

CHALLENGE:

Children's Access, Retention & Success in School

Whilst more children are entering school than ever before, research indicates that a high percentage of children, especially girls,

- **enter school late** - and fail to complete school once they reach puberty. In Malawi '...only 52% enter on time, 18% late, and 26% early'¹. Timely entrance will ensure at least a minimum of 7 years of schooling.

- **repeat or drop out within the first two years of school** In Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Madagascar and Equatorial Guinea '... more than 50% of children either repeat first grade or drop-out (2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report)'.²

- **are not meeting minimum learning standards by Grade 3 or 4 and are most likely to fail school** Fluent reading is a cornerstone for mastering all other subjects. However, many children do not reach the required reading levels in the first years of primary school. The '...failure to learn reading early creates inefficiencies that reverberate all through the system (Abadzi, 2006)'.²

1. National Statistical Office and ORC Macro. 2003. Malawi DHS EdData Survey 2002: Education Data for Decision-making. Calverton, Maryland USA: Malawi National Statistical Office and ORC Macro.

2. Arnold C. & Bartlett, K. 2006. in press.

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ADEA Working Group on Early Childhood Development
www.ADEAnet.org



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care & Development
www.ecdgroup.com

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WHY is this wastage of education resources & loss of human potential happening?

Schools are NOT Ready for Young Children

- Long distances between home & school;
- Class sizes too large & intimidating for young children;
- Language of instruction at school different to that at home;
- The school environment often feels 'alien', unsafe and unwelcoming for young children;
- The programme is unrelated to what children know - their families, community, culture and environment;
- Teaching approaches often rely on rote learning, and do not reflect young children's natural active learning styles;
- Learning materials for children are often very limited;
- Teachers are not specifically trained to work with young children and support their transition to school;
- In the early primary grades learners need to acquire key skills, competencies and confidence, but often their classes are under-resourced with the best teachers, facilities and learning resources being allocated to higher grades.

Young Children are NOT Ready for Schools

Poverty, changing socio-cultural contexts, and HIV/AIDS negatively impact on families' capacities to care for and support their children's overall development in the critical early years, 0-8 years of age. Specifically...

- family members struggle to meet their young children's basic needs;
- young children are often left alone because traditional child care support structures are dwindling and sibling caregivers are at school;
- families have limited access to organised childcare or preschool arrangements.

Therefore, children of vulnerable families are more likely to enter school ...

- **undernourished & in poor health;**
- **with limited cognitive and language abilities;**
- **lacking self-confidence;**
- **having had no preparation for the culture, social routines, language and teaching approaches of school.**

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure ... Schools are Ready for Children & Children are Ready for School

Through a comprehensive ECCE policy and implementation framework including:

- inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration;
- partnership approaches to supporting young children in families, communities & more structured settings;
- adequate costing and financing.

EFA Goal No. 1: Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) The Dakar Framework for Action: April 2000

EFA Goal No. 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Guiding Principles:

- All young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert, and secure and be able to learn.
- Good quality early childhood care and education, both in families and in more structured programmes, have a positive impact on the survival, growth, development and learning potential of children.

Early Childhood Care & Education Programmes should...

- be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing
 - health,
 - nutrition and hygiene,
 - cognitive and psycho-social development;
- be provided in the child's mother tongue;
- help to identify and enrich the care and education of children with special needs;
- include activities
 - centred on the child,
 - focused on the family,
 - based within the community
- supported by national, multi-sectoral policies and adequate resources;
- coordinate closely with local Grade 1-2 teachers to ensure continuity in learning experiences for children.

Who is Responsible?

Families and communities are their children's primary caregivers and first teachers, responsible for supporting their children's quality care and education before they reach school and then as they progress.

Governments across relevant ministries, have the responsibility for:

- formulating ECCE policies within the context of national development plans and budgets (PRSPs/SWAPs);

- mobilizing political and popular support;

- promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age and not mere downward extensions of formal school systems;

- the education of parents and other caregivers in better child care, building on traditional practices, and including the systematic use of early childhood indicators;

- working in partnership with and supporting families, communities and NGOs to achieve quality ECCE for ALL

**SCHOOLS
READY
FOR
CHILDREN**



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