

**CARE International in Malawi
Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative (PCTFI)**

**Situation Analysis Study Report for Marginalized Girls in
Kasungu District, Malawi**



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ACRONYMS

AGEI	African Girls Education Initiative
AGLIT	Adolescent Girls Literacy Project
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BOMA	British Overseas Military Administration
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBE	Complementary Basic Education
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbytery
CERT	Center for Educational Research and Training
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CSCQBE	Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEM	District Education Manager
DEN	District Education Network
DFID	Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESSP	Education Sector Support Program
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GABLE	Girls Attainment for Basic Literacy Education
GAC	Gender and Curriculum
HH	Household
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JCE	Junior Certificate Examination
KII	Key Informant Interview
KI	Key Informant
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MESA	Malawi Education Support Activity
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MTTA	Malawi Teacher Training Activity
NALP	National Adult Literacy Programme
NGP	National Gender Policy
MIDEC	Minnesota International Development Education Consortium
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOESC	Ministry Of Education, Sports and Culture
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PAGE	Partnership in Addressing Gender in Education
PCAR	Primary Curriculum Assessment Review
PCTFI	Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PIF	Policy Investment framework
PLA	Participatory Learning Approaches
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal

PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
PSSP	Primary School Support Project
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
REFLECT	Regenerated Frierian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SAFE	Support to Vulnerable Groups to Achieve Food Security
SPAC	Social Policy, Advocacy and Communication
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
STD	Standard
TA	Traditional Authority
TALULAR	Teaching And Learning Using Locally Available Resources
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Education Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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On behalf of the Malawi PCTFI Situation Analysis Study Team:

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Executive Summary

The situation analysis was conducted in order to produce a comprehensive report for the Malawi Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative (PCTFI) to be implemented in Kasungu district. Malawi continues to face a number of major obstacles in creating a stable and sustainable educational system for its children, in particular for the girls. CARE Malawi is already implementing a number of other projects in Kasungu district and in order to contribute to solving the educational problems in the country, CARE Malawi was looking at maximizing the impact and synergy of its programs by increasing intra-sector and cross-sector coordination and collaboration and narrowing the spread of the programs by mapping and prioritizing key geographical areas of coverage. It was therefore felt that a Situational Analysis would be useful to get a better idea of the prevailing situation in Kasungu that the PCTFI project was to address.

The Situational Analysis research employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Questionnaires were administered to households in four Traditional Authorities as well as to head teachers, teachers and pupils from four schools; one each from the Traditional Authorities. A number of participatory data collection tools were also employed at the village and school levels.

The results have showed that while Malawi has made great strides in getting many children into schools, there are many hurdles for survival in school for girls as they hit puberty. There are a lot of misconceptions about girls being dull, needing more encouragement to stay in school, and expectations that they should marry early, that boys are future leaders and that generally parents support girls' schooling much less than boys, for financial, cultural and other reasons. Many boys, girls, and parents who participated in the research felt that schooling may not be very useful to girls, and the nature of the constraints that girls face in getting to, staying in, and achieving in school are generally different those of boys. Girls are pushed out of school by early entry into marriage and parenting and a host of negative attitudes to their education while boys who leave school generally do so to become involved in money makers activities. In addition girls have many fewer options to return to school than do boys. This evidence suggests that the challenges that countries face to meet the EFA gender equity goals are complex and multiple and no single intervention has proved to be effective at significantly reducing gender disparities in education; such reduction may require cross sectional interventions.

It is therefore recommended that, as a first step, government must work toward recognizing and eliminating all forms of discrimination restricting girls' attendance. It is also recommended that government should move towards the creation of **Child Friendly Schools** that are rights-based schools and that demonstrate, promote and help monitor the rights and well being of ALL children. There is also need for mechanisms to be put in place in the society to identify problems and find solutions for them. This should be done using the already existing structures like the chiefs who are behind the *mwambo* of the village. Lastly, the government should take additional steps to reduce the opportunity costs of schooling for girls, which for families remain higher than those for boys.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

This first chapter provides an overview of the state of education in Malawi. It describes the socio-economic context of Malawi, outlines the problem statement and objectives for undertaking the study, and presents the context in which it occurred.

1.2 CONTEXT

Malawi is a small, densely populated, landlocked country – a vulnerable yet hopeful country, which is focused on improving the lives of all of its citizens. Its economic and health indicators highlight its vulnerable status. With one of the lowest GDPs per capita in the world at \$164 in 2004, 85% of its 13 million people living in rural areas, and almost half of the country living on less than \$1 per day, Malawi is ranked among the six poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2007; UNICEFa, 2007).

Malawi's human development index indicators also are among the lowest in the world (162 out of 175) (Human Development Index, 2008). Life expectancy is declining, and the country's HIV/AIDS infection rate of 15% affects all areas of life, including personnel and activities in the education sector. Malaria is also rife and causes huge economic losses, including keeping adults from working an average of 25 days a year¹. Malawi has a high infant mortality rate of 133 deaths per 1000 live births and a high maternal mortality rate of 620 deaths per 10,000 live births. Hospital services are extremely limited, including for maternity services (UNICEFd, 2007, p. 143).

Before the implementation of the FPE, Malawi had one of the lowest enrolment rates in SSA. Throughout the 1980s, only half of the eligible school-aged children were in school and gross enrolment rates (GER) remained below 80%. The major turning point in school enrolment in Malawi was in 1994/5 following the introduction of the FPE policy. Enrolment increased from 1.9 million to 2.8 millions pupils between 1993/94 and 1994/95. The GER increased from 83.4% in 1993/94 to 134% in 1994/95, while the net enrolment ratio increased from 71.4% to 95%. Out of a population of approximately 13 million, 32 percent are illiterate adults, most of whom make up the backbone of the agricultural industry on which Malawi's economy is anchored.

Malawi is divided into three regions, the North, Central, and South. CARE has strategically positioned its work in the Central region. The country is ethnically diverse: Chewa, Yao, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngonde, Asian, and European are the main identified ethnicities. Some of Malawi's ethnic groups are matriarchal and some are patriarchal. Chichewa is the national language and is spoken as a mother tongue by approximately 57% of the people; English is the official language. Other languages spoken include Chiyao, Chinyanja, Chitumbuka, Chilomwe, and Chisena. A predominantly Christian country, Muslims and those identified as "other" make up the other major religious groups in the country. The secret society of Gulu Wamkulu are an influential group in the Central region of the country.

¹ This section is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) US Department of Health and Human Services web site: http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/controal_prevention/malawi.htm

1.3 ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The structure of the education system in Malawi follows an 8-4-4 pattern of education comprising three levels. The primary level, which is an eight-year cycle, runs from Standard 1 through to Standard 8. This level is divided into three sections; infant section which comprises Standards 1 and 2; junior section comprising Standards 3, 4 and 5 and senior section comprising Standards 6, 7 and 8. Secondary schooling lasts four years and consists of two cycles- junior (Forms one and two) and senior (Forms 3 and 4) with national examinations after each cycle. Tertiary education includes university, technical and vocational and teacher education. The number of years for this level varies depending on the course being pursued and ranges from one year to seven years.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has administrative, financial and academic control over primary, secondary, tertiary (including the University) and distance education as well as the training of primary school teachers. The system of education is organised in four tiers. At the top of the national structure is the MoE, which is headed by the minister. While the MoE plans and administers the system as a whole, the responsibility of managing and administering the three levels above is assigned to two Principal Secretaries (PS). The second administrative tier is the divisional level. Under the recent efforts to decentralise education services, the previous regions (three) were split into six divisions, each headed by a division manager. The divisions are in turn organised into 34 education districts of which four are urban. At the bottom of the tier are the schools. According to the 2007 education statistics, there were 5307 primary schools, 141 formal secondary schools, 289 private secondary schools and 573 Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs), 44 open secondary school, 5 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), 4 technical colleges and two public Universities and three private Universities in the country. There are also two autonomous institutions: the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), which oversees examinations and the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), which plays a leading role in curriculum and material development and in-service teacher education.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While change is on the horizon, Malawi continues to face a number of major obstacles in creating a stable and sustainable educational system for its children, in particular for the girls. As in many countries, economic conditions; direct and indirect costs for school; distance and access to schools; sexual harassment within schools; gender biases, inadequate sanitation facilities; HIV/AIDS; cultural traditions; and lack of parental/community support influence girls' enrollment and retention in schooling (Chesterfield, Enge, and Martinez-Enge, 2001; Miske, 2004).

In addition, food and water shortages during certain times of the year, endemic poverty, and high rates of HIV/AIDS that cause medical problems and leave children orphaned to fend for themselves are three problems confronting Malawi (UNICEF, 2004 and UNICEF, 2005). Less transparent constraints also have an impact on education on girls and boys in the Malawian context. These include cultural constructions of gender combined with traditional practices; the taboo on sexual topics affecting lack of open discussions and explicit understanding of HIV/AIDS; traditional and unchallenged

hierarchies within education; and the lack of human and other resources. The most disturbing feature that one encounters when looking at education statistics or visiting a school is the tendency for enrolment to decrease as pupils progress to higher standards. Moreover, while the numbers of boys and girls are almost equal in the lower standards, it appears that differential household, child, school and community characteristics exert different pressures on boys' and girls' education in Malawi. These forces have to be properly understood for any constructive programming of projects on girls education

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this exercise was to produce a comprehensive situational analysis report for the Malawi Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative. The situational analysis investigated issues affecting and exacerbating girls' marginalization in the area where the initiative intends to implement its intervention. The overall approach aimed at building the capacity of CARE Malawi and its partners to collect, manage, analyze and use and draw lessons from data to inform the design of a programme that aims to address factors that affect girls' marginalization. Specifically, the study was to carry out a comprehensive study to understand the current situation and trends preventing girls from achieving and performing in the education sector; build capacity of CARE Malawi staff and partners to collect, manage, analyze and use and draw lessons from data and from results of the Situational Analysis; and identify probable theories of change. The results of the analysis may form the basis for an experimental design model that will drive the intervention design. The study will also assist in building the capacity of CARE Malawi's staff to carry out a similar exercise in the future and to build a platform from which to launch an evidence based advocacy program to improve girls' performance and achievement.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This first chapter has introduced the situation analysis exercise and its rationale and justification. The second chapter reviews the literature on girls' education and the third chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct the study. The main findings are presented in chapter four and chapter 5 discusses implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Education for All initiative, launched at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, and the UN Millennium Development Goals, enacted in September 2000, have put the education of girls and women at the forefront of educational initiatives globally and in Malawi. Specific initiatives directly aimed at girls in Africa, such as UNICEF's African Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) (UNICEFa, 2004) and SADC's adoption of the Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997 (*Review of African Political Economy*, 1999), has productively challenged Malawi to consider the benefits of having an educated female populace and a more inclusive education environment. This chapter discusses some of the issues surrounding the challenges and dilemmas to the global and national education initiatives at getting everybody (especially girls) in school and providing them with quality basic education.

2.2 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Malawi has seen remarkable gains in primary school enrolments as a response to the 1990 and 2000 Education for All commitments and subsequent initiatives by the Ministry of Education and its donor and NGO partners. The school age population for the primary standards is estimated to be 2,857,643. Current enrolments in primary school stand at 3,307,000, up by nearly 10 percent since 2000 and by 136 percent since 1990. The GER is estimated at 116 percent and the net enrolment rate at 100 percent (2007 EMIS data). While it is acknowledged that the MOEST's EMIS data still face some challenges, it is reasonable to conclude that the multi-year enrolment data and the current gross enrolment data show a major surge in pupil participation in primary schooling (Chimombo, forthcoming). Disparities have persisted, however; for example, children in lower socio-economic groups generally manifest lower enrollment and achievement (Rose and Kadzamira 2003).

Primary school enrolments in Malawi have been steadily increasing since Malawi gained her independence in 1964. The 1990s, however, registered accelerated increases in primary enrolments due to the introduction of a number of policy reforms in primary education (such as FPE) following the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All. In 2005 the Gender Parity Index for primary education in Malawi was 1.0, indicating that Malawi has gender parity in primary education (UNICEF, 2005: 17). However, 60% of children still drop out within the first four years of primary school (Malewezi and Chitedze, 2002: 9). The enrollment parity that is present in the first four years of school slowly declines as more girls than boys drop out of school. Geographical location (urban vs. rural) also influences girls' access to school, with urban areas recording higher percentages of girls' participation. Generally, it appears that girls have a lower propensity to remain in school than boys, but it is also possible that the huge leap in girls' enrolment represent the changing proportions of boys and it is possible that in lower standards, it is the boys who are now lagging behind. More work is needed to examine this in detail.

2.3 ACHIEVEMENT

Pupils' scores on the PSLE determine whether or not they can continue on to secondary school; the PSLE thus functions as a high stakes exam and a gatekeeping device for students progressing through the system. Teacher-made classroom tests also have a significant impact on pupils' success in school. Pupils are ranked according to their total marks, and these marks determine a pupil's place in the class (Miske, Schmidt and Santhe, 2003) and their leadership assignments in classroom and school activities (Kendall, 2008).

Project assessments have revealed the generally low performance of Malawian students, and gender differences on various exams. In SACMEQ, for example, Malawi's pupils performed the least compared to all other 14 countries. The performance of these pupils on all the items had significantly decreased between SACMEQ I in 1998 and SACMEQ II in 2002. In SACMEQ I, 19.4% of the pupils reached the minimum level of mastery in reading while in SACMEQ II, only 8.6 per cent of them reached the minimum level (Chimombo et al, 2005). This was a very significant decrease and this very deplorable state of affairs was an indication of the magnitude of the schooling problems the Malawi Education System was and is facing. The SACMEQ studies have demonstrated the overall challenge faced by countries like Malawi in sustaining some levels of quality education..The Improving Educational Quality longitudinal study (1999-2002), which assessed pupil performance in Chichewa, mathematics, and English in standards 3, 4, and 5 in several districts using a curriculum-based instrument, revealed gender differences as well as differences according to language of instruction and mother tongue. Boys outperformed girls in every area, and those whose home language was not the national language of Chichewa performed less well than those who spoke Chichewa at home. More recent data from the Primary School Support Project (PSSP), which uses a different curriculum-based instrument to assess pupils in standards 3 and 6 where Chichewa is the home language for the majority of children, has measured girls as outperforming boys in particular areas (PSSP, 2008). This is clearly an area where additional research is needed.

2.4 GIRLS' MARGINALIZATION

This section provides an overview of the factors that contribute to the marginalization of girls, paying particular attention to relationships, traditions, access to services, distribution of resources; and roles and responsibilities, as indicated in *Perspectives*. CARE's use and adaptation of UNICEF's *Operational Guidance Note for Girls' Education* guided the structure of this section. Specifically, factors related to girls' marginalization are discussed in terms of system and policy (with economic factors noted first), school, and community and household levels (CARE, 2005: p. 24).

2.4.1 Economic Factors: Poverty and Costs of Schooling

Direct costs to education such as exercise books, pens/pencils and clothes have an impact on pupils' enrollment and continuation in schools. Malawian households tend to spend between 7.5-13% of their total expenditures on education (Rose, 2003 in Kadzamira and Rose, 2003). This is a large portion of earnings in poor households. The economic drain on families of school costs is a factor in students' high dropout rate (p. 506).

Due to the high incidence of poverty, child labor is woven into the economic fabric of Malawi. Girls' and boys' labor frequently is required for family survival, but family expectations for their labor differ significantly. Girls typically work one more hour a day than boys, which reduces the time they can allot to their studies (Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000, as cited by Kadzamira and Rose, 2003: 507-508). Moreover, fetching water becomes increasingly difficult during times of drought, a common occurrence in the region, which requires girls to travel long distances to get water for their families. Families may also require that students help fund their education. Boys are able to raise money for school by working piece work (*ganyu*) whereas girls typically find themselves in domestic work that does not pay. Even when policies such as the Social Policy, Advocacy and Communication (SPAC) of the Child Protection Project is enacted to protect children, the demand for the labor remains, which outweighs a student's ability to enroll and/or to remain in school (Centre for Educational Research and Training, 2004).

Many studies have found that the necessity for children to perform economically important tasks that support household survival limits participation, especially in rural and urban squatter groups (Anderson, 1988, Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991). In deciding to send their children to school, parents face a trade-off between household consumption now and children's expected future income. There are direct and indirect costs of children's forgone labour at home or in paid work, their forgone time that could be spent in non-school education, such as learning how to work in the family business or on a family farm. Thus, opportunity costs refers to the cash earnings or other contributions which a household or individual sacrifices in order to keep a child in school. Bryant (1990) noted that many children in Malawi began working at very early ages and were not enrolled in school at all. He noted that they spent their time child minding their siblings, working on the estate farms, in family fields and with herds or on the lake.

Williams (1983) and Colclough and Lewin (1993) have observed that the practical and financial difficulties of moving towards 90 or 95 per cent net enrolment are likely to be considerably greater than those associated with the earlier stages of expansion of the primary system. This is because those children not in school are likely to be different in important respects from their peers. They are likely to live in marginal or relatively inaccessible areas with poor infrastructure. The opportunity cost of school attendance may therefore be significant. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) argued that one of the most significant ways to increase demand is to improve the quality of education and therefore increase the opportunity cost of not attending school.

The interplay between the lack of financial stability, gender, and education is even more serious. A recent DevTech study (2004) observes, "The *feminization of poverty* in Malawi and the growing number of female and child-headed households has resulted in increased prostitution among girls for money, food, or necessary goods. Some girls opt to make alliances with 'Sugar Daddies' in order to pay for necessities, although the degree of coercion is difficult to discern" (USAID and DevTech, 2004, p. 21). Social service programs, whether government supported or initiated by outside agencies, that provide

girls with viable alternatives to relying on “Sugar Daddies” are essential in addressing HIV/AIDS related issues and empowering girls.

2.4.2 Policy and System Factors outside Education that Marginalize Girls

Various policies are in place to promote equity and to improve access to and quality in education for girls and boys, women and men. However, the distribution of resources, such as health care and land, and of services to which girls and their families have access, varies based on region of the country, urban or rural location, and relative wealth or poverty (i.e., ability to pay for services at private clinics or schools).

2.4.3 Health and Health Services

A number of public and private organizations and individuals provide health services: GOM – 60%; Christian Hospital Association of Malawi (CHAM), with some GOM funding – 37%; Ministry of Local Governments – 1%; and other providers, chiefly private hospitals, commercial companies, and army and police – 2%. Since a policy of national decentralization began to be implemented in 1998, each of Malawi’s 33 districts has managed its own service delivery. The Ministry of Health (MoH) continues to formulate policy and set standards and regulations. Reproductive health services are provided through antenatal clinics, primary care clinics or hospitals, traditional birth attendants, mobile teams, and private clinics. While schools offer health and life skills classes, schools do not have clinics staffed by medical personnel, and inoculation records are not kept routinely at schools. School health related issues include deworming, nutrient supplementation, bilharzia, malaria, HIV/AIDS and water and sanitation.

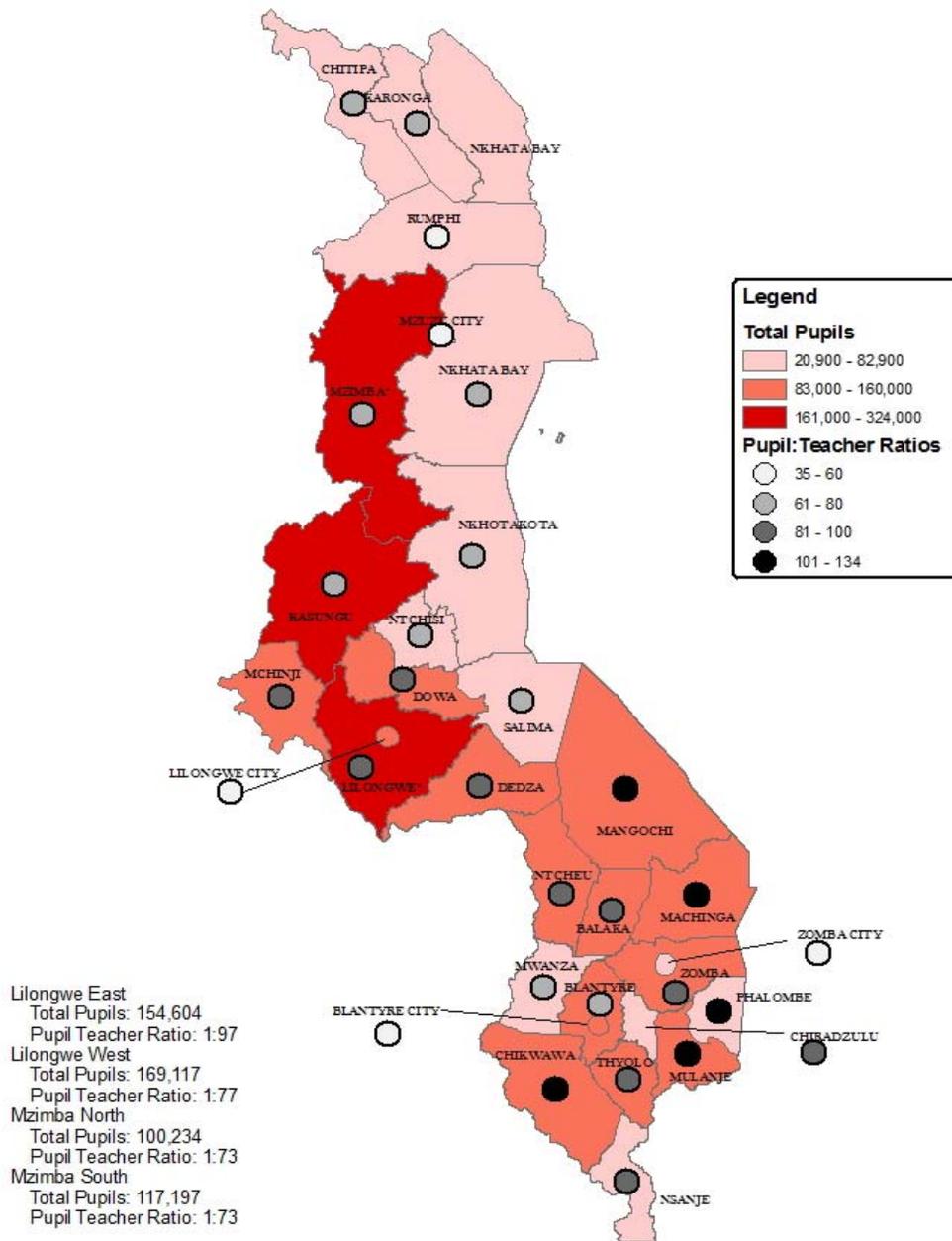
Malaria is one of Malawi’s most serious health problems. The groups at highest risk are children and pregnant women, especially women in their first pregnancy. Malaria infection often causes children to become sick and/or anemic, and many die. In 2001, malaria accounted for 22% of all hospital admissions, 26% of all outpatient visits, and 28% of all hospital deaths. Since not all people go to hospitals when sick or having a baby and many die at home, the true numbers are likely much higher.

HIV/AIDS is taking a huge toll on Malawi, including children and youth. HIV/AIDS is physically, emotionally, psychologically, and economically draining. Parents become sick, girls drop out of school to care for their dying parents, parents pass away and leave orphaned children behind. The deaths of family members take a traumatic toll on children and are a financial hardship on families. The statistics surrounding HIV and AIDS in Malawi are alarming: approximately 14 to 15% of the population aged 15 to 49 is estimated to be HIV positive, including 500,000 women and 91,000 children under the age of 17 (UNICEFd, 2007, p. 127). Children and youth become more transient and migrate more often due to HIV/AIDS. Ansell and van Blerk’s study on AIDS and migration in four communities – two in Lesotho and two in Malawi—revealed that in the Malawi group, 10 percent of urban and twenty-two percent of rural children and youth reported migrating to other cities/regions due to an illness, either of their parents or another family member (Ansell and van Blerk, 2004, p. 679). About 19 percent of children indicated that their families had taken in children because of HIV/AIDS related illnesses. HIV/AIDS has a disproportionate effect on girls. Girls represent the fastest

growing population of new infections, and girls are more likely than boys to take on the caretaker role for family members infected with HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2005: 17).

In schools, pupil: teacher ratios have been affected significantly by the number of teachers living with HIV/AIDS. UNICEF (2005) reports that the pupil: teacher ratio in some areas has grown to 96:1 due to the numbers of teachers dealing with HIV-related illness (p. 17). This is also supported by the map below.

Malawi: Total Pupils and Pupil:Teacher Ratios



The map (adopted from Williams et al 2008) illustrates the density of the pupil populations in each district and the pupil: teacher (p:t) ratios. Some districts have a fairly low pupil density and a relatively favorable p:t ratio, others have a moderate pupil density and an unfavorable p:t ratio, and others have a moderate pupil density and a favorable p:t ratio. The already high p:t ratios in some districts and in many schools within those districts has created a significant challenge to achieving access to a *quality* education for all. This is particularly the case for rural schools and in the lower standards where the highest p:t ratios are exhibited. Further, teacher absenteeism and death also affect the school and student learning. School communities often face the dilemma of whether or not to report a teacher who has HIV/AIDS and is missing school due to illness, lest the ill teacher be dismissed (Kendall and O’Gara, 2007), although this has greatly changed. The loss of a job on top of dealing with an illness is not something the school community wants to inflict on anyone (p. 10). In one particular case study of a school, no records were kept of which families were dealing with the HIV/AIDS virus, and teachers did not feel they were responsible for identifying or tracking vulnerable children who did not make it to school. (Kendall and O’Gara, 2007).

Further, the lack of openly tracking and honestly discussing HIV/AIDS within education environments, the limited explanation of how HIV/AIDS is a life-long disease, and the at times contradictory educational explanations of sexual relationships provided to girls and boys is perpetuating unhealthy sexual practices and maintaining stereotypes about HIV/AIDS and individuals living with the virus.

Absence of clean water continues to be a serious national problem in Malawi. Rural access increased by 11 percentage points, from 47 percent in 1990 to 58 percent in 2000 (Republic of Malawi, 2003) and to 68 percent in rural areas by 2004 (UNICEF, 2008). Access to running water and toilets is a necessity for girls who want to continue to attend school during menstruation. A recent report illustrates that for girls there is a statistically significant relationship between puberty, not completing primary school, and not attending secondary school (Biddlecom, Gregory, Lloyd, and Mensch, 2007, p. 29).

2.4.4. School Factors

2.4.4.1 Safety: Gender-based Violence in Schools

Sexual harassment and violence in and around schools continues to be a major threat to girls’ education. Parents want to protect their daughters from abuse within the schools and the potential dangers to girls on the way to and from school (UNICEF, 2005, p. 17). Findings emerging from the USAID-funded Safe Schools Program raise a number of gender issues within the Machinga District. Verbal and physical abuse from teachers and other peers is a reality for both girls and boys. Corporal punishment is officially banned but still practiced; most common is physical labor (USAID and DevTech, 2004). Parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school out of fear of inappropriate teacher behavior in terms of soliciting girls for sex or drinking during school (Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000, p. 41). Teasing by teachers and teasing or bullying by male peers also contributes to girls’ lack of persistence in schooling (Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000 and USAID and DevTech, 2004).

2.4.4.2. Quality of Education

Education quality, as defined by PCTFI, includes the learner, the environment, learning outcomes, processes of teaching and learning, content, and learning outcomes.

2.4.4.2.1 School Infrastructure and Environment

Factors such as long distances between villages and schools and poor infrastructure, including lack of water and sanitation facilities, prevent girls from attending and remaining in schools. Other dimensions of the school environment impact girls' participation in school. On a practical level the school calendar is still not advantageous for retaining boys and girls. The school calendar, presently January to November with a long break in November and December, was revamped in 1997 to take into consideration the "hunger months" (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003, p. 513). While this addresses some of the school absenteeism due to hunger, the school year still overlaps with high agricultural production times when students must work at home, are drawn to labor on plantations, and when initiation ceremonies are conducted.

2.4.4.2.2 Teachers and Teacher Attitudes

Teachers' attitudes toward girls and boys affect how they treat girls and boys in the classroom. A 2000 research study observed that teachers' impressions of girls were less favorable than of boys. Chimombo, et al. (2000) cite teachers in Kainja and Mkandawire as saying, "Boys are perceived to be intelligent, hardworking, motivated and co-operative whilst girls are perceived to be easy to control, passive, calm, and submissive (p. 12). Girls were described by interviewees as being less "serious" and "capable" in Davison and Kanyuka's (1992) work in Zomba region (p. 454). Kadzamira and Chibwana (2000) reported that teachers see girls' participation in class as a poor use of time (p. 40), and Davison and Kanyuka (1992) noted that Malawian teachers hold different levels of expectations for girls and boys. More recent research in a school reform initiative suggests that these attitudes may be changing in some schools. Kendall's (2008) evaluation of lessons learned and best practices in the USAID-funded MTTA professional development project for teachers found a more equitable, gender-responsive environment in the classrooms of the 10 schools observed in the MTTA district schools.

2.4.4.4.3 Pedagogy

Child-centered teaching is still unrealized in many schools where teachers are untrained and class sizes remain large. The high p:t ratios prevalent since FPE was enacted makes implementing new teaching approaches quite difficult. With a 100:1 or 85:1 p:t ratio, authoritarian control remains the norm in teaching practices (Kadzamira and Rose as cited in Evans and Rose, 2007: 907). In order to maintain control within the classroom, teachers use forced physical labor as a form of punishment. This is detrimental to students' desire to remain in school (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992). Malewezi and Chitedze (2002) point out that authoritarian teaching can also be perceived as "traditional education" which "is value based with social sanctions liberally used to bring about conformity and the required change in behaviour" (p. 10). This style of teaching can be disengaging for students and perpetuate dropouts (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003, p. 512).

2.4.5 Household and Community Factors

2.4.5.1 Families

Families and parents shape the way children perceive the world and their place in it; they are the epicenter of transmitting and transforming cultural beliefs around gender. Parental perceptions of the relevance of girls' education, girls' interest in education, and girls' responsibilities in the home influence a girls' choice and/or ability to enroll and remain in educational programs (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992; Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2001; Maluwa-Banda, 2003). Parents are aware of their influence on their daughters' participation in school. As early as 1992, Davison and Kanyuka documented that mothers "recognized that perhaps their own attitudes toward education in general, and educating girls especially, might negatively affect their daughters' persistence through school" (p. 458). The findings of a 2000 study that aimed to understand parental attitudes towards girls' and boys' education in Malawi (Chimombo, et al., 2000:43) showed that the majority of the respondents to the questionnaire were mothers, and the majority of them believed that boys were more interested in school, more intelligent, make a greater financial contribution, and have more time to do school work. Girls were seen to need more disciplining. Mobility restrictions arise in many societies when girls reach puberty, affecting girls' retention (Lloyd and Blanc 1996). Families fear that once a girl reaches puberty, she is prone to getting pregnant out of wedlock. The result is that the girls are forced into early marriage, which in most cases takes them out of school.

Parents control the initial decision of a child to attend school and often influence the nature of a child's participation in education. The Malawi Primary School Study (1989) found that boys received more parent-supplied exercise books than girls did. Likewise Davison (1993) found that very few mothers in Malawi thought it was more important to educate girls than boys. The reason most cited was that girls got married or conceived during the school cycle resulting in wastage and loss of the educational investment (CERT, 2000). A closer involvement of parents in their daughters' education is essential in their learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2004). Overcoming the gender gap will therefore require not only providing more school places for girls but also overcoming parents' ignorance of the gains that will result from enrolling their female children, (CERT, 2000).

2.4.5.2. Social Constructions of Gender, Family, and Culture

Cultural attitudes and tightly held beliefs relating to gender roles remain a large factor in girls' education. The *National Gender Policy* (NGP) (2000) states, "...there are strong traditional and cultural forces that impinge on the participation of both men and women in development endeavors" (Republic of Malawi: MGCWCS, 2000). The NGP also reports that while women are responsible for 70% of the agricultural work, land continues to be handed down to men. Abuse, both physical and sexual, is an accepted practice within the classroom and the home (Republic of Malawi: MGCWCS, 2000). While the *National Gender Policy* looks to address the many cultural inequities, enforcement of the policy across society and within the education system is difficult.

Across various ethnic groups there is a wide range of heterogeneity in terms of patrilineal and matrilineal tradition (Ansell and van Blerk, 2004 and Davison and Kanyuka, 1992).

However, the collective constructs of gender across groups in Malawi perpetuate the subordination of girls and women (USAID and DevTech Systems, Inc., 2004 and Republic of Malawi-a, 2000). Gender constructs are learned in the home, through communal initiation ceremonies, and through the education system. Re-conceptualizing these norms is necessary to start to break some of the long-held beliefs and practices.

Cultural factors have been seen to contribute considerably to school dropout for females and males. Kapakasa (1992) in her study on determinants of girls' participation and persistence in school, found that initiation ceremonies contributed significantly to school dropout. Parents demonstrated a willingness to pay more for initiation ceremonies than for regular schooling. Since initiation prepares young girls for married life, girls choose to put into practice what they learn at the initiation ceremonies rather than continue with schooling (CERT, 2000). Malewezi and Chitedze (2002) point out that girls find themselves exposed to the risk of contracting HIV through initiation as well as the potential for psychological trauma as sex is performed whether the girls submit and accept it or not (p. 14).

Various sexual practices—forced and unforced—also affect girls' education. Economic circumstances may force girls to exchange sex for resources (CERT, 2000). The UNICEF mid-term evaluation of girls' education described these practices: “ceremonies which force girls into sexual relations with older men, experiments with sex during and following initiation, cleansing ceremonies which involve sex with strangers or relatives following a husband's death, forced marriages of young girls, defilement of young girls, the rising incidence of rape and the phenomena of ‘sugar daddies’” (Centre for Educational Research and Southern?, 2004: 17). The “high value placed on fertility, ‘dry sex’ preferences of some men and myths about curing AIDS by having sex with a virgin” are other factors that continue to subjugate girls and women to physically and emotionally unsafe practices (Lindgren, Rankin and Rankin, 2005, p. 72)

The culturally assigned roles that girls and boys perceive and the ways in which “gender scripting” occurs (USAID and DevTech, Inc., 2004) socialize boys to be verbal and assertive while girls are taught to be quiet and submissive. Perpetuation of these roles into adulthood is evident in that the Malawi culture empowers men and disadvantages women. The power relations maintain “prevailing gender inequities in social practices in families and communities...” (Moser, M'Chaju-Liwewe, Moser, and Ngwira, 2004: 6).

Early marriage and pregnancy also impact a girl's, and her family's, decision to stay in school. Kainja and Mkandawire (1989) argued that while girls as well as boys experience multiple repetition, girls are at a disadvantage because the onset of adolescence brings competing demands in school, at home and in the community with the risk of pregnancy and early marriage (reported in CERT, 2000). Roughly 11% of girls between the ages of 15-49 report being married prior to age 15, and approximately half of women aged 20-49 stated that they were married by age 18 (UNICEFc, 2007, 26). Another challenge faced by girls who are sexually active is that male teachers often regard school girls as potential sexual partners. Girls are promised money or good grades if they have sexual relations

with them. If they refuse, they start to have bad grades and to fail exams. Parents may thus withdraw their daughters from school when they reach puberty. (UNICEF, 2004)

A recent study by Biddlecom, Gregory, Lloyd, and Mensch (2007) describes the correlation between pre-marital sex and marriage with school retention and secondary school completion by gender in Malawi and three other Sub-Saharan countries. There is a substantial difference between sexes in the number of out-of-school married girls compared to out-of-school married boys (p. 123). This research highlights how differences in cultural expectations can influence choices in terms of sexual behavior, which in turn can influence marriage and school completion. In program implementation, a balanced approach and a critical eye are needed toward respecting and valuing marriage and family, while promoting the empowerment and education of girls and young women.

What goes on in the classroom also affects female access to education. Teaching methods, curriculum content, classroom and other facilities all affect female entry and retention (Anderson 1988:12). The sex of the teacher is even more important. Anderson says that female teachers act as role models and thereby provide more encouragement to girls than male teachers. Other in-school effects on female access include tracking by sex into certain courses. Malewezi (1990), in her study on why girls fail to continue with their education, observed that teachers treated girls differently from boys both in terms of academic expectations and gender-specific forms of discipline.

2.4.5.3 Orphans

In the past, orphanhood in Malawi posed no major problems because the family and community social care systems were able to help the few orphans who were at serious risk of deprivation. Now, due to HIV/AIDS the number of orphans has increased rapidly and places unmanageable strains on the extended family and affected communities. There are three ways that becoming an orphan impacts a child's ability to remain in school. As an orphan, a child's economic standing is diminished, school readiness is different from non-orphans, and the "relationship to adult decision makers" is significantly changed (Case, Paxson, and Ableidinger, 2004: 493). Relatives are less likely to "invest" in the their orphaned relatives than the orphan's parents. Ansell and van Blerk (2004) found that maternal grandmothers take in their orphaned grandchildren at higher rates than other family members (p. 681). These conclusions align with UNICEF findings that children want to live with grandparents more than other relatives, although grandparents have less "economic capital" and it can be difficult financially to support their grandchildren.

Family members that take in orphans can at times exploit the power position that exists, requiring the child or adolescent to take on a heavy burden of chores that prevent them from remaining in schools. In Malawi girls are typically used for domestic labor and boys are expected to help on the farms or in the gardens. Orphaned girls also appear to be at greater risk for HIV infection than their peers, in part because of a lack of family financial support. Children interviewed by Ansell and van Blerk (2004, p. 387) resented their aunts, uncles, and grandparents for requiring them to take on increased responsibility such that it prevented them from going to school. Support for families that

take in vulnerable children and monitoring systems that ensure their needs are met are essential to the betterment of their lives (UNICEFd, 2007).

2.5 CURRENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS GIRLS' EDUCATION AND MARGINALIZATION

2.5.1 The Policy Environment for Girls

The Government of Malawi (GoM) already has enacted policies that promote (1) gender parity in education between men and women, boys and girls; (2) inclusion of orphans and children with special needs, and (3) protection and promotion of the well-being of children and youth. These policies lay out comprehensive plans on how to address educational inequalities for various populations and present a framework for how to achieve established goals and objectives.

The GoM has enacted many specific policies to support girls' education, from FPE to the readmission policy, which allows pregnant girls to return to school after they become mothers. How these policies are actually carried out and whether or not they support girls effectively has been and is being explored in UNICEF's current UNGEI evaluation. For example, past data have indicated that teachers and community members struggle with girls' re-entry, concerned that the girls "set a bad example" for others in the school. The GOM has limited ability to monitor and evaluate how policies are implemented. UNICEF reports high rates of turnover in the MOEST and the Ministry of Gender, which is not conducive to long-term implementation of gender-related policies and programs (MGCWCS, 2000 and UNICEFb, 2004). High turnover rates and the failure of GOM to give community stakeholders a direct role in the policy process raises the question of whether the educational changes being enacted meet the educational needs and priorities of the people in the absence of a participatory process (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003).

2.5.2 Educational Access and Quality

2.5.2.1 Access

Girls' initial access to schooling has been effectively addressed by numerous development partnerships with the GOM and the MOE, including GABLE (Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education). More recent initiatives focus on educational quality in addition to access. Successful interventions from these earlier programs can be adapted to current issues. These include the successful GABLE social mobilization campaigns that worked with communities to create action plans to address local barriers to girls' schooling; the use of Theater for Development to raise awareness in communities with low girls' primary enrolment; radio programs on gender issues broadcast country-wide; and gender-sensitive curriculum and role model literature production, among other initiatives. Current programs, such as the USAID-funded Primary School Support Project: School Fees Pilot (PSSP) in its third year of implementation in the Central region's Dowa district, have shifted attention from an exclusive focus on girls to all vulnerable children, especially HIV/AIDS orphans.

2.5.2.2 Quality

Hanushek (1995) contended that high quality schools raise student achievement and speed students through the school cycle, thus saving costs. Hanushek suggested that students respond to higher school quality with lower dropouts; 'they tend to stay in good schools and drop out in poor ones. Though there is less evidence available in Malawi about how parents and students conceptualize a quality education, or how quality affects their decisions about schooling, quality of education issues have been addressed in a number of programs to positive effect. The USAID-funded Malawi Education Support Activity (MESA) focused on pedagogy and community support. Pedagogy and content together were and are the focus of teacher professional development in the Malawi Teacher Training Activity (MTTA) and PSSP. These initiatives reached only five districts out of 33, but this includes nearly 8,000 teachers, many of whom have embraced the training and the results of which are demonstrated in increased teacher knowledge and skills, teacher credentials, and pupil learning.

Currently a new curriculum for primary education, "PCAR," the Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform, is being introduced. During the previous curriculum reform in the 1990s, GABLE helped establish a Gender and Curriculum (GAC) unit at the MIE. Personnel from the unit reviewed all curriculum to move it away from gender bias and toward gender equity. The GAC unit still exists, and gender awareness modules for teachers are available to use in teacher training.

2.5.2.3 Health and Safety (Safe Schools, Life Skills)

Teachers' professional development not only enhances the classroom learning environment, it can result in less corporal punishment and improved pupil learning. In the Improving Educational Quality Continuous Assessment pilot project, standard 3 teachers said they became more confident teachers as they learned to understand their pupils' learning process, and they had less need to discipline pupils because pupils were actively involved in their own learning. In *Proud Pioneers*, Miske (2003) observes that pupils who were interviewed about the Continuous Assessment program spoke of it favorably, saying, "The teacher doesn't beat us any more." Other direct interventions are needed to address harassment and gender violence in schools. Other health and safety interventions include the UNICEF Life Skills Curriculum, developed for all standards of primary school, and MTTA's introduction of life skills teaching strategies for new teachers.

2.5.2.4 Community-School Partnerships

PTAs and school committees seem to be an under-utilized resource in creating stronger partnerships between parents and schools. The intention of the school committee is to serve as a bridge between the school and the community, however in practice school committees typically have done more solicitation of funds and labor for school improvement projects than building bridges (Rose, 2003). One example of a school group that works well is UNICEF's partnerships with Mother's Groups, School Management Committees (SMCs), and Parent Teacher Association (PTAs) to discuss the Human Rights Based Approach and to address cultural issues surrounding girls' participation in schooling. UNICEF evaluators of this work stressed that "training alone does not change cultural values and attitudes that are engrained in people's minds" (Centre for

Educational Research and Southern?, 2004). There needs to be both training and community dialogue. The current policy direction encourages schools to move towards whole- school management (Malawi Government, 2004).

2.5.2.5 Non-formal Education

The Ministry of Education states in the National Education Sector Plan that non-formal education includes out of school youth and adult literacy programmes. Several approaches to non-formal education (NFE) have been introduced (Nampota and Moleni, 2006). These include the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP), launched in 1986 and implemented through District Community Development Officers and locally-based volunteer instructors; the Adolescent Girls Literacy Project (AGLIT), a nine-month combined literacy and health curriculum launched by a local NGO in 1997 to improve the health of rural adolescent girls, especially reproductive health; REFLECT (Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques), piloted in Malawi through Action Aid by four NGOs from 1998-2001, which merged Freire's literacy methodology with Participatory Rural Appraisal methods and was demonstrated to have the potential to empower communities to tackle local development needs and promote sustainable livelihoods; and the Complementary Basic Education (CBE), a three-year pilot begun in 2006 under the Ministry of Education, which is designed to provide appropriate, relevant basic education to children who cannot easily benefit from the formal education system (e.g., working children, adolescent mothers).

2.5.2.6 Information Gaps

There are numerous information gaps related to girls' educational experiences, particularly those of marginalized girls, such as orphans, girls from very poor families, and girls who have given birth or been married early. A UNICEF study currently is underway to explore the outcomes of the funds and activities supported by the "25 by 2005" initiative of UNICEF/NY Headquarters to close the gender gap between girls and boys participation in basic education in 25 countries by 2005. Malawi was one of those countries, and, through school-based research, Dr. Diane Prouty-Harris is currently studying the impact of that initiative on girls, including girls who became pregnant and gave birth while in school. The findings will be useful to this Situation Analysis.

Other information gaps include a deeper understanding of how gender mainstreaming (versus girls' education) policies and program approaches affect schools and students, and the need for more current data on women's and girls' empowerment. The reliability of data and accuracy of information systems in the Malawi basic education sub-sector remains a huge challenge.

The Gender Assessment for Malawi (2007) reports that the traditional attitude of considering gender-based violence as an internal family matter makes collection of such data particularly challenging. Women who want to convey their experiences of domestic violence may find it difficult to do so because of feelings of shame or fear. Complete privacy is essential for ensuring the security of the respondent and the interviewer. Asking about, or reporting, violence, especially in households where the perpetrator may be present at the time of interview, carries the risk of future violence. These aspects may

lead to an under-reporting of the incidence of domestic violence (NSO, 2007). This is also true for violence in schools, where girls may be threatened with future violence if information about their experiences is gathered in the presence of a perpetrator.

2.6 AREAS OF INNOVATION: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The aforementioned studies and research center on work and research being done in Malawi by a variety of researchers, many of whom are from Malawi or Sub-Saharan Africa. The GABLE program, the rights-based Safe Schools education initiative, and the UNICEF multi-year aid project being carried out around girls' education initiatives in Malawi are the three main large scale projects currently wrapping up or soon coming to a close. Through this analysis and institutional partnerships, CARE is positioned to build on much of the work that has been done and target their work around issues that require further assistance. The points below highlight key recommendations from various organizations and reports in regards to girls' education in Malawi:

The Republic of Malawi Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (MOESC) (2001) recommends creating Community Based Childcare (CBC) at primary schools in order to better accommodate young women with children or who have to care for younger siblings, and recruiting more female teachers for primary school positions.

The USAID-sponsored Safe Schools Program makes a number of recommendations on how to raise awareness of gender based violence and implement a more rights-based approach within the Malawian curriculum. Their extensive recommendations include: implementing better protection for women at a policy level, creating a network between schools/hospitals/social service agencies so that reporting of abuse is more streamlined, providing training for teachers and communities on the impact of gender-based violence, creating a reporting structure that allows for teachers who abuse their power within schools to be cited and punished for their actions, recognition of the cultural traditions that surrounds many of the practices, and mobilizing communities towards a gender inclusive and safe environment (USAID and DevTech, 2004, pp. 47-49).

GABLE was successful on many levels in terms of having an impact on girls and their ability to attend and remain in school, and to address local communities' views of girls' education; a number of its most effective interventions were noted above. Key pieces missing from the program were addressing the hostile classroom environment that many girls faced, looking at the direct challenges to female teachers within the classroom, and broadening the reach of the program to address some of the other institutional barriers that girls face (Kendall, 2006). As noted, these have since been examined in other projects (DevTech, 2004; Kendall, 2008), but can always be extended even further.

UNICEF's girls' education initiative in Malawi recommended that more be done to address the cultural practices that impact girls' participation in school. As a means of addressing this as well as to have a broader outreach in the community, the UNICEF research team advocated creating stronger ties with religious, community, and health

organizations (Centre for Educational Research and Southern, 2004, p. 8) “[R]espect for confidentiality” and continued affirmation of the “richness of Malawi’s culture,” while working with communities to rethink ways to maintain cultural practices in light of issues such as HIV/AIDS, are essential aspects to creating long-standing relationships that allow for intercultural bridges to be built (Malewezi and Chitedze, 2002, pp. 19)

UNICEF’s Malawi’s Girls’ Education Program 2004 Mid-term Evaluation advocated for building the capacity of various groups at different levels and addressing issues related to HIV/AIDS are key threads that extend through much of the work on the project. “Advocacy” and “social mobilization” are also themes that emerge in the work they are doing around girls’ education. Ensuring that partner organizations have the capacity to sustain the work being done on the program is also critical.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Socio-cultural practices and beliefs seem to be a major deterrent to female children’s persistence in primary school. There is widespread early marriage; early pregnancy (in and out of marriage), heavier domestic and subsistence duties for females (especially in rural areas), and a generally lower regard for the value of female life (as sex objects). All these tend to combine to affect the participation of girls in the primary schools. There is also a dearth of female role models in some rural schools among the staff. Further, achieving the gender equality goal will be extremely challenging as it will require addressing both the poverty issues as well as societal and cultural barriers that work together to produce the gendered outcomes of schooling that have been observed. Addressing these will require multiple and multi-sectoral interventions, some of which lie outside the mandate of ministries of education.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The Malawi Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative (PCTFI) interventions will be done in Kasungu district because CARE Malawi is already implementing a number of other projects in Kasungu district and CARE Malawi plans to maximize the impact and synergy of its programs by increasing intra-sector and cross-sector coordination and collaboration, and narrowing the spread of the programs by mapping and prioritizing key geographical areas of coverage. The Situation Analysis (SA) was thus conducted in Kasungu. The methodological approach drew heavily from the Malawi situation analysis design Workshop that was held at the Malawi Institution of Management in Lilongwe Malawi from 3-7 March 2008. The introductions, aims and justification were spelled out in the scope of work provided by CARE. There were three main tasks involved:

- Carry out a comprehensive study
- Build capacity of CARE Malawi staff and partners to collect, manage, analyze and use and draw lessons from data.
- Identify probable Theories of Change

The situational analysis also assessed the socio-economic situation and cultural practices in these villages and explored the extent to which they affect girls' access to quality education (enrolment, retention, completion and achievement). Since the essence of the PCTFI project is to bring about change, the SA also provided a baseline/ benchmark against which to assess the impact of the planned innovations. As some interventions may have a greater impact than others and some initial innovations may not be adequate, the baseline could also provide a framework to evaluate which of the future innovations have the greatest positive impact on enhancing girls' access to quality education and which may have to be changed or sharpened in order to achieve greater impact.

Finally the SA also aimed to involve communities and other stakeholders in data collection so that they are aware of the marginalization of some girls and buy into the PCTFI project to empower girls and ensure equitable access to quality education.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR THE SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The SA was designed to provide a baseline against which to assess impact and progress. It was also to focus the research process, including data collection, analysis and methodologies and to help sharpen plans for the interventions and to get support and buy-in from communities and others with whom CARE will work in the PCTFI project. Finally, the situation analysis was to raise awareness of issues in order to provoke action, including policy change or enforcement. The information derived from a situation analysis would make it possible to base decisions on a realistic understanding of the factors most significant in the target area and how these factors relate to each other in causing or mitigating problems. Output from the SA can be used to:

- Promote advocacy efforts at multiple levels
- Plan strategically for intervention

- Assess the scale of the problem under study
- Define and refine interventions
- Mobilize social and community activities
- Build capacity of organizations
- Plan, enhance and expand programs
- Monitor and evaluate

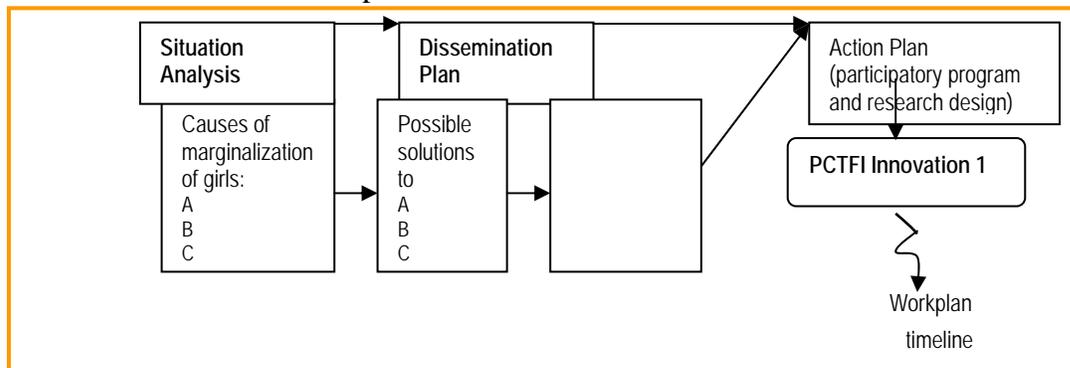
3.3 OVERVIEW OF THE PCTFI FRAMEWORK

According to CARE (2007) the PCTFI agenda is completely driven by CARE which means that there is flexibility in the grant to do quality programming that is decided on by the office, not an external donor. PCTFI provides the opportunity for CARE to be a leader in evidence-based programming/research on the global stage. As such there may be need for standardization of the indicators and activities such as the (experimental) research design, research tools, etc. Impact measurement is a critical focus and there is an opportunity to be creative through attempting a longitudinal experimental design. The CARE Malawi team identified a number of concerns related to the experimental research design. These included: how will CARE effectively ensure that the “control” in the design is not tampered with – considering that there are several development agents out there who have autonomy to assist the marginalized? How will CARE address the ethical issues that arise from experimental design, and is the office ready for the demands of this type of research and programming approach? The Atlanta workshop concluded that as the project is being designed caution should be taken concerning the social implications.

PCTFI Indicators

ATTAINMENT	EQUALITY	QUALITY	EMPOWERMENT
Completion	Communities' Educational Opportunity Perception	Suitable Educational Environment	Supportive Strategic Relations
Persistence/retention	Teacher's Gender Sensitivity	Relevant Educational Content	Girls' Agency
Achievement	Children's Perception of educational equity and equality	Child Centered Processes	Structural Environment for Girls

The PCTFI Cohort 2 Conceptual framework



The aim of the SA is to understand both the manifestations and the causes of the marginalization of vulnerable girls in Kasungu District. The Malawi SA design Workshop isolated these into intermediate and underlying causes. Intermediate causes are defined as those that directly relate to life and survival and include: disease, famine, environmental disasters, and conflict. Underlying causes are those that relate to the structural underpinnings of underdevelopment.

3.4 ASSUMPTIONS

Based on the literature review and CARE’s own experience in the educational field the main assumptions for the SA are as follows:

- There is inequitable access to quality education for some girls in Kasungu District;
- Girls’ access to quality education is negatively affected by some socio-cultural practices such as early marriages and gendered division of labour;
- Girls have less access to resources and basic services in Kasungu District than boys and this affects their retention and performance in schools;
- Girls have a low esteem of themselves and the role of education in their development which disempowers them to demand for their rights

3.5 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The SA employed quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, including field based visualisation, interviewing, group work which advocated and promoted interactive learning, knowledge sharing and flexible structured analysis. Visual techniques provided scope for creativity and encouraged a frank exchange of views and allowed cross checking. The major data collection tools included questionnaires, interviews (including key informants), and FGDs. A number of PRA/PLAs methods were also used in this study. Particular attention was paid to getting a random sample of respondents and using triangulation for each category of data to be collected so as to ensure a process of data cross-checking and thus achieve reliability for the data collected. Participatory methodologies were complemented by quantitative data from schools and households. Appendix 1 summarizes these participatory methods. The table below summarises the mixed data collection methods.

Table 1: Methods of Data collection

Combined Approach/ Mixed Method			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
Household	School	Village	School
Questionnaire	School Records, classroom observation, and FGDs	PRAs and FGDs	Interviews and FGDs

Table 2 lays out the twelve PCTFI indicators and associated key research questions.

Table 2: Core indicators with mapping of key research questions.

P1. Relevant Educational Content is defined as the degree to which PCTFI innovations are able to promote regular use of curriculum and learning materials that cover basic skills with pertinent, gender-sensitive and contextually appropriate subject matter. (adapted from UNICEF)	How effective are current efforts to mitigate HIV/AIDS in education?
	What the learner’s experiences with the life skills education in schools?
	What are the teachers’ experiences with the life skills education in schools?
	What is the level of awareness of HIV/AIDS in schools?

P2. Structural Environment for Girls is expressed in whether girls have equitable access to basic human services.	What is the state of girls' access to education?
	How accessible is the education for girls?
	To what extent are these facilities accessed?
	What mechanisms /structures are there to protect girls from abuse?
P3. Communities 'Educational Perceptions are defined as the percentage of community members that believe girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from education in the program area.	How do the girls participate in the development of these mechanisms?
	What are the socio-cultural practices, norms and values that deprive girls their rights to education?
	What are the socio -cultural practices and values that support girls/women's rights
	How is the position of girls perceived at house hold level?
	How do the girls participate in the development of these mechanisms?
	What is the level of commitment in protecting /safeguarding girls education?
	What is the level of commitment in protecting /safeguarding girls education?
P4. Children's Perception of educational equity and equality is defined as the percentage of children in the impact area that believe girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from education in the program area.	What are the community perceptions on girl vulnerability?
	How is power distributed at the house hold level?
	How do the girls participate in the development of these mechanisms?
P5. Completion is defined as the percent of enrolees that start a PCTFI supported educational program and finish based on a set of pre-determined requirements for the program.	
P6. Persistence/ retention is defined as the percent of direct beneficiaries that are enrolled in an educational program that continue to subsequent years, periods and/or levels.	What factors militate against the progression and completion of girls in their schooling?
	What proportion of those who start standard one complete the various levels of the system?
P7. Achievement is defined as the percent of direct beneficiaries that demonstrate acquisition and practical application of new skills as a result of PCTFI supported program.	
P8. Girls' Agency is expressed in the frequency with which girls exercise their rights and/or their rights are recognized in the law.	What factors are making girls drop-out of school when they reach puberty?
	What has the community do to help the learners that could not afford to go to school or remain in school?
P9. Supportive Relations are defined as the degree to which formal and informal decision makers exercise their ability to make decisions in favor of girls' right to development.	
P9. Supportive Relations are defined as the degree to which formal and informal decision makers exercise their ability to make decisions in favor of girls' right to development.	What is the performance of girls in school?
	What factors contribute to this?
	How does their performance compare with that of boys?
P9. Supportive Relations are defined as the degree to which formal and informal decision makers exercise their ability to make decisions in favor of girls' right to development.	What are the socio -cultural practices and values that support girls/women's rights
	Who allocates teachers at the school and how are they held accountable?
	How do the girls participate in the development of these mechanisms?
	What are the community perceptions on girl vulnerability?

P10. Teacher's Gender Sensitivity is defined as the percentage of teachers observed to be facilitating equal conditions for girls' and boys' learning using a standardized instrument	What mechanisms /structures are there to protect girls from abuse?
	Which categories (gender, class in which they are) of pupils are more affected by the availability and distribution of teachers and why?
P11. Suitable Learning Environment is defined as the degree to which schools and classrooms in PCTFI target areas demonstrate social and physical learning environments that are gender-sensitive, healthy, safe, protective, and include adequate facilities. (adapted from UNICEF)	How much of the education budget national and school level goes to school infrastructure?
	What role does the school institution play in marginalization?
	What is the type and ratio of sanitary facilities do the school have?
	How effective are current efforts to mitigate HIV/AIDS in education
P12. Child Centered Processes is defined as the degree to which child centered pedagogies and methodologies are evidenced in practice in the educational environment.	Which categories (gender, class in which they are) of pupils are more affected by the availability and distribution of teachers and why?
	How do teachers interact with the pupils?
	What are the various participatory methods they are using?

Source: Malawi Trip Report 3-7 March 2008

The literature review implies that the factors that affect girls' access to education are, on one hand, the socio-economic and cultural environment of the households of these girls, and, on the other, the quality and delivery of the educational system. The SA therefore also assessed the socio-economic situation and cultural practices in these villages to see to what extent they affect girls' access to quality education (enrolment, retention, completion and achievement).

3.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY, CONSTRAINTS, AND LIMITATIONS

3.6.1 Sample

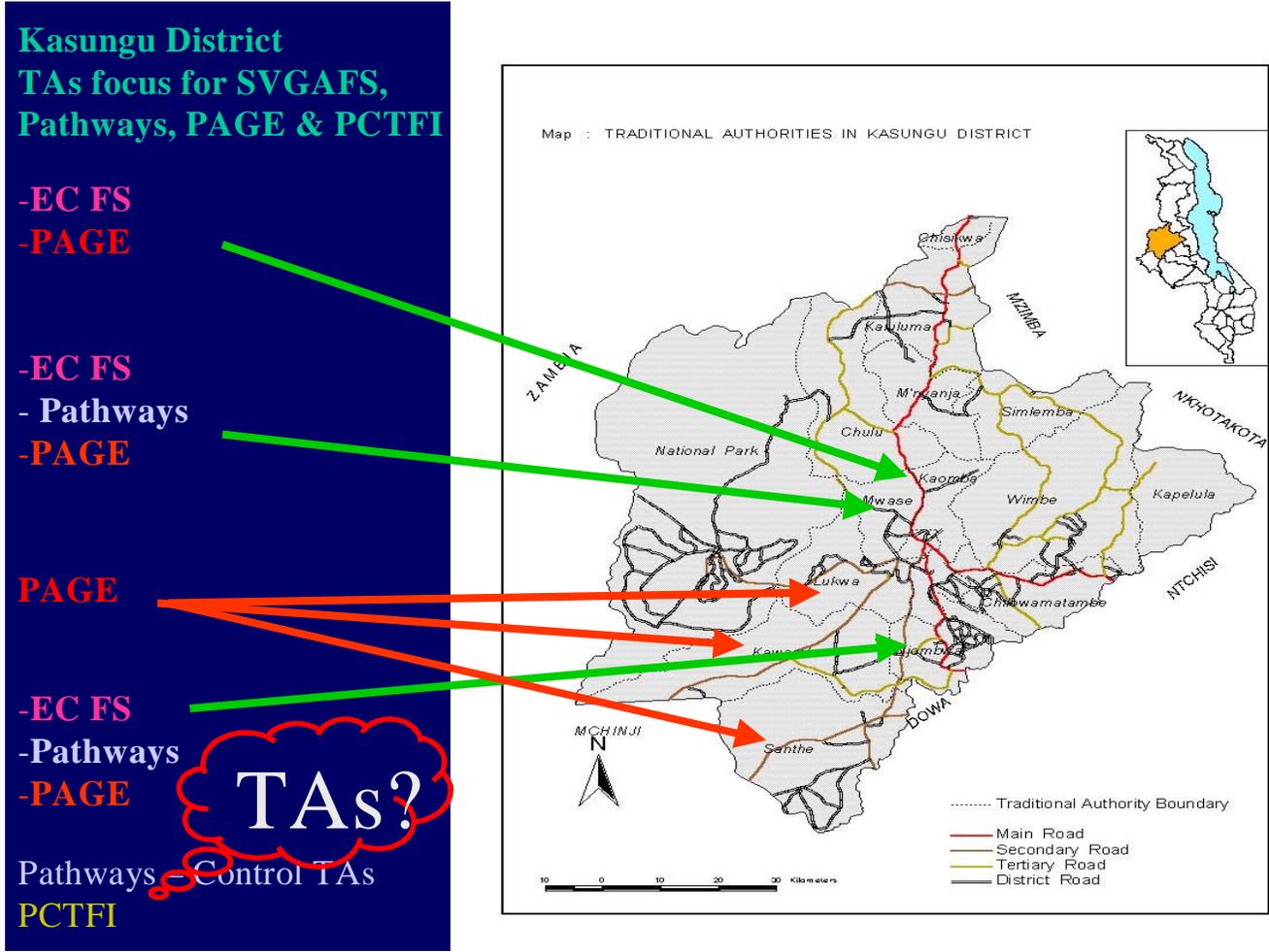
The main groups involved and consulted were: in- and out-of-school girls and boys, particularly of school going age (6 years to 18 years); male and female parents of such children; teachers; members of school management committees and PTA; community leaders; government decision makers in the education and related sectors; and the CARE Malawi country office, particularly the education sector. This sample selection took into consideration the fact that the PCTFI project will be an action research oriented project with an experimental design. The intention therefore in the SA was to involve as many stakeholders as possible and hence ownership of the intervention that would result. The use of PRA/PLA methods was one way of ensuring that the interventions indeed originate from the grassroots.

The SA employed a purposive sampling technique. The main reason for purposively selecting the samples is that CARE Malawi is already implementing a number of projects in Kasungu and as such, there are many opportunities for synergies. The aim here was to maximise such synergies in approach, M&E, resources, partners and other areas.

There are four projects that are being implemented in Kasungu, as follows:

- Support to Vulnerable Groups to Achieve Food Security (ECFS/SAFE) - Jan 2008- Dec 2010
- Pathways Linking Poverty, Food Insecurity and HIV and AIDS in Rural Malawi- April 2008 March 2013
- Partnership in Addressing Gender in Education (PAGE) – July 2007 – June2009
- Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative (PCTFI) July 2007 – June 2012

It is also acknowledged that there will be many possible challenges when implementing different projects in the same district. CARE Malawi has just completed a baseline study for the country office in three districts, including Kasungu. This study aimed to avoid going into the same households in which the baseline had visited; hence villages were purposively sampled. These were spread across the TAs in Kasungu as displayed in the following map.



Using this information about the concentration and spread of projects in Kasungu, the purposive sampling categorised the areas into four groups. These were as follows:

- Area of high concentration of CARE projects (three projects present)
- Area where there is less concentration of CARE projects (one CARE project)
- Area where there are no CARE projects but there are projects by other partners
- Area where there are no projects at all.

This design attempted to examine synergy issues with other CARE projects, while for research purposes maximizing the different contexts in Kasungu. Once these were defined, a description of the sampling frame was shared with the DEM and the coordinating PEA and these in turn selected schools that fit the sampling description. The sample included some good schools and some less well-performing schools from the district perspective. We couldn't go to all corners of Kasungu because of financial and time constraints, but we went to the North, near the BOMA, and to the South (intensive farming near auction floor). Considerations were also given to culture and educational history; by going to the North we were able to compare the Tumbuka, with their strong school going tradition, to the Chewa in the other three schools who have more combative history with Western schooling, in part because of the strong Gule Wamkulu presence.

Table 3: Sample design²

T/A			
TA Njombwa	TA Lukwa	TA Kalululuma	TA Mwase
Chinkhoma School	Chankhozi School	Chankhomi School	Hanock Nsokera School
Five Villages	Five Villages	Five Villages	Five Villages
60 Households	60 Households	60 Households	60 Households

Each school was chosen from a different T/A as follows:

<p>TA Njombwa, Chinkhoma: highest CARE intervention, food security, SAFE, PAGE (education), PATHWAYS (food security and HIV/AIDS); lower community resources, but with very strong community support</p> <p>TA Lukwa, Chankhozi: CARE education project (PAGE); good resources, but a bit below Chankhomi.</p> <p>TA Kaluluma, Chankhomi: no CARE project but other NGOs; good resources, this was labeled as the “complete school”</p> <p>TA Mwase, Hannock Nsokera: minimal CARE project food security just starting; poorest in terms of resources, but the community is a bit better off and can support it more (near the auction floors so the community was constructing school blocks)</p>

An examination of the data obtained from NSO (1998 sampling frame) indicates that whether examined by TA or Village, the units are of different sizes but have an adequate number of households for the sampling of 12 households per village. Thus, the main

² Because of differences in response to research assistants, the actual sample is not exactly as outlined here. In some TA, access was easy while in others it was not so easy.

critical element to be considered in sampling was the application of randomness to the sampling techniques. To ensure that each household has an equal chance of being picked, and to reduce cost and time with an acceptable level of corrections for design effect, the sampling employed the probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) cluster sampling strategy to select the ultimate sample units, which in this case was households. This sampling strategy involved three strata – TAs, villages (as clusters), and households as units within clusters. In this case, households were randomly selected using the sampling interval which was calculated by taking the total sum of households listed in the village and dividing that number by the number of households to be selected from the village (12). Then any number between 1 and that interval was chosen and the subsequent households were chosen by adding the interval to the first number.

3.6.2 Study Execution- the Process

The situation analysis was undertaken under the overall leadership of Dr. Joseph Chimombo- the consultant. He was assisted by twelve research assistants including three experienced supervisors. These collaborated very well to administer the household questionnaires, conduct the PLA, and collect school level data. This whole process was supported by three CARE Malawi staff on full time basis while the project coordinator assumed the responsibility of overseeing the whole process. Attempts to involve two other persons from partner organizations did not materialize because they were preoccupied with other commitments.

The research assistants were split into two groups; one group was lead by one supervisor while another group was led by two supervisors. Group one went to Chankhozi and Chinkhoma primary schools and to 5 villages in the school catchment area, while group two went to Hannock Msokera and Chankhomi Primary schools and to 5 villages surrounding each of these schools. The whole process took a total of three weeks and one day. Before the main data collection, research assistants were oriented and trained in the different data collection tools. The instruments were then piloted before their full-scale application. Appendix 2 summarizes the events during this period.

The schools were visited first by CARE staff a few days before the actual data collection to alert them of the coming exercise and identify catchment villages. At the school, consultations with the school personnel led to the identification of five group village heads. A visit to the group village heads resulted into the identification of the five villages to be visited. On day one, the two teams visited a school each and did all the school related activities (including pupil and teacher FGDs, classroom observations, and the check list). The last activity on the first day was the administration of the HH questionnaire to about twelve households. On the remaining four days of the first week, each team visited a village each day that was part of the catchment area for the school. These activities were then repeated in the second week for the second school. These activities have been summarized in the tables below.

Day One: Activities at the school for each team

Day	T/A	Village	Time	DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	DC5	DC6	Supervisor	Consultant
			8-9:30	FGD Boys		FGD Girls		FGD SMC		FGD Teachers	
			9:30-10:30	Daily activity Boys		Daily activity Girls		FGD with PTA		KII HT	Observations (3-Infant, junior and senior sections)
			10 : 30 – 11: 30	Force field analysis		Force field analysis		Seasonal calendar		KII Teen Mothers	
			11:30-12:30	Pair wise Ranking boys		Pair wise Ranking Girls		Force field analysis		KII counselors	KII PEA
			Afternoon	HH1	HH2	HH3	HH4	HH5	HH6	Walkabout	
				HH7	HH8	HH9	hh10	hh11	hh12		

Day two: activities in the village

Day	T/A	Village	Time	DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	DC5	DC6	Superv	Consult
			9:00 to 10:30	FGD Men		FGD women		Social mapping both		KII female leader	KII male leader
			10:30to 11:30	Pair wise Ranking		Pair wise Ranking				KII CDA	KII religious
			11:30 to 12:30	Force Field Analysis				FGD with out of school		KII TBA	KII Institutions
			12:30 to 13:30	KII OVC	KII OVC	KII OVC	KII OVC	Walk about		Health worker	
			13:30-15:00	HH1	HH2	HH3	HH4	HH5	HH6	Walkabout	
				HH7	HH8	HH9	hh10	hh11	hh12		

3.6.3 Constraints and limiting factors to organizing and conducting the study

There were a number of constraints associated with the SA. A misunderstanding between BGE and CARE Malawi, especially on the design tools for the SA, occurred at a critical stage because of improper communication. This created some confusion and needed the

Malawi team to make adjustments to their original plan, thus necessitating additional costs. Also, as always, there was a constraint on time, with funds not allowing a long enough study period to do everything that the team wanted³.

The other constraint was and still is the unavailability of data at the district level. It has proven to be difficult to get information from the DEM's office, who keeps on saying that they will give us information, but it has yet to come. For example, we would like to determine the level of schooling in Kasungu, by age group, gender, etc. But this is really difficult to get from the district. This problem is not peculiar to Kasungu alone but is a general problem in Malawi's education system. While the MOE has made great strides in improving the data collection in schools, a lot more needs to be done to make this data more readily available in a usable state. This makes it difficult to compare our schools to Kasungu generally. Similarly, there was a limited availability of data in the schools themselves, and there were limitations in how data were given at the household level. For example, people hid information about initiations. Also, when people know there are NGOs coming, they think that if they say they have something then they will not get what the NGO is giving out. This is a problem with NGOs doing research in areas where NGOs are active. We encouraged researchers to try to verify as much as possible what the respondents said and also encouraged them to be aware and not to record things blindly. For example, we verified cases where people said that they had neither chairs nor sofas, but invitations into their homes revealed that they indeed had both chairs and sofas.

Language was also an issue in the North because half of the research team did not speak Chitumbuka. It was difficult where there was no interpreter. There were also issues with random selection in villages because the government pays village heads a lot of money for headship, so everyone wants to be a village head. There are constant claims of villages dividing, etc. which makes it hard to select the units in which to do research.

In terms of the various instruments, the participatory instruments were new to some of the research associates, but we were able to do these without a problem because of the intensive training and also because the CARE staff could lead them. This is an issue though with data collection generally, that these instruments are not well-known. Nonetheless, we engaged a lot of stakeholders and respondents with the research and the participatory methods were really yielding some of the most interesting data. The involvement of village heads was central in organizing people for these activities (including FGDs) and there was really a sense of engagement. You could tell for instance sitting for an FGD, you use another participatory method like a seasonal calendar, the people are doing things and it brought the research to a different level. Participatory methods really opened them up to the excitement that comes with exercises where they are moving, were more free, were really debating and got engaged with the process. Most

³ Financial constraints were perceived to have been there by the study team on the ground in Malawi. This was experienced due to limited funds available at the hands of the study team for carrying out the SA. CARE Malawi anticipated that it would carry out the exercise in the first year and budgeted for it (though this had limits as the SA needs had to be balanced with anticipated expenditure on activities to be implemented as part of the action research. In the end, there were limits on the SA budget though at the same time overall program budget had some funds for implementation.

of the times, the things that were coming out in the FGDs were also coming out in the participatory methods, especially the seasonal calendar—this was really useful here in terms of details about annual cycles of the event discussed more generally. The social mapping as well really complemented the FGDs.

The instruments used with children were differentially effective. The student questionnaire administered after following advice from CARE International did not work well because it asked for opinions from kids on a Likert scale. The tendency culturally, especially for girls and kids at that age is not to tell you what they really think. They will try to answer in the way that they think we wanted answered. The questionnaire would work if it were appropriately structured. This one was too opinionized. When you ask kids about facts (e.g. their background), questionnaires work well. Otherwise, FGDs are good when properly conducted with a team that mixes well with kids. The daily activity chart could have been very useful, but it was difficult to implement with the kids. It was very hard to get details from them, especially sequentially and in terms of exact times. It didn't yield the kind of information that would be very useful.

PCTFI indicators worked well as a framework to guide the research, though there are concerns about particular indicators. The qualitative/quantitative requirement does not work for every indicator and sometimes feel forced (eg attitudes for empowerment). Some indicators are going to be more qualitative, others more quantitative. While they are very useful for triangulation, they do not work perfectly on each and every indicator.

The household questionnaire was too detailed. It was a bit complex in terms of analysis and not everything was needed. Support from MIDEAC was very helpful in the analysis. It should be pointed out that notwithstanding what has been said above, we had enough means of triangulating and verifying the data that we felt comfortable with what people were saying about schooling and girls' education. As has always been the case, the teachers are the key informants for those things that do not concern them. They know better about the general issues of schooling in the areas. The men and women, though, may want to show that they have received the message about gender, schooling, and girls' education so we encouraged our research assistants to be observant about their actions as well as what they said about girls' education.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In Malawi, there is a procedure for doing research or other related activities among the communities. Accordingly, CARE ensured that the relevant authorities (national, district and village) and communities were informed about the PCTFI and the SA and that any concerns were addressed and allayed. This was done through a series of meetings followed up by a formal written request to the relevant district/village authorities to carry out the SA. Informed consent was obtained for all study participants. During consent solicitation, the research assistants made sure that they clearly described the purpose of the research, the potential risks and benefits of participation, and the voluntary nature of participation. Since we were dealing with pupils, discussions were held with various stakeholders on the modalities of involving children without offending the children or

their parents. All interviews were conducted in a physical space in which other study participants could not hear the questions or participant responses.

Since one of the methodologies that was used was observation of teachers in their classrooms, the research team negotiated for such observations and respected any reservations that the teachers had in being observed.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, details of the findings are organized and discussed based on the PCTFI indicator framework of attainment, equity, quality and empowerment. The chapter maps out key issues affecting girls' and boys' education in Kasungu district against each indicator and relates these issues to the research questions. Inevitably, because similar issues arose under multiple indicators, it is not possible to run away from the problem of repetition of issues although this has been minimized.

4.2 ATTAINMENT

In the PCTFI framework, attainment is conceived of as comprising attendance, persistence and achievement. These are discussed below.

4.2.1 Attendance/Completion and/or Transition

Although the PCTFI framework only talks about completion, the analysis for Malawi included issues of transition because in Malawi, as in many other post-colonial states, the focus of the primary education system, from the perspective of most parents, pupils, and teachers, is not to provide a basic education for its own sake, but instead to successfully transition pupils into secondary school, and from their into formal wage labor. For example, numerous parents and pupils in this and many other studies talk about passing in primary schooling in terms of students' capacity to continue to secondary (being selected), and therefore if people perceive that secondary schooling is not possible, this discourages achievement and completion in primary. This is also true if secondary schooling becomes delinked from formal wage labor, though this remains a less pressing concern for many rural parents and pupils because secondary schooling is still linked in Malawi to greater access to the formal labor economy.

The results for Standard eight examinations from the four schools represent a key measure of attainment and completion. For the selected schools, they were as follows:

	2005				2006				2007			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	Sat	%Sel	Sat	%Sel	Sat	%Sel	Sat	%Sel	Sat	%Sel	Sat	%Sel
Chinkhoma	20	60	19	47	22	32	19	37	38	42	35	69
Chankhozi	25	56	33	52	46	30	41	44	51	33	41	37

Table 4.1: Percentage of Pupils Selected to Secondary Schools

Chankhomi	23	87	14	57	26	81	16	75	27	74	20	80
H. Nsokera	41	39	53	28	53	32	51	27	46	52	39	53

There are two schools where more girls are now going to secondary school than boys (Chankhomi and Chinkhoma). This is due in large part to boys' dropout. There were fewer girls than boys going to secondary school at Chankhozi and Hannock Nsokera. The

percentages of pupils going to secondary school at Chankhomi are much higher than all other schools. Chankhomi is what we have termed a complete school in terms of resources and it is possible that the school provides an environment that is particularly conducive to good teaching and learning. Data from exam results and head and teachers' FGDs support the claim that in the last two years girls have surpassed boys in exam pass rates. This was also true for the other three schools in 2007. In general, the percentage of pupils being selected to secondary school at Hanock Nsokera is consistently on the lower side. This is not surprising, given the lower school environment, social events, and school facilities. However Chankhozi, a school with better resources, seems not to be in an upward trend and has actually been declining. Though this would appear to indicate that resources alone do not determine girls' and boys' attainment and completion rates, the research also appears to indicate that when schools are relatively well-resourced and of good quality (as measured in terms of infrastructure and community participation), girls are actually performing as well as or better than boys on the PSLE (in 2 of 3 cases). This is a significant change from 15 years ago, when very few girls had the opportunity to go to secondary school and may indicate that for a small group of high-performing students, being female is no longer holding back achievement to secondary school. When schools are of lower quality, and possess fewer supportive elements, this may be less the case. In these other schools, girls continue to receive messages of discouragement as reflected in the following case from Hannock Nsokera:

Guardians who are looking after orphans in most cases force girls who are orphans to get married in order to ease their financial hard ships in the household. For example, there was a certain girl who was in standard 8 at this school who was forced by her aunt to get married to a certain business man at Kasungu BOMA. This girl was an orphan who lost both parents and used to stay with her aunt within this community. When the business man came and proposed her she refused that "am schooling". However her aunt forced her to get married when she insisted, her aunt told her that even if she seats for P..S. L.C.E. and gets selected nobody was going to pay for her secondary schooling. Finally she got married and she was currently staying at Kasungu BOMA.

The danger here is that the girls are more likely to get the message that they will not have their fees paid even if they make it to secondary. This may be even more so if they are orphans. This really discourages them, because the purpose of primary schooling remains to go on to secondary. The next section examines the daily attendance of pupils as recorded on the day of the study. The information for the attendance of boys and girls is shown by school in Appendix 1.

It can be noted from the appendix that in three of the four schools, girls' attendance was generally higher than boys'. Even at the more poorly-resourced Hanock Nsokera, in all classes apart from std 5, the rate of attendance for girls is higher than that of boys. It should be pointed out that this school runs a feeding programme. At Chankhomi, in contrast, the attendance rate for boys was slightly higher than that of girls. This was different from the other three schools. What was more surprising is that at Chankhomi there were incentives for girls' attendance: PLAN provides 12.5 Kgs of maize to girls if they attend school for 18 days in a month. This contradicts findings from the FGDs and

KII where by it was indicated that due to the incentive, girls attend more than boys. It may be that on the particular day of the study, something was happening that led to these outcomes, but this calls for more studies.

At Chankhozi, generally girls' attendance rate was higher than that of boys. What was more striking however was that in the higher classes, attendance rates of girls were significantly higher than that of boys. At Chinkhoma, girls' attendance rate was generally higher than that of boys except for std 2. Just like Chankhozi, the differences were more marked in the higher classes. This collaborates very well with what Key Informants (KI) and teachers said. The KIs and teachers indicated that the many female teachers at the school acted as role models. This was also consistent with what KIs said about girls' performance at the school. Girls were being encouraged by girls who got selected to secondary school in the previous years. This also complimented well with figures in Table above (selection) whereby, for the past two years more girls than boys got selected.

The problem of attrition is acute in the Malawi education system and it is the girls who have a lower propensity to remain in school. The 2007 EMIS shows that while girls constituted 50.9 percent of the Standard one enrolment, they were only 44.2 percent of the Standard eight enrolment. In Kasungu, while Standard one girls constituted 51.8%, they were only 44.9% in Standard eight. The data from the SA indicate that a higher percentage of the girls who make it to standard 8 are performing well, and the number of girls who make it to class regularly may be about the same or greater than boys. Underneath these numbers, however, lies greater male absence and dropout, not increased girls' numbers. The majority of girls and boys—but particularly girls—are still not making it to Standard 8 in the first place.

In this section the evidence indicates that school characteristics can affect girls' schooling, It also seems that the small number of girls who make it to std 8 in good and okay schools are performing as well or better than boys. The important gender issues, then, are in the lower grades as boys and girls drop out, in the different experiences that older girls and boys have in school (and thus their socialization experience in school), and in the different reasons that girls and boys leave school as discussed later.

4.2.2 Persistence/Retention

The PCTFI framework defines persistence/ retention as the percent of direct beneficiaries that are enrolled in an educational program that continue to subsequent years, periods and/or levels. The main research question addresses the factors that are making girls dropout of school when they reach puberty and what the community does to help learners that cannot afford to go to or remain in school.

Poverty has consistently been identified in research as an underlying cause of under-enrolment of children and as contributing to the gendered outcomes of schooling. Direct and indirect costs of schooling (such as school fees and other unofficial fees such as school fund contributions, examination fees, costs of textbooks and other supplies, uniforms and clothing for school, transportation, and food) and the opportunity costs of sending girls to school because of forgone labour depresses the demand for schooling

amongst resource poor households. Household contributions to the cost of education in Malawi are quite substantial and in most cases larger than the government contribution even when fees have been abolished like in Malawi (Kadzamira 2004). Research shows that the poorer households spend less than wealthier households on education of their children and that the education costs comprise a larger proportion of their total household expenditure than wealthier households. These costs have often been overlooked or underestimated when analysing costs of education.

Paralleling this body of research, in the SA research poverty was high on the list of factors influencing persistence in school. When asked what the main constraint to girls' education is in the area, the majority of the respondents at the household level mentioned poverty. This was also corroborated by girls from Hanock Nsokera who said that girls get married early because of poverty. "They lack money to buy food, school uniforms and other school materials while boys try to do piece work at least to ease financial problems". Contributing to this issue, teachers at Hannock Nsokera said that a large number of boys go to school, unlike girls who were highly affected by poverty. This problem affected girls more than boys because girls are dependent on their parents to provide them with everything while boys do piece work (ganyu) to complement what they get from their parents. This enables them to persist in school, the teachers said. An FGD with parents at Mvula Village of Hanock Nsokera agreed with the teachers that girls do not go far with schooling because of poverty. They said that:⁴

Girls need a lot of clothes to change especially when they reach puberty stage. This is because when they start experiencing menstruation periods they need to change clothes frequently. The boy child does not need many clothes and they can do piece work to provide for themselves, whereas girls think of getting married.

Related to poverty, another strong factor contributing to low persistence of girls in school is household demands on their labor, and particularly the need to do household chores. Parents at Hanock Nsokera said that "domestic work is very intense for the girl child which leaves her with less time to concentrate on schoolwork". Teachers at Chankhozi said that "too much household chores that girls are told to do in the morning before going to school make them report to school while tired and they do not actively concentrate on lessons and that "this brings about poor performance, which ends up into failure hence do not continue schooling after losing interest". There was overwhelming evidence from all respondents, (pupils, parents and teachers) that girls are more heavily involved in domestic work, such as looking after siblings, preparing and cooking food, cleaning the house and fetching water and firewood, than boys. This was collaborated very well by the quantitative data from the household questionnaire. The respondents were asked who did the various tasks between boys and girls. These were their responses.

⁴ Quotes from participants are near quotes, based on field notes taken by the data collectors in English. They are thus translated and summarized versions of the original quotes.

Table 4.2: Who do the following chores between boys and girls?

Who does the following chores?	Boy	Girl	Both
Housework/cleaning before going to school	3	274	148
Works in the garden	81	8	336
Draws water before or after school	1	294	130
Cooks before or after school	1	322	102
Cares for siblings before or after school	9	279	137
Goes fishing	397	4	23
Does ganyu	155	6	263
Cares for livestock	319	3	102
Does part time jobs	210	20	191
Collects firewood	9	318	98
Goes to the grinding mill	19	268	138
Goes on errands	123	73	229
Cares for the sick	10	217	198
Sell produce	78	89	257
Washes the dishes	6	322	97
Does laundry	5	245	174

The evidence above collaborates very well with literature in Malawi, as in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, that has demonstrated that girls continue to experience a high degree of inequality in terms of the type and amount of work they are expected to do, and this affects their earning potential and economic empowerment. Most societies observe some gender division of labour within the home, with women taking primary responsibility for caring for the family, whereas men tend to be associated with work outside the home, often on a paid basis. This division of labour goes some way towards explaining the gender inequalities observed in many nations. Parents at Hanock Nsokera said that when parents die in the family and leave young children, it is the girl child who is always responsible caring for the siblings in the household. Boys, on the other hand, are mainly involved in working on the family farm, looking after livestock and engaging in income-earning activities. Other school-based surveys for a large number of countries show that household and domestic work is a significant reason for non-attendance, and more so for girls than for boys. In Ethiopia and Guinea, between one-quarter and one-third of school drop-outs surveyed indicated that their need to earn money or to work at *home* on the family farm were the main reasons for leaving school early. In both countries the girls who dropped out for these reasons did so mainly in order to help the family in the home, whereas the boys who did so cited work on the family farm, or earning money as having been their main intent (Colclough et al., 2003). Parents at Hanock Nsokera had mixed sides of the story. They said that boys dropped out of school to go to town and look for jobs however, too many household chores cause girls to be late to class and teachers send them back. This made them miss classes and they ended up failing and repeating the class, which frustrated them and they eventually dropped out.

There were of course other factors that hindered persistence in school that were mentioned. Perhaps the most prevalent across stakeholder groups and in terms of the importance given to it by participants was girls choosing or being forced into sexual relationships, which in turn leads to school dropout. These were in the form of early marriage (forced and unforced), early pregnancy, having boyfriends and older lovers, and prostitution. Girls are expected to marry soon after puberty, and according to culture, when a girl is married she should dedicate herself to being a wife, not a student. Girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse from peers, teachers and predators encountered on the often long walks to schools, and girls are expected and or encouraged to engage in premarital sex as a part of the process of earning a living.

Early marriage was mentioned as the second main constraint to girls' education in the areas by respondents at the household level. Many FGDs revealed that girls ended up in early marriages due to poverty in their homes. While their parents have limited capacity to provide for them financially, they think that their husbands are going to be caring for them (FGD boys at Chankhomi). Boys at Chankhozi also said that poverty makes girls leave school and rush into early marriages in order to get support from the husbands who are to marry them. Girls at Hanock Nsokera concurred with the boys and said that "girls get married because of poverty. They lack money to buy food, school uniforms and other school materials while boys try to do piece work at least to ease financial problems". Marriage thus becomes one of girls' primary strategies for survival and financial support. Almost all of these strategies relate to girls' sexuality; and of these, marriage is the only one that is broadly sanctioned by the community.

Participants also added that girls mostly drop out because of early pregnancies; "when girls get pregnant they feel shy to come back to school hence do not continue with schooling because they are called a lot of names in a mockery way like *Nchembere* (post partum)". This collaborated very well with what parents at Hanock Nsokera said. They said that "In senior class girls drop out more than boys because of negative comments from teachers such as "you are dull why can't you just get married?" Boys at Chinkhoma said that girls do not reenter school after dropout because their friends mock them after they return back from marriage and after giving birth they call them mothers. Boys, it was reported, return to school even after divorcing without fear of peer or teacher mockery. It should be mentioned here that there were some elements of misunderstanding of policies as some parents thought that "government policy on pregnancy allows boys to stay in school while girls have to temporarily drop. This is bad because it does not deter boys from having sexual relationships as they can continue their school"⁵.

At Chankhozi, teachers said that "peer pressure forces girls into premarital sexual relationships with older men who are even married; "this is like this because of poverty, they think that is the best way of doing away with their poverty as they will be getting financial support from their lovers; in the process they become pregnant and drop out". At Chankhomi, parents said that "in the senior classes girls constitute a larger number of dropouts because they have reached puberty and indulge in sexual relationships, which

⁵ The government policy in fact states that both pupils should stop attending school until they both come back

brings about early pregnancies and early marriages. This also makes them lose interest in school and perform poorly and eventually drop out”. Parents at Chankhomi also said that girls indulge in sexual relationships which make them not concentrate on schoolwork.

There were a number of other factors related to dropout that were mentioned by fewer stakeholders. For example, at Chankhozi, girls blamed a lack of parental encouragement for their desistance. They said that most parents lack interest in school and as a result children are free not to go to school or leave school. It was observed that parents do not see any future in schooling for their girl children (either secondary school, or leadership positions, or jobs). Girls at Chankhoma and Hanock Nsokera blamed sexual harassment perpetrated against girls by boys for making girls feel not safe staying in school. At Hanock Nsokera, teachers said that “there are no role models that can inspire girls to work hard towards education as most of the girls in the community get married with tobacco farmers and feel contented”.

In summary, the evidence shows that the nature of the constraints that girls face generally is different than boys. Because girls’ role as student is in conflict with the roles of mother and wife, once they enter these roles, they are not seen as appropriate students. Boys, on the other hand, do not have this conflict of roles and so can move in and out of school more freely. Thus, there are several factors mitigating against persistence in school by girls. In the research the top constraints identified were poverty, household chores, early marriage, harassment, and lack of student and family appreciation of schooling. The evidence above suggests that the challenges that countries face to meet the EFA gender equity goals are complex and multiple. In particular achieving the gender equality goal will be extremely challenging as it requires addressing both poverty issues and societal and cultural barriers that work together to produce the gendered outcomes of schooling that have been observed. Addressing these will require multiple and multi-sectoral interventions, some of which lie outside the mandate of ministries of education.

4.2.3 Achievement

The last component to be presented under attainment is achievement. The PCTFI framework defines achievement as the percent of direct beneficiaries that demonstrate acquisition and practical application of new skills as a result of PCTFI supported program. Here, the main concerns are the performance of girls in school and the factors contributing to this. These are discussed below.

The data indicate that participants’ common opinion was that achievement is very much divided by age. Numerous stakeholders indicated that girls may even be smarter than boys when they are young, but as they get older, they are perceived to do worse by most people. This collaborated with what teachers at Hanock Nsokera said: “in the infant level both boys and girls perform well because they are still young and have equal opportunities and they do not have gender attitudes as they learn a lot together”.

These perceptions of girls’ lowering intelligence and boys’ increasing intelligence over time appeared to be directly related to girls entering puberty. As they became capable of becoming wives and mothers, their schooling experiences and opportunities declined.

From being called names for being “too old”, to being mocked if they tried to return to school after dropping out for marriage or pregnancy, to increasing demands on their time by family household chores, girls are given the message that once they are physically mature, they are no longer “good” students. The data on achievement shown above do not support these strongly held and reported beliefs.

The overall impression obtained from the FGDs was that there is usually no difference between boys and girls in the infant sections. Parents at Hanock Noskera said that:

Infant and junior levels there is no difference between boys and girls because girls are not old enough to do household chores that usually disturbs them from concentrating on school. In the senior level girls are usually in the age range of 11 to 15 years old and involved in household chores and at the same age boys are considered still young....The other reason for girls not performing well is that they are shy with boys and teachers (mostly male teachers) and therefore do not ask questions in class.

It appears that as girls grow older, they are faced with a lot of obstacles. Girls at Chankhomi said that:

Repetition is high in junior and senior classes for girls because of household chores. But dropout is high for boys because they are busy with field work in their own gardens or because they admire friends doing business at the market. Boys come back to school after they dropout in std 6 to 8. They come back to escape work at home or after their businesses fail or because they admire friends. Girls are not dropping out because they receive 12.5 kgs of maize for continuous attendance of 18 days a month in school.

At Chankhomi, parents said that in the senior classes girls constitute a larger number of dropouts because they have reached puberty and indulge in sexual relationships, which brings about early pregnancies and early marriages. This also makes them lose interest in school and perform poorly and eventually drop out. The parents also mentioned teacher/girl relationships, which resulted in pregnancies and eventual dropping out. The problems of weak PTA/SMCs means that when a teacher has impregnated a school girl, he is simply fined and no serious disciplinary measure is taken. For instance, a teacher at Lojwa School (a school neighbouring Chankhomi) impregnated 3 school girls but no serious action was taken. The parents also said that orphanhood leaves girls with no support from relatives. They end up indulging in sexual relations, which results in early pregnancies. Boys do ganyu, cultivate vegetables, and sell produce instead.

It is also important to look here at physical presence versus holistic presence. While girls were attending classes more than boys, they were not performing as expected and were also not actively participating in class. Incentive programs like the one at Chankhomi had achieved physical presence but the girls feel they are not able to really perform. This also collaborated with girls at Chinkhoma who said that:

Boys do better in class, speak more freely, are more competitive, etc. than girls. Girls are the ones that mostly fail in senior classes because they have reached puberty and focus on sexual relationships instead of schoolwork

There were many expressions of beliefs that place girls at a disadvantage in their efforts to feel that they can achieve in school. The following extracts testify to this

Girls fail and repeat in infant classes because they have brains which have little memory capacity compared to boys, are too playful and they do lots of household work which leave them with less time for peer instruction and revision work at home. In junior classes girls repeat because they are less intelligent than boys, they are also beaten up by the boys and fear to go to school and end up failing

(Men at Hanock Nsokera)

Girls repeat in higher numbers in the infant classes because boys are more intelligent because they are free to move around and get exposed to many things which develop their intelligence whereas girls do not have such a chance because they are confined in the home doing household chores. (Men at Chankhomi)

Most girls do not perform well because the school is near Jenda market where they go and indulge in prostitution and miss classes and end up failing (Girls at Chankhomi)

Girls concentrate on their sexual relationships with boys and men and end up failing

They lack confidence and accept failure as normal (Men Hanock Nsokera)

In senior classes girls repeat in higher numbers because they are overloaded with household chores (Ibid)

Boys are more intelligent than girls and are given fewer household chores and this makes them to excel in class (Ibid)

Lots of girls frequently fail in class and just think of dropping out of school because of frustration (boys Cankhozi)

It should be pointed out the perceptions that girls are less intelligent are not supported by the evidence above regarding selection to secondary school. In fact it was noted that in most cases girls surpassed boys in terms of the percentage going to secondary school. A comparison of the mean score of boys and girls during the first two terms of the year yielded the following results.

Table 4.3: Mean grade for first and second terms

Report

Sex of pupil		SCORE1	SCORE2
Female	Mean	1.86	1.98
	N	58	59
	Std. Deviation	.888	.881
Male	Mean	2.22	2.25
	N	58	56
	Std. Deviation	1.093	1.031
Total	Mean	2.04	2.11
	N	116	115
	Std. Deviation	1.008	.962

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SCORE1 * Sex of pupil	Between Groups	(Combined)	3.802	1	3.802	3.836	.053
	Within Groups		112.983	114	.991		
	Total		116.784	115			
SCORE2 * Sex of pupil	Between Groups	(Combined)	2.047	1	2.047	2.236	.138
	Within Groups		103.483	113	.916		
	Total		105.530	114			

These scores were out of four and were grades awarded by teachers in the first and second terms. The figures show that girls were failing and these differences were significant. However, the evidence above showed that at Chinkhoma, girls perform better than boys, and as already observed, more girls were being selected to secondary school. These data may indicate that teachers and families continue to hold biases about girls' capacities that undermine girls' education experiences and opportunities, regardless of their actual capacities and performance.

4.3 EQUALITY

The most disturbing feature that one encounters when one looks at education statistics or visits a school in Malawi is the tendency for enrolment to decrease as pupils progress to higher standards. In the lower sections, class sizes are larger, often by a factor of five or more, than those in Standard seven or eight. As noted above, in 2007 for example, the number of pupils enrolled in Standard eight at national level was only 19.6% of the number enrolled in Standard one. While this attrition problem applies to both sexes, the problem is greater for girls than boys. For example, in the same 2007 academic year, while girls in Standard one were 50.9% of the total Standard one enrolment, there were only 44% of Standard eight enrolment.

Despite the general equality in attendance patterns for those children who make it to Standard 8, which is a huge change and achievement for the Malawian education system,,

the school and community environment are not very equal, and girls pick up on these messages. As noted above, there was a strong and widely shared (including by girls and women) perception that girls are less intelligent. They are trained in a cultural setting where these ideas are generally experienced and enforced at home and in the classroom. One school in the SA seems to potentially be offering a different cultural environment for girls (Chankhozi), at least a bit. There are few reports of teacher-pupil relations, students are doing group work in mixed sex groups, the school is offering after-school activities for all kids, and they have engaged pupils through more student-centered pedagogies. The teachers seem to be a bit exposed to gender equity issues too; they talked about having a lot of visitors and having lots of activities they are involved in (eg MTTA), and when someone needs to go somewhere to learn, the school staff share the opportunities (eg the head teacher sends people out for activities and trainings), and so forth. This results in more capacity-building for the teachers, and they are exposed to ideas about gender and child-friendly pedagogies. All these translate into the evidence in the box below.

CASE STUDY on CHANKHOZI

Inequalities appear to be diminishing at least for Chankhozi, a school that, as discussed previously, has some significant differences in pedagogical approaches and community-school relations than other schools in the sample. The school has been part of various projects promoting gender equity, child-centered pedagogies, and safe school environments. The school has active, engaged community participation; very good infrastructure; many after-school activities organized by pupils and teachers for students; classrooms that regularly use groupwork and active learning approaches; a head teacher who actively searches out opportunities for learning and activities for teachers and pupils; a school culture that encourages people to learn from and help one another; and four female teachers who serve as role models for pupils. How does this “whole school” model translate into girls’ schooling experiences?

From the quantitative data it was observed that a greater percentage of girls at this school were selected than boys for 2006 and 2007, though the numbers of boys and girls in Standard 8 are about the same. In terms of attendance, except for Standard 2, attendance was higher for girls than boys, especially in the upper classes. Enrollment in Standards 7 and 8 is higher for girls than boys. In terms of repetition, fewer girls were repeating than boys (2008), and the same applies to the official dropout rates. In the qualitative data, there were not too much differences in people’s general responses, though there are a few interesting differences. There were fewer mentions of sexual relationships generally, but girls still mentioned teacher-pupil relations are a problem. Girls’ school reentry issues seem to be more positive here than in other areas and mockery was not mentioned by any group as a problem for girls. So in terms of verbal harassment, this seems to be lower.

The three components related to equality are child perception, community perception and teacher gender sensitivity. These are discussed below.

4.3.1 Child perceptions of schooling

The PCTFI framework defines children's perception of educational equity and equality as the percentage of children in the impact area that believe girls and boys have equal

opportunities to participate in and benefit from education in the program area. The findings above indicate that the environment is particularly unfriendly for girls who are old, who have children, or so forth. For some girls, school is a site to get involved in sexual relations, whether forced or not. Girls also feel they cannot be leaders, and there are often no role models for girls in terms of seeing educated women with a better future than they have. Getting married is their next important step in life and the sooner they get married the better. Girls gain status in their families and communities when they become wives. The girls are perceived in school, and often perceive themselves, as dull. In contrast, in the arena of household chores and marriageability they may receive positive feedback about their capacity. In some cases, genuinely, they are heading households by themselves or are very poor. In these cases, school becomes an extra burden or a luxury they cannot afford. Girls are given more household chores, so they do not have enough time to concentrate on schoolwork. They don't have time to practice subjects like English or science, while the boys do. They have a tremendous burden in terms of household chores.

Girls' perceptions about their schooling opportunities were tightly tied to the household chores for which they were responsible, and issues of poverty. The information in the table above about chores collaborates very well with the results from the FGDs. Girls are mostly cleaning, drawing water, cooking, caring for the siblings, collecting firewood, going to the grinding mill, caring for the sick, washing dishes and doing the laundry. On the other hand, boys are mainly going for fishing, doing ganyu, caring for the livestock, doing part time jobs and going on errands. These results support that the gendered outcomes of schooling are a consequence of adverse socio-cultural factors, not just poverty itself (Coclough et al 2000).

The FGDs alluded to the fact that if a girl needs or wants to make money, she can potentially stay in school for a bit while she has a boyfriend. But eventually, she usually drops for pregnancy or marriage. A boy who wants to make money will drop to go for business or work. In the long run, the girl will not be likely to have a chance to return to school, while the boy can make this "mistake" and come back and will not be mocked.

Girls may be forced into marriages even at young ages, and this can make them feel that there is no future in schooling. This is particularly true for young girls for whom the parents have already received lobola. They know that in some cases, especially if they are orphans, they won't have their secondary fees paid. This makes them feel that there is no purpose in continuing. But there were also examples of girls' willingness and desire to learn. At Chinkhoma, girls demonstrated how they should be taught/what they thought was good. They said that they learnt better when teachers used TALULAR and did different activities in class (groups, pairs). They also pointed out the need for teachers to help them when they are struggling with their schoolwork. They added that the school environment is good when they were not whipped or beaten.

The boys perceive the girls as spending more time on love affairs than schoolwork. They perceived themselves as more competitive, intelligent, and better at science and math than girls in school. The boys perceived the girls as receiving special treatment from

teachers who want to be in relationships with them. Boys at Chinkhoma said that girls were favored by teachers because by giving bad comments to boys in class the girls will accept teachers' proposals for love. There was some resentment here from the boys.

In Chankhozi, in contrast, boys said they were treated equally except for punishments and chores at school. Chankhozi had a different school culture generally, from students' perceptions. There didn't seem to be teacher/pupil relations in the same way either. Although this might be because 3 of the male teachers had their wives teaching at the same school, as well as any cultural difference related to the participatory practices, there should be more to this because the only school with more female teachers did not exhibit these characteristics.

The head teacher at Chankhozi talked about girls writing notes to him about wanting relationships. *Lero nde mwabeba* (you are looking so good today), for example. He said that in such cases he does not want to look as if he is making the girl exposed (as she could be mocked). "But what I do is to call the girl and say when I look at her she is just a student. She is not more than that—she cannot be a wife or girlfriend and she should be behaving as a student". But this is a good example of how the girls tried to push relationships with him.

This shows that there are many obstacles to the schooling of girls, ranging from the perceptions of the girls themselves to the fact they are sometimes forced to conform to gender norms that are damaging to their educational experiences and opportunities. The results also indicate that although boys and girls are very aware of the financial and cultural constraints that girls face in continuing their schooling, there is still little support from most school and community members for girls to overcome these constraints. Pupils reported teacher/pupil relations in most schools, boys and girls noted that girls began thinking of—or being forced to think of—marriage while still in school, and girls' capacity to make money directly (not through a man) are very limited.

4.3.2 Community/parent perceptions of schooling

As per the PCTFI framework, community educational perceptions are defined as the percentage of community members that believe girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from education in the program area. Here, the main interest is on the socio-cultural practices, norms and values that deprive girls of their right to education and the socio-cultural practices and values that support girls/women's rights.

In general, almost everything that was said by pupils was also said by parents. In some communities, it seems that they don't value education, and so parents don't really encourage their children. Hannock Nsonkera noted a lack of parental encouragement for schooling. Parents say many more good things about marriage than about education. So kids, mostly girls, are mostly taught about reproductive roles instead of productive roles. Here again, school does not conflict with marriage in the same way for boys. Additionally, there were a lot of comments about mothers' lack of interest or inability to successfully encourage girls to get to and achieve in schools. Women are the ones who hinder girl's education because they assign too much household chores to them and

mothers are responsible for advising girls and encouraging them to go to school, men at Hanock Nsokera said. Thus, the perception was that parents generally don't provide too much encouragement, but women in particular were blamed for girls' lack of interest or attendance because they are supposed to advise girls and because they give girls chores.

An interesting issue that arose from parents was that they felt that girls and boys matured at different rates. Boys matured more slowly. Many were suggesting that girls should start school earlier because they were mature enough earlier (5 instead of 6), and they ran into trouble after puberty.

Girls should get married at the age of 21 and boys at 25 because girls grow faster than boys and attain adulthood faster than boys of similar age. The impact of this on schooling is that when girls enroll at school a bit late they do not complete as they drop-out to get married. (men at Hanock Nsokera).

Table 4.4 presents the age of the pupils by standard:

age of pupil * Sex of pupil * class of pupil Crosstabulation

Count			Sex of pupil		Total
class of pupil	age of pupil		Female	Male	
standard 4	5-9 years old		3		3
	10-12 years old		21	25	46
	13-15 years old		14	13	27
	Total		38	38	76
standard 5	5-9 years old		4		4
	10-12 years old		17	17	34
	13-15 years old		18	21	39
	more than 15 years old		1	1	2
Total		40	39	79	
standard 6	5-9 years old		1		1
	10-12 years old		16	8	24
	13-15 years old		20	25	45
	more than 15 years old		1	6	7
Total		38	39	77	
standard 7	10-12 years old		10	6	16
	13-15 years old		23	25	48
	more than 15 years old		7	9	16
Total		40	40	80	

The information in the table seems to indicate that indeed, girls are already starting school earlier than boys. This is also collaborated by the analysis of the EMIS data for 2007. It was found that 43 percent of the Standard one girls were at the right age of 6 years while this was the case for 42 percent of the Standard one boys. Girls' earlier start in school may be an important tactic to expand the number of years that they can comfortably stay in school, but such an approach is only effective if girls are not repeating often.

As noted earlier, girls face a number of constraints on how long they stay in school that boys do not face. As they get older, they have to do more chores. But they also face cultural expectations that boys do not. For example, all parent groups agreed that girls should get married earlier than boys, usually with a large gap (eg 18 versus 25 years).

Many said that girls were dull and too focused on sexual relationships. Some parents also said they were afraid of girls getting pregnant out of wedlock.

There were very gendered expectations for the future: Boys are leaders in society and as such need to be educated. Girls will be married, hence no need for them to get educated (Chinkhoma school, Mbeta village men's FGD). Boys should attend school because they will become men and men fend for themselves and provide for their wives (men Hanock Nsokera, Feza village). On the other hand, *educating a girl child is a waste of resources because she will be spending her income on her husband and not on her parents* (men Hanock, Kaipa village). This collaborated with *A key informant at Chankhozi who said that the community perception is that*

Boys should get better education rather than girls because girls will get married while boys will be bread winners; when a girl gets married she leaves the home and go to stay at the husband's village. This means that educating the girl child is as good as educating somebody's child not your own child.

Men at Chinkhoma school, (Chipokolo village) added that girls were involved in witchcraft, which made them stubborn and dull in school because they spend most of the night going abroad in their nocturnal activities.

There was also evidence that what is taught in schools is being undermined by communities and churches. For example, the school encourages children to sit anywhere and to mix in groups, but in the community and church they have to split up the genders and not sit with each other. These community norms contradict the participatory methods at Chankhozi, for example. Girls are taught at home to look at boys as family members or as sexual partners, but not as fellow learners or as non-sexual friends. In the communities, a woman and a man should not be close to each other or working together without it being a sexual relationship. That is why all the night activities are to promote sexual activities between boys and girls. They are always strangers until they meet at night, and then must make hay while the sun shines. In such an environment, it is particularly difficult for teacher/girl relationships to not become sexualized. And some girls are abused at home by a family member, and so when she is looking at the teacher that is all she can remember and think about. This is a very good example of how it is not appropriate to focus on one group to create change. Improving schooling requires transforming the socio-cultural settings in which the school operates (Thompson, 1981).

Men have more power in the community than women and this is set as an example for children and discourages girls to work hard because it is the boys who are given more power in leadership and decision making (men at Chankhomi). Early marriages influence other girls who are still in school that getting married is the most important thing to do than going to school, and this increases the dropout rate for girls (men at Hanock Msokera). The vast majority of all parents agreed that women should have the same leadership opportunities as girls, but a greater proportion of men than women strongly agreed. A chi-square test showed that these differences were significant and this is an indication of the fact that women are part of the problem to reaching gender equality.

When asked who needed more encouragement to go to school, most men and women, but more women, said that girls needed more encouragement to go to school. In terms of whose education is more expensive, 50% of parents said equally expensive; but about 30% said girls' was more expensive. It can be expected that this reinforces the perception about low focus on girls' education since it is expensive. The majority of parents thought that boys were more interested in school (66%) than girls, but there were more men than women. A Chi-square test showed that these differences were significant at the 95% confidence level.

About 95% of parents agreed that girls' schooling was more disrupted with household chores. About 64% of men and 56% of women said boys were more intelligent and only 12% of men and 16% of women said that girls were more intelligent than boys. These results from the household questionnaire collaborated very well with the findings from the FGDs. Although school performance tracks relatively closely onto intelligence, there were some differences. When asked from whom should the family expect more financial support in future, men expected more from boys, women more from girls and there was a pretty even distribution. There was agreement by about 76% of all parents that boys have more time after school for schoolwork. Thus, the perceptions held by the communities reinforce the disadvantaged nature of girls' schooling.

In terms of employment, boys and girls (and parents) say that there are so many people who have gone up to Form 4 but they are not getting employment. School is a waste of time if at the end of the day an educated person is sitting in the village with the same people who went up to Standard 5 only. At Hannock Nsokera, they gave an example of one girl who went up to form 4 but "is just bearing children now". People do not yet value education for enlightenment on its own. They still think of schooling in terms of white collar jobs, and still link schooling strongly to employment. This is particularly problematic for girls, who face even greter hurdles than boys in finding employment—in part because of discrimination that they face because of broader cultural norms concerning women's intelligence and because employers would prefer a worker who will not ever require maternity leave. It would appear that until the opportunity structure opens up and low status groups and women are equally allocated the opportunity to progress in life through education, the family choice of whether to keep children in school remains highly constrained (Fuller and Robinson, 1992).

There was a lot of evidence about how some parents perceive the school as a very gendered space too. For example, parents talked about bad comments from teachers whereby some teachers mock older girls in class by calling them degrading names like *Agogo* (granny) and *Amayi* (mother) when addressing them in class.

The pedagogical agenda of basic education is the cultivation of children's intellectual and moral development. But there is also the economic agenda, which has been seen in this study to far much outweigh the pedagogical agenda at least as far as the parents are concerned. This agenda concerns education's ability to uplift individuals' status in society. Since sending children to school and keeping them there is largely a parental

decision in the absence of compulsory primary education, it is necessary to understand the context in which the decision is made. As also observed by Chimombo et al (2000), the evidence has shown that decisions about girls' schooling are shaped by a complex interplay of socio-cultural and economic factors.

The top community perceptions are that girls are dull, need more encouragement, should marry early, that boys are future leaders and that generally parents supported girls' schooling much less than boys, for financial, cultural, etc. reasons. But there were a number of other perceptions mentioned by fewer stakeholders such as witchcraft, girls enticing teachers, that were also playing their roles in hindering girls' education.

4.3.3 Teachers' gender sensitivity

Teachers' gender sensitivity is defined by the PCTFI framework as the percentage of teachers observed to be facilitating equal conditions for girls' and boys' learning using a standardized instrument. Here, our main concern is the mechanisms/structures that exist to protect girls from abuse and which categories (gender, grade level, etc.) of pupils are more affected by the availability and distribution of teachers and why.

It was observed that in general, male teachers were not all gender sensitive. They made negative comments that made girls drop out. A men's FGD at Hannock Nsonkera reported that one teacher asked a girl "you are very dull why can't you just get married?" A parents' FGD with men at Hannock Nsokera observed that some teachers mocked older girls in class by calling them with degrading names like agogo and amayi, as noted above. As one example, one of the participants said that his niece dropped out of Std 3 at the age of 15 years because of a similar issue.

Teacher issues with girls develop after puberty; before then, girls are even sometimes viewed more favorably than boys. This is one reason why starting school on time is particularly important for girls. In Hannock Nsokera, teachers sent children home, saying they were too young to enroll even if they were 6 years old (boys FGD). This delays enrollment, which more seriously affects girls because of their shortened timeframe for schooling. Such practices need to be addressed so that girls are not further disadvantaged.

It was reported that boys were given more physically challenging punishments and school chores than girls by teachers (girl's FGD, Chinkhoma school). While boys and girls disagreed on who gets more chores, they agreed boys got more punishments and were often treated more harshly because teachers don't want anything from the boys. An FGD at Hanock Nsokera (with boys) reported that girls received more positive messages from teachers, especially male teachers, because they wanted to enhance their relationships with the girls so that when they propose love to them they should not refuse. Boys FGD at Hannock Nsokera and girls of Chankhomi both said that teachers treat girls favorably or give them more positive comments so that they can fall in love with them. Thus, pupils widely believed that in cases where girls are treated favorably by teachers, it is for sexual purposes. When girls are diminished by teachers, it is usually in a sexual manner. Girls FGD at Chankhozi gave the following example: "Look at her body, like a mother. Do you think you are beautiful? I have a more beautiful wife than you".

Teachers said that participatory methods helped to involve boys and girls (Chankhomi), but all teachers said boys and girls were treated well and equally without differentiating gender. They mixed boys and girls for activities, reported a KI at Chankhomi. But some teachers thought that girls were less intelligent. This is a widely held view by respondents, but was said directly by teachers from Chankhozi. There were also more complex discussions by teachers about when boys and girls did well in school. For example, many teachers said that girls are smarter at young ages, but not when they are older. This mix of sexualizing female pupils and holding low views about their abilities makes school a relatively unsafe and unequal space for many girls.

4.4 QUALITY

There are three components of quality under the PCTFI framework. These are Suitable Educational Environment, Relevant Educational Content, and Child Centered Processes. The data from this study indicate that usual measures of quality don't seem to really affect boy/girl involvement in school, or really change the girls' education issues that are identified as most important by pupils, parents, and teachers. These remain focused on household/school issues like household chores, poverty, and sexual relations. These data may indicate a need to look more carefully at the issue of education quality, both in terms of how it is measured and in terms of the assumptions made about how it affects girls' experiences and education decisionmaking.

4.4.1 Relevant Educational Content

Relevant educational content is defined as the degree to which PCTFI innovations are able to promote regular use of curriculum and learning materials that cover basic skills with pertinent, gender-sensitive and contextually appropriate subject matter (adapted from UNICEF). The section reports on teachers' perceptions of the curriculum, as well as pupil and parent perceptions of the utility of schooling.

The new curriculum under PCAR seems to be gender sensitive. It also has subjects like lifeskills, including assertiveness training and HIV/AIDS education, which can be helpful for pupils. The cornerstone of school-based HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention is Life Skills Education (LSE), which has been included in the national primary and secondary school curricula as both a stand-alone subject and as a topic integrated into other subjects such as biology, social studies, home economics and religious studies. LSE, developed by UNICEF (levels 1-4), and by UNFPA and the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) (levels 5-8 and Forms 1-4) provides age appropriate lessons on HIV/AIDS, STIs, malaria, self-esteem and other topics designed to strengthen pupils' physiological and psychological well-being. This is particularly important for girls given the disproportionate effects of HIV/AIDS on their lives.

Head teachers were asked through the checklist to assess the textbook and learning materials in schools in terms of their relevance to curriculum expectations, usefulness, effectiveness, gender sensitivity and adequacy. All four head teachers said the textbooks and learning materials were relevant, useful, effective and gender sensitive. However, all

teachers said that the provision of these materials was inadequate. As has been documented by other studies (e.g the SACMEQ studies for Malawi), a key problem with attempts at providing EFA in Malawi is the low levels of provision of materials.

The curriculum also tries to involve parents by making them check their children's schoolwork as part of a continuous assessment structure. Despite this, teachers at Chankhomi said the new textbooks do not contain sufficient information in Standards 1, 2, 5, 6, and that Standard 1 Chichewa is difficult to teach. Teachers expressed reservations about the Chichewa literacy approach. Their concerns centered on the whole word methods of PCAR's Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy (MBTL) model. Teachers were detecting a lag in learning Chichewa words without first mastering the component syllables through phonics. It is a well known fact that lack of phonics can negatively affect an otherwise good model such as "Breakthrough to Literacy," which was designed for teaching English but may require modification for teaching other languages first.

Numeracy and literacy skills are widely perceived as important for both boys and girls. All schools have school-based activities that could theoretically be good for girls, such as AIDS TOTO clubs that include a few indoor games, though it is not clear from the data what the gendered effects are of such initiatives.

It is clear that due to over 15 years of gender programming, Malawi's official curriculum is very gender sensitive, and teacher training contains some gender sensitivity components as well. With time constraints, it was hard to look into issues of actual use of the curriculum and the appropriateness of materials. The general perception was that schooling is not useful if it does not result in paid employment, however, something which is particularly damaging for women, who have a harder time finding employment.

4.4.2 Suitable Education environment

The second element of quality under the PCTFI framework is suitable educational environment. This is defined as the degree to which schools and classrooms in PCTFI target areas demonstrate social and physical learning environments that are gender-sensitive, healthy, safe, protective, and include adequate facilities, (also adapted from UNICEF). This discussion was extended to cover the environment in school surroundings that affects schooling.

Two critical facilities in schools are latrines and water. There were some issues with latrines and water sources at these schools that affected girls, particularly after menarche. Also, if there is no water source at the school, as at Hanock Nsokera, girls are sent to draw water for drinking.

All the four schools indicated that they had toilets. But our observations indicated that only Chankhozi and Chankhomi had (near) adequate number of toilets. The toilets at Hanock Nsokera were in very bad shape and located on the same side of the school. There was hardly a toilet for the pupils at Chinkhoma and pupils were using the urinals as toilets. A spot check showed that these urinals were in very pathetic state and littered with feces everywhere.

There was also a shortage of teachers and teachers' houses at some schools, along with lots of teacher beer drinking at Chankhozi. The schools' surroundings were also in bad shape especially at Hanock Nsokera and Chinkhoma. At Chinkhoma, the classrooms were not spacious enough, not adequate for learning, and this made the facilities not adequate. At Hanock Nsokera, the classrooms (constructed under self-help) were small and very dark inside so that it was difficult to see. Except for Chankhozi and Chankhomi, none of the schools have enough classrooms.

Good infrastructure affects boys and girls, but girls more. For example, with desks girls are helped more because of their comfort with not having problems responding and standing (this is because girls wear dresses and they need to be careful about abuse like peeping, laughing, etc.). Hanock Nsokera didn't have even one single desk for pupils. Girls were observed struggling to sit (using their zitenje for comfort) in the classroom during our observations.

If teaching and learning materials are inadequate, the school can be considered to be a less healthy environment. The school with participatory methods was using TALULAR, so it had fewer issues here. Classroom shortages and teaching and learning materials shortages affect all students, but tend to affect girls more because they tend to not be allowed to control learning materials if there is a shortage, and they are further disadvantaged than boys when they must sit outside or in bad learning conditions.

The presence of sporting facilities can attract children, boys and girls, to be in school. Students will not absent themselves on the days when there are sporting activities and attendance is high. After-school academic activities are very good for girls both as safe spaces and in terms of the content they might learn. Indeed Chimombo et. al. (2003) observed that:

Inadequate facilities at the school limit the nature of activities that attract girls. The majority of girls in these areas are simply not interested in school. The provision of simple materials, equipment and sports gear is imperative if the school is to appeal to girls. (p:104).

It should also be pointed out that one of the key elements in the Dowa holistic reform by USAID (Williams et al 2008) is the transformation of the school environment to make it more attractive through the provision of various sports equipments and games.

The research revealed that the environment around the school can significantly impact girls' and boys' learning experiences. Schools located near markets, towns, video halls, bars, have particular problems with having students move in and out of the school, having adults move around the campus, and so forth. In the case of Chinkhoma, which has auction floors nearby, men come to the school and entice girl students into sexual relationships or sometimes abuse them. The video shows, including pornographic films, done at the trading center mostly affected boys' attendance. In terms of selling things at the markets near school, Chankhomi and Chinkhoma for example, it was mostly boys selling things at the market, while girls were going to look for boyfriends. At Chankhozi,

they mentioned that children might go to school in the morning, then when the market starts in late afternoon, the kids would just go there as a meeting place for sexual relationships (girls, boys, and older men).

Socially, there is lots of evidence that schools and classrooms are not regularly protective of or gender-sensitive towards girls. There was widespread reporting of verbal and sometimes physical abuse from pupils and teachers to girls, including touching breasts and buttocks and peeping private parts. Girls absent themselves after such harassment or drop out if they feel too uncomfortable. Teacher-pupil relationships usually did not lead to the teacher being removed. There were reports of teachers punishing boys harshly for sexual harassment of girls in some schools, to the detriment of boys' schooling, while in others there was no regular adult response to peer or teacher harassment. The following are extracts from FGDs.

FGD B1 Punishments in school are too much that we become tired after doing the punishment and this leads into loss of interest in class work and physiologically we feel tortured because the size of punishment is beyond our size

B2 The sexual harassment for girls, boys touch girls' breasts, bad comments and place a mirror between the girls' legs so that they can see thighs and underwear

B3 Sexual harassment to girls creates unhealthy learning environment for example:- boys do a lot of sexual harassment to girls like shouting at them without apparent reason, beating them up, sniffing breasts and pinching the buttocks;

B4 Sexual harassment; when boys have been denied sexual relationships, they beat up girls and this creates unhealthy environment for learning

G1 The sexual harassment for girls -Boys touch their breasts, -Peep at their nakedness using mirrors, -Teachers treat boys and girls in the classroom equally

Teachers punish the boys who perpetrate sexual harassment by giving them tough punishments such as digging rubbish pits and harsh punishments such as being dismissed.

G3 Hanock Nsokera Teachers indulge into sexual relationships with school girls and threaten them not to report to anyone; this creates unsafe environment for girls in school.

It is important to note that the poorest school has a school feeding program that seemed to make a difference in enrollment and in attendance. This did not change the gender attendance and performance patterns (which still favored girls), but it might increase the total number of children who attend and stay in school longer.

In terms of community perceptions of school quality and appropriateness, respondents at the household level were asked to mention three most important characteristics of a good school (first, second and third). The tables below present their responses:

Table 4.5: Most important characteristics of a good school

What is the first most important characteristics of a good school? * head of household gender Crosstabulation

Count

		head of household gender		Total
		Female	male	
What is the first most important characteristics of a good school?	highly qualified teachers	54	53	107
	Experienced teachers	36	30	66
	availability of T/L materials	14	12	26
	Good condition of school buildings	35	35	70
	Availability of sanitary facilities	20	8	28
	Good examination performance	55	46	101
	Community Participation	11	4	15
	Other Characteristics	7	5	12
Total	232	193	425	

What is the second most important characteristics of a good school? * head of household gender Crosstabulation

Count

		head of household gender		Total
		Female	male	
What is the second most important characteristics of a good school?	highly qualified teachers	27	14	41
	Experienced teachers	41	32	73
	availability of T/L materials	32	24	56
	Good condition of school buildings	49	54	103
	Availability of sanitary facilities	34	25	59
	Good examination performance	23	23	46
	Community Participation	17	13	30
	Other Characteristics	9	8	17
Total	232	193	425	

What is the third most important characteristics of a good school? * head of household gender Crosstabulation

Count		head of household gender		Total
		Female	male	
What is the third most important characteristics of a good school?	highly qualified teachers	35	12	47
	Experienced teachers	33	28	61
	availability of T/L materials	26	25	51
	Good condition of school buildings	31	37	68
	Availability of sanitary facilities	27	28	55
	Good examination performance	32	39	71
	Community Participation	36	18	54
	Other Characteristics	12	6	18
Total	232	193	425	

It can be observed from the tables that the people of the communities visited ranked the presence of highly qualified teachers as their first priority seconded by good examination performance and then the good condition of school buildings. It is unclear from the data how the inadequacy in teacher supply, dilapidated school buildings (including toilets), and poor pupil performance and/or outcomes may play a factor in families' decisions about the schooling of their children. In terms of teacher resources in the sample schools, although resources obviously make a big difference, they don't appear to determine outcomes. Having a lot of resources doesn't seem to affect gender as expected—for example, the best school is the only one with more boys attending than girls (though this is the Tumbuka area, so this might play a role).

In terms of safety, it appears that the safety of the school for girls is closely tied to their age. As girls mature, they are moved into sexualized roles and start performing poorly in school. For boys, they are seen as immature and too young at first sometimes, but as they grow, they are perceived as being more interested in schooling, harder workers, more intelligent, not shy, are in positions of power in terms of mocking girls, and they are never seen as not being appropriate for the role of student. They are not mocked if they come back to school or if they are old. These are socialization expectations in the community, but they are produced and reproduced in the school as well. This is what has been referred to in the literature as the "gender regime" (Kessler et al, 1985) which is constructed through institutional practices (with inscribed social relations of gender) that are symbolically constructed and regulate everyday life and normalize unequal power relations both in the home and at school.

In summary, it can be noted that almost all the schools lacked basic faculties for proper functioning and this made the schools in general not healthy places for any students. The community ranked the presence of qualified teachers as the most important characteristic of a good school, with infrastructure the third characteristic. It was unclear from the

research, however, how poor infrastructure differentially impacted girls' enrollment and attainment rates, as the poorest school did not have lower girls' rates than better resourced schools. It did appear to make their schooling experiences less comfortable, however, especially in terms of sanitary services and desks. Lack of infrastructure presents a lot of discomfort to girls. Above these concerns, the school was not a safe place in terms of harassment and abuse, especially for girls.

4.4.3 Child-centered processes

The last component under quality is child-centred processes. This is defined as the degree to which child centered pedagogies and methodologies are evidenced in practice in the educational environment.

Chankhozi, Chankhomi and Hanock Nsonkera schools reported doing participatory teaching, and there were lots of teaching resources. These schools had outside support in adopting these approaches. They talked about TALULAR, which was helping with learning resources, and when teachers are not available, kids can learn on their own with TALULAR. They also used participatory teaching and learning methods, and teachers said this was good for girls because they actively participated in the lessons more than in normal lessons. Also there was less personal negative feedback from teachers to pupils, which might help girls. It was also reported that the new curriculum is gender sensitive.

Only two student populations reported that teachers used participatory methods, but where these were happening, the pupils showed appreciation. These same schools were doing more to involve communities as well, and said that when communities are made to understand the importance of education they come forward and help (eg Chinkhoma). In contrast, where there are lessons in the traditional lecturing style, the girls are shy to stand up and answer questions and they do not actively participate in the lessons. Because the classroom in this case is more competitive, girls are perceived as not competing well against boys.

Teachers reported that the content of the new curriculum is learner-centered but not exam-centered. This means that pupils know now what to do, they are not just learning to pass exams. The best teaching and learning, according to the SA's data collectors, seemed to be the two most-resourced schools (Chankhozi and Chankhomi). But our sense of these schools' success in child-centered processes did not translate into high pass rates; Chankhozi was actually quite low.

Some of the schools reported being constrained in using groupwork in infant classes since the children are too playful to be organized and there is a lack of infrastructure and high teacher:pupil ratios. Nonetheless, the schools that made up the SA sample do not reflect the range of quality issues related to teacher shortages that exist in Kasungu. In this group, the teacher:pupil ratios are: Hannock Nsonkera, 1:67; Chankhomi, 1:41; Chankhozi, 1:41; and Chinkhoma, 1:59. These are lower than the district average which is 1:79 (GoM, 2007) In thinking about interventions throughout the district, the constraints to child-centered processes related to infrastructure and teacher shortages will

need to be carefully examined, acknowledging the limitations of the study to fully document these constraints.

4.5 EMPOWERMENT

The last component of the PCTFI framework is that of empowerment. The three issues that make up this component are supportive strategic relations, girls' agency and structural environment.

4.5.1 Supportive strategic relations

Supportive relations are defined as the degree to which formal and informal decision makers exercise their ability to make decisions in favor of girls' right to development. In most cases, girls have few to no supportive strategic relations for school, and many for marriage. It was also clear that with just some small shifts, that can really change. A village head who really supports schooling (as in Dowa), a mother who enforces schooling, or a school environment supportive of girls can make a large difference in girls' educational experiences and expectations. The question is how to make such relations the norm. Its possible to map from the data the types of supportive strategic relations that appeared to play a role in not supporting girls' education, as well as a few examples of what happens when supportive relations exist. The groups that appear important in providing supportive relations are:

4.5.1.1 Families:

Harsh punishments given to children really dissuade them from school. In most cases, these included denying food. Children would miss school because of hunger, or go and not concentrate. The pupils said that they felt worried just thinking about such punishments, and may be physically affected by beatings. Most of these punishments resulted from not doing household chores, or from refusing to run errands.

There were many comments about parents not supporting school and how this dissuaded girls. Household chores were assigned unevenly to girls and boys, overburdening girls. They are often forced to do chores in the morning so that they are tired for school. Girls may be expected to help brothers prepare for school before they can prepare themselves (prepare hot bath and breakfast for him and clean up before she can begin her preparations).

Repeatedly, it was noted that girls were expected to get advice from mothers, boys from fathers. Participants said that it can be expected that since mothers are "weak" and want the girls' labor, they would not normally encourage girls to go to school. Mothers' perceived weakness also means that girls can more easily choose to ignore the advice from their mothers while boys listen more to their fathers. If fathers give good advice, then, it is more likely to positively affect boys' education.

Girls are brought up to think that men are superior to women. Most of the socialization happens in the home, and girls are made to believe that men are superior to women and

grow up with that mentality. On the supportive side, some parents help girls to do their homework, put on school uniform, and encourage them.

An FGD with women at Chankhozi observed that naturally girls are lazy and when things are not working out for them in terms of performance in class they opt for dropping out from school. The women further said that girls are not intelligent and hence they easily fail in class and eventually drop out of school.

An example of supportive relations was that of a girl whose mother was supportive and so gave her daughter fewer household chores and time to study. The mother prepared her breakfast and bath, so the girl only had to get up and start off for school. When she comes back, she eats, cleans the dishes, and then its time for her to study. The girl explained that she was the lastborn in the family and all her 3 sisters had at least gone through primary and through secondary school and were working in town. Not only was her mother's support critical, but the girl felt that she had to do all she could to also finish primary and get selected and finish secondary so that she would not be the only sister who did not achieve. She was focused and knew why she was in school and what she wanted to do after secondary school (become a teacher). In this example, the home environment worked at every step to support the girl's schooling and was all that she needed to be a high achiever.

4.5.1.2 School Management Committees

These were mostly reported not to be functioning in schools in Kasungu; for example, they were not removing male teachers after pregnancies. But at some schools, like Hanock Msonkera, the SMC talked to the parents about releasing children from farming to come to school on time and the result of this was that the situation improved. Some SMCs were checking attendance and following up absences to find out why pupils were frequently absent (Chinkhoma). Chinkhoma was also encouraging punctuality of teachers as well as pupils, which improved performance, and were also monitoring teachers' behavior. At Chankhomi, the SMC provided counseling to girls (and boys) as well, in terms of their behavior, telling them how important school is. The SMC at Chinkhoma was very active to the extent that at the time of research, they were building some school blocks and it was actually the SMC that was leading and supervising the work.

4.5.1.3 Community power and authority structures

Authority is generally embedded in men. There were lots of comments throughout the FGDs about men being leaders and women not. It was observed that in most villages, VHS and GVHS are mostly men. In the Tumbuka area, you would rarely find a female VH. Even where a VH is a woman, there is usually some man that is making most of the decisions and telling the woman what to do. For example, in a meeting they would consult the man on what to discuss. In the case of Malanganu (Feza GVH), there were two lady chiefs but they always consulted their uncles on what to do, and indeed what decision to make.

Participants also mentioned that in terms of religion, whether its *Gule* or churches or mosques, the heads of the religious institutions are men. A KI at Chankhozi used the

Catholic church as an example to say that even though there are nuns, you easily notice that their role is not the same as the role played by the priests.

This issue was seen as affecting family relations as well; as mentioned earlier, although women are in charge of young boys and all girls, their advice was not heeded carefully by children because they were perceived as “weaker”. In Venge village, most of the men in the village had more powers both at community and household levels. This made the girls not to be inspired in education, because even if they got educated, they will still remain inferior to males.

4.5.1.4 Initiation ceremonies:

Girls said that when they reach puberty they are in confinement for 7 days for initiation ceremonies and during that time they miss classes. Some are done in a Christian context (which don't take many days), but the ones that are done for 7 days are outside the Christian context. The girls would not be drawn to come out straight about initiations or about what happens at the initiation camps. These were of-course different depending on the area with Chankhomi largely Tumbuka and the other three were largely Chewa. In Lobola areas, it may be harder for the girl to get out of a marriage, even when they are very young like:

The case of the girl got married to a cousin who was really abusing her; she asked her parents to get her out but they said no because of lobola. The community knew but said there was nothing to do because it was a family matter, even though all of them knew what was happening.

In the communities, there was a strong sense that girls grow faster and the time that is available for them to be students is limited by puberty and the other roles they should play, as well as people's sense of their intelligence (girls regularly referred to as dull or stupid).

4.5.1.5 School environment:

Generally, the school environment is very gendered. Plenty of girls are subject to mockery and abuse by peers and teachers, and these issues are often not addressed. In Hannock Nsonkera and Chinkhoma, for example, parents say that teachers give girls good comments, but this is to get them to agree to relationships. Subjects taught in English are difficult for girls because they have less time to study English although some parents said girls do better in languages than boys, while boys do better in Math, science, etc. Some schools organized events for students to have more knowledge apart from what is taught in the class (science club, HIV/AIDS club), like Chankhozi and Chinkhoma, and tried to counsel students about relationships. Some schools and classrooms encourage participatory teaching approaches (Chankhozi)

4.5.1.6 Teachers

Teachers have a positive impact when there are female role models (eg more girls get selected to secondary schools than boys because of female teachers and other female role models in the area (near town) and the role models set a conducive environment for girls

to learn because they feel safe confiding in female teachers, or when they provide counseling (Chankhozi, eg). In the previous school year, they had counseled 75 couples. Teachers can also have a negative impact with male teachers undermining girls through mockery and also through sexual relations and indeed through perceptions of girls' intelligence.

4.5.1.7 Religion and traditional dances:

Religion can be supportive in terms of providing resources. At Chankhozi, for example, they renovated classroom blocks, provided school fees for those selected to secondary school who could not afford the fees. They also had some counseling sessions for pupils, and built a staffroom for the school and bought some desks. Although this was not gender-oriented, it improved the quality. At Chinkhoma, the Methodist Church also helped by establishing clubs for OVCs to empower them to stand on their own. At Chankhomi, CCAP provided mission exams at STD 8 so if they were not selected to government schools they could go to mission schools, and they provided secondary fees for those in need and supported needy students in primary and secondary (with soap, fees, clothes).

Male-dominated leadership structures can be negative, though, and students are also encouraged to sing at funerals and miss school, and the choirs provide space for sexual relationships. At Chankhozi, the KI said that a boy and 2 girls in the choir were involved in relationships. The boy was in Std 8, the girls in Standards 8 and 6. When they realized what was happening, they fought at the school. They were called for hearing at the disciplinary committee where it was discovered that everything started at the choir. At Hannock Msonkera and Chinkhoma, there were not sufficient classrooms, so some students learn in the church, which the church allows. The SMC at Chinkhoma, also used the church to mobilize students to school. It was reported that before or after preaching, the pastor/priest would say "its important to send your child to school, school is opening on this date, students be ready for school".

There were many example that depicted the negative side of traditional dances which sometimes happen at night. Girls choose to go although sometimes they are not compulsory. Consequently, the girls go to sleep very late. They last very late into the night and provide meeting grounds for sex, and most girls end up being impregnated.

Sports were similar to traditional dances in terms of being an opportunity for meeting, and its not just students who attend, so there are a lot of sugar daddies, boys who dropped out, etc. They have the opportunity to meet the students there. On the other hand, it gives the athlete students something to do and they are kind of busy with practicing on sports days and they have little time to engage in bad behavior. It may be necessary that these be properly supervised.

4.5.1.8 Peers:

Girls' peers often drop out to marry or get pregnant, or have boyfriends. In all of these cases, girls in school see this and can be envious of these girls. Its not that the friends may encourage the girls in school, but the girls in school see their friends' life and envy

it. An FGD with women at Chankhomi noted that early marriages influence other girls who are still in school that getting married is the most important thing to do than going to school as a result this increases the dropout rate for girls. On the other hand, girls feel discouraged from going to school because they take themselves as second-class citizens.

Boys don't really help girls as their classmates, and can be particularly cruel to a girl who is seeing a teacher or who is pursued by a teacher. There was no data as to whether girls helped each other.

Boys are most of the times perpetrators of sexual harassment, which really affects girls' ability to remain in school. They can touch girls' breasts, peep at their private parts with mirrors, and so forth. There is also a lot of mockery, especially after that week of initiation. This puts off the girls as well. Sometimes teachers intervene to punish these peers (often harsh punishments or dismiss them), but sometimes nothing is done. The girls who drop out mostly never come back while boys who drop out may be encouraged by their peers to rejoin, and in any case, are not mocked for their age.

In terms of the girls being assertive and taking decisions critical to their lives, most issues are imposed on them and cannot really be questioned by them easily. They may be married off young, they spend lots of time doing chores for the family, they receive messages all the time that they are duller than boys and cannot be leaders, and so forth. They are powerless. They don't feel they can speak freely (the Shyness issue), their rights are not being followed. Their environment is geared into the path of marriage and motherhood, everything is arranged around that, and that structure reproduces their secondary status. When they see their friend getting married, this environment creates inherent pressure in girls to get married too.

In summary, it can be noted that there are generally few strategic relations supportive of girls' education. Families will deny children food if they do not perform their tasks, SMCs are not active, while the local leadership provides a powerful structure for dealing with problems of schooling, in general girls are being brought up in an environment which is dominated by males always being told men are superior.

4.5.2 Girls' Agency

Girls' agency is expressed in the frequency with which girls exercise their rights and/or their rights are recognized in the law. Here, our interest is to assess the extent to which the marginalized girls make decisions about their survival.

Girls' options and girls' voices are extremely limited by the lack of supportive structural relations. For example, the girl who says she wants school not marriage is simply forced to get married. "Agency" related to school is very limited, and limiting. They don't know about no-local programs, they don't know where to turn for support in many cases. On the other hand, when they decide to have relationships, they are not stopped in the same way.

Girls' agency seems to be quite limited as relates to schooling and school-linked outcomes. There was lots of talk about girls being shy and dull, and girls not being competitive in class because they are tired after household chores. Girls normally also may not want to compete with boys, and are shy in class especially in front of teachers. When the respondents in the household were asked who needs encouragement to attend school, there were more respondents saying that girls did as shown below.

Table 4.6: Who need more encouragement to attend school

**who needs more encouragement to attend school - boys or a girls? *
head of household gender Crosstabulation**

Count		head of household gender		Total
		Female	male	
who needs more encouragement to attend school - boys or a girls?	Boys	19	17	36
	Girls	57	62	119
	Both	155	112	267
Total		231	191	422

These and other perceptions help to reinforce the disadvantaged position of girls. But an example is given in Chankhozi of how group work allows girls to mix freely with boys in class, with fewer boundaries for participation.

There is a very strong link between supportive strategic relations and girls' agency. This of-course relates to the way girls are socialized as well as the opportunities they are given to be agentic. However, it is really difficult to figure out what it means to be agentic in these cultures. The opportunity to be agentic is not really there and the girls' behaviour and actions are shaped by people's expectations for her. People are just making decisions for her most of the time. They expect her not to make decisions for herself and the opportunities for girls to do are very limited.

Early marriage is a particular issue that is often tied to force and is very closely linked to poverty. This ranges from "kutomera" (child bidding), where older men pay lobola and take the young girl when they want, to parents forcing girls to rid themselves of a financial burden. This came very strongly from the pupils' FGDs. There were also lots of conversations about girls focusing on love affairs instead of school from all FGDs. This is a type of agency, though it is limited by the options structured for girls. The choice for girls is either hard path through school or a path that looks easier to motherhood and wifehood. There was an example of a girl who was an orphan who was propositioned by a man from the BOMA. The girl said no to the propositioning but her aunt in trying to rid herself off the burden of caring for this orphan girl said that she must marry and she was forced to marry.

The FGDs seemed to confirm some of the known facts that most girls "accept" existing gender dynamics at the family, community, and school levels. These tightly constrain

their “personal” agency, though it was obvious from the various stories that a shift in one or two of these can really make a difference. This is made worse by the fact that generally men hold power in these communities and women have limited or no knowledge about their rights. If you have knowledge about your rights, you are a step ahead in possibly taking up other decisions and ensure that your vision is realized. Most of the girls are not aware of the world around them, opportunities outside of the village (eg laws against sexual abuse, where to go when it occurs, etc., bursary schemes nationally, etc.) Their understanding of being a daughter of someone is that they should be guided, and that they should not make their own decisions. There isn’t much room for them to express their views about how they feel about particular situations, or if they do, it may not lead anywhere (e.g. girl who was being severely abused in the marriage noted above). Girls cannot resist some abuse (eg initiation), they are powerless and not assertive enough when the parents are not on their side, and are not aware of the rights to challenge their parents with those.

The evidence shows that it is absolutely essential to understand girls’ agency within the context of the community and school cultures in which they operate and that how we might think of girls’ agency may be useful in understanding girls’ lives and movements towards their being able to choose schooling more freely.

4.5.3 Structural Environment

Structural Environment for Girls is expressed in whether girls have equitable access to basic human services. Here, the main concern is girls’ access to education and what mechanisms /structures are there to protect girls from abuse. The evidence from the FGDs pointed to the need to attend to the absolute poverty of most girls and families in order to equalize access to basic human services. Generally, girls have a lower capacity to address their own poverty without exchanging sex for resources while boys can do work, do business, or farm. Girls usually cannot, yet the poverty they face is the same. Girls are therefore being agentic when they choose sex; but what kind of choice is this? Girls are also “empowered” in relation to their wife and mother roles. They are told that they are good at chores, taught how to do them well, and so forth. In contrast, at school they are told they are less intelligent, they are subject to many failures, open to various sorts of abuse in most schools, and so forth.

Certainly in the community, the distance to water and fuel sources has a huge impact on the amount of time girls spend on chores and it was noted from the quantitative data that there were wide variation within villages. The minimum time to fetch water was 21.4 minutes. This ranged from 17.35 minutes in TA Mwase to 26.09 minutes if Sub-TA Njombwa.

In terms of broad policy environment, there are policies that are relatively gender-supportive, but these seem to either not be known or to be overruled by community practices. For example, on the policy that girl and boy should be out of school for pregnancy but then return; there are a few girls who go back because of this. The ones who do go back to school tend to be mocked by their friends and drop out. It really takes

a lot of courage for a girl to go back because they know there is going to be a lot of mocking and embarrassment and they need family support for the baby as well.

The administrative structures are there, but in some cases they are not very efficient because the PEAs are supposed to visit each school at least once every term. But because of resources, transport, etc. this does not happen. But it is possible that it might not be that they don't have resources; it may be that they are giving excuses and do not know how to prioritize. And when they do monitor, there may often be no focus on gender. They are there to supervise what is happening in the schools. They focus on things that are not gender-focused, mostly teacher delivery of materials (or to a small extent participatory approaches). The TDCs are a focus for a lot of the PEAs, they may talk about classroom interactions a bit, but just not much. Some lady PEAs were involved in role model activities in other CARE projects outside of this study. In these other projects, a number of PEAs are actively involved in gender issues and they do so as volunteers.

A major limiting factor to girls' education appeared to be personal and family poverty. Girls are married off, so there are issues with perceiving them as serving another family and thus not being worth an investment. But beyond that, when a family was very poor, there were lots of forced marriages-girls could be sloughed off to another family, and might even bring lobola. When asked who the family expected more financial support, most of the respondents to the household questionnaire said that it was the boys as follows:

Table 4.7: Who should the family expect more financial support?

**who should te family expect more financial support in future - boys
or a girls? * head of houehold gender Crosstabulation**

Count		head of houehold gender		Total
		Female	male	
who should te family expect more financial support in future - boys or a girls?	Boys	98	78	176
	Girls	61	68	129
	Both	72	45	117
Total		231	191	422

Girls seemed to be more affected by lack of food (though it was not clear that there was a difference between girls and boys), soap, and clothes. Families may also need to move because of poverty (eg tenants) which affected girls and boys schooling and causes a lot of absenteeism and dropping out. The socio profile for Kasungu indicated that the tenant system really cause a lot of movements among families. Family poverty is a key component of girls' educational possibilities. There were also a lot of reported absenteeism during hunger season as well, as girls being pulled out to help at home (eg if parents are trying to go out for piecework, the girl is told to stay home with the babies). Thus, girls are growing up in an environment that is fundamentally unsupportive of their "agency" and their equality in the community, family, and long-term.

In summary, it can be noted that the structural environment for girls is very poor. Access to basic services is unequal and this is made worse by girls' motherly roles and indeed the perceptions of low future returns from girls' education. Although the structures are in place (e.g. TDC and PEAs), these do not seem to adequately be doing their jobs.

4.6 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In trying to disentangle what the data are telling us, it can be noted that girls have been behind for a long time, but Malawi has really made great strides. Girls are actually showing their progress. However, at the community level, the perception or value that the communities are attaching to education, (when you hear these issues about early marriages being promoted by parents), means that there is really a problem with the actual value attached to girls' education. There are many hurdles for survival in school for girls as they hit puberty. If they make it through, they are surviving at the same rate as boys. The main issue in Malawi is that most girls and boys do not make it through primary school at all, and the reasons that they do not make it through are quite different. These are primarily sexual roles and cultural expectations for girls, versus moneymaking opportunities for boys. Both, however, are heavily influenced by the endemic poverty that children and their families face. In the long run, these decision paths (re)create the gender division over resources and basic skills in a way that hurts women (and their children).

There were widespread attitudes in the home and at school that undermined girls' schooling, especially related to intelligence. These were held by women and men, boys and girls, with women in some cases displaying more negative expectations of girls than men. In addition, cultural practices such as early marriages, initiation ceremonies, marriage practices such as bride price, and perceived lower economic returns from girls' education due to lack of employment opportunities contribute to the gendered outcomes of schooling. Girls are given many more chores to do, which obviously affects schooling. In many cases, there does not appear to be that much active family support for them.

At the policy level, there is both a lack of knowledge about policies supportive of girls' education and a lack of appropriate implementation of policies when they are known. They are not having the intended effects in communities, as they are overridden by community practices. They really do disadvantage girls in a number of situations, and undermine school safety as well. There is a significant gap between knowing and understanding education policies and implementing them.

Schools are not always safe spaces for girls; teachers and peers can engage in a lot of harassment and mockery that affects girls' attendance, retention, and achievement. Re-entry is very important for girls' long-term educational attainment, especially in a system with high repetition rates.

Despite these issues, the most significant problem that girls and boys face in the area is the extremely high attrition rates that exist. There is a group of elite students—almost equally girls and boys—who are able to complete primary school, but most children never reach this stage. As we plan for future programmes, we need to ask: are these girls in schools really protected by those who are supposed to protect them? Is the SMC protecting them from teachers that are impregnating girls and are still teaching? Are the Head teachers and teachers creating an environment conducive to girls' success? Are parents and peers supportive of girls' schooling? Are girls provided sufficient resources to not have to exchange sex for survival?

One major problem for policy analysis is how to disentangle the issue of absolute poverty from the gender issues and the education issues. This is such a constraining issue in so many different ways. It shapes community capacity, it shapes school capacity fundamentally, and without emphasizing this and understanding it, programs will not change people's perceptions and actions. It is very hard to prioritize school in this environment. It is important to recognize that parents still know that school is important to success. But then a lot of things come in to maintain the kids in school or not. Central to these are community and pupil perceptions of educational success. Schooling is still seen as successful when it results in urban employment. There have been research reports, for example, that have indicated that boys may just want the English skills needed to get to South Africa (see Chimombo 1999). Teachers talk about how difficult it is to be role models when they have to borrow food, and the success of tobacco farmers and businessmen without education further undermines the perceived utility of education.

The challenge to meeting EFA goals lies in the willingness of governments to undertake major institutional reforms that may have major costs implications, particularly for those countries with low enrolments rates, and to address the poverty and socio-cultural constraints that are known to be the main factor explaining the gendered outcomes of schooling. Progress towards meeting the gender equality goals will rest on how countries address these issues, which may require complex and diverse interventions that currently are beyond the capacity of most countries.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

Malawi has realized considerable gains in providing access to primary education since the introduction of the FPE policy in 1994. However, this success is limited; as the main findings in this SA have shown, there are considerable obstacles to girls' remaining in school and having positive, safe experiences while in school. These findings are not necessarily new. There continues to be a problem with the socio-economic and cultural disadvantage of the poor and girls. Ideally, gender equality should mean that boys and girls are offered the same chances and have equally positive experiences with regard to educational access, treatment and outcomes. This also implies equality of educational opportunities, equality in the learning process (in terms of treatment and attention received in school, gender sensitive curricula free of biases and stereotypes, etc.), equality of outcomes (academic achievement and educational attainment) and equality of external results (i.e. no discrimination in the labour market) (2003/04 Global Monitoring report).

The main factor that has consistently been identified in research as the underlying cause of under-enrolment of children and contributing to the gendered outcomes of schooling is poverty. Direct and indirect costs of schooling (such as school fees and other unofficial fees such as school fund contributions, examination fee etc, costs of textbooks and other supplies, and uniforms and clothing for school, transportation and food) and opportunity costs of sending girls to school because of the labour forgone depresses the demand for schooling amongst the resource poor households. These costs have often been overlooked or underestimated when analysing costs of education. Governments should therefore tirelessly work towards reducing the opportunity cost of schooling.

Although poverty has been identified as the main factor affecting children's enrolment, the gendered outcomes of schooling are more a consequence of adverse socio-cultural factors and their interactions with poverty. For example, the division of labour in the household places a heavier burden on girls relative to boys as girls are generally expected to do more work than boys. In addition, cultural practices such as early marriages, initiation ceremonies, marriage practices such as bride price, societal beliefs that girls are less intelligent than boys, and perceived lower economic returns from girls' education due to lack of employment opportunities contribute to the gendered outcomes of schooling. As a first step, government must work toward recognizing and eliminating all forms of discrimination that restrict girls' attendance.

Schools, far from being secure places, are often places of intolerance, discrimination, and violence, with girls disproportionately affected. Making schools safe environments for all children, particularly girls, is a challenge many countries still have to address to ensure gender equality. Similarly, the environment at school may not be favourable to girls because of the absence of essential facilities such as toilets or chairs, school policies and curricula might reinforce rather than undermine societal gender stereotypes, and teachers may provide more support to boys than girls or view girls primarily as potential sexual

partners. It is recommended that government should move towards the creation of **Child Friendly Schools** that are rights-based schools and that demonstrate, promote and help monitor the rights and well being of ALL children. Such schools seek out and trace children excluded from education and include them. They are gender sensitive/girl friendly, child centered, encourage child participation, are flexible, and respond to diversity.

Further, Head Teachers and teachers should be provided with sensitisation training in gender based violence and harassment. It was clear during our interaction with teachers that many of them do not understand girls' problems and perceive solutions in terms of either (more) punishment or counselling (which usually involves reprimanding). A rights based approach should be incorporated in the training to ensure that schools promote and do not abuse the rights of all children.

There always problems of data in Malawi. Data issues are a central issue for any measurement of a project. There is need to base data collection at the school and these data should be collected on a regular basis. Enrollment, retention, and dropout data do not exist now, and pregnancy and OVC data may not be much better. There will be need for more resources for the data collection and analysis process if PCTFI wants to capture the actual movement of students in and out of school. It cannot be the normal way of doing short-term and rapid data collection if we want real numbers. This process needs to be regularized and of high quality, which requires more resources.

To leverage change across the 12 indicators, there is need for holistic interventions that target multiple stakeholders, institutions and sectors. These interventions are not all very straightforward or easily packed together. For example, community mobilization and participation is hard to measure but may be more important than gender-sensitive curriculum or infrastructure development. Thus, there is need for an intersectoral partnership to provide the context for effective health-related school policies. School policies, promoting good health and a non-discriminatory, safe, and secure physical and psychosocial environment, are most effective when supported by other reinforcing strategies, such as the provision of safe water and sanitation, skills-based health education, provision of health and other services, effective referral to external health service providers, and links with the community.

It is not clear from the research as to what exact effects other existing interventions have, but it is clear that absolute poverty is centrally involved in "schooling" issues. The Dowa example, for example, shows how central the socio-economic situation is to schooling practices. This may mean that school feeding, bursaries, or some other such effort needs to be examined and seriously considered, as does the cyclical nature of deep poverty in Malawi.

Most interventions have been tied to technical aspects of girls' education such as getting girls into school, affecting quality by affecting educational environments, measuring completion, and so forth. This needs to shift from a girls' education focus to a gender and education focus. Effective interventions will address what happens in the home, the community, and the school around gender relations. This lets us understand how the

sexualization of girls in the family, the church, the community, and school interact to reinforce their marginalization and existing gender divisions. The main goal of the socialisation process is to mould these girls into “good” mothers in the future. As a result, mothers give work to the girl such as going to the grinding mill and other household chores even if this means that they have to absent themselves from school. If the girls refuse, they are told that they will ‘*eat their school*’ and are denied food. The parents, especially the mothers, are a vital element in the education of our girls. This means then that the home is one of the most important domains in the improvement of girls’ education. It also helps us see how boys are affected by current girls’ education approaches, which do not recognize how boys are negatively affected by and also promulgate these messages and social relations, as well as by educational structures and practices.

Girls’ educational experiences are largely a result of widespread gender norms that fundamentally undermine girls’ education and rights. When most people, including girls and women, think girls are less intelligent than boys and don’t need to finish primary school, there is a fundamental issue to address concerning the place of girls in society and in school. The fact that government has tried to tackle these for a long time without success means that a new set of strategies to address girls’ education are needed.

5.2 ISSUES TO ADDRESS

The practice has been that education projects are done in a short period of time. To be able to see the impact, there is a need for a longer period of time to develop the project and to see the results. Considering that some of the indicators will also need a longer time to be effectively measured (retention, completion, empowerment), this also calls for more time.

When it comes time to identify needs and design interventions, it will be important for country offices, working within a common framework, to be able to identify the interventions that are most important for Malawi. One possible commonality might be CARE’s approach to programming which could test the effects of a participatory approach on girls’ education programming, using a common framework for participation instead of a common framework for interventions.

Malawi has decentralized. In implementing development projects, what the district really prefers is to make the choice of programming in conjunction with district assemblies. This needs to be kept in mind. The evidence has showed that institutions cannot just come into a district and say “we have come to do x”. There is another level of participation required by the District Assemblies that can be leveraged positively in the coming project stages. The DA also takes part in identifying the impact area. This is an issue that will need to be addressed in planning for the randomization of sites.

5.3 CONSIDERATIONS

In order to capitalize on the gains that have been made in the education sector, the Government of Malawi and the international community should invest more resources into secondary education for girls. Projects that award scholarships and challenge harmful

cultural norms can play a critical role and are a natural complement to large scale projects to improve infrastructure and the quality of education. Development partners should help government to smooth out the “hard” transition that is currently being experienced by many learners in Malawi as they finish primary school and look towards financially out-of-reach secondary school opportunities. Given the pervasive poverty in Malawi, the majority of girls’ cannot afford to pay for school fees, boarding fees, or even uniforms.

It is critical that any provision of scholarships for girls in Malawi be coupled with efforts to change attitudes in communities and to confront harmful cultural norms that create obstacles for girls and for the development of the nation. Educating a girl can provide a torch for a village, and indeed for the nation, when the entire community is involved. With encouragement, communities will support young scholars, thus giving them a chance to become role models that inspire younger girls to follow in their footsteps. The Dowa holistic reform has demonstrated that this is possible. There is obviously a small section of people where there is lack of effective demand for education. For these people, even if all the calculations were made and provisions made for classrooms, books, teachers and all other T/L materials, they would still not send their children to school. Here, the real problem with EFA is that government cannot do anything about absolute poverty. But there is also a large section of the society which wants the education for its qualification to enable their children to climb up the social ladder. All concerned stakeholder must do their best not to dampen this light of hope.

The evidence from the study pointed to the fact that fellow pupils perpetrate much of the abuse that occurs within schools. There is therefore a need to develop programmes that target pupils in schools on rights, sexuality and abuse. An opportunity is available to do this through the various clubs existing in schools, particularly the Anti-Aids and TOTO clubs. There is a need therefore to integrate abuse issues and sensitisation training into Anti- AIDS Club activities so as to empower pupils to take appropriate action in cases where their rights are being violated by peers and those in authority.

There is need for mechanisms to be put in place in the society to identify problems and find solutions for them. There are key elements in society that much be recognized, including the village heads, change agents, SMCs; these are the people on the ground who have the best understanding of the context. They need to be brought on board in conceptualizing these changes. And schooling is of course part of this context. It is part of this community and society. Chiefs and school committees possess a lot of power which is not wielded to the benefit of school going children, as demonstrated by the Dowa reform. They are the driving force behind the *mwambo* of the village (see Chimombo 1999).

5.4 CONCLUSION

The results in this SA show that all families do not respond to the micro-structures in a uniform way and that choices available to the household are constrained by opportunities set by institutions and markets (Fuller and Clarke, 1994). This counters the structural view that parents’ decisions about the schooling of their children are made individually for each child in a normative vacuum (Hareven 1982, Tilly and Scott 1978). Here they are immersed in the economic interdependencies and social obligations as defined by the *mwambo* of the village.

The *mwambo* is the pivot of a total ritual that defines the boundaries of individuals' dispositions in society. It also demarcates and differentiates within them the categories of gender, age grade and rank. Any attempts to touch and influence the lives of people at the periphery are weaker relative to the boundaries as set by the *mwambo* - the ritually transmitted knowledge that reifies the principal social categories of the communities. There is thus the need to sensitize these key stakeholders and empower them with appropriate support to take a lead in encouraging girls to participate more fully in education. When this is done, socio-cultural issues that revolve around the chief could be infiltrated and modified to be compatible with schooling needs. All stakeholders in the provision of education should work together towards this end.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Tools and their purpose, research area and targeted respondents

Research Tool	Purpose	Research Area	Targeted Respondents
Social mapping	To locate type, number, distance of social amenities in the community. -Effects of availability or lack of social amenities like school/health centres	Structural environment for girls	Men and women separate groups
Seasonal Calendar	Indicate time when particular activities are done that may affect school attendance variation, labour demand, disease prevalence. And availability of resource (food) by time	Suitable Learning Environment (Workload patterns and demands for labour and social events)	Women and girls
Activity Chart	a group of women/girls or individuals to map out what they do each during the week for the identification of Gender roles -Labour distribution	Suitable Learning Environment	Girls and boys in school
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Focuses on people's understanding of school related gender issues	Relevant education content, Community education perceptions, Children perception of educational equity and equality, Completion, Girls agency, Supportive relations, Teacher gender sensitivity, Suitable Learning Environment	Men and women separate groups, Teachers, SMC and PTA, out of school youth, pupils (boys and girls separate)
Pair wise ranking	Prioritizing problems and opportunities	Girls agency	Girls and boys
Key Informant Interviews	To explore the history and background of the school, school linkages with the zone, district and other collaborators at the local level, their understanding of issues to do with girls education, issues to do with community involvement especially as they pertained to girls education as well as the socio-cultural issues and attitudes towards girls schooling prevailing in the community.	Relevant education content, Completion, Suitable Learning Environment	Professionals (PEAs, school managers (head teachers and SMC) and club patrons) and traditional leaders (village heads, group village heads and TAs), religious leaders and initiation counsellors, OVC, TBA

Force field analysis	focus on both positive and negative aspects impacting on education of girls and to come up with a Force Field that showed their vision of what improvements they would like to see made in the schools by some year. The force fields also takes stock of what factors may work against these improvements and what factors may help them to be realised.	Structural environment for girls, Community education perceptions, Completion, Girls Agency, supportive relation, Teacher gender sensitivity Suitable Learning Environment	SMC, Pupils
Observations	used to assess gender sensitivity of teachers as well as pupil participation and the child centred nature of teaching and learning	Relevant education content, Child centred processes	Teachers and pupils
HH questionnaire	Collects household based information about the various aspects of schooling	Structural environment for girls, Community education perceptions, Completion, Supportive relations, Suitable Learning Environment	Parents or heads of households

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Checklist	This will collect quantitative data from the schools on enrolment, attendance, repetition ,dropout rates, and progression to secondary schools.	Structural environment for girls, completion, achievement and Suitable Learning Environment	Filled with the help of the head teacher

Appendix 2: Schedule of Activities for Situation Analysis

Day of the week	Session	Events
Monday	Session 1	Opening Remarks
		Welcome remarks
		Self-introductions
	Session 2	Training objectives
	Session 3	Introduction to CARE programming in Kasungu
	Session 4	Introduction to Situation Analysis
	Session 5	Briefing on the Core indicators
Tuesday	Session 1	Data collection Methods and tools (quantitative and qualitative)
	Session 2	Participants' past experiences
		Selected tools to be used and their justification
Wednesday	Session 1	Introduction to Ethical considerations
	Session 2	Discussion of instruments and translation
Thursday		Continued
Friday	Session 1	Continued
	Session 2	Peer practice on data collection
Monday		Pre-testing of instruments at Chitenje School
Tuesday		Debriefing on pre-testing on what worked and what did not work
Wednesday to Friday		Main data collection (with debriefing on every evening to share experiences)
Monday to Saturday		Main data collection with debriefing on every evening)
Monday		Debriefing on data collection
Tuesday		Depart Kasungu