

A. Sector Analysis

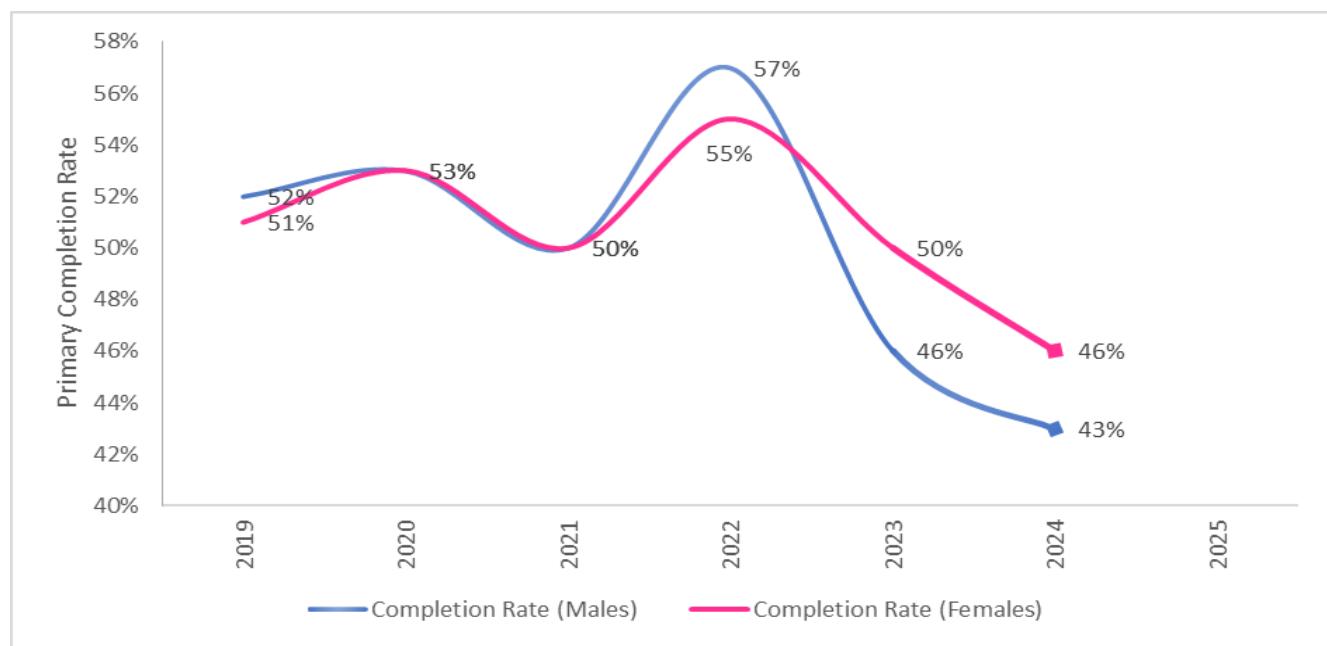
1. Current situation and major challenges of the sector:

The education sector is managed by different institutions. Early Childhood Education (ECD) is under the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare. Delivery of primary education is the responsibility of the district councils which fall under the Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is responsible for policy, monitoring and planning for primary, secondary and higher education.

According to Malawi's Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR), 2004), ECD gross enrolment rate dropped over the years from 2.02% in 2018 to 0.84% in 2024 due to harsh weather-related factors prompted by the cyclones (Ministry of Education, 2024). Only 51% of its caregivers were trained. In 2024, only 26% of the children [4-5 years] achieved 50% on numeracy and literacy score.

Primary education was declared free in 1994 and carters for children between 6 and 13 years old and the Net Intake rate of the 6-year-olds into the first grade was 81% in 2024. Due to lack of readiness for school, about 36% of these learners repeated the very first grade. In 2024 about 4.3% of all the learners dropped out of school resulting in completion rates reduced to 43% for boys and 46% for girls in this year. The performance in the common zonal tests registered only 23% proficiency in mathematics. Pass rate for primary school certificate of education merely jumped from 83% in 2020 to 86% in 2024 (Ministry of Education (EMIS, 2004).

Figure 1: Trend of primary school completion rate between 2019 to 2025



Source: ESPR, 2024)

According to the Ministry of Education (EMIS, 2024), some of the factors responsible for the learners' non-persistence in education include poverty, truancy, family responsibilities, distance to school, early marriages and pregnancies, just to mention a few. To reverse the situation, the Ministry of Education introduced a policy allowing pregnant learners to return to school after delivering their child. The ministry also recruited more teachers which helped to increase the pupil to teacher ratio to 66.6 to 1 in rural schools and 40.66 to 1 in urban areas. There has also been an increase in construction of classrooms and provision of textbooks. In

addition, the ministry has introduced a pre-primary class to prepare children for the primary school curriculum and learning conditions.

Access to secondary education favours few primary education completers as transition from primary to secondary education was as low as 37% in 2020 and jumped to 49% in 2024. Statistics show that dropout rates increased from 3.4% in 2014 to 4.96% in 2024 mainly due to lack of fees, marriage and pregnancy reasons. Performance at the Malawi School Certificate of Education registered 49.15% in 2020 and 54.79% in 2024. The government addressed some of the challenges through provision of bursaries, construction of additional classrooms, supply of textbooks, revision of the curriculum and allowing students to return to school after delivering their baby (Ministry of Education, EMIS 2024).

Higher education is delivered through colleges and universities. Enrolment to public universities is restrictive as there were only 45,099 students in 2019 and 74,414 in 2024 with a gender parity index of 0.65 in 2024. Technical and Vocational Education is delivered through National Technical Colleges (NTCs), Community Technical Colleges (CTCs), and Community Skills Development Centres (CSDCs). There were only 5012 students in 2020 and 9707 students in 2024 with Gender Parity Index of 0.64 and 0.99, respectively (ESPR, 2024).

2. Sector policy, strategic plan, priority areas:

a) The Malawi Vision 2063 (MW2063)

The MW2063 considers Human capital development as one of its main enablers and focuses on impartation of foundational skills through relevant quality education for school going children with consideration given to girls, children with disability and the marginalised to tackle problems of health and nutrition.

b) The National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) (2020 - 2030)

NESIP 2020-2030 is based on the recovery plan from the impact of COVID-19 while promoting improvement of quality and relevance of education with reference to the MW63 and the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 for improving quality of education.

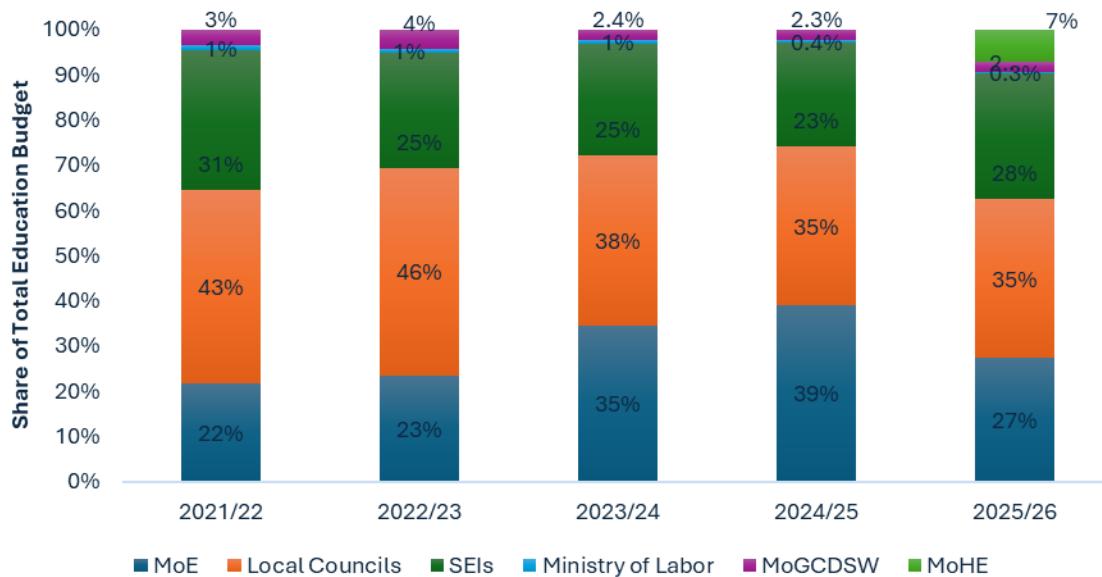
3. Donor activities and commitments

According to Malawi Education Development Partners Group (2024) the following are some of the commitments to the sector:

- **EU** has the following projects:
 1. Skills and Jobs creation from 2021 to 2026 worth US\$ 50 million for strengthening TEVET delivery
 2. Improving Secondary Education in Malawi phase II from 2021 to 2026 worth US\$ 59 million
- **German Cooperation** has the following projects
 1. KFW: Unlocking talent: e-learning in primary education
- **World Bank** has the following projects
 1. Skills development in TEVET from 2020 to 2026 worth US\$ 100 million Regional Africa Centres of Excellence from 2016 to 2023 worth US\$ 42 million
 2. Education Quality with Equity and Learning at Secondary (EQUALS) from 2019 to 2025 worth US\$ 95 million
 3. Malawi Education Reform Programme (MERP) from 2022 to 2027 worth US\$ 150 million
- **UNICEF** has the following projects:
 1. Spotlight project worth US\$ 1.6 million to support girls' education
 2. Support and strengthen the capacity of primary school girls worth US\$ 0.3 million
 3. Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme worth US\$ 1 million

4. Budget Situation

According to UNICEF (2025), with an allocation of 16.6% in 2025/26, the sector got a lion share of the total government budget. In this year, funding from donors went down to 17.5% from 21.4% in 2024/25 financial year. The budget is split into Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education; Ministry for Higher Education; Local Councils; Ministry of Gender; Ministry of Labour; and Subventions to public universities and colleges.



Source: UNICEF, 2025

5. Dialogue structure of the sector:

The Ministry of Education engages its stakeholders through Joint Sector Reviews, Sector Working Group (SWG) meetings, Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings, Development Partners' meetings and Troika.

B. JICA's Position

1) History of JICA's cooperation:

a. Grant Aid (GA) and Technical Cooperation (TC)

【Basic Education/Primary School】

- (TC) The project for Supporting District Education Plan Institutionalization Programme (2006 Dec - 2010 Dec)
- (Training) Capacity Building for Curriculum Development for Strengthening Early Grade Numeracy (FY2019 - FY2021)
- (TC) School for All Project {2023 – 2028}

【Secondary Education】

- (TC) The project for Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education through In-service Training in Malawi (2004 Oct - 2007 Oct)
- (TC) The Project for Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education INSET Malawi (Phase 2) (2008 Aug - 2012 Aug)

- (TC) The project for Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education in Malawi (Phase 3) (2013 Aug - 2017 Jul)
- (GA) The project for Re-Construction and Expansion of Selected Community Day Secondary Schools (2010 Aug singed)
- (GA) The project for Re-Construction and Expansion of Selected Community Day Secondary Schools (Phase 2) (2012 Mar singed)
- (GA) The project for Re-construction and Expansion of selected Community Day Secondary Schools and Conventional Secondary Schools (Phase 3) (2014 Mar singed)

【Higher Education】

- (GA) The project for Improvement of Domasi College of Education (2004 Jul singed)
- (GA) The Project for Construction of a Teacher Training College for Secondary School Teachers in Lilongwe (2013 May singed, completed in 2016)
- (GA) The project for Expanding and Upgrading of Domasi College of Education (2017 Jun signed, completed in 2023)

b. Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV)

In addition to the activities summarised above, the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have since 1971 been working with educational institutions in various capacities such as teaching, providing capacity building to the counterparts in the delivery of mathematics, science and technology education in various institutions. Since the beginning of the JOCV program, the education sector has so far received 68 volunteers to date.

c. Capacity Development / Human Resource Development

JICA, through its short-term and long-term training programs, has also been supporting capacity building of government as well as private personnel with different skills.

Long Term

Malawians continue to acquire JICA supported master's and doctorate degrees from several long-term training programs such as African Business Education Initiative for Youth with a Masters and Internship; Human Resource Development in Mining; Water Engineering and Utility Management; Agriculture Studies Networks for Food Security; and Sustainable Development Goals Leadership program; and Improvement in Children's Learning. The education sector has been one of the beneficiaries of these programs either at office level or academic institution level such as secondary school or university.

Short Term

Around 3,000 Malawians, including the education sector have benefitted from different short term capacity building programs either in Japan or a third country such as Egypt, Malaysia, and Zambia.

2) Cooperation Assets and major outcomes

JICA boasts of establishing long lasting systems that benefit Malawians for over a long period of time. These systems include:

- Institutionalized capacity of counterpart organization for effective implementation of the decentralization policy through:
 - the establishment of the district education plans at council level through the micro-planning project

- strengthening school governance and empowerment of communities to plan for school development through the School for All project.
- Institutionalized capacity for continuous development of teachers for quality learning through the project for strengthening of mathematics and Science Education at Secondary School Level.
- Institutionalized capacity for promoting gender equality by increasing girls and women participation in maths and science education through the construction of female dormitory facilities at selected and expanded Community Day Secondary Schools, Nalikule College of Education and Domasi College of Education.

3) Lessons learned:

Strict monitoring of project implementation by the Malawi office has contributed to effective delivery of the projects from the introduction to their completion. The office's understanding of the project management style is a major contributing factor to an effective guidance to the implementing agency.

With change of leadership or high turnover of staff in a counterpart office, there is always loss of important documents and continuity of project activities and outcomes. JICA has resolved to increasing the number of staff in the counterpart organization to ensure that there is always someone who can remain after others have changed their office or left the institution. Building strong relationships with the counterpart organization leadership is key to influencing close ties between the project team and the counterpart offices for effective implementation of the project. This relationship helps the project team to manage emerging issues through negotiation for any positive changes in the project delivery mechanism for effective results.

4) Comparative Advantage of JICA:

JICA's development cooperation programs align with the aspirations of the Malawi government. As such, JICA activities directly support the development needs of the country. This approach has not only made the development activities relevant to the needs of the country but also guaranteed their ownership and eventual sustainability of the outcomes.

JICA is a pioneer of and nationally recognised as the major partner for the improvements in the delivery of science and mathematics education in the country. This delivery has been through the JOCV, constructions that include science laboratories, KCCP and technical cooperation projects such as the SMASSE.

5) TICAD process:

According to the Ninth Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD) hosted in collaboration with United Nations, UNDP, World Bank and African Union Commission (AUC) anchored on youth empowerment as the main drive for Africa's future. Malawi, therefore, is poised to ensure that programs that promote youth development through education are prioritised.