocations for special education, from only around 10% of the estimate funded in 2010, to around 30% in 2013, and an average of around 20% between 2010 and 2014.[xx] A recent unpublished baseline study conducted by ActionAid Malawi[119] estimated that, in 2016/17, the Government allocated MK 100 million (US$ 136,935)[xxi] towards special needs education,[120] and in 2018/19 this was reduced to MK 84 million (US$ 112,669),[xxii] representing only 0.03% of the total education budget.[121]

The NSIE includes an estimate of (some) needs to move towards inclusive education, with a costed model and a total financial requirement of over MK 22 billion (approximately US$ 29 million in current prices) over five years.[122] Divided annually, in 2020 this provides an estimated cost of MK 3.75 billion (or around US$ 5 million) to deliver on the NSIE objectives.

The costing is a welcome initiative, as it links the objectives and implementation strategy to financing needs. However, it appears that financing estimates have not been translated into concrete budget allocations. As one interviewee described, *"despite government costing the inclusive education framework there was no money allocated or budgeted for the said item". Another stated, there is a "huge gap between what the strategy says"* and practice.

One interviewee suggested developing a technical working group with development partners to *"help government implement what they have spelt out, which is brilliant in the strategy, but it's not implemented."* They added that *"Sometimes some of the work being done has already been analysed but there is no political will to move forward by government – we understand the lack of resources, but we call for urgency in the matter."*

Furthermore, the costing model for the NSIE fails to account for the likely need to recruit more teachers, for which there is no budget allocation. As the Strategy itself states, *"although the Government is trying its best to promote inclusive education if budgets are not improved it will be difficult to achieve it".*[123]

Interviewees reported increased investment in inclusive education over the past five years, but noted that *"there has not been much increase in terms of budget for teachers".* One indicated that funds from the World Bank's Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project were sometimes channelled toward infrastructure development to make schools more accessible, rather than to workforce development.

Fortunately, the NESIP 2020-2030 shows a strong government commitment to ensure that inclusive education is integrated across all levels of the education system, and responds to concerns about funding shortages. It specifically highlights the need for a review of the NSIE to increase budget allocations for delivering inclusive education. Newly approved in March 2020, the NESIP builds on plans outlined in the NSIE, with considerably more emphasis on teacher training and continuous professional development.

The overall amount allocated to the *'Inclusive Education, Gender and other Cross Cutting issues'* sub-sector in the NESIP is MK 850 billion (over US$ 1 billion) over the 10 years, which amounts to around 8.6% of the total budget. However, this includes a range of activities, including those aimed at improving disaster risk reduction, gender equality and children protection, and so does not give a complete picture of the allocation to disability-inclusion.

A closer analysis of the initial NESIP five-year implementation plan (2020-2025), allows for a more disaggregated view of allocations to teacher training and continuous professional development. Whilst NESIP has an overall objective to increase the number of qualified teachers to contribute to the quality of primary and secondary education, it also includes specific

xx. Authors own calculations based on figures submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Government of Malawi (2017). In 2010/11 the need for special education spending was estimated at MK 185,342,951 and actual spending was MK 168,000. In 2013/14 the estimate was MK 212,341,089 and actual MK 67,307,00.
xxi. Converted using average MK to US$ exchange rate for 2017 for indicative purposes.
xxii. Converted using average MK to US$ exchange rate for 2019 for indicative purposes.

allocations for interventions to support disability-inclusive education.

As table 4 indicates, a total of nearly MK 10 billion (US$ 13,338,876) has been allocated for training, including for specialist teachers in inclusive education, at degree level. This amounts to 0.2% of the total five-year budget, a significant improvement on previous allocations. However, it is still unlikely to be sufficient.

This becomes apparent when comparing the total amounts allocated for each type of training against the target number of teachers to be reached. For example, the Government plans to train 35,000 teachers in inclusive education over five years and has allocated MK 267,750,000 (US$ 363,675) to this, which works out at only MK 7,650 (US$ 10.39) per teacher, raising serious questions of feasibility.[124]

Table 4: Allocations for teacher training in inclusion in the NESIP 2020-2030 five-year implementation plan[xxiii]

Excerpt from NESIP 2020-2030	Target numbers of teachers for training						Amount allocated	Allocation per teacher trained[xxiv]	
Line Item	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**	**TOTAL**	**Malawi Kwacha**	**MK**	**US$**
Specialist teachers trained at diploma/degree level in inclusive education	150	650	1150	1650	2250	**5850**	5,265,000,000	7,151,275	1,222
Teachers trained on teaching methodologies and assessment of learners with diverse needs	3500	4500	5500	6500	7500	**27500**	2,107,100,000	2,862,004	67
Teachers and teacher educators oriented on the use of inclusive education tools in primary education	800	1150	1500	1,850	2200	**7500**	911,500,000	1,238,060	165
Teachers trained in braille	500	900	1400	2000	2700	**7500**	257,900,000	350,297	47
Teachers trained in sign Language	600	700	800	900	1000	**4000**	267,000,000	362,657	91
Teachers trained on maintenance of assistive devices	160	360	560	760	960	**2800**	203,750,000	276,746	99
Teachers trained in inclusive education	6000	6500	7000	7500	8000	**35000**	267,750,000	363,675	10
Teachers oriented in inclusive education	3000	3500	4000	4500	5000	**20000**	540,500,000	734,143	37
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	-	**110150**	**9,820,500,000**	13,338,860	-

SHARE: Malawi allocates a good proportion of its budget and GDP to education, but it is still insufficient

In 2019, the education sector received the highest share of the total government budget, 23.5%, equivalent to 6.3% of GDP. This has risen significantly over recent years, with the Government taking the share of the budget and GDP to the upper end of the recommended international benchmarks of 15-20% and 4-6% respectively (see Figure 1 and 2). As such, education can be seen to be a top spending priority for the Government.

However, in actual terms, these amounts are not sufficient to respond to real needs across the country. A costing model for SDG4, carried out for the Global Education Monitoring Report, noted that most low-

xxiii. MoEST NESIP 2020-2030. Conversion to US$ done by authors for indicative purposes using average exchange rate for March 2020, the date of publication of the Plan

xxiv. Calculations by the authors based on table data

income countries need to spend above the 6% GDP target in the short term to meet the twin targets of improving equity and quality, in the context of a huge expansion of children coming into education due to population growth and increased retention. The report lists ten low income countries, including Malawi, where *"projected education expenditures in 2030 would take 10 percent or more of GDP"* to account for the low starting point (in terms of both access and quality); high rates of poverty; and very high population growth. It points out this will be required to *"come close to achieving the education targets"* and that *"these countries need very high levels of external support".*[125]

This costing projection takes account of the need to expand the education workforce to meet inclusive education and quality targets.

Considering the huge task at hand, in terms of reducing pupil-teacher ratios; embedding inclusive education pedagogy, meeting new costing estimates for the NSIE, and expanding provision into poorer rural areas, the Malawian Government must continue to spend a very high proportion of its budget and GDP on education. External donors must also continue to support these efforts. Yet in a time of increasing fiscal pressures on the budget this will become ever more difficult (see Box 4).

Figure 1: Malawi share of the budget to education, 2012-2019

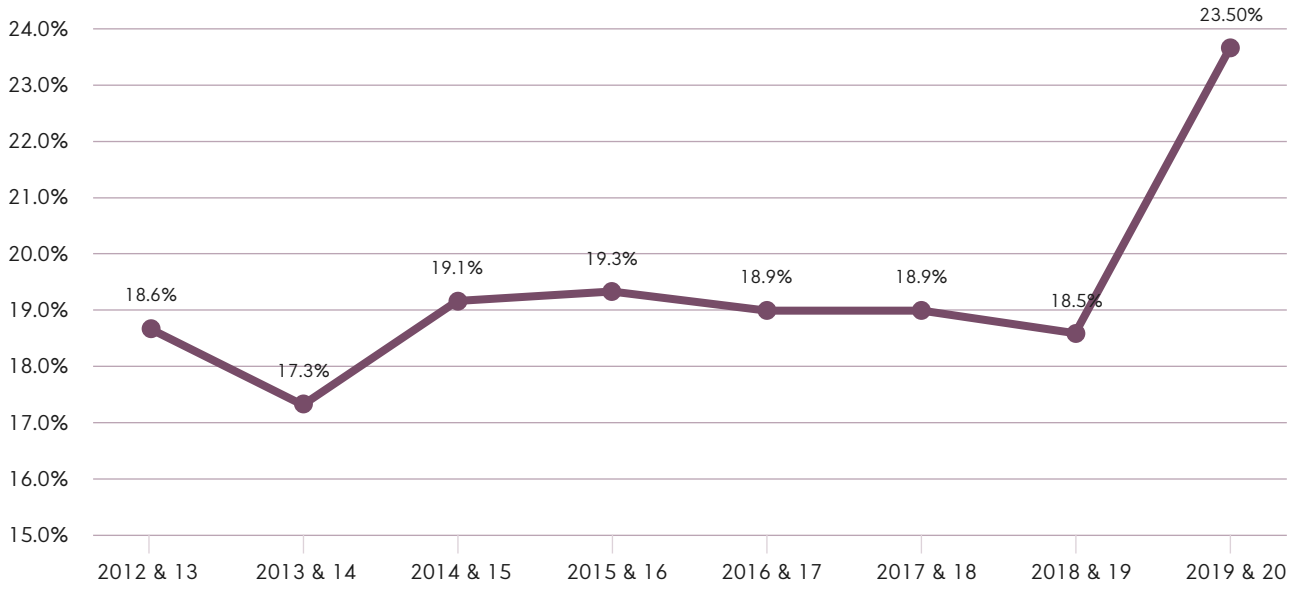
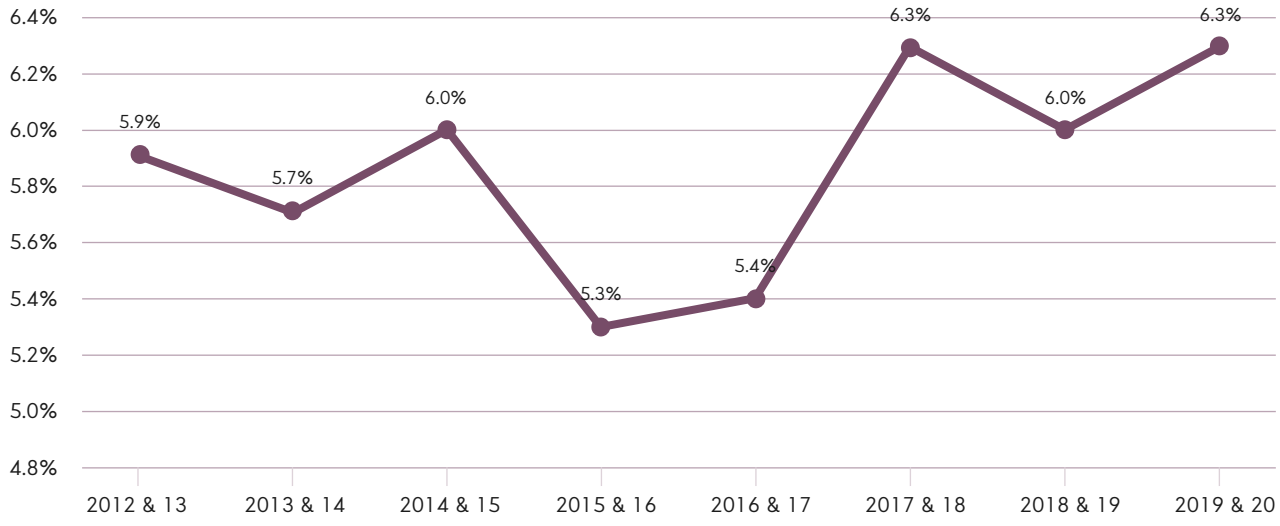


Figure 2: Malawi share of the GDP to education, 2012-2019



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

Table 5: Investment in Public Inclusive Education, 2018[126]

	Details
National budget	MK1,454.80 Billion
National education budget	MK345 Billion
Proportion of GDP spent on public education	6.3%
Proportion of budget spent on public education	23.5%
Teacher development budget (overall)	MK4.8 Billion (1.7% of education budget)[127]

Box 4. Donor support to inclusive education

The Government of Malawi's education budget is highly dependent on development partner support.[128] This has significantly reduced in recent years, not least following a financial scandal in 2013 where donors pulled support after widespread corruption and misuse of public funds.[xxv] However, donors continue to play a big role in the country's development budgets. The MK 22 billion contribution from international donors to the 2018/19 budget (7.5% of the total education budget) was earmarked for development projects.[129] Overall, fiscal space for education remains very limited, meaning that donor support for non-wage expenditure will be central to achieving SDG4 targets, and specifically inclusive education, in coming years.

The Global Partnership for Education has been a key mechanism for financing education in Malawi since 2009. The Government recently received a US$ 44.9 million grant as part of GPE's 2016-2020 strategic plan to support quality education and address the inclusion of vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities.[130] Part of the grant will support capacity development for teachers and head teachers in school management practices, and will include a module on special treatment and inclusive teaching of children with disabilities and special needs.[131]

...the ongoing pandemic is likely to disrupt the global economy and adversely affect inflows of overseas development aid... In this context, the Government of Malawi must work harder to protect education funding through increased progressive domestic resource mobilisation and tackling debt.

New findings from UNESCO suggest that aid to education will be more important than ever to mitigate against the effects of the global financial downturn brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure that progress towards SDG4 is not irrevocably reversed. At the same time, the pandemic is expected to put significant pressure on aid budgets as donor governments struggle to respond to the economic crisis.[132]

Malawi's NESIP acknowledges that the ongoing pandemic is likely to disrupt the global economy and adversely affect inflows of overseas development aid, and outlines a funding scenario of a 30% reduction in donor assistance to education, resulting in a financing gap of MK 6.5 trillion (US$ 8.2 billion). In this context, the Government of Malawi must work harder to protect education funding through increased progressive domestic resource mobilisation and tackling debt.

SIZE: Insufficient revenue collection hampers the collection of domestic resources to fund inclusive education

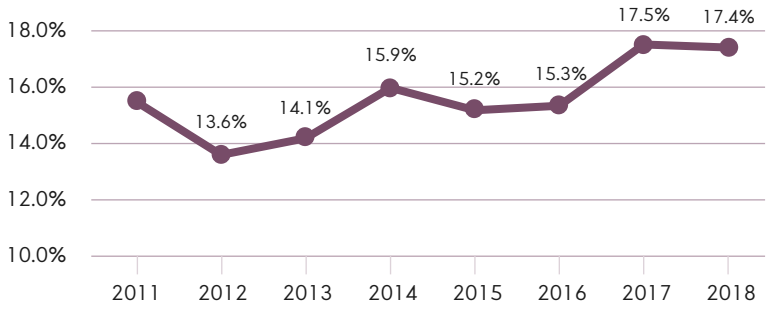
UNICEF has noted that, while budget allocations are currently insufficient to meet the growing demand for education services, *"fiscal space to increase education sector budgets ... remains very limited."*[133]

UNICEF suggests that some new fiscal space can be freed-up by increasing efficiencies and equity in the use of existing resources.[134] However, ensuring that sufficient funding is available to meet SDG4 will almost certainly require increased domestic revenues. For example, the World Bank estimate that around 6,000 new classrooms and teachers are required each year just to keep up with the demand from the half a million new children entering the first year of primary school each year.[135] This is before considering the huge expansion in access to lower-secondary education. In this context, it is likely that the Government of Malawi will need to continue to allocate such a high proportion of the budget to education, and push up levels of overall spending in real terms.

xxv. For more information https://www.economist.com/baobab/2014/02/27/the-32m-heist

This need for increased spending to achieve SDG4 targets, taken alongside the current high shares of budget and GDP for education, point to the need to increase the overall amount of revenue available. As noted in a recent baseline study conducted by ActionAid Malawi, while there has been an increase in domestic tax revenue over the past few years, the proportion allocated to the education sector *"is not adequate to address the aspirations of the sector on quality and inclusive public education".*[136]

Figure 2: Tax % GDP in Malawi, 2011-17



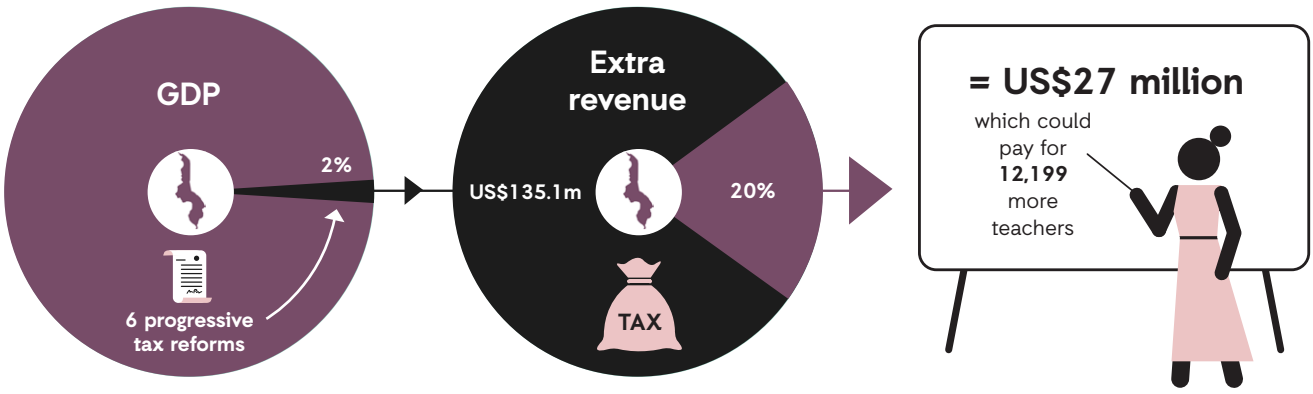
Source: ICTD/UNU-WIDER Government Revenue Dataset

The education sector budget, especially recurrent spending, is largely financed from domestic resources (over 90% of education sector resources were mobilised from within the country). This means that, given huge teacher shortages, low wages and lack of training, Malawi will need to allocate above the recommended share of its budget to education to transform the workforce for inclusive education, and this will require new sources of domestic funding.

Whilst Malawi's tax-to-GDP ratio of 17.2% in 2018 was in line with the average range for sub-Saharan Africa,[137] It is still only just above the minimum threshold of 15% considered necessary to finance even the most basic of state functions. This makes increasing the actual amounts allocated to education very difficult.[138] Moreover, while the tax-to-GDP ratio rose from 13% in 2012 to above 17% in 2017, it has started to decline in 2018 (see figure 3).[139]

Urgent actions are required to reverse this trend in order for Malawi to raise the funds needed to make sustained progress towards the SDGs. This requires concrete measures, such as eliminating harmful tax exemptions, to help the country generate significantly more revenue. ActionAid has estimated that US$ 87.04 million was lost to tax incentives and tax treaties in 2015/16.[140] This represents more than double the NSIE costings over five years (US$ 29.3 million).[xxvi]

Additional research by ActionAid in 2020, exploring the revenue potential from just six progressive tax reforms in Malawi, shows that there is considerable space for significant revenue increase.[141] The proposed reforms, focusing on taxes on personal and corporate income and incentives, property and luxury goods, could translate into a 2% increase in Malawi's tax-to-GDP ratio, an estimated US$ 135.1 million. If just 20% of these new revenues were allocated to education (as per the international benchmark) this would equate to around $US 27million – enough to pay the entry level salaries for 12,199 much-needed newly qualified teachers. This equates to around 27% of the total number of primary school teachers needed by 2030, and 35% of the teachers expected to be trained in inclusive education by 2025.[xxvii]



xxvi. Authors own calculations, based on costings in the NSIE report.
xxvii. This estimate, for advocacy purposes is based on information obtained regarding current teacher salary scales effective 1st July 2018 which notes that the monthly salary for a teacher on grade L1 is MWK 136,078. This would add up to MK 1,632,936 per annum (around US$ 2,213 using average US$ to MK exchange rates for 2020).

Measures to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio and raise new revenues are especially important given Malawi's debt servicing commitments, which consume around 20% of its revenue,[xxviii] increasing fiscal pressure on the budget.

Box 5. Debt is spiralling in Malawi and threatening public service spending

Faced with fiscal pressures, the Government often resorts to borrowing, especially from domestic lenders. Whereas planned foreign borrowing declined by 56.3% between 2017 and 2018, domestic borrowing is projected to increase by 473.6% from MK 30.7 billion in 2017 to MK 176.1 billion in 2018. Interest on debt payments is projected at MK 182.9 billion in the 2018 budget, of which MK 168 billion is interest on domestic debt.

With debt currently spiralling, analysis carried out by Jubilee Debt Campaign and ActionAid found that Malawi spends around 20% of revenue on debt servicing, and is set to stay that way for some years to come.[142] The IMF noted that Malawi is in high debt distress, and has *"accumulated debt at a fast rate over the recent years, and the country's debt level is high compared to its sub-Saharan African peers"*.[143] In this context, new domestic revenues are urgently required to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further.

SENSITIVE: budgets need to better address inequalities to support inclusion

Addressing inequity is particularly important for inclusive education. In addition to disparities in teacher deployment and infrastructure provision that leave most remote, rural areas struggling to attract qualified teachers and lacking adequate infrastructure, there are also huge variations in per capita allocations to district councils and secondary schools. This suggests that budget allocations are unequitable, and formulae outdated.[144] Furthermore, spending on education has historically been highly skewed towards tertiary education.[145] While this has improved in recent years,[xxix] given that more than 90% of students at tertiary level are from the wealthiest 20% of families, subsidising higher education perpetuates wider inequalities.[146]

Malawi needs to ensure more equitable allocations across the sector and among schools, including factoring in formulae that address disadvantage, including disability. This is necessary to address the very high pupil-teacher ratios, by recruiting more teachers whilst also improving teacher pay and conditions and incentivising more staff to work in disadvantaged areas.

This all requires a much sharper focus on the sensitivity of the budget. Malawi needs to ensure more equitable allocations across the sector and among schools, including factoring in formulae that address disadvantage, including disability. This is necessary to address the very high pupil-teacher ratios, by recruiting more teachers whilst also improving teacher pay and conditions and incentivising more staff to work in disadvantaged areas.

At the same time, the budget needs to support progress towards inclusive education. Analysis by the Malawi Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) found that the 2018 budget allocated a total of MK 260 billion to *"special needs education"*, roughly one third at central (MK 86 million) and two-thirds decentralised (MK 174 million) level. They note: *"These are meant to address the needs and aspirations of 131,135 learners with special needs (NSIE 2019 target). This means Government is providing a meagre per capita resource estimated at only MK1, 982.69 (US$ 2.64) per special needs learner."* As the study goes on to argue: *"this is not inclusivity, what can one do with a mere MK 1,982.69? Government ought to demonstrate its seriousness towards the implementation of the NSIE by allocating resources commensurate with the minimum requirements as laid down in the 2019 NSIE costing of MK 4.5 billion."*[147]

xxviii. The data used in this report was based on debt data (external and domestic) from the Jubilee Debt Coalition database, which is based on IMF Article VI Country Report data. See also ActionAid (2020). Who Cares for the Future: Finance gender responsive public services. Table 8.

xxix. The latest budget figures show this to be split as 47% to basic education (primary); 11.5% to secondary and 36% to higher education. From UNICEF (2019) Education Budget Brief: Towards Improved Education for all in Malawi.

SCRUTINY: Budget allocations to inclusion require greater scrutiny to ensure that plans are realistic and on track

Until recently, monitoring and scrutiny of spending on inclusive education was a considerable challenge, as spending on inclusive education was integrated into wider education budgets. As UNICEF noted in 2017, *"Despite having a target to improve enrolment of persons with disabilities at various levels of education, there is no dedicated budget line item despite the launch of the National Inclusive Education Strategy in 2016".*[148] This analysis has been corroborated by CSEC who note that the special needs budget is very difficult to identify, *"hidden"* within budget lines that cover a number of issues as *"cross cutting budget".* The analysis goes on to note that the allocation to cross-cutting issues is only MK 306 million, against the NSIE (2017-2021) costing matrix which provides for MK 4.5 billion for special needs in 2019.

The new NESIP aims to ensure that inclusion is considered as a cross-cutting element of the overall education plan, but also includes a relatively detailed breakdown of specific line items aimed at promoting inclusive education, and disability-inclusion in particular. This will make spending on inclusion easier to track and monitor.

However, as mentioned above, timelines and targets in the results framework and the implementation plan do not always match up.[xxx] More remains to be done to ensure that plans, budgets and targets for inclusion-related actions and expenditure are both harmonised and realistic. Engagement and scrutiny by civil society education stakeholders will be key to ensuring accountability, to ensure that planned actions are delivered and contribute to improved outcomes.

PHOTO: KATE HOLT/ACTIONAID

xxx. The NESIP period is 2020-2030 and the NSIE ends in 2021

PHOTO: FLETCHER SIMWAKA, ACTIONAID

The inconvenient truth is that Malawi will only achieve truly inclusive education when it takes the necessary steps to reduce its staggeringly high pupil-teacher ratios, and allocates sufficient funding to ensure that the education workforce is properly recruited, trained, deployed and supported.

SECTION 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent completion of the NSIE heralds a significant step forward for Malawi in laying out a pathway to improve provision for children with disabilities, and build a more inclusive education system. Ambitious plans such as those outlined in the new NESIP 2020-2030 must be sustained by the necessary resources and championed through political will across the whole system, from policy makers to the education workforce. Implementation of the NSIE depends on ensuring that the right resources (human and financial) are in place. This requires investment to guarantee full funding of the strategy, but true inclusion must go beyond this. The inconvenient truth is that Malawi will only achieve truly inclusive education when it takes the necessary steps to reduce its staggeringly high pupil-teacher ratios, and allocates sufficient funding to ensure that the education workforce is properly recruited, trained, deployed and supported.

Recommendations

1. **Continue to embed inclusive education into policy planning, budgeting and monitoring.**

- Ensuring that broad commitments to inclusive education as embedded in the NSIE and, in particular the NESIP, are translated into concrete actions.
- Reviewing the definition of the "twin-track approach" to inclusive education to align with international frameworks, to ensure the full implementation of inclusive approaches.
- Ensuring that ambitious commitments to transform the workforce to deliver inclusion are accompanied by appropriately costed and realistic budgets.
- Ensuring that implementation plans and their results frameworks for the delivery of inclusive education include harmonised and realistic targets to enhance tracking and achievement.

2. **Ensure more robust and accurate data to improve planning and budgeting for inclusive education and monitoring change.**

   Improvements in data should focus on:

- Ensuring standardised, comparable data collection methods that meet international standards by using the Washington Group child-functioning module and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, which collect information on disability at the household level, school attendance and other relevant demographic data for planning purposes.
- Strengthening the Education Management Information System (EMIS), using the UNICEF Inclusive EMIS guidance on rights-based language and the data required to inform policy, financing and the allocation of resources.
- Delivering on commitments to using the Teacher Education Management Information System to collect better data on the availability of educators and education support personnel, including their level of preparedness to deliver disability-inclusive education. This includes setting clear targets for the system.

3. **Address the high pupil-teacher ratios which prevent teachers from practicing inclusion in the classroom, strengthening equitable teacher deployment.**

   This includes delivering on commitments to:

- Recruit and train significantly more teachers and education personnel to address the acute education workforce shortage and reduce pupil-teacher ratios.
- Address teacher training needs and deployment to under-served districts with higher pupil-teacher ratios.
- Roll out pre- and in-service professional development and training that supports teachers to deliver inclusive education, whilst continuing to manage large class sizes.

4. **Develop a workforce that can practice inclusion, including transforming training to equip teachers to practice inclusion.**

   This includes delivering on commitments to:

- Review the qualifications required for special needs/inclusive education support personnel and develop training courses to enable them to support teachers in the delivery of inclusive education.
- Review compensation, incentives, wage structures and career progression for special needs/ inclusive education support personnel to ensure better staff retention.
- Ensure all pre- and in-service subject teaching training embed inclusive education principles and cover differentiation for children with different learning styles and abilities:

  At pre-service level:
  - strengthen the capacity of lecturers in teacher training colleges so that they have both theoretical and practical experience on inclusive education;
  - ensure broader curriculum change within mainstream teacher training colleges to better prepare new teachers to provide quality inclusive education that will benefit and accommodate the learning needs of all learners, including children with disabilities.

  At in-service level:
  - strengthen continuous professional development for teachers on inclusive education, and allocate budgets to improving this;
  - design and implement strategies to incentivise teachers to engage in continuing professional and skills development (e.g. through recognition in salary, position/title, etc.);
  - sensitise practicing teachers to address attitudinal barriers related to the inclusion of children with disabilities.

5. **Support teachers through improving the resource centre system of inclusive education delivery.**

   This includes delivering on commitments to:

- Support well-funded resource centres with clear links to mainstream classrooms, ensuring they can provide guidance to teachers and other education personnel on effective delivery of disability-inclusive education.
- Strengthen and expand the coverage of resource centres to help teachers embed inclusive education.
- Allocate budget for teaching and learning materials to support teachers to practice inclusive education.

6. **Carry-out credible costings for supporting inclusive education, including education workforce development.**

- Delivering on commitments to develop credible budgets for inclusive education provision e.g. by increasing allocations in the NSIE to meet the

ambitious targets set out in the NESIP.

- Ensuring realistic costing exercises that take into account spending levels vs need and highlight financing gaps in order to take identify the system-wide investments required for inclusive education.
- Developing all costing exercises in collaboration with representatives of the education workforce and unions, as well as Disabled Persons Organisations and other civil society allies.

7. **Raise significant new funds for education to transform education systems and the teaching force for inclusion.**

   Transforming the workforce to move towards system-wide inclusive education requires substantial increases in public budgets, which can be supported by applying ActionAid's "4S education financing framework". In Malawi this requires:

- **Maintaining the share of the budget at current high levels of over 20%.** Ensure frontloading of the investments required to scale-up education to meet the 2030 targets, notably ongoing investments in the education workforce. Manage pressure from debt servicing so as not to erode these investments. This in turn will require the IMF to ensure that its advice to the country does not counter their commitment to social spending.
- **Increasing the size of domestic revenue, and hence government budgets overall.** Enable increased commitments to education by action to widen the tax base in progressive ways and increase the tax-to-GDP ratio. Adopt measures to build more a progressive tax system, including stopping the allocation of harmful corporate tax incentives and using tax incentives selectively and strategically to facilitate national development.
- **Improving the sensitivity of the budget to support inclusion.** Ensure more equitable allocations to schools, including factoring in spending formulae that address disadvantage such as disability. Ensure that allocation distributions respond to pupil-teacher ratios and incentivise staff to work in disadvantaged areas.
- **Enabling scrutiny of current and future budgets and expenditure for inclusive education.** Ensure plans, budgets and targets for inclusive education are harmonised across different education strategy and policy documents.

Building back better for inclusion

With crisis comes opportunity and against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, we hope that the practical recommendations outlined in this report will support the implementation of sustainable measures, not just to perpetuate the status quo, but to invest in the skilled education workforce needed to build back education systems that are better, more inclusive and leave no child behind.

A Call to Action

Billions of dollars are lost each year to harmful tax incentives, double taxation agreements and debt, meanwhile governments lack the funds to recruit, train and deploy the teachers they need to achieve SDG4. With only 10 years to go before 2030, Covid 19 must not be an excuse for retrogression.

We call on governments to act now to safeguard education financing and invest in the education workforce needed to deliver quality education for all children, including those with disabilities by:

- increasing the size of their overall budgets through progressive taxation
- spending at least 20% of budget and 6% of GDP on education
- addressing amounts lost each year to debt servicing and
- ensuring funds allocated to education arrive on time where they're needed most.

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ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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