



IEQ in Malawi

CONTEXT

Malawi currently faces the combined challenge of guaranteeing all primary school-age children the right to attend school within a system ill-equipped to meet their instructional needs and improving the quality of education. More than 1.3 million additional children came to school following the declaration of Free Primary Education in 1994. Yet, even with donor assistance and Government increase in budgetary allocation to primary education, the system struggles. USAID supports the Government through the Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) program, which seeks to increase: enrollment and persistence of girls in primary school through social mobilization; efficiency within the primary education sector; and investment in schools and teacher training facilities. Several projects are supported through this program.

IEQ/Malawi is collaborating with the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Save the Children/US to support USAID's Strategic Objective 4: Increased Access to and Quality and Efficiency of Basic Education, Especially for Girls. We will contribute to Intermediate Results (IR) 4.1: Effective Schools Developed in Targeted Areas (Sub IR.4.1.1 Improved Teaching & Learning and Sub IR 4.1.2 Improved Support Systems and IR4.2 Linkage to Policy Reforms and Investment Strategy).

PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES

The initial research agenda for IEQ/ Malawi is linked to Save the Children/ US'S QUEST (Quality Education Through Supporting Teaching) program. QUEST builds upon the popular and successful Village Based Schools by working at the district level with partners from the Ministry of Education's Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and teachers. QUEST continues to focus on the school and classroom by providing frequent supervision and training support to teachers and communities, and by strengthening the skills at the zone, cluster, and school levels. This represents a decentralized approach to fostering educational quality. IEQ will also collaborate with their partners in Malawi to build professional development programs that strengthen professional capacity to conduct qualitative and multi-method research. In addition to the research agenda linked to QUEST, IEQ will also work with Malawi partners to plan a longterm research agenda.

The initial research agenda for IEQ/ Malawi is linked to Save the Children/ US'S QUEST (Quality Education Through Supporting Teaching) program. QUEST builds upon the popular and successful Village Based Schools by

working at the district level with partners from the Ministry of Education's Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and teachers. QUEST continues to focus on the school and classroom by providing frequent supervision and training support to teachers and communities, and by strengthening the skills at the zone, cluster, and school levels. This represents a decentralized approach to fostering educational quality. IEQ will also collaborate with their partners in Malawi to build professional development programs that strengthen professional capacity to conduct qualitative and multi-method research. In addition to the research agenda linked to QUEST, IEQ will also work with Malawi partners to plan a longterm research agenda.

IEQ/Malawi's research team consists of educators from Save the Children, MIE, the Centre for Research & Training (CERT), and several university and teacher training institutions. The team is examining the implementation and effects of the QUEST program, which began in January 1999. The activities include: measuring pupil proficiency in Chichewa, English and mathematics for standards 2- identifying teacher knowledge and skills in English and mathematics; observing classroom teaching and learning; surveying availability and use of instructional materials; and interviewing teachers, headteachers, and community members.

TIME PERIOD

Following discussions with Save the Children in mid-November 1998, IEQ met with SC /US, MIE, CERT, and others in Malawi to finalize the research agenda, identify team leaders, construct instruments for pilot testing, and prepare materials for training team members for baseline data collection. The baseline data were collected from 65 schools in Mangochi and comparison schools in Balaka: data will be analyzed in the spring of 1999. IEQ/Malawi anticipates a three-year partnership.

OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS

Products to date include: a Memorandum of Understanding with the Malawi Institute of Education; an Assessment Manual for administering pupil proficiency measures in Chichewa, English and Mathematics for Standards 2,3,4 (including the pupil performance measures); a classroom observation instrument; instructional materials and school facilities surveys; and interview protocols for teachers, headteachers, and community members. Through IEQ, collaborative linkages have been forged among many key stakeholders in Malawi education.