

How governments are failing on the right to education

Findings from citizens' reports in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal

Executive Summary August 2017



ActionAid has recently conducted extensive research in schools in four developing countries – Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal – to assess the extent to which children, especially girls, are accessing good quality primary education. Our findings, while showing some positive progress, are extremely concerning. They show that:

- Governments are not investing enough to ensure a quality education for the next generation, and are largely failing in their duty to promote the right to education.
- Governments are also largely failing to meet the education commitments they have signed up to in international fora.
- The consequence is that few children are receiving a quality education. It is girls who often lose out most: girls are more likely to be victims of violence and abuse in school, often do less well in school examinations and are enduring extremely poor school sanitation facilities that are not conducive to a quality learning environment.

ActionAid's findings are consistent with the experience of many other developing countries, which we also analyse here. Recent years have seen real improvements in some aspects of education and millions more children have gained access to school. But millions of children around the world remain out of school. Further, many millions of children who are in school are simply not accessing a quality education. Too many children are being taught in schools with not enough teachers and classrooms or inadequate infrastructure such as sanitation facilities - and this is contributing to high dropouts and poor learning outcomes, such as low examination pass rates.

ActionAid's research in the four countries has involved a large number of stakeholders, including parents/guardians of schoolchildren, pupils themselves, head teachers and teachers, school administrators, local education authority staff, community leaders and school governance structures such as School Management Committees. The research was conducted in:

- **Malawi:** in 20 schools in four districts - Chitipa, Neno, Lilongwe and Ntchisi.
- **Mozambique:** in 14 schools in one district - Marracuene.
- **Tanzania:** in 30 primary schools in two districts - Kilwa and Singida.
- **Nepal:** in 25 schools in two districts - Kailali and Doti.

Progress

Developing countries have made some progress in education in recent years. Millions more children are attending school: between 1999 and 2012, the net enrolment ratio increased from 60% to 83% in low income countries and from 59% to 79% in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls' enrolment has improved and many countries now have as many girls as boys in primary school. Many countries have embarked on infrastructure improvement programmes, building more classrooms and improving school facilities. Pupil-teacher ratios have declined in most countries and many countries have been prioritising the recruitment of more teachers.

There have been clear signs of progress in certain aspects of education in the four developing countries ActionAid has analysed:

- In **Malawi**, enrolment in primary school has increased to 94%, with roughly equal numbers of girls and boys enrolled.
- **Mozambique** has achieved a surge in primary and secondary school enrolment from 3.6 million children in 2003 to around 6.7 million by 2014, and is now at 97%.
- In **Tanzania**, primary school enrolment increased from 4.8 million to 8.4 million (from 55% to 94%) between 2001 and 2010, and the number of teachers has increased from around 165,000 in 2010/11 to over 190,000 in 2014/15.
- **Nepal**, despite a decade long armed insurgency and other political turmoil in the country, has in recent years achieved significant progress in education, especially in largely achieving gender parity in enrolments in primary and secondary education, and in increasing the number of schools.

In all four countries, governments are showing considerable political will to address education deficiencies, and have comprehensive strategies on paper to, for example, train more teachers and improve infrastructure.



Annie and friend, Malawi

PHOTO: GRAEME ROBERTSON/ACTIONAID

Challenges: 10 Broken Promises

Unfortunately, the progress made is nowhere near sufficient to provide a quality education to all children, especially girls. ActionAid's findings from the research in the four countries, combined with our analysis of the situation globally, highlights ten major challenges that are not being adequately addressed by governments. Governments are largely failing to meet their commitments to fulfil the education rights enshrined in international human rights law and to meet their political commitments outlined in the *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* to which governments committed in 2015.

The ten major challenges are:

1 Children out of school

Estimates provided by research participants in the project districts suggest disturbingly high levels of children out of school and dropping out:

- The highest rate is in **Malawi**, where the number of out of school children is estimated to be equivalent to 22% of children enrolled.
- In **Mozambique**, data was only accessible in 2 of the 14 schools, showing an average out of school rate of 2.7% of those enrolled.
- In **Tanzania**, some 4.3% of those enrolled in the two districts are estimated to be out of school.
- In **Nepal**, an average of 8% of children aged 5-9 years are estimated to be currently out of school; for girls, the proportion is 9.6%.

2 Cost of education for parents

Our research found that all schools in all four countries charge some sort of extra costs to parents:

- In **Malawi**, all 20 schools charge fees for examinations and 19 charge for 'school development', among other costs. These fees are compulsory in all schools.
- **Mozambique** has abolished school fees for primary education but parents make voluntary contributions to school maintenance and school guards, and pay for school uniforms, in most of the 14 schools.
- In all 30 schools studied in **Tanzania**, parents have to pay for school uniforms and writing materials. Parents also make compulsory payments for exam fees in 9 schools, for sanitation equipment such as brooms and buckets in 8 schools and for food contributions in 4 schools, among others.
- In **Nepal**, despite the Constitutional provision of free education until secondary level, all 25 project schools were found to charge fees of some kind which in most cases are compulsory. For example, 22 schools require examination fees to be paid.

3 Girls' education

The research found that both girls and boys are losing out in accessing a quality education, but that the situation is worse for girls in some areas:

- More boys than girls are estimated to be **out of school** in Malawi and Tanzania, with a higher figure for girls in Nepal, and insufficient data available in Mozambique. The dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys in Malawi and lower than for boys in Tanzania and Nepal.
- Girls do less well than boys in **end of primary school exams** in Malawi and Nepal but better than boys in Mozambique and the same as boys in Tanzania.
- Girls are particular victims of **violence and abuse**. In Tanzania, for example, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. In Malawi, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only.

4 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes in schools taking part in the research vary across the four countries:

- In **Malawi**, across the 15 schools that could provide data, the average pass rate in end of year primary examinations was 67%: 64% for girls and 70% for boys.
- In **Mozambique**, only 55% of those who sat the final primary school examination in 2015 passed. The pass rate for girls (58%) was far much higher than for boys (40%).
- In **Tanzania**, the average pass rate in end of primary school exams was 68% in 2015, equal for girls and boys.
- In **Nepal**, the pass rate in end of primary school exams was relatively high, at 84% in 2015, a rate which was slightly higher for boys (85%) than girls (82%).

5 Infrastructure and sanitation

Our research found especially poor sanitation facilitation, a situation that impacts girls in particular.

- In **Tanzania**, only 4 of the 30 schools have flush toilets. On average, there is a toilet for every 53 pupils across the 30 schools, split roughly equally between girls and boys – there is a toilet for every 52 girls. Only 13 of the 30 schools have toilets with doors.
- In **Malawi**, there is an average of one toilet for 113 girls and one toilet for 134 boys. In the worst case, one school had an average of just one toilet for every 513 girls. In only 12 out of 20 schools do most toilet facilities have doors.
- In **Mozambique**, there are only 38 toilets in the 14 schools – an average of just 2.7 per school. In two schools, it was reported that there were none at all. Thus on average, there is a toilet for every 339 pupils across the 14 schools. For girls, there are 19 toilets available in the 14 schools – one for every 331 girls.
- In **Nepal**, an average of 87 pupils share each toilet in the project schools. Where separate toilets were available for girls, 84 girls shared a toilet compared to 70 boys.



Latrine, Mozambique

PHOTO: ERNANIO MANDLATE/KISAI/ACTIONAID



Birendra, age 8, Nepal

PHOTO: NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI/ACTIONAID



Classroom, Tanzania

PHOTO: EMANUELA COLUMBO/ACTIONAID



Old classroom, Mozambique

PHOTO: ERNANIO MANDLATE/KISAI/ACTIONAID

6 Teachers

Our research in the project schools found that the average pupil-teacher ratio across the schools studied was 73:1 in **Malawi**, 45:1 in **Mozambique**, 59:1 in **Tanzania**, and 25:1 in **Nepal**. These figures sometimes mask significant variations – one school in Malawi has 126 children per teacher, for example. (Official government targets are 40:1 in both Tanzania and Nepal and 60:1 in both Malawi and Mozambique).

7 Violence against children

Our research reached a number of very disturbing findings on stakeholders' perceptions of the prevalence of violence in schools:

- In **Tanzania**, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. Teachers are identified as the main perpetrators of corporal punishment but boys and peers are mainly responsible for other forms of violence.
- In **Malawi**, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only. Corporal punishment was reported to take place in 7 schools, affecting boys more than girls.
- In **Mozambique**, physical punishment is reported to be widespread, taking place in all 14 schools, while sexual harassment (i.e., bullying or coercion) was reported to take place in eight and sexual abuse (i.e., molestation) in one.
- In **Nepal**, physical violence was reported to take place in 16 of the 25 schools while sexual abuse was reported to exist in two schools. Teachers, boys, and peers were reported as the key perpetrators.

One problem is the lack of training received by teachers to respect children's rights. Our research found that, in **Tanzania**, only 57% of teachers in the schools were reported to have received this training. In **Malawi**, the proportion was found to be just 7%. In **Mozambique**, 5 of the 14 schools do not have teachers who have been trained to respect children's rights and in **Nepal**, only 10 of the 24 schools which reported have at least one teacher trained to respect child rights including protection against corporal punishment.

8 Children with disabilities

Our research found an exceedingly small percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in the project schools: less than 1% of all those enrolled were disabled in the project schools in **Malawi**, **Tanzania** and **Nepal**, while 1% of children were recorded as disabled in **Mozambique**. These low figures are likely to be the result both of poor recording by schools and children with disabilities simply not attending school.

9 School governance

- Our research found that the School Management Committees are 'active and fully functioning' in **Malawi**, **Mozambique** and **Tanzania**. In **Nepal**, however, the SMC reported to be active and fully functioning in only 3 out of 25 schools.
- In the same 3 countries, the SMCs are regarded as being mainly inclusive of all main groups in the local community. However, in **Nepal**, SMCs are regarded as inclusive in only 4 out of 25 schools.
- Women are much less represented on SMCs than men in all four countries. For example, in **Tanzania**, only around a third of members are women and in only 5 of the 30 schools is the chair of the SMC a woman. In **Nepal**, only around 1 in 5 members of SMCs are women. In **Tanzania** and **Malawi**, the precise proportion of women could not be estimated but was described as minimal.

10 Government financing for education

The four countries under analysis are largely failing to adequately promote the right to education. In order to change this, they must allocate sufficient resources to the task. Yet all four countries are failing to allocate 20% of their national budgets to education, as agreed by world leaders in the Incheon Framework of Action. Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania are spending 17-19% of their budgets on education while Nepal is allocating just 12%. Developing country governments as a whole are failing to meet their education spending commitments. On average, low income countries allocate 16.7% of the national budget to education (Sub-Saharan Africa 16.6%).

Governments need to increase spending on public services and find extra resources to do this. One major way of finding the resources needed to fund education is to reduce the tax incentives that governments currently give to corporations. In 2013, ActionAid estimated that developing countries lose US\$139 billion a year just from one form of tax incentive – corporate income tax exemptions: even this would be more enough to fund the US\$39 billion education financing gap. The four countries under analysis in this report all lose vast amounts of revenues from tax incentives given by their governments to corporations.

- Most stark is **Nepal**, which lost \$990 million to tax incentives in 2014/15 – more than it spent on education.
- **Malawi** may have lost \$117 million a year on average during 2008-12, which could have increased the education budget by 27%.
- **Mozambique** lost \$561 million in 2014, which could have increased the education budget by 31%.
- **Tanzania** lost \$760 million in 2014/15, which could have increased education spending by 28%.

Summary - Are the four countries adequately promoting the right to education?

The findings of the research suggest a mixed picture but overall it is clear that many aspects of the right to education are currently being violated in the schools under study in the four countries.

- The **Right to Free and Compulsory Education** is being supported in the high enrolment rates for girls and boys but is being violated by the high numbers of children out of school and who drop out, and in requiring parents to pay for various school costs.
- The **Right to Quality Learning** is being compromised by high pupil-teacher ratios in Malawi and Tanzania and relatively low pass rates for end of primary school (except in Nepal, which has relatively high pass rates).
- The **Right to Adequate Infrastructure** is being compromised by poor and inadequate sanitation (toilet) facilities, especially for girls.
- The **Right to a Safe and Non-Violent Environment** is being violated by widespread corporal punishment and sexual and other forms of violence in many schools and by an insufficient number of teachers trained to respect children's rights. These factors adversely affect girls in particular.
- The **Right to Participate** is being supported by children reported to be able to participate in class and in clubs or councils, by mainly equal participation of girls and boys, and by the SMC listening to children's views (except, for the latter, in Mozambique).
- The **Right to Transparent and Accountable Schools** is being supported by a large number of SMCs being active and fully functioning (except in Nepal) and by SMCs monitoring school budgets and children's participation in many schools. It is being compromised, however, by school governance structures not playing these roles in some schools and by women's under-representation in SMCs.

Underlying all these issues is a lack of adequate financing.

Recommendations

Fundamental to addressing the broken promises and rights violations is to increase the financing available to education in a sustainable way. For this reason we put our recommendation on increasing financing first, because it is this which will enable the other recommendations to be achieved.

Government financing for education

- Announce a timetable to reach, within three years, a tax to GDP ratio of 20% (e.g. through ending harmful tax incentives and promoting other progressive tax reforms) and an allocation of at least 20% of government spending to education (publishing a clear breakdown of budget allocations by sub-sector online). Education budgets should be gender-sensitive to ensure adequate financing for measures proven to tackle persistent barriers to girls' education.

Children out of school

- Ensure that up-to-date, accurate figures disaggregated for gender and disability are available on the number and location of children out of school. Develop a costed plan to ensure that all children are enrolled and retained in school using proven approaches including but not limited to: adequately resourced inclusive education interventions, cash transfers, school-feeding and active outreach programmes.

Cost of education for parents

- Ensure that all primary (and secondary) education is genuinely free by abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs (e.g. enrolment and exam fees, uniforms and learning materials amongst others) to parents and ensuring that the State education budget adequately covers all these costs.

Girls' education

- Take firm action towards the achievement of gender parity and equality in education by ensuring appropriate policies are funded and implemented in order to tackle persistent barriers to girls' education, including but not limited to: gender-related school-based violence; early marriage; unwanted early pregnancies; lack of sanitation facilities; lack of female teachers and gender bias in teaching and learning materials. Engage with communities, civil society and policy-makers to shift deep-seated discrimination against girls at all levels.

Learning outcomes

- Make continued efforts to improve learning outcomes, through more investment in training for formative assessment by teachers and addressing the underlying reasons for poor learning outcomes such as large class sizes, too many untrained or poorly trained teachers, outdated pedagogy and teaching-learning materials, and inadequate infrastructure. Ensure teachers are adequately supported, monitored and supervised whilst in post to ensure quality teaching and learning is occurring during an agreed minimum standard of instructional hours per year.

Infrastructure and sanitation

- Ensure national minimum standards for school infrastructure and construction exist and are being adequately funded and implemented to guarantee children's equal access to safe, resilient, inclusive learning environments including sufficient number of classrooms and adequate provision of accessible, gender-sensitive sanitation and hygiene facilities. National minimum standards should be equal or superior to agreed international minimum standards for school construction and sanitation (e.g. SPHERE standards).

Teachers

- Take concrete steps to recruit and retain more trained and qualified teachers (especially female teachers) to reduce pupil: qualified teacher ratios and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Introduce domestically competitive salaries and career progression plans and provide incentives for teachers posted to difficult locations to encourage recruitment and retention of qualified personnel and reduce the risk of exclusion for poor children in remote, rural areas.

Violence against children

- Announce zero tolerance for violence in and around schools and take steps to ensure this is implemented, including but not limited to: making corporal punishment in schools illegal; training education staff and parents in human rights standards and alternatives to physical and humiliating punishment; drafting and implementing comprehensive codes of conduct for education staff that specifically prohibit the use of violence against children in schools and ensuring all schools have clear policies to monitor and prevent violence, with confidential reporting procedures linked to the police as well as health, social welfare and justice services.

Children with disabilities

- Establish coordinated mechanisms for identification and referral of children with disabilities that cut across health, education and social welfare services from local to national level ensuring that children with disabilities are adequately supported to access and remain in school. Ensure national inclusive education policies and strategies exist, are funded and implemented covering adequate provision of adapted infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and teacher training to cater for children's different learning needs.

School governance

- Review national policies to ensure that all schools have an effective, well-resourced and representative School Management Committee, which is gender balanced and inclusive of children. Allocate sufficient resources to ensure School Management Committees are trained in their roles and responsibilities and empowered to monitor school performance, learning outcomes and budgets. Promote transparency and accountability in School Management by using approaches such as public display boards for school budgets and spending.

To download the complete report and view full references go to:

<http://www.actionaid.org/publications/how-governments-are-failing-right-education>

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

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