

**Malawi: Primary School Programme (Phases 1 and 2)**

**Ex post evaluation report**

<b>OECD sector</b>	Basic education / 11220	
<b>BMZ project ID</b>	1995 66 977 (Phase 1) 1999 66 128 (Phase 2)	
<b>Project executing agency</b>	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training	
<b>Consultant</b>	GOPA-Consultants, Bad Homburg	
<b>Year of ex post evaluation</b>	<b>2006</b>	
	<b>Project appraisal (planned)</b>	<b>Ex post evaluation (actual)</b>
<b>Start of implementation</b>	Phase 1: 4th quarter 1996 Phase 2: 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 2000	Phase 1: 2nd quarter 1997 Phase 2: 4th quarter 2000
<b>Period of implementation</b>	Phase 1: 36 months Phase 2: 45 months	Phase 1: 43 months Phase 2: 53 months
<b>Investment costs</b>	Phase 1: EUR 6.14 million Phase 2: EUR 7.67 million	Phase 1: EUR 6.95 million Phase 2: EUR 6.24 million
<b>Counterpart contribution</b>	Phase 1: -- Phase 2: --	Phase 1: -- Phase 2: --
<b>Financing, of which Financial Cooperation (FC) funds</b>	Phase 1: EUR 6.14 million Phase 2: EUR 7.67 million	Phase 1: EUR 6.95 million Phase 2: EUR 6.24 million
<b>Other institutions/donors involved</b>	GTZ (Phase 2)	GTZ (Phase 2)
<b>Performance rating</b>	3	
• <b>Significance/relevance</b>	3	
• <b>Effectiveness</b>	3	
• <b>Efficiency</b>	3	

**Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators**

The project focused on seven districts in Malawi with particularly badly equipped schools, and comprised the new construction of school buildings (including furniture), teacher housing units, teacher development centres (including furniture and teaching materials), an office building, which was to house the teacher training and advanced training unit of the Ministry of Education (Phase 1) as well as the rehabilitation of classrooms. The overall objective of the project was to contribute to improving the quality and quantity of primary school facilities and teaching in the programme region. The criteria for measuring the achievement of the overall objective were the

primary school completion rate and the net enrolment rate. The programme objective was to make a contribution to sustainably improving the learning and teaching conditions at the schools and teacher training facilities financed under the programme and to ensure their proper use. The criterion to measure the achievement of this objective was a pupil-classroom ratio of at least 50:1 and the adequate use of the teacher development centres for teacher training purposes (at least 30 days per year).

### **Programme design / major deviations from the original programme planning and their main causes**

As scheduled the construction works were implemented in several lots by small Malawi construction firms. Since the construction firms showed deficiencies they had to be closely supervised and controlled by the consultant. The contributions to be rendered by the population remained well below expectations; in particular the production of purpose-made bricks for the walls had to be cancelled due to quality defects. Due to considerable cost increases in Phase 1 which were largely caused by exchange rate movements, the scope of the measures to be implemented was reduced. Overall, only 750 instead of the planned 1,000 classrooms were built or rehabilitated. The number of teacher development centres established was 27 units as compared with 33 planned units. A positive result is that 95 additional teacher housing units were built and this contributed substantially to increasing the attractiveness of the school locations and the satisfaction of the teachers. To support a parallel project implemented in the context of German Technical Cooperation (TC) financing was provided for an office building for the TC promoted Department for Teacher Education and Development. This building had not been included in the original project planning.

### **Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating**

The national net enrolment rate in Malawi increased from just under 60 % in 1998 to about 80 % in 2005 for boys as well as for girls. The primary school completion rate as an indicator of the quality of education rose on a national average from the low level of 29% in 1998 to 34% in 2005 (which still is not satisfactory). Moreover, substantial deficiencies were detected with regard to the knowledge and skills which pupils had actually acquired. We consider the overall objective as reached by a narrow margin (though with an upward trend).

The indicators for the assessment of the achievement of the programme objective were the adequate utilisation of the classrooms and teacher development centres financed. According to information provided by the consultant (which was also confirmed by random samples we drew ourselves) all facilities are utilised fully or at least to a satisfactory extent. The pupil-classroom ratio in the programme districts – which had originally been extremely high at an average of over 150 pupils per classroom – fell by 25% to 60% and now ranges between 88 and 139 pupils per classroom depending on the district. Taking into consideration an attendance rate of about 75%, the average class size is higher than the requested minimum rate of 50 pupils per classroom. Only due to the construction of new classrooms was it possible to offer lessons during the rainy season for many children. As a result the number of lessons per pupil increased and this, in turn, improved the effectiveness of teaching.

While the number of (mostly) well-trained teachers is just sufficient at all programme schools, the still very high number of pupils in grades 1 to 3 and the often totally insufficient supply of school manuals and teaching materials is a major cause for concern. This situation is a major reason for the unsatisfactory quality of school education, which is also reflected by the high repeat and dropout rates of between 15% and 20% on average. A positive aspect to be mentioned is that the quality of the school buildings is very good and, thus, the buildings have not required any maintenance up to now. Though maintenance will be difficult in the future for

lack of money both at the level of the Ministry of Education and the school level, the buildings are expected to have a technical lifetime of at least 15 years.

The project benefits approx. 60,000 pupils every year, who come mostly from poor and very poor families. The very widespread poverty in the country is one reason for the sometimes very low attendance rates, because pupils can frequently not afford to go to school (even though school fees have been abolished) or have to work at least temporarily in order to contribute to the family income. In the 'hunger months' of November through March, i.e. when food reserves are depleted and before the arrival of the new harvest, pupils' performance at school is usually severely restricted and sometimes they are not in the position to attend classes. It has clearly turned out that well-designed school meal programmes help to increase attendance rates.

To sum up, we assess the developmental impact of the programme on the basis of the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance/significance as follows:

The project made a contribution towards reducing the average pupil-classroom ratio in the programme region, even though the number of pupils attending school has increased. The pupil-classroom ratio continues to be unsatisfactory (in absolute terms) and this clearly indicates that there is still a considerable need for additional classrooms. The sustainability of the investment is limited to a certain extent, which is due to the fact that the provision of maintenance funds is uncertain. The programme's effectiveness is rated as only sufficient (sub-rating 3).

Due to exchange rate related factors, the unit costs for the construction measures in Phase 1 were substantially higher than estimated, while they were lower than estimated in Phase 2. The volume of funds used to achieve the programme objective was appropriate. The capacity utilisation of the schools is very high, and due to the solid construction of the buildings maintenance costs are very low. Measured by the repetition and dropout rates, the sectoral efficiency, which had already been low at the time of project appraisal, had even deteriorated. Thus, the project's overall effectiveness is rated as slightly insufficient (rating 4).

As regards the contribution of the project to solving the sectoral problems different aspects have to be considered. In terms of quantity (measured by the net enrolment rate), improvements were obviously achieved. In terms of quality of education, however, the situation continues to be unsatisfactory by African standards, even though a slight increase in the completion rate at primary schools was achieved. Given the tremendous pent-up need for school facilities in Malawi, even the complementary and harmonized measures implemented by different donors (school buildings, teacher training and advanced training, reform of curricula, supply of school manuals) could not change this situation. In particular the provision of sufficient qualified teachers is a long-term undertaking. The sub-criterion of significance/relevance is rated as sufficient overall (rating 3).

To achieve the project objectives to a satisfactory degree, further quantitative and qualitative measures are required (including the construction of new school buildings). Such measures are already being implemented or in preparation. The Malawi government is generally willing to implement reforms, and the donors involved have declared their long-term commitment. We judge the developmental effectiveness of the project to be sufficient overall (rating 3).

## General conclusions and recommendations

- In very poor countries, in which the provision of maintenance budgets is uncertain, buildings have to be constructed in a very solid manner in order not to require extensive maintenance. This is important even if higher unit costs are unavoidable. Cheap construction techniques are not cost-efficient.
- In corruption-prone countries with construction firms that do not work very efficiently a continuous and close supervision of construction works by a qualified consultant is indispensable. This is important even if the share of consulting costs is relatively high.
- School meal programmes are an important instrument to improve primary education because they have two major impacts: They have a positive effect on children's health and nutritional situation and they reduce the opportunity cost of school education. In this way they help to improve pupils' learning results, to increase demand especially among poorer population groups and in the medium term to reduce dropout rates.

## Legend

Developmentally successful: Ratings 1 to 3	
Rating 1	Very high or high degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 2	Satisfactory developmental effectiveness
Rating 3	Overall sufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Developmental failures: Ratings 4 to 6	
Rating 4	Overall slightly insufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 5	Clearly insufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 6	The project is a total failure

## Criteria for the Evaluation of Project Success

The evaluation of the "developmental effectiveness" of a project and its classification during the ex-post evaluation into one of the various levels of success described in more detail below concentrate on the following fundamental questions:

- Are the **project objectives** reached to a sufficient degree (aspect of project **effectiveness**)?
- Does the project generate sufficient significant **developmental effects** (project **relevance** and **significance** measured by the achievement of the overall development-policy objective defined beforehand and its effects in political, institutional, socio-economic and socio-cultural as well as ecological terms)?
- Are the **funds/expenses** that were and are being **employed/incurred** to reach the objectives appropriate and how can the project's microeconomic and macroeconomic impact be measured (aspect of **efficiency** of the project conception)?
- To the extent that undesired (**side**) **effects** occur, are these tolerable?

We do not treat **sustainability**, a key aspect to consider for project evaluation, as a separate category of evaluation but instead as a cross-cutting element of all four fundamental questions on project success. A project is sustainable if the project-executing agency and/or the target group are able to continue to use the project facilities that have been built for a period of time that is, overall, adequate in economic terms, or to carry on with the project activities on their own and generate positive results after the financial, organizational and/or technical support has come to an end.